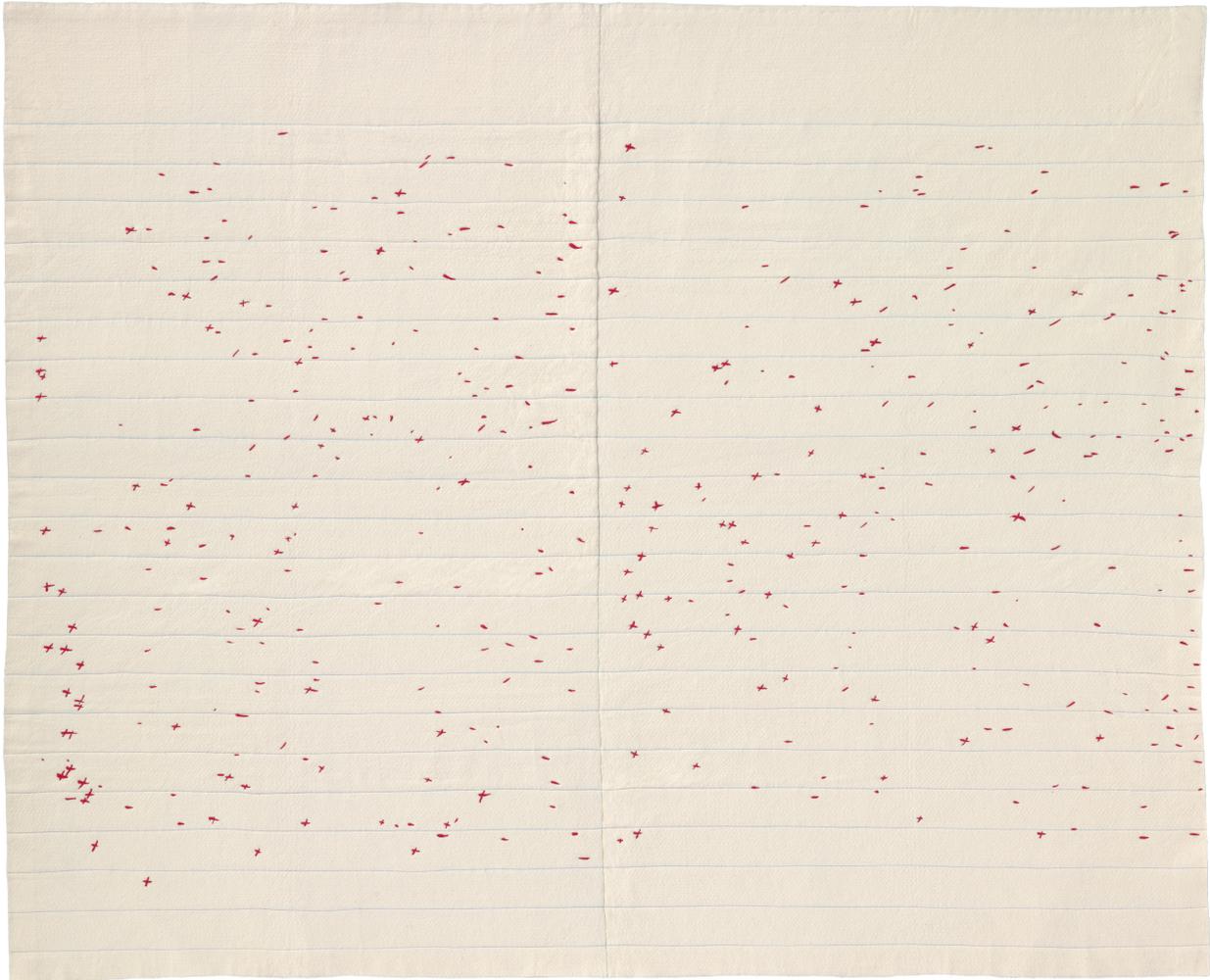


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Above: Jen Bervin, *The Dickinson Composites Series (The Composite Marks of Fascicle 38)*, 2008; cotton batting, muslin, and hand-dyed silk thread; 72 x 96 inches.

Jen Bervin: *Doing and Undoing*

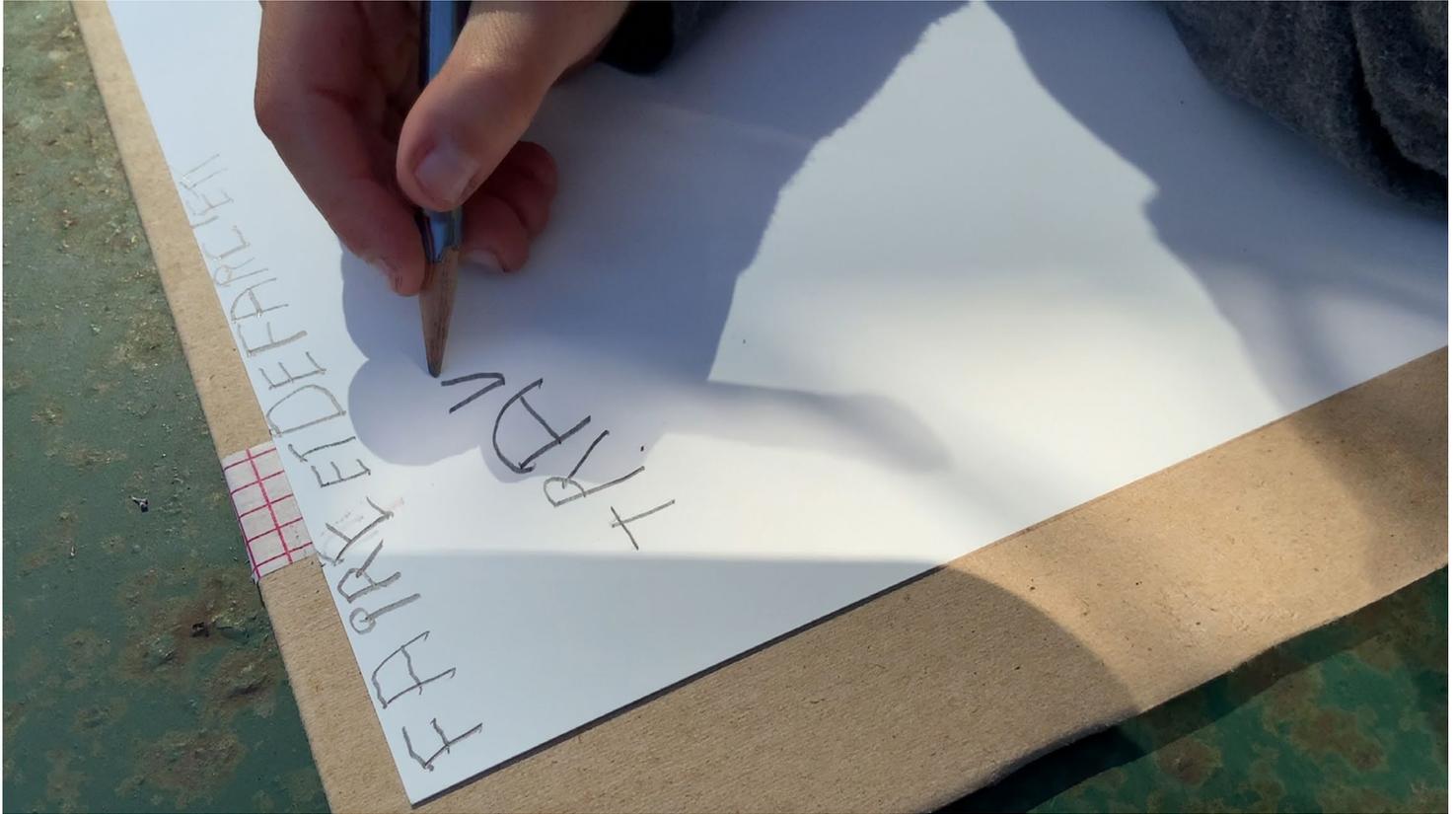
April 17 – May 29, 2021

Opening reception: Saturday, April 17 from 12 – 6pm; social distancing and health protocols are in effect

San Francisco, CA: Catharine Clark Gallery opens its Spring 2021 program with *Doing and Undoing*, the gallery's debut solo exhibition of work by multi-disciplinary artist Jen Bervin, on view April 17 – May 29, 2021. Encompassing fiber works, installation, and video, Bervin's presentation draws on the poetic tensions of text/textile, inviting viewers to reflect on language as a material and technology for intimate forms of connection.

The exhibition title stems from a new video cycle, on view in the Media Room, that draws from an expression that Bervin's francophone in-laws often use: "Faire et défaire c'est travailler," which Bervin translates as "Doing and undoing it's working." Reflecting the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, Bervin's video depicts the hands of three family members writing, erasing, and rewriting this endlessly applicable expression, spanning small hands new to lettering, to aging hands for whom writing is becoming increasingly difficult. Each draft is embroidered on linen scraps previously set aside for the purpose of mending.

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Above: Jen Bervin, still from *Faire et défaire c'est travailler / Doing and undoing it's working*, 2021; single-channel video.

The expression evokes domestic activities and cycles intimately familiar during the pandemic as we collectively reconnect with our immediate surroundings at-home. Through these metaphors of “doing and undoing,” Bervin’s video also raises larger questions about our relationship to the social fabric and the critical work of anti-racist learning/unlearning which has been centered during the pandemic as we work together to create a just and equitable world.

The main galleries feature *Close Reading* (2021), a constellation of new works by Jen Bervin that poetically respond to sheltering-in-place during a time of human loss on an unprecedented scale. Bervin reimagines the American poet Emily Dickinson’s late fragments and manuscript drafts in magnified textile forms that draw upon the formal characteristics of their source materials and manuscripts, realized as stand-alone works or as mirrored diptychs that represent the front and back of a page. Dickinson’s penciled writings are sewn into hand-dyed cotton batting with silver-metallic thread, a process that evokes the velocity and brilliance of Dickinson’s compositions. Bervin describes these tactile, meditative works as “threshold texts that draw on the particulars of Dickinson’s language and script in order to offer the space for careful, sustained attention, and for close looking and close reading, to contemplate how poets touch poems and, by extension, readers in the space of a poem.”

The poet Mary Ruefle has described Bervin as “an artist who takes everything a woman ever did and turns it into an example of the world.” This work is a continuation of a sustained engagement with Dickinson’s work, in parallel with other such works related to the writings of Ruth Asawa, Anni Albers, and the 4th century poet Su Hui. In her previous body of work, *Silk Poems*, Bervin delved into Tufts University’s cutting-edge research on liquefied silk, to explore the cultural, scientific, and linguistic complexities of silk written nanoscale inside the body to write a poem in the form of a silk biosensor. In *Close Reading*, she questions the provenance of the paper ground and its relationship to suffering in conjunction with the exploitative global empire of cotton.

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Above: Jen Bervin, *Close Reading 877*, 2021; Dickinson fragments and drafts on hand-dyed cotton batting, muslin, thread.

Throughout the exhibition, Bervin invites viewers to imagine the possibilities and responsibilities embedded in poetic forms of doing and undoing, knowing and unknowing. The exhibition also includes works from Bervin's composites of Dickinson's variant system in a series of quilts titled *The Dickinson Composites*, work from *The Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson's Envelope Poems*, with Marta Werner and Susan Howe, as well as a range of artist book projects. ***Doing and Undoing* opens on Saturday, April 17 with a socially-distanced, extended opening from 12 – 6pm.** Advance reservations are encouraged, but walk-ins are welcome, with capacity limited to 10 visitors or fewer. [Please click here to make an advance appointment to view Jen Bervin's solo exhibition.](#)

In response to Bervin's exhibition, Catharine Clark Gallery, BOXBLUR, and the San Francisco Dance Film Festival present a **new commissioned dance work by New York-based choreographer Catherine Galasso**. Galasso will present *Dances for Doing*, an original, site-specific dance in dialogue with Bervin's exhibition, featuring two distinct duets: one for longtime dancers and collaborators Karla Quintero and Phoenicia Pettyjohn, and another for dancers in training Galicia and Santiago Stack Lozano. Galasso will employ the form of the duet to create intricate combinations of everyday gesture, resulting in otherworldly forms both familiar and strange that experiment with a range of scale, narrative, and architectural response. Composer Catherine McRae creates a haunting original score using violin, cello, and kalimba that accompanies Galasso's choreography. **Performances are scheduled for May 1, May 2, and June 27, with tickets from \$30 - \$40; please contact Anton Stuebner, Director at associate@cclarkgallery.com for more details.**

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Poet and visual artist JEN BERVIN's projects and long-term research delve into the relationships between text and textiles, abstractions of language and landscape, and concepts of repair. Bervin's work emerges from collaboration with artists and specialists – ranging from literary scholars to material scientists – through which Bervin activates the intersections of art and science, technology, and craft in works that range from poems written nanoscale to large-scale museum installations.

Bervin's solo and collaborative work has been exhibited internationally at MOMENTA, Biennale de l'Image, Montreal; the Hong Kong University Museum and Art Gallery; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa; Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne; The Power Plant, Toronto; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts; Tufts University Art Galleries, Medford, Massachusetts; Rhode Island

School of Design, Providence; and Morgan Library and Museum, New York, among others. Bervin has authored eleven books and artist's books: *Silk Poems* was a New Museum Book of the Year and a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award, and *Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson's Envelope Poems* (with Marta Werner and Susan Howe) was a Book of the Year selection by *The New Yorker*.

She has received grants, awards, and fellowships from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Asian Cultural Council, Creative Capital, Foundation for Contemporary Art, SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence), Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Banff Centre, and New York Foundation for the Arts, among others. Her work has been covered in media outlets such as *Artforum*, *Huffington Post*, *NPR*, *The Nation*, *LA Times*, *Frieze*, *Hyperallergic*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*, and can be found in more than sixty international collections, including Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Yale University; Brooklyn Museum, and The J. Paul Getty Museum. She lives and works in Guilford, Connecticut, with her wife and collaborator Charlotte Lagarde. *Doing and Undoing* is her first solo exhibition with Catharine Clark Gallery.



CATHERINE GALASSO creates original dance works that revolve around the inherent architectural and narrative qualities of the dancing body, granting equal influence to light, sound, and space. She embraces historical renderings and inspirations in a collaborative approach that values intuition and co-authorship. The subject matter of her work is the people that inhabit it, often with historical characters and anecdotes threaded throughout. Galasso has personal roots in the avant-garde, evident in her unique style that is steeped in postmodern abstraction, combined with a pop sensibility that is playfully self-aware. Her dances are consistently idiosyncratic, with an emphasis on community and relatability.

Galasso's work has been supported by the New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Brooklyn Arts Exchange, Robert Wilson's Watermill Center, Headlands Center, Kaatsbaan and ODC Theater in San Francisco, among others. Her interdisciplinary dance works have been presented by venues in the US such as SFMOMA, La MaMa, and MoCA Santa Barbara, and internationally at Bibliotheque National in Paris, France; Skena UP in Pristina, Kosovo; and Zona D Studio in Bucharest, Romania. In June 2021, Galasso will present a virtual commission for ODC's Theater Festival, the video work (*Alone Together*)², which will premiere online on June 3, 2021.

<https://odc.dance/festival>

Photo above of Catharine Galasso: Photo: Laura Brichta