

# ZIYI LI

Media theory and the philosophy of technology — research grounded in artistic practice

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## RESEARCH PROFILE

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I work at the intersection of digital media, media theory, and the philosophy of technology, examining the relationship between **materiality and cognition** — how material and technical systems at once reveal and conceal the limits of human understanding, and how new forms of knowledge and perception emerge from that tension. Across a sustained body of practice-based research centered on the **human voice**, I treat phonation as a critical site for rethinking embodied cognition, human-machine relations, and the material conditions that artificial intelligence presupposes and erases. My method joins the hands-on construction of vocal apparatuses with theoretical inquiry drawing on cybernetics, new materialism, embodied cognition, and the philosophy of mind. I pursue this work primarily through scholarly writing, conference presentation, and publication, with making serving as a mode of material investigation rather than an end in itself.

**Keywords:** media theory of art and technology · philosophy of technology · embodied & extended cognition · cultural techniques · human-machine relations · critical AI · new materialism · sound and voice studies

## EDUCATION

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**Master of Arts, Digital Media** — Hochschule für Künste Bremen, Germany 10/2023 – 02/2026  
Thesis: *Vocal Organ: Apparatus for Generating Voice and Images* (60 pp.). Advisors: Prof. Dr. Andrea Sick, Prof. Ralf Baecker, Prof. Natascha Sadr Haghghian.

**Vordiplom (Intermediate Diploma), Freie Kunst (Fine Art)** — Hochschule für Künste Bremen, Germany 10/2020 – 07/2023  
Sculpture, ceramics, and installation exploring the vocal apparatus and the simulation of the human voice.

**Bachelor of Arts, Painting** — Luxun Academy of Fine Arts, Shenyang, China 09/2015 – 06/2019

**German Language Studies** — Fremdspracheforum Sprachschule, Köln, Germany 08/2019 – 03/2020

## PUBLICATIONS & WRITING

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**Li, Ziyi (2026).** *Vocal Organ: Apparatus for Generating Voice and Images*. MA thesis, Hochschule für Künste Bremen. Open-access preprint, DOI: [10.31235/osf.io/ywdct\\_v1](https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/ywdct_v1).

An interdisciplinary study of how the material act of phonation relates to the emergence of intelligence. Traces the progressive stripping of the voice's material conditions through writing, phonography, and AI-generated speech, and proposes "**The Room without Echo**" as a material-acoustic critique of Searle's Chinese Room. Engages Wiener (cybernetics), Merleau-Ponty and Clark & Chalmers (embodied/extended cognition), and Searle and Putnam (philosophy of mind).

## PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

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**Vocal Tectonics** — Physical installation, Bremen 2025  
A constructed vocal apparatus (porcelain, silicone, air pumps, Raspberry Pi) that materializes the invisible cavity of the human vocal tract. Treating the voice as a "converter" between concept and matter, the work stages cognition as something investigated through hands-on engagement with physical systems, drawing on the notion of the material-discursive apparatus.

**Initial Voice** — Material research project 2024  
Advisor: Prof. Ralf Baecker. Reconstructs the body's resonant cavities in porcelain and silicone to study vocalization as a material process, connecting a personal history of hearing impairment to broader questions of perception, sensory reorganization, and embodied knowledge.

**Humanoid Vocal Simulator** — Vordiplom project 2022  
Advisor: Prof. Dr. Mona Schieren. A first mechanical device simulating human vocalization, probing the gap between externally understanding vocal mechanics and the internal experience of producing voice — and the limits of technical replication.

## EXHIBITIONS

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### SOLO

*Vocal Organ* — Hochschule für Künste Bremen, Germany 2026

*Humanoid Vocal Simulator* — Hochschule für Künste Bremen, Germany 2022

### GROUP

*I Hope This Finds You Well* — Hochschule für Künste Bremen, Germany 2025

*Studies of Change* — Alte Pathologie, Bremen, Germany 2024

*Our Porous Limits* — SPEDITION Kunst- & Kulturverein, Bremen, Germany 2021

*OUT/SYNC* — Galerie HBKSAAR, Saarbrücken, Germany 2021

### PROJECT / COLLABORATIVE

*Habla con la papa en la boca* — After the Butcher, Berlin, Germany 2025

*goarwywaswyt* — Hochschuletage, HfK Bremen, Germany 2025

*LACUNA: Inside of a Dumpling* — Hochschuletage, HfK Bremen, Germany 2022

*Walking Towards a Garden* — Hochschuletage, HfK Bremen, Germany 2022

*When to Move in Disorientation* — Open Space Domshof, Bremen, Germany 2021

*Shape Shifting – Sightings* — Circa106, Bremen, Germany 2020

## HONORS & AWARDS

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**DAAD Prize for Outstanding Achievements by International Students** — DAAD & Hochschule für Künste Bremen 2025

## PROFESSIONAL & CURATORIAL EXPERIENCE

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**Curatorial & Workshop Assistant** — chi K11 art space, Shenyang, China 05/2018 – 08/2019