

# Feng Mengbo

# 冯梦波



Shot\_Q, 2003, Photo,  
75x100 cm

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Feng Mengbo was one of the first Chinese artists to develop an interest in global networking, the virtual world, and their effects on human behavior. Since the early 1990s he has worked at the intersection of painting and digital media. His interactive digital works *My Private Album* (1996), *Taking Mr. Doom by Strategy* (1997), and *Q3* (1993) are now part of the history of new media art in China and have been shown widely internationally.

Mengbo's first two animations are based on picture books published in 1972 and 1969 respectively, widely popular stories full of violent imagery. The third animation, *The Technology of Slide Shows* draws from a book of that title published in 1982 which documented methods developed by the People's Liberation Army for creating animation effects with slide projections, which, in the absence of television and films, provided a major source of entertainment during Mengbo's youth. Likewise, four oil paintings *Street Fighter 1-V* take their name from an original and widely popular computer game but reference none-the-less particular aspects of Chinese history and political development: Although the aesthetic expression of the characters in the painting resembles that of the original game, the characters in the painting are dressed in the People's Liberation Army's characteristic uniforms. By inserting the Chinese military into the context of a violent computer-game Feng Mengbo indirectly, but nevertheless strongly, critiques the diatribes committed by the system in power.

In a recent series of photographs he employs a new method of using the computer game as a critical tool: In these works he has included himself in the game to fight and shoot against some imaginary evil power: Kill or be killed. What comes across as a virtual game might very well be regarded as a mirror of 'real' people struggling the rigid and omnipresent Chinese organization of control. Feng Mengbo's pictures have a slightly adversarial air – urgent, almost hostile, and often reaching witty heights of passive aggression. His work present a surface that gives way to the growing suspicion that it is not as mute and virtual as it first seems.

Feng Mengbo, born 1966, was initially trained as a printmaker at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. He began making digitally based work in the early 1990's. Feng Mengbo has participated at the Documenta in Kassel (both Documenta 10 and 11) and hold solo exhibitions at Holly Solomon Gallery, NY; Hanart Gallery; Haggerty Museum, Milwaukee; DIA Center for the Art, NY; Renaissance Society, Chicago among other places.

