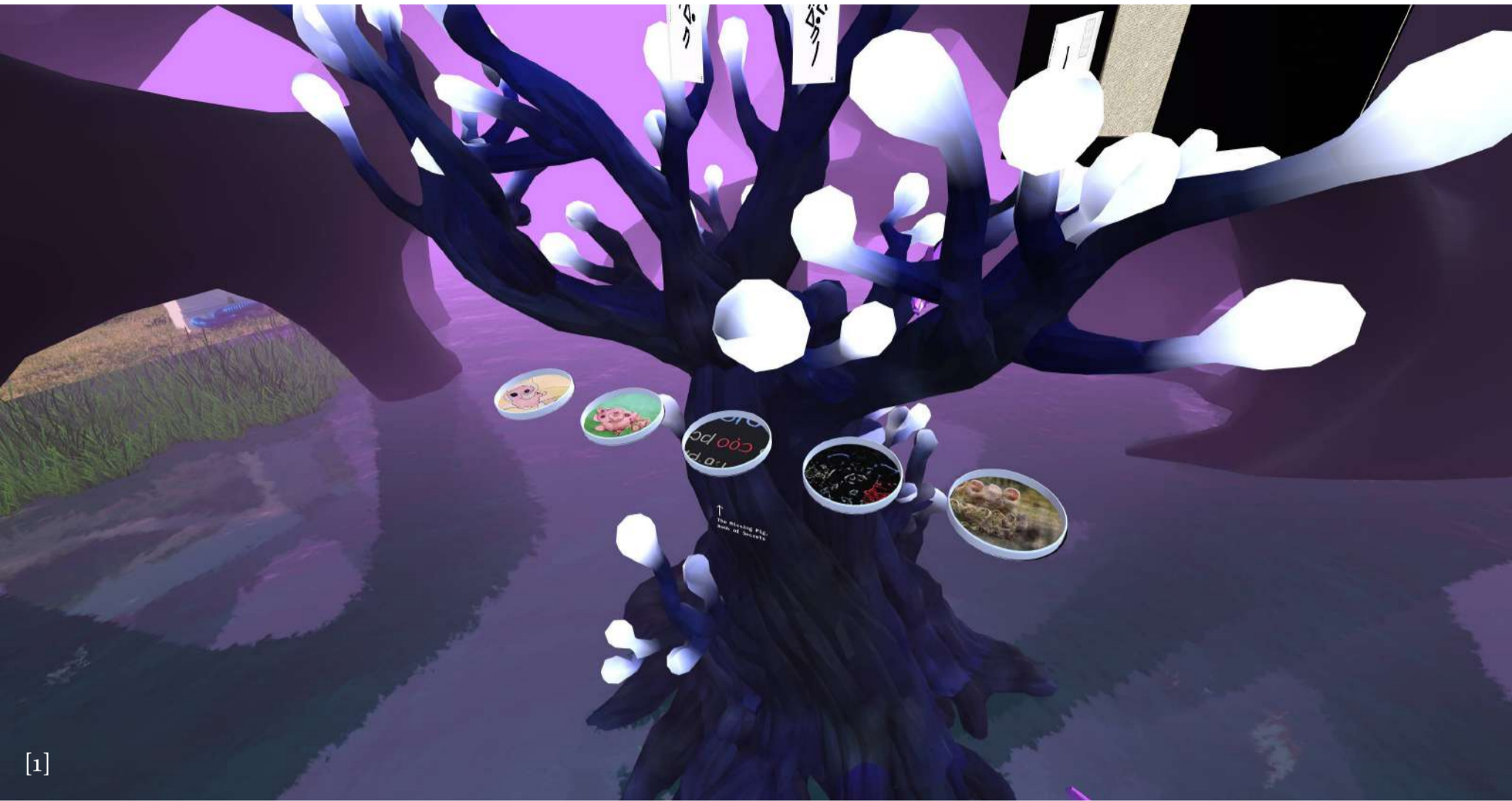




# YUJWEN HUANG



LET'S START WITH THE DEFINITION. HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE *ALT-ALTERITY*? COULD YOU SHARE YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THE THEME AND ITS POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS?

I believe the theme of the exhibition, *Alt-Alterity*, is about rebellion and challenge against anthropocentrism. This theme delves into everything beyond the human realm. The addition of "alt" as a prefix signifies a deeper exploration of the non-traditional differences among non-human entities. This exploration goes beyond mere biological distinctions such as species, gender, or the line between living and non-living things. Instead, it probes into the potential for alternative ways of existing within the intersections of various disciplines under the current virtuality media environment. The exhibition theme stimulates our imagination, inviting us to reflect on the environment we often take for granted.

COULD YOU PROVIDE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF YOUR BACKGROUND AND ELABORATE ON WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN EXPLORING RELATED THEMES?

I have a background in digital media art, currently pursuing an MFA in Art and Technology Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. My work generally explores themes of nature, history, and identity through the use of technology.

The piece I selected for this exhibition stemmed from a prolonged personal experience of physical discomfort after consuming pork. This incident prompted me to delve deeper into the essence of pork, contemplating not only the food itself but also its underlying phenomenon in society. I realized how detached I had become from the source of pork and began questioning its true nature, transcending it as being labeled as mere "food."

This reflection led to broader inquiries about our contemporary life. Nowadays, people are becoming increasingly distanced from the natural environment, sinking into a technological landscape. I began to ponder the extent of a non-human entity's presence, and how it is transformed by an advanced society. This is not only related to the entities' existential crisis but also to the erasure of their identity within the society's culture.

WHAT IS YOUR EXHIBITED WORK FOCUSED ON, AND HOW DOES IT CONTRIBUTE TO THE REIMAGINATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE WORLD?

**My work focuses on the image and concept of the pig as a specific creature, exploring how technology, at the current level of scientific and technological development, influences and gradually erases its image and concept. I also explore the concept of lab-grown meat, incorporating Petri dishes in my work to reflect on the significance of biological life. Not only is its territory of existence threatened, but its conceptual context is also completely separated from its original identity, further resulting in its identity being expelled by technology.**

**Through the use of AI generation technology, my work encourages people to recode their image of a pig. It raises questions about whether the image of pigs in the future will become increasingly abstract and vague in our minds as nature and society become further separated. The AI-generated videos provide room for imagination, allowing viewers to consider possibilities rather than offering very specific and exact images.**



OUR ONLINE EXHIBITION IS HOSTED ON A VIRTUAL PLATFORM, NEW ART CITY, AN ARTIST-RUN ORGANIZATION THAT PROVIDES VIRTUAL SPACE FOR THOSE DENIED PHYSICAL SPACE AND AMPLIFIES THE WORK OF THOSE FACING SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE. HOW DO YOU THINK EXHIBITIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE WILL SHAPE THE ART SCENE?

**In general, I learn about other new media artists as well as about art festivals that are far from me via online platforms. So, I am heavily dependent on online platforms. I think the biggest advantage of a digital exhibition is that it breaks down geographical barriers, allowing art to be accessed globally and in turn, shaping new ways of seeing and experiencing art. Also, digital exhibitions contribute to the preservation and documentation of art.**

**However, this doesn't mean physical spaces are a thing of the past. More and more physical spaces are now including digital artworks. From my perspective, digital spaces as well as physical spaces both create room for diverse voices and perspectives to be heard in the digital age. While digital spaces offer a broader platform for artists to create and present their media artworks, physical spaces allow media artworks to create immersive ways for people to interact with and experience the world around them. Digital and physical art spaces each have pros and cons, but they have both brought about significant changes and contributed to the art world in the digital age.**

HOW DOES THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT AFFECT YOUR OWN PRACTICES? ARE THERE SPECIFIC THINGS THAT WORK VERY WELL IN ONE CONTEXT BUT NOT IN ANOTHER? BY "ANOTHER," WE MEAN THE VIRTUAL AND PHYSICAL SPACE.

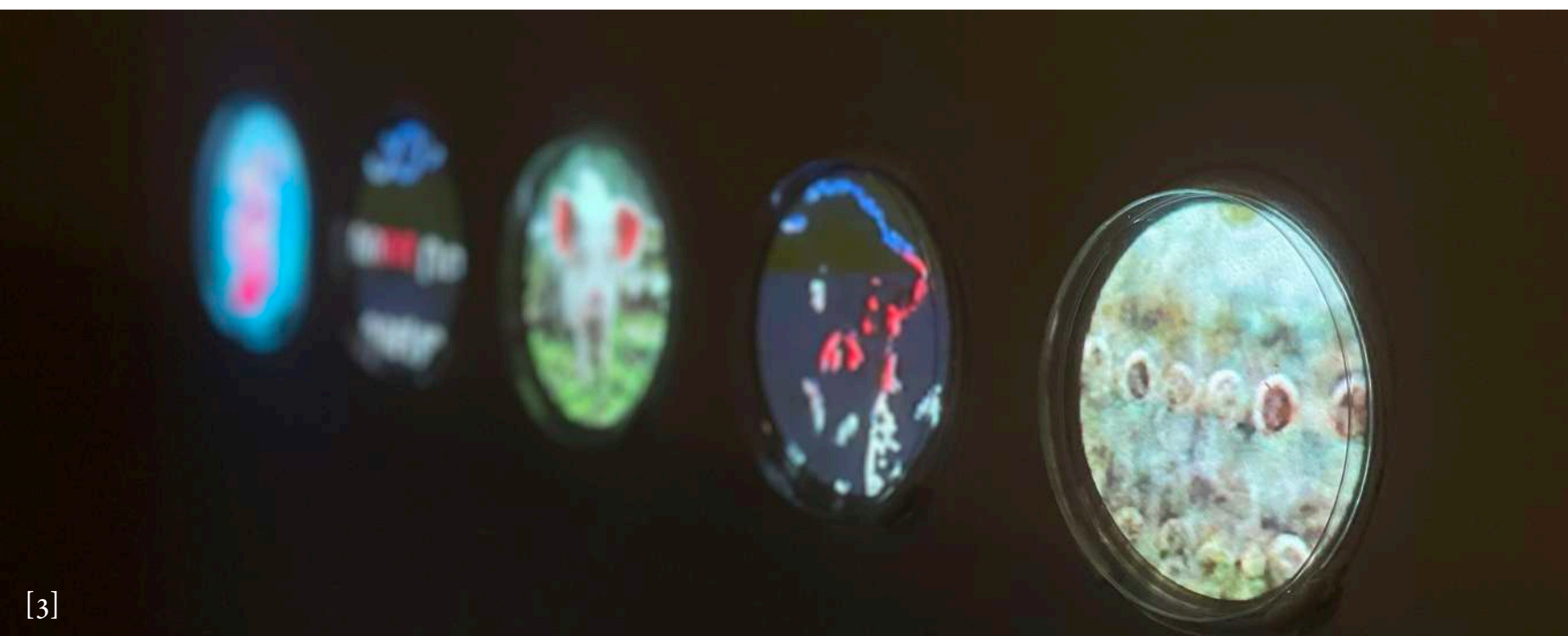
I have never thought particularly about the impact of the virtual environment on my creative approach because, as a digital native, most of my creations are made in the virtual environment. This is as natural to me as eating or holding chopsticks. Occasionally, I will create physical installations. It depends on the situation, especially when I need to place virtual works in a physical space. For example, my blockchain artworks outside of exhibitions are interactive pieces built on the Internet, more suitable for interactive operations in the virtual space and set within an online context. However, when I need to present the work in a physical space, it becomes mundane. What you see is only one monitor and a mouse in the physical space, which can be boring. To make online works more tangible and accessible to the public, I add physical installations and environments. This way, the window of the virtual world can be better connected to the real space.

But in another work of mine, "Random Walk Memory," I attempted to combine online platform technology with offline activities to create art. For instance, I used the pattern generated by an early basic programming language as a guide to navigating real spaces in the city. I then employed current fashionable Python technology to visually express the experiences and emotions related to these physical spaces. I don't see virtual and physical spaces as binary opposites; instead, I see how, at certain moments, they coexist and complement each other.

WHO DO YOU ENVISION AS YOUR IDEAL AUDIENCE? IN REALITY, DO YOU FEEL YOU SELECT YOUR AUDIENCE, OR DOES AN UNANTICIPATED AUDIENCE NATURALLY GRAVITATE TOWARDS YOUR CREATIONS?

**I think normally, I create for an audience that is interested in the characteristics of technology because my medium selection is usually based on its technical characteristics and incorporates these into the concept of my work. Such media attributes are part of the concept and require a certain threshold of understanding. Visual representation is a secondary consideration in my work, so sometimes my work cannot convey information to the audience very directly visually.**

**For example, in "The Missing Pig," I chose AI generation as a means of expression, based on the fact that it can abandon the original thing and generate new things based on human subjective selection. And in turn, this requires the audience to have a certain background understanding of how AI generation works. In a different work "To Be an In-Circle Artist," I chose blockchain technology to**



explore the definition and boundaries of an artist, based on blockchain's utopian properties of decentralization, permanent record, and energy-consuming characteristics. There are no flashy visuals; the work was presented in a minimalist way. So, without any background in blockchain, the appearance of the work might not be fancy enough to catch people's eyes.

But naturally, every exhibition attracts unexpected audiences, and these experiences also enrich my understanding of my own work. So, I strive to balance between creating for the two. When it comes to unexpected audiences, my primary focus is usually on building a connection at a visual level.

WHAT'S YOUR VISION FOR A FUTURE THAT TRANSCENDS THE DOMINATION OF THE PRESENT, THE NUMEROUS ENDS PORTRAYED IN POP CULTURE, DYSTOPIAN SCI-FI, CLIMATE SCIENCE, AND BEYOND?

In my vision of the future, animals would cease to be the exclusive source of sustenance. Instead, a diverse range of alternatives is embraced, breaking us free from the traditional power structures, hierarchies, wealth disparities, and cultural beliefs ingrained in our food choices. Plant-based options, lab-grown proteins, and sustainable food sources would be commonplace, fostering a society where the chosen source of nourishment is no longer associated with social status or cultural identity. This future would promote equality and inclusivity, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, has access to nutritious and ethical



**food choices. In turn, it would lead to a more harmonious relationship between humans, animals, and the environment.**

**HOW MIGHT WE (FEEL FREE TO DEFINE "WE") ACHIEVE THE FUTURE YOU'VE ENVISIONED? WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL PRACTICES, BIG OR SMALL, THAT YOU WOULD ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO ADOPT TO BE MORE THAN JUST BYSTANDERS TO THE ONGOING PROCESSES OF OTHERING AND EXCLUSION, AND THE RESULTANT PHENOMENA LIKE CLIMATE BREAKDOWN, MASS EXTINCTIONS, FINANCIAL COLLAPSE, GLOBAL WARS, AND POPULISM?**

**Humans desire meat due to the historical and cultural significance it holds for them. The pursuit and domination of animals in pursuit of meat turned meat into a symbol of masculinity, strength, and wealth, originating from the early cultures of hunting and farming. Plant-based meat, while it holds great potential for conserving environmental resources, has been under-appreciated, partly due to the cultural meanings historically ascribed to meat. However, lab-grown meat presents a new alternative that has the potential to reshape our perceptions of meat and in turn of animals. It exists in the middle ground, between traditional meat and plants, and offers ambiguity. This option not only conserves resources but also has the potential to alleviate social inequalities that were perpetuated by previous meat-eating societies.**

**I believe that the concept of "otherness" gains profound meaning within this context. The moving image of pigs in my works reflecting lab-grown meat introduces a new meaning to the idea of "otherness" for our future. Lab-grown meat shows us how "othering" can apply to more than humans, but it applies to more than non-humans as**

well. I believe our efforts can begin with how we perceive our food and our eating habits, which significantly influences our impact on animals and our expansion of the concept of "otherness." Lab-grown meat, as an epitome of "otherness," plays a significant role in our future life. It liberates animals from the historical symbols imposed upon them. This represents a genuine form of "otherness," one that technology has created.

IF YOU WERE TO COMPARE YOUR ART STYLE OR PHILOSOPHY TO A TYPE OF FOOD, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

The first thing that comes to my mind is water. Water is incredibly adaptable. It can take the shape of any container it is put in and seamlessly integrate with other elements. It is also colorless and odorless, and it can take on any color and flavor when combined with other substances. This philosophy extends to my approach to life, emphasizing the importance of enjoying and adapting to life's changes. Additionally, while seemingly transparent and unassuming, water holds immeasurable depth and significance. Similarly, my art may appear simple on the surface, but it carries layers of meaning and intention beneath. It challenges viewers to look beyond the obvious, inviting them to explore the concepts and ideas embedded within the artwork.

ARE THERE ANY ARTISTS, PODCASTS, BOOKS, OR PLATFORMS YOU'D LIKE TO RECOMMEND?

**Some interesting books, as references related to my artwork:**

- **Lestel, Dominique. Eat This Book : a Carnivore's Manifesto. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.**
- **Adams, Carol J. The Sexual Politics of Meat : a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory. Bloomsbury Revelations edition. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2015.**
- **Koert van Mensvoort and Hendrik-Jan Grievink. The In Vitro Meat Cook Book. Laurence King Publishing, 2014.**

**Other Book recommendations: Domenico Quaranta, Surfing with Satoshi Art, Blockchain and NFTs, 2022.**

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**[Yuwen Huang](#)** (b. 1997) is a conceptual media artist, currently pursuing an MFA in the Art and Technology department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Her practice focuses on Virtuality through different mediums such as video, net, installation, gan-generated images and videos, blockchain, and creative writing. Influenced by Eastern philosophies such as I-Ching and spiritual Cultivation, Eastern spiritual thinking and Western research-based methods are both important in her process of creation. As she is interested in the interconnectedness of all things and their connection to our inner experiences, her conceptual-based art explores how technology extends our perception and expands our understanding of the things around us. Common themes in her works include nature, history, and identity as they relate to technology. In 2019, she received a Bachelor of Arts in Intermedia Art from the China Academy of Art (CAA in Hangzhou, China), and her work was selected for the Lumen Prize Longlist in the Crypto category in 2023.

## ARTWORK STATEMENT

Datasets were collected from different kinds of pictures of pigs online and terms for pigs in different languages. Those images online have been selected and filtered many times by human desire. In the experiment, the algorithm creates new images and a new language for pigs. Similar to LGM (lab-grown meat), it was created by technology without the presence of any animals, and it separates the concept of the pig from the context of meat. This work discusses the erasure of pigs physically and their absence in our psychological minds.

## IMAGE CAPTIONS

[1] *The Missing Pig* (Exhibition Screenshot), Yuwen Huang, 2022.

[2/3] *The Missing Pig*, Yuwen Huang, 2022. Gan-generated Videos on 90 x 15 mm Petri Dishes.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## EDITOR AND CURATOR:

Amy Xiaofan Jiang is the Founder of Underground Art And Design (UAAD), a media platform and creative studio based in New York and Shanghai, dedicated to showcasing and empowering change-provoking artists and designers. A narrative weaver—her curation projects and publications are dedicated to bringing together people and their stories, ideas, and works that would challenge dominant power structures and unlock pathways for provocative/ actionable strategies toward a more equitable future rich in empathy and symbiotic relationships. Graduated from the MFA Transdisciplinary Design Program at Parsons The New School for Design, her practice is to shift Design away from being the tool of extractive capitalism, back to the human ingenuity that prioritizes planetary symbiosis.

## CURATOR:

Fangyi (Yiyi) Yang is a multidisciplinary designer, artist, and curator based in New York City. Her practice focuses on challenging human exceptionalism, fostering dialogue on our interconnectedness with the environment, and honoring the land. Through transformative journeys that engage the mind, body, spirit, and place, Fangyi is committed to healing, connection, and empowerment, offering new perspectives on human existence through multi-sensory experiences and collective storytelling.

## 3D environment designers:

Gumi Guihan Lu is an interdisciplinary artist, glassmaker, and storyteller born in Chongqing, China and currently residing in New York. Raised in a forest environment, she spent her early years gathering herbs with her grandfather, deeply connecting with nature. For her undergraduate studies, Gumi moved to the United Kingdom, where she majored in Computer Science with a focus on genetic music. She furthered her Master's degree at the Parsons School of Design. In her art, Gumi intertwines natural phenomena with psychological schemas, creating a narrative on how to measure life in the context of future survival mechanisms.

Xinyue Ma (Effy) is a forward-thinking designer and a graduate student from Parsons. She is propelled by a profound passion for seamlessly blending design and interactive technology, aiming to create cutting-edge art experiences that ignite human connections. Her overarching mission is to envision new possibilities for art exhibitions and design transformative encounters that cultivate meaningful connections with readers, transcending geographical boundaries.

#### COMMUNICATION TEAM:

Weijing Xia is a zealous explorer in the fields of communication and marketing. Her diverse past roles as an advertising student, journalist, public relations practitioner, market researcher, and strategy developer have collectively shaped her into who she is today. A constant in Weijing's life, however, is her identity as an art enthusiast—a passion that remains unchanging. She treasures moments when inspiration strikes and resonance with the world around her springs.

Jing Dong is a multidisciplinary designer from Shanghai. She has a strong passion for handicrafts, digital fabrication, and crocheting. She dedicates herself to creating delightful things and finding inner peace.

Iliana Sun is a biologist and an artist who tells stories with a camera. Through photography and film, she advocates a scientific understanding of our environment, while also conveying the complexity of our relationship with it. She is especially interested in wicked environmental problems as their intricate socio-ecological interconnectivity lends itself to storytelling from multiple perspectives. She hopes to gently nudge people to appreciate the intricate interconnectedness of life on Earth. Her work emphasizes the role of human empathy and understanding in the quest for biodiversity conservation and sustaining our planet for future generations.

#### INTERN:

Ronny Chuwei Zheng is a queer interdisciplinary artist and experience designer based in New York and Canton. He is currently pursuing a BFA degree in Design and Technology at Parsons School of Design. His interests revolve around digital senses, spirituality, and media-tech topics.

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## Exhibition Link

[newart.city/world/alt-alterity](http://newart.city/world/alt-alterity)

## Website

[uaad.art/alt-alterity](http://uaad.art/alt-alterity)

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## Instagram

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## WeChat Official Account

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