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Random Thoughts on "Thread-winding"

Tian-miao LIN 林天苗

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Random Thoughts on "Thread-Winding"

Lin Tianmiao

What was most interesting about this project was the process of winding bundles of cotton thread into several thousand, ping-pong sized balls. This experience really brought about a change in both the friends who helped my and myself. This was beyond any expectation I had when I first came up with the idea of doing such a piece. The physical aspect of the work made me so tired that my back was permanently sore. Some of my friends even said to me in jest: "Tianmiao, what have we ever done to you to deserve this?" What is true is that individual characters were really revealed through this simple and tedious action. Some people felt calm and relaxed; some tortured and unable to bear it; some of my friends became puzzled whilst others were impatient, and some even seemed bewitched and unable to stop. Beneath the exterior of this seemingly mild and feminized behaviour was hidden an inexplicable sense of threat and expansion. When the large number of balls of thread are draped from the mattress of the bed and spread all over the ground, they immediately turn into something associated with maleness - most obviously sperm. Showing the unceasing action of thread-winding, the video image inside the pillow reminds people of the original form of the thread.

A steel needle, 12-15 centimeters in length, is sharp, cold and threatening. But when 20,000 such needles are closely stuck into the mattress, they lose their original and take on the *nature* appearance of animal fur spread on the bed, warm and soft. Such transference of the nature of objects gives rise to a whole new idea.

The giant-sized -men's paper trousers (15 meters long), when densely pinned with needles suddenly become impotent and desexed, deprived of all previous male authority and power; like a general in the bathroom. Again, it's a kind of softening of a hard image.

When I was actually working on this piece, the feeling of the contrast and transference between all the opposites (not just male and female) was accentuated more clearly and strongly than before. I tried to explore the subtle relationship of things in contrast, the conditions necessary for their shift from one aspect to another; big and small; gathering and scattering; aggression and withdrawal; harshness and tenderness; proliferation and reduction; male and female...

Translated by Dong Wei