

XU ZHEN
XUZHEN Supermarket, 2007/2017
 Curated by Victor Wang 王宗孚

21 September – 04 November 2017
The Shop, 62 Kingly St, London W1
Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6pm

Sadie Coles HQ and Victor Wang are proud to present Shanghai-based artist Xu Zhen's *XUZHEN Supermarket (2007/2017)* for the first time in the United Kingdom. The project runs in tandem with *Zhongguo 2185*, an exhibition of ten artists from China.

Xu Zhen (b. 1977) is known for his wry and provocative appropriations of the tropes of advertising, distribution, and consumerism.

This project, which has previously been presented in Shanghai, Singapore, New York and Miami, takes the form of a

functioning supermarket. Visitors to the store, located in the ground-floor 'Shop' space at Sadie Coles HQ, are invited to buy from continually-restocked rows of packaged goods from China – all of them completely authentic, and all completely empty.



Playing out the artist's interest in capitalist products and processes, *XUZHEN Supermarket* occupies an unlikely space between installation art and commercial food production. Inviting viewers to invest in empty shells – containers bereft of substance or use value – the venture offers a critique of the often-destructive nature of global capitalism – its relentless cycles of supply and demand, brute logistics and mass consumption, and the aesthetic guises it assumes through branding and packaging. There is also a satirical metaphor, in the hollow vessels, for the international art market and its arbitrary ascriptions of value.

Initiated in 2007, the project embodies many of the characteristics that artist Richard Hamilton identified as defining Pop Art: popular (designed for a mass audience), transient (short-term), expendable (easily forgotten) and low-cost (mass-produced). The stacked, identical commodities of Xu's supermarket invite numerous parallels with Pop Art's mergers of art and life, while also implicating viewers as participants – placing them in the role of active consumers.

XUZHEN Supermarket in this way constructs a space which accelerates and parodies the consumerism prevalent in China – a phenomenon which has frequently eclipsed historical and cultural contexts and traditions. The original food markets of Shanghai, for example, were public spaces for social interaction and entertainment, often visited by families once a day for fresh produce. In recent decades, these traditional markets have been transformed into supermarkets and fast-food dining outlets (first introduced in China in the 1980s to cater for foreigners) – and drained of their historical significance. The customs of community, diet and trade which were ingrained in these social spaces have been exchanged for the mass commoditisation and 'international aesthetic' of global chains and franchises. The empty simulacra of Xu Zhen's store – available for purchase, if not for consumption – express a comic yet mordant critique of this evacuation of history.

Xu Zhen (b. 1977, Shanghai) is one of China's leading contemporary artists. His practice spans a variety of media including installation, video, painting and performance. In 2004, Xu won the prize for 'Best Artist' at the China Contemporary Art Award. He has exhibited internationally, with exhibitions and projects including those at the National Gallery of Australia (Canberra, 2016), Al Rihag Art Center (Qatar, 2016), Armory Show (New York, 2014), Long Museum (Shanghai, 2015), Lyon Biennale (2013), Hayward Gallery (London, 2012), Tate Liverpool (2007), PS1 (New York, 2006), Mori Art Museum (Tokyo, 2005), The Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2004), and the Venice Biennale (2001, 2005). Xu Zhen has co-curated major exhibitions in Shanghai, and helped to initiate *Art-Ba-Ba* (www.art-ba-ba.com), a leading online forum for discussion and critique of contemporary art in Shanghai, in 2006. In 2009, Xu Zhen established Madeln Company, a contemporary art creation corporate, focused on the promotion of creativity. In 2013, Madeln Company launched the brand "Xu Zhen". In 2014, Madeln Company established Madeln Gallery and launched the first "Xu Zhen Store" in November 2016 in Shanghai.

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