

My latest project, *Modern Girl*, extrapolates upon past themes of commercialism and identity within Western culture by creating reimagined ad campaigns based upon the famous “pin-up girl” advertising posters of 1930s Shanghai, China. This era heralded the emergence of Asian women as individuals, as they began to break away from Confucius tradition that demanded total filial piety alongside crippling beauty practices like foot binding. However, while an expression of gender emancipation, the posters sowed the seeds of a new form of exploitation: the use of the female form to sell consumer products.

I grew up in Vancouver — regarded as the gateway to the East. It has experienced unprecedented immigration from Hong Kong and China in the past 35 years, turning this once provincial community into a vibrant Asian metropolis. The impact of Asian culture has been profound, not only on the city but on me as an individual and artist. I have come to love Asian film and literature such as Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and Gish Jen’s *Mona in the Promised Land*. Such works explore the immigrant experience, something that resonates with my own experiences emigrating from Israel in childhood. Learning to fit in was stressful, however, I realized that the challenges facing my young Asian friends in Vancouver were even greater. They were torn between familial demands of obedience and academic achievement — in opposition to the Western ideals of self-expression and individualism.

The ‘Modern Girl’ image first appeared in the West and was notable for its bold sexuality, with scantily clad women selling everything from clothing, soap and cigarettes to army recruitment. Chinese pin up girls also began to appear in magazines and posters. More conservatively dressed in silk cheongsams and smooth chignons, these models nonetheless radiated sensuality. *Modern Girl*, in fact, was inspired by Chinese historians Tani Barlow and Madeleine Yue Dong, who theorized that this Asian version was an extension of a global phenomenon launched by multinational corporations and disseminated by mass media, whose effect was to emphasize Western imperial dominance.