Thuy Linh Tu uses interdisciplinary approaches to critique the fashion industry and the complex engagement of Asians—as designers, tropes, workers, icons—in the business and culture that emanates.

Until recently, when we thought about Asians Americans and fashion, it was as sewers and garment workers, not as stewards of chic. How did we get from the typical image of them as “nimble fingers that sew” to Vogue-featured designers winning top CFDA awards and dressing celebrities like Jennifer Aniston and Michelle Obama? Thuy Linh Tu’s The Beautiful Generation explains this shift by tracing how designer clothing, the lives and labors that make it possible, and New York City, where it thrived and which it ultimately transformed, became connected and animated by a series of ethnic networks just barely visible under the glaring lights of fashion. Asian Americans are now leaders in the fashion industry—as demonstrated by boldface names like Philip Lim, Thakoon Panichgul, Doo-Ri Chung, and Jason Wu—whose successes were made possible by the presence of Asian immigrants in garment production.