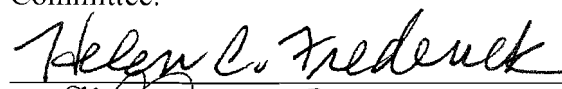


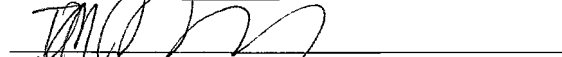
LIVING SYSTEMS AS READYMADE AND THE QUESTION OF MEMORY

by

Elsabé Dixon
A Thesis Project
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Fine Arts
Art and Visual Technology, InterArts

Committee:

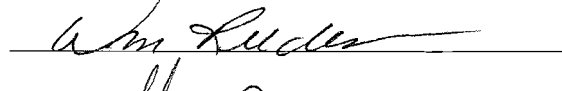
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Date:  May 2, 2012
Spring Semester 2012
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at George Mason University

by

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Bachelor of Arts
George Mason University, 1987

Director: William Reeder, Dean
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my husband Rick, for his emotional, intellectual and financial support. To Rick I also say “thank you” for your tolerance of silk worms in the house and studio and in the car. Early morning coffee and tea drinking, over discourses and references to education and art theory steered me onward always. I also would like to thank my family – far and near – for their support and interest.

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I have been fortunate in having the help of GMU faculty and peer comments as my body of work evolved. Individual papers and large sections of my thesis were read by Helen Frederick; Mark Cooley; Sue Wrbitan; and Tom Ashcraft.

My thesis advisor **Helen Frederick** not only read through endless amounts of essays without batting an eye— because I did go off on tangents, but she also physically walked me through the process of international curating over a two year program with the Aspen Institute-affiliated ***Breakthrough Art*** group. I was given the opportunity to write curriculum in collaboration with the Newsseum and the Goethe Institute pertaining to freedom issues, as well as participate in two of the five US shows installed in Chicago IL, San Antonio TX, Washington DC, Nashville TN and Aspen CO. Helen also facilitated an exchange opportunity with the Sichuan Normal University of China as well as my participation in the 5th National Collegiate Paper Triennial. The energy and commitment Helen pours into everything she does will be a constant reminder to me of professional and intellectual integrity and I will carry this with me always.

Mark Cooley's ***Agri Art*** program and his unfailing commitment to environmental and logistical inquiries has influenced and affirmed very much my ethical outlook on sustainable concepts. His ability to supportively comment and steer me through multiple papers, proposals and ideas while allowing me the freedom to investigate open-ended installation work during the summers proved invaluable. He allowed me that interstice between the Greek *Agora* (public) and *Oikos*(private) in which to think.

Sue Wrbitan's work with the ***Floating Lab Collective*** and her experience working for Morgan Stanley greatly informed her class on professional practices in which she took great pains to expose her students to “the business” side of being an artist – her advise and systematic approach to Documentation, tax information, grant applications and resume as well as portfolio formats and endless patience proved to be a tremendous resource – one could say, with a spoon full of sugar she made the medicine go down.

Tom Ashcraft and **Peter Winant's** work with the ***Workingman Collective*** and their slogan “your ideas are ours” greatly informed my practice and process. The philosophy of “maintenance” and consistent “tending” which was imparted so easily in Tom's sculpture classes will be something which I will integrate into my practice always. Also the Greek idea of equality and participation of all at the feast or meal - or in the studio process - is something I came to understand in Tom Ashcraft's practice as sculptor and instructor.

Work creates work. To think, one needs to create order or a system first – it is not just an ethical stance but a moral code also.

Other professors played an integral part during reviews as well as studio critiques. **Paula Crawford** initiated me in the process of video documentation and interpreting a full range of critical approaches. **Walter Kravitz's** unwavering aesthetic principles guided me through a range of mark making and **Maria Karametou** supported me through a turbulent exploration of color.

Deborah Mcleod, my curator for the Charlottesville show at Chroma Art Laboratories, was a vital interlocutor in connecting me to a wider framework for this particular body of work; introducing me to Washington Post critic Michael O'Sullivan, as well as a larger network of professionals such as the architect Stephen Balut and journalist Laura Parsons. Deborah was also fearless in supporting and accommodating my large live installations. **Ruth Harwood** is another brave soul that curated the Inside/Outside show: A live installation on Rorschach inspired canvasses at the Montpelier art center in MD. She also facilitated and organized a lecture on my work for Montgomery County.

I was fortunate to have my colleagues at the ***Glenstone Museum***, in constant dialogue with me not only during the trying times of planning the summer installations but also during the long winter months when I was grappling with heady theoretical themes. In particular I would like to thank **Jamin An**, for his unnerving ability to steer me through massive amounts of reading in preparation for the Glenstone exhibits ***If we can Imagine*** (2009) and ***No Substitute*** (2011) - published by Glenstone Foundation 2009 and 2010. This Postmodern reading marathon informed my body of work, and our long intense study sessions on Sundays after brunch in the Episcopal High School dining hall will never be forgotten. I would also like to thank **Anne Reeve**, who writes for Art in America, for her support as “pointer” to any information that pertained to my practice. Her tremendous amount of knowledge on art sources and her experience in the New York City art world and as well as the Venice and Basel Biennale art culture was invaluable.

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ABSTRACT

Living Systems as Readymade and the Question of Memory

Elsabé Dixon, Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2012

Thesis Project Director: Professor Helen Frederick

The artwork is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than itself: it manifests something other; it is an allegory. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made. To bring together is in Greek, “sumballein”. The work as symbol.
(Martin Heidegger, *THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK OF ART*)

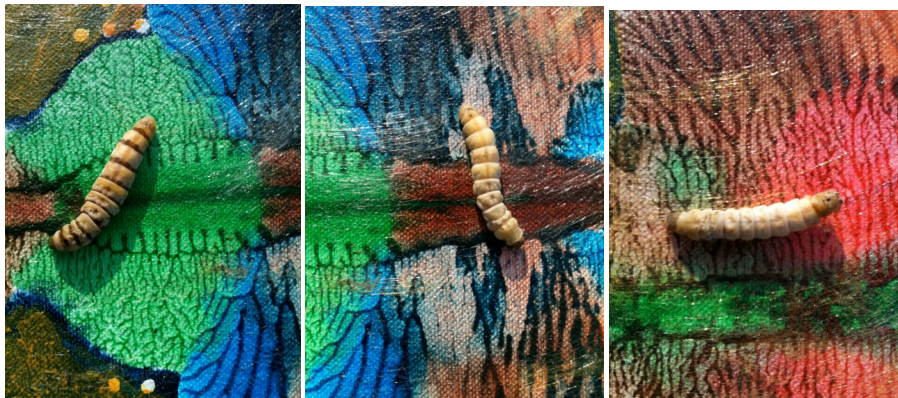


Figure 1: Spinners

The luxury of exploration that was afforded me during my time at George Mason University and my pursuit of investigating the use of live organisms in conjunction with symbiotic systems and audience involvement, led me on a journey of both failed attempts as well as successful and meaningful analysis. Much like a scientist I worked with a control group and an experimental group. The silkworms were the constant in every one of the three projects completed in the summers of 2010 and 2011. The audience, the symbol and the artistic, cultural and sustainable systems were the variables.

I used live silkworms, because for me, it references identity. As the artist Katharina Fritsch delved into her childhood experience and absorption of folk tales to extract her symbiotic stances and allegorical sequences in her large sculpture projects, I drew from my own childhood experiences growing up in South Africa as a descendent of French silk weavers, the symbiotic sequences associated with sericulture or the raising of silkworms. We are, as the American Contemporary sculptor Bob Gober so aptly states, prisoners of our own cultures and cultural iconography. *As an immigrant I am interested in the transfer possibilities and communication possibilities of cultural messages in sequential practices.*

By using the silkworm as a symbol or code for sequential action I have tried to make alterations, accommodations and hopefully also created a meaningful dialogue pertaining to natural life cycles, resources, and sustainable systems in post modern society.

The first installation focused on the theoretical work of Roland Barthes who

asserted that the audience plays a central role in creating meaning within a work of art.¹ This work was completed in the summer of 2010, involved the Arlington, Fairfax and Alexandria School systems, and had – all in all - about 400 participants. Also influencing this particular work was Bourriauds Relational Aesthetics and the more ideological approach, which is outlined in the writing of Claire Bishop.² The final exhibit of the Living Sculpture that summer of 2010, took place in Washington DC at 1275 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW and was sponsored by the Washington Sculptors Group.

The second show involved Rorschach prints and signifiers pertaining to the theoretical work of Jean Baudrillard and his ‘critique of the political economy of the sign’. Baudrillard’s work such as *Simulcra and Simulations* in which he investigated the relationship between reality, symbols and society inspired the second installation in which silkworms “erased” images with silk. This show combined the work created by the audience in the summer of 2010 as well as six large oil paintings of colorful Rorschach prints set up as tables, which were then gradually spun over by the silkworms. The carefully hand crafted images in the oil paintings were slowly almost completely “erased” by the organic spinners. This show took place at the Montpelier Art Center in MD and the curators theme was “Inside/Outside”. I wanted to juxtapose the two dimensional, handcrafted paintings inside

¹ Roland Barthes, *Death of the Author*, 1967

² Nicolaus Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 1998

the traditional picture plane with the live organic Bombyx Mori outside the picture plane. I also wanted to create a dialogue about Heidegger's concept of "subjectivity" and "objectivity". What was the subject – worms - and what was the object – canvas - and how did the interaction of both convey meaning?³

The last show involved placing spinning silkworms on mirrors and also allowing the audience to observe the full life cycle of the Bombyx Mori in the gallery setting. A live pod with mirror segments and organic paper and mulberry bark constructions revealed the spinners spinning cocoons, emerging as moths, mating, laying eggs and dying. The show took place at the Chroma Projects Art Laboratory in Charlottesville, Va. and the curator's theme was "Fecundity". This work was cultivated through Jean Baudrillard's 1987 essay: the Ecstasy of Communication in which he rejects the idea of the object as mirror or "scene" of the real and instead advocates for a symbolic exchange in which the status of the object's consumption goes beyond exchange and use, beyond value and equivalence. The description of the universe in the life cycle of the silk worm aimed to be a projective, imaginary and symbolic correspondence to the object status as "mirror" of the subject. By actually using mirrors as pedestals into which an organic universe is reflected I hoped to deconstruct the image as "scene" or mirror of the real. My aim was to illustrate Richard Rorty's essay Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature" in which he states that what we see should be a

³ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, Stanford University Press, 1998

matter of conversation and social practice rather than a mirror of nature.⁴

The postmodernist shift should not be characterized as from nature to culture but as a shift in elocutionary mode from history to discourse. By placing live organisms on a platform I feel I am starting a discourse on nature and our current relation to it in history. I am trying to call attention to living organisms, which lie outside the realm of the screen. My thesis show will hold the “artifacts” of these three summer installations; no live organisms will activate the objects. It has been my aim to be able to present the “after effect” of the work with live organisms in a succinct academic presentation. The last chapter of my thesis will explain how I do this, and will be a discourse on methodology used in my work, which I have appropriated from various sources.

⁴ Craig Owen, *The Allegorical Impulse*, 67

CHAPTER ONE:THE LIVING SCULPTURE (PROJECT ONE)

It is by means of the powerful yet pacific force of his sensitivity that man will inhabit space, it is by the impregnation of space with human sensitivity that the much coveted conquest of this space will be achieved.
(Yves Klein)⁵



Figure 2:Living Sculpture - 500 spinning silkworms on pedestals

⁵ Reference taken from Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les Presses Du Reel, 2002

Afrikaner children born in South Africa of French descent, raising silkworms to spin “bookmarks” for their bibles, are unaware of the deliberate coding sequences imbedded in such a seemingly childish and harmless activity. This innocent pet-raising and uncanny nature lesson, was engineered by their French Huguenot ancestors, who wove silk for the courts of Louis the XIV, and Queen Elizabeth, and was used to establish the continued industry and work ethic of future silk weavers. Unlike playing with a static object such as a doll or a toy, observation as well as engagement with the small silkworm enabled children to observe and experience directly *cause* and *effect*. Static objects can be controlled and manipulated to create a perfect world but organisms respond to each manipulation and can die at the drop of a hat. To work with organisms you have to allow alterations and accommodations as well as dialogue. Not only does it call for action but also teaches you the patience to base your action on observation in order to be successful.

I attempted to move the first project: *The Living Sculpture* - created in the spring and summer of 2010 - out of the artist studio and into the public sphere of schools, libraries, recreational centers as well as art centers. By bringing thousands of silkworms into the urban school system I wanted to create awareness for live organisms and sustainable agricultural systems patterned after the concept of Joseph Beuys employed in 1982 highlighted the condition of the local environment by planting 7000 oak trees throughout and around the city of Kassel. Works such as *7000 Oaks* reflect ecologically informed ethical and practical codes that take into account the environment’s complete and multi-context systems. I feel that the **Living Sculpture** was my response to director Davis

Guggenheim's documentary film *Waiting for "Superman"* which analyzes the failures of the American Public School System. Our students are so far removed from natural spaces and real situations and through the Living Sculpture project I attempted to take into the schools an interactive readymade life cycle.

Working with living organisms is in and of itself an interaction not only with the audience but also with nature and the affects upon it. While linking artist, audience, the empirical field of natural science and its histories, this work also responds to the increasing urgency in the global climate change debates, which merges aesthetic response with functional properties of energy generation or saving. In much the same way I wanted to show and discuss the sustainable nature of a historical and also ancient agricultural system that could lead to new aesthetic responses and open further the debate on sustainability. No new materials - other than the production of raw silk - was used during the duration of the project.

The intent behind the *Reading Silk – Living Sculpture installation in 2010* was to not only impart an ethical code of interaction with live organisms but also to include all those who interact with it, from participating children and teachers to the visitors that frequented the art center, in a dialogue discussing energy, sustainable resources and methods of production, as well as the aesthetics of art, science and nature.

Nicolas Bourriaud lays out the challenges of contemporary art and its links with society, history and culture in his 1998 ensemble of essays called *Relational Aesthetics*. Wanting to engage in the dialogue of Relational Aesthetics I created - the “Living Sculpture” that engaged with the public to the extent that the sculpture itself was not made in the artist studio or by the artist but instead, by the public, in the public domain of schools, recreation centers and other public art spaces. I tried to assess how the “Living Sculpture” relates to Bourriaud’s concept that *art needs to link itself to society, history as well as culture*.

Bourriaud says that artistic activity gives forms, patterns and functions that develops and evolves according to periods of social contexts and that it changes over time. He quotes Louis Athusser who said that one has to catch the world’s train on the move.⁶ It is Bourriauds opinion that the growth of a world-wide urban culture since the postwar period has led to the possibility of a relational art which takes on the realm of human actions and its social context rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space. In this relational realm, Bourriaud says, is created a system of intensive encounters that end up producing linked artistic practices and takes “being together” as a central theme. It is in this arena of togetherness that artist and audience collectively elaborate on meaning.

⁶ Nicolaus Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les Presses Du Reel, 2002, 13

In the spring of 2010 I engaged in this arena of “togetherness” by involving about 400 students and 12 teachers as well as two schools, three public school systems and a community of local artists at the Torpedo Factory in this project I called *The Living Sculpture*.⁷ My aim was to bring into the classroom setting, silkworms (part of the required SOL studies involve biological life cycles), and to produce a product for collective display and debate after a two-month period of observation.

This idea of exposing the public to natural phenomena is one that has been a constant theme in American history. Examples of this phenomena can be found in the Charles Wilson Peale’s painting: “The Artist in his Museum”, 1822, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, as well as the work of the Hudson River School. Should I describe myself as Peale did: “a naturalist as well as an artist”? The theme shows itself as pedagogy in the 1st year instruction of students at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). I have long been aware of Rhode Island School of Design’s Nature Lab that is a unique resource for examining, exploring and understanding the patterns, structures and interactions of design in nature. Founded in 1937 by a graduate of RISD and a long-time faculty member Edna Lawrence, the nature lab houses live animals and plants, a natural history reference library and clipping file, and archives of slides, tapes, videos and x-ray photographs. Students may borrow selected objects as reference for studio projects. I wanted to incorporate this idea of bringing nature into the urban setting of the public school classroom as the main event for the *Living Sculpture*.⁸

⁷ School systems participating in the Living Sculpture project were: Alexandria Public Schools, Fairfax Public Schools and Arlington Public Schools.

⁸ <http://www.etsy.com/storque/read/theres-no-place-like-here-edna-w-lawrence-nature-lab-at-the--4282/>

While experiencing an increased loss of resources because of corporate development and increased population growth -at a time when we need more awareness for preserving and balancing our own natural systems - make the public exposure to a natural system seem like a good place to start.

Depending on the degree of participation required of the onlooker by the artist, along with the nature of the works and the models of sociability proposed and represented, an exhibition will give rise, Bourriaud says, to a specific “arena of exchange” – art as a state of encounter. It is with this social encounter in mind that I proposed to reveal to all who participated in the Silkworm Living Sculpture project a French Silk Guild code that had been passed down in my family through Huguenot lineage showing, within the process of training a silkworm to spin a flat silk form instead if a 3-D cocoon, a language describing life systems and how they work.

Transitivity, Bourriaud states, is of vital importance to the artwork. He quotes Eugene Delacroix who said that “transitivity in a picture/image temporarily condenses an emotion that the beholder’s eye needs to bring to life and develop”. It denies any one specific thing in favor of a forever-unfinished discursiveness.⁹ According to this theory of transitivity an artwork such as the *Living Sculpture* should be perceived from a threefold viewpoint:

Aesthetic: How is it translated in material terms?

⁹,Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les presses du reel, 2002, 27

Historical: How is it to be incorporated into a set of artistic references?

Social: How is it to find a coherent position with regard to the current state of production and social relations?

Natural: How is it able to assimilate with environmental matter and concerns.

Artistic structures, Bourriaud says, are never limited to just one set of meanings. The main question is whether the art allows “all” to exist in front of it. The aura of art no longer lies in the hinter world of the object (realism), nor in its structural form (abstraction), but in front of it, within the temporary collective form that it produces by being put on show (relational effects or connectivity to other things).

The *Living Sculpture* does not offer itself up as a spatial whole that can be scanned by the eye, but instead it unfolds in real time and has to be crossed and experienced, sequence by sequence; similar to a movie in which the viewer has to evolve by himself, but here the camera is turned back onto the audience in the *Living Sculpture* as participants are asked about the process in which they are both looking at and collaborating in, as well as experiencing in real time.

“*The studio shot*,” wrote another great philosopher, Walter Benjamin, “*is particular in that it replaces the audience by the camera*”, and enables the picture editing process to

steal the player's body. The camera turns into an instrument for questioning the audience
12.¹⁰

For my documentation I used the now very outdated Flip camera for documenting audience comments during the duration of the *Living Sculpture*. The Flip camera was outmoded by the Smart phone, which could not only take high definition pictures or video but directly post it to a blog, to facebook or a computer. I recorded unprepared comments from the students, teachers and onlookers of the final exhibition. I also took some of the grant money I was given for the project and paid a GMU graduate student (Jeff Goldman) to document the final exhibition/installation of both the forms spun by the students and the live silkworms spinning shapes in live time in front of an audience. In many ways I left the camera process open and uncontrolled.

The interviews with students and teachers often show stage-frightened children painfully self-aware and struck mute in front of the camera, teachers spewing educational dogma which they feel might relate to the silkworm life cycle in order to justify their participation in the project and I found that the paid footage from the live installation gave me little access to the “unedited” footage taken by someone else.

The footage of the exhibition space is where everyone comes both to be seen and to see their own visibility, proved to be true – it is here that I got the best footage during the

¹⁰ Nicolous Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les presses du reel, 2002, p. 73

entire time frame of the *Living Sculpture*.¹¹ The footage was taken in the end space, which was perceived as “gallery”. Here the audience projected small but very clear definitions of what they saw in the work as a whole. The problem, however, was that the background noise of the working artist studio’s within the art center where the *Living Sculpture* was shown first (one sculptor was using a chain saw during one film clip), interfered with the way this information would be received.

How does the Living Sculpture - which depicts sericulture as semiotic code passed down through small family units of French silk weavers since the 17th century - “read” *when combined and transferred to multiple cultures and educational systems? How is this process or the process of the life cycle perceived in postmodern society? And which are the signs found in sericulture that in spite of mutation and transience remain circulated in current meaning?*

Each time I show with live organisms I receive new information; new investigations and experience new connections made. I feel I have found my field of study, and I understand my obligations as artist, but also understand that I need time to fully master the fleeting moment and transitory nature of meaning in real time. If you have ever stood in a moving ocean surrounded by both currents and waves and found your way back to the beach, you know that it is possible to have complete control by moving in a specific way through the surf – to learn how to do this takes time and practice.

¹¹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les presses du reel, 2002, 77

During the months predating the *Living Sculpture Installation 2010* I researched concepts used by Joseph Beuys. I understood that I was informed by work he did, with communities or groups that are remote from the institutional world of art: children in public schools which are populated with students coming from minority and ethnic communities on whose maps museums and galleries have no location. And in doing so, I perceived my work to be, like that of Beuys – “social sculpture”. This can also be perceived as “culture in action”. Through this act of social ritual or process, everybody participating in the project becomes an artist capable of thought (denken) and poetic creation (dichten).¹²

In order to encourage the free and active mental creativity of the viewer, the viewers participate in the art process by means of their own thoughts, emotions and will. This parallels Beuys “principles of chaos/will, movement/perception and thought/action” through which he stressed the anthropological tasks of mankind: transmission – preservation- protection – direction and the gift of love. I too believe that only an epiphany can bring about recognition in the viewer – the work needs to be a means of transportation, as a vehicle for the spirit. Art should be accessible to all (like water and fuel) and material for discussion should arise from it. By inventing rather than analyzing social conditions there is a possibility to contribute to their change. Every human, Buyes stated, is an artist.¹³

¹² Claudia Mesh & Viola Michely, *Joseph Beuys, The Reader*, The MITT Press, 2007, XVIII

¹³ Claudia Mesh & Viola Michely, *Joseph Beuys, The Reader*, The MITT Press, 2007, 16

Additionally, in his aestheticization of politics Beuys follows Rudolf Steiner, who in his series of lectures entitled: *Über die Bienen* (On the Bees', 1923), had presented the organization of bee communities as a model for human society. Steiner defined this organization as the result of two *formative processes*: The “crystalline-anorganic” construction of the honeycombs, and the “organic-energetic” production of warmth within these combs. In the same way the production of silk bookmarks – the flat two dimensional forms I train my worms to spin - within specific “crystalline-anorganic” platforms while working with live organisms which provide, in collaboration with the interaction of the viewer, “organic-energetic” production. While interacting with the silkworm to create a small piece of luminous silk, the viewer becomes aware of his/her own creativity and is affected by his/her own initiation of change. Only through a ritual that allows a person to realize the power of self-determination can that person truly be affected to change, because they will become aware of possibility through the journey of interaction and reaction.

To collaboratively create and make works of art into magical luminous objects means that those participating in the process will value their labor because they are unable to recognize it as such. Within the art everybody will see the labor, the society, the context and the history that allowed the work to be created. Through this concept of , work creating work, instead of the transformation of art into merchandise however, art instead becomes a vehicle for energizing the human spirit and facilitates new possibilities.

According to Nicolas Bourriaud : “The work of art represents a social *interstice*. The interstice is a space in human relations, which fits harmoniously into the overall system, but also suggests other trading possibilities than those within the system. Depending on the degree of participation required of the onlooker by the artist, along with the nature of the works and the models of sociability represented, an exhibition gives rise to a specific “arena of exchange – art becomes a state of encounter.” ¹⁴

In the issue of the October 110, Fall 2004 magazine, Clair Bishop, discusses Bourriaud’s idea that the structure in a work of relational art can also be the subject matter, but she questions the way in which we assess relational art . ¹⁵In her essay *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics* she notes particular discrepancies evident in relational work. While Bishop recognizes that Bourriaud’s collection of essays published in 1997 under the title *Esthétique Relationnel*, was an important first step in identifying recent tendencies in contemporary art, she points out that relational artworks insist upon *use* rather than *contemplation* It is with this particular question that I grappled with during the summer’s 2010 *Living Sculpture* installation and I found her arguments both compelling and motivational.

Bishop states that the *Palais de Tokyo* exhibition of 2002, directed by Nicolas Bourriaud, former curator at CAPC Bordeaux and editor of the journal *Documents sur l’art* is

¹⁴ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les presses du reel, 18

¹⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud, “Relational Aesthetics”, October 10, Fall 2004, p 51-79, October Magazine, LTD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

significant because of the way in which the interior exhibition spaces were presented - reconceptualizing the “white cube” ; showing art in the studio as experimental “laboratory” and interactive environment. And, this is precisely what the *Living Sculpture of 2010* aimed to be – both the art object and the art subject created not in front of the audience but collaboratively with the audience. However, the reaction to the three month long process (of intense and laborious effort on the part of all participants) imposed on the *Living Sculpture* was somewhat anticlimactic as it left me standing afterward with the question: “so what?” All this conviviality and togetherness and nothing happened, or did I miss it?

In her essay *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics* Claire Bishop sheds some light onto why this might have happened. I found for instance that my signifier – the silkworm – signified only life cycles for the audience and that - beyond asking facts about the Bombyx Mori or silkworm, ***there was no further discussion***. The use of the silkworm as a practical insect that supplies the raw material of silk overwhelmed any other art “gestalt” or signifier I intended to include. Just as Charles Ray grappled with his work *Tractor* - which he intended as a metaphor for a childhood memory - so I struggled to impart the mapping or intrinsic code present in training a silkworm to spin a flat shape instead of a cocoon. ¹⁶But to no avail – the code was not read. Charles Ray stated that no matter how much he took the individual tractor parts apart, no matter how many different people worked on finishing the different parts cast – when the pieces were reassembled in

¹⁶ Schimmel, Paul, *Charles Ray*, Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998

their disparate forms the work returned to its original signifier – it remained a tractor. In the *Living Sculpture* (2010) it did not matter that 400 people trained individual worms to spin flat forms of silk instead of cocoons, it only mattered that these were silkworms and that they produce silk, which is ordinarily used for silk ties and silk blouses. Relational art, Bishop says, makes use of existing cultural forms – including other works of art – and remixes them. What did I still need to add?

In the installation of 2010, I referenced, through the title “*Living Sculpture*”, other contemporary works such as Piero Manzoni’s *Living Sculptures*(1961) in which he changed nude models or visitors to the Galleria La Tartaruga (Rome) into *Living Sculptures* by signing them and placing them on pedestals; Yves Klein’s *Blue Anthropometries* and fire paintings as well as London artists Gilbert and George’s *Living Sculpture*. While these artists worked specifically with human bodies I felt that using live organisms implied “*Living*” in the same way live human bodies do. Furthermore the silkworms – as image - removed from the silk production process, creates a wonderful symbol of either encroaching death or its polar opposite: fecundity (similar to snakes).

But my audience was too young – they had very little knowledge of systems and could therefore not apply complex symbiotic meaning. And there further was a time limit factor. In many ways, the end results – the full digestion of a system or code - will be derived or calculated a couple of months or years from now. What coding was perceived during the production of the *Living Sculpture Installation* can only be assessed later or

perhaps when another experience encountered by the child triggers the code and summons memory of the project.

In the *Living Sculpture* the persona of “public” changes as the work of art progresses – children and teachers are the initial audience as they observe natural phenomena, life cycles, and sociological associations of the sericulture system. Then the work moves into the public domain of art center, where live organisms are further observed by those who did not produce the work – triggering memory and personal connections. Eventually, the work ends up in the gallery space as subjective object which serves as detritus or after effect. Detritus because of the matter that is left in combination with the object after the worms have interacted with the object and after effect, which recalls work in the art canon that goes before.

CHAPTER TWO: INSIDE/OUTSIDE – SYMBIOTIC SYSTEMS (PROJECT 2)

It is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable, which cannot be presented. Let us wage war on totality: let us be witnesses to the unpresentable, let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name.
(Jean-François Lyotard.¹⁷)

¹⁷ François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester University Press, 1984, 81



Figure 3: Three Rorschach Paintings - Erased by 1000 silkworms

The second show with live organisms was installed in the summer of 2011 at the Montpelier Art Center, Montgomery County, MD. This show combined the work created by the audience in the summer of 2010 as well as six large oil paintings of colorful Rorschach prints set up as tables, which were then gradually spun over by the silkworms. The horizontal surfaces depicted the open-ended images of manipulated Rorschach paintings and used *simulacrum* – described by Roland Barthes as “intellect added to object” to discuss issues pertaining to diminishing or erased natural systems.¹⁸

¹⁸ Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects*, University of California Press, 1999, 59

While working on this piece I looked at the theoretical work of Jean Baudrillard:

Simulacra and Simulation in which he investigated the relationship between reality, symbols and society.¹⁹ It was important for me to carefully deconstruct and reassemble the idea of *The Table* and all that was on it, in an attempt at establishing a dialogue between reality, symbols and audience. My aim was to find new forms for recognizable older symbols. The forms I worked with were those of the table, of the Rorschach print and of the organic matter and agricultural systems.

Several artists produced Rorschach prints during the 70's and 80's. This open-ended mark making with its strange balanced organic composition is exquisitely sensual and also acts as a screen for conjuring up imagined forms. I am thinking particularly of artists such as Bruce Conner whose ruminations on the emblematic nature of things seem to be depicted in his multiple inkblot prints and of Philip Taaffe whose sequence of primordial matter paintings, seems to transform into recognizable signs.²⁰ I reproduced similar inkblot drawings, conjuring insect-like forms, which I then painted in oils. Blotting first puddles of children's finger paint between the folds of pleated sheets of canvas, sealing it with a translucent varnish and then painting into the image with oils was how these Rorschach-like shapes were made. The images were then stretched after painting, over constructed canvas frames.

¹⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Stanford University Press, 1998

²⁰ John Yau, "Essay on Philip Taaffe: The Art of Being Susceptible", *Gagosian Gallery*, New York, 2010, 11

The relevance of the Rorschach image used in this particular installation is to represent the ultimate open interpretation. It invites the audience to see what they want to see. We make art in order to forget our foreknowledge of the total opacity of objects and things or, perhaps worse, because we do not know whether things have or do not have to be understood.²¹

After the paintings dried, they were placed in horizontal positions on table legs and stacked with live organisms. The live silkworms “erased” these large organic Rorschach images with silk that they spun over the surface of the canvas. The carefully hand crafted images in the oil paintings slowly dissipated and blurred. The illusion of nature erased by nature itself. The curators theme was Inside/Outside. I wanted to juxtapose the two-dimensional handcrafted paintings *inside* the traditional picture plane with the live organic Bombyx Mori *outside* the picture plane. I also wanted to create a dialogue about Heidegger’s concept of “subjectivity” and “objectivity”. What was the subject – the paintings, the worms or the table? And what was the object – the painting, the worms or the table? And how did the interaction of all convey meaning?

Claire Bishop, who has written extensively about relational aesthetics, maintained that it is not enough just to engage with the public but that there should be a collective memory or meaning that is derived at through open-ended dialogue. What is important is not merely the interaction and collaboration of nature and objects but also the symbiotic

²¹ Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, Yale University Press, 1982

relevance of a living object.

I understood through my experience of raising silkworms as a child that meaning could be derived from watching worms. The act of sericulture practice is indeed an interaction with a preexisting code or language. The ritual of raising and then altering or ordering the environment of the silkworm when it metamorphosis into a spinner in order to produce a flat filament of silk instead of a silk cocoon, is an act of language or of a sign. As the act of engagement with the silkworm was transformed into allegory by 17th century French silk weavers who wanted to initiate their children in the craft of sericulture while also indoctrinating them with a code of ethics, I felt I could impart meaning by placing organisms on static objects. The way the code was taught to children in the 17th century was by allowing the code to be remembered through various tasks in a meaningful, sustainable and relevant way. Basically, not only teaching them the craft of sericulture but also relating the process of that craft to the process of living life as a human in the most optimal way – holding the small industrious silkworm as an example or metaphor for Godliness, righteousness and goodness. Using the worms on objects would always for me, enact the allegory of human industry and diligence. We are at present diligently erasing our natural resources, just as we are in Postmodern art theory experiencing the erasing of illusion and the merging of art and life. My work tries to underline the idea that realities are only social constructs or open ended Rorschach forms and are therefore subject to change and erasure. It emphasizes the role of language, collaborative relationships between nature, artist and audience, and is motivated by old agricultural

systems of ideas and beliefs presented in new forms. It claims that there is no absolute truth and that the way people perceive the world is subjective – just like looking at a Rorschach print. “ In the illusory Babels of language”, Robert Smithson wrote, “ an artist might advance specifically to get lost.”²²

The painting, on wooden or steel legs, was presented as both a table and as a *stand*, which becomes a kind of anthropomorphic cosmos, the object transformed into an open-ended form, becoming surrogates for subliminal yearnings and dreams. The table is a place for communal acts of eating and meeting, and it also embodies the platform of industry and the surface for making things. Wikipedia describes the table as a form of furniture with a flat and satisfactory horizontal upper surface used to support objects of interest, for storage, show, and/or manipulation. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, the word **table** can be used as a noun, a verb, or an adjective. It can be described as a smooth flat slab, a place where people assemble to eat, work or negotiate. Or table can be a systematic arrangement of data usually in rows and columns for ready reference. Table can be a condensed enumeration: a list or table of contents. It can be a horizontal stratum or it can be a reference to something considered for negotiation both on and under the table. As a stand displays a work of art in a museum, these tables in the Inside/outside show at Montpelier were meant to hold, show and act as communal interactive forms in space.

²² Rosalind Kraus, Cindy Sherman, Department of Publications, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 5

But the table for me also holds another implication for meaning. John Wilkins writes that the equity of the distribution is of central importance in ancient Greek culture concerning meals, and indeed that the Greek word for banquet, *dais*, derives from the verb 'to distribute'.²³ Richard Seaford writes in his book *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, that the ancient Greeks, regular and highly ritualized slaughter and distribution of the animal ensures that everybody is given a share, that there is an equal feast. Equal distribution to all and especially collective participation (*koinonia*) are persistently emphasized in numerous later references to the animal sacrifice performed by groups varying in size from the household to the whole city-state or even Greeks from different city states at Pan-Hellenic festivals. My work is not political but I would hope that the connection between the Rorschach Moths as well as the live organisms and our fragile natural infrastructure, would be made. As we move toward an awareness for diminishing resources and insufficient systems (as expressed in books such as Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma*, and Sonia Shah's book *Crude, The Story of Oil*) we will have to consider *equal distribution dialogues* in the future. And where else would we do this other than at the table – the communal table.

What exactly are the silkworms erasing, the image, the object, or the concept of distribution? The act of “Erasing” has a historical reference in the piece by Robert Rauschenberg known as the *Erased de Kooning Drawing* from 1953. In that year Rauschenberg obtained a drawing by Willem de Kooning and erased it, showing that the

²³ John Wilkins, Oxford Symposium on Food in Antiquity – Public Eating 1991, 306-10

destruction of an artwork can be considered an artwork in itself. In my series, live organisms do the erasing. Based on its own need to spin a silk cocoon the live organism or silkworm covers certain parts of the painting with fine glistening silk thread while leaving others translucent. If the amount of silkworms on the painting is increased the process of erasure is increased and can eventually cover everything.

The weaving or spinning silkworms act according to an emergent behavior, in which metamorphoses triggers an action of releasing silk thread on a surface of a painting in the form of an infinity sign. In this installation of *Erasure* the final composition corresponds to the live organisms interpretation of the surface of the painting. And in this interpretation of silk threads on a two dimensional surface lies the ultimate signature of collaboration between object, organism, culture, space and time.

It was important for me to find a standard, a specificity of scale, material and sign, so that the object and methods of making is transformed and removed from their ordinary function or association, existing apart from its normal circumstances. The painting is not on the wall, the table is not being eaten on – they are mere vague representations or metaphors for culture and social interaction. The act of *erasure* is a reminder of the transience of life. The insect, long known in 16th century Dutch Still Life paintings to be a vanitas symbol/sign, moves in front of the audience in a rhythmic dance of life, reminding us of the briefness of life.

CHAPTER THREE: NATURE AS MIRROR – RECOGNIZING THE SYSTEMS (PROJECT 3)

Motion which reveals a story in time. Allegory tells of a desire that must be perpetually frustrated, an ambition that must be perpetually deferred. Not to change or purify the symbol but to challenge the symbolic itself.

(Roland Barthes²⁴)



Figure 4: Twelve Mirrors - Silkworms spin, change into pupa and then moths in front of audience

²⁴ Stephen Heath, *Changing the Object Itself*, Image Music Text – Roland Barthes, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, 167

The final and third summer project was a show that involved placing spinning silkworms on mirrors and also allowing the audience to observe the full life cycle of the *Bombix Mori*/silkworm in the gallery setting through biologically activated live objects. The object created for this purpose was a pod constructed from mulberry wood, Kozo/mulberry paper and cardboard segments with mirrors. I had placed spinners on the pod structure before the show and they had cocooned themselves in the segments given – still and silent white silk cocoons but alive and dormant for 8-12 days. This live pod with mirror segments “hatched” in the gallery when the moths climbed their way out of the cocoons, while I continuously kept stacking the organic paper and mulberry bark constructions with spinners that continued spinning cocoons, emerging as moths, mating, laying eggs and dying – all while dangling above a mirror. The *Living Pod* with mirror segments also hung in a window of the Chroma Laboratory Gallery in such a way that at night it reflected three images of the *Living Pod*. Tripling the Pod image.

Chroma Projects Art Laboratory in Charlottesville, Va. interpreted the silkworms, spinners, pupa and moths within the curator’s theme “Fecundity” while I also incorporated concepts from Jean Boudrillard’s 1987 essay: the Ecstasy of Communication in which he rejects the idea of the object as mirror or “scene” of the real and instead advocates for a symbolic exchange in which the status of the object’s consumption goes beyond exchange and use, beyond value and equivalence.

Baudrillard insists that the content of communication is completely without meaning: the only thing that is communicated is communication itself. There is nothing I specifically want to impart through the viewing of the live pod and the silkworms spinning on mirrors. Like us, these organisms are masses writhing in an orgiastic ecstasy of communications. What is perceived as content is open-ended.

What I do focus on is bringing the real experience, as opposed to an illusionary experience back into the artwork. The audience is not merely seeing the living organisms; they are smelling, possibly touching, and experiencing the organisms in real time also. The artist Thomas Demand performed multiple projections that removed his work from the real and discusses the idea that we encounter the illusion of something before we encounter the real, but that somehow we still recognize the illusion. I am investigating the composition of live organisms in real time. They are not an illusion; not pictures; not video; they are not sketched or painted or sculpted, they are real and when they are looked at they are evolving in real time. The illusion in this case is staging the real. The audience expects a static or digital moving image of light but is instead faced with a strange staged reality. Presenting not a found object on a pedestal and signing it R-Mutt but placing an organic living form on the pedestal for viewing. “The success, even the survival of the arts”, Michael Fried declared, “has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theater”.²⁵ By placing living organisms before an audience I am hoping to in some way defeat theater by presenting the reality of a living system. Art is usually

²⁵Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects*, University of California Press, 1999, 175

the after effect of something tangible but, I am interested in returning to the natural while repeating the symbols that we consistently reiterate through illusion. The language of the object, symbiotics and context must be consistent with the patterns that have been used before.

The description of the universe in the life cycle of the silk worm aimed to be a projective, imaginary and symbolic correspondence to the object status as “mirror” of the subject. By actually using mirrors as pedestals into which an organic universe is reflected I hoped to deconstruct the image as “scene” or mirror of the real. My aim was to illustrate Richard Rorty’s essay “Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature” in which he states that what we see, should be a matter of conversation and social practice rather than a mirror of nature.²⁶

It was important for me, during the assembly of this particular installation of live organisms and mirrors to also review Lacan’s idea of the “mirror stage”. Acting on his own studies in physiology and animal psychology, Lacan proposed that human infants pass through a stage in which an external image of the body (reflected in a mirror, or represented to the infant through the mother or primary caregiver) produces a psychic response that gives rise to the mental representation of an “I”. For Lacan, the mirror stage establishes the ego as fundamentally dependent upon external objects. By looking at nature, real nature, we become more like nature and remember the natural. I wondered

²⁶ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton University Press, 1979, 171

how presenting the audience with living objects would affect the way they might or might not perceive themselves.

During the mirror installation in Charlottesville, I tried to reflect an organic system within a specific time frame in the mirrors. *Instead of holding up the mirror to reflect the real I staged the real that would be reflected.* The Pod was partially loaded with spinners that spun cocoons before the installation. This enabled multiple biological “events” during the show. The silkworms spinning on flat mirror surfaces not only left glistening trails of silver silk across the surface of the mirror, but also changed after three days from a spinning worm into a pupa in front of the audience. Not being cased in a cocoon, the process of transformation was made visible. While these changes took place on the horizontal mirrors the cocoons in the Pod simultaneously hatched into nervous moths fluttering vigorously to attract mates.

There were complete responses from the audience. The first reaction came from my curator who informed me, one morning about three days into the show, that all the spinners were dying and what should we do. I had verbally discussed the process of metamorphoses with her but she was still unprepared to see the *death-stage* (right after the spinner releases its last thread and lies dormant on its side before shedding its worm skin). Repeated in multiple mirrored stands the *death-stage* must have been conceived as tragedy. I have found, after multiple installations with silkworms that we identify with these small creatures in strange ways. Could the multiple small *death-stage* worms

possibly have resembled on some level the gruesome photograph *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 1863* by Timothy O'Sullivan? All I could think of was to thank Sherrie Levine – YES, the multiple does work beautifully. This was confirmed at every biological staged happening: multiple spinners, multiple cocoons, multiple moths, multiple copulations and multiple deaths (or death stages – the organism stays alive until it dies a natural death at the end of its life cycle).

CHAPTER FOUR: WE WILL NOT PLAY NATURE TO YOUR CULTURE (PROJECT 4)

Opening John Cage's Notations at random, she reads, I mix chance and choice somewhat scandalously, and then writes, "I copy this phrase into a notebook, a perfect encapsulation of my own desire for contingency within a structure. I decide to allow chance elements, the flanerrie, as it were of daily life, to find their way into this essay." (Asked once if his cut-ups were "truly" random, the writer William S. Burroughs replied, "Yes, but it's my random".)

(Chris Kraus²⁷)

The quote above alludes to an essay written by Chris Kraus pertaining to artist Moyra Davey's *32 Photographs from Paris* in which she presented earlier works shot over two decades in her family's New York apartments. In the same way Davey showed her photographs of daily life, I wanted my thesis show to be a documentation of three summer installations with living organisms as it was part of my daily life. The thesis show aimed to be random cut-ups or clips from the projects that have gone before, distilled in innate quiet objects without live organisms but the thesis show also needed to be an outline of the way I think about art and the things I have noted while working.

The objects represented from the first show with living organisms were two large sheets of worm spun silk filament stitched with industrial silk thread into tapestry-like constructions of many different forms collaged into a silk filament diptych measuring 90"

²⁷ Chris Kraus, *Where Art Belongs*, Description Over Plot, MITT Press, 2011, 103

x 36” for each panel. These tapestries held random pieces of silk collected from different times when the silkworms were placed on cardboard or Plexiglas or paper to spin their silk threads onto a flat surface instead of a three dimensional cocoon. These works represent endless hours of harvesting mulberry leaves and other sericulture practices that led to the final result of worm spun silk filament. Perhaps it is not self evident that these sheets were spun by silkworms and not processed by the human hand in an agricultural industrial setting but these works do form a tangible fiber notebook that encapsulates my own desire for contingency within a structure – much like a quilt or a weaving that documents cultural matter in fiber and gives a visceral memory of small pieces taken from larger entities.

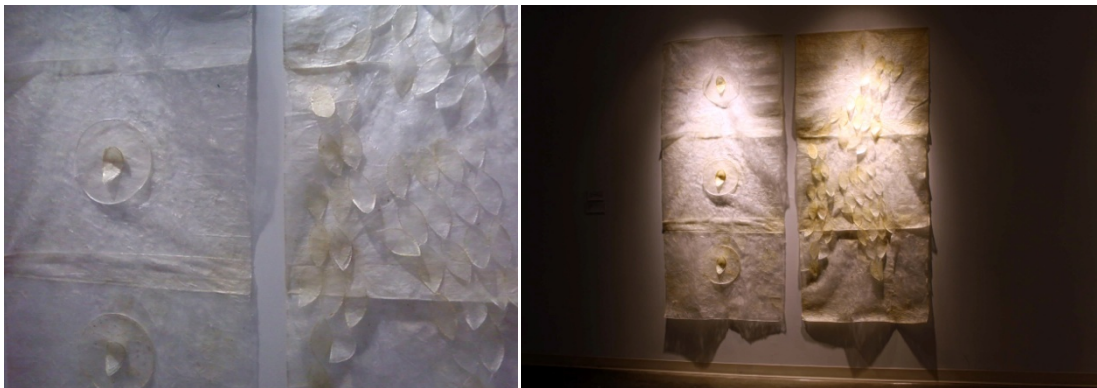


Figure 5: Silkworm spun Diptych Tapestry

The objects represented from my second summer show were two 5 square foot Rorschach canvasses set up as tables in front of the worm spun silk tapestries. The surfaces of the paintings held the silk thread from hundreds of silk worms that had spun across the canvasses during two months in the summer of 2011. Each worm left a trail of silk thread marking the surface just as a penciled line marks a page – each thread recording *movement in form* – mantra of art philosopher Suzanne Langer, who claimed that this was the formal definition of painting.²⁸ The table acted not only as platform for working on, or pedestal representing the communal table of interaction, but also looked like a book flipped open to read. In this sense the “pages” or canvasses acted as a notebook holding the “writing” or recorded thread of once moving silk worms in real time and space. Now, however, the silk thread on the canvas acted as an after effect. That which is left after the action has been completed.

²⁸ Langer is best known for her 1942 book *Philosophy in a New Key*. Beginning with a critique of positivism, the work is a study of human thought progressing from semantic theory through philosophy of music, sketching a theory for all the arts.



Figure 6: The Communal Table



Figure 7: Erasing the Rorschach = Erasing Natural Systems

The objects represented from the third and last summer show was the living pod structure made out of mulberry wood and paper. This structure still contained strands of silk, which was spun by silkworms as well as cocoons, dead moths and live silk seeds or eggs. The pod was suspended above a mirror filled with liquid marks made by the moths during the period of mating and procreation in the summer months of 2012 and a floor installation was of sericulture detritus mulberry wood, worm frass and cocoons, were placed around the mirror.



Figure 8: Living System as Readymade

This structure, much the same as the paintings and the silk filament tapestries held detritus from the living organisms that had activated a specific time and place during the summers of 2010 and 2011. It showed that which was left after live interaction, and in this sense became the “after effect” of the living pieces. The spring sunlight streaming through the

corner window of the gallery could have activated and triggered - if the pod was left to hang long enough - a second cycle of life in the silk seeds.²⁹

Flanked on either side of the installation were objects not produced during the summer months, but which underlie and repeat concepts I encountered during the live *Bombyx Mori* exhibitions.³⁰ On one side a large white pedestal held bright yellow modular constructions that resembled honeycombs/ sea coral/ floral reproductive parts. It occurred to me that this modulation is precisely what we do as artists – we continuously appropriate forms and concepts that have gone before and in doing so we expand or reconstitute memory cycles of birth, life and death.

²⁹ Eggs take about fourteen days to hatch into larvae, which eat continuously. They have a preference for white mulberry, having an attraction to the mulberry odorant cis-jasmone. Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, 1828.

³⁰ The **silkworm** is the larva or caterpillar of the **domesticated silkmoth**, *Bombyx mori* (Latin: "silkworm of the mulberry tree"). It is an economically important insect, being a primary producer of silk. A silkworm's preferred food is white mulberry leaves, but it may also eat the leaves of any other mulberry tree as well as the Osage Orange. It is entirely dependent on humans for its reproduction and does not occur naturally in the wild. Sericulture, the practice of breeding silkworms for the production of raw silk, has been underway for at least 5,000 years in China from where it spread to Korea, Japan and later India and the West.

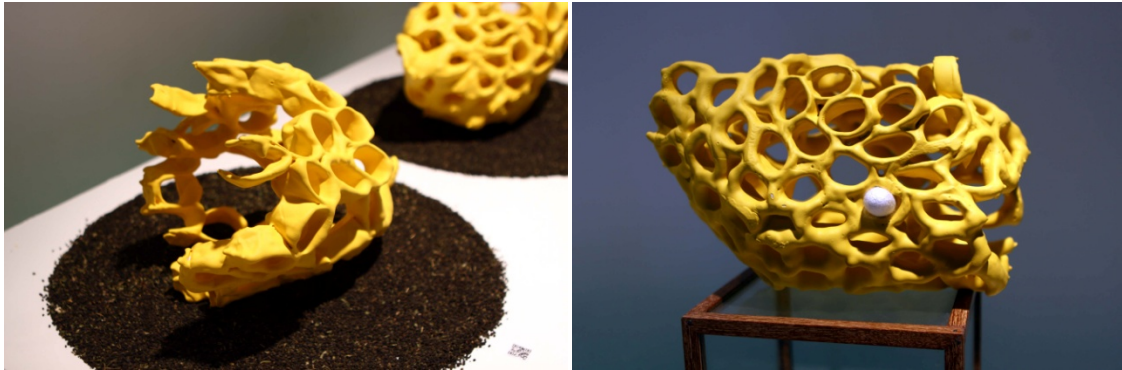


Figure 9: Modular Systems Translated into Organic Form

On the other side of the room stood a large 8 foot steel structure resembling a cocoon or a pod or a sea shell. The armature was created from welded steel and the “skin” was created from recycled metal cabinets that came from the old art building at Mason. The recycled steel was cut into strips, riveted, curled and then tied to the outer structure. This structure was also based on a modular system and repeating one particular form.



Figure 10: The Steel Cocoon

Inside the structure, a small pupa lay on the floor – a constant memory of metamorphoses and inevitable change.

Behind the cocoon steel structure, the walls held multiple circular spheres – hand paper on one side and mirrors with silk thread from silkworms spinning over them on the other. Once again life cycles and repetition was underlined.



Figure 11: Living Systems, Culture and Observation Disks

Each object in the show was assigned a QR code (Quick Response Code) linking it to a collage of unseen but accessible video clips taken from YouTube. The hand-made paper spheres were linked to video that was posted by scientists who filmed live organic matter under the lens of a round microscope. The visuals were inevitably linked to soundtracks recalling sentimental love songs and in this sense affirming the association scientists make with live organisms as a symbol of fecundity and procreation.

The mirror spheres were linked to culturally associated phenomena. Two small South African children tending to their silkworms while their father films the process; a Chinese man participating in the act of “silk boxing” imitating the movement of the silkworm; an African American musical group called “Silk” singing a passionate love song; a gay Texas cowboy who weaves exquisite silk bookmarks with silk that he harvests from his own sericulture practice... Instead of implying specific meaning, the QR codes describe cultural phenomena that exist within the context of associations connected with the physical material and objects of silk.³¹ Just as Sherri Levine appropriated works of art that already exists within the art canon and then duplicated not only the works but also the context within which she first encountered them, so I tried to not only construct objects

³¹ Please see figure 12 for a list of the QR codes linked to the objects in the show.

that appropriate systems, but also connected these appropriations to a larger system of contextual phenomena.³²

Perhaps the main concept behind the living sculptures and their detritus objects that act as “after effect” is to underline the idea of memory as transferable pertaining to living and dying, as well as, the cycle of rebirth. I appropriate and restate concepts in order to remember them and in remembering, I am able to regenerate or activate new life. Without memory the process of regeneration dies or lies dormant.

“You must write (or create) as if you’re already dead”, Davey writes in INDEX CARDS, quoting David Reiff who is in turn quoting Nadine Gordimer.”³³

³² Sherrie Levine created six copies of Brancusi’s “Newborn” and used as pedestals baby grand pianos which describes the context in which she first encountered the original Brancusi “Newborn”; on the baby grand of the collector Jim Ede.

³³ Chris Kraus, *Where Art Belongs*, MIT Press, 2011, 110

THESIS SHOW QR Codes:

1. Signature: Title - www.readingsilk.com

PEDESTAL INSTALLATION: SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE

- 2. Spirit of the Beehive! - <http://youtu.be/VOExlrG9XUA>
- 3. The Vanishing of the Bees - http://youtu.be/XL-A8Ap1_s
- 4. Bee Being Born - <http://youtu.be/YEh-y8pjb68>

10 CIRCLE INSTALLATION

- 5. Carson Optical FH-25 FreeHand™ Magnifier - <http://youtu.be/OwuKuZgxIO4>
- 6. Microscopic Cells - <http://youtu.be/ZGafHFN-t5w>
- 7. Aelosoma Digesting - <http://youtu.be/8Fg1CpDr0Uk>
- 8. Paramecium Digestion - <http://youtu.be/W5xBpBwiDAo>
- 9. Fagocytosis Colegio Excelsior Santiago - <http://youtu.be/UKbtPQrnVag>
- 10. Fagocytosis - <http://youtu.be/1cuaS2QKobA>
- 11. Mikroskopaufnahme eines Regenwassertropfens vom 03. März 2012 - <http://youtu.be/0IA5hWUsJGI>
- 12. Sloodwater Onder De Microscopie - <http://youtu.be/XE9kWWjIxQ0>
- 13. Life in a Water Droplet - http://youtu.be/dcHB2Efr_eY
- 14. Human blood at 1000x - <http://youtu.be/hCNREzpMoGY>

MIRROR INSTALLATION: NATURE AND CULTURE

- 15. Løvenes Konge - Sirkel Av Liv (The Lion King - Circle of Life) - <http://youtu.be/BBQ5oqU7Z-M>
- 16. Elsabé Movement in Form - <http://youtu.be/j-wp6FgYSe0>
- 17. Sywurms - http://youtu.be/XQZ5i8bbD_M
- 18. Silkworm life cycle - <http://youtu.be/26Zgx5PNzt4>
- 19. Stephen Malkmus on Silkworm - <http://youtu.be/fHkA0v5LcqM>
- 20. Silkroad Online : Trailer - <http://youtu.be/EGhEDJu0MIM>
- 21. Silk ~ Lose Control (Live) - <http://youtu.be/xmSHNJ-k59E>
- 22. Silkworm Cocooning Time Lapse - <http://youtu.be/R6Q6vCBFJL4>
- 23. The Story of Silk - <http://youtu.be/-wbmEjTvsZI>
- 24. Silk Stories in Kunsthal Rotterdam - <http://youtu.be/BXxyXAluhqM>
- 25. Readingsilk: Living Sculpture - <http://youtu.be/2Tu6WnZVbOE>
- 26. Sericulture Farming by Award Winner Farmer Geevarghese Mathew from 26.27. Central Silkboard - <http://youtu.be/Mo2yJuTzgLO>
- 28. Kitaro – Silk Road - <http://youtu.be/ZoURE7kheKg>
- 29. Silkworm - http://youtu.be/EI1SZb55Q_Q
- 30. DreamRibbon - <http://youtu.be/FWjQCsI2BCE>
- 31. Ladysilk - www.ladysilkworm.com
- 32. Silkworm Boxing - http://youtu.be/laf9hp_nm-s
- 33. Portland Bridal Show 2012 Scene FIVE - Gowns By Cocoon Silk on NW 23rd - http://youtu.be/IBb_rZA-0YU

STEEL SCULPTURE INSTALLATION

- 34. Spider Silk is 5x Stronger than Steel - http://youtu.be/C3ChH_eVwaA

LIVING POD INSTALLATION

- 35. Foucault's Pendulum - Sixty Symbols - <http://youtu.be/sWDi-Xk3rgw>
- 36. Pendulum Black Sand - <http://youtu.be/NgXvGypcEWs>

LIVING INSTALLATION: RORSCHACH TABLES

- 37. How to erase a picture - <http://youtu.be/8KSMAuTIQRg>
- 38. The Rorschach inkblot psychological test - http://youtu.be/Fw_awSGygH4
- 39. Graphing a linear equation using a table of values. - http://youtu.be/Kscfqx3_YFs
- 40. How to Build a Table With Removable Legs : Wood Type for Building - <http://youtu.be/DIv8ypDfS9o>
- 41. Diminishing Resources - Music Video - <http://youtu.be/wNa0oSH-g9A>
- 42. What sources of energy will the world run on in 2035? - <http://youtu.be/iHPN9rJ6yPE>
- 43. Erasing Tomorrow - Chaos is Natural - <http://youtu.be/5aCW7UGjRqM>

Figure 12: QR Codes underlying each object - connected to Video

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Elsabé Dixon graduated from Averett University, Virginia, with Bachelor degree in 1992. She taught art at Chatham Hall, Burgundy Farm Country Day and The Madeira School and is currently serving on the board of the Washington Sculptors Group (DC). In 2010 she received a grant from the Chenven Foundation which was used to complete the body of work produced in the summers of 2010 and 2011. Elsabé continues to participate in solo and group shows in New York, Philadelphia, Washington DC, McLean, Arlington and Montgomery County, Maryland.