



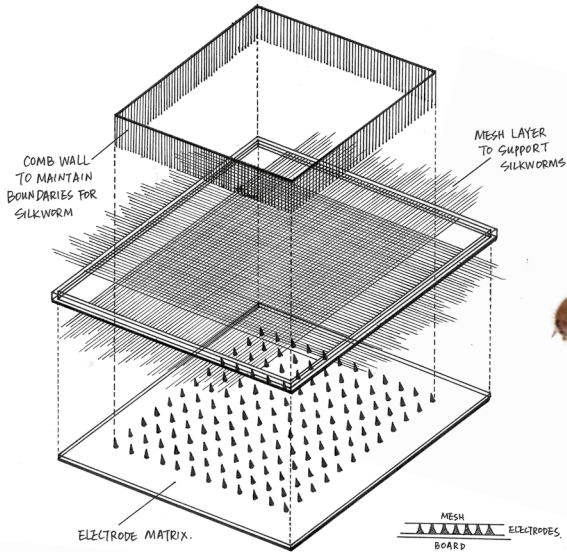
# THE SILKWORM PROJECT

Vivian Xu

# THE SILKWORM PROJECT

## ELECTRODE MATRIX AND MESH DESIGN. (Version 3)

APR. 6, 2014. VIVIAN, XU.



[1]



[4]

**[1] Vivian Xu**  
*Silkworm Machine I*, 2014  
Electrode Matrix and Mesh Design,  
diagram, hand sketch by the artist

**[2] Vivian Xu**  
*Silkworm Machine I*, 2014  
Flat Printing Machine, wood,  
electronics, photo by the artist

**[3] Vivian Xu**  
*Silkworm Bombyx mori*, 2014  
Raised in Shanghai by artist,  
photo by the artist

**[4] Vivian Xu**  
*Silkworm Machine III – Magnetic Spinning Machine*, 2019  
Wood, glass, electronics, photo by  
the artist, production supported by  
Art Laboratory Berlin

**[Front page] Vivian Xu**  
*Silkworm Bombyx Mori*, 2014  
Photo by the artist

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 objects, installations or wearables.

In *The Silkworm Project* Vivian Xu explores the possibilities of using silkworms to design a series of hybrid machines capable of producing self-organized 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 works on the creation of self-organized silk structures designed by live silkworms, a post-human machine.

»The silk machines utilize 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 re-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 organization of silk and the organization of information.

*The Silkworm Project* is the first of an ongoing series *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 fourth and most recent prototype of *the Silkworm Project* has been financially supported by Art Laboratory Berlin.

Regine Rapp & Christian de Lutz (curators)

# THE SILKWORM PROJECT

Art Laboratory Berlin is pleased to exhibit the projects of Shanghai-based media artist and researcher Vivian Xu for the first time in Europe. We are delighted to collaborate with the Berlin-based Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG) on Xu's four-month artistic research stay in Berlin. 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

---

1 June – 14 July, 2019 // Fri – Sun, 2 – 6 pm

**Opening** // Friday, 31 May, 2019 / 8 pm

**The Silkworm Project Workshop** with Vivian Xu // 8 June 2019,  
at Art Laboratory Berlin // Registration necessary: [register@artlaboratory-berlin.org](mailto:register@artlaboratory-berlin.org)

**Artist Talk** with Vivian Xu and Lisa Onaga (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science) // 30 June 2019 / 3 pm, at Art Laboratory Berlin

**Symposium** *The Artist-Silkworm Interface: The Agricultural Treatise as Source and Scrutiny for Creating an Artist Book*, organised by Lisa Onaga, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science // Speakers: Vivian Xu, Dagmar Schäfer, Regine Rapp, Anna Grasskamp, Yubin Shen // 4 July 2019, at Harnack Haus, Ihnestraße 16 – 20 // Registration necessary: [event\\_dept3@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de](mailto:event_dept3@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de)

---

## ART LABORATORY BERLIN

Prinzenallee 34, 13359 Berlin

(U8 Pankstraße / S-Bahn Bornholmer Straße)

[info@artlaboratory-berlin.org](mailto:info@artlaboratory-berlin.org) // [www.artlaboratory-berlin.org](http://www.artlaboratory-berlin.org)

Cooperation partners:



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE  
FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Design: Eva-Maria Bolz, Berlin // [www.evamariabolz.de](http://www.evamariabolz.de)