



RACIST LOVE

ASIAN
ABSTRACTION
AND THE
PLEASURES OF
FANTASY

Leslie Bow

Racist Love

Asian Abstraction and the Pleasures of Fantasy

LESLIE BOW

In *Racist Love* Leslie Bow traces the ways in which Asian Americans become objects of anxiety and desire. Conceptualizing these feelings as “racist love,” she explores how race is abstracted and then projected onto Asianized objects. Bow shows how anthropomorphic objects and images such as cartoon animals in children’s books, home décor and cute tchotchkes, contemporary visual art, and artificially intelligent robots function as repositories of seemingly positive feelings and attachment to Asianness. At the same time, Bow demonstrates that these Asianized proxies reveal how fetishistic attraction and pleasure serve as a source of anti-Asian bias and violence. By outlining how attraction to popular representations of Asianness cloaks racial resentment and fears of globalization, Bow provides a new means of understanding the ambivalence surrounding Asians in the United States while offering a theory of the psychological, affective, and symbolic dynamics of racist love in contemporary America.

“Thought-provoking and illuminating. Professor Bow’s analysis is both broad ranging and a deep dive into culture, history, psychology, and much more. Her work provides context, vocabulary, and insight—a powerful framework for understanding.”—Charles Yu, author of Interior Chinatown

ANIMA: Critical Race Studies Otherwise

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