

# MAG

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## When Pigs Fly By Monika Burman

Chinese buffet, Indian buffet, Breakfast buffet – the idea of gorging yourself on food for as long as you want is an appealing thought, at least it is according to all the street signage advertising “All You Can Eat”. This philosophy doesn’t apply strictly to food; we have an equally bottomless appetite for material goods, and advertisers are pretty talented at presenting them on a smorgasbord too.

Karine Giboulo tackles these ideas in her installation work, “All You Can Eat” at Galerie SAS in Montreal. The installation features tower-like structures, constructed like the factory-dwelling buildings in many Chinese industrial parks. Within these boxy structures, Giboulo’s inhabitants go about their days: eating, sleeping, working, and socializing.

A keen observer of culture and contemporary issues, Giboulo visited the city of Shenzhen in southern China’s Guangdong province in December 2007, where she toured a cellular phone factory, the dormitory and cafeteria. While there, she decided she wanted to put a face to the “Made in China” label we see so often here in the West.

Giboulo spent months creating the pieces that make up the installation, sometimes working seven days a week, for very long hours. Each of the hundreds of figures is sculpted by hand from modeling clay, then baked in her oven, and then hand painted. It’s painstaking, time-consuming work that certainly contrasts with the efficient mass manufacturing industry represented in her work.

In Giboulo’s imagined world, employees work at a food processing factory, making ribs and wings from flying pigs raised on “Miracle Gros”, a humorous play on Miracle Grow plant food, and the French word “gros”, meaning “big”, “large” or “fat”. And speaking of fat, a companion piece aimed squarely at the Western world shows two overweight groundhogs having an eating contest inside a boxing ring, complete with a busty blonde waitress. Clearly a comical take on our consumption habits, Giboulo asks us to peer inside her installations and think about the “army of invisible workers [who] produce day and night”.

The figures have a child-like quality, seemingly malleable and moveable, situated like dolls in a great factory dollhouse. The obvious humour and whimsy is balanced by the gross proportions of the assembly line churning out masses of processed products that are served as meals to us. The work is partly playful parody, partly critique of consumer culture, but a full feast of creativity and fun surprises.

All images: Karine Giboulo, All You Can Eat (or detail of) Mixed media installation. 2008

“All You Can Eat” by Karine Giboulo  
Through January 31st, 2009  
Galerie SAS, Montreal, [www.galeriasas.com](http://www.galeriasas.com)

galerie SAS, montreal

