

COMMUNE

NULL-Object



DING SHIWEI
JING AO
MAK2
VLADISLAV MARKOV

CURATED BY
NIKLAS CHOU

In the context of computer programming, the "Null Object" represents a special state of absence—an unfilled pointer or uninitialized variable. The ambiguity of this absent state lies in the fact that it is by no means a simple "nothingness," but rather a clearly defined "emptiness." The concept of "emptiness," with its distinctly Eastern connotations (such as its metaphysical references in Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism), articulates social atmospheres, individual conditions, and natural laws, creating an unexpected resonance between computer science and Eastern philosophy. Much like the dialectical relationship revealed in the core Koan "form is emptiness, emptiness is form," the four artists in this exhibition—Jing Ao, Ding Shiwei, Mak2, and Vladislav Markov—address the concept of "emptiness" from different dimensions, including the body, digital ruins, virtual reality, and mechanical materiality. Their practices not only extend the exploration of "emptiness" and "negative space" in the history of Eastern and Western art but also imbue this grand proposition with new philosophical implications and critical reflections in an era dominated by technological optimism.

This exhibition also attempts to construct an interdisciplinary genealogy in pursuit of the meaning of "emptiness," preserving the establishment of human subjectivity within the construction of meaninglessness. This approach emerged in computer science through the proposal of Bobby Woolf (1996) as an elegant way to confront the binary language of rational supremacy (1). "Providing an object with no behavior" creatively transforms "nothingness" into a presence with clear referentiality in programming paradigms (2). Heidegger (1927), in *Being and Time*, offers a profound ontological analysis of "nothingness" (*Das Nichts*), arguing that it is not the opposite of being but rather "the veil of being itself" (3). Similarly, John Cage (1952), through his groundbreaking musical composition *4'33"*, conveyed that "there is no such thing as silence, only unattended sound" (4). This perspective is further extended in Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Seascapes* series, where long exposures transform the ocean into meditative images of emptiness (5). The same idea was echoed in the surge of Eastern philosophy in the last century, as seen in Keiji Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness*: "True emptiness is not the emptiness of Nihilism but a field of infinite possibilities" (6). Thus, through philosophical inquiry, technological progress, and art historical retrospection, an interdisciplinary genealogy and mode of viewing are reestablished to interpret the concept of emptiness.

In extending this line of reasoning, when objects in the digital age possess a reality independent of human perception, does the "Null Object" attain the status of a digital ontology? Can the posthuman landscapes hinted at by mechanical devices develop new forms of existence once technology is freed from functional constraints? Or perhaps, through the contrast between minimalist bodily movements and complex technologies, do the artists allow us to perceive the most primal state of "conscious emptiness"? (7). As a cognitive tool and medium for contemplating contemporary states of existence, the narrative space constructed by this exhibition may serve as a declaration of cognition and stance: "an alternative order that operates within society while maintaining a distance from it" (Foucault, 1967) (8).

Text by Niklas Chou with thanks to Junyao Chen

- (1) Woolf, Bobby (1996), "The Null Object Pattern", from Pattern Languages of Program Design II, edited by John M. Vlissides et al., Boston: Addison-Wesley, pp. 5-18.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Heidegger, Martin (1952), Being and Time. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962.
- (4) Cage, John (1961), Silence: Lectures and Writings, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press
- (5) Sugimoto, Hiroshi (2004), Hiroshi Sugimoto: Seascapes, Berlin: Hatje Cantz.
- (6) Nishitani, Keiji (1982), Religion and Nothingness, Translated by Jan Van Bragt, California: University of California Press
- (7) Harman, Graham (2018), Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything, London: Pelican
- (8) Foucault, Michel (1967), "Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias", from Architecture / Mouvement/ Continuité, Translated by Jay Miskowiec, October 1984. Paris: Publications du moniteur



VLADISLAV MARKOV
I'll be in the lobby, 2025
Acrylic and pigment on canvas
198 x 152 cm

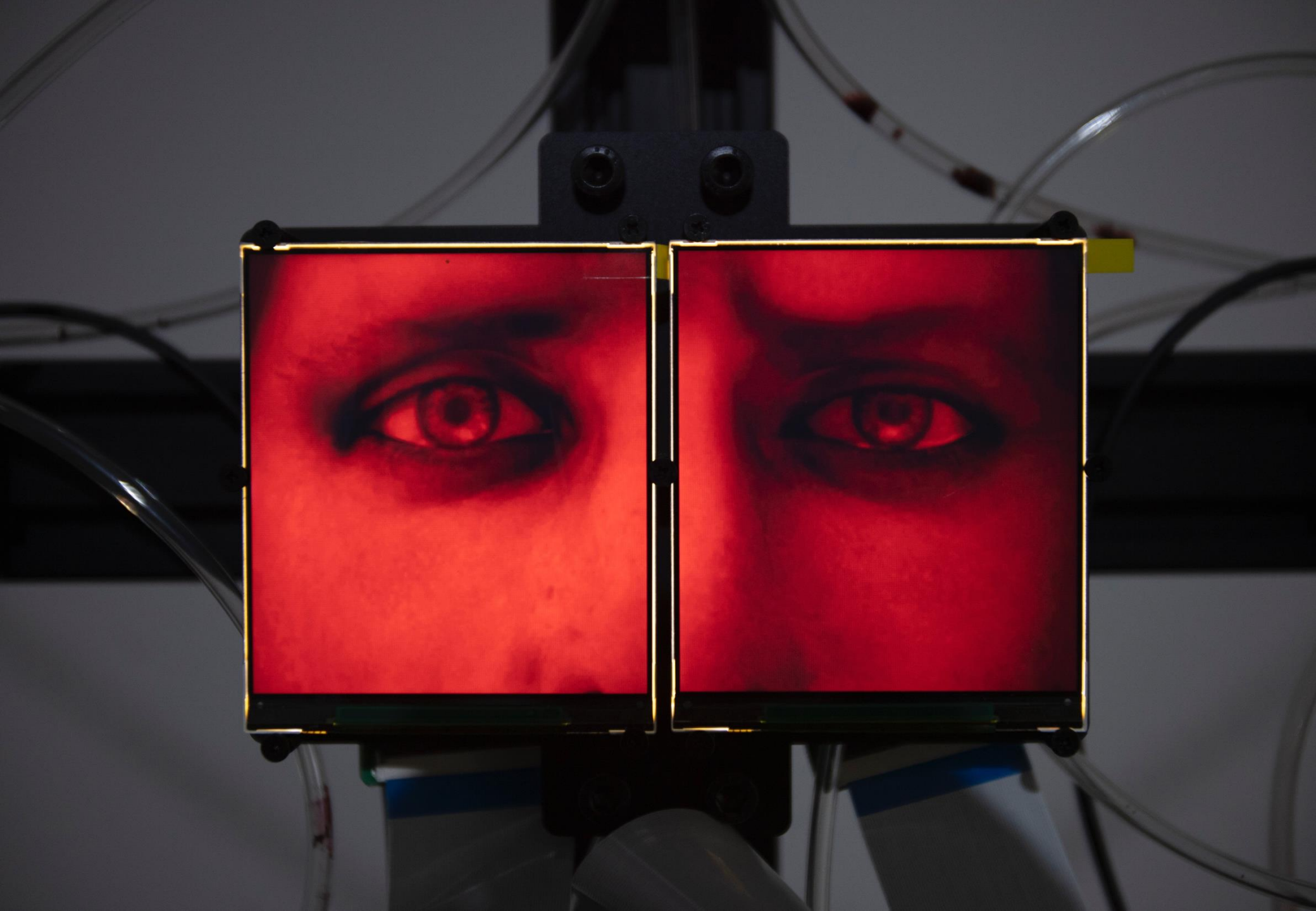
VLADISLAV MARKOV

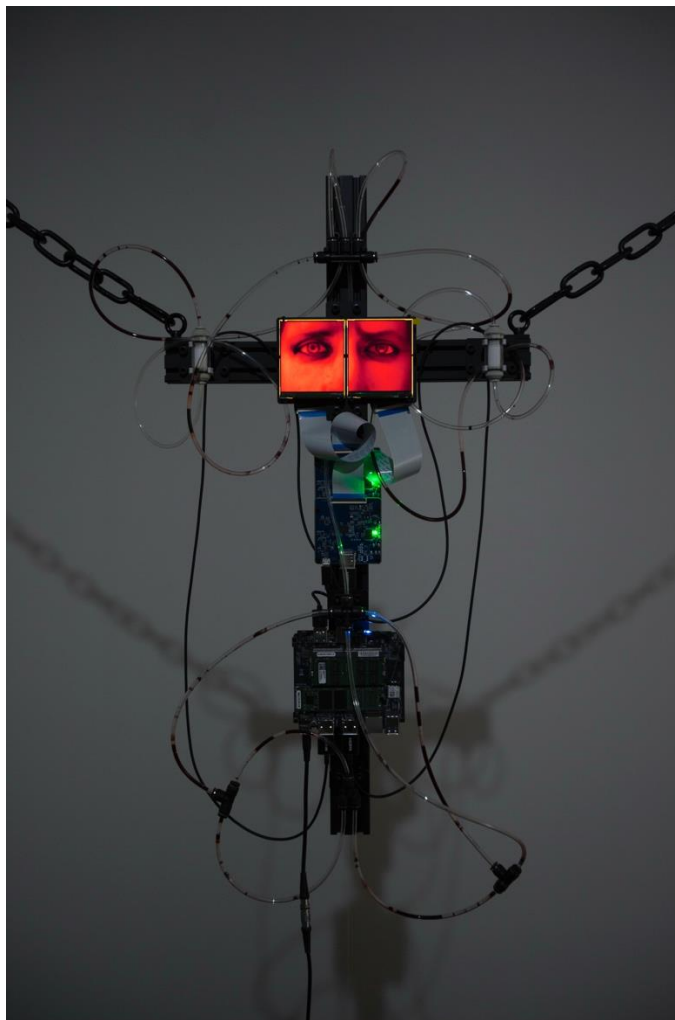
Born in 1993, Magadan, Russia
Lives and works in New York, USA
MFA Cornell University
BFA Parsons School of Design

Vladislav Markov works in immersive installation, sculpture, and painting, rendering objects in an unfamiliar ontological state to bewilder the viewer's perception. Markov's procedural gestures and resultant work represent an altered version of a readymade: instead of the displacement of a recognizable object outside of the possibility of use, Markov alters the readymade through his process and practice, consisting of dialectical shifts from digital to physical states and back again.

Recent exhibitions include: 'Blood thinner, low-dose aspirin, best painkillers for kids' at The Address, Brescia, Italy (2024); 'PANSORI', the 15th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2024); 'Summer Hang', BS&J, New York, 2023; 'Local Objects', International Objects, New York, 2023; 'Invitations to Tremble', Management, New York, 2023; 'Eight Feet Under' (solo), Management, New York, 2022; Vladislav Markov (solo), M 2 3, New York, 2020; 'Extra Medium' (solo), Spazio ORR, Brescia, Italy, 2020; 'eddy.', M 2 3, New York, 2020; 'Seven Artists/Seven Works', M 2 3, New York, 2020; 'On High Water', Cornell MFA Exhibition, Brooklyn, New York, 2019; 'it is', MFA Thesis Exhibition Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 2019; 'Three Artists Exhibition', M 2 3, Brooklyn, New York, 2018.

Markov's work has been written about in Artforum, Flash Art Italia, King Kong, Numero Berlin, Elle Japan, and other publications. His work is included in the collections of the M Woods Museum, China, and the Jumex Museum, Mexico City.





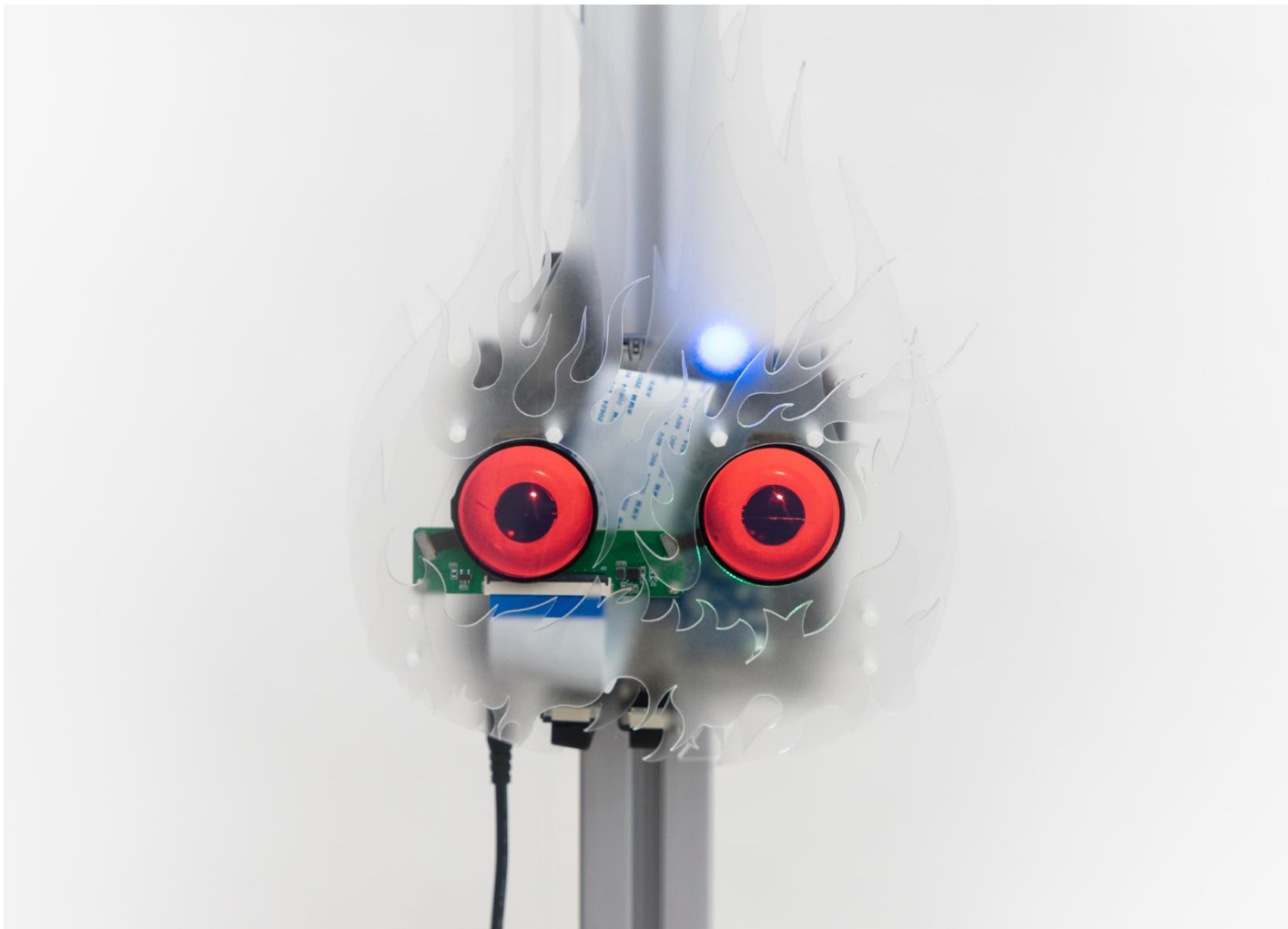
DING SHIWEI

The Trial, 2024

Video Installation, 3D Animation/3.5-inch dual display screens, display driver, module mini computer, aluminium, profile/PU, tubing, PY quick, connectors, chain, precision engraved acrylic, power supply.

Dimensions variable

Edition #:AP1



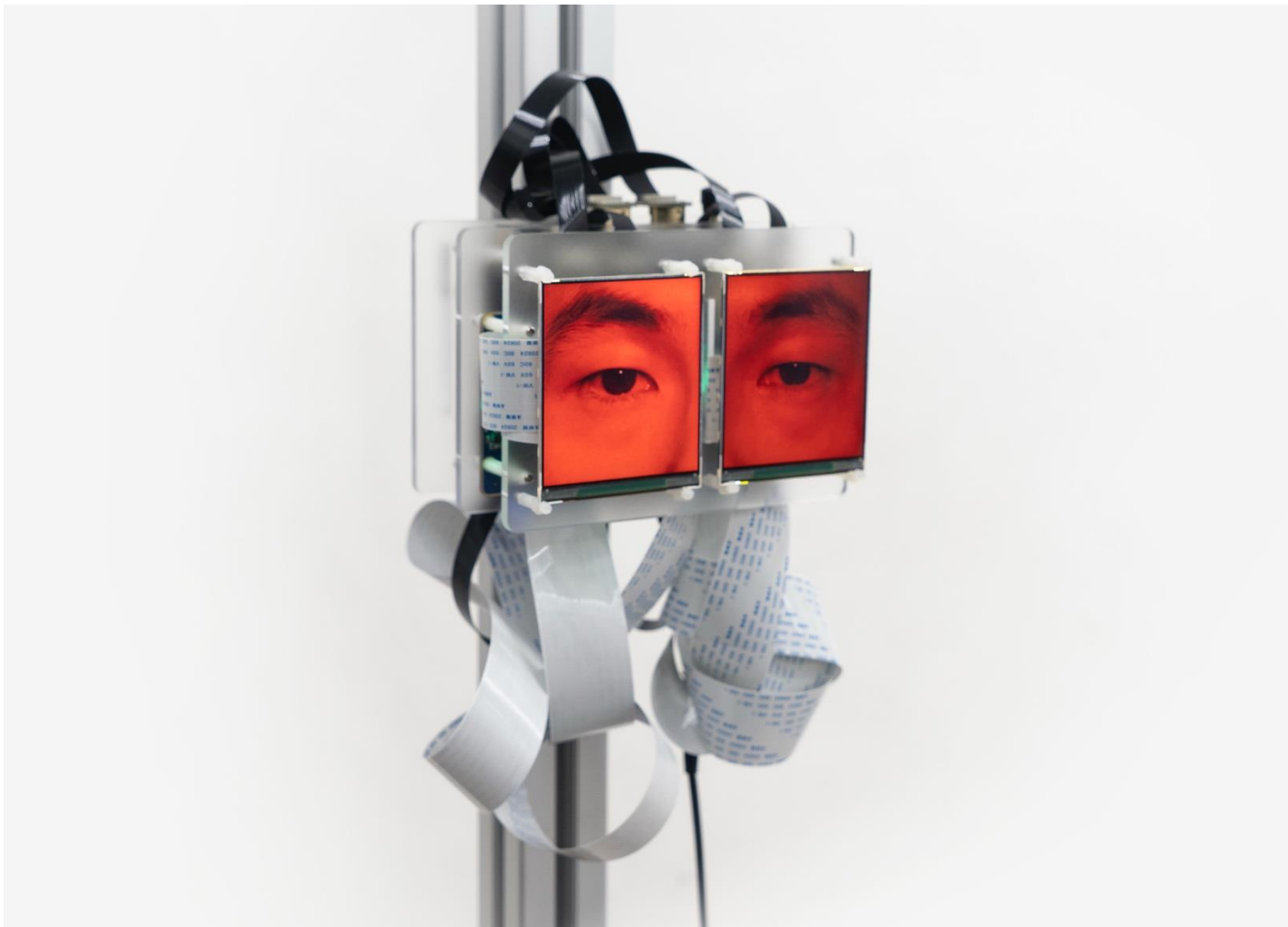
DING SHIWEI

Borderman No.5, 2023

Video, 1.39-inch dual round screens, screen drive module, mini computer / acrylic, customised power

27 x 18 x 9 cm

Edition #: 2/3



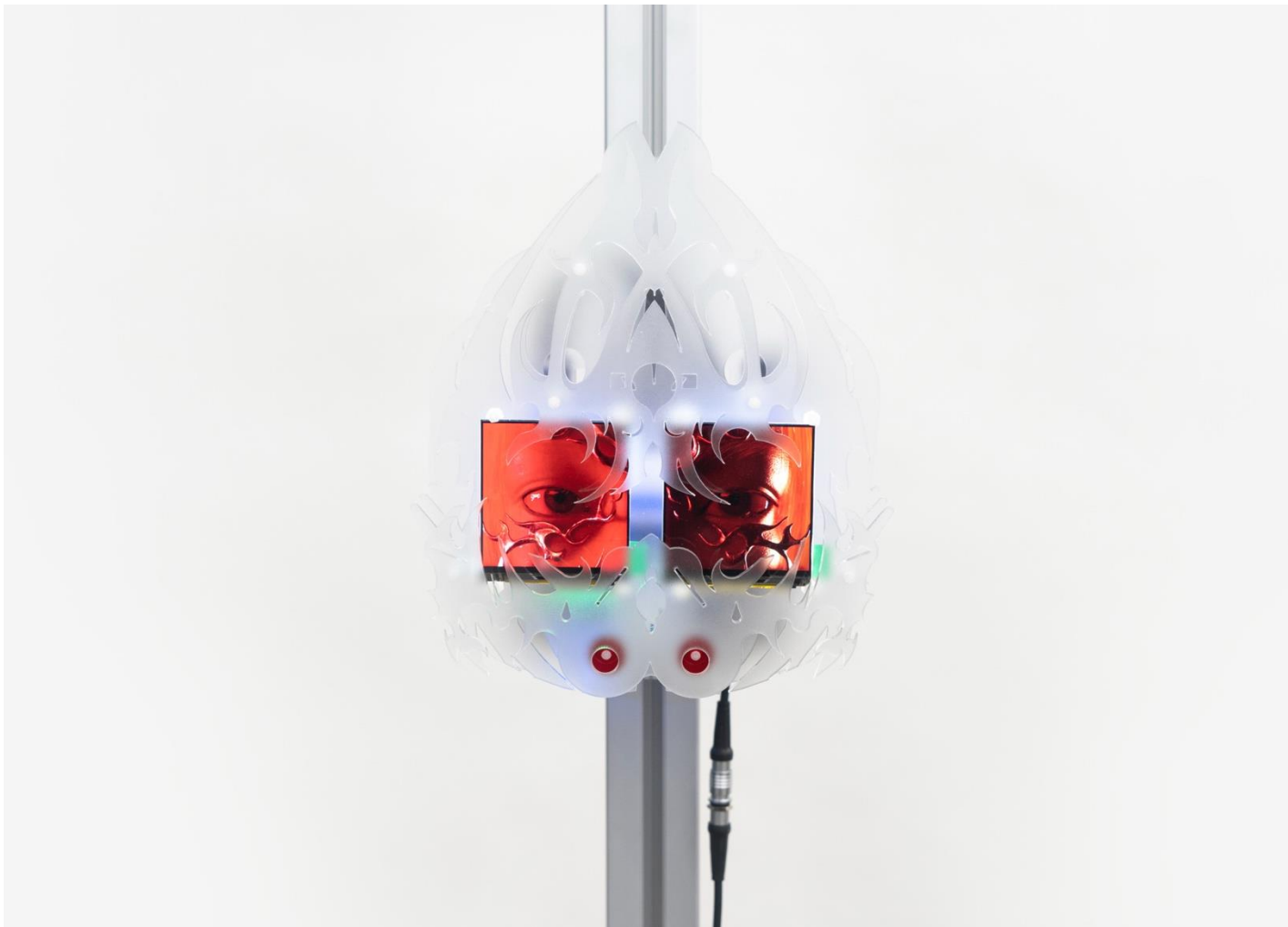
DING SHIWEI

Borderman No.8, 2023

Video, 3.5-inch dual square screens, screen drive module, FFC, mini computer, acrylic, customised power.

36 x 14 x 9 cm

Edition #: 1/3



DING SHIWEI

Borderman No.6, 2023

3D animation, 2.9-inch dual square screens, screen drive, module, mini computer, acrylic, customised power

21 x 18 x 12.5 cm

Edition #: 2/3

DING SHIWEI

Born in 1989, Heilongjiang, China
Lives and works in Hangzhou, China
MFA School of Intermedia Art, China Academy of Art

Ding Shiwei's works unfold in various mediums such as video installations, sculptures, images, videos, and interactive installations based on the experience of the screen. He invokes and appropriates a wide range of ideological discourses, popular images, and philosophical symbols, opening up the viewer's perceptual channels through the media interface, filtering and intervening with the individual's degraded user experience, thus revealing the screen landscape as an anti-utopian self-fulfilling prophecy of contemporary politics and beliefs. As a mediator between the material world and the digital simulacrum, the screen is constantly involved in reshaping and disciplining the viewer's body. On the one hand, his works re-pierce the viewer's silently alienated interface body and the observation senses, and on the other hand, ultimately adopting "kawaiiification" as the categorical imperative to obscure the fanged structure, they constantly stitch together the real and virtual branching in a paradoxical perception of wit and pain.

His recent solo exhibitions include: 'Specter's Ventriloquism', Hunsand Space, Beijing, 2024; 'The Window', 1000 Press, Hangzhou, 2023; 'Faith on Tap', Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai, 2021; 'Enter the Void', Imagokinetics Lab, Hangzhou, 2020. Selected group exhibitions recently include Macao Museum of Art, Macao, 2025; Times Museum, Guangzhou, 2024; By Art Matters, Hangzhou, 2023; X Museum, Beijing, 2023; Surplus Space, Wuhan, 2022; Wind H Art Center, Beijing, 2021; K11 Art Foundation, Shanghai, 2020; MOCA Yinchuan, Yinchuan, 2019; Castello Di Rivara Center for Contemporary Art, Turin, 2016; CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, 2015.

His animated short films have had screenings at various international film festivals, including Festival International du Film d'Animation d'Annecy, Holland International Animation Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, and Tampere Film Festival. His work is featured in the collections of Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, DK; CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, CN; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, CN; By Art Matters, Hangzhou, CN; etc.



MAK2

Home Sweet Home: Injured Queen 1, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

In three parts: 67 x 150 cm (each), 201 x 150 cm (overall)

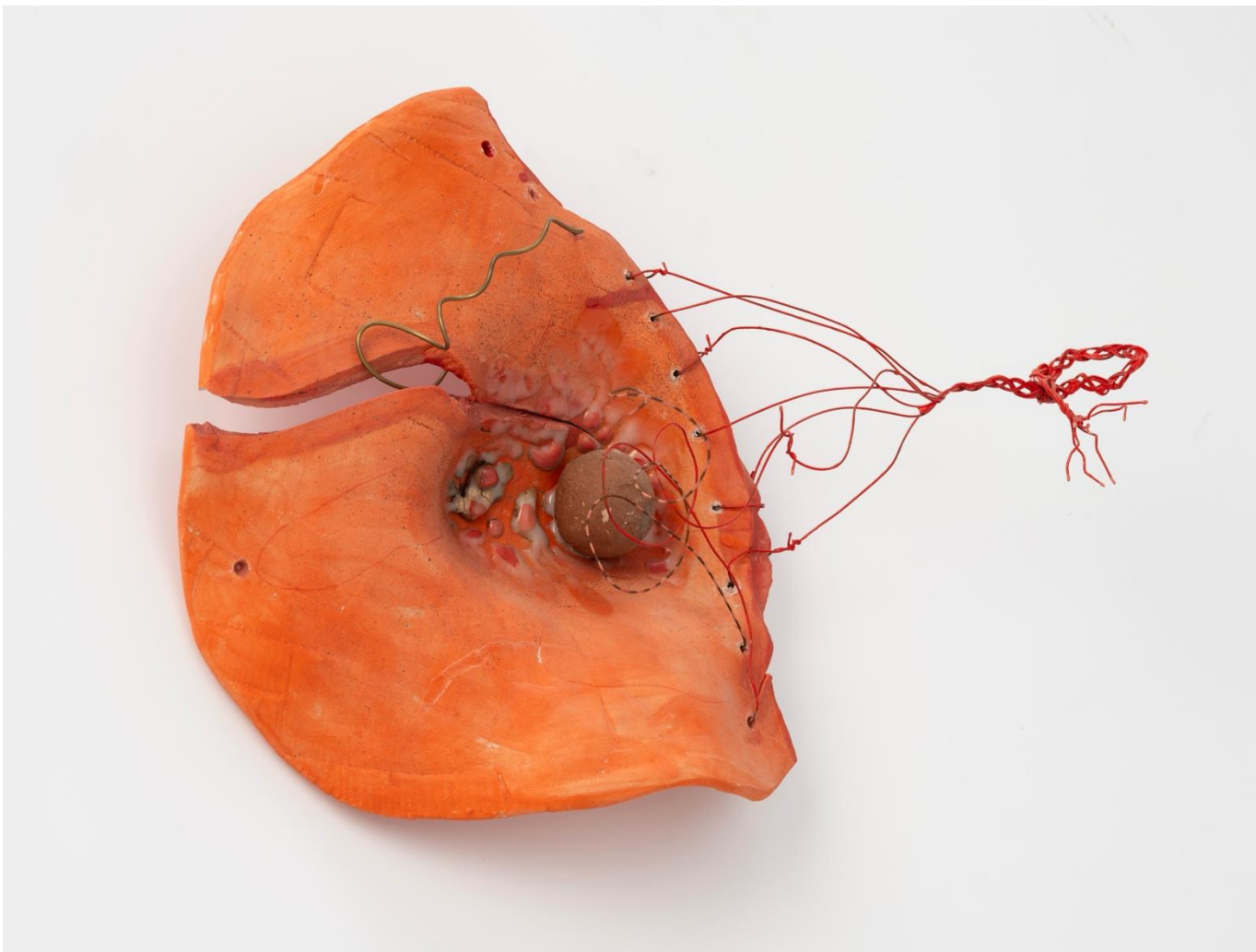
MAK2

Born in 1989, Hong Kong, China
Lives and works in Hong Kong, China
BFA School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong

MAK2 is a conceptual artist whose work contemplates 21st-century issues through the study of philosophy, art history, culture, shifting socio-political environments, the Internet, and new technology. The aesthetic experience she crafts is bound by the dualism of humor and intense inquisitiveness. Throughout her practice she works with a variety of media including: installations, paintings, drawings, video work, Youtube videos, stand-up comedy routines, and Instagram filters.

Her *Home Sweet Home* (2019-) series are triptychs on canvas that make use of the popular American life simulation video game "the Sims" and are each painted by three separate painters on the Chinese e-commerce platform Taobao. She uses "the Sims" as a virtual construction tool for her ideas of both utopia and dystopia in the context of Hong Kong. In the game, she creates bizarre environments such as bedrooms filled with CCTV cameras, lonely millennial hangout spots, and pools on roofs filled with flowers. She takes screen-captures of these digital fantasies and divides the resultant images into thirds. Each third is subsequently painted by a separate painter found on Taobao, who is given as little instruction as possible. Through fracturing the process of production and allowing external factors to intervene in the actualization of her artwork, MAK2's "Home Sweet Home" series not only elucidates the inevitable disparity between fantasy and reality, but it also crafts a comment on authorship, "copy-cat" culture, and the complex narratives that construct her understanding of home.

Previous exhibitions include: 'Mirage or Reality', Shanghai K11 Art Mall, Shanghai, China (2021); 'The Principle of Hope', Beijing Inside-Out Art Museum, Beijing, China (2021); 'How Do We Begin?', X Museum, Beijing, China (2020), 'Home Sweet Home', de Sarthe, Hong Kong, China (2019); 'We Didn't Mean To Break It (But It's Ok, We Can Fix It)', Pedro Cera, Lisbon, Portugal (2019); 'Whatever Works, Whatever It Takes', Goethe-Institute China, Beijing (2019); The Anything Machine, de Sarthe, Beijing, China (2018); 'Invisible Cities', Crow Collection of Asian Art, Dallas, USA (2017-18); 'com/.cn' - Co-presented by KAF and MoMA PS1, K11 Art Foundation, Shanghai, China (2017-18); 'Reversal Ritual', de Sarthe, Hong Kong, China (2017); 'COMEINSIDE: EAT ME', PingPong 129, Hong Kong, China (2017); 'COMEINSIDE: BABY SHOWER', Gallery Exit, Hong Kong, China (2017); Artists' Film International, Whitechapel Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2016).



JING AO
Seeds, 2025
Ceramic, wire, copper, paint
32 x 24 x 15 cm



JING AO

Sky Dancer, 2025

Tin, wood, horse hair, bronze, oil paint

42 x 19 x 14 cm



JING AO
On the Path, 2025
Ceramic, stone, horse hair, iron wire
35 x 38 x 24 cm

JING AO

Born in 1993, China
Lives and works in Beijing, China
MFA Public Sphere Art Practice, Royal College of Art
BFA Goldsmiths, University of London

Ao's artworks explore how different materials transform into various series of sculptures, performances and visuals under artistic expressions in different environments. In turn, the ambiguous relationship between "material" and "immaterial", "conscious" and "unconscious", is explored in a non-dualistic context. Compared to the current mode of artistic production, which is dominated by dialectical thinking, Ao's work is more narrative literature, constantly asks questions and wanders through doubts. In the process, all her attitudes, choices, confusions, etc. about life are honestly presented in her works.

Recent solo exhibition includes: 'Sleepy Time', START Museum, Shanghai, CN (2024); 'Theory of Emotion', SUHE HAUS – Skyline, Shanghai, CN (2024); 'In the Pit', Magician Space, Beijing, CN (2023). Her recent group exhibitions include: 'The Quest of Young Artists', Each Modern, Taipei, TW (2024); 'Weaving in Entanglement', Mending in Punctures, 69 Art Campus, Beijing, CN (2024); 'META MEDIA ART FESTIVAL', Shanghai, CN (2023); 'Where Wood Stands', Part Group, Shanghai, CN (2023); 'Invisible V.4: The Silence of Nature', Zhi Art Museum, Chengdu, CN (2023); 'Vacuum', Yuan Art Museum, Beijing, CN (2023); 'To the Public: Please Read the Exhibition the Way One Perceive the Woods', Magician Space, Beijing, CN (2022)

Ao was awarded the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) Young Associates' Choice Awards (Beijing, 2023).

OPENING RECEPTION:

Thursday 04.09.25
19:00-21:00

EXHIBITION DATES:

04.09.25- 24.10.25

OPENING HOURS:

Wed-Fri, 12:00-18:00

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All prices are in EUR and excluding VAT

