

Clever Video Installation Encourages Charitable Giving

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A problem like homelessness hides in plain sight: It's easy not to give, because, as any city dweller knows, you simply don't notice the homeless after a time. And even if you intend to be charitable, you're probably loathe to give change--and neglectful in following up with the right charities.

Those dilemmas are solved in a new installation created for the charity Pathways to Housing created by digital agency Sarkissian Mason. First, there's a project of a shivering homeless person projected on the open street; viewers can then donate directly to the charity via SMS, via a number shown on the installation.

By way of giving credit where due, the idea of projecting video of homeless people actually isn't new. But the combination with the txt-message giving is brilliant. Non-profits from the Red Cross to NPR have raised massive amounts of money via text message, simply because of how simple it is--when giving becomes as easy as texting, you can get people to open their wallets precisely at the moment you've reached them. There's no loss from the countless people who thought to give but failed to follow up. (Which has probably been all of us, several times over.) The biggest example so far: The Red Cross's recent text-giving drive benefiting Haiti, which raised tens of millions in a matter of days.

