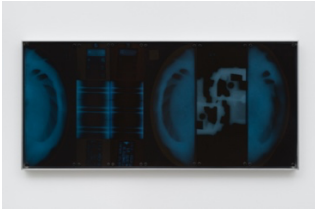


CHAPTER NY



For immediate release

Antonia Kuo

Milk of the Earth

April 18 – June 14, 2025

“The successful negotiation
Of holes...
Is dependent on maintaining
A healthy respect
For what cannot be seen.”
– Pope.L, *Hole Theory*

In *Milk of the Earth*, Antonia Kuo continues her engagement with personal histories rooted in alchemical transformation, metallurgy, and Chinese painting. She focuses on an ecology of material extraction—extraction of the body and the Earth—wombs, mines, cavities, milk, and metal. This framework brings our attention to the viscous liquidity of milk and ceramic slurry, the act of mining as milking the earth, and the mine as an excavated void, or negative. The site of the negative is a focal point for Kuo, a vital space activated by protean energies. Kuo utilizes photographic and sculptural technologies to convey aspects of these lineages, including chemical paintings on light-sensitive silver gelatin paper, X-ray film and corresponding photograms, video footage from her family foundry, micrographs of metal alloys, ultrasound video she recorded of her fetus, and sculptures referencing the industrial mold making process.

In mold making, a “mother mold” is fabricated as an inverse matrix from which multiples are produced. Kuo’s ceramic mold sculptures are hollow, precisely recording an initial wax form that has been vacated, flushed from the ceramic. As a new mother, Kuo is interested in her body as a transformed and emptied vessel, one that has been mined by her infant, both in vitro and on a daily basis.

Kuo’s work is inextricable from her relationship with her own Taiwanese artist mother who has a lifelong Chinese painting and calligraphy practice. Kuo uses the lens of Chinese painting to interpret aspects of landscape through embodied memory and engages the concept of emptiness which is pivotal to the Chinese conception of the universe. Emptiness is not inert or vacuous; it is active, dynamic, and connects the visible world to an invisible one. It is the site of continual becoming.

From this emptiness over 10 billion years ago, all metallic elements in the universe were forged in stellar processes. Most of the copper in the Milky Way originated in supergiants, the most massive stars in the universe. In this exhibition, copper appears in several different modalities: as a supportive substrate, an electroplated coating, and a selective chemical sensitizer for her painting *Pit Mine*, producing chalky iron oxide tonalities.

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Kuo reflects on her family's roots in the copper mining town of Butte, Montana, a metalworking heritage that inspired her uncles to start their own foundry. Berkeley Pit is a massive open pit mine in the heart of Butte, which Kuo remembers since childhood to be as breathtaking as an earthwork, a radical mile-long excavation of terrain waterlogged by deep burgundy and startling turquoise water containing high levels of heavy metals and toxic chemicals.

At the crux of Kuo's work is a complex ambivalence in relation to toxicity and awe. Kuo is familiar with collaborating with the caustic, unpredictable nature of chemistry, but is transfixed by its extreme transformative capabilities. Her paintings on paper coated with silver halide crystals are sensitive receptors to light and time. While copper was forged over the course of millions of years, silver was created in the flash of an eye during the intensely bright explosive moment of a star's death.

Antonia Kuo (b. 1987, New York, NY) lives and works in New York, NY. She received an MFA from Yale University in 2018, her BFA from School of Fine Arts Boston and Tufts University in 2009, and a one-year certificate from the School of the International Center of Photography in 2013. In 2024 Kuo had a two-person exhibition with Martin Wong at the Frye Art Museum, Seattle. Her work has been exhibited at Metropolitan Museum of Manila, PH; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Chapter NY, New York; James Cohan, New York; Project Native Informant, London; Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles; Moskowitz Bayse, Los Angeles; Jack Barrett Gallery, New York; F, Houston; Chart, New York; Each Modern, Taipei; MAMOTH, London; Make Room, Los Angeles; among others. Kuo has performed and screened her work at Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, NY; Knockdown Center, Queens, NY; MoMA PS1, Queens, NY; and the Musee d'art contemporain de Montreal, among others. She has been an artist-in-residence at Mass MoCA, Vermont Studio Center, The Banff Centre, and was a MacDowell Colony Fellow. Kuo's work is included in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and Centre Pompidou, Paris. In May 2025, Kuo will have a solo exhibition at Adams and Ollman in Portland, OR.

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