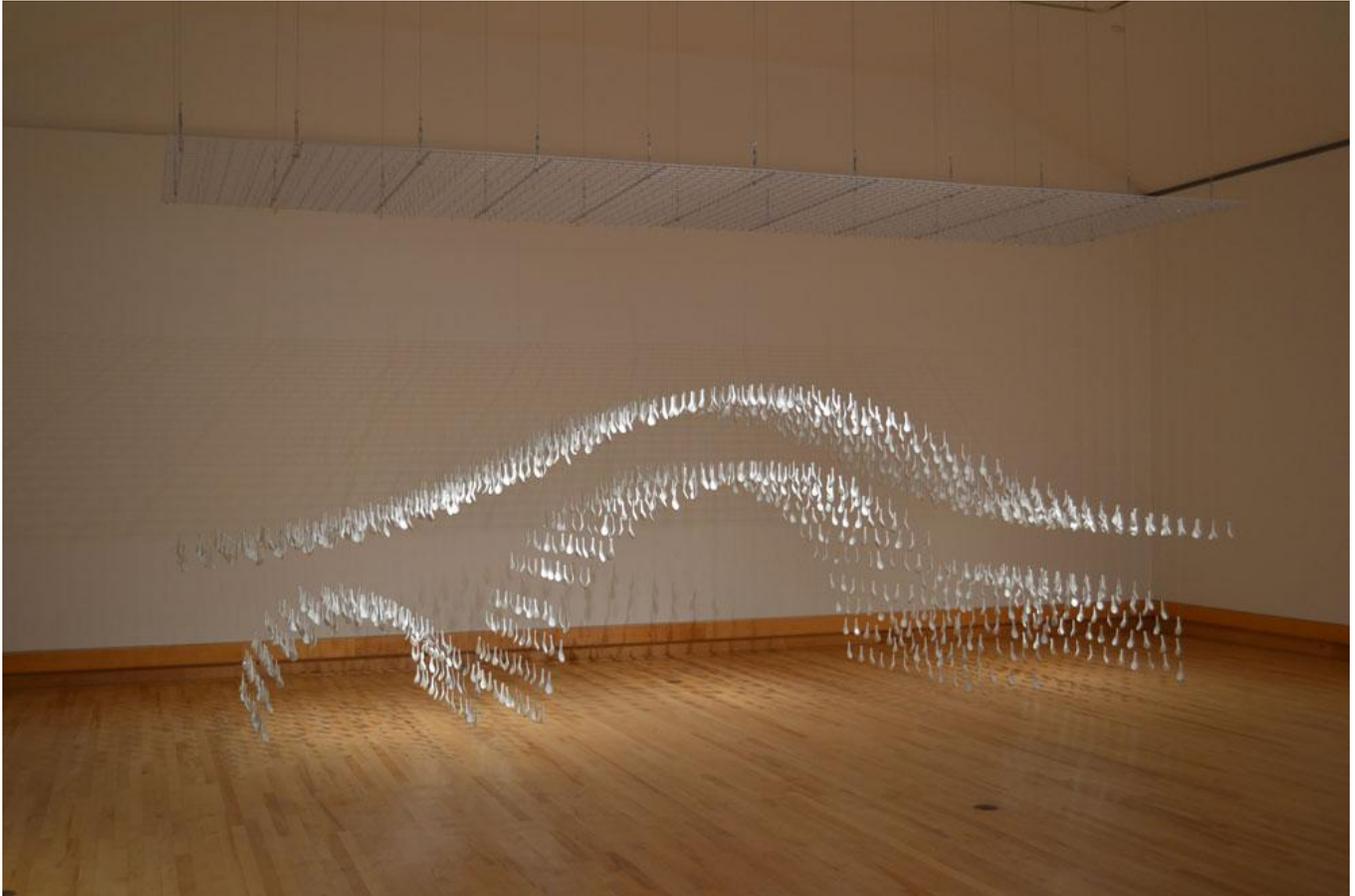


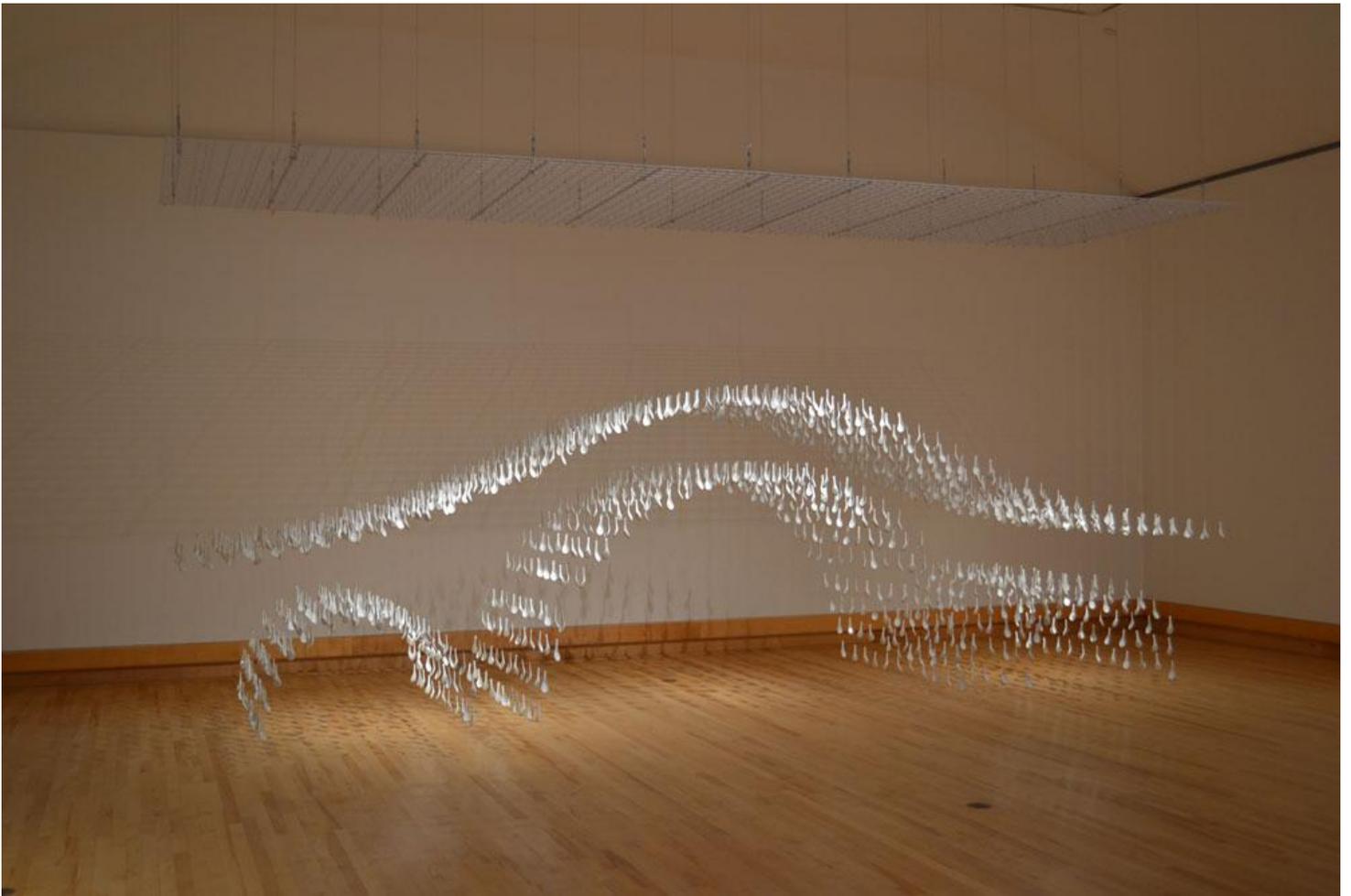
# CANADIANART

## (Da bao)(Takeout): Good to Go

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In a residential neighbourhood in Unionville, an exhibition that strives to locate a cross-cultural dynamic between China and the West presents a thoughtful selection of works from Chinese, Canadian and Chinese-Canadian artists. Co-curated by Shannon Anderson and Doug Lewis with the assistance of Selena Yang, “(Da bao)(Takeout)” appreciates the influences that inevitably weave their way into the practices of artists as they navigate between various cultures and societies.

Passing through the large oak doors that lead into the exhibition, viewers are confronted with a 2011 video by Vancouver-based artist [Laiwan](#) entitled *Movement for Two Grannies*. The work depicts two elderly Chinese-Canadian women wading through ankle-deep water, the light around them casting an abalone shimmer. It is tender, poetic and, most importantly, slow, setting a tone that suggests one should approach the entire show with a similarly deliberate thoughtfulness.

In the same darkened, small room is a curious work by [Knowles Eddy Knowles](#), a collective made up of Robert Knowles, Michael Eddy and Jon Knowles that originally formed in Halifax. In the 2012 work *The Holding Environment*, a laptop is repurposed as a heat-generating object atop which a bag of mushrooms in soil sits. The eccentric re-articulation of this 21st-century information tool into a nurturing entity is both veiled with humour and laced with a type of sadness, the choice of mushroom spores alluding to things that flourish where there is only darkness. Nearby, a series of digital photographs by Beijing-based artist Zhang Zhaohui depicts life-sized glass cut-outs of male and female silhouettes in public spaces. The work is conceptually elegant and charming.



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Knowles Eddy Knowles *The Holding Environment* 2012 Installation view Courtesy the artists and Varley Art Gallery / photo Anik Glaude

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A larger room holds the bulk of “(Da bao)(Takeout),” and it buzzes with curious energy—the painting, photography, sculpture, installation and video pieces collectively, although presented in a contemporary manner, evoke the feeling of a salon-style exhibition.

*Chi #3*, a video by Chinese artist [Nan Hao](#), portrays the artist performing tai chi in the middle of a traffic-congested

Beijing road. One can almost sense the bewilderment of the drivers as Nan silently and calmly resonates confidence in their midst, suggesting that it is the motorists who are at risk if they don't slow down. The artist's second work in the exhibition—a digital print entitled *SONG Type Study One*—evokes the attrition of tradition in China due to globalizing enterprises from the West. In this image, the artist and his brother stand in front of a Forbidden City Starbucks holding a large scroll that states a phrase from the local *hutong* slang—"fuck your mother"—inscribed in two rarely used Chinese characters.



Nan Hao *Chi* #3 2008 Video still Courtesy the artist

Toronto-based, Taipei-born artist [Ed Pien](#) continues the theme of changing traditions with his 2012 work *Shadow Player*, a piece that looms eerily like something out of a fever dream. A constructed figure swathed in black sports a small digital screen in lieu of a head; the screen depicts the artist moving slowly yet animatedly across a backlit stage. *Shadow Player* speaks to the tropes of traditional Chinese shadow theatre, an ancient form of storytelling, but also seems to suggest this form is more a relic than a still-vital genre.

*Your Morning Is My Night* is a sweetly collaborative work created by [Sara Angelucci](#) and [Han Xu](#). Though both artists are based in Toronto, Beijing native Han is newer to the city than Angelucci, having arrived in 2001. In 2006, the artists decided to venture on a project that involved them taking photographs twice daily (at 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.) in their respective locations: Angelucci was attending a residency in Shanghai, and Han was living and working in Toronto. With the photographs presented as diptychs, it is sometimes hard to tell which photographs are Angelucci's and which are Han's, as Western influences permeated Angelucci's surroundings and Han's Chinatown snapshots confuse the situation further. Together, the images speak poetically to the parallels and divergences between life in the East and life in the West.



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"(Da bao)(Takeout)" 2012 Installation view Courtesy the artists and Varley Art Gallery / photo Anik Glaude

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The 2009 installation *Bridge* is hard to ignore. For it, [Xiaoqing Yan](#), a Nanjing-born, Markham-based artist, suspends 1,364 Chinese soup spoons with razor-sharp accuracy in an arching pattern that speaks to Yan's recent social and cultural migration. Redirecting traditional utensils to form an installation that exudes Western aesthetics, she successfully manages to create a work that is enthralling both in its symbolism and in its painstaking execution.

"(Da bao)(Takeout)" boasts other works worthy of thoughtful contemplation, including an installation by Halifax-based artist Cathy Busby, paintings by New York- and Beijing-based artist Gang Chen and work by Canadian-born, New York-based artist Brendan Fernandes, among many others.

The success of the exhibition is in its combined narrative; it speaks to the inevitable alienation that can occur with immigration to Canada, but it also speaks to feelings of both dissatisfaction and affection for one's country, and to the anxiousness an outsider might feel in China. This approach allows an often-ironic humour to diffuse the exhibition, while permitting darker, more sardonic perspectives to emerge.