

Trans-ing Borders: Cultural Performance and Identity Formation in a Fractured World

The International PhD Program in Taiwan and Transcultural Studies at National Chung Hsing University is hosting a two-day workshop Oct 29–30, 2026. This symposium centers on issues of identitarian shifts in our current world of constant flux, movement, migration, and transition. At a moment when digital connectivity promises global openness yet societies grow increasingly polarized and ultranationalist, this gathering addresses the urgent contradictions shaping our fractured world.

With the increasing rivalries we have witnessed on the geopolitical front in recent years — the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Israeli-Palestine conflict, the Sino-US competition — the hostilities stoked by COVID-19, and not least the racist antagonisms between and among nations fanned by an uncritical mob mentality, we seem to have entered into a new Cold War era. As nation-states jostle to form new alliances in the changing world order, at the same time, they continue to compete for the loyalties of citizens internally as well as exert their influence beyond national borders, appealing either through a sense of cultural affinity or otherwise rhetorical intimidation. How far have we come since the first “Chinese” Nobel Literary Prize laureate Gao Xingjian cautioned that the call for patriotism and nationalist impulses are the most reactionary of watchwords authoritarian regimes of the past and present have utilized to trick people? Our symposium seeks to examine cultural performance as a critical site for understanding transnational identities, political belonging, and resistance in contemporary Asia.

More specifically, our symposium:

1. Examines different “trans-” formations (transnational, transregional, transformational, translational, transcendent, transitional) and how they intersect with performance in Asia.
2. Treats performance broadly (theatre, film, media, literature, translation, visual arts, music, performance art, television) as a key site where identities are imagined, resisted, and transformed beyond rigid nation-state frameworks.
3. Focuses on how the lingering and renewed Cold War logics shape cultural and political life in places like Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, mainland China, and the wider Chinese diaspora.
4. Asks how artists and cultural practitioners use performance to challenge authoritarianism, ultra-nationalism, historical amnesia, and the state’s demand for loyalty, especially amid US–China tensions, surveillance, and digital echo chambers.

The workshop will allow us an opportunity to reflect and contemplate on new directions emerging in transnational Asian studies.

We welcome papers in either English or Chinese. We are assuming a bilingual audience and speakers should choose in whichever language you are most comfortable to deliver your ideas. You could, for instance, have your PPT in one language and speak in another.

Organizer: The International PhD Program in Taiwan and Transcultural Studies
National Chung Hsing University
Conveners: Wah Guan Lim 林華源, NCHU
Chunyen Wang 汪俊彥, National Taiwan University
Venue: College of Liberal Arts 711, National Chung Hsing University
Dates: Oct 29–30, 2026