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Huidi Xiang Reimagines the Fairy Tale at YveYANG Gallery

Transforming classic imagery into a critical exploration of work and production.

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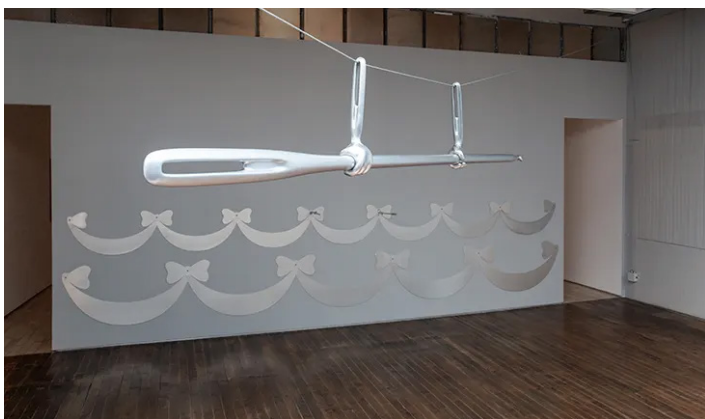
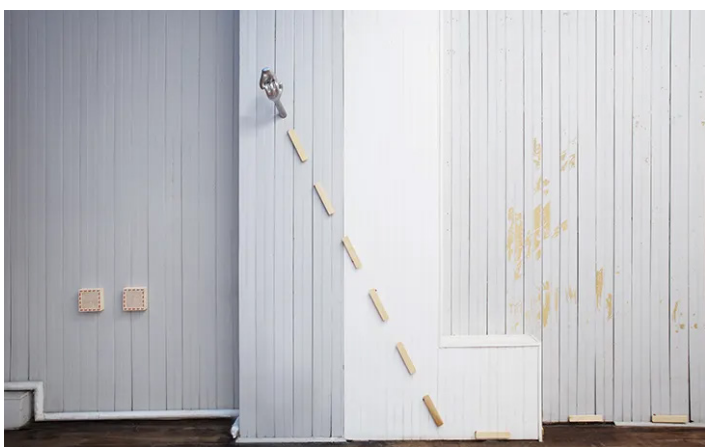
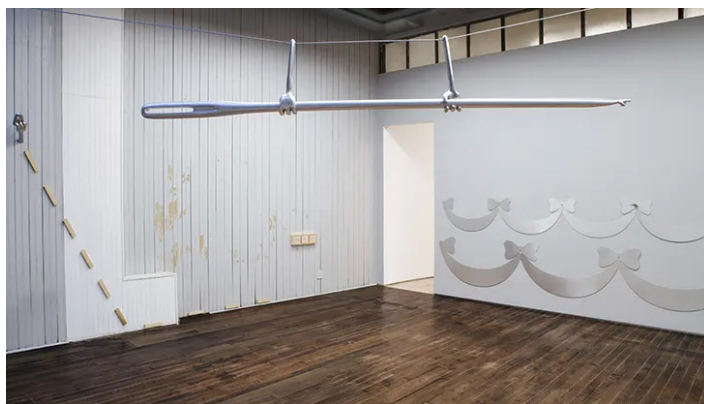
Huidi Xiang, "goes around in circles, til very, very dizzy," Installation view, Courtesy of YveYANG Gallery

Huidi Xiang's solo exhibition "*goes around in circles, til very, very dizzy*," now on view at YveYANG Gallery from January 10 to March 1, 2025, offers a compelling, multi-layered critique of late-stage capitalism, one that fuses the whimsy of cartoon consumerism with the often invisible labor underpinning our everyday consumption.

Upon entering the transformed back room of YveYANG Gallery, a space steeped in Tribeca's industrial history and once home to a sewing machine factory, visitors are immediately struck by a giant sewing needle suspended from the ceiling. This imposing installation serves as both a literal and figurative thread, weaving together disparate narratives of labor, art, and popular culture. The needle is not solitary: it is animated by the deft, four-fingered hands of rodent seamstresses, their design an unmistakable nod to the animated aesthetics of Disney's *Cinderella* (1950). Yet, while the familiar scene of animals laboriously crafting a gown for a princess is immediately recognizable, Xiang's interpretation is anything but nostalgic.

"Imagine that I'm one of those mice," Xiang muses, inviting viewers to identify with the marginalized labor force typically rendered invisible in fairy tales and real-world factory floors alike. For Xiang, the animated rodent workers symbolize the idealization and erasure of manual labor. In her reimagining, these tiny artisans are not merely whimsical characters but poignant figures echoing the real historical struggles of workers, reminiscent of the tragic legacy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory just blocks away.

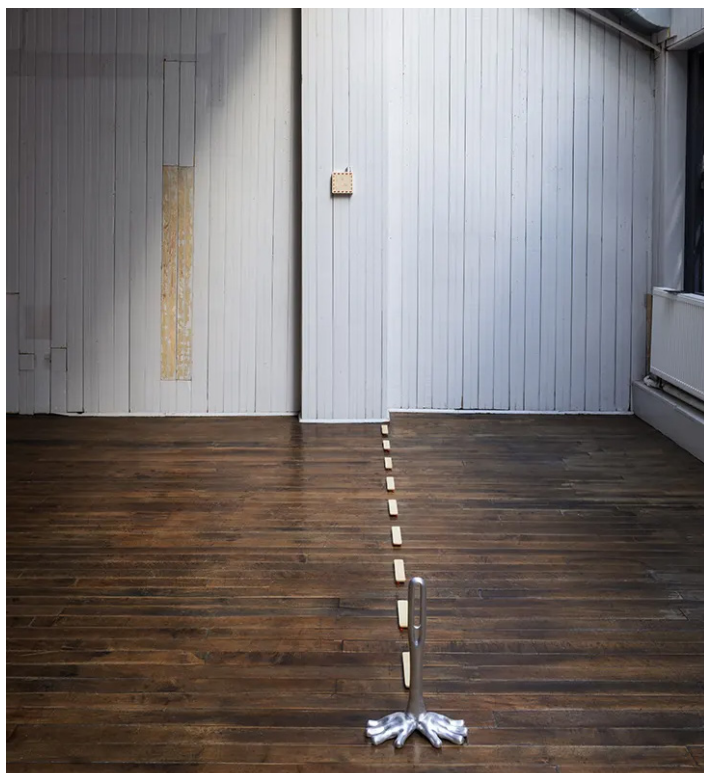
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The exhibition's spatial arrangement deepens its narrative. A low-riding gown's hem and a shelf of tiny aluminum alloy hats, eerily reminiscent of the headgear donned by the film's mouse workers, line the gallery walls, merging nostalgia with industrial materiality. Elsewhere, disembodied hands, ghost-like yet meticulous, trace dotted lines along the floor and walls, blurring the boundaries between the animate and the abstract. Here, Xiang's work extends into a meditation on the dichotomy of creative labor: the tangible, physical effort of the unseen worker versus the ethereal, almost magical production of value and consumption.

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Xiang’s practice, informed by her early encounters with bootleg DVDs of classic Disney films in 1990s Chengdu, is both personal and political. Her engagement with the Disney canon is not an ode to childhood fantasies but a critical reappraisal of how popular culture obscures the hard labor that makes these fantasies possible. The artist’s earlier work, such as the defeated broom from *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* showcased at Art Basel Hong Kong in 2024, already hinted at this delicate interplay between exhaustion and idealization. In “goes around in circles, til very, very dizzy,” Xiang expands this inquiry into an ambitious, immersive installation that questions who is seen, who is celebrated and who is forgotten.

In its ambitious scale and layered symbolism, the exhibition challenges the viewer to reconsider the everyday artifacts of production and consumption. Xiang’s deconstructed reimagining of a beloved fairy tale becomes a powerful allegory for modern labor, where creativity, exploitation, and the erasure of the worker converge in a dizzying, circular narrative.