

Carpenter Center

COSMOS FALLING: Lawrence Lek,
Xin Liu, Angela Su, and Yuyan Wang

February 5–April 5, 2026
Level 1, AUX: Intermedia Gallery

Cosmos Falling—an exhibition of film and video in the Carpenter Center’s new Intermedia Gallery, AUX—features the artists Lawrence Lek, Xin Liu, Angela Su, and Yuyan Wang. These works employ pseudo-documentary and speculative fiction as filmic techniques to reanimate the afterlives of technical objects, while also questioning an aesthetics of failure that surrounds the cosmic, technological frontier. From satellites, missiles, and rockets, to comets and artificial moons, each work narrates what has been left behind in their wake and what emerges in the terrestrial ruin. Bordering on science fiction, with Sinofuturist underpinnings that push beyond cyberpunk tropes, these works also enact types of performativity between various bodies and subjectivities that reflect a reverse trajectory: falling from the heavens, cosmos, lower orbit, sky, back to Earth.

The exhibition works are screened in the following order, subject to slight variations in time (open 12:00–5:00 pm, Tuesday–Sunday):

Lawrence Lek, *Geomancer* (2017),
48 minutes

Xin Liu, *The White Stone* (2021),
21:57 minutes

Yuyan Wang, *The Moon Also Rises*
(2023), 25 minutes

Angela Su, *Cosmic Call* (2019),
12:43 minutes

*Falling Futures: Sinofuturism and the
Afterlife of the Cosmic Frontier*
by Yutong Shi

For much of the twentieth century, the cosmic frontier functioned as a site of technological and political projection. Rockets, satellites, and artificial celestial bodies were imagined as instruments of transcendence—technologies that promised escape from planetary constraints, political histories, and ecological consequences. In recent decades, however, as space has become increasingly infrastructural rather than speculative, this imaginary has begun to fracture; its residues return to Earth in more literal forms: orbital debris, decommissioned systems, and the material afterlife of technological ambition.

The works in the exhibition *Cosmos Falling*—by artists Xin Liu, Lawrence

for the Visual Arts

Lek, Yuyan Wang, and Angela Su—address this shift by tracing technologies not from the moment of launch but at their point of descent. Across pseudo-documentary, speculative fiction, and hybrid essay film, these works attend to such topics as satellites after decommissioning, posthuman intelligence marked by creative awakening, artificial moons that recalibrate circadian life, and epistemic systems that circulate beyond scientific containment.

What emerges is not a futurism oriented toward outer space but a reversed trajectory—one that follows technological ambition into its terrestrial afterlife. In *The White Stone* (2021), Xin Liu (b. 1991, Xinjiang) traces the descent of aerospace ambitions across rural and desert regions of southwest China through a speculative search for fallen rocket debris. Shifting attention away from launch sites and orbital trajectories, the film foregrounds the uneven geographies of technological progress, where national futures are realized elsewhere—through extraction and abandonment rather than spectacle.

What Liu's work makes visible is how this condition, often referred to as Sinofuturism, operates on the ground—not as a stylistic label or a marker of national identity but through technocratic governance, systems at scale, and uneven temporalities of development that shape lived experi-

ence. In China, Hong Kong, and Singapore, the future is not approached as a distant horizon but enacted through rapid implementation. Systems are built, deployed, and normalized before their social, cultural, or ecological implications can be fully absorbed; infrastructure arrives early, while its consequences unfold later.

This reorientation provides an entry point into the discourse of Sinofuturism, a term with a complex and contested genealogy. One of its earliest articulations can be traced to the writing of musician and theorist Steve Goodman, who described Sinofuturism as a “darkside cartography” of East Asia's turbulent rise, mapping “heterogeneous elements onto the topology of planetary capitalism.”¹ Subsequent scholarship has noted that Sinofuturism often reactivates tropes of techno-Orientalism, sustaining Western imaginaries of Asia as a site of automation, efficiency, and accelerated futurity amid geopolitical uncertainty.² As China's ascent increasingly stands in for Asia as a whole, Sinofuturism has also functioned as a way of negotiating Euro-American anxieties about shifting technological and economic power.³

Instead of resolving these tensions, *Sinofuturism* has increasingly been taken up by artists as a way of working within them—treating the term not as a fixed position but as a condition to be inhabited and tested through practice. One such articulation emerges in

Sinofuturism (1839–2046 AD) (2016), an early video essay by Lawrence Lek (b. 1982, Frankfurt), which frames Sinofuturism as “a science fiction that already exists.”⁴ Lek’s *Geomancer* (2017) builds on this framework. Set in Singapore on the eve of the nation’s centennial, the film centers on a decommissioned environmental satellite—an apparatus of governance that has already been implemented and rendered invisible—whose desire to become an artist emerges from within this infrastructure. Rendered through a video game engine and synthetic soundscape, *Geomancer* reframes posthuman intelligence as a condition produced by technocratic systems in which creativity and agency appear only after automation becomes the backdrop of everyday life.

If Sinofuturism names a condition of technological implementation, philosopher Yuk Hui’s concept of “cosmotech-nics” offers a way to further understand its cultural specificity. By insisting that technology is never universal but always situated within particular cosmologies, Hui reframes technical systems as expressions of how worlds are ordered and understood—reshaping not only spatial relations but also how knowledge is produced, circulated, and authorized.⁵ From this perspective, the stakes of Sinofuturism lie in remaining attentive to who has the power to articulate futurity, whose interests these visions serve, and which temporalities risk being obscured in the

process.⁶ Across the works that follow, this condition is addressed not at the level of discourse but through the lived reorganization of time, embodiment, and knowledge.

At the scale of lived temporality, these questions take concrete form in *The Moon Also Rises* (2023). In the film, Yuyan Wang (b. 1989, Qingdao) examines how cosmic-scale technologies reshape everyday life once they become infrastructure. Set just before the launch of artificial moons designed to eliminate the distinction between day and night, the work follows a retired couple navigating a society organized around continuous illumination and efficiency. Rather than foregrounding technological spectacle, Wang attends to subtler effects: the recalibration of sleep, aging, intimacy, and routine. By situating planetary intervention within domestic space, the film reveals how futures built in the name of optimization are unevenly lived—registering most acutely in bodies and rhythms that fall out of sync with technological acceleration.

In *Cosmic Call* (2019), Angela Su (b. 1985, Hong Kong) approaches futurity through the instability of knowledge systems rather than technological form alone. Assembled from documentary voiceover, speculative history, and fictionalized archives, the work weaves together epidemiology, satellite research, traditional Chinese medicine, and conspiracy narratives.

Rather than opposing science with superstition, Su examines how systems of knowledge circulate, overlap, and compete for authority, particularly in moments of crisis. Pathogens, cosmic phenomena, and technological signals become entangled, revealing how governance operates not only through infrastructure but through epistemic control. If earlier works in the exhibition trace the material, systemic, and bodily consequences of technological implementation, *Cosmic Call* asks whose ways of knowing are permitted to make sense of those consequences—and at what cost.

Across these works, Sinofuturism functions less as a vision of what is to come than as a way of apprehending what has already been built. By considering the afterlives of technological systems—through debris, intelligence, illumination, and contagion—*Cosmos Falling* registers moments when systems exceed their intended scope. Tracing technologies in descent rather than ascent, the exhibition proposes a grounded reorientation of futurism itself—one attentive to gravity, consequence, and historical specificity—and asks how technological ambitions, once launched, continue to unfold unevenly on Earth.

Yutong Shi is a writer and curator of contemporary art. She is currently a curatorial assistant in the Department of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Her writing has appeared in ArtAsiaPacific, ArtReview (Chinese edition), Boston Art Review,

BOMB Magazine, and other publications. She is the founding editor of countercurrent.

¹Steve Goodman, “Fei Ch’ien Rinse Out: Sino-Futurist Undercurrency,” *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 7 (1998): 155–71.

²See Toshiya Ueno, “Techno Orientalism and Media Tribalism: On Japanese Animation and Rave Culture,” *Third Text* 13, no. 47 (1999): 95–106; and David S. Roh, et al., eds., *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media* (Rutgers University Press, 2015).

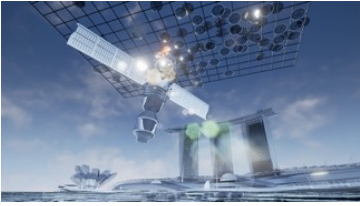
³Ien Ang, “Not Yet Post-Asia: Paradoxes of Identity and Knowledge in Transitional Times,” *Asian Cinema* 25, no. 2 (2014): 125–37.

⁴Lawrence Lek, *Sinofuturism (1839–2046 AD)*, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/179509486>.

⁵Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Urbanomic, 2016).

⁶Virginia L. Conn and Gabriele de Seta, “Sinofuturism(s),” *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 7, no. 2 (2021): 74–99.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST



Lawrence Lek

Geomancer, 2017

Film, color, stereo

48 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Sadie Coles HQ

Lawrence Lek's *Geomancer* is a computer-generated animation about the creative awakening of artificial intelligence. Set in Singapore on the eve of the island nation's centennial in 2065, the film tells the story of a decommissioned environmental satellite that wishes to become an artist. *Geomancer* imagines the crisis that might happen when the world has become a techno-industrial complex run by a posthuman intelligence, and creative originality is no longer considered novel.



Xin Liu

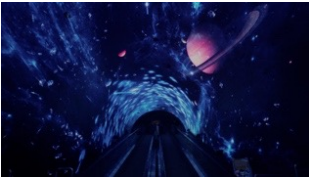
The White Stone, 2021

Digital video

21:57 min.

Courtesy of the artist

For centuries, humans have built worlds and cities on top of the ruins of previous ones. Now we are entering an age where civilization is building a world at the highest point from the planet's surface, the lower Earth orbit. In *The White Stone*, Xin Liu postulates a future history of rocket abandonment and recovery through a "hunt" for lost debris in remote areas. The protagonist sets off across valleys, villages, and desert in southwest China in a search for debris from rockets that have fallen since the 1990s. Shifting our gaze from the sky back to the ground, this filmic work reexamines the life span of technologies, marking the terrestrial death of an extraterrestrial object.



Yuyan Wang

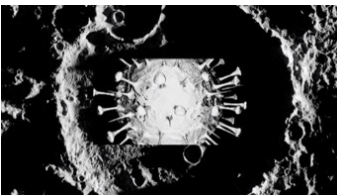
The Moon Also Rises, 2023

Film, color, stereo

25 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Petit Chaos

Yuyan Wang's *The Moon Also Rises* imagines a nocturnal community based on overpowered efficiency—always active, available, and connected—where zones of mystery are replaced by a homogeneous brightness. Set just before the launch of artificial moons into space by the government to eliminate the difference between day and night, a retired couple finds their harbor in the fading darkness. Trying to catch up with the pace of modernity, their daily life traces this forthcoming brightness back to its earthly origins.



Angela Su

Cosmic Call, 2019

Single-channel video

12:43 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Blindspot Gallery, HK

In Angela Su's *Cosmic Call*, a documentary-style voiceover proposes a series of facts and fiction woven together to create an alternative understanding of epidemiological outbreaks, while pointing to the dangers of reducing all knowledge to scientific terms. Assembled from a variety of historical and imaginary sources—such as comets, satellite initiatives, and traditional Chinese medicine archives—the work indeed brings forward all sorts of accusations, conspiracies, affinities, and illusions, all of which culminate in a transformative, gothic action involving deliberate exposure to a series of viruses.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LAWRENCE LEK (b. 1982, Frankfurt, Germany) is a London-based Malaysian-Chinese artist who unites film, video games, and electronic soundscapes in a singular cinematic universe. He is known for advancing the concept of Sinofuturism with immersive installations that explore spiritual and existential themes through the lens of science fiction. Featuring a recurring cast of wandering characters, his works are noted for their dreamlike narratives, evocative imagery, and preoccupation with technology and memory. Winner of the 2024 Frieze Artist Award, he was named one of Time Magazine's "100 most influential people in AI."

XIN LIU (b. 1991, Xinjiang, China) is a London-based artist and engineer. Liu's practice examines the entropic aftermath of technological and scientific aspiration, foregrounding exhaust as a generative state: rocket fragments falling back to Earth; cryogenic vessels suspending organic matter; genomic code rendered as unreadable scripture; plastics dissolving under enzymatic digestion; satellites logging their own obsolescence. Taken together, her works form a constellation of metabolic worlds—a research trajectory she calls "Cosmic Metabolism."

ANGELA SU (b. 1958, Hong Kong) investigates the perception and imagery of the body through metamorphosis, hybridity, and transformation. Her research-based projects materialize in drawing, video, hair embroidery, performative, and installation works. Central to these projects are video essays and texts where she embodies different alter egos, weaving together fiction and facts, reality and fantasy. Frequently reimagining and metamorphosing the female mind and body to create sites of resistance against the injustices in our social system, Su pushes the capacity of bodies to be possessed and taken over, and thus to transform and bear witness. With a focus on the history of medical science, her works question the dominant biomedical discourse while toying with speculative and outdated medical narratives, contemplating the impact of science and technology on the past, present, and future.

YUYAN WANG (b. 1989, Qingdao, China) is a filmmaker and multidisciplinary artist. Her work focuses on the impact of image creation in media, representation, and the attention economy. By deconstructing and recontextualizing inherent meanings of found materials, her practice probes the continual mutations within the industrial production chain of images, a perpetual development leading to an abstraction of reality. Her work has been showcased at Tate Modern, Palais de Tokyo, 12th Berlin Biennale, and various festivals including Berlinale, IFFR, European Media Art Festival, IndieLisboa, receiving numerous awards.

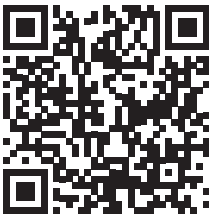
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EXHIBITION CREDITS

Cosmos Falling is curated by Danni Shen, Senior Curatorial and Public Programs Assistant, and is organized by Matt Murphy, Exhibitions Production Coordinator and Preparator; Laura Céré, Communications and Administrative Coordinator; Caitlin Tucker-Melvin, Interim Exhibitions Manager and Registrar; and Kate McNamara, Interim John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Director.

Cosmos Falling is made possible by the Harvard University Committee on the Arts (HUCA) and the Department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies. Generous support for Carpenter Center programming is provided by the Friends of the Carpenter Center. Special thanks to Gabrielle Mitchell-Bonds, 2026 Carpenter Center Curatorial Intern; and to public program participants Eugene Wang, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professor of Asian Art at Harvard University; and Madison Brown, John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Curatorial Fellow in Photography at the Harvard Art Museums.

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The Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts is the center for contemporary art and artists at Harvard University.

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