



# Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women

*Laura Hyun Yi Kang*

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In *Compositional Subjects* Laura Hyun Yi Kang explores the ways that Asian/American women have been figured by mutually imbricated modes of identity formation, representation, and knowledge production. Kang's project is simultaneously interdisciplinary scholarship at its best and a critique of the very disciplinary formations she draws upon.

The book opens by tracking the jagged emergence of "Asian American women" as a distinct social identity over the past three decades. Kang then directs critical attention to how the attempts to compose them as discrete subjects of consciousness, visibility, and action demonstrate a broader, ongoing tension between socially particularized subjects and disciplinary knowledges. In addition to the shifting meanings and alignments of "Asian," "American," and "women," the book examines the discourses, political and economic conditions, and institutional formations that have produced Asian/American women as generic authors, as visibly desirable and desiring bodies, as excludable aliens and admissible citizens of the United States, and as the proper labor for transnational capitalism. In analyzing how these enfigurations are constructed and apprehended through a range of modes including autobiography, cinematography, historiography, photography, and ethnography, Kang directs comparative attention to the very terms of their emergence as Asian/American women in specific disciplines.

Finally, Kang concludes with a detailed examination of selected literary and visual works by Korean women artists located in the United States and Canada, works that creatively and critically contend with the problematics of identification and representation that are explored throughout the book. By underscoring the forceful and contentious struggles that animate all of these compositional gestures, Kang proffers Asian/American women as a vexing and productive figure for cultural, political and epistemological critique.

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