

THE SILKWORM PROJECT

Vivian Xu

Exhibition | Talks | Workshop | Symposium
Mai – July 2019 (*Timetable of events* → p.3!)

Vivian Xu is a media artist and researcher based in Shanghai. Her work is situated between bio and electronic media in creating new forms of machine logic, life and sensory systems, and often takes the form of object, installation or wearable.

In *The Silkworm Project* Vivian Xu explores the possibilities of using silkworms to design a series of hybrid machines capable of producing self-organised 2D and 3D silk structures. Xu wants to understand how far the behaviour of insects can serve as a foundation for technological design. To this end she has developed cybernetic devices based on both biological and computer-controlled logic. In the exhibition a series of interactive machines made of silkworms and electronics will be displayed. The artist-designer works on the creation of self-organised silk structures designed by live silkworms, a posthuman machine.

Art Laboratory Berlin is happy to present Xu's projects for the first time in Europe.



“The silk machines utilise a closed feedback loop system between the organic and the artificial, where the biological and the computational form an ecosystem that demonstrates automated production that is autonomous in its nature” remarks the artist. By researching in the history of computation and its entanglement with the technological development of the loom, the artist explores a critical and artistic intersection between the organisation of silk and the organisation of information.

The *Silkworm Project* is the first of an ongoing series titled *The Insect Trilogy*, in which she examines the behaviour of silkworms, ants and bees in order to take this into account in the design of machines. Combining the 5000 year-old tradition of sericulture with new technologies, Vivian Xu's work investigates the role of human and nonhuman, biological and technological, and the permeable borders between them. Her silk machines are based on a closed feedback loop that creates an autonomous production system that is both organic and artificial, biological and computational.

The exhibition will present multiple prototypes and documentation of previous experiments as well as a new machine interacting with live silkworms. The most recent prototype of *The Silkworm Project, Machine III – Magnetic Spinning Machine*, has been financially supported by Art Laboratory Berlin.

Our collaboration with Vivian Xu spans more than four years. Her project “The Silkworm Project” is closely tied to our series “[Nonhuman Subjectivities](#)” (2016/17) and “[Nonhuman Agents](#)” (2017/18). We appreciate Vivian Xu’s contribution at our conference “[Nonhuman Agents in Art, Culture and Theory](#)” (Nov 2017, Art Laboratory Berlin), which we published as a video recording (along with all other conference contributions) in our web archive ([see here](#)).

*We are pleased to collaborate with the Berlin-based **Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG)** on a four-month artistic research residency in Berlin by Vivian Xu (May–August 2019). The exhibition, talks, a symposium, and a workshop on sericulture by Vivian Xu will provide the public with insights into this fascinating long-term project.*

Regine Rapp & Christian de Lutz (curators)

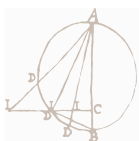
BIO | VIVIAN XU

Vivian Xu (b.1985) is a media artist and researcher from Beijing, currently based in Shanghai. Her work explores the boundaries between bio and electronic media in creating new forms of machine logic, life and sensory systems, and often take the form of object, installation and/or wearable. She has shown, lectured, and performed at various institutions in China, the US, Germany, and Australia, including the National Art Museum of China (Beijing), the Central Academy of Fine Art (Beijing), the China Academy of Art (Hangzhou), the Chronus Art Center (Shanghai), the Rockbund Museum (Shanghai), the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra (Shanghai), the New York Science Museum (New York), Gallery Ho (New York), Art Laboratory Berlin (Berlin), SymbioticA at University of Western Australia (Perth), and currently at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Berlin).

Vivian co-founded Dogma Lab, a trans-disciplinary design lab in Shanghai, that is dedicated to creating experimental research at the intersection of design, technology, art and science. Between 2013 – 2015, she was Research Fellow at New York University Shanghai. Since then, she has lectured at various universities and programs, including Shanghai Tech University, Chinese University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Campus, Roy Ascott Technoetic Arts program (Shanghai), etc. Her work has been featured in media and press, including VICE China, Elle US, and the China Global TV English Channel, etc. Xu received her MFA in Design and Technology at Parsons the New School for Design in 2013.

www.vivianxuprojects.com

In close collaboration with:



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

VIVIAN XU | The Silkworm Project

EVENTS

TIMETABLE

Exhibition THE SILKWORM PROJECT | VIVIAN XU

Opening: Friday, **31 May, 2019** / 8PM

Running Time: 1 June - 14 July 2019, Open: Fri – Sun, 2 – 6 pm

@ Art Laboratory Berlin

Workshop THE SILKWORM PROJECT with Vivian Xu

Saturday, **8 June 2019**

@ Art Laboratory Berlin

Registration necessary: register@artlaboratory-berlin.org

Artist Talk with Vivian Xu and Lisa Onaga (Historian of Science and Technology, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)

Sunday, **30 June 2019**, 3PM

@ Art Laboratory Berlin

Symposium

The Artist-Silkworm Interface: The Agricultural Treatise as Source and Scrutiny for Creating an Artist Book

Thursday, **4 July 2019**, organised by Lisa Onaga, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin

Speakers: Vivian Xu, Regine Rapp, Anna Grasskamp, Yubin Shen, Dagmar Schäfer.

@ Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, at the **Harnack House**

More information: <https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/event/artist-silkworm-interface-agricultural-treatise-source-and-scrutiny-creating-artist-book>

Registration necessary by 30 June 2019: event_dept3@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de

