

# Zhou Tiehai

# 周铁海



*Lily, Oil/acrylic on canvas – airbrush, 2006  
200x160 cm*

**ShanghART 香格纳画廊**

50 Mognshan Rd. Bldg 16 & 18  
Shanghai, 200060, China  
Tel: 0086-21-63593923  
Fax: 0086-21-63594570  
E-mail: [info@shanghartgallery.com](mailto:info@shanghartgallery.com)  
[www.shanghartgallery.com](http://www.shanghartgallery.com)



*Flower, Oil/acrylic on canvas – airbrush, 2006, 90x140 cm*



*The First Duke of Wellington*  
Oil/acrylic on canvas – airbrush, 2005  
150x132 cm

Zhou Tiehai's conceptual projects are symptomatic of the artist's vengeance and attitude towards the self-absorbed art market. His works' power to amaze and provoke is the consequence of a host of strategies that mix antagonism with sincerity. Appropriating classical imagery, generating ironic projections, proclaiming laconic yet heartfelt discourse, and actively de-skilling their painterly craft – these are the key ingredients that drive Zhou Tiehai's troubling yet amusing practice. He employs the role of both artist and patron since many of his air-brush paintings are done by assistants under his directions. He permits himself to 'play' with the oldest art's historical baggage, that is, to make paintings that are simultaneously self-aware and self-abnegating, virtuoso and pop all within a single canvas. He manipulates acclaimed magazine covers for his own purposes and articulates the notion of 'artistic agency' within the current conditions of the art world and the global economy. He makes self-promotional images that subvert the establishment notion of how artists should look and behave. Irony is indeed one of the main characteristics of Zhou Tiehai's art. But hidden behind this irony there is true engagement - and a subjective agency.

In the Placebo Series, Zhou Tiehai replaces his subject's faces with a camel's head wearing fashionable sunglasses. As his models he chooses classical portraits by Leonardo da Vinci, Goya, or Ingres, and enlarges them. Here too, the airbrush technique neutralizes or annihilates the 'inspired' brushstroke – that is the signature of the European master as well as the individual brushstroke of Chinese ink painting. Zhou Tiehai spares neither tradition. A placebo, as everyone knows, is a substitute drug. It is an inert substance administered to stimulate the curative effect of the patient's own belief. The placebo for Zhou's praxis may be the constructed imagery, though continuously showing its un-reality, retains its illogical fascination and force. He makes critical art, but not in the conventional understanding of the term. While there is a narrative trail that draws on contemporary topics and the mechanisms of artistic reception he refuses from making any clear value judgment. Instead, Zhou Tiehai presents the viewer with a highly delicate body of work.

Zhou Tiehai was born in 1966 in Shanghai, and attended the art school at the university there, where he also lives and works today. Zhou Tiehai has exhibited extensively internationally at acclaimed institutions such as The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany, Kunsthal, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, Shanghai Art Museum, China, and at Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin. Additionally, he participated in the 48th Venice Biennale, the 5th Shanghai Biennale and the 4th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea.

*Bamboo*, Oil/acrylic on canvas - airbrush, 2004, 150x116 cm

*Lotus*, Oil/acrylic on canvas – airbrush, 2004, 170x170 cm

*Bamboo*, Oil/acrylic on canvas – airbrush, 2004, 175x170 cm

*Fish*, Oil/acrylic on canvas – airbrush, 2004, 160x145 cm

*Bamboo*, Oil/acrylic on canvas – airbrush, 2004, 124x122 cm

*Lotus*, Oil/acrylic on canvas – airbrush, 2004, 175x170 cm