On view at University Galleries of Illinois State University from August 15 through December 13, 2020. Curated by Kendra Paitz, Director and Chief Curator

Exhibition website
Exhibition documentation

Jen Bervin

Silk Poems
2016
Multimedia installation in 3 parts

For Silk Poems, Bervin partnered with scientists at Tufts University to fabricate a nanoimprinted poem on a silk biosensor. Her silk research spanned thirty international nanotechnology and biomedical labs, textile archives, medical libraries, and sericulture sites. The full project is comprised of the nanoimprinted poem on a microscope for viewing; a video documenting Bervin’s research and process by Charlotte Lagarde; and the Silk Poems book featuring Bervin’s poem written from the perspective of a silkworm and composed in a six-character chain corresponding to the DNA structure of silk.

Jen Bervin
Silk Poems film
2016
Silk film with poem nanoimprinted in gold spatter
3.5 inch silk film in 5 x 5 inch acrylic frame on microscope
Courtesy of the artist
Charlotte Lagarde
*Jen Bervin’s Silk Poems*
2016
HD video with sound, 9:16 minutes
Courtesy of the artist

This video follows Jen Bervin’s research and the fabrication process for *Silk Poems.*

Jen Bervin
*Silk Poems book*
2017
Nightboat books

Jen Bervin
*7S (Seven Silks)*
2018
Archival box with foil-backed label, two prints on silk fabric, signed copy of Silk Poems by Jen Bervin; a Bombyx Mori cocoon in glass jar, a vial with a scroll printed on silk, a vial with a skein of silk thread, a glass vial of liquid silk fibroin, and a colophon. Granary Books, edition of 100, #79, available.
Courtesy of the artist
Jen Bervin
*Silk Poems print*
2016
Digital print of silk poem strand on silk fabric, suspended on aluminum tube
65 x 52 inches
Courtesy of the artist

This print on silk shows Bervin’s poem written from the perspective of a silkworm and composed in a six-character chain corresponding to the DNA structure of silk.

Jen Bervin
*Silk Line*
2015, 2016, 2020
Drawing performance
Courtesy of the artist
Jen Bervin and Charlotte Lagarde

**Su Hui’s Picture of the Turning Sphere**

2016–2020

5-channel video installation with sound and two double-sided embroideries

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artists

The exhibition premieres *Su Hui’s Picture of the Turning Sphere*, a collaboration with filmmaker Charlotte Lagarde. The multi-channel video and textile installation, self-described as a “feminist listening room,” focuses on Chinese poet Su Hui and her 4th-century reversible poem, “Xuanji Tu.” Structured on an astronomical gauge and stitched in five colors, the poem was written in a 29 x 29-character grid and can be read in any direction to yield almost 8,000 possible interpretations. Bervin and Lagarde created a rotation of four projected videos featuring commentary from eight Chinese women: an algorithmic game theorist, calligrapher, art researcher, astrophysicist, artist, novelist, and literary scholars. The fifth video shows the stitching of the embroideries in this gallery. This work premieres at University Galleries.

**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

Jen Bervin and Charlotte Lagarde partnered with a contemporary embroidery studio in Suzhou, China, to create two new renderings of Su Hui’s “Xuanji tu” poem using a specialized double-sided silk embroidery technique on translucent silk screens. The finished embroideries and a video projection of the embroidery process are included in the installation, *Su Hui’s Picture of the Turning Sphere.*
Rory Ou
xuanjitu
2020 (work in progress)
Web app (Ruby on Rails, JavaScript, HTML5, and Canvas)
Courtesy of the artist
Jen Bervin

**Concordance Omission: No**

2020

Excerpts from *The Concordance to the Poems of Emily Dickinson* (far left), original research from Dickinson writings (Emily Dickinson Archive, Franklin and Johnson variorum editions), new concordance entry typed on an IBM Wheelwriter (Manifold font), reprinted in vinyl lettering. The handwritten excerpt (don’t you know that “no” is the wildest word we consign to language? You do, for you know all things –) pencilled on the wall is from Dickinson manuscript A 739, Amherst College Archive and Special Collections. Fabrication credit: Lisa Lofgren, University Galleries of Illinois State University. 16 x 25 feet

Courtesy of the artist
The Dickinson Composites Series: The Composite Marks of Fascicle 40; The Composite Marks of Fascicle 28; and The Composite Marks of Fascicle 19
2004–2008
Cotton and silk thread on cotton batting backed with muslin
6 x 8 feet
Courtesy of the artist

The Dickinson Composites Series is comprised of stitched composites of the variant marks American poet Emily Dickinson used in her manuscripts to link alternate words and phrases. These marks and the original line breaks were often omitted by editors for print editions, and Bervin describes The Dickinson Composites as being “aligned with mending, restitution, and the deeper gesture that Dickinson’s poems and variant marks make.”
Jen Bervin

**The Dickinson Composites Edition**
2010
Archival box silkscreened with marks; hand- and machine-sewn cotton batting on muslin, silk, and cotton thread; 6 large color prints; 16-page booklet in a silkscreened pocket fold sewn with a cotton tape lift. Edition of 55. #AP available. 11.5 x 15 x 1.5 inches, 24 pages

Courtesy of the artist

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**The Gorgeous Nothings Edition**
2012
Portfolio of 48 unbound double-sided color manuscript facsimiles, 11 x 14 inches; a 52-page essay printed letterpress with digital prints tipped-in, bound soft cover, 10 x 7 1/2 inches; a 32-page unbound guide with visual indexes, a directory of manuscripts, a postscript and a colophon in a slipcase, 9 x 11 1/2 inches, an archival box with an original line drawing in blue pencil, and a hand-painted seal of gum arabic, and gouache. Granary Books, edition of 60.

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**The Gorgeous Nothings**
2013

American poet Emily Dickinson’s late writings on deconstructed envelopes, each accompanied by a transcription to facilitate reading of the manuscript facsimile, edited by Jen Bervin and Marta Werner.
Jen Bervin

River
2006–2018
Silver foil-stamped cloth sequins, metallic thread, silver mulberry paper, mull, and Tyvek
230 curvilinear feet; 100 x 20 feet installed
Courtesy of the artist

River is a scale model of the Mississippi River from the geocentric point of view (from inside Earth’s interior looking up at the riverbed). Hand-stitched at a scale of one inch to one mile, the work took twelve years to make. Bervin points out that it took “the same amount of time to sew each section of river that it would take to walk the real one.”
Jen Bervin

*The Desert*

2008

Granary Books, edition of 40, out of print, #40
Twinrocker handmade bleached abaca paper, digitally printed, machine-sewn with pale blue zigzag stitching, handbound by Susan Mills in a punched abaca cover
8.25 x 11 x 2 inches, 148 pages
Courtesy of the artist

Bervin sewed through chapters of John C. Van Dyke’s *The Desert* (1901) with pale blue thread to, in her words, “construct a poem narrated by the air.” She originally composed the poem for a reading at Roden Crater, artist James Turrell’s large-scale artwork within a volcanic cinder cone in the Painted Desert region of Northern Arizona.

Jen Bervin

*Pierced Light*

*[Latitude 31.4482, Longitude 109.9284]*

1998

Topographic perforation of Bisbee, Arizona, and paper scraps of various sizes sewn together with pale green cotton thread
64 x 70 inches
Courtesy of the artist
Jen Bervin

*Envelope Coverlet*
1998
Cotton sheets, machine- and hand-sewing, and number stamps
76.5 x 56 inches
Collection of Hm Mirra

Coverlet quilt blocks in green reflect outlines and markings from correspondence sent by Hm Mirra to Jen Bervin in Bisbee, Arizona, in the late 1990s. It was made as a gift for Mirra.

Jen Bervin

*Under What Is Not Under*
1997
Courtesy of the artist
Jen Bervin

**Juniper Caesura**
1999
Binder’s board, cotton paper, typed and penciled text, linen tape and metal snap closures.
Courtesy of the artist

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Jen Bervin

**Nets**
2004 (10th printing in 2017)
Trade paperback with letterpress cover and perfect bound offset interior. Ugly Duckling Presse.
6.5 x 5.5 inches, 130 pages

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Jen Bervin

**A Non Breaking Space**
2005
Single unbound signature of rice paper with white bond paper and carbon paper pasted in, with gesso, gouache, ink, pencil, cursive typewriter text, and typewriter opaquing film. 1/1.
Courtesy of the artist
Jen Bervin

**The Silver Book**
2010
Courtesy of the artist

Jen Bervin

**Draft Notation**
2014
Courtesy of the artist

Jen Bervin

**Poems for Ruth Asawa: from her writings and correspondence**
2020
Letter-sized loose pages, Byron Weston Linen Ledger Bright White. 1/1.
11 x 8.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Bervin composed these poems for American sculptor Ruth Asawa (1926-2013) using text from Asawa’s writings and formatting them into the shape of Asawa’s wire sculptures.