

# The Boston Globe

Six degrees of innovation

By Cate McQuaid

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*Vanitas – A Study for Human Opera*, installation view at 808 Gallery, Boston

Wang's striking abstract paintings, tufted with yarn or creepily coated with hair and fur, pull you in with detail and color, and sometimes push you away with texture.

There's a story behind them: an unhappy marriage, infidelity, murder. The tale plays out in a video at the end of his exhibition — an imagistic narrative the artist has deftly woven from two novels: Theodor Fontane's "Effi Briest," and Émile Zola's "Thérèse Raquin." The video, filled with intrigue, critiques naturalism versus realism in 19th-century literature. One character in Wang's

story, Joseph, is the fictional artist of the works in the show, including photos and a performance art video.

Wang, who grew up in Beijing and has a bachelor's degree in biology, ditched science to become an artist. When he got to BU, he pushed himself beyond painting.

"I've read French philosopher Guy Debord's concept of spectacle," he says. "I thought I should be using all myself to make a spectacle, a system, everything functional in its own space." Wang's spectacle is his installation, packed with story, theory, performance, and technique.