

*Networks of Kisses*

Installation and Performance by Alchemyverse  
 Nunu Fine Art New York | Project Space  
 December 18, 2024 – February 8, 2025

Curatorial text by Yihsuan Chiu, Independent curator

When recalling their time spent on Rabbit Island in Lake Superior, Alchemyverse described hearing the storm approach from far to near, carried closer by the rustle of leaves. On this untouched island, trees, bushes, rocks, moss, soil, even the animal carcasses within the earth, the waves crashing against the shores, altogether created a symphonic cacophony of the wilderness. *Listen*. They say. This active act of *listening*, pays profound respect to the surrounding nature, resonating and vibrating across different scales and times.

Alchemyverse's process-driven practice is inspired by anthropologist Tim Ingold's concept of being *sentient* to the inhabitable world (2011). The artists recover and advocate for ways of listening, seeing and feeling through the sentience of materials. Ones that allow us to connect more deeply in time, more slowly in speed, and more flexible in scope to our natural worlds.

Since 2021, artists Yixuan Shao and Bicheng Liang have practiced their *studio in-situ* in diverse wildernesses across the globe, including volcanoes, deserts and isolated islands. They view the time spent in each remote and extreme environment an inseparable part of their creative practice. While they study and collect specimens, they also make drawings, prints, ceramics and sound recordings on site. Constantly facing the unknown, the artists adapt and improvise with weather, landscapes, and available resources, allowing the land itself to shape the creation. By working *with* rocks, mud, solar, corals, fire, water, lava, among many others, they hone and embody what they describe as "material perception" or "other-than-human instinct" —an approach that again comes to life in their new site-specific installation *Networks of Kisses*.

A low, steady hum rises from the red-hued dirt bed at the center, filling up the space with a palpable sonic presence. The bed subtly trembles, acting as a gigantic speaker, as the tactile exciters transmit vibrations drawn from the field recordings. Overhead, suspended copper plates vibrate in sync with the visceral sounds of water, soil, and wind in motion recorded in the wilderness. These vibrations create a network of resonant forces that are felt as much as they are heard, highlighting the matters' abilities to perceive sounds as much as the air transmitting them. In *Networks of Kisses*, the artists create a multi-sensory field of sound, haptics and visuals, forming an active network of relationships that link every element in the space, including the audience.

The visual details on the copper plates add another conceptual layer to the installation. Upon closer look, the paper-thin copper plates - engraved with ambiguous photographs and drawings - resist straightforward interpretation. The when, where, and how of these documentations remain obscured, offering glimpses into worlds that remain just beyond reach.

Ultimately, *Networks of Kisses* is a work about a multitude of sentience offered to us if we open to the world and yield ourselves to its embrace. The relational web mirrors Alchemyverse's experience *in-situ* in the wilderness, connecting us to forces way larger than ourselves. During two scheduled performances, the audience members are invited to hold the copper plates feeling vibrations firsthand as whispers of recorded voices and environmental sounds travel through their hands. Under a presumption that all materials are capable of sentience, to hold a vibrating plate becomes a way to hold a world in motion. The installation encourages us to resonate, vibrate, participate, and co-exist with countless microscopic worlds, if we pay enough attention.