# Alice Wang

## 14th Shanghai Biennale

#### **Cosmos Cinema**

#### November 9, 2023 - March 31, 2024





### Alice Wang

Untitled

2016/2023 Hand-painted glass tiles unfixed to the ground Dimensions variable Courtesy of the artist and Capsule Shanghai Alice Wang's sculptural forms shine a light on the uncanny forces that shape the physical world. Using material such as fossils, meteorites, moss, and heat—ranging from leftover radiation from the Big Bang to the wax secreted by bees—her work aims to reconfigure our understanding of reality.

Wang's research has taken her from Biosphere 2 to the Mesoamerican pyramids but has recently been trained on the smallest—and most fundamental scale. Quantum computers bridge the gap between classical Newtonian physics and the altogether stranger world of subatomic particles. Like the artist's work, these machines work at the crossover of the real and the imaginary.

Comprising more than 100,000 individually hand-painted glass tiles placed in interlocking but unfixed patterns on the ground, *Untitled* materializes the chaos of the subatomic world. Based on the behavior of cosmic background radiation generated by the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago—the same radiation that manifests as "white noise" on an analog television—the immersive floor sculpture reveals the conditions that prevail in the universe beyond the register of human perception. This mandala-like mosaic is like a "sound fossil," a two-dimensional representation of reverberations through the fabric of spacetime.





#### **UCCA Dune**

## **The Touching Touched**

October 29, 2023 - February 18, 2024



#### Top:

#### Whew, 2012-2013/2023 helium, air, clear nylon film 180 x 180 x 180 cm and shrinking

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art



#### Untitled, 2023

# stainless steel, each pair: matte black and mirror finish sizes range from 6.3 x 6.3 x 6.3 cm ~ 35.4 x 35.4 x 35.4 cm





*Untitled*, 2017 mimosa pudica dimensions variable

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

UCCA Dune presents "Alice Wang: The Touching Touched", the most comprehensive institutional solo exhibition of Alice Wang to date. The exhibition is a survey of Wang's sculptures, films, and photographs from 2013 to 2023, and includes a series of new sculptures commissioned by UCCA. Through three-dimensional, moving image, and photographic forms, the exhibition combines scientific, technological, and mythical perspectives to explore nature in cosmic and subatomic scales at the intersection of the real and the imaginary.





One of the highlights of the exhibition is the juxtaposition of Wang's earliest sculpture *Whew* (2013) with her latest UCCA commission *Untitled* (2023) in the main exhibition hall. While *Untitled* reveals the quantum realm to our human senses, *Whew* explores kineticism and change, both playing with elemental matter through the sculptural form. *Whew*, an onomatopoeia, is a large (180 cm3) clear levitating minimalist cube filled with helium. Over time and given its atmospheric context, the sculpture will float around, shrink and expand, and eventually fall to the ground, changing its original shape and state.





#### *Untitled*, 2023 porcelain (high gloss black glaze and white crackle glaze) dimensions range from 6.3 x 6.3 x 6.3 cm ~ 35.4 x 35.4 x 35.4 cm

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

*Untitled*, on the other hand, consists of twinned porcelain sculptures that are identical in shape yet opposite in texture – one is coated in high gloss black glaze and the other is in a white crackle glaze finish – generating different optical effects. The twinned sculptures are modeled after hydrogen electrons in quantum entanglement – they cease to be distinct objects but function as one system that simultaneously inhabits two states. In Wang's own words, "The physical boundary of the work is not limited to its visible expression."







#### Untitled, 2021

waveform fossils found in Eastern Europe from the Jurassic Period (199.6 million to 145.5 million years ago), and stainless steel three pieces: 74 x 43 x 84 cm, 107 x 58 x 97 cm, 80 x 54 x 86 cm

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![](_page_24_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_24_Picture_1.jpeg)

![](_page_24_Picture_2.jpeg)

![](_page_25_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_26_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### Outside:

#### Untitled, 2023 Ultra matte black paint on 3D printed resin on black sand Dimensions range from $6.3 \times 6.3 \times 6.3$ cm to $35.4 \times 35.4 \times 35.4$ cm

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

Inside (left to right):

\*Untitled, 2015 1000 Watt metal-halide light, silver Mylar, moving reflections on the wall and floor Height variable, 100 cm wide

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

Untitled, 2019/2023 Stainless steel, heat Set of 28, dimensions range from  $10 \times 10 \times 9.5$  cm to  $12.5 \times 15.5 \times 13$  cm

Commissioned by OCT Loft and UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

Untitled, 2017 Wind, beeswax, silver  $243.8 \times 61 \times 30.5$  cm

![](_page_28_Picture_0.jpeg)

*Untitled*, 2023 Porcelain and vapor Set of 9, 66-97 cm each in height, 16-17.5 cm each in diameter

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

![](_page_30_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_31_Picture_1.jpeg)

![](_page_32_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_33_Picture_0.jpeg)

Untitled, 2019 Iron meteorite found in Egypt (Gebel Kamil, East Uweinat Desert)  $50.8 \times 50.8 \times 7$  cm

![](_page_35_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_36_Picture_0.jpeg)

Untitled, 2018 Wet plate collodion photographs on mirror Set of 7,  $25 \times 20 \times 0.5$  cm each

![](_page_38_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_39_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### Untitled, 2021 Ambrotype Set of 5, $30.5 \times 38.1 \times 0.2$ cm each

Commissioned by OCAT Xi'an

![](_page_41_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### Left:

#### Untitled, 2020

Prism, Crookes radiometer, hand-made white gold tiles, air plants, fluorescent pink isometric grid, wet plate collodion photographs on mirror, glass microspheres table: 121.9 × 243.8 × 121.9 cm

![](_page_43_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_44_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### Oracle, 2017 Alice Wang and Ben Tong HD video 9'42"

*Oracle* is a meditation on the relationship between plants, humans, and technology. Filmed collaboratively by Ben Tong and Alice Wang at Biosphere2 — a self-contained ecosystem enclosed in a 3.14-acre glass and steel structure in Arizona, the work defamiliarizes the synthetic structure and the organisms living within it. In the age of the Holocene, the space of Biosphere2 becomes an allegory for our entanglement with the world. Despite our technological interventions, we find that it is no longer the case that we can disregard the noumenal world. Forces and substances like CO2, bacteria, UV rays, the weather and viruses exert their own presence. What is at stake is another way of relating to our mediated environment, our place within it, and death.

https://vimeo.com/243046147

![](_page_46_Picture_0.jpeg)

# in five billion years

![](_page_46_Picture_2.jpeg)

In addition to an examination of Wang's sculpture and photography practice, the exhibition also features three experimental films Wang has made since 2017. The infinite film series *Pyramids and Parabolas* explores our relationship to the natural world by examining how we communicate with the unknown universe through geometric structures. In *Pyramids and Parabolas II*, we see the artist building a radio telescope in Joshua Tree, then an aerial view of a mountain landscape in Guizhou, China, and then in Svalbard, just 500 miles south of the North Pole, where the embodied camera is on a snowmobile chasing the pink blue hue of the first sunrise of the year. The films are not just recordings of the artist's experiences, but reflect on notions of the self, nature, and the cosmos in the vast expanse of spacetime.

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![](_page_48_Picture_1.jpeg)

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![](_page_48_Picture_3.jpeg)

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![](_page_48_Picture_8.jpeg)

![](_page_48_Picture_9.jpeg)

![](_page_48_Picture_10.jpeg)

![](_page_48_Picture_11.jpeg)

![](_page_48_Picture_12.jpeg)

![](_page_48_Picture_13.jpeg)

Pyramids and Parabolas is an infinite film series that explores our relationship to the natural world by examining how we communicate with the unknown universe through geometric structures.

The idea of an infinite film series allows each episode to take on a looseness and autonomy in order to experiment freely with the serial form. From collage, to essayist, to abstract, each installment of the series assumes a different genre, which can be independent of the others. The episodes all-together form a total work of art with a common theme and interconnected narrative threads.

As the series unfolds, *Pyramids and Parabolas* will shape shift and take on a life of its own. New ideas and formal experiments may emerge from the openness of the film form that is not predetermined.

![](_page_50_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### Pyramids and Parabolas I, 2019 16mm transferred to HD video 7 minutes

Weaving together scenes from the movie Contact with 16mm footage shot at the Very Large Array — the radio astronomy observatory in New Mexico, as well as three Mayan pyramids across the Yucatán Peninsula—Calakmul, Uxmal, and Cobá, *Pyramids and Parabolas I* imagines how geometric forms can function as portals into parallel dimensions. The parabolic shape of modern day radio telescopes—made to listen to signals emitted by celestial objects and events, and similarly the pyramidal shapes of ancient Mayan monoliths—where priests communed with forces beyond the human realm, can both be understood as ways of transiting into alternate universes.

The first episode established the groundwork for the dialectic between the pyramidal structure of ancient monolithic architecture and the parabolic shape of modern radio telescopes. Featuring found dash-cam footage of the apocalyptic fireball that came crashing down from outer space into Chelyabinsk, Russia, *Pyramids and Parabolas* started with a bang that signaled our precarity in the cosmos as a vulnerable planet amidst powerful natural forces. Our relationship to nature is not just what's on Earth; we live in a world that is largely inhospitable to humans and other living organisms.

https://vimeo.com/364601921

![](_page_52_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_52_Picture_1.jpeg)

![](_page_52_Picture_2.jpeg)

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#### Pyramids and Parabolas II, 2021 16mm transferred to HD video and HD video 18m 45s

Calling attention to the body in order to foreground the experiential aspect of the film, the second episode of *Pyramids and Parabolas* begins with a twominute body scan meditation in the dark. Followed by a quote from the sci-fi novel Three Body Problem, "Three days from now, between one and five in the morning, the entire universe will flicker for you" — which acts almost like a spell, the film is a travelogue of the artist journeying through surreal and sublime landscapes in nature. Bookended by the building of a NASA JOVE radio telescope in Joshua Tree, California, the collage film is the artist's quest to touch the cosmos and connect with the universe through flesh.

https://vimeo.com/560699934

# Kling & Bang

# Reykjavík, Iceland

June 3 - July 16, 2023

![](_page_55_Picture_0.jpeg)

Untitled, 2023 Ultra matte black paint on 3D printed resin Dimensions range from  $6.3 \times 6.3 \times 6.3$  cm to  $35.4 \times 35.4 \times 35.4$  cm

![](_page_57_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_57_Picture_1.jpeg)

Popping in and out of being, electrons exist as probability clouds. They can also be entangled to exist in two different parts of the universe at the same time. What Einstein called "spooky action at a distance," these electrons cease to be distinct objects and function as one system that inhabits two states simultaneously. Beyond our commonsense perception of reality, the quantum dimension feels strange and mysterious.

Unlike digital computers that store information as electrical signals in binary bits, quantum computers use subatomic particles, such as electrons. In particular, entangled electrons are used to encode data in multiple states at once, giving the quantum computer its incredible potential. Based on the shapes of hydrogen electron probability clouds, *Untitled* (2023) uses the language of sculpture to bring the quantum experience into the realm of our senses.

![](_page_59_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_59_Picture_1.jpeg)

### Art Basel

# Hong Kong

### March 21 - 25, 2023

Sculptures can shift perception and open up alternate ways of thinking and imagining new worlds. Entangling two electron cloud forms, the paired sculptures *Untitled* (2023) are interconnected — one existing in opposite phenomenological effect to the other; the ultra-matte black stainlesssteel pieces absorb light while their mirror finish counterparts reflect light. Activating one's memory and imagination, the work implicates the spectator in its entanglement; seeing one form triggers the mind to conjure its inverted twin, in an instant, one is transported into the quantum dimension.

Quantum computers have the potential to model reality in a range of scenarios, including weather systems, viral behavior, information networks. The future applications of quantum computing will be revolutionary that may affect climate change, global health, communication, and other issues on the planetary scale. As Richard Feynman said, "Nature isn't classical, ... if you want to make a simulation of nature, you'd better make it quantum mechanical."

![](_page_62_Picture_0.jpeg)

Untitled, 2023 Stainless steel, matte black and mirror finish Dimensions range from  $6.3 \times 6.3 \times 6.3$  cm to  $35.4 \times 35.4 \times 35.4$  cm

![](_page_64_Picture_0.jpeg)

Alice Wang (b. 1983, Xi'an, China) received a B.Sc. in Computer Science and International Relations from the University of Toronto, BFA from the California Institute of the Arts, and MFA from New York University. She was a fellow at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, a Villa Aurora fellow in Berlin, and a grant recipient from the Canada Council for the Arts. Wang has presented solo exhibitions at the UCCA Dune Art Museum, Capsule Shanghai, Human Resources (Los Angeles), 18th Street Arts Center; participated in group exhibitions, screenings, and performances at the K11 Art Foundation (Hong Kong), Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibition, Armory Center for the Arts, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Taikang Space, Para Site, and the Hammer Museum. She will participate in the 14th Shanghai Biennale at the Power Station of Art in the fall of 2023, and present a solo exhibition at the Vincent Price Art Museum in the spring of 2024. Later in 2024, she will participate in the International Program residency at the ISCP in Brooklyn, and present her film series Pyramids and Parabolas at the e-flux Screening Room. Wang lives and works in New York.