

ZHOU XIAOHOU



Zhou Xiaohu, *The Goey Gentleman* (2002), stop-motion animation, 4:3, color, sound, 4'40"

Edition: 4/4

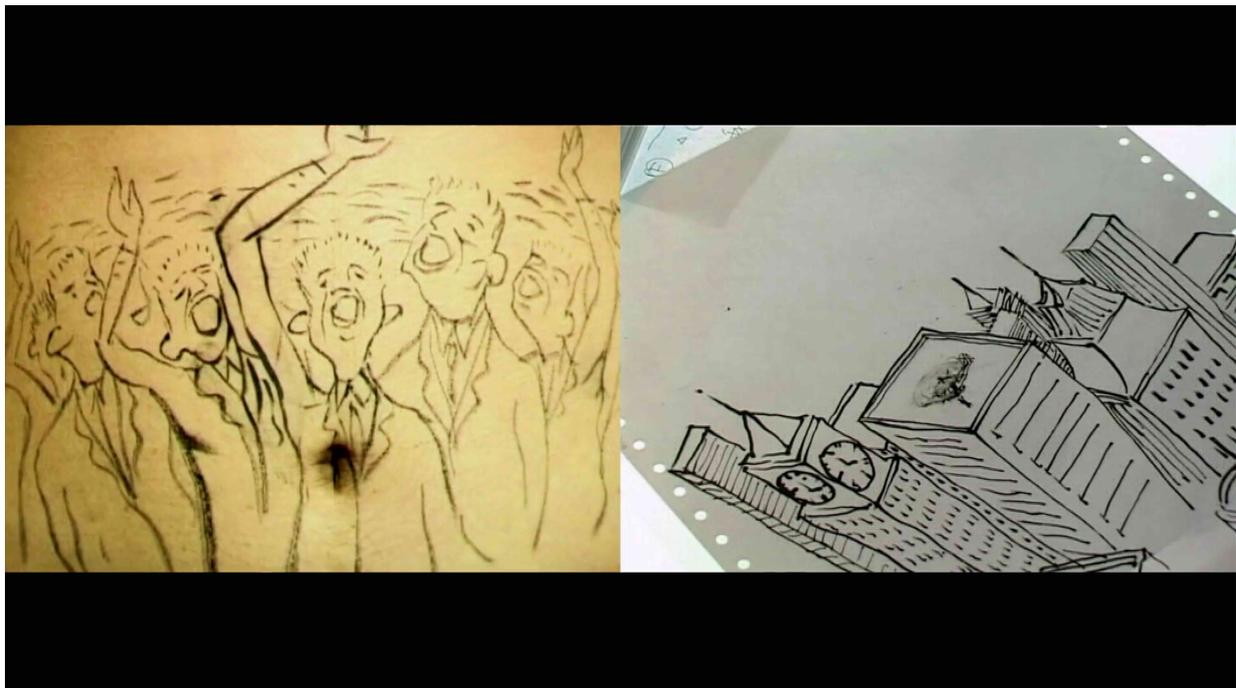
Price: € 40.000 Euro + VAT

In *The Goey Gentleman*, Zhou Xiaohu – pioneer of video animation in China - turns the human body into both canvas and battlefield. Playful, perverse, and wickedly intelligent, *The Goey Gentleman* is a striptease gone deliciously wrong. Painted frame by frame onto two naked bodies - one the artist himself, and the other female - the stop-motion animation turns flesh into film, intimacy into spectacle, and desire into slapstick. As the images flirt, fight, and ultimately destroy one another upon each other's skin, Zhou blurs the line between seduction and aggression, the creator and the created. The result is as funny as it is unsettling: a surreal duet of body politics, played out on literal bodies.

The work's absurd sensuality conceals a biting critique. Beneath its comic rhythm - a burlesque of touch, a tango of paint and sweat - *The Goey Gentleman* exposes the politics of looking, the power play between who performs and who watches. Like politics itself, it's a performance of exposure: a choreography of charm, deceit, and control. Zhou's own hand - the artist as manipulator - becomes complicit, drawn into the lusty theatre of his own making.

In the context of *Art from Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT*, the work hits a nerve. When politics becomes pornography and truth is stripped bare, Zhou's animation reads as both erotic farce and political allegory. Its sticky humour mocks the obscenity of power - the endless teasing, the promises of revelation that never quite deliver. At the same time, it reminds us that laughter can be its own form of resistance, that satire and seduction share a pulse.

That *The Goopy Gentleman* cannot be shown in the artist's home country only amplifies its punch. Its painted bodies - humorous, tender, rebellious - stand in for all bodies forbidden to perform freely. Zhou's burlesque of exposure becomes an act of defiance: a reminder that, in repressive times, pleasure itself is political, and the erotic can still be a weapon against control.



Zhou Xiaohu, *Conspiracy* (2004), 2-channel stop-motion animation, color, sound, 6'12"

Edition: 3/3

Price: € 43.000 Euro + VAT

In *Conspiracy*, Zhou Xiaohu stages a literal and metaphorical *body politic* - a double-screen performance where creation, control, and corruption play out across flesh - turning the body into a subversive stage for political theatre. On one screen, the artist is seen at work, sketching and shaping his film; on the other, his ideas come alive as animations drawn frame by frame directly onto a naked female body. Political rallies erupt, leaders speechify, and the seduction of power unfolds as erotic spectacle. Then - suddenly - a sniper takes aim. A single animated bullet pierces both screens, killing the politician and penetrating the woman's body - collapsing both the animated subject and its fleshy canvas. The assassination is both metaphor and climax: politics consummated through violence, image, and desire. The film closes in a chaos of rallies and rivalries, until one politician triumphs in election - as if power, having devoured its own image, must always resurrect itself for another round. The body, meanwhile, remains marked,

wounded, and complicit: both medium and message, both victim and stage, where violence and seduction blur into one another.

Zhou's trademark humor runs through the work — a sly, dark irony that heightens its discomfort. *Conspiracy* turns the language of animation — a medium of childhood fantasy — into a tool of political satire. The stop-motion animation, handmade and tactile, contrasts sharply with its brutal content, making the absurdity of political theatre even more palpable. Here, the artist's hand and the woman's body fuse into a single apparatus of image-making: a collaboration, a struggle, a conspiracy of creation itself. Zhou's painted figures rise up, collapse, and are reborn in an endless loop of destruction and regeneration. It's a cycle as old as history and as current as the news feed: protest and power locked in an embrace so intimate it becomes impossible to tell who is controlling whom.

Zhou uses the techniques of play - stop-motion, slapstick, absurd juxtaposition - to talk about the gravest of subjects. As the two halves of the screen interact and slip between film and animation, they mimic the unstable choreography of politics itself: disinformation, delay, distortion. The two-channel structure mirrors the split between representation and reality, artist and subject. It echoes the double-speak of power, where truth is refracted into competing narratives - a visual metaphor for how propaganda, media, and spectacle conspire to turn political reality into performance.

In *Art from Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT*, *Conspiracy* resonates as a devastating allegory of politics as the new pornography - where the obscene is no longer hidden but performed, where domination and desire are indistinguishable, and where truth itself becomes a fetish. It exposes the perverse intimacy between power and pleasure, between political violence and the erotic gaze. *Conspiracy* feels almost prophetic, capturing in the "innocent" medium of animation, the obscene theater of geopolitics, where violence is aestheticized, rebellion commodified, and outrage becomes entertainment. Zhou's use of the body as both surface and subject underlines the exhibition's central theme — that politics today operates through exposure, intimacy, and desire.

In the end, *Conspiracy* turns the oldest metaphor in politics — the "body politic" — inside out. What remains is a stark and seductive truth: that power always leaves its mark on the flesh, that the spectacle of control is inseparable from the desire to watch, and that the politics of our time is nothing if not a performance of the obscene.

ARTIST BIO: <https://www.mplus.org.hk/en/collection/makers/zhou-xiaohu/>

ZHOU XIAOHOU (Born 1960 in Changzhou, China. Lives and works in Shanghai.)

Zhou Xiaohu is a pioneering figure in Chinese contemporary art, celebrated as one of the first to develop claymation and stop-motion video animation in the region. Trained in sculpture and oil painting at the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, he began using computers as an artistic tool in 1998. He has since experimented with stop-frame video animation, video installation and

computer-gaming software by interlayering images between moving pictures and real objects in what has become his signature style. His work defies genre boundaries by combining animation, video, installation, performance, photography, and sculpture. Drawing on techniques from folk puppetry, popular media, and classical art forms, Zhou orchestrates biting social satire that critiques the mediated production of reality and the absurdities of modern public life.

Zhou's interdisciplinary practice reflects the documentation of and misunderstandings of history in a digital age. His work offers a provocative exploration of mediated reality—using puppetry and animation as metaphors for spectacle and absurdity in contemporary culture. Through meticulously crafted claymation scenes re-enacting news events, social spectacles, and folklore, his installations dismantle the authority of media while exposing how spectacle shapes collective perception. With roots in Chinese folk forms and engagement with philosophical parody, Zhou's artistic vision challenges viewers to question the line between fact and fiction, and to see how narratives are constructed, circulated, and internalized. Using absurdist narratives and puppet-like figures, Zhou Xiaohu probes the social and philosophical landscapes of contemporary life.

Selected major exhibitions include: *Permaculture*, Zhou Xiaohu Solo Exhibition, Biyun Art Museum, Shanghai China (2024); The 14th Shanghai Biennale (2023); 2nd Bangkok Art Biennale (2020); *Chimera: Zhou Xiaohu Solo Exhibition*, Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum, China (2016); *Schiesse: Zhou Xiaohu Solo Exhibition*, MOMENTUM, Bethanien Art Center, Berlin, Germany (2015); *Harmonious Society*, Asia Triennial, Manchester, UK (2014); White Rabbit Gallery, Sydney, Australia (2013); *Panorama: Recent Art from Contemporary Asia*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (2012); 4th Guangzhou Triennial -Grangdview project, Guangzhou, China (2012); Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK (2011); National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China (2011); 40th International Film Festival Rotterdam in Netherland (2011); *Not Soul For Sale*, Tate Modern Turbine Hall, London, UK (2010); 8th Gwangju Biennial, Gwangju, South Korea (2010); Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, UK, (2007); Museum Moderner Kunst, Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, Austria (2007); Kunst Museum Bern, Bern, Switzerland (2007); Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, Australia (2006); The Utopia Machine, MoMA Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (2004); 1st Seville Biennial, Seville, Spain (2004); *Between Past and Future*, International Center of Photography, New York, USA (2004); 56th International Film Festival Locarno, Locarno Switzerland (2003); Experimental Video Gold Medal Award, 36th World Fest-Houston International Film Festival (2003); *China Rushes*, Hamburger Bahnhof National Museum, Berlin, Germany (2001); 3rd Shanghai Biennale (2000); amongst many others.