

In this lesson, students will examine and discuss Jen Bervin's performance drawing [Silk Line](#). They will observe and analyze patterns of movement found in nature before imitating these patterns through their own performance drawings.

**Grades:** 3-4

**Subject Areas:** Visual Arts and Science

**Illinois State Standards:**

**Visual Arts**

- VA.Cn10.1.3a. Develop a work of art based on observations of surroundings.
- VA.Re7.1.4a. Compare responses to a work of art before and after working in similar media.

**Science**

- 3-PS2-2. Make observations and/or measurements of an object's motion to provide evidence that a **pattern** can be used to predict future motion.

**Lesson Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- observe, analyze, and document **patterns** of movement in nature.
- develop **performance drawings** based on observations of **patterns** of movement found in nature.
- compare their responses to Jen Bervin's *Silk Line* before and after working with similar **mediums** and techniques.

**Vocabulary:**

- **Pattern:** the regular repetition of movement, form, or elements (such as line, texture, or color)
- **Performance drawing:** a drawing made by recording the movement of an artist
- **Mediums:** materials used to create art
- **Mimic:** to imitate or copy the actions of something or someone



Jen Bervin, *Silk Line*, 2015, 2016, 2020. Drawing performance. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

**Teacher Materials:**

- Computer
- Projector or Smart Board
- [Video](#) clip of Jen Bervin's *Silk Line* performance (2:33 - 2:43)
- [Video](#) clip of a silkworm creating its cocoon (1:30 - 1:35)
- Visual examples of **patterns** of movement in nature

**Student Materials:**

- Notebook or sketchbook
- Tablet or computer
- Pencils, crayons, markers, oil pastels, or other dry media
- Large sheets of butcher paper (to be hung on a smooth section of a wall or laid flat on the floor or a table)

# Lesson Sequence

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1. Use the following prompts to guide a class discussion in response to Jen Bervin's **performance drawing** [Silk Line](#).
    - Describe what you see. What does the drawn **pattern** remind you of?
    - Bervin drew the **pattern** with white grease pencil on glass. Why do you think she chose to create the artwork using these **mediums**? How does drawing on glass differ from drawing on paper?
    - Why do you think Bervin chose to create the drawing in front of an audience?
  2. After discussing the work, watch the [video](#) clip of Bervin performing *Silk Line* (2:15 - 2:55), and the [video](#) segment of a silkworm creating its cocoon (1:30 - 1:35). Slow down the speed of the video by clicking the settings icon and selecting "playback speed."
    - Ask students what similarities they notice between *Silk Line* and the movement of the silkworm spinning its cocoon. In what ways does seeing the video of the silkworm add to their understanding of *Silk Line*?
  3. Share with students that Bervin spent a lot of time studying the life cycle of silkworms. In *Silk Line*, she **mimics** the movement and labor (time and work) of a silkworm creating its cocoon.
    - As a class, discuss how Bervin has imitated the silkworm in her **performance drawing**.
    - Demonstrate drawing the motion of a silkworm on the board and invite students to follow along by drawing this motion on paper. Then prompt students to stand and make the motion of the silkworm in the air using their whole arm, not just their wrist. Ask students to share how drawing in the air feels compared to drawing on paper.
  4. Guide students in identifying other **patterns** of movement that can be found in nature. Write students' responses on the board.
    - Provide an example to get students started (such as the movement of snakes, rivers, tides, bees flying from one flower to the next, Earth's orbit around the sun, or the weaving of a spider's web).
  5. Working independently or collaboratively, instruct students to select one of the **patterns** of movement from the list you created as a class. Provide students with resources to observe and document their chosen **pattern** of movement.
    - Weather-permitting, take students outside to search for examples of **patterns** of movement in their immediate environment.
  6. Provide students time to explore different ways of drawing their chosen **pattern** of movement in their sketchbooks. Encourage students to use a variety of **mediums**.
    - Engage students in a discussion about the different **mediums**. What does it feel like to draw with each? Which **mediums** work best for documenting their chosen **pattern** of movement? How do the **mediums** relate to their chosen **pattern** of movement?
      - For example, the white grease pencil that Bervin used flows smoothly when applied to glass. It is also similar in appearance to the thread of the silk worm's cocoon.
  7. Based on their explorations, prompt students to create a **performance drawing** of their selected **pattern** of movement using a **medium** of their choice.
    - Provide students with large pieces of butcher paper on which to draw, placed either on the floor or hung on the wall.
  8. After creating their **performance drawings**, engage students in reflecting on their own and Bervin's work.
    - Ask students to share what they learned about their **patterns** of movement through this process.
    - How do they relate to Bervin's work after creating their own **performance drawings**?
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## Accommodations and Modifications:

- Provide students with a printed list of project instructions.
- Enable captions on all videos.
- Provide [Alt Text](#) for all images.
- Provide pencil grips or low-tech assistive technologies for drawing.
- Tape paper to a table or rigid board instead of the wall or floor.
- Provide a drawing app on a tablet or other digital device.
- Provide templates of **patterns** of movement in nature for students to trace or transfer.



## Extension Activities:

1. Inspired by [Silk Poems](#), engage students in writing narrative poems inspired by their chosen **pattern** of movement.
  - ELA:W3-4: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
2. Prompt students to create an in improvisational dance inspired by their chosen **pattern** of movement.

## Lesson Resources:

- Jen Bervin's website: <https://www.jenbervin.com/>
- *Silk Line*: <https://www.jenbervin.com/index.php?p=projects/silk-line>
- *Silk Poems*: <https://www.jenbervin.com/index.php?p=projects/silk-poems>

## About the Artist:

Jen Bervin is a visual artist and poet. She explores relationships between text (words) and textiles (fiber-based materials) through a variety of lenses (scientific, mathematic, historical, cultural, and artistic). Through her art practice, Bervin examines histories of materials (such as silk) and the ways in which language shapes our understanding of the world around us.

## Selections from the Press Release:

[Shift Rotate Reflect](#) is a re-imagining of 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. 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."

Educator resources are available on the exhibition [webpage](#).

[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](#), [X](#), and [Vimeo](#) and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact [galler@illinoisstate.edu](mailto:galler@illinoisstate.edu) or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to this exhibition.