

Condition for Ordinary Choi Xooang

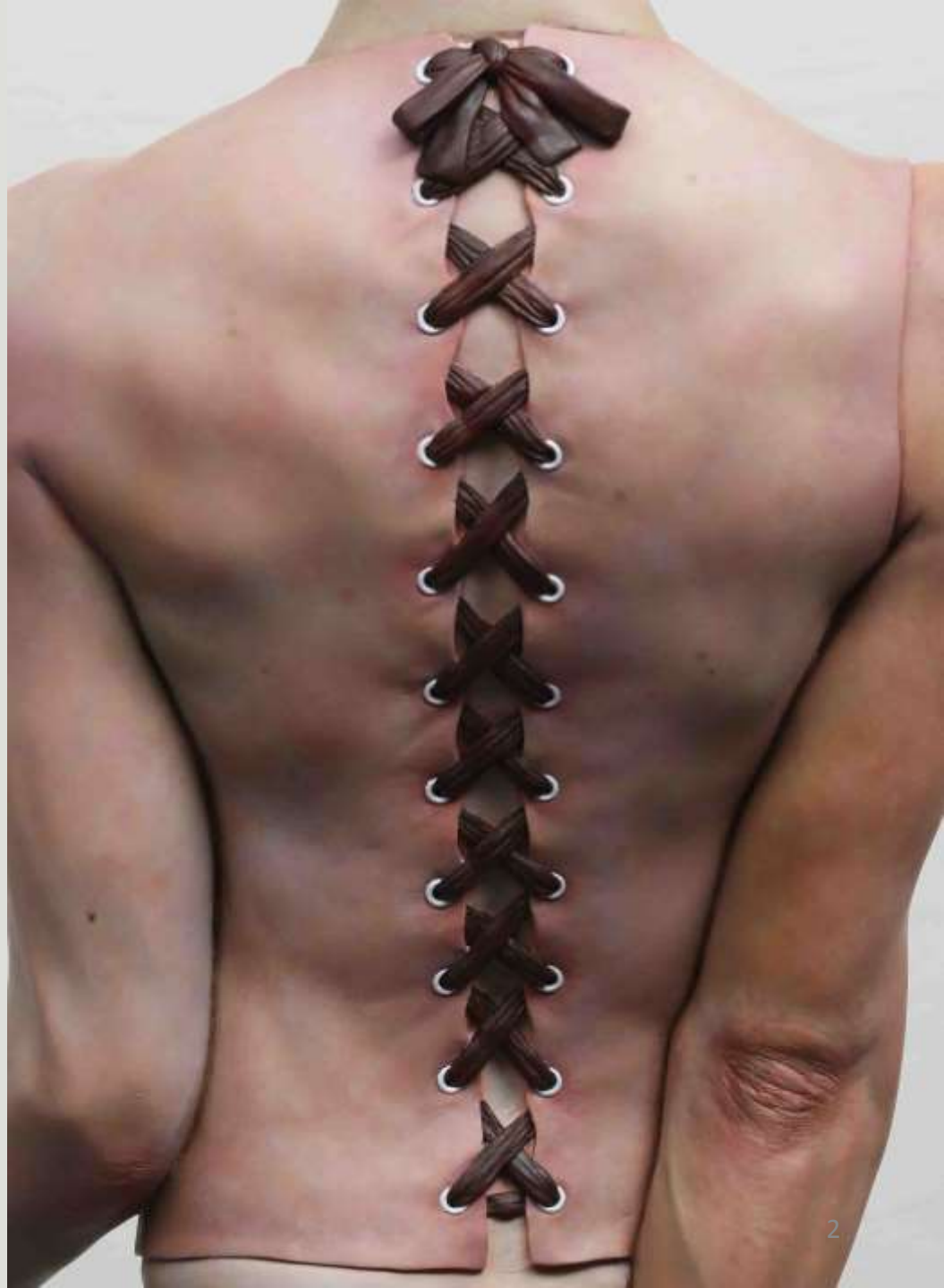
[The Blind for the Blind]



ART SEASONS
Singapore Beijing Jakarta

I've been exploring ordinary people and society they live in. The bigger and more advanced a society, the more standardized and systemized it becomes so as to more efficiently manage and control its citizens.

--- Choi Xooang



March 22-April 13, 2013

Choi Xooang

Condition for Ordinary

[The Blind for the Blind]

ART SEASONS GALLERY

Choi Xooang began to be recognized from the early 2000's for his miniature figurative sculptures made of painted polymer clay. Since 2007 his work has been enlarged in its scale, which gave more presence to his sculpture - as if a living object staged in space.

Choi's work is distinguished for its hyper-realistic technique of portraying human bodies and its powerful metaphors contained therein. Figures and body parts in his work are distorted, exaggerated, abbreviated or mutilated, participating in a certain action or composing a certain structure. The artist portrays facets of human relations and contemporary psychology including society's pathological state, gender politics, communication (or its absence), and isolation, oppression or anxiety of an individual devastated in the homogenized, uniform social structure. Remarkably delicate in detail yet also disturbing - even macabre, images of his work comprise a metaphor expressed in human bodies, their gestures and looks - at once extremely realistic and surrealistic - reflecting the artist's acerbic observations and commentary on society. His sculptures that reveal mental maladies of contemporary people - lost; deficient; paranoid; and deprived of free will -, and violence hidden beneath the rationality of society expand to explore ontological questions about human existence and identity.

Kang Yoewool
Independent Curator



Perception | Oil on Resin | 2012 | 86x50x30cm | Edition of 5



Vegetative State installation view



The Wings installation view

In 2007, Xooang Choi held a solo exhibition titled *The Vegetative State*. Choi has continuously explored ordinary people and the social milieus in which they live. His interest centers around how social systems – as they become both accelerated and urban centers expand – become more standardized in order to manage and control people more effectively. Most people have no choice but to adapt to these changes, and some – without their knowledge – are brought to a standstill (become helpless), a condition Choi has termed “The Vegetative State”. The sculptures in his embody this “state”, drooping almost lifelessly and appearing resigned, as if they are suppressed by a great force.

In 2009, Choi presented two works *The Wings* (2009) and *The Hero* (2009), both of which reveal his interest in the issue of “microfascism”. The French philosopher Felix Guattari’s analysis of capitalism and fascism noted that figures of authority in a capitalist society try to control the population by making their values internalized by the masses. That is to say, what the society desires is induced, and the masses in turn follow the desired actions voluntarily. Even though it may appear that those following authority desire something forced upon them by an outside entity, the desires may in fact be their own.

The military regime that governed Korea during the 1960-70s emphasized the value of the collective over the worth of a single individual under the guise of growing the industry and economy. The people of this generation followed the direction established by the authority figures and regarded themselves

the protagonists and heroes of Korean society's progress. However, as time passed, this historic era has been (re)assessed, raising the question of whether its generation was in fact heroic or if they had been manipulated by the ruling party. *The Heroes* and *The Wings* specifically address these longstanding issues.

In the works mentioned above, Xooang Choi began examining the relationship between the collective and the individual, exploring issues of generation, ideology, and history. In later works, Choi focused on observing the relationships between different social groups rather than trying to classify an individual within the collective. Following the insight of French postmodernists like Guattari and Michel Foucault, Choi developed his own insight into how collectives disregards certain characteristics of an individual in an attempt to integrate them a single unified stream. In this context of fascism, whatever does not fit in the mainstream is deemed abnormal. It was this tension that prompted Choi to develop two distinct bodies of work, the *Islets of Aspergers* (2009) and *Speaker* (2011) and *Listener* (2011).

First, Choi took interest in social minorities. In his series *Islets of Aspergers*, he focused on people who have Asperger's syndrome. Asperger's syndrome is characterized by individuals who have difficulty integrating into mainstream society and lack basic social communication despite normal linguistic and cognitive development. Those displaying this syndrome may also be sensitive to sensory stimuli such as sound, light, smell, and taste, and they have a tendency to become intensely



The Hero installation view



Islets of Aspergers installation view

focused on idiosyncratic subjects, sometimes displaying an outstanding gift in a specific subject. Given the broad definition of Aspergers, Choi asks the question: is it possible that certain individuals are described as outside the norm and suffering from psychological conditions based solely on their behaving outside the norm? Anybody can become immersed in a certain subject, and there may be a difference in intensity and focus, but this is the kind of distinction which separates certain individuals further from social norms and not the basis for medical condition.

Second, Choi has explored the issue of perspective, focusing on the two roles of *Speaker* and *Listener*. Exhibited as a pair, his sculptures show a male figure (*Speaker*) with his hand raised, suggesting that he is saying something, while the female figure (*Listener*) sits passively and listens to the speaker. The artist has depicted the hand and the mouth of the male figure and the ears of the female figure clearly, while the rest of the body was sculpted to appear blurry. In addition, the figures are clothed, an unusual feature in Choi's work.

At first glance, the *Speaker* on the higher pedestal seems to dominate the *Listener* who occupies a lower pedestal. One would assume that the former holds the power. However, this is not the only viable interpretation of the work. While the female *Listener* sits comfortably wearing loose track pants, the male *Speaker* stands in a precarious position, wearing a tight pair of jeans. Moreover, most viewers would consider the clearly defined areas of the body more important, but the rest of the body rendered indistinctly reveals that the listener

appears more composed and relaxed than the speaker. As such, power can easily shift depending on the point of view — a point that informs Choi's critique; that social minorities are created from similarly arbitrary viewpoints.

Recently, Xooang Choi's work has begun to explore explicitly "ordinary" subjects. Although themes of society, collective and cultural structures are important, it is always made up of individual "humans". Choi sculptures frame the importance of these individual traits examining self-awareness and the inner conflicts of ordinary people, focusing in particular on the ways these elements manifest in the subjects' physical stature. By presenting two bodies at the same time, the artist visualizes the subtle psychology and attitudes of individuals through the dichotomies of the subject and object, active and passive, dominant and submissive, exposed and hidden, variable and constant.

Comprised of two female figures, the work *Reflection* (2012) addresses "self-awareness". The work presents a woman looking in the mirror and the shape of her body reflected in the mirror. One figure is rendered clearly but the other remains indistinct. It is easy to look at the pair and say that the clearly defined form is the actual model and the blurry form is the mirrored image, yet the opposite is true. The viewer can recognize this by looking at the tattoos on her arm, ankle, and waist. The model may have seen a reversed image of herself in the mirror many times, but she has probably never seen herself reversed three-dimensionally. A mirror shows our reflection as an exact copy but nevertheless still a reversed 9

image, different from our actual appearance. In this same way, humans have difficulty perceiving their bodies and personalities accurately. Humans are more likely to be familiar with looking at themselves through another's gaze rather than their own. The model in *Reflection* has gently turned her head to look at herself and one can see that her expression shows cautiousness, curiosity, and surprise.

In another work, *Isometric_Male* (2013) is also formed of two figures. They are in fact the same person. The same applies for *Isometric_Female* (2013). The two male figures depicted in *Isometric_Male* put their hand atop each other's head. The naked man covers the mouth of the other, while his male counterpart who is wearing panties covers the genitalia of his companion. In a similar manner, the two women depicted in *Isometric_Female* place their hands on one another's heads. The woman wearing panties covers the eyes of her mirror image while she in turn places her hand inside her companion's panties.

The sculptures reveal a scene reminiscent of a puppet show because their hands are placed into the head of the other almost as if they were directing them. But because both figures are doing the same thing, it is difficult to discern which one is human and which is the marionette. One man wants to say something but he is unable to do so because his mouth is covered. The other man wants to expose himself

Ryu Hanseung
Curator, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea





Reflexion | Oil on Resin, Solid Wood (Walnut) | 2012 | 87x82x52cm | Edition of 5



Reflexion (Details) | Oil on Resin, Solid Wood (Walnut) | 2012 | 87x82x52cm | Edition of 5



Choi Xooang | Perception | Oil on Resin | 2012 | 86x50x30cm | Edition of 5



Isometric_Male | Oil on Resin | 2013 | 47x61x95cm | Edition of 5



Isometric_Female | Oil on Resin | 2013 | 89x38x38cm | Edition of 5





Condition for Ordinary_Settlement | Oil on Resin,
Wood | 2012 | 96x45x41cm | Edition of 5



Condition for Ordinary_Colonization | Oil on Resin, Steel |
2013 | 103x45x52cm | Edition of 5



Listener

Listener | Oil on Resin | 2011 | 58x50x58cm | Edition of 5



Speaker

Speaker | Oil on Resin | 2011 | 89x28x42cm | Edition of 5



Listener and Speaker installation view



The Blind for The Blind | Watercolor, acrylic on paper | 2013 | 50x38.1cm

Tears | Watercolor, acrylic & crystal resin on paper | 2013 | 40.5x30.5cm

Eyes | Acrylic on tracing paper & watercolor paper | 2013 | 50x38.1cm





Intersection | Watercolor on paper | 2013 | 35x27.3cm



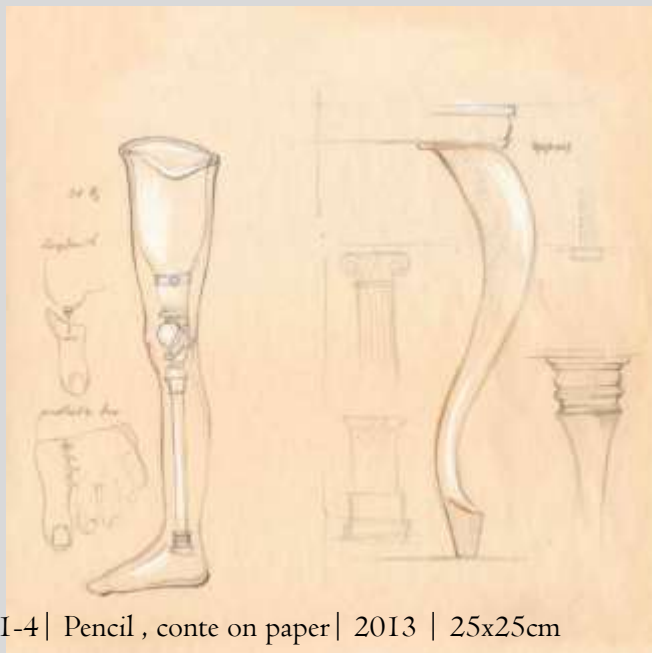
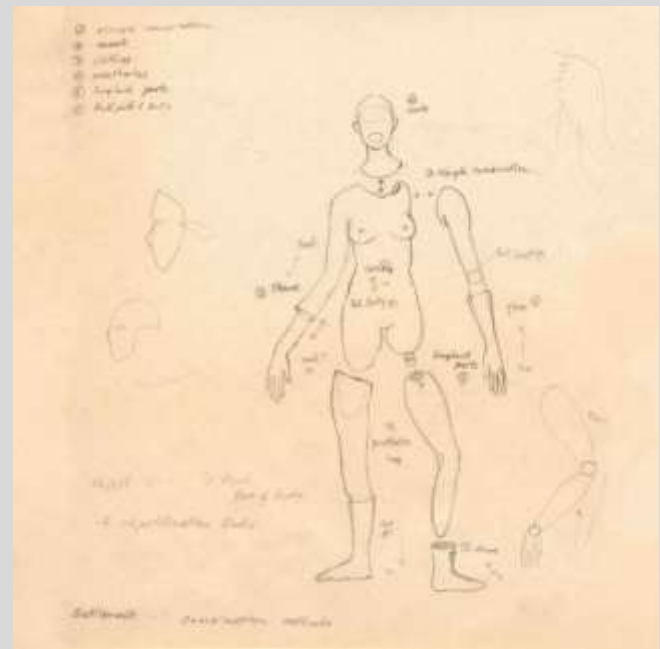
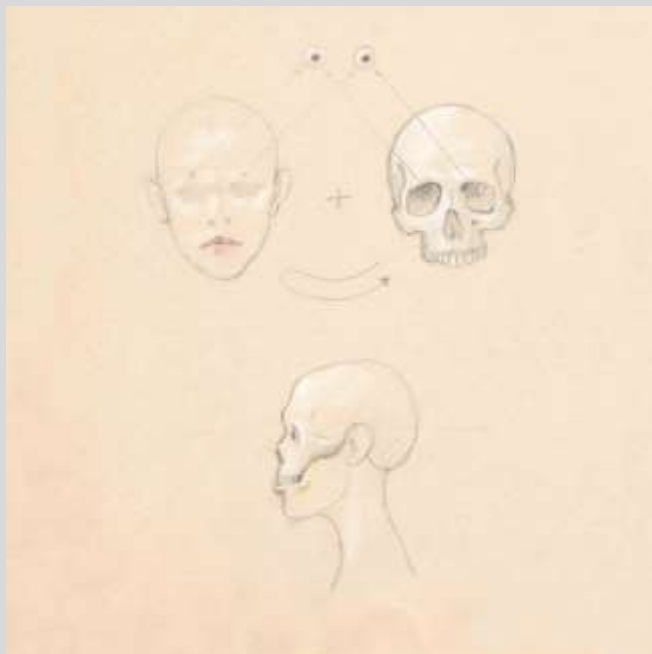
Untitled | Watercolor & fine line marker on paper | 2013 | 56x36.8cm



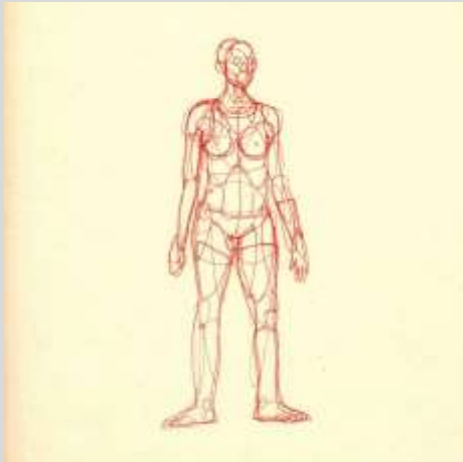
Untitled | Watercolor on paper | 2013 | 56x38cm



Untitled | Watercolor on paper | 2013 | 56.5x38cm



Settlement 1-4 | Pencil , conte on paper | 2013 | 25x25cm



Choi Xooang

1975 Born in Seoul, Korea

Lives in Seoul, Korea

Educations

2005 M.F.A Sculpture, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea

2002 B.F.A Sculpture, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea

Exhibitions

Solo Exhibitions

2013 Condition for Ordinary (The Blind for the Blind), Art Seasons Gallery, Singapore

2011 Xooang Choi, Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, Korea

2010 Islets of Aspergers, Doosan Art Center, Seoul, Korea

2010 Islets of Aspergers, Galerie Albert Benamou, Paris, France

2009 The Human Emotion Unveiled, Galerie Albert Benamou, Paris, France

2009 The Pruritus, Dukwon Gallery, Seoul, Korea

2007 The Vegetative State, Gallery LM. Seoul, Korea

2004 Phototaxis_Mania, Space Cell, Seoul, Korea

Group Exhibitions (Selected)

2013 HEY! Modern Art & Pop Culture/Part II, musee de la Halle St Pierre, Paris, France

2012 Thoughts on Body, Soma Museum, Seoul, Korea

2012 House of The Nobleman Project - 'One must imagine Sisyphus

happy', Neo Bankside,

2012 Playground, Arko Art Center, Seoul, Korea

2012 Chronicled Portrait Painting: Portray Spirit through Shape, Space CAN, Beijing, China

2011 Zeitgeist, Interlalia art company, Seoul, Korea

2011 Féminité 0.I, Maison Particulière Art center, Brussels, Belgium

2011 Fiction & Nonfiction, Interlalia art company, Seoul, Korea

2011 Korea Tomorrow - Hybrid Reality, SETEC Convention Hall 3, Seoul, Korea

2010 Blindness, Boan-Yugwan, Seoul, Korea

2010 Here And There_The World in Motion 2010, Fine Art Gallery of Luxun National Institute, ShenYang, China

2009 The fabric Arche - Daegu Textile Art Documenta 2009, Deagu Cultural & Arts Center, Deagu, Korea

2009 The Beginning of New Era, National Museum of Contemporary Art., Seoul, Korea

2009 Korean Hyper Realism, Gimhea Arts Center, Gimhea, Korea

2009 City_net Asia 2009, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea

2009 Between The Borders, Gwang-ju Museum of Art, Gwang-ju, Korea

2009 Artist Gallery_ Portrait, Museum of Art Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea

2008 Sculpture Spoken Here, Dukwon gallery, Seoul, Korea

2008 Korean Young Artists 3: Sculptures&Objects- Solitary Meditation, Doosan Art Center, Seoul, Korea

2008 SeogyoSixty 2008 - The Battle of Taste, Gallery SangSangmadang, Seoul, Korea

2008 From Korea -First Step- , Art Seasons Gallery, Beijing, China/ Singapore, Singapore

Choi Xooang

- 2007 BBULJIT, Alternative Space Choong Jung Gak, Seoul, Korea
- 2007 Critical Mass, Gallery Kwan-Hoon, Seoul, Korea
- 2007 Vanitas, Gallery Espace Sol, Seoul, Korea
- 2006 Merz's Room, Seoul Museum of Arts, Seoul, Korea
- 2006 Lilliput in me, Mushroom Arts, New York, U.S.A.
- 2006 The Power of Imagination, Korea University Museum, Seoul, Korea
- 2005 Speaking of Young Artists, Suggestion Of Critics, Project Space Zip, Seoul, Korea
- 2005 City_net Asia 2005, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- 2005 O'pink, Space Phil, Seoul, Korea
- 2005 Nano in young artist, Alternative space LOOP, Seoul, Korea/ Gallery Ssamji, Seoul, Korea
- 2005 Destructive characters (6artists & Intruder), Gallery Kwan Hoon, Seoul, Korea

Awards

- 2009 Artists of Tomorrow 2010, Sung-Gok Museum Award, Korea
- 2008 Fund from Seoul Foundation for Art and Culture (NART), Korea
- 2007 Fund from Seoul Foundation for Art and Culture (NART), Korea

Collections

- 2011 Maison Particulière Art center, Belgium
- 2011 Koron Cultural Foundation, Korea
- 2011 Sungkok Art Museum, Korea
- 2010 Seoul Museum of Art, Korea
- 2009 National Museum of Contemporary Art. Korea



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