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Artist opens subversive supermarket in Shanghai

Xu Zhen has recreated a Chinese mini-mart, but the packages have been emptied of their products

by LISA MOVIUS | 11 April 2016



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The Chinese artist Xu Zhen has taken his Xu Zhen Supermarket project to the streets of Shanghai—to the bewilderment of many a Chinese granny. The conceptual art supermarket, which has "Fill the void" as its sales slogan, is a spot-on recreation of China's ubiquitous mini-marts, peddling soft drinks and booze, junk food, cigarettes, condoms, and other familiar products. All of the branded packages have been emptied of their products, however. On Friday, 8 April, the store opened its doors at 1386 Yuyuan Lu of Changning District, a lively residential and business neighborhood. It is due to remain in business until 29 April, opening daily from 7am until midnight to welcome—and perplex—regular shoppers. There are fliers explaining the concept and anyone purchasing something gets an explanation at the checkout along with a receipt.

The artist's supermarket was offered the temporary space by Art Yuyuan, an initiative to attract more culture to the street. Xu Zhen's Madein Company hopes to open further public iterations of the Supermarket, which made its debut in 2007 and has been featured at Art Basel in Miami Beach, ShanghArt Singapore and the Seoul Museum of Art. The Supermarket, which provided a jokey splash of Chinese novelty abroad, becomes a different creature back home in China.

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