

In British Columbia and Ontario, there are hundreds of thousands of international temporary migrant workers who labour on farmlands and in greenhouses. They come from Mexico, Jamaica and other Central American countries to work for eight months out of a year. Most of them return each year for many years.

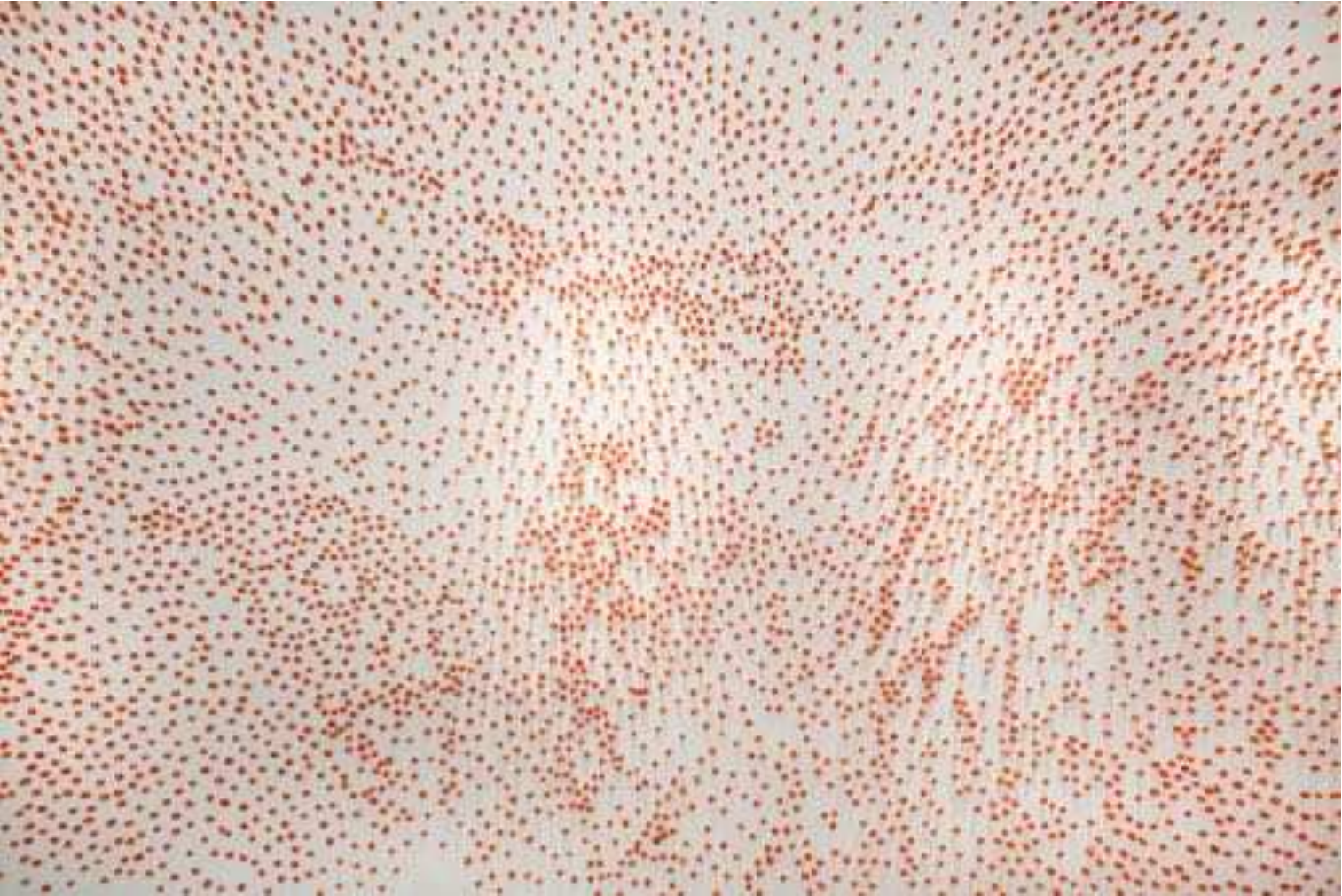
Gu Xiong made Invisible in the Light after conducting extensive research trips in British Columbia and Southern Ontario in Canada. He interviewed and photographed several temporary migrant workers across Canada. He found it intriguing and disconcerting that a package of tomatoes, for example, would be labelled “Product of Canada” without mention of, or reference to, how many countries were actually involved in the production of the tomatoes picked by people from the international community. The workers’ presence and involvement in the food production and packaging had been erased—made invisible. Through this installation, Gu Xiong remembers the workers’ forgotten histories and makes it visible. In addition to recognizing the global community involved in our food practices. Gu Xiong’s piece also remembers his own history working in the Chinese countryside during the Cultural Revolution.

The tomato first came to Gu’s attention in the hands of a Mexican migrant worker. The worker was staring intently at the tomato, turning it this way and that. Then he crushed it in his hand.

The tomatoes do not taste dark and bitter, even though they are produced from the silent and strained existence of people who are not represented on the labels. The pressure of isolation does not make them any less round, or diminish their brightness. But to crush these tomatoes is not to crush their artificially bright and happy existence—to crush these tomatoes is to transform that lonely existence into something acknowledged by the body of the tomato—the silence contained in the perfect forms let out in an explosion of pent-up anger, frustration and melancholy.

The tomatoes function as a symbol of the struggles that the workers go through in overcoming their intense psychological journey. The crushing of the tomatoes symbolizes freedom from the silence, isolation and barely endured existence to something solemn and stirringly beautiful. Their remains assert their presence—the smell, the wetness, and the splattering.

Gu Xiong



视而不见 / Invisible in the Light
多媒介装置
multi media installation
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