



The Martial Arts Cinema of the Chinese Diaspora: Ang Lee, John Woo, and Jackie Chan in Hollywood

Kin-Yan Szeto

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In *The Martial Arts Cinema of the Chinese Diaspora*, Kin-Yan Szeto critically examines three of the most internationally famous martial arts film artists to arise out of the Chinese diaspora and travel far from their homelands to find commercial success in the world at large: Ang Lee, John Woo, and Jackie Chan. Positing the idea that these filmmakers' success is evidence of a "cosmopolitical awareness" arising from their cross-cultural ideological engagements and geopolitical displacements, Szeto demonstrates how this unique perspective allows these three filmmakers to develop and act in the transnational environment of media production, distribution, and consumption.

Beginning with a historical retrospective on Chinese martial arts films as a diasporic film genre and the transnational styles and ideologies of the filmmakers themselves, Szeto uses case studies to explore in depth how the forces of colonialism, Chinese nationalism, and Western imperialism shaped the identities and work of Lee, Woo, and Chan. Addressed in the volume is the groundbreaking martial arts swordplay film that achieves global success—Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*—and its revelations about Hollywood representations of Asians, as well as concepts of male and female masculinity in the swordplay film tradition. Also investigated is the invigoration of contemporary gangster, thriller, and war films by John Woo, whose combination of artistic and historical contexts has contributed to his global success.

Szeto then dissects Chan's mimetic representation of masculinity in his films, and the influences of his Chinese theater and martial arts training on his work. Szeto outlines the similarities and differences between the three artists' films, especially their treatments of gender, sexuality, and power. She concludes by analyzing their films as metaphors for their working conditions in the Chinese diaspora and Hollywood, and demonstrating how through their works, Lee, Woo, and Chan communicate not only with the rest of the world but also with each other.

Far from a book simply about three filmmakers, *The Martial Arts Cinema of the Chinese Diaspora* investigates the transnational nature of films, the geopolitics of culture and race, and the depths of masculinity and power in movies. Szeto's interdisciplinary approach calls for nothing less than a paradigm shift in the study of Chinese diasporic filmmakers and the embodiment of cosmopolitical perspectives in the martial arts genre.

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