

Yang Zhenzhong

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Lucky Family, Special, Photo, 1995

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The desire to challenge normative notions of social behavior informs the practices of Yang Zhenzhong's work. He is pre-occupied with China's intrinsic disharmony and severe contrasts, and he often touches upon taboos such as death and out-grown societal patterns. His approach is rather metaphorical than narrative. His videos often start from witty ideas, using the repetition of images and the rhythmic coordination of sound, language and image. Yang became famous in 2000 with his half-hour video (I Know) I Will Die. It is made up of short sequences in which a series of people articulating "I will die" in front of the camera - a disconcerting, soberly presented film that confronts the viewer with existential questions. Yang Zhengzhong recognizes, that individual participation is the starting point for the transformation of perception. The video "922 Grains of Rice" plays with the interaction of the image of a cock and a chicken pecking grains of rice and the sound of a male and female voice counting the number of pecked grains - a humorous battle of sexes and also a comment on today's competitive behavior.

Let's Puff (4th Shanghai Biennale and Zone of Urgency, 50th Venice Biennial) similarly starts from the interplay of two images: a young woman puffing and a busy street. Every time the woman breathes, the image of the street moves away from the viewer. The rhythm of the traffic and the angle of perception are altered with the rhythm of the woman's breath. Yang Zhengzhong's playful videos are not only visual reflections, intelligent comments on the design of contemporary society. In a series of photos entitled Light and Easy, he perceives the weight of urban changes as being an exterior phenomenon, and he literally depicts this process as a weightless factor, turning the urban landmarks up-side down. Light and Easy is based upon a conviction that the lightness of the isolated exterior - or the isolated interior is a source of interesting material. The successful experiments the artists have done to formulate connections are exciting, sincere and disturbing.

Born in Xiaoshan in 1968, Yang Zhengzhong now lives and works in Shanghai. He graduated from the oil painting department of the China Fine Arts Academy in Hangzhou in 1993, and started working with video and photography in 1995. Yang Zhengshong's work has showed at all major biennales and triennials such as Venice (2003), Shanghai (2002), Guangzhou (2002), and Gwangju (2002).



Light and Easy, Video (single channel), 2002, 1 minute