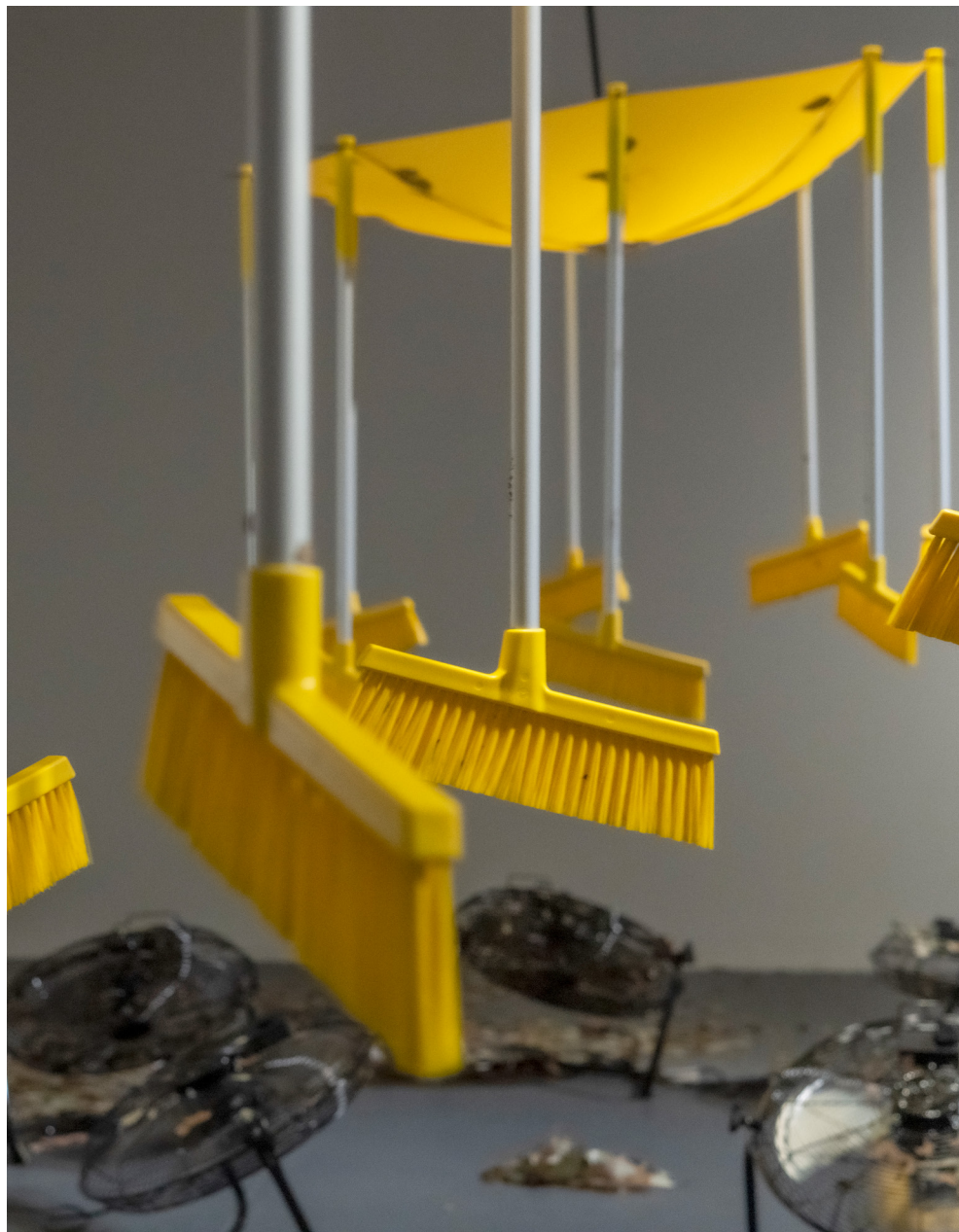




It's Going to Rain

Tielin Ding

September 18, 2025 - October 26, 2025

REAL
ART **WAYS**

About the Exhibition

Before a storm comes,
swirling vortices of air,
bring leaves floating and in motion.
Brooms, fans, umbrellas
gathering, murmuring
It's a party with flickering lights.
Yes, it's going to rain.

It's Going to Rain is a multimediu exhibition that reflects on the relationships between objects, environments, and their shared states of uncertainty.

John Cage asked, "When a truck passes by a music school or a factory, which is more musical?" Tielin Ding approaches his exhibition It's Going to Rain, with a similar spirit; pondering the buildup of energy before a storm and the tension that precedes a natural eruption. When does the storm truly begin?

The umbrella, a common motif in this exhibition, symbolizes protection and faith. The color yellow recurs throughout his practice. He considers the yellow lines on roads suggesting a sense of both continuation and separation. By focusing on the friction and pulse between things and their environments It's Going to Rain presents a look at the moments between safety and uncertainty, logic and whimsy.

Tielin is a wanderer, observer and mixed-media process-based artist interested in repetition of forms and movements; operation of chances and metaphors. In his installation works, he likes displacing objects, shifting their scales and relocating their context, aiming for building its own constellation with a leap of thought and a slow surprise.

Tielin holds the belief that "At the center of a mirage, is its transformation". "Chance favors a prepared mind." A lot of times, inspiration comes from his observation while wandering, while playing, while living. Sometimes, it can be mystic and improvisational. He has been very interested in drifting in the field of language and space, risking getting lost from point A to point B.



John Groo Photography

About the Artist

Born in 1996 in Chongqing, China. Tielin Ding is a wanderer, observer and mixed-media artist currently based in New York and Shanghai. He graduated from MFA in photography and related media at Parsons School of Design, The New School in NYC with a bachelor's background in architecture engineering at Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture. He exhibited his works at Site Santa Fe in New Mexico, Brand Library in California, Garrison Art Center/BAU Gallery/The FLAG Art Foundation in New York, Fort Wayne Museum of Art in Indiana, Noorderlicht International Photo Festival in the Netherlands and Reclaim Award in Germany. Past residency he attended includes Swatch Art Peace Hotel in Shanghai, Abbott Watts Photography Residency at Monson Arts, Nars Foundation Satellite Residency on Governors Island, Ellis-Beauregard Foundation residency, Millay Arts, VCCA and Volland Foundation.

It's Going to Rain

Essay by **Jared Quinton**

Emily Hall Tremain Associate Curator of Contemporary Art
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum

This September, I've had the good fortune to get to think about Tielin Ding's work twice, professionally, in close succession: once as guest curator of the Ely Center of Contemporary Art's annual open-call exhibition, *Conceptual Romance*, in which I selected Ding to participate, and now as the commissioned essayist for the artist's Real Art Award solo exhibition, *It's Going to Rain*, at Real Art Ways. As a curator who lives and works in the middle of Connecticut and is invested in the enduring relevance of conceptual art, it's gratifying that an artist whose practice testifies so smartly and humorously to this exact thing has works on view at two of the state's most adventurous contemporary art venues.

My recent familiarity with Ding's *A Walk with Traffic Stick* (2021), the site-responsive work he included in our New Haven exhibition, offered some guideposts for my experience with the exhibition at Real Art Ways. *Traffic Stick* is essentially a structured, improvisational installation. To make the work, Ding instructed the Ely Center to purchase commercially available sticks, typically used to demarcate construction zones and direct



A Walk with Traffic Stick (2021)

traffic flow in urban environments, and yellow powder. He traveled to the gallery and responded directly to its architecture using the materials. Ding walked along a long wall and left a winding trail of powder that traced his path. Then he used the sticks to inscribe irregular, drawing-like lines in the powder and left them leaning against the wall at regular intervals, where they stand as evidence of his performative action and seemingly invite the possibility of future activation. The whole thing is succinct, provisional, open-ended, and formally appealing. It doesn't purport to mean anything beyond the materials and gestures it contains.

I often say that the job of the artist today is not to come up with the next new thing, but rather to look back to art history and find small gaps to fill in or ideas to expand upon. Ding's work makes me think of some of my favorite performative works from the 1960s and '70s, by artists

like Joan Jonas and Richard Serra, who used readily available materials to make ephemeral action traces in galleries, on city streets, or in abandoned lots. Ding seems keenly aware of this legacy and finds room to play within it, infusing his own sense of absurdism as well as distinct formal choices, most notably his signature color, bright yellow. He also makes me think of the great Romanian conceptualist André Cadere, who was best known for his *Barres de bois* (*Bars of wood*) (1970–78), the striped wooden sticks he would carry around Paris in durational performances and occasionally install—without permission—in gallery exhibitions.



André Cadere walking with artwork, *Barre de bois rond*, Photo: Shunk-Kender/© J. Paul Getty Trust.

In *It's Going to Rain*, Ding retains his whimsical matter-of-factness while embracing a more maximalist, eccentric approach, and invites viewer interaction. The exhibition at Real Art Ways includes two new installations of inverted yellow umbrellas that hang from the ceiling and spin on motors. Yellow brooms are attached to their ribs, and two rings of fans on the floor blow dead leaves around the gallery and occasionally into the upturned umbrellas. More yellow brooms are offered for visitors to pick up and use, presumably to sweep the leaves into the path of the fans—an undeniably enjoyable, childlike activity—although explicit instructions are not offered. Three photo-based works hang on the walls: printed images of leaves (*Leaves*, 2025) and umbrella handle forms (*Psycho Rain*, 2025) that the artist has elaborated with colorful paint, and a striking, frontal self-portrait, in which the artist wears yellow sunglasses and poses beneath one of his yellow umbrellas. From the vantage of this latter image, Ding watches us as we move around the space.

What to make of this constellation of objects, images, and interactive elements? The intelligence of Ding's work lies in its seductive open-endedness. He presents us with objects that feel familiar and quotidian, inviting a feeling of instant comfort and recognition, and subjects them to modest transformations of context and scale, which allows a different, unexpectedly formal appreciation. The way Ding animates the umbrellas and brooms is humorous and absurd. It's also familiar in a different way, recalling pop cultural touchpoints like the dancing brooms in *Fantasia* or *Mary Poppins'* flying umbrella. The umbrellas also make me think about Traveler's Insurance and its iconic red umbrella logo, enshrined in a monument in downtown Hartford. The



John Groo Photography

invitation for us to interact literally, using the brooms, becomes a metaphorical invitation to inject our own subjectivity into the work.

It's Going to Rain calls to mind some other great 20th-century precedents, like Alexander Calder's Circus and elaborate hanging mobiles, and John Cage's durational, kinetic sound installations. Entering in dialogue with these pioneering artists, Ding seems interested in the play between chaos and control, form and energy. He creates an experience for his visitors that is multi-sensory and inescapably implicating. The umbrellas spin precisely on finely tuned, whirring motors, while the unpredictable movement of the crunchy dead leaves introduces an element of entropy that feels decidedly destabilizing. We are forced to use our eyes, minds, and bodies in equal measure.



Traveler's Insurance
Umbrella sculpture

In the text he has written to accompany the exhibition, Ding is playful and perhaps deliberately misleading in his use of language, offering an almost deconstructionist collage of words, phrases, and ideas. He describes himself as "interested in drifting in the field of language and space, risking getting lost from point A to point B." This elision between language and space—in other words, between the intellectual and the physical realms—offers a helpful cue for engaging the work. We can grasp for a meaning to graft onto it, but whether the components Ding has assembled cohere into a logical text is beside the point. There is great pleasure to be found in the challenge of accepting that the meaning of this work lies in sharing space and time with it, in using our own imaginations to try to access Ding's.



Self Portrait
pigment print, floater frame
2025



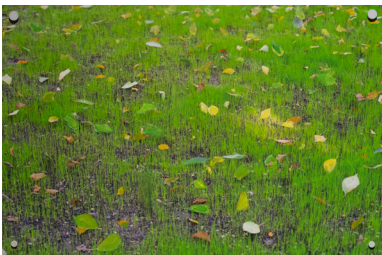
It's Going to Rain (#1)
motor, fan, leaves, brooms, umbrella
2025



Psycho Rain
acrylic and watercolor on print
2025



It's Going to Rain (#2)
motor, fan, leaves, brooms, umbrella
2025



Leaves
acrylic and oil pastel on print
2025



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Real Art Ways is a contemporary arts organization with a record of linking artists, innovation and community. Programs include visual arts, with exhibitions, public art projects, and artist presentations; cinema, with independent and international films; music; performance; literary events; community and educational **programming**.



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