
饺子 (dumpling)

Elizabeth Tsui

Abstract

Offering a glimpse into the Chinese-diasporic experience, I create mundane artworks that elicit the sensation of reliving small joys from my life. In 饺子, or *dumpling*, in English, a still life drawing of a home-made Chinese pork dumpling is captioned with the word “dumpies!”. The image references a time when my siblings and I were trying to remember what the food is called in Mandarin (none of us are remotely good at the language) and, when that failed, we settled on calling them dumpies instead. The vast negative space of the drawing resonates with the simple design of the subject, gesturing to the sort of echo chamber that can happen when one is comfortable and used to being around folx with similar life experiences and worldviews. The memory of making dumplings in the kitchen with family is rather unremarkable as it was common in my community growing up. But as I embarked on my academic journey, I learned that the experience was alien to many of my peers and mentors – that sitting around a table preparing food with family wasn’t a universal practice. It was a small but disorienting realization. From this, it can be observed that language and food play integral roles as methods of retaining and preserving everyday culture among displaced communities.

Keywords

Mundane, diaspora, food, Chinese culture



dumpies!

Acknowledgments

Having made this piece, I'd like to thank my parents, John and Minzhi, and my sisters, Cecilia and Stacey Tsui, who are joining me in the nexus of cultures that make up our diasporic reality.

Author Biography

Elizabeth (Liz) Tsui (she/her) is an emerging artist and curator based in Tkaronto/Toronto who received her BFA in 2021 and is currently continuing her studies toward a MA in Art History at York University. Her artistic practice and research interests are grounded in technology, popular culture, and Asian diaspora. She is interested in the manipulation of humorous content and dissecting it to critique the cultural context that situates it as disposable culture, responding to the fluctuations of social media, and emulating fads. Her artwork is often derivative of memes: currently in the form of 3D print, ultimately casting the object in bronze. Memes are of particular interest as a virtual phenomenon because the content they translate is tailored to the user and their activities online. Using this information as a foundation, Liz seeks to uncover erased histories surrounding migrant and diasporic communities in Canada. As a multidisciplinary artist, Liz is constantly learning how to manipulate new types of media. Her most recent interest is in the integration of 3D printing, painting, and woodworking to create sculptural forms that blur the line of artworks and functional objects. Through this shift in perspective, she hopes to generate dialogue between the mundanity of her work and spectators to encourage a sense of intimacy with art objects.