

# JEN BERVIN: *SHIFT ROTATE REFLECT, SELECTED WORKS (1997-2020)*

University Galleries of Illinois State University

GRADES 7-12

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

*Shift Rotate Reflect*, the first survey of work by American poet and artist Jen Bervin, presents twenty-three solo and collaborative projects, artist's books, embroideries, videos, drawings, prints, and a performance created from 1997- 2020. The selected works demonstrate the interdisciplinary range of Bervin's long-term research on topics including legacies of women artists and writers, relationships between text and textiles, and abstractions of language and landscape.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jen Bervin is a poet and visual artist who works at the intersections of art and scholarship, text and textiles, science, technology, and craft. Her projects have been exhibited both nationally and internationally. Bervin has authored eleven books and artist's books.

## ART PROJECT 1: Textual Amends

### Materials:

Newsprint, graphite, paper (preferably thick paper), edited papers with mark-ups, pencil, tape, needle, and thread.

### Inspiration:

What similarities can you find between Bervin's use of text in *The Dickinson Composites Series* and *Concordance Omission: No*? How do these works relate to one another conceptually?

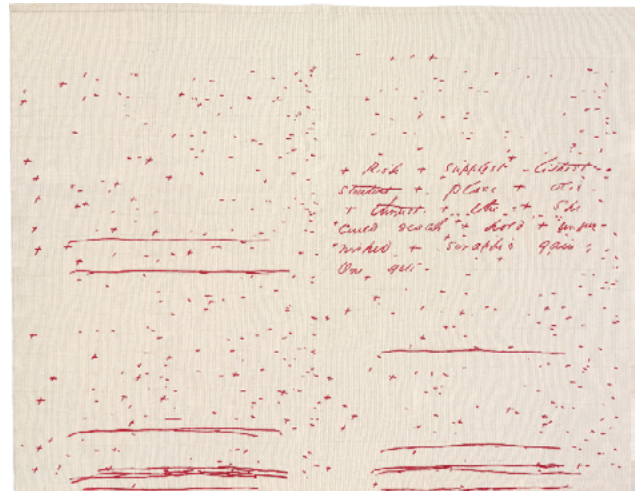
### Project:

1. Cover one side of the newsprint using your graphite.
2. Place the graphite side of your newsprint face-down on your paper and tape the top so it doesn't slide around.
3. Arrange the edited papers with mark-ups face-up on top of the newsprint. You may want to tape this down as well.
4. Use a pencil to trace over any marks, words, or phrases added to or removed from the marked-up document.
5. Lift your graphite paper to reveal the image below.

How did you choose what to trace and what to leave out? How does this process relate to *The Dickinson Composites Series* and *Concordance Omission: No*?

### Extension:

Using a needle and thread, sew through your paper to highlight the marks and/or words you transferred. Try creating two works using this process and sew them together like an open booklet.



Jen Bervin, *The Composite Marks of Fascicle 28* from *The Dickinson Composites Series*, 2004-2008. Cotton and silk thread on cotton batting backed with muslin. 6ft x 8 ft. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Lyndsie Schlink.

# ART PROJECT 2: Unconventional Script

## Materials:

A text of your choice, pencil, scissors, paper, and glue.

## Inspiration:

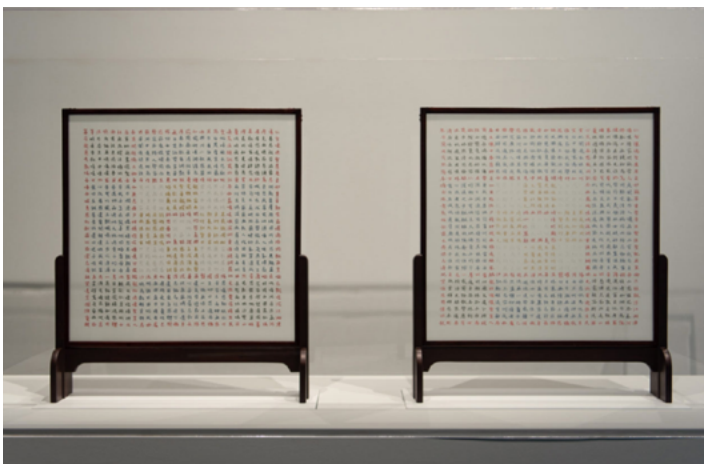
[The Desert](#), [Silk Poems](#), and [Xuanji tu](#), or [Su Hui's Picture of the Turning Sphere](#) utilize text in unique ways. Analyze the arrangement of text in each poem. How is the text arranged? How is reading each of these texts different and how is it similar? Can you tell where the text begins or ends? What purpose do you think the arrangement of text serves in each work? Learn more about each work at [jenbervin.com](http://jenbervin.com).

## Project:

1. Select or create a text of your choice. This could be a poem, essay, page, or paragraph from a book, transcribed monologue/dialogue, or song lyrics.
2. Consider a theme to focus on (such as change, memories, joy, or relationships) and thoughtfully select words that relate to this theme to cut out from your text.
3. Arrange the words to form a poem in a shape or pattern found in nature, as seen in the movement of silkworms in *Silk Poems* and the movement of celestial bodies in *Xuanji tu*. Try to avoid creating a clearly defined beginning or end to your arranged text. An alternate option is to cover up text on the page to create your pattern, leaving behind words related to your theme.
4. Read the text from different starting points. How does the arrangement affect the meaning of the text?

## Extension:

Create an artwork inspired by your unconventional script or design an artwork that includes your unconventional script. Consider documenting various ways your unconventional script can be read, similar to [Rory Ou's](#) documentation of different paths for reading *Xuanji tu*.



*Su Hui's Xuanji tu* (840) and *Su Hui's Xuanji tu* (841), 2020. Double-sided silk embroideries of Su Hui's poem framed between two sheets of glass, on support base. 34 x 31 x 11 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Lyndsie Schlink.



Jen Bervin, *Silk Poems* print on silk (detail), 2016. Digital print on silk fabric, suspended on aluminum tube. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Lyndsie Schlink.