



LURE: Installation Art by Beili Liu

Lure: Chinese-American Contemporary Artist Beili Liu Explores the Ties that Bind Lovers

Chinese Culture Center

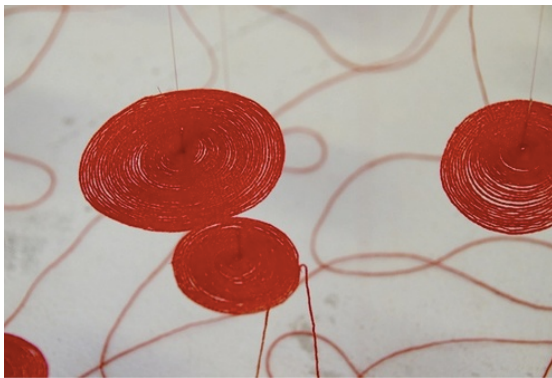
750 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA 94108

May 9, 2008 - July 5, 2008



Lure is the inaugural exhibit in the Chinese Cultural Center's new *Xin Rui* (fresh, sharp) series, showcasing contemporary Chinese-American artists. Beili Liu, who teaches in Michigan, has a national reputation —she recently created an installation for the Djerassi Foundation in Woodside, for example—and her elegant, beautiful work often treats Chinese-American biculturalism, drawing on tradition, but in a

contemporary and cosmopolitan manner. *Lure*, the large installation that dominates the gallery, is a swath of red flowerlike discs suspended mid-air, quivering with the faintest breeze; the viewer stands as if in a field of swaying poppies, or by a pond of undulating lily pads. Each of the thousands of flowers is a spiral of red thread coiled around a needle and hung from the ceiling; the loose ends of each flower coil dangle onto the floor in whorls and loops, but each is connected with another flower, illustrating the Yuan fen belief that lovers are connected from birth by the old man under the moon, Yue Lao, by an invisible red thread and that they will inevitably be united, regardless of obstacles.



Male-female connection is depicted as well in *Bound*: on opposite walls, pins delineate male and female shapes; from each pin a red thread flows across thirty or so feet of floor to its counterpart across the gallery. A similar linking of opposites is symbolized in *Origin*, a wall piece made of folkloric spirit money, traditionally burned to be sent to departed ancestors; here, spools of coiled money, both burned and intact,

are arranged in a great circle like a planet half in light and half in shade, emblematic of *yang* and *yin*, female and male.

Philosophical detachment and an appreciation for transience inform *Tie-Untie* and Liu's burned-paper drawings. In the former, a woman's hands (Liu's, seen in projected video) unravel floating red threads inside a nestlike cavity of coiled white threads; it's a contemporary symbol of *Jing hua shui yue*, Mirror flower water moon, the unreal, beautiful and unattainable. In the latter, made with lighted incense sticks, we see Liu's familiar coiled floral shapes, but here connoting flowers, seeds, landscape and natural forces — *Yun yan*, Cloud smoke, a world of evanescent beauty.

—DeWitt Cheng

(*Images, from top to bottom: Beili Liu, *Lure*, May 9 – July 5, 2008; Chinese Culture Center, *Lure* installation photo, 2008, courtesy of the Artist, photo by Beili Liu. Beili Liu, *Lure*, May 9 – July 5, 2008; Chinese Culture Center, *Lure* installation detail, 2008, courtesy of the Artist, photo by Beili Liu. Beili Liu, *Lure*, May 9 – July 5, 2008; Chinese Culture Center, *Lure* installation photo, 2008, courtesy of the Artist, photo by Beili Liu.)

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