

Alchemyverse: Messa in Luce

An exhibition amplifying the universe's "background noise"

June 29–November 17, 2023

Opening Reception:
Thursday, June 29,
6–8pm

Gallery Hours:
Monday–Friday
10:30am–5:30pm

The International Studio & Curatorial Program presents *Alchemyverse: Messa in Luce*, an installation of work developed in and about Chile's Atacama Desert by resident collaborative artist duo Alchemyverse, curated by Jess Wilcox. The installation's centerpiece is a cascade of hanging ceramic tiles produced from wild clay sourced, shaped and pit-fired during a 2022 research trip.



Alchemyverse, Messa in Luce, detail, 2022-2023, pit-fired wild clay sonified by bone conducting transmitters, solar irradiances, earth substrates, field recordings of Rio San Pedro and Mina Victoria, NASA recordings of solar activities, and other mixed media, 240 × 192 × 42 in. (609.6 × 487.68 × 106.68 cm). Courtesy of the artists

Alchemyverse probes the region's reputation as the driest, sunniest place on Earth and host to large-scale scientific and technological infrastructure such as astronomical observatories and solar energy farms. Each ceramic tablet bears the measurement of solar irradiance in kilowatts per square meter on the date of its making and is sonified by conducting transmitters emitting field recordings of the dried river Rio San Pedro and abandoned mine, Mina Victoria. The artists invite exhibition goers to walk onto an elevated floor that vibrates with desert audio and houses artifacts from their field work, which can be viewed from above.

True to the title's meaning, *Messa in Luce*, brings to light what is typically beyond sight. With this immersive scale-shifting installation, Alchemyverse amplifies the universe's "background noise" to promote an understanding of the Earth as an accumulation of particulate matter in a state of constant flux.

Alchemyverse was founded in 2020 in New York City by artists Bicheng Liang (b. 1994, China) and Yixuan Shao (b. 1996, China/United States). They combine their respective knowledge bases and skills in print-making and sound studies with intensive field research to form their collaborative practice. Focusing on the intersection of geologic time and contemporary human experience, Alchemyverse uses a tactile, multisensory approach to foster empathy in humans towards mineral systems in the landscape and beyond. Their collaboration began at the MFA Program at Columbia University, where they met.

Jess Wilcox is an independent curator focusing on ecocritical, socially engaged and public art. From 2016 to 2022, she was Curator and Director of Exhibitions at Socrates Sculpture Park. There she curated dozens of projects including *Helio Oitica Subterranean Penetrable Projects: PN15*, *Sink or Swim: Climate Futures*, *Guadalupe Maravilla: Planeta Abuelx*, *MONUMENTS NOW*, *Nari Ward: G.O.A.T., again*, and the Socrates Annual exhibitions among others. During her tenure, she organized the first single-artist exhibitions in the Park's 33-year history and initiated a program of traveling commissioned works to other venues. From 2011 to 2015, she worked at the Brooklyn Museum's Center for Feminist Art where she co-curated *Agitprop!*, a 60-artist exhibition of historical and contemporary activist art.

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