

ZERO...
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João Maria Gusmão
The School of the White Tiger
November 21st, 2024 - January 25th, 2025

Fellow Abissologists!

For fine folk who find themselves fond of flick shows, here's a Christmas treat for you!

ZERO... Milano is glad to present, during this festive season, a hotchpotch of expanded cinema by João Maria Gusmão - a concoction titled *The School of the White Tiger*. This exhibition features numerous new films and photographic work fresh from the artist's darkroom caldron. Behold and believe! Oodles of swirling photochemical fumes, an array of vaporous visions made into nourishing spectral images of mind-bending boggling. *The School of the White Tiger* is such a spectacle! It delves into the "pharmakological" depth at the heart of Western metaphysics and the logocentric worldview, sharply addressing the lemmas of our historical moment. As Derrida argues, a deconstruction movement is necessary to think through the binary antagonism that pit good against evil, transcendence against materialism, poison against remedy, bla bla bla, and so on and so forth. PIM!

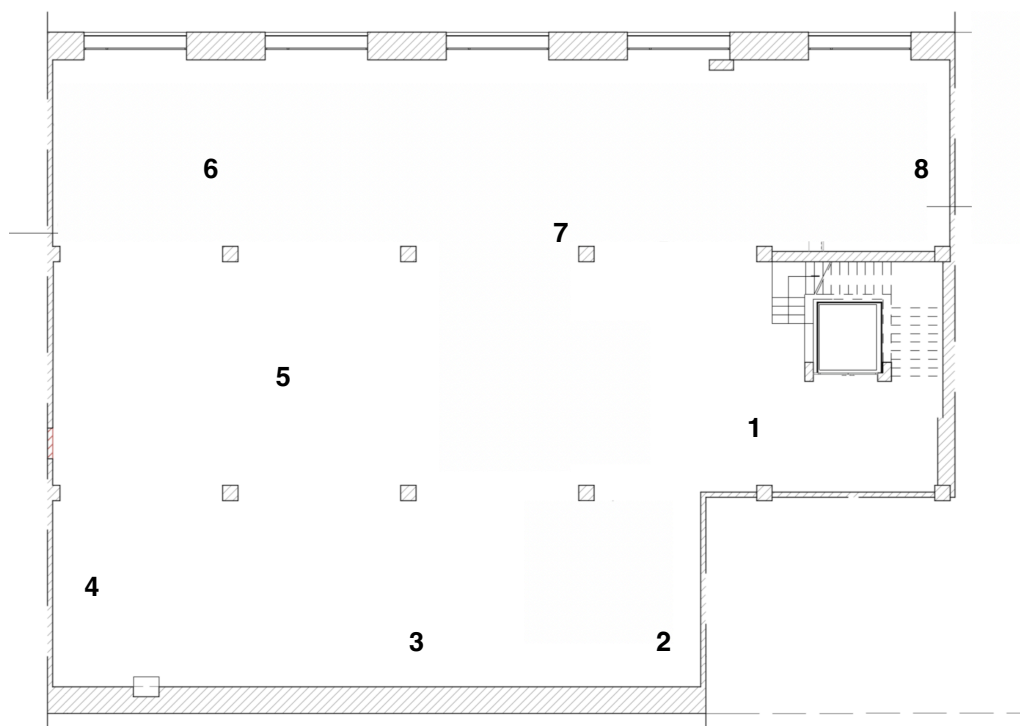
The title of this exhibition is drawn from an existing cinematic oeuvre on display. This particular film comprises a sequence of vertical still shoots capturing the whereabouts of a kung fu dojo in Grasse, France. This assemblage of images invites viewers to contemplate the connection between martial arts and the pinnacle of all crafts which is painting! Channeling the essence of cowboy Zen masters like Franz Kline and Robert Motherwell, the film introduces an unintentional yet powerful echo of De Kooning's erased drawing: a graffitied wall on the dojo's façade, painted over in hazy white, appears like a ready-made expressionist artwork. Coincidentally, these paintings seem inspired by a kind of kung fu pictorialism that mimics animal strikes, counterstrikes, dodge and defense movements. It's spiritual, invigorating, speculative, and performative—white tiger brushstrokes, pale gray over weathered cement walls, created with the "claw-paint bucket" technique.

Yet, this cinematic chance encounter is also reminiscent of Mao Zedong's "paper tiger" parable: Once upon a time, there lived a great leader called Chairman Mao. Within his realm, five martial styles—Monkey, Leopard, Snake, Dragon, and Tiger Claw—flourished. The visionary Chairman Mao, aiming to unite his people with the historic mission of the working class, melded these ancient styles into a modern martial sport called Wushu. The Great Cultural Revolution dawned. Tournaments thrived, and prosperity blossomed in Mao's land, where the industrious Communist Party favored conscription over the way of the fist. Yet, the mythical mystery of animal techniques lingered in Mao's words. In an interview with an American journalist from August 1946, he remarked: "The atom bomb is a paper tiger which the U.S. reactionaries use to scare people. It looks terrible, but in fact it isn't. Of course, the atom bomb is a weapon of mass slaughter, but the outcome of a war is decided by the people, not by one or two new types of weapon. All reactionaries are paper tigers. In appearance, the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful."

The "paper tiger" parabola suggests an "illusion theory" in Gusmão's overall proposal. It intertwines the concept of mimesis in painting with conceptual speculation in film/photography - presenting us with a painting that appears as painting but is merely a "coverup" executed by a Shaolin artist that impersonates a tiger with a brush. It's fierce, but harmless. It just doesn't exist.

(The gallery and the Artist want to thank La Società delle Api and Silvia Fiorucci, Marco Bene, the ANIM department of the Portuguese Cinematheque, and the International support program from dgARTES, Ministry of Culture of the Portuguese Republic)

BASEMENT



1 *The school of the white tiger*, 2024
vertical 16mm film projection, color, no sound, 2'30"
Thanks to La Società delle Api

2 *Les Bambous du Mandarin*, 2024
vertical 16mm film projection, color, no sound, 3'35"
Thanks to La Società delle Api

3 *Bedrooms*, 2023
16mm film, color, no sound, 8'10"
Thanks to ZDB

4 *Le Moulin des Ribes (night version)*, 2024
16mm film installation, 4 overlaid B&W colored tinted
vertical projection, no sound, 11'00" (infinite loop)
Thanks to La Società delle Api

5 *Flat Gods*, 2024
16mm film, anamorphic projection, color, no sound,
12'30"
Thanks to La Società delle Api

6 *Day for night*, 2023
16mm film, color, no sound, 2'28"
Thanks to ZDB

7 *Concrete Film*, 2024
vertical 16mm film, color, no sound, 2'35"
Thanks to La Società delle Api

8 *Le Moulin des Ribes (day version)*, 2024
16mm film, color, no sound, 20'30"
Thanks to La Società delle Api