

Disidentifying the body: the indefinite disability in *Single Copy*

In the story of Taiwanese conjoined twins Chang Chong-I and Chang Chong-Yin, technology holds cruel power over them. According to Chang Chong-I (the younger brother), the hospital signed an agreement for experimental surgery with them before the segmentation surgery in 1979. The surgeon injected the contrast medium liquid and pumped air into the brothers' belly so that they can get a clearer picture of their body structures. When the segmentation operation was performed, Taiwan was still under martial law and the media was strictly controlled. However, the segmentation operation was able to be broadcast live on TV for 12 hours. The two brothers therefore became popular and turned into public figures at one time. As 1979 is a vital period, the segmentation operational surgery is considered to be a metaphor of relation between Taiwan and China, which makes the brothers significant socially and politically. Taiwanese artist Xsu Che-yu finds this analogy full of violence because the norms of the body reveal itself when it is fixed and intertwined with the metaphorical meanings, disability is in commensurate with incompleteness. In 2018, after the older brother died, Xsu reproduces the modeling which failed in 1979 and rebuilds the lost shared leg for Chang in the remodeling. The artist also does 3D modeling for him, his wife and two kids. The film re-enacts the shooting scene of a Taiwanese movie *Masked Superman*, in which the twin brothers starred. Xsu puts the 3D modeling of Chong-I's non-identical twin kids into the scene and re-simulates everything that used to be in the shooting scene, while Chong-I acts as himself (Xsu2020, *Nowness*).

The conjoint twins Chang Chong-I and Chang Chong-Yin's life is full of controversial

events: the separating surgery make the individualization of those two subjects exposed into the public realm. Because the conjoint/ fragmented body doesn't fit in the nomination of the body in society, it because the field of an experiment, according to Chong-I, the separating surgery is based on the experiment contract. Chang Chong-I seems to have been confused about the concept of inside and outside, self and others, even after the brother's death. When looks into the process of remodeling of Chong-I's body into the sculpture in 2018, we start to empathize the violence on Chang's body and the cause of his confusion: the artist doesn't apply enough vaseline before putting the silicone on Chong-I's body that the body-hair comes off from the body and sticks to the silicone modules, he has to get rid of the hair to get the smooth surface for the sculpture. The residues of the body become excessive and something to be disposed of in art. If modeling is to represent the body, the hair, the authentic part of the flesh-hair- is something that challenges the representation. As a body under the scrutiny of the society all his life, Chong-I's confusion is apprehensible.

As the private space of the brothers is deprived by the society's body norms, the public space becomes something private instead. As Chong-I states: the film shooting scene, which should have been a non-private place, has become a private promising land for him and he has been going back to the shooting scene again and again in his dream. In the re-enactment of *Masked Superman*, the editing is jumpy and Chong-I's actions are cut in a surreal way: the way he rides his bike, he circles around the bus, and he folds the tissue, all become loopy, like there is no beginning or ending. These repetitive gestures are the illustration of what Chong-I calls the repetition of history. A the history is "Publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences" (Roach1996, 26) ,when he takes the public realm as a private space, the repetition of his activities become the analogy of the repetition of history. In the Chang brothers'

case, it is about the history of techniques specifically. The first time the society wants to model them, they use the technique of silicone modeling while in Xsu's piece, they try to capture his body with the 3D techniques. The captivation of Chang's disabled body repeats as technology develops.

At the beginning of the short film, the camera is held by Chong-I, and with his voice-over, he explains, some of the masterpiece films used the wheelchair for track shooting. When the sculpturist was hired to model the conjoined twins 40 years ago, it is hard to tell if it is an art or an experiment, as the public has been surveilling their body over TV, the modeling the twins' body could be part of the consumption and exploitation of the disabled bodies. As the silicone modeling is substituted by the 3D technology and human bodies is preserved as digital models in big data, the violence of modeling becomes furtive. In the broadcast in 1979, the birth and separation of the two brothers were shown in the public media as a spectacle, which makes the whole process becomes the consumption of physical disabilities, this also the same agency which makes the two brothers the public figure. Xsu talks about the phenomenon of Taiwan and Hong Kong TV in recent years using a 3D modeling technology to restore social news in the crime scene (mostly murder crime) in an interview. According to him, the database of 3D technology will randomly select the digital data of the human body and make the simulation of the crime scene. The simulation technology makes the digital modeling of human beings a spectacle, just like the broadcast and exposure of the Chang brothers' body 40 years ago.

Nevertheless, Since the 3D has been done after one of them died, it makes the whole project the mourning of the lost one, as in the dreamy and surreal tone of the short film, it is hard to tell who is the one survived, Chong-I has become the surrogation (Roach1996,2) and the ghost of the other one. Each time Chong-I's body is modeled, it is like the artist wants to

find the lost one in his fragmented body. The public media has made the lives of the twins non-private by display their life as a reality show, the artist wants to retreat the body in the public into the private space by art making. In the video, Xsu himself also contributed the dubbing to increase the narrative level. The artist's narration and Chong-I's subjective recollection make add a new layer into the narrative, which is about the relationship between art and the disabled body.

Single Copy as the oxymoron means the existence the brother is not only about himself, it is also about his dead brother, the time when they were together as the conjoint twins, and the one who used to act in the reality show and the film, the one in his dream. However, the feature of his body makes him the only copy of himself. The documentation mixed with the re-enactment in the film, the abutment of Chang brothers' and the artist Xsu's visit in Swiss makes the parallel narratives of Chong-i and Xsu overlapped. The artist uses the mountains with virtual tags in Switzerland as a comparison for the inspections of the body, the way doctors tag the body in hospital is the same as tourists tagging the mountain by virtual tags. Is the environment natural when the tourists are viewing them with artificial tags and try to figure them out by naming them. Names are artificial which makes the norms behind it artificial too. Conjoint twins are by nature an accident, if they separate into two embryos, they become heterosexual twins, like the son and daughter of Chong-Yin's. "I don't remember if the shared leg is left or right," said Chong-I, after almost 40 years of the separation surgery. The phantom awareness of the shared legs makes the disability a forced idea by society. At the coda part of the short film, Chong-I utters: "The intrinsic substance of life is Language." Language is the force that fixes down the nomination of the body, draws the line between art and life, public and private, self and other, abled and disabled, inside and outside. But the nondiscursive force

of a disabled body has become disruption of these dichotomy drawn by discursive force.

“This scene is like the one from 20 years ago, ...my body is the part that repeats. As if an entire history circles around the scene of this abandoned bus.” Said the Chong-I, while circling the abandoned bus. The imagination of completion is the trap of the norms of the body in society. Lingered around the fictional location, in my opinion, is the mourning for the lost brother, and is also the mourning of the prosthetics of history, both personal and collective. Xsu mentions that there was no fingerprint on the shared leg, and the two conjoined brothers could feel and control it together, but it could not be given to either person after they were separated. The existence or abandonment of the leg became a dialectical choice between “one or two,” the imagination of still having it as an individual could be a metaphor for the illusion of completion. But as time and space are disrupted by the mix editing of the artist in different dimensions, not only does Xsu mess up the fictional world with the authenticity of the same body, but he also manages to mess the binary of the public and the private, abled and disabled. Xsu looks into the emblematic meaning of the disabled body and found the agency of violence in it: Disability was depoliticized and made into spectacles, presented more as nature than culture. It is seen less as an objective fact of the body or mind and more as a product of social relations. (Kafer2013, intro) According to Allison Kafer, in order to break the binary of abled and disabled, body and mind, we have to “queer the crip” (Kafer2013, intro), as “queerness should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time, a desire that resists mandates to accept that which is not enough.” (Muñoz2009, 37)

The subtlety of the artists' reflection reveals in the following monologue of Chong-I: "when I was stuck in the silicone for a few hours, everything slows down when the liquids turn into jelly." After he explains that they shot the film *Aliens* in the same studio, the narrative

jumps into the ultrasonography of a baby reveals its face from the liquid, just like the body reveals itself from the silicone. By going back to the sensibility and narrative of individual, Xsu queers the fixed definition of disabled and the metaphorical meaning of incompleteness clinged into it.

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