Andrew Yang

This exhibition is a meditation on our galaxy.

Since light pollution in urban areas prevents us from seeing the Milky Way, most of us no longer have a sense of our relation to life and systems at much larger scales. In this exhibition, American artist and biologist Andrew Yang (b. 1973) examines our relationship to the galaxy from personal and astronomical perspectives. In the interior gallery, he has constructed a one-to-one model, installing one grain of sand for each star in our galaxy. The room is also infused with white noise, which contains traces of the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB)—a residual signal of the origin of the universe. The result is a scale model, but also an intuitive encounter, experientially conjuring the galaxy in the space of the gallery.

The outer gallery's central space is filled with tables displaying what appear to be fossils and geological materials. On closer inspection, however, Yang has collapsed the boundaries between nature and culture, making it difficult to discern whether the objects are organized by scientific classification or formal and aesthetic relationships. Works on the surrounding walls contextualize galactic material in familiar terms: One compares the time it takes to make a human to the time it takes lava rock to form. Another presents the exact amounts of each element that composed his daughter's material being at birth. And the wall drawing, completed by the artist and his friends and family, repeats a mantra that reminds us that everything we know and experience is the Milky Way. In this sense, we are all celestial bodies.

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CHICAGO WORKS

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