

OOLONG GALLERY



Sky written, cosmic draw

Ivan David Ng & Sergio Suárez

Oolong Gallery Sept 23 – Oct 23, 2025

6030 La Flecha Rancho Santa Fe CA 92067

Opening Reception Sat 08/23 from 5-7pm

Synopsis of the exhibition essay: *A Summoning for Closer Contact* by Dana Kline, PhD

In their West Coast debut at Oolong Gallery, *Sky written, cosmic draw*, artists Ivan David Ng and Sergio Suarez invite viewers into a realm where the boundaries of identity dissolve, and abstraction becomes a language of wonder, longing, and imagined unity.

David Ng, originally from Singapore and currently serving as faculty at Ohio State University, excavates his ancestral Hakka history through layered assemblages that read like non-verbal palimpsest. Co-constructed from his own imagination and culturally contested chronicles, NG's conceptual and materially altered studies on the order of fragmentation is a celestial scattering across well-considered surfaces via drawing, fresco, experimental photography, 3D printing, and collage. His "scrambling" process generatively remixes materials, translating the endurance and displacement of a diasporic lineage into patterns that swirl and slither, refusing stillness. Paradoxically so, it is the stillness that is required to enter the subtle interstices of his work, where quiet movements shimmer into view. The selection of presented works in totality reads like a Genogram, where relational signifiers seem to appear when the viewer can soften into the role of the visitor. The presence of the visitor amidst an ambiguously familiar terrain is, after all, most familiar to NG. The translation of Hakka in Cantonese is "guest", which serves as a speculative theme into the complicated ontology of the stranger.

Suarez, a Mexican-born, Atlanta-based artist, bridges spirit and matter through a practice spanning printmaking, woodblock carving, painting, sculpture, and installation. His works stage the dialogue between the sacred and profane, often etched as depersonalized figures, are animated by the opposing tensions in archetypal forces (ie bodily desire and the limits in temperance, fire as regenerative and

destructive). His allegorical dramas are enlivened by pastel bursts and dewey flames of guttural awe, signaling interruptions of awakening out of the dismal malaise of technological fatigue. His spatial compositions, conceived as two-dimensional forms stepping into three-dimensional stages, evoking an homage to the Pre-columbian pantheon and the alchemical manuscripts of Hermetic traditions. Suarez' visual tomes of rigorous craftsmanship and ambitious systemic studies offer a contemplative refuge ripe for reverie.

Together, Ivan David Ng and Sergio Suarez create a contemporary codex that nudges curiosity into the conceptual articulation of a mythopoetic way of knowing.

A Summoning for Closer Contact
Dana Kline, PhD

Metaphors are often only displaced thoughts, the result of an attempt to say something more clearly or differently, but images – real images – as imagination's earliest form of life, leave the real world behind for an imagined, for an imaginal world. Through the imagined image we are made familiar with that absolute realm of reverie we know as poetic reverie.

Gaston Bachelard (1961), *The Flame of a Candle*

I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails...

Gloria Anzaldua (2012), *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Imagination is a tricky power; it refused to stay in one or even two places.

Shirley Geok-lin Lim, (1989)

In the discovery of making contact with irretrievable experiences in the form of transpersonal and historical inquiries, artists Ivan David Ng and Sergio Suarez find roots in these nebulous gaps of empirical knowing. Through their visual storytelling, a language of their imagined images awakens hints of wonder, longing, and primordial desire to feel unified between self and other. Upon their first meeting in 2023 under Maine's summer sky as residents at Skowhegan School of Painting of Sculpture, their shared creative instincts fostered a natural inclination to slow down: to investigate uncultivated worlds that returned to the wisdom of symbols and elemental representations from cosmogonies and cultural-historical mythologies — to access the axis of the imaginal world through the listening to the riddle-inducing motifs.

In their west coast debut exhibition at Oolong Gallery, *Sky written, cosmic draw* elicits a temporary expansion into a harmonious order of mystery, where explicit identity references are omitted. The visceral, intelligence of the body is depicted through a kind of wavering movement of abstractions: fragmented, interconnected, overlapping, celestial, dripping, spreading, grounding, and rupturing.

In this correspondence, the intimate colliding of constructed ecologies provides a pregnant pause in the spirit of play, a nod to the opportunity to remember what is without retrievable memory. Reminders of the fluid nature of time and its impact on the mind's faculties is exemplified through the use of blurring, layering, juxtaposing and condensing spatial proximity on the bodies of their canvases.

Uniquely so, David Ng and Suarez' works read like encoded pages from a contemporary codex, where the quality of symbolic communication is enhanced by the viewers' own desire to suspend rational cognitive processing and instead marvel into an associative, receptive state. Historically, codices have varied in content (daily and spiritual practices, astronomical observations, technologies) and materials used (plants, parchment, pigments, metals) depending on the geographical location, historical era in they were created and when they were discovered. Functioning as an object that surpasses mortality, the codex is gift of accessibility. Intended to be treasured in its reveal, and most potently so, a reminder that wonder can unexpectedly whispers through the stars to awaken a mind without memory. *Sky written, cosmic draw* presents a myriad of wonder fueled artifacts as vestiges in a state of resurrection, each piece an entry point into visual text.

Taking a speculative approach to this body of work, **Ivan David Ng** unearths his complex and dubious ancestral history of the Hakka people through a series of labyrinthian abstractions. Having grown up in Singapore before receiving his MFA in drawing and painting with a specialization in interdisciplinary technology at Ohio State University, where he currently teaches, David Ng writes (2025) "To me, making is not a teleological act, but a means of knowing. It is a search process, as I contemplate what it means to be human, wedged between earth and sky." His active search is further illuminated by ubiquitous change, with special attention constellated around lunar motifs. David Ng's multi-layered assemblages read like peeling skin imprinted with enigmatic references adjacent to a non-verbal palimpsest. Glimpses and references to the heavens are dusted throughout his abstract works using a range of methods including drawings, fresco paintings, experimental photographic processes, 3D printing, digital fabrication and collaging in form of scrambling, a term he favorably uses to describe a methodological and phenomenological approach in generative remixing of materials.

His experimentations in re-imagining are responses to a lineage fraught with blurred recall of an unclear past; the conflation of an idealized origin tale contrasts with the harsh otherness driven by the mistreatment

that comes from an untraceable diasporic past. David Ng's collage technique is imbued with skillful labor and innovative experimentation replicates the Hakka's emotional, physical and psychic hardships through the force and flexibility of shapes and patterns that stack and swirl, sway and slither – antithetic to remaining still. And yet, in order to make contact with the subtle secrets that saturate these many interstice spaces between his contrasting hues, stillness is required.

There is a paradoxical position at play; in order to make contact with what is being revealed in these vivid works, a receptive, stationary stance is required. And all the while, the more stationary the gaze, the greater the subtle stimuli become, shooting and shimmering through his florid palettes across the canvas in a chimeric way. Such an illusionary quality posits questioning reality as reliable; is what I am looking at looking at me? If I stay still, will I see what was just in front of me? Despite David Ng's images being void from verbiage, there is a presence of cryptography. His secret writings are encoded in his unique remixing of mixed mediums. Perhaps this quality of ambiguity and mystery is imbedded in the necessity to protect. Under the guises of transience, being explicit can result in less favored effects. After all, the Cantonese translation of Hakka, defined as “guest”. It is the presence of this guest that is hidden through displacement, existing in liminality, and seen as visitor eternally without a native home.

Within the constructs of ambiguity and mystery, **Sergio Suárez** structures his form and vision through his attention to the sensorial and sensual strokes amidst the dark skies. His vignettes showcase his multifaceted mastery in printmaking, woodblock carving, painting, sculpture and installation, serving to nourish ennui, rouse the corporeal out of fatigue, and surrender to symbolic sagacity. Taking on the arduous task to cross-pollinate and simplify such abstruse constructs from metatheory to flesh filled matter risks the trap of surface reductivism or naïve idealism.

Suarez does not fall prey to these trappings, and in a most erudite and canny way. He states the evident tension between opposites, for instance, spirit and matter, the sacred and profane, by placing them in conversation with one another. A woodcut print suspended on a wall becomes a backdrop constellation for the ceramic vessels of earthly bodily *memento mori*, insouciantly resting on the floor. Conceptualized by Suarez as 2D stepping out into 3D, his spatial design reaches into very transcendental and relational themes illustrated in his distinct aesthetic.

Needless to say, the selected works are ripe with psychological themes to lean into and defend against: merging and separation fantasies, states of ecstatic bliss and oblivion, destruction and serenity, smudging and precision. Suarez' use of depersonalizing figures through his use neutral shapes for faces, animated by nature's elements, makes for an inviting projective to enter into. In the allegorical dramas where fervor is felt through the splash of pastel color and flames of transmutation are cues to pay attention, Suarez'

aesthetic acts a purifying salve to settle into substratal times. Where rules of physics and unyielding obstacles dissolve into an amorphous dance, a temporal composition is steadfast in stance.

Bridging the body to heavens and the sea, the possibility of union becomes a temporal reality. Logic and intuition can bathe without rivalry! In the deep noir skies, the silver-grey hues offer agility to the stars. Reminiscent of the alchemical manuscripts and wood engravings starting in the 16th century depicting philosophical traditions in Hermetic principles, including mythology, mysticism, and the humble practices developed through interpreting symbols, Suarez' tableaux's provide a contemplative respite.

Sky written, cosmic draw is choreographed towards the stretching upward into the metaphysical as musings while remaining tethered to the earthly constraints of embodiment bookended by the fragility of time. Perhaps the ether binding the sky to the cosmos is where the cosmic can then begin, but only realized through the gesture of an inquisitive hand.

Dr. Dana Kline holds a PhD in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Depth Psychology and a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology. Dr. Kline has over a decade of clinical experience providing individual, group and family psychotherapy in private practice, community mental health, inpatient/outpatient treatment centers and education settings. Her doctoral training at the C.G. Jung Institute and Wright Institute in Los Angeles has informed her psychoanalytic and imaginal approaches towards braving one's interior life. Through the undoing of editing thoughts, feelings, bodily responses, memories, and wishes, Dr. Kline supports the unique process of unearthing avoidances, contradictions, conflicts, ambivalence, and desires. This includes the treatment and discovery of the language of the unconscious in personal, historical, and systemic violence resulting in psychological ruptures. Specializations include developmental and transitional life stages, mood and anxiety disorders, obsessional preoccupations, existential quandaries, interpersonal conflicts, and dreams analysis.

Dr. Kline's writing practice incorporates critical theory, psychological perspectives, and inquiries towards the poetics of contemporary art. She has presented both nationally and internationally at colleges, universities, and conferences, including the International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education, the London Arts -Based Research Centre and Hauser + Wirth. She has also contributed to various musical projects and performances over the past two decades incorporating experimental approaches to her formal training on flute. She resides in Los Angeles, California.

Curriculum Vitae- 2025