

# NICODIM

## Zhou Yilun Liao Guohe

December 12, 2015 - January 16, 2016

Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles is pleased to present Zhou Yilun and Liao Guohe. The art works by both artists are selected as antiheroes to deconstruct the romantic notion of “beauty” and “tastefulness” in art. It is not to say that our antihero artists naïvely champion “bad taste,” or attempt to subvert the established aesthetic canons. Their brutal, grotesque, and seemingly messy artworks are about painting’s capacity (or incapacity) to produce a self-critique, and seeking alternative constructions of painting.

Flat, immediate, reductive, and lineate, Liao’s painting reveals his profound interest in the fluidity between painting, drawing, and calligraphy—a sensibility rooted outside Renaissance traditions. Liao handles canvas like paper. Instead stretching the canvas, he affixes it directly on the wall. The image is always depicted with a few crude but expressive strokes, and the background is left largely blank or with a quick wash of color. His paintings entertain the viewer with grotesque worlds and fantastical scenes in which the caricatures are subject to ridicules or even humiliations. He often inscribes the narration, the title, and his name on the painting, which alludes to not only the distinctive interplay between text and image in Chinese Literati painting but also in comic strips and street graffiti. While the subjects in his idiosyncratic paintings appear easy to decipher at the first glance, the unspoken allusions are often known only to Liao himself.

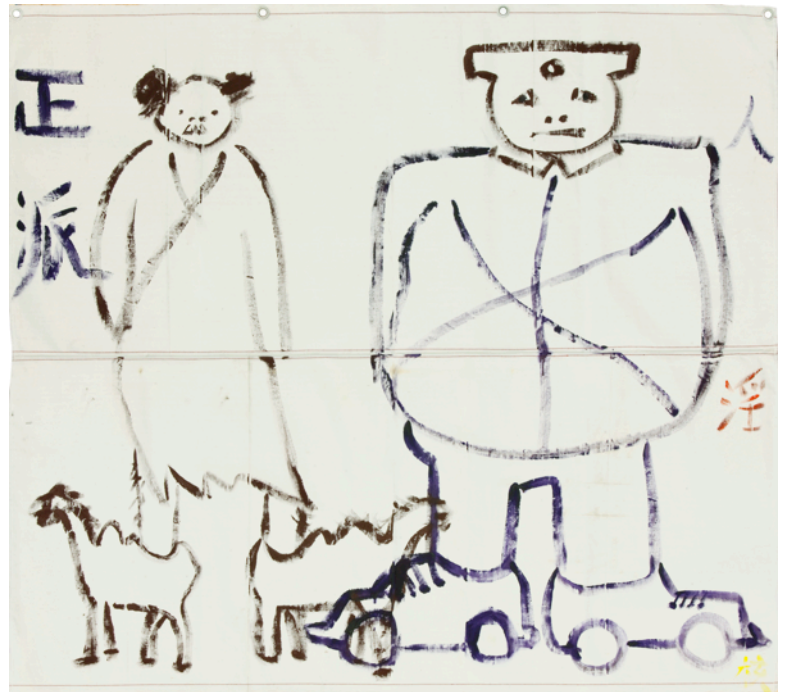
Different from Liao’s reductive approach, Zhou Yilun’s works are overloaded with motifs, pictorial elements, and, increasingly, found illegible objects, causing the pictures to deflate in both formal and semantic terms. Zhou’s paintings can be read as reconstructions of fragmented and seemingly random images that are appropriated from art history, mass media and popular culture. The paradox, the mockery, and the absurdity in his work rely on juxtapositions of kitsch imagery, coded narratives, contingency and contradiction between the visual elements to emanate. At the same time, these very devices eliminate the artist’s predetermined possible significance and instead evoke variable readings from various viewers. He reworks the classical and the kitschy at the same time with a listless attitude, so that everything, instead of creating new meanings, works to disrupt and undo one and other on the pictorial surface. His paintings empower the viewer with a sense of freedom not to believe certain things—especially the goodness in art—and a sensation of transgression.

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Liao and Zhou do not treat painting problems solely as problems of taste on a purely formal level, but also problems permeated by social, ethical and anecdotal elements. Both artists play on “stereotypes and the power of iconic symbols and with a stylistic kinship to political satire and caricature” to topple the viewer’s preconceptions about discourses in art history, global cultures, and social conditions.



Zhou Yilun  
Arrow Madonna, 2015  
220 x 180 cm  
spray paint on canvas with  
wood sticks



Liao Guohe  
Decency, Human, Pervert, 2013  
180 x 200 cm  
acrylic on canvas