

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 15, 2025



University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present
Jen Bervin: Shift Rotate Reflect from August 15 through December 10, 2025.

Shift Rotate Reflect is a re-imagining of poet and artist Jen Bervin's first survey exhibition. Originally on view at University Galleries in Fall 2020 during COVID-19 restrictions and closures, the exhibition featured 23 solo and collaborative works created from 1997 through 2020. Opening five years after the first exhibition, this experiment—re-presenting the anchor projects differently alongside new works—is a direct response to the limitations imposed by the pandemic. Audiences will be able to engage with the material complexities of Bervin's work, explore the expanded connections among them, and participate in robust public programming.

The exhibition title, *Shift Rotate Reflect*, was excerpted from *Su Hui's Picture of the Turning Sphere*, a five-channel video installation that Bervin collaboratively created with filmmaker Charlotte Lagarde. The words "shift," "rotate," and "reflect" have been guideposts for Bervin and exhibition curator Kendra Paitz while envisioning the 2025 exhibition. This iteration of *Shift Rotate Reflect* features installations, embroideries, prints, artist's books, and videos created through 2025. 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.

Core projects from the first exhibition include *Su Hui's Picture of the Turning Sphere* (2016–2020), a video and textile installation addressing Chinese poet Su Hui and her 4th-century reversible poem, "Xuanji tu"; *River* (2006–2018), a scale model of the Mississippi River from the geocentric point of view, hand-stitched in silver sequins and spanning 230 curvilinear feet; *Silk Poems* (2010–2017), which centers around Bervin's poem for a biosensor written from the perspective of a silkworm and composed in a six-character chain corresponding to the DNA structure of silk; and *The Dickinson Composites* (2004–ongoing), a series of large-scale embroideries comprising stitched composites of the variant marks American poet Emily Dickinson used in her manuscripts to link alternate words and phrases.

New works featured in *Shift Rotate Reflect* include eight new quilts in *The Dickinson Composites* series, a 10-foot silk print of the silkworm cocoon, the video *Faire et défaire* with an original score by Catherine McRae, and two recent artist's books *The Sea* and *On Weaving*—a video, typed prints, and an annotated copy of Anni Albers' 1965 book of the same name—which, in Bervin's words, "references the grid that the typewriter and weaving have in common, as well as the direct relationship between looms and computing."

This exhibition is the center point of multiple programs and engagements. Jen Bervin will give a public lecture and meet with students on campus. Bervin's exhibition is a central focus of a Text and Textile seminar in the Wonsook Kim School of Art. Normal Community High School's Experimental Ensemble is composing original scores inspired by Bervin's work and performing them within the exhibition. University Galleries is collaborating with Illinois State University's Milner Library on a reading list and book display and partnering with Bloomington Public Library on a poetry workshop that will result in a zine. A reading group will be organized by Melissa Johnson (Professor, Art History and Visual Culture) and Kendra Paitz. University Galleries' staff is also leading art-making workshops for ISU students, K-12 students, and community members, as well as organizing pop-up exhibitions. Sensory-friendly times, independent drawing hours, drop-in writing hours, and scavenger hunts are available. Curator-led tours are available by appointment. Field trip reimbursements for tours and workshops are available for K-12 schools and community organizations.

A 192-page monograph accompanies the exhibition. Published in 2022, between both exhibitions, the book features poet and playwright Claudia Rankine's conversation with Bervin, Jennifer Yee's interview with Bervin and Lagarde, essays by scholar Jayme Collins and curator Kendra Paitz, a facsimile chapter

from Bervin's hand-stitched artist's book *The Desert*, a visual index of Bervin's book projects, and an illustrated biography.

Jen Bervin: Shift Rotate Reflect is curated by Kendra Paitz, University Galleries' director and chief curator. This exhibition and programming are supported by University Galleries' grants from the Illinois Arts Council and the Alice and Fannie Fell Trust. Workshops and field trip reimbursements are supported by the Lori Baum and Aaron Henkelman University Galleries Community Fund. This exhibition would not have been possible without previous support. The 2020 iteration of *Shift Rotate Reflect* was supported by University Galleries' grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Illinois Arts Council, Harold K. Sage Foundation, and the Illinois State University Foundation Fund.

Artist biographies

Jen Bervin's projects have been exhibited at the Hong Kong University Museum and Art Gallery; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa; Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne; The Power Plant, Toronto; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts; Tufts University Art Galleries, Medford, Massachusetts; and Morgan Library and Museum, New York, among others. Bervin has authored numerous books and artist's books including *Silk Poems*, a New Museum Book of the Year and a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award, and *Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson's Envelope Poems* (with Marta Werner and Susan Howe), a Book of the Year selection by *The New Yorker*. Bervin has received grants, awards, and fellowships from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, Asian Cultural Council, Creative Capital, Foundation for Contemporary Art, SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence), Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Banff Centre, Northwestern University, and New York Foundation for the Arts, among others. Her work is featured in 60 collections, including Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Yale University, Brooklyn Museum, and the J. Paul Getty Museum. Bervin's work is represented by Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco. She is a 2025–2026 Fellow at The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University and lives in Connecticut and Marseille, Bouches-de-Rhône in France.

Charlotte Lagarde has made more than 20 films, which have been aired on PBS, HBO, and the Sundance Channel, and exhibited at MASS MoCA. Her many awards include an Academy Award, the PBS Independent Lens Audience Award, and the Ashland Independent Film Festival's Best Documentary award, as well as fellowships from Sundance, BAVC, and Camargo Foundation. Her project *Colonial White* was included in the exhibitions *The Racial Imaginary Institute: On Whiteness* at The Kitchen, New York City, and *Great Force* at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University as a city-wide participatory project in Richmond, Virginia. Lagarde is the executive director of the Swell Foundation and the COO & co-founder of B.Public. She lives in Connecticut and France.

Events and programming

All events are free and open to the public. Additional programs will be announced.

- **Opening reception**
Friday, August 15, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
- **Artist lecture by Jen Bervin**
Wednesday, October 1 at 4:00 p.m. at the Normal Theater (209 N. Street, Normal, Illinois) with a reception immediately following at University Galleries

- **Reading group**

Join a gathering to read and converse about texts selected to accompany Jen Bervin's exhibition. The texts will be made available. These events are organized by Melissa Johnson (Professor, Art History and Visual Culture) and Kendra Paitz. Send an email to Gallery@IllinoisState.edu for more information.

- **Independent drawing hours**

Spend time looking closely at artworks in the exhibition and drawing at your own pace. Materials provided.

- Friday, August 29, from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, September 10, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
- Friday, September 12, from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- Friday, October 3, from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- Thursday, October 9, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- Thursday, November 20, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

- **Sensory-friendly mornings**

Visit the exhibition before opening hours to enjoy dimmed lighting and a quiet space.

- Saturday, August 30, from 11:00 a.m. to noon
- Saturday, September 20, from 11:00 a.m. to noon
- Saturday, October 4, from 11:00 a.m. to noon
- Saturday, November 15, from 11:00 a.m. to noon

- **Drop-in poetry writing**

Spend time writing poetry in response to artworks on view in Jen Bervin's exhibition. Materials provided, including poetry templates.

- Saturday, August 30, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.
- Friday, September 26, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, October 23, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 18, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

- **All-ages found-poetry workshops**

Create found poems inspired by artworks on view in Jen Bervin's exhibition. All materials provided.

- Saturday, September 6, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. [Register](#).
- Saturday, September 27, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. (presented in collaboration with Bloomington Public Library). [Register](#).

- **All-ages art-making workshops**

Create artwork inspired by works on view in Jen Bervin's exhibition. All materials provided.

- Saturday, September 20, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. (presented with Illinois State University's Family Weekend). [Register](#).
- Saturday, October 4, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. [Register](#).
- Saturday, November 15, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. [Register](#).

- **Found poetry zine launch party at Bloomington Public Library**

Saturday, November 8, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

- **Performance by Normal Community High School's Experimental Ensemble**

To be announced

- Field trip program, curator-led tours, and workshops available by appointment throughout the exhibition. Reimbursements are available for K-12 schools or community organizations to offset the costs of transportation. Please contact University Galleries at Gallery@IllinoisState.edu or (309) 438-5487 to schedule an appointment.

University Galleries

University Galleries, a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact Gallery@IllinoisState.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to this exhibition.