

The idea came to her after a dream. In it, she moved through the streets of a strange city, lit by yellow streetlamps. It was nighttime; there was no one else there. The streets were narrow and cobbled. It seemed like a kind of residential area – but all the windows were shuttered. Still, she felt no fear. Her legs moved of their own accord, towards the place she knew she was going. At the end of one of the streets she saw a piece of red yarn. She picked it up at the end and began to follow it. As she went, she noticed more and more strands of yarn, all the same red. She moved, closer to the knotted tangle in the centre, a tangle that engulfed everything around it. With ease, she entered into it. A safe, quiet place.

When she woke up, the feeling lingered. All that quietness, the soft, knotted walls holding her fast. But it wasn't enough – this space, all this yarn woven together – it needed to contain more. At her kitchen table she began to sketch it out. The piece would be in a room, a large room with high ceilings. The room would have a darkened passage leading to it, lit by small, golden lights. The main room would be brighter – people would need to see, after all, she couldn't have them tripping over anything. The most dense part of the yarn would be at the centre. People would need to be able to move through the rest of it, somehow, to get to this middle bit (*the heart* she labelled it). This was where dream-logic wouldn't work. She would need to construct some sort of structure, made of wood maybe, or metal, something to hold the yarn, to make pathways through it. But the paths would need to feel a little constricted, at least in places. There needed to be the sense that you were moving through the structure with some difficulty. A sense of near-unbearable density. A hint of claustrophobia, at least in some places – that the walls were closing in on you.

And the heart, wrapped in all that red yarn, it needed to be glowing and beating. It needed to feel real – warm, human. It needed to be sublime. The whole thing had to be bigger, bigger than just a room. A warehouse, that was what she needed. And in the rest of the maze, along the way to the heart, that's where everything else had to be contained. *Everything*. Illuminated corners in which people could sit and rest, could shut their eyes and be transported. There would be darkened corners where people could come close to one another, maybe even touch one another. Places where the boundaries between self and other melted. Where people could become whatever they wanted.

There needed to be places too where people began to feel lost. The edge of fear – *how will I ever leave this place?* There needed to be some moments of disorientation. Perhaps a turn into a darkened space, completely dark, with loud noises playing. The sounds of crowds, the sound of a riot. In the air, the scent of smoke. A quieter fear sometimes. The sound of weeping. Lost objects from your childhood, knit into the walls. Reminders of heartbreak. But just as your heart rate begins to rise, just as the breathing begins to accelerate, there, a pinprick of light saying come, come this way, and as you walk towards it it opens into a comforting vastness, the red fuzzy walls falling away from you, now decorated with garlands of flowers. The scent of rain. The sounds of a sighing meadow. You are okay, a disembodied voice says. You shut your eyes. It feels like a phantom hand is stroking your head, like they are taking your hands in theirs. And still, still they lead you to the beating, living thing at the centre of it all. As you walk you think – am I ready to meet it? But you keep moving.

Tension and release – that’s what it was all about. That’s what everything was about, anyways, and she knew that this installation needed to capture that – *everything*. Throughout it all, sometimes stronger, sometimes faint, sometimes nearly imperceptible, the heart, pumping light out through the circuits of yarn, light that sometimes snarled, or dimmed completely. Not just tension and release though – good art needed to be universal, and to be universal, first it needed specificity.

So it wasn’t just *lost objects from childhood and reminders of heartbreak and sounds of crowds and feeling lost and feeling found again*. They needed to be *lost objects from her childhood, like the little blue blanket she carried around with her until it became too dirty and her mother threw it away, and the plastic baby doll that was missing a leg and was left in the park, and maybe all the hair of her Barbie dolls she had cut off, gathered into a ball and photographs of her lovers, of her with them taken at the exact moments that they were happiest and most unaware of the endings of things, looking away from the camera, at each other with bright, private smiles and sounds of crowds that had made her feel frightened, overwhelmed, that had made her chest feel constricted, like danger waited for her around every corner, but actually, they were just normal crowds, just people like her, walking and talking, laughing, shopping, and they posed no threat really, no threat*

*at all and times she had felt lost, not just physically but also existentially, that is, sometimes the world became strange and unfamiliar to her in an instant and the loneliness of this feeling made her feel like a great void was opening within her, a feeling which was too hungry to be fed and being with her friends and laughing and drinking good wine and eating olives and salted almonds and the warmth that surrounded them then, around the table where they would sit for hours, like they were wrapped in a golden light only they could see.*

She knew now that it would take her years, maybe a decade, maybe longer, to make such a work. This didn't discourage her; she understood why the work was important, why it had to be made.

People would come and they would walk through, lingering in some places, rushing through others, closer and closer to the middle, towards her beating heart. And they would be there, with her, and her with them, standing in the same light, until all the boundaries between them began to blur, until, in the tangled centre, they were all there, together.