



**Art Basel 2021** 9/21-26,2021

ShanghART

Liang Shaoji - All things equal

Online Viewing Room

ShanghART Gallery is pleased to present Liang Shaoji's All things equal as a special Art Basel OVR project. Liang Shaoji is a most unique and singular figure. "Silk" has been his main medium throughout his four decades of an artistic career. Borrowing its title from Zhuangzi sayings, this special OVR project advocates Liang's aesthetic relativity theory and showcases Liang's milestone works including installation, sound, drawing, performance, photography, and video that reveal the pattern of how the artist quests upon the life, nature, and universe through silkworm.

All things equal elaborates that all existences are dependent upon the opposite for existence due to the importance of fluidity and interconnectedness. This core spirit has become the philosophical foundation for Liang Shaoji's creation to pursuit the highest level of unity between man and nature. Deeply rooted in ancient culture, coordinated with cosmology, and instructed through science, Liang aims to create a new form of ecological aesthetics that reflects worldwide philosophies and collaborates with contemporary materials and methodologies.



**Liang Shaoji**

**Chains: The Unbearable Lightness of Being/Nature Series No.79**

2002-2007

Silk, silk cocoons, polyurethane resin, iron powder

18 pieces, 5\*5\*10m

LSJU024

"The relationship between the silk and the metal chain here is one of dependence . . . they depend on each other, but also conflict with each other."

—*Liang Shaoji*

### **Chains was exhibited**

The Allure of Matter: Material Art from China, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)

Smart Museum of Art & Wrightwood 659, Chicago, (touring exhibition) U.S.A., 2019-2020

Everyday Legend, Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, 2016

Myth / History II: Shanghai Galaxy, YUZ Museum, Shanghai, 2015

Alchemical Dissent: Silkworms, Mushrooms and Random Brush Strokes, Times Art Museum, Beijing, 2016

Art of Change, Hayward Gallery, London, U.K., 2012

Questioning Heaven, Liang Shaoji Solo Exhibition, Gao Magee Art Gallery, Madrid, Spain, 2012

Liang Shaoji, Prince Claus Fund, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2009



**Beds/Nature Series No.10**

1993 ~ 1999

Silk, cocoon, charred copper

17 pieces

LSJU018\_1

“In addition, in my creative process, I always emphasized experiencing. Western philosophy emphasizes analysis, the Eastern more experience. The dynamic ‘experiencing’ process results in enlightenment, either a sudden or a gradual one. The Beds and Chain: The Unbearable Lightness of Being are the result of life experience and enlightenment. My inspiration for making Beds came from my experience of observing the silkworm spinning. I used to observe the silkworms at night and sometimes I continuously sat up for several nights. One time, after continuously observing them spinning for several days and nights, I was then too tired and fell asleep while I was sitting on the floor. When I woke up after one hour, I found that a silkworm had fallen down on to my shoulder and had already made a thin cocoon on it. I suddenly started to think: am I a silkworm? So I thought of using the burnt enameled wire from the discarded motor to make a number of tiny beds. Then I cultivated silkworms and let them spin on the beds. Year after year, the process went on. This work was made from 1992 to 1999. In 1999, this work went to the Venice Biennale. ....

These swaying tiny beds that staggered and extended in the exhibition hall were weighted by the pressure of the surrounding space while projected a tremendous power, like those matchstick-like figures in Alberto Giacometti’s works”

—Liang Shaoji



### **Beds was exhibited**

Liang Shaoji, Prince Claus Fund, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2010

Metamorphosis ShanghART, Shanghai, 2009

48th International Art Exhibition Venice Biennale Venice, Italy, 1999

Jiangnan: Modern and Contemporary Art from South of the Yangzi River, Emily Carr Institute and Design, Vancouver, Canada, 1998

95' Art Critics' Nomination Show of Sculpture and Installation Nanjing, 1995



## **Time and Permanence**

1993 ~ 2018

Silk, cocoons, barbed wires

400(H)\*77(W)\*65cm (in 2 pieces) | 104\*77\*65cm | 136\*43\*45cm

LSJ\_8528

" ...I like to put uncompleted or completed work in a new environment to create a dialogue between my work and that environment and then I take photos. For instance, I have been working on this four-cornered pyramid shaped item for many years and it is still going on. If you look from one side, it is like a pyramid; if you turn it upside down, it is a sandglass. I continue to cover it with silk, and take it to meaningful spaces, such as the Museum of Louvre in Paris, the Sagrada Familia Cathedral in Barcelona, the Florence Cathedral and the Forum of Heaven in Beijing."

—*Liang Shaoji*



Time and Permanence  
Drawings and photos



"I spent thirty years understanding the Tao through silkworms. The Tao follows nature; in other words, the Tao is a synonym of the nature. To grasp the Tao, we need not only logical thinking, but also an aesthetic attitude with continuous practice, summarization and reflection. The Tao of Zhuangzi and Laozi's Tao is a kind of chaotic whole thing that is neither the subject nor the object, yet both the subject and the object. To seek the Tao through the silkworm is to observe everything about the life process of silkworms, immerse myself in this process, and then achieve such a status of "I am a silkworm", as if I'm living and metamorphosing with the silkworms. Heidegger mentioned that "devoutness of thinking lies in questioning", silk ( 丝 ) became thinking ( 思 ) and history ( 史 ), and then surpassed individual thinking and history, becoming a poem ( 诗 ). Silkworm ( 蚕 ) becomes Zen ( 禅 ). "

--- *Liang Shaoji*



## **Destiny**

2012 ~ 2014

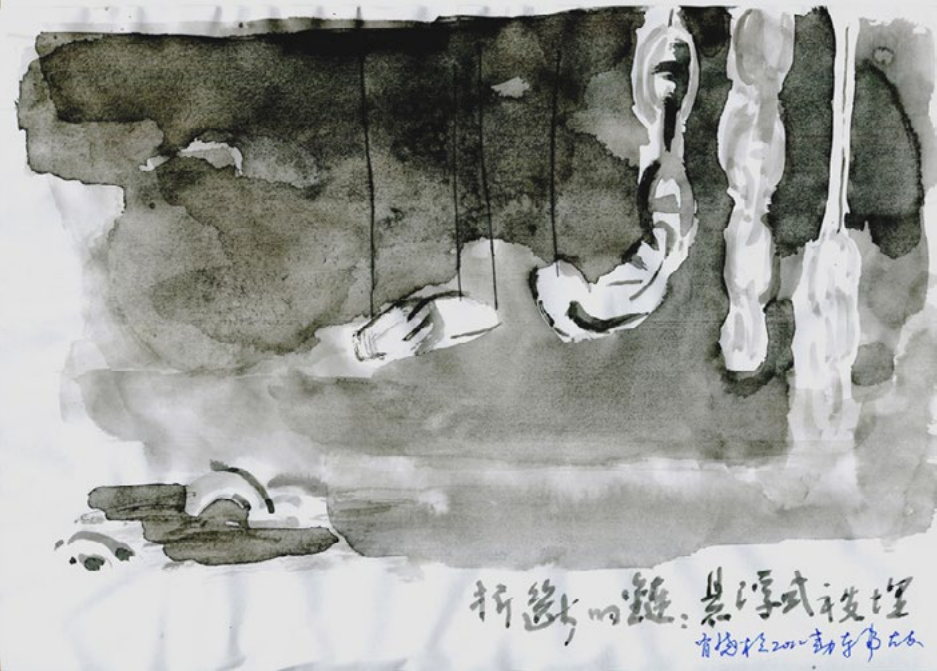
Silk, cocoons, iron plate, iron powder, oil barrel, polyurethane colophony, acrylic, yellow ground

180(H)\*1250(W)\*350cm

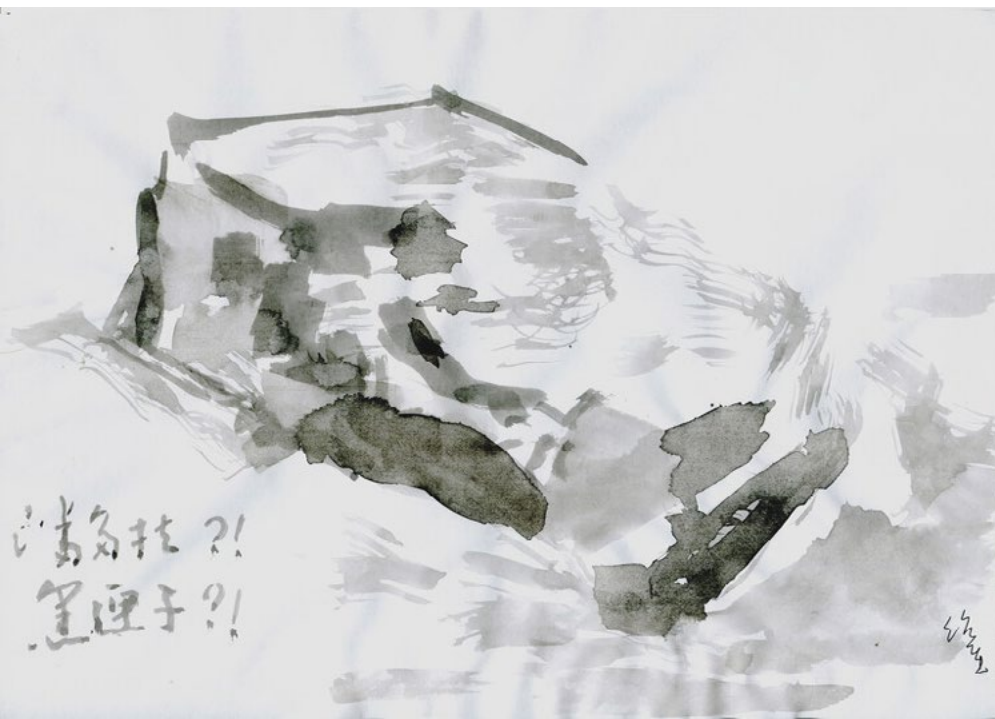
LSJ\_5139

"Destiny, an enormous mixed-media installation, uncovers a chapter of shocking scenes: the giant metal chains wrapped and covered by silvery and soft silk crawling out of a broken and rusty black box, squirming painfully back into mud. It is an allegory of natural catastrophes and man-made calamities such as traffic accidents, oil pollution and war. It is the allegory of destiny."

--- *Liang Shaoji*



Destiny  
Drawings





## Broken Landscape

2013

Silk, cocoon

540(H)\*140(W)cm

LSJ\_2251

Liang Shaoji sees silk as line of life and line of destiny, seemingly broken but actually not. Overcoming firmness by gentleness, while semitransparent silk asserts itself as being in a state of stillness, emptiness, and blurriness.

Thus, says Liang Shaoji, "I am a silkworm." It is because his artistic creations, as well as what he feels and thinks about art, have fused seamlessly into a silkworm's self-creation and sublimation. This "fusion" is not a sudden event but rather a culmination of nearly forty years of life experience. Of the hundreds of projects since his Nature Series No. 1 in 1988, each and every one is a collaboration between him and his idea of the silkworm, although the visual effects have become more and more complex, and the scope of his thinking, philosophy, and aesthetics also continue to expand and overlay. They include the shocking *Destiny*; *Listening to the Silkworm*, which sounds like a misty rain; *Cloud Mirror*, a cosmic retrospection; and *Mending Sky*, with its echoes of Zen. In these works, people can feel the primal encounter between the world and civilization and the interaction and acclimation of humanity and nature, rethinking life from a religious and philosophical perspective, and considering the eternal tension between power politics and individual desires. In one sense, "I am a silkworm" personifies and identifies with the Tang-dynasty poet Li Shangyin's (813–858) famous verse: "Till the end of life do silkworms keep spinning silk." In another sense, "I am a silkworm" is a visual development of Heidegger's philosophical statement that poetry is a kind of homecoming. Liang has used Heidegger's phrase, expressing his quest in the Nature Series as "looking up toward 'poetry.'" Regardless of the specific theme of his work, whether cosmic philosophy or international politics, it is indeed poetry, written by the artist and nature together.

--- *Wu Hong*



## **A Move in Silence**

2013 ~ 2014

Acrylic sheet, silk, metal frame, resin emulate stone

for display 430(H)\*480(W)\*480cm

LSJ\_8065

"In A Move in Silence, the light and shadow of the cloud like silk spread on the acrylic sheets, making an effect of the coexistence of quietness and motion.

I take a sudden stop in utter silence. Quietly a clock is deconstructed, hands going nowhere,  
and my face being covered by messed silk threads. The old clock goes into shock.  
Silently an oval stone clock floats in middle of the air, wrapped by the warm silk fiber,  
starting to melt bit by bit...

Serenely an accelerator is being erected. The clouds of silk on the wall echo with particles inside. They seem to be vaporizing and eventually spin rapidly in the air.  
No truth or illusion can be told. The silk fiber sparkles with soft power. Time is restarted."

--- *Liang Shaoji*





**Planar Tunnel**

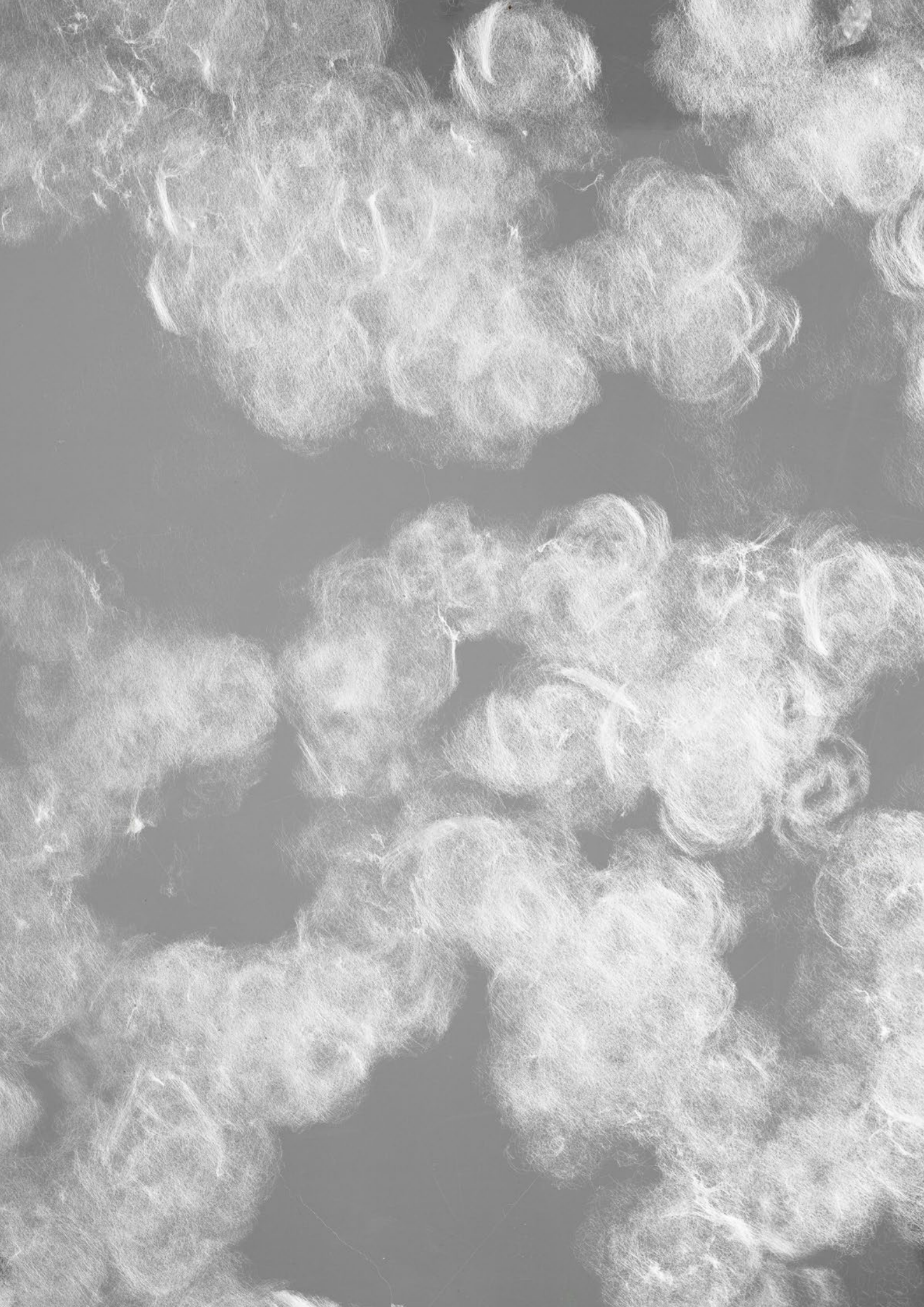
2018

Silk, 145(H)\*145(W)cm

LSJ\_6442

"Zhuangzi to the extreme of emptiness inspired me as it is an Eastern perception of minimalist art. Planar Tunnel reveals the infinity of the time and space of life, universe and history through the plain and mysterious silk pieces woven by silkworms"

--- *Liang Shaoji*



## **Stars All Over the Sky**

2020

Silk, mirror-acrylic panel

122(H)\*244(W)cm | Acrylic frame 123.5\*245.5\*15cm

LSJ\_8184

"A conceptual artist who creates unique meditations on nature and human existence"  
(Prince Claus Foundation)

Liang Shaoji was born in Shanghai in 1945. He lives and works in the remote mountains of Tiantai in Zhejiang province. From 1986 to 1989, he studied at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou. Around same time Liang started experimenting with silkworms and has since been indulged in the interdisciplinary creation of art and biology, installation and sculpture, new media and textile.

Exhibitions include: The Allure of Matter, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Smart Museum, Chicago, U.S.A. (2019-2020); Liang Shaoji: As If, M Woods Museum, Beijing (2018); The Curitiba Biennale, Brazil (2017); Liang Shaoji: Cloud Above Cloud, Museum of the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou (2016); What About the Art?, Al Riwaq, Doha (2016); Art of Change, Hayward Gallery, London (2012); The 3rd Shanghai Biennale, (2000); The 5th Lyon Biennale (2000); The 48th Venice Biennale, (1999); The 6th Istanbul Biennial, (1999); China/Avant-Garde Art Exhibition, National Art Museum of China, Beijing (1989).

Liang Shaoji was awarded the Chinese Contemporary Art Awards (CCAA) in 2002. In 2009 he received the Dutch Prince Claus Awards for his "evocative artworks that offer a meditative approach in which art becomes nature and nature becomes art, for his artistic integrity in working outside the mainstream, and for his insightful investigation of the ethics of the human condition and relationship with nature."

September 28, 2021 Liang Shaoji's "A Silky Entanglement", an exhibition which has been in the making for 3 years will open at the Power Station of Art in Shanghai.

(most quotes by Liang Shaoji are from: Pursuit for the Tao through the Silkworm, A Conversation with Liang Shaoji, Interviewer: Yang Jing 2017-08-07; post-doctoral research at the Department of Music, Art and Culture Studies of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, focusing on ecological awareness in Chinese contemporary art)



I have had a cursory read of works by Eastern and Western philosophers. In traditional Chinese works, I like Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu's philosophy. In Western works, I read more about the works of German and French philosophers. I am fond of Chuang Tzu because of his rich thinking about life and aesthetics. Among Western philosophers, I was fond of Nietzsche in the 1980s. With the passage of time and advancing years, I read Heidegger more. In addition, I also read Deleuze, Foucault, Benjamin and Agamben. Heidegger's thinking has had a deep influence on me. His idea about the technology is inspiring to us today. Heidegger regarded poetry as measure-taking and the obligation of a poet is to return as a native, but I prefer, in this case, to change "poetry" into "silk" (the two words poetry (诗) and silk (丝) are homophones in Chinese), and thus "silk is measure-taking and the obligation of silk is to return as a native".

--- *Liang Shaoji*

# ShanghART

香 格 纳 画 廊

ShanghART Shanghai 香格纳上海  
西岸，徐汇区龙腾大道 2555 号 10 号楼，上海，中国 200232  
West Bund, Bldg. 10, No.2555 Longteng Avenue, Xuhui District, Shanghai 200232, China  
T: +86 21-6359 3923|F: +86 21-6359 4570|info@shanghartgallery.com

[www.shanghartgallery.com](http://www.shanghartgallery.com)