



FOOTNOTE

a film by Zhengfan Yang

2022 | United States | documentary | 92 min | color | English

International Film Festival Rotterdam

LOGLINE

With shots recorded from his Chicago apartment, the filmmaker reveals a seemingly commonplace, almost imperturbable existence. Police radio excerpts suggest something else: the seething reality of a politically unstable country at a particularly historical moment, in a year unlike any other.

SYNOPSIS

An audio-visual portrait of a neighborhood in the city of Chicago. Life presents itself in two contradictory ways: as seen through the windows of an apartment filmed over the course of three years - peaceful, mundane, ambiguous; and as told through the local police scanner recorded during the last year of the Trump administration, also the first year of the ongoing pandemic - violent, tragic, absurd. From here, a neighborhood is observed, a city is echoed, and a country is footnoted.

CONTACT

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

FOOTNOTE is the last part of *The Outsider Trilogy*, following my previous two films *DISTANT* and *WHERE ARE YOU GOING*.

Three years an immigrant to the United States, in summer 2018 I moved into an old, high-rise, apartment building. The apartment is hardly spacious, but it is a corner unit with multiple windows, and so has both the city view of Chicago as well as the lake view of Lake Michigan. Standing by the windows and looking out day and night, I see different American people, all living their American lives without the American Dream, which is literally a dream that one has to be asleep to believe. Sometimes, I also see my own reflection in the windows, overlapping the lives of others. This visual relationship spontaneously becomes a metaphor - the distance between those people and me echoes the personal experience of alienation in a foreign country where I am an outsider in terms of language, culture, and identity. It didn't take long for me to start filming the outside scenes. Back then, seeing-the-world-from-the-window had not yet become a fashion. Over the course of another three years, this feeling of alienation continued, so did the filming, through which I gradually became a flâneur who strolls not in space but in time.

The year of 2020 is not only the last year of Donald Trump's administration but also the first year of this ongoing pandemic. While the former marks the end of one tragedy, the latter marks, not the end, not even the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning, of another tragedy. During this year, the crime rate in Chicago increased significantly, and the atmosphere in American society changed dramatically. All kinds of incidents were taking place in the city and in the country. In order to determine if it's safe to go out, even for a casual walk, I started listening to police radio, which delivers real time happenings in the neighborhood. As I listened more and more - ultimately over 1,000 hours- I started feeling that it extends my perception by providing something that my sight could not reach. The police radio as a medium, a highly social and political one in its nature, not only uncovers some hidden corners in our surroundings, but also offers an alternative narrative to understand many phenomena in this country, and more importantly, a different perspective to approach the complexity behind it.

As a result, I decided to construct the image and sound by juxtaposing the events heard on radio with the scenes seen from home, both of which present to us a collision of mediated lives. In the end, this audiovisual documentation of our times has become something more than personal.

Zhengfan Yang
2021.12.02
Chicago, Illinois



BIOGRAPHY

Zhengfan Yang (b. 1985) is a writer, director, and producer originally from China and now based in Chicago, IL, USA. Together with Shengze Zhu, he co-founded BURN THE FILM, a production company that is dedicated to singular moving-image work with personal voice.

FILMOGRAPHY

DOWN THERE (那里)

2018 | short | China | 11 min | Mandarin | Venice International Film Festival, Orizzonti

LIQUID IMAGE

2017 | video | USA | 12 min | no dialogue | Video Data Bank

WHERE ARE YOU GOING (你往何处去)

2016 | documentary | Hong Kong SAR China | 128 min | Cantonese, Mandarin, English, Tagalog | International Film Festival Rotterdam

DISTANT (远方)

2013 | fiction | China | 88 min | no dialogue | Locarno International Film Festival, Filmmakers of the Present

THE SURROUNDINGS (吞噬)

2011 | short | Hong Kong SAR China | 25 min | Mandarin | Hong Kong Fresh Wave International Short Film Festival, Best Cinematography Award

TEN YEARS LATER (十年后)

2010 | short | China | 10 min | Mandarin | China Independent Film Festival



CREDITS

Director Zhengfan Yang

Producers Shengze Zhu / Zhengfan Yang

Cinematographer / Sound Designer/ Editor Zhengfan Yang

Sound Recordists Zhengfan Yang / Shengze Zhu

Re-recording Mixer Aymeric Dupas

Colorist Vivian Bao

Transcription Bridget Stiebris / Andrea Troolin / Patrick Durgin

Audio Broadcastify

Legal Lawyers for the Creative Arts

Support Foundation for Contemporary Arts

Production Burn The Film



