

Silent Threads

20 Jan - 24 Feb 2024

Artists

Gao Rong 高蓉

Yin Xiuzhen 尹秀珍

Faerie

2/19 Wellington Street, Chippendale NSW 2008, Australia | www.redbaseart.com

REDBASE
contemporary art space

Silent Threads

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REDBASE proudly presents a group exhibition by
three women artists from China and Indonesia

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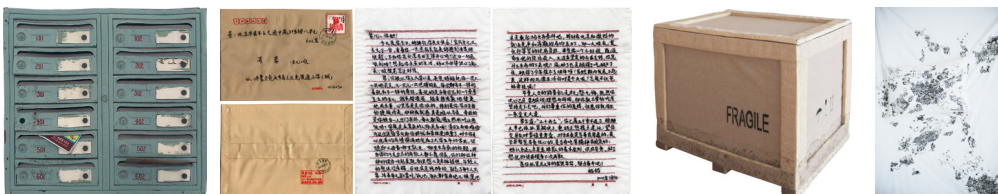
Thread-making and threadwork is among women's finest expressions of the mastery in skill and artistry, and from ancient civilization to modern society exquisite weaving, embroidery, and handicrafts have both transformed homes into houses of art and frequently became mediums of economic currency. With the practice thriving across countless societies and shaping cultural heritage, we at Redbase cannot help but ask: what is fundamentally about threadwork that makes it such a force of spirit and instinct for survival, imagination and identity? And how should we, as a gallery, best capture and display its hidden quiet of attitude, intent and process, which on close inspection, can be deafening?

Silent Threads is an exhibition presenting thread-making practice emphasising the unsaid. Undisclosed words, feelings and narratives concealed within artworks once intertwined in the hands of three female artists: Gao Rong, Yin Xiuzhen and Faerie. You will experience Gao Rong's beautiful letter: a conspicuous balancing act between an invitation for transgression with a warm permission to unfold and renew the past; Yin Xiuzhen's comment on the modernisation of female labour, and what happens to the associated stored memories as the proverbial suitcase is closed and put onto its next journey. Finally, you enjoin with Faerie as she finds her path as an emerging artist, navigating the various facets of the archetypical relationship between mother and daughter in a female hero's journey. This exhibition ultimately constructs narratives about the interwoven growth and absence of interconnectivity between personal stories and place, and viewers are invited to quieten their minds so to be fully present with these extraordinary artworks.

Gao Rong 高蓉

Initially taught embroidery by her grandmother, Gao Rong now safeguards native cross-stitching folk art techniques of Shaanxi Province. Discreetly weaving her life story and subtle illusions in how reality is but an interpretation of the relationship between object and time, her art commonly appear as an obsession to a singular moment: hyper-real home décor capturing an iconic time and place, and thus embedding a narrative to that moment. *Mailbox* (2011) is a beautiful example of Gao Rong: it is a perfect replica of her apartment's letterbox, with distinctive but unique blemishes meticulously sewn. A flawless copy of her mother's handwritten letter is encased in a slotted envelope; left undisturbed for 13 years. Thus, just like her labour the letterbox goes far beyond performing the function of an 'act of service': both are rather storytellers and Gao Rong leaves you, the viewer, to make the choice on whether to open that envelope.

In a further glimpse into her daily life in Beijing, *After the Rain: Shipping Crate* (2013) captures 21 st July, 2013, when the rain soaked and weathered a shipping crate and the artist was simply in the moment to bear witness. Similarly, *Water Stain: The Bed* (2014) captures the mould and spots on her bed sheet and pillow. Both works are narratives to the quiet determinism in the notion of transience, with organic time facing the rapid change in Beijing's relentless growth and demolition.



Yin Xiuzhen 尹秀珍

“Clothing has feelings: it has a language that connects time and history.” – Yin Xiuzhen

Yin Xiuzhen's *Portable City: Sydney* (2004) is a piece demonstrating the economic function and symbolism of fabric, intricately weaving the story of place and memory along with a socio-economic critique. Produced for the 2004 Biennale of Sydney, the artist sewn and sculpted miniature representations of Sydney's iconic buildings into a standard suitcase, encasing memories of a city from the collected textiles of keepsake souvenirs. Born in 1963, Yin Xiuzhen now often explores the past and its relation to cultural identity, and in 1995 she began combining 30 years of her own clothing and personal objects with her father's suitcase, to form the series *Portable City*: with over 40 textile cities sewn into airport check-in suitcases.

The *Portable City* series is a metaphor for the idea of the 'portable home', a critique against the traditional notion of 'domesticity' and its relationship to fixed dwellings, underscoring the dynamic aspects of mobile architecture, urbanism and globalisation: it is a new narrative of women's sense of geography. For example, commonly but incorrectly associated with domesticity, threadwork now extends far beyond the confines of the home and is instead an extraordinarily large economic participant in the globalised textile industry, where female labour is allocated disparately across factories, towns and cities. As these women journey for work and adopt a new nomadic culture of traversing this urbanism outside their homes, what is the role of newly collected memories and how should they be packaged and stored? The suitcase is thus a quintessential symbol of both the miniature home and the necessity for travel in the context of economic labour: transporting to different destinations to be reopened at a new place while bringing past experience and memories along.

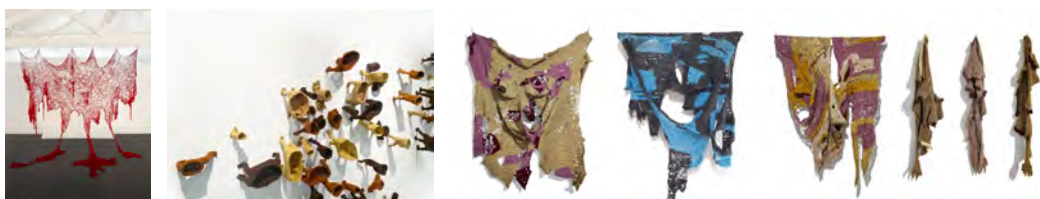


Faelerie

In *Tears of Red* (2022), a loose-fitting mass knitted piece of three meters in length and width, forms a wave of fields, shapes and volume. Draped from the ceiling, it resembles a red body of water and is a symbol from the cry of sorrow and the yearning and search for meaning. *Journey* (2023) then hangs from the walls with an army of two hundred crochets feet marching in all directions.

Faelerie comes from a family deeply immersed in textiles; she learned to sew from her mother, who inherited the skill from her grandmother and forebearers during Dutch colonial times. Embracing the power of silence to recall the past, and entwining joys and disappointments, the ritual of repetitive and time-consuming knitting prompts reflection, but also allows for interjections by life's questions, as one marches along in search for purpose and meaning. To Faelerie, if depicted as a colony of ant-like fabric feet, life is a journey seeking elusive truths amid boundlessness. And yet ants must also face the archetypal relationship between the queen mother and daughter: a silent story awashed in the collective memory of all ants. Thus she notes the poem *Laut* (The Sea) by Sanento Yuliman (the late Indonesia's foremost art historian) who speaks of life as stepping into a dark ocean: "when it's silent, the sea begins to roar in our ears – a sound of the noise of two enemies engaged in eternal battle. The sea serves as a symbol of enduring darkness."

Faelerie was born in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1994 and graduated from the Faculty of Fine Art, ISI, Yogyakarta in 2013. Notable works by Faelerie include *Menghias Luka* (2023) and *Skin Off* (2023) which detail the female body and its wounded odyssey, along with experiences of trauma and healing. Through crocheted depictions of human tissues with spatters of blood, hands and female breasts scarred by holes and tears, she invites an unfiltered portrayal of her bodyscape, where the healing process is a form of survival; and life's poetry is but the hope for triumph over challenges.

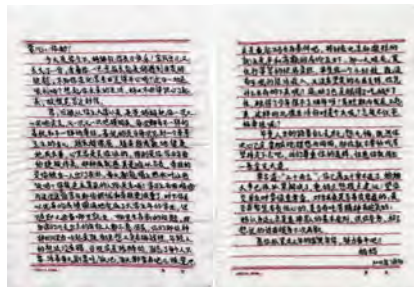
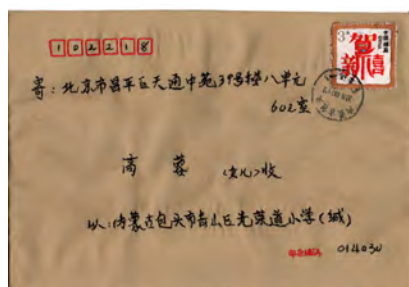




Gao Rong

Mailbox

Embroidery, cloth and foam
68 x 70 x 21cm, 2011



English translation of the letter within *Mailbox*

My dearest Rong: How are you?

Today is your birthday, Mother wishes you a happy birthday! My baby girl you've grown one year older, and Mother feels overjoyed to have seen you grow up little by little. I wonder if you had a happy birthday in Beijing? Is everything going well these days? Thinking of your future life, Mother couldn't help but worry again, hence I'm writing this letter.

Rong, ever since you started university, your father and I have seen you off and welcomed you back home time and again. Each time brings different joys and concerns. The joy is seeing you grow more beautiful and healthy, and especially when we hear about your success in your studies, which brings us indescribable pride. The concern is you are far from home, and alone. Do you eat and drink well? Are you facing any problems at school? Can you adapt and fit in to a new environment and the complex interpersonal relationships?

After sending you back to Beijing this time, our worries and concerns have deepened. Nowadays, although you have successfully completed your five years of university studies with excellent grades, you face new challenges regarding where to work and live, because young people like yourself are reluctant to return to their hometowns. Your various reasons sound both ideal and challenging: young people's ideas are correct, but they don't know that the reality is harsh and cruel. Don't forget the basic living condition is to have

a meal everyday and a place to sleep. Especially under the fierce competition for employment and high housing pressure in Beijing, with the huge financial burden of food, clothing, housing, and transportation. You as a young woman without significant income or strong support, how will you survive and develop? Even if you succeed, you can only secure food but not housing. If you can take care of this year, you will not be able to protect next year! If you struggle in the short term, when will this kind of life for Beipiao (Beijing Drifters) come to an end? It's natural for your parents to worry.

Life's journey is yours to walk without regrets. Since you are determined to achieve your ideals, don't be afraid of hardship and persevere! We respect your choices and hope you'll find great success.

As the saying goes, "one should stand firm by the age of thirty". You are not far from thirty, and it is time to resolve major marriage issues as soon as possible. Dad still wants to give some advice. He hopes you carefully consider when dating a boyfriend: whether the person is kind in character; whether he is wise and responsible; whether he has the spirit to endure hardship and the ability to survive. We believe These are basic principles for choosing a man. Just our opinion.

There is much more to say, let's talk about it later!

Mother
2011,1,16



Gao Rong

After the Rain - Shipping Crate

Embroidery, cloth, wooden board and sponge

76 x 74 x 92 cm, 2013



Gao Rong

Water Stain - The Bed

Embroidery, cloth, cotton and latex

210 x 132 x 20 cm, 2014



Ym Xiuzhen

Portable City - Sydney

Suitcase, used clothes and magnifying glass
82 x 140 x 90 cm, 2004



Faelerie

Tears of Red

Polyester

360 x 300 x 225 cm, 2022



Faerie

Merenda Tubuh, Menghias Luka

Crochet and beads

88 x 117 cm, 2023



Faerie

Silent Poetry

Crochet

100 x 140 cm, 2022



Faerie

Memorabilia

Crochet

100 x 140 cm, 2022



Faerie

Skin Off

Handmade crochet with polyester
Variable Dimensions, 2023



Faerie

Langkah Langkah (Journey)
200 pieces of crochet
Variable Dimensions, 2023

Exhibition View



