

(telescope)

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(telescope)

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Yang Jian's sparse and strange installation entitled *Thank You! Have a Nice Day* is broken down into three simple observations on today's society:

Status Quo, Nostalgia, and (a call to) Action.

Status Quo is defined as: the existing state of affairs (socially or politically). *Thank You! Have a Nice Day* looks back at society and that which controls or subjugates people to various ends. Whether it is governments, corporations

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w technologies, society is under the great

'microscope' of a greater and unseen power in control. Surveillance cameras, two-way mirrors, smart phones, computer screens, radio waves, television, etc. have all been developed to protect, entertain, make life easier and business more profitable, but also to manipulate and control. What used to be personal and private is now readily made public and can be accessed by anyone anywhere. What does this ultimately do to the long term 'psyche' of a society?

The British 18th c. philosopher and social theorist, Jeremy Bentham designed a prison building and system called "Panopticon" for a single watchman to be able to observe all of the inmates of a prison without them knowing whether or not they were being watched. The prison design was a circular building several stories high. Each floor or ring had many cells all facing inwards toward a common courtyard. In the center of the courtyard area was a tower rising above all of the prison floors with one observation room at the top housing a single guard. Even though it was physically impossible for one guard to observe all of the cells at one time, the inmates could not see into the tower observation room, so they had to act as though they were always in view effectively controlling their own behavior all of the time. This design offered a very simple and effective way to oversee and order an entire population. Yang Jian suggests that we are now living in a type of "Panopticon" society.

Nostalgia is a desire to return to the happiness of a former place or time. Yang Jian states that people living under this type of "Panopticon" system, at some point, begin to become nostalgic in wanting to return to the days when things were simpler with less control and more freedom. But in reality there is no real way back. Without knowing it we have accepted the shackles of technology and control, have been grafted in to its system, and now we cannot escape its grasp. This nurtures an increasing tension within our personal and social psyches. We are feeling ever more trapped and unable to do anything about it.

(a call to) Action. Feeling unsatisfied and oppressed by the Status Quo and unable to go back to better times, Yang Jian asks, "So, what can we do?" Yang Jian's artworks are practical and metaphoric solutions his personal as well as our collective. *Thank you! Have a Nice Day* is his call to

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The installation at Telescope includes two monitors with two videos of the artist gathering seeds from dead weeds, the last inhabitants of a nearby village condemned by the government to clear the land to build high rise apartments, and walking the city redistributing the collected seeds onto the manicured lawns of government security and media buildings, shopping malls, apartment complexes, and other normal everyday locations. It is a seemingly insignificant even humorous gesture but even the tiny seed of a small weed has the potential, in time, to split rocks. On the window ledge at Telescope Yang Jian has placed 100 envelopes full of his harvested seeds and stamped on the outside with "Plant Some Weeds." Visitors can take an envelope and chose where they would like to plant their seeds. In so doing they complete the artwork by becoming part of it.

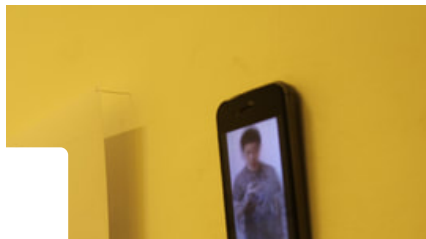
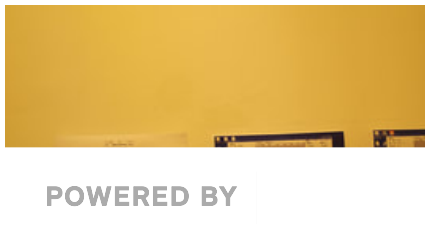
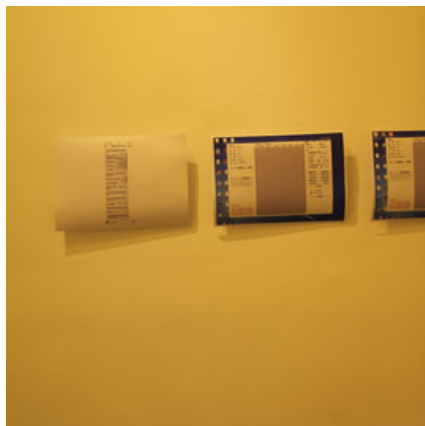
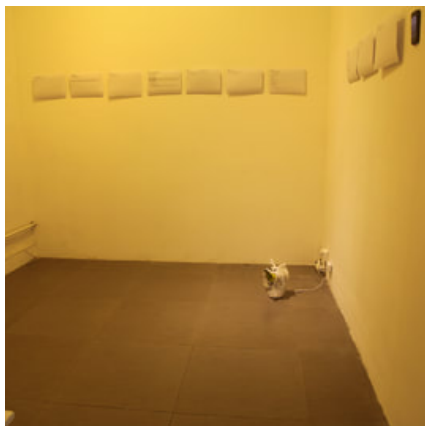
Another Action seems to 'take on' the insidious marketing system that continuously strives to break through our privacy and break down our will.

Yang Jian hired a spam messaging company to randomly send out 50,000 spam messages to unsuspecting people. But his 'message' was only a poem, simple and pure. There were no ulterior commercial motives, only to enrich people lives and to provoke them into their own creative actions. Out of 50,000 messages 15 people responded to the artists contact info at the end of the message. Some cursed at him, some asked him what was he trying to sell, two men wrote their own poems in response, another told Yang Jian that he was at first very angry because his phone woke him up but as he thought about this unusual and unexpected message he became intrigued and sent him a critique of his poem. He felt that Yang Jian had great promise as a poet. Yang Jian has printed out all of the letters and installed them in a long line along the walls in the small gallery.

On the floor of that gallery is a small slowly turning surveillance camera covered in a cheap plastic shopping bag with the words printed on it in black and yellow, "Thank You, Have a Nice Day." No matter where you go or what you do it is impossible to escape the omnipresent 'eye' that watches every move we

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installation view and works



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