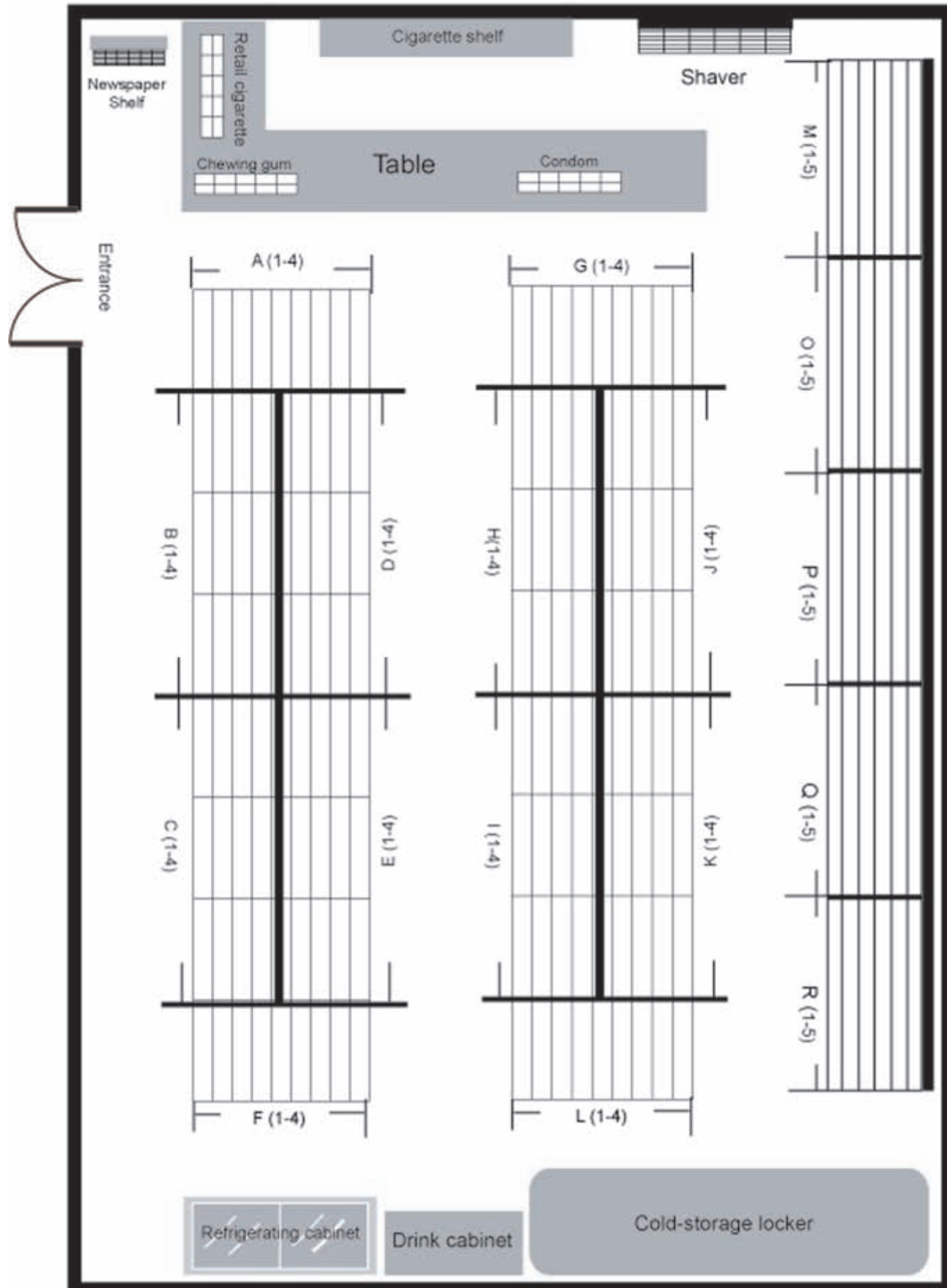


Xu Zhen
徐震

Selected Work



ShanghART Supermarket Plan



SHANGHART SUPERMARKET

WELCOME

店号:01 机号:01
 收银员:0000 销售方式:零售
 小票:01010711020001

商品	数量	单价	金额
1 芬达2.5升 6901939721247	1	6.00	6.00
2 可口可乐 6901939651605	1	2.00	2.00
3 芬达2.5升 6901939721247	1	6.00	6.00
4 可口可乐 6901939651605	1	2.00	2.00
5 可口可乐 6901939651605	1	2.00	2.00
6 芬达2.5升 6901939721247	1	6.00	6.00
7 芬达2.5升 6901939721247	1	6.00	6.00
8 芬达2.5升 6901939721247	1	6.00	6.00
9 芬达2.5升 6901939721247	1	6.00	6.00
10 芬达2.5升 6901939721247	1	6.00	6.00
11 可口可乐 6901939651605	1	2.00	2.00
12 可口可乐 6901939651605	1	2.00	2.00
13 芬达2.5升 6901939721247	1	6.00	6.00

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 =====2007-11-02 7:29:58=====

总件数:13

人民币 60.00 汇率1.0000 现金

合计: 58.00

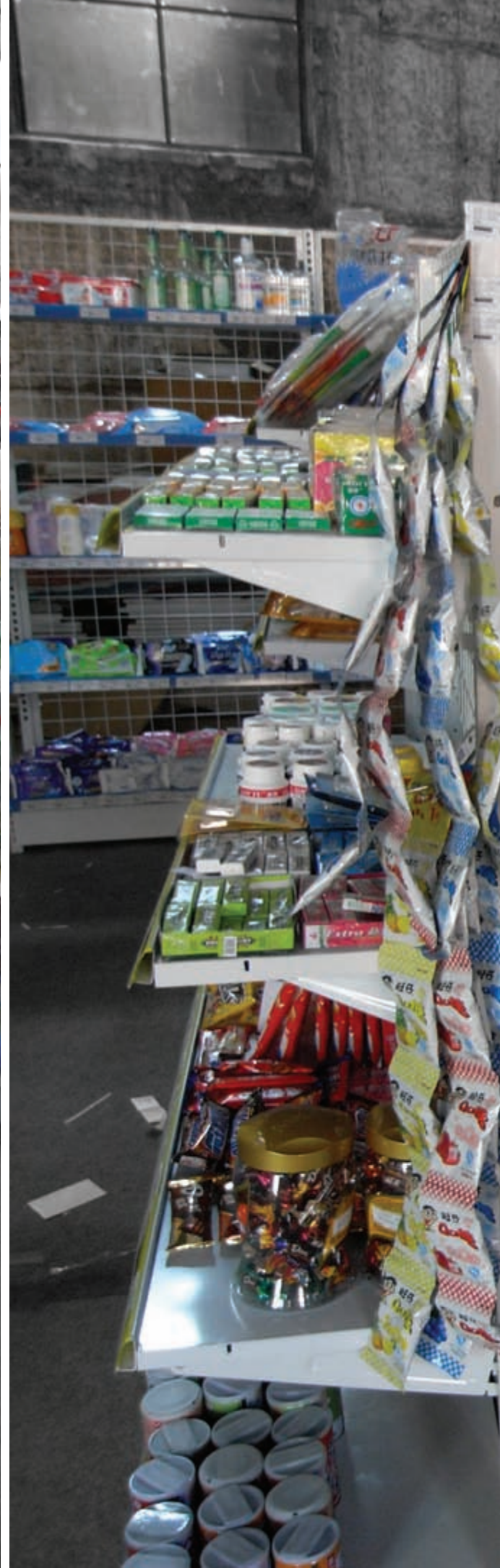
收款: 60.00

找零: 2.00

THANK YOU

SHANGHART SUPERMARKET (2007), mixed media installation [cash register, counter, shelves, refrigerator, fridge, multiple consumer products], **6 x 5,5 m** [dimensions variable]

In his work Xu Zhen interrogates complex and sensitive terrain that – on first encounter – never ceases to invoke ambiguity when it comes to the real meaning intended. His compelling oeuvre, as in all great art, is marked by a sense of antagonism towards its environment, a friction with its context that resists conformity and instead exerts its own terms of engagement. Xu Zhen's recent installation is a project in which the rules of the game for both art and the global market are – seemingly – collapsed.



Accordingly, his new project SHANGHART SUPERMARKET effectively elaborates, manipulates, and invents upon a delicate matrix of power relations. His installation, thus, is a full-scale replica of what is alleged to be a proto-typical Chinese convenient store. One of these (meticulously copied 1:1 and re-named by the artist) only to be transplanted across the Pacific and set up in the United States. Ironically, while the genealogy and aesthetic of these Chinese shops are inherently Western in aspiration, they are effectively promoted and encouraged by the communist government as a tool to specifically resist the establishment of their foreign counterparts (i.e. Western chains of convenient stores). With their easily recognizable corporate logos, and with the immense frequency of their layout scattered in thousands throughout the country, they have become unavoidable icons in the Chinese urban landscape. Open 24 hours a day, these franchised stores provide consumers with all imaginable basic products needed. Shelves filled with an eclectic mix of well-known international goods, such as soft drinks, cigarettes and dairy, inter-mingle with Chinese pickles, dried fruits, toiletry, newspapers, and rice-wine.

Upon entering Xu Zhen's installation, however, one immediately senses a difference. This store is filled with packages and wrappings containing, literally, nothing! Everything is empty, just shells. The false appearance of the shop, or of the ghostly merchandise as such, indicate that there is much more at stake than the obvious critique of exchange value. It is an artwork that is paradoxically defined by emptiness and lack of content, its most distinguished characteristic being hollowness: In other words, a spectacle in its purest effect. And the spectacle, to recall Guy Debord's classic formulation, 'is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image'. The ambiguous status of the supermarket, which has been stripped of all its defining qualities, seems to indicate that consumption, whether of food or images, is essential, but it also destroys.

Xu Zhen's SHANGHART SUPERMARKET is both an appropriation of economic strategy, and its very negation. The shop is the stage for a world of role-changes between artworks and the real and the imaginary, and more importantly perhaps, between the East and the West. China has recently become the core country of global controversy regarding its expanding trade practices, including rejected food shipments contaminated with pesticides and banned drugs. With each revelation of exported filthy food and other equally dubious product lines, China's special brand of capitalism looks increasingly suspicious to Western sensibilities. So, are the Chinese effectively trying to conquer corporate America by its own means, or are they merely following their late President Deng Xiaoping's seductive, but obscure, maxim 'to get rich is glorious'? Equally, the uncertainty remains whether SHANGHART SUPERMARKET is targeted as a critique of Western or Chinese standards.

The project raises intriguing questions about the nature of representation, the ownership of image, and the process of production, distribution and audience reception. It addresses notions of authorship, authenticity, fiction and reality. Xu Zhen turns the shop into an object of critical play and frames the system of exchange value with witty parody. He plays on the collapse of the dialectic of art and commodity, but precisely in the form of an art-commodity. In effect, a critical distance is created from within by displaying empty ghost-like goods for sale. While subtly alluding to China's expanding powers, the store simultaneously reframes the codings of merchandise and artifacts – how objects are translated into cultural exempla, invested with value, and acknowledged by viewers and consumers.



Xu Zhen was born in 1977. Resides and works in Shanghai. He was invited to the 49th Venice Biennale and has since exhibited his works widely. Recent exhibitions include Performa07, 10th International Istanbul Biennale (2007) China Power Station: Part II, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, (Oslo, Norway, 2007), Part I, Battersea Power Station, (London, UK, 2006), On Mobility, De Appel, (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2006), China Contemporary - Art, Architecture and Visual Culture, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen (Rotterdam, 2006), The Thirteen – Chinese Video Now, PS1 Contemporary Art Center (New York, 2006).

ShanghART
Gallery & H-Space
香格纳画廊

ShanghART Gallery & H-Space
50 Moganshan Rd., Bldg 16 & 18
Shanghai 200060, P.R. China
T: +86 21-6359 3923
F: +86 21-6359 4570
E-mail: info@shanghartgallery.com
www.shanghartgallery.com