

VISUAL ARTS

The familiar transformed into the mysterious

R.M. VAUGHAN**THE EXHIBITIONIST****An Te Liu at MKG127**

Until May 21, 127 Ossington Ave., Toronto; www.mkg127.com

The re-purposing of familiar, everyday objects into high-concept art commodities is at least a century-old practice. (Many would argue that crafters, who turn scraps of all sorts into decorative art, have been doing it forever – but that's another column.) Two new shows, one at Susan Hobbs Gallery and the other at MKG127, breathe gentle puffs (quite literally at MKG127) of new life into the practice by re-working objects so familiar, so tame and easily overlooked, they are almost abject.

Over at MKG127, An Te Liu's *Blast*, a room-sized sculpture made from dozens of partially gutted, whitewashed small appliances – everything from a Dustbuster, a soap dispenser, a toaster oven, an ice crusher and a clock radio to a collection of still-working fans – chugs, whirls and hypnotizes the over-oxygenated viewer.

Starting with a small tail of tangled appliances near the gallery floor, the sculpture spirals upward, an inverted whirlpool. As it grows wider, the array encircles a long, downward-pointed black pendant spotlight, recreating the effect of dropping a lit flashlight down a tiled well.

When fully activated, with the light bouncing upward off the floor and onto the bellies of Liu's disemboweled machines, and with all fans spinning, *Blast* is a white-noise dervish that effectively neutralizes the entire gallery; making conversation, even ex- and inhalation, difficult, or at least more than involuntary. You feel that you are being both drawn into a vortex and shoved away, pushed to the wall.

Deliciously disorienting but, counterintuitively, given the scrapyards materials, made with abundant, tidy care, *Blast* is both meditative and bombastic, blustery and still.

Liu, who recently sold a similar huge sculpture (one that was on view last summer at Toronto's Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art) to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, is the new crown prince of the gleaners.