

October 21, 2005

## Art in Review; Zhou Xiaohu

By KEN JOHNSON

Ethan Cohen  
18 Jay Street, TriBeCa  
Through Nov. 12

You might recall seeing Zhou Xiaohu's haunting, low-tech Claymation films in the International Center of Photography's round-up of Chinese photography, film and video last year. This is his first solo exhibition in the United States, and it reveals a versatile artist who is trying to cover too many bases at once.

Most compelling are the jerky, gray, deliberately crude Claymation works representing scenes like the trial of Saddam Hussein, the assassination of a politician, a prisoner's electrocution, a boxing match, and the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

In a different mode, a recent video diptych called "Conspiracy Theory" juxtaposes projections: kinetic, politically suggestive cartoons evolve frenetically on a woman's naked torso on the left, while on the right, the artist's own handwritten Chinese script morphs into video-game imagery. The materialization and dematerialization of imagery and the tension between public and private realms calls to mind the animated works of William Kentridge.

With more conventional facility, Mr. Zhou makes paintings, depicting opening ceremonies at last year's Documenta art festival in Germany, a political demonstration, war imagery, world leaders, pornographic actors and abstracted, floating figures. In some cases the imagery is woozily distorted; in others, straightforwardly representational. Some have bar codes painted on them as a comment on commodification. Mr. Zhou's desire to take on any and all topics is admirable, but he would be better served by a more focused exhibition. KEN JOHNSON

---

[Copyright 2008 The New York Times Company](#) | [Home](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [XML](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Back to Top](#)