Condition for Ordinary  
[The Blind for the Blind]  
Choi Xooang
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.

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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
Vegetative State 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
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 has never seen herself reversed three-dimensionally. A mirror shows our reflection as an exact copy but nevertheless still a reversed
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 (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 Settlememt | 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 | Oil on Resin | 2011 | 89x28x42cm | Edition of 5
The Blind for The Blind | Watercolor, acrylic on paper | 2013 | 50x38.1 cm

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

Eyes | Acrylic on tracing paper & watercolor paper | 2013 | 50x38.1 cm
Settlement I-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, Interalia art company, Seoul, Korea
2011 Féminité 0.1, Maison Particulière Art center, Brussels, Belgium
2011 Fiction & Nonfiction, Interalia 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 & 1intruder), 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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