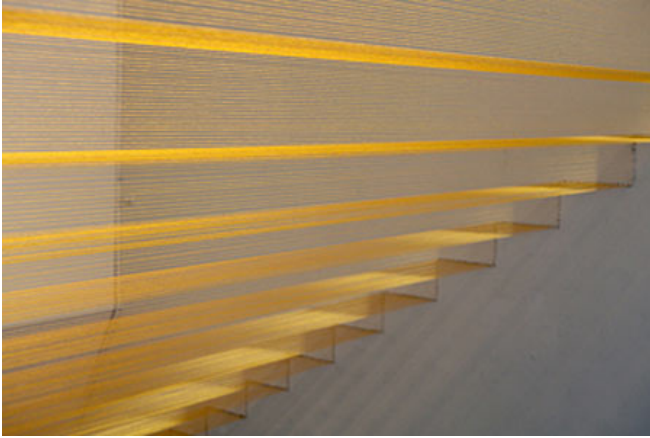


Editorial:

Beili Liu

at Form/Space Atelier, Seattle, Washington

Review by Adrianna Grant March 2011



Beili Liu, "Gold Stairs," cotton thread, staple, 13 1/2 x 15 1/4 x 10".

Using approximately three miles of mustard yellow thread, **Beili Liu** has created a light infused second staircase. Stapled across the stairwell at Form/Space Atelier, "Gold Stairs" is installed just above head height. Move in relation to this piece and light glimmers against its intense hue. Descend the steps and the whole zig-zag appears to ripple. The shape of the work itself and the play of light across it compel you to descend the stairs and ascend them again. (Hope for sun when you visit, as the gallery is lit with tall windows, and sunlight performs its own magic on this piece.) Hundreds, thousands of parallel lines will shimmer before your eyes.

Liu has created a lovely way to deconstruct the architecture of a very modestly scaled space and put it back together again. Her seemingly simple, site-specific work offers an idealized view of the gallery's architecture. With the exhibition space measuring in at thirteen and a half feet wide by ten feet high by more than fifteen feet long, this is no small accomplishment. Stapled into opposite walls at seven feet, two inches above the gallery's 18 wooden steps, the yellow suspended staircase acts as a delicate wavy mirror.

This is a scrappy gallery space, occupying an entranceway and a stairwell to one door that remains closed, a storage space covered in burlap, and a tiny, dark room that contains a television and a couch. Liu expands that perimeter. Step in off of the street and the first thing you'll encounter is "Taken," a tangle of wicker suspended from the ceiling. This loose, looping ball of thin wooden reeds contains half circular curls that repeat themselves

over and over, forming an airy near-sphere measuring approximately six feet in diameter. The reed (wicker) has been dyed brown, and is secured in place with a series of glinting, near-invisible lines of monofilament. "Taken" possesses an organic form, but is not intended to move with the draft generated by a passing observer. It's a complex, open knot that seems very carefully constructed, with one curve mimicking another, first opening one way, and then the opposite. Despite its airiness the work possesses a sizable heft.

Sited in the room downstairs is a two and a half minute video loop entitled "Burn." The digital video shows a large cone of incense used to burn a sheet of wax paper. The cone is inserted into the blackened holes it creates, generating a slick of melting wax as the paper disintegrates into flame. Flakes of paper fall as more and more of the paper is allowed to burn. One craves a more intimate look at the materiality of the work, which the other two pieces possess so very much of.

The title of the exhibition, "Extent," seems to refer to the stretches of thread and lengths of wicker used to assemble the sculptures. It appears in fact to reference the tangible effort put forth to construct these delicate installations. "Golden Stairs" and "Taken" are two thoughtful, well-constructed pieces that illustrate the artist's ability to occupy an unusual space in a way that invites a physical reaction. Standing next to "Taken," one sizes it up like another body in the room, while "Golden Stairs" inspires climbing.