

*Treatise* (tentative title) is an artist book by Chinese artist Vivian Xu. The work is a reflection of her installation series *The Silkworm Project*, where she explores the realities of designing silk printing machines that are driven by the silkworm in producing organically formed silk structures that emerge from hybrid bio-machine ecosystems. The artist book investigates the complex historical and cultural context of sericulture, and through the research and interrogation of the industry, reflect on the relationship between nature and culture through the lens of agriculture industries. Treatises, specifically sericulture treatises, have historically been the vehicles for transferring technological information and know-how. With the sericulture treatise as a template, the artist seeks to present her perspective on the nature / culture dichotomy in the 21st century.

The artist book consists of two parts. The first is a codex format manual. This manual is divided into the following four chapters: Time; Material; Labor; Methodology. The artist understands agriculture as a methodology that combines time, material, and labor in producing the end product. Thus, *Treatise* attempts to provide a new perspective on these respective topics that is based on the artist's own research and practice of rearing silkworms in both China, America and Germany. In devising a "new sericulture" in the final Methodology chapter, the artist book acts as a guide to an artistic practice of sericulture. Inspiration and the content for each chapter is drawn from a variety of sources including scientific papers, historical accounts, first hand data collection and meticulous daily documentation of silkworm growth and development by the artist. The second part of the piece is a material artifact woven and created from the silk harvested from silkworms reared in Berlin in the summer of 2019. The artifact becomes the material result of the practice of the codex manual. Juxtaposing the artistic practice of material play with the historical practice of the studying of text and context of materials, the project hopes to illuminate how knowledge and skill is developed, preserved and encrypted into artifacts, be they the objects themselves or illustrations of these objects.

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Vivian Xu, Sept. 15, 2020