## Transcript: Transmissions 1

A Reader-in-Residence conversation with Laurie Kang and Oscar Santillán

55:20

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

images, impurity, solaris, science, sand, world, thinking, desert, modern science, question, body, speak, atacama desert, lenses, case, instance, mutation, project, people, self organizing system

**SPEAKERS**

Laurie Kang, Oscar Santillán, Laura Tibi

**Laura Tibi** 00:05

Welcome to Transmissions, a podcast of the Blackwood Gallery at the University of Toronto Mississauga. My name is Laura Tibi and I'm the educator-in-residence here at the Blackwood. This podcast begins by covering Burning Glass, Reading Stone, a series of exhibitions across four lightboxes on the UTM campus running from September 2020 through June 2021. As fall semester brings students, faculty and staff back to campus for a tentative return, it's important we reflect on how we think of and engage with the campus amidst the global pandemic. As the current pandemic has reconfigured nearly every aspect of our collective lives, making more apparent than ever the social, economic and environmental disparities in our world, we can begin by acknowledging the land on which the University of Toronto Mississauga operates, acknowledging that this is stolen, exhausted and occupied land that has been inhabited, stewarded, and cared for by the Huron Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River, and that it continues to be the meeting place and home to Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. Burning Glass, Reading Stone explores the conditions spaces and technologies of looking especially in a hyper mediated COVID world. It asks what habits of looking has social distancing made clear? What responsibilities do images ask of us, and what responsibilities do they include? And how can various modes of looking, whether they be scientific testimonial or a documentary, refocus our collective attention. Each segment of the lightbox series will feature a reader-in-residence in dialogue with the images on display. This podcast forms one part of our reader-in-residence program featuring the reader and artist in question-driven conversation. The reader will then respond to the image series in the form of a reading, a set of images, a performance, a musical score, or another form of interpretation. In this episode, reader-in-residence Laurie Kang will speak with Oscar Santillán about his image set titled Solaris. Santillán is very much interested in the relationship between nature and intelligence, and Solaris asks how we might begin to see nature as an intelligent life form. The photographs Santillán takes are of the Atacama Desert in Chile, known for its extremely arid climate. He made these images by gathering sand grains from

the desert, melting them into glass, and then turning the glass into photographic lenses which he calls "desert eyes." He then uses these lenses to photograph the desert landscape. And so in this way, the desert takes on a level of consciousness by looking back at itself and partaking in the making of its own images. Solaris therefore confronts us with the proposition that nature is capable of thinking, challenging the idea that nature is a passive object of contemplation. Oscar Santillán is an artist and cybernetician living in the Netherlands and Ecuador. And Laurie Kang is a Toronto-based artist whose practice engages with queer theory, science fiction, and biology. Without further ado, let's hear the conversation between Oscar and Laurie.

**Laurie Kang** 03:18
Hi Oscar.

**Oscar Santillán** 03:20
Hi Laurie, nice seeing you here.

**Laurie Kang** 03:22
Yeah, nice to see you virtually as well. So I wanted to start by setting the environment of the work Solaris, and like any good sci fi novel or film. Yeah, I want to hear from your and what your atmosphere was, as you were making this work. And also, maybe this is a way for me to ask about your concept of Antimundo. Am I pronouncing that properly?

**Oscar Santillán** 04:01
Antimundo? Yes, no.

**Laurie Kang** 04:04
Okay. Yeah. Which is, it's been written as a methodology. That is a matrix containing sci fi, indigenous worlding and cybernetics that can be sensed as a way of identifying and generating realities that do not fit in the world. And I found this really compelling. And I guess I want to start with that, and ask if you could tell me more about this methodology and the backstory of its emergence, what your atmosphere was, at the time that this term became a mode of seeing, thinking, and making for you?

**Oscar Santillán** 04:39
Yeah, so all right, so um, I feel like we're gonna be speaking at this point about two things. One would be Solaris and the other one would be Antimundo. Right, and then I would like to perhaps just for for the general public that may be listening [to] this or watching it, just to go into some some basics about about Solaris, the material of it, what is what is it what is it all about? And kind of like the premise in that novel that really illuminate it. The shortest possible version I can make of it is that Solaris is 1961 novel written by a Polish writer philosopher, Stanislaw Lem. And the novel

has been, perhaps people more often knows it through the Tarkovsky film. Hopefully they know it by the Tarkovsky from the 1970s and not through the Soder- Soderbergh's film from the 1990s. So the because the Tarkovsky film, it's, it's a it's a beautiful film, I would say, for the purposes of, of my, my take on Solaris, or my Solaris version, the film itself wasn't particularly helpful for one reason, and it is, that Tarkovsky put more emphasis into the psychological aspects of the characters, rather, rather than in the, in the scientific. And yeah, I would say the scientific aspects that really shaped the narrative in the novel, so in that regard, are talking about atmosphere. The Stanislaw Lem novel, feels a fair, I would say, fairly different than the Tarkovsky novel, which, of course, is totally right. It's not that much of our of a moral judgment, as is just simply an acknowledgment of certain characteristics, where they differ. And the basics, if I could just briefly go into describing what the novel goes about. There is this astronaut or cosmonaut, rather, as the Soviets used to call their astronauts. So there is this this cosmonaut that is sent to, to see what is going on in this artificial satellite that the Soviets had placed in, in this faraway planet. So it's a planet outside of our solar system, so it's an exoplanet. This planet, it is already in known for 50 years. So there have been many missions sent already there, there is an entire, an entire, decades of research done in this on this planet. And what has been clear is that the ocean of the planet is intelligent, that is self conscious, indeed, not only intelligent, but it is self conscious. And but here, it is, like the two main points for me a about why this novel in particular, really drew my attention. One reason is that in, in the Solaris novel, this intelligent in the presence of a self conscious being, that doesn't have a brain already defies our mainstream notions of thinking. Where for centuries, at least, in mainstream Western, scientific thinking of well, and even, even beyond, really, you could even find traces of what I'm about to say, probably the Bible as well in terms of the Bible being a book that is so anthropocentric. So, what is it? So basically, you have this ocean that is self-conscious, and it means that the intelligence in this in this entity is decentralized, unlike the intelligence of mammals, that is the one that for, for centuries has been acknowledged in western thinking. As the The capital letters, the thinking entity, the Brain. So that's, that's one aspect of the novel with it, this is fairly revolutionary, you would say this is the, again, this is, you know, published in 1961. And the only aspect is that um, um, this, this intelligent ocean is not interested on interacting with humans. So for decades, these cosmonauts have tried over and over and over, to get in touch with, in contact with the ocean. So that's, that's, again, really interesting because, again, it defies mainstream assumptions. And also, it pushes the, the sci-fi agenda in that sense, where the main use of narratives were about extraterrestrials coming and supposed to be finding us so interesting, so important, so relevant, that they have to come here to talk to us to save us from self-destruction. That was usually the theme. And this is very, very different. This ocean Yes, it's just simply not interested in humans.

**Laurie Kang** 11:28
Right. Which is so interesting, because it's like, you know, the fantasy of an author writing the story of extraterrestrials coming and finding us as a species, so interesting, is this exoticization and this

reverse colonization, and then in this sense, with the water that's, in essence, refusing to be colonized. Um, that's something that's super interesting about that.

**Oscar Santillán** 11:54
Yeah, it's, that's totally right. I think we could even say that, that call it like a third aspect of these of these main topics and a narrative at least in the way we look at it from, from our perspective in this here, and now. So, yeah, so in that regard, that's kind of like a short introduction to to Solaris. And then I think we're going to have time later on to talk about a little bit why was that my take when this term or this became an art project. But going back now to the question about the methodology, or the main methodology that I'm using for or the framework that I'm using, Antimundo. So, this anti-world, what it is, so, in, I define it as, as a way of putting emphasis on those aspects of reality, that are overlooked.

**Laurie Kang** 13:13
Okay.

**Oscar Santillán** 13:15
So, um, to really work with what is in the margins, and being the case that an artist who is interested in the dialogue between art and science, what I felt that was, was missing is, you know, this is the main critique I would have personally have against modern science. And this is not much about the very foundations of it, which is, you know, the, the relationship between evidence and the way in which the scientific method processes that evidence, and works with it in search for truth. I think that method of working of modern science is absolutely brilliant, and it produces unquestionable results. So, what is what is it? And I want to emphasize that because, you know, I think when when we go into criticizing science, I think is really important to pinpoint, why is it that—which aspect is—it that that we are criticizing, not to play along with extreme right narratives that are rather they're not criticizing science there. I would say they are rather just discrediting science. So I didn't want to go into discrediting science. Because of the current context, I think it's very important to, to, yeah, make that that clear.

**Laurie Kang** 15:11
Yeah, I appreciate that. Because I have the, you know, I love, I'm super inspired by science and technology studies and texts and papers that I read, which, as you said, really exist at the fringes of the medium. You know, they're papers written by scientists who aren't necessarily artists, but I, I, like you, I'm really interested in that intersection of science and arts, because science has all this information in the structure. But what I think they often leave out, or what they don't focus on too much is the imaginative potential, like, you know, quantum physics, there's all these insane leaps that are happening and, you know, then you have writers that talk about it from a queer perspective or, and, and that things that what art enables is that kind of imagination, but I did not

even think—as you mentioned, of the, the other direction of like, critiquing science as discrediting so I appreciate you bringing that up.

**Oscar Santillán** 16:10
Yeah, I mean, I think in context, especially when we are reaching larger audiences, I think it's very important to do this. And I think often I, I experience it myself in discussions and arguments, with with colleagues who come from, for instance, some decolonial perspectives that I'm familiar with and, and, partially affiliated to those sort of worldviews. But I feel that sometimes the, the scope for the for the criticism is so broad, that it's not really helpful in the end. So, anyways, basically the point that I want to make and going back to the Antimundo idea, is that, what I aim to do is to, by going back into into looking at sources, at research done in the history of science, to see what is it that has been left outside of the understanding or, or its scientific narratives about time, and, and you see that because science is made by human beings, and many of the prejudices that had been mainstream our societies for a long, long time have impressed on us there, this has caused the exclusion of for instance of women, in, in, in science, of all type of minorities, you see, also in my own case, and very devoted towards studying the history of science in Latin America, especially, and science fiction from Latin America as well. And, and you see, how, how is it that modern science, well, the critiques for instance, about what was left outside, is that basically, the narrative was stated so that basically, there is this kind of fantasy, as if, as if modern science began with Newton. And then of course, according to the, to the story, some, some figures were opening up the gates, basically for Newton to pop to pop up right, like Copernico like Galileo, Kepler, and finally, you have here the, the guy that is going to open the gates for humanity to enter into a new time of enlightenment. And no doubt that there goes these achievements are really remarkable. But as much as light was, was brought into into the scenery, many shadows were cast as well.

**Laurie Kang** 19:25
Mm hmm.

**Oscar Santillán** 19:26
And, what is there in those shadows, right. So right, so I would say the, what I call Antimundo, is, is what science for a long time didn't consider to be part of, or contributors to, to those discourses and to those achievements. And then in terms of history, also, you know, when you look back into the history of science and the history of science really, you know, it's so interesting to see where the foundations are for the scientific revolution of modern science, because then you really have to start looking first into into the Arab world. And the Islamic Golden Age, then you have to look into into China. And really, it's so so interesting, for instance, to to see how the colonization of the Americas couldn't have happened without Europeans having gained access to Chinese technology.

**Laurie Kang** 20:42

Right.

**Oscar Santillán** 20:43
Just, just, to put something into into context, in the, in the 15th century, which is, you know, by the end of the 15th century, Columbus famously travels to the Americas. Um, the maritime technology of Europeans allows them to make—a the world is not in a boat, but how will you call, galleons, and—ships? Ships of a certain size, while China at the same time—it was Chinese engineers who were capable of building ships 10 times longer. Europeans couldn't make it, because they didn't have the the scientific knowledge for that. So actually, there's this, you know, same with gunpowder. And when you say, the compass as well, paper, when you start looking into technologies, enabling enabling Europeans to colonize the Americas. You have—

**Laurie Kang** 21:52
It gets very complicated.

**Oscar Santillán** 21:54
Yeah, you have to look backwards into where these technologies come from. And yeah, most of them do not come from from Europe, really. They come from the Arab world, they come from China. So it's a it's a, it's a really interesting situation, when we start looking at what what has been left out from the narrative.

**Laurie Kang** 22:15
Yeah. I like that description of Antimundo in that way of what's in the margins. And, you know, it was kind of picturing you as a gleaner in a way like, you know, when you glean or you sift through and what is left out of that, or what what is left behind from that. And that image of you of that—like the image of a Gleaner in that way feels relevant here. And also just thinking about what I was hearing you talk about was the kind of non-neutrality of science as a medium, as a structuring medium, as a knowledge-producing medium that involves bodies that are not neutral as well, that, you know, inclusion inevitably entails exclusions and science doesn't take those exclusions into account, on the macro level of like the people doing the research and knowledge production. And even and often at a microscopic level of the tools, the hands, that manipulate the tools as not being those are not neutral things as well. So I'm really interested in that, kind of like, your emphasis to think about, you know, this, the desire to apprehend in the construction of modern science, versus your practice of complexifying. And in a way through looking at what is left behind or what is left out, or what is in the margins, as you say. And that made me think of another question that I had about the work, about the literal work of the, of your, of Solaris with the what you call "desert eyes," which are made of the melted down sand from the Atacama Desert. And just thinking about, you know, the, the margins, or the in between, I wanted to ask you to speak about this idea of impurity again, and maybe that goes along with maybe I'm thinking of gleaning

because of the sand as well, but about impurity and how—because the sand that you got cast into glass wasn't filtered thoroughly—so it has the impurities in embedded into this, this transformed state that it's in now. So, can you talk about impurities, how it relates to porous membranes, insides and outsides. What you think about those things?

**Oscar Santillán** 24:51
Yeah, so this is actually a really, really interesting point for for reflection. Let me just make a quick note before I move into trying to answer this question, and it's that the Antimundo vision is informed. I just wanted to mention this because it's really informed by the work of scientists themselves. So, there is a kind, we think science there have been always been contrarians contrarians like Lynn Margulis, for instance. And I would say that she is for me, as for many others, a big source of inspiration and someone who was fearless—like totally fearless—and not really into making any sort of concessions or commitments, sorry, compromises. So, an absolutely brilliant contrarian scientist that,

**Laurie Kang** 26:09
I love that you bring her up. Yeah.

**Oscar Santillán** 26:11
And she wasn't ever shy to make people mad. Because she was just speaking really, from a perspective of serious research. She just he wasn't just within the consensus of the time. And now many of her ideas have become part of the canon. Yeah, and then of course, there are people like Thomas Kuhn also, that being a very important for, so if there is, you know, I just want one to mention this, like, because also mentioning her and she's one of those really fascinating people that I think, for for the general public or for other artists, who are looking for entry points, with humanities to transition from the humanities into science. I think she's really one of those people who does that brilliantly.

**Laurie Kang** 27:06
Yeah, she's, she's a serious scientist, but I always thought that her writing was very embodied. And to me, that's an inherently feminist kind of mode of practicing science, is that she—it was more imaginative, I love that she collaborated with her son, you know that they had this thing, she's not nearly as famous as her ex Carl Sagan. Like there's so much to that story that speaks exactly to the things that you're talking about, the kind of like, what what we don't see or what's pushed to the sides or what is what has given center space.

**Oscar Santillán** 27:44
And she's not as famous as John Lovelock, for instance, in that

**Laurie Kang** 27:50
yes.

**Oscar Santillán** 27:51
in the development of the idea of Gaia

**Laurie Kang** 27:54
Yeah, and I also think Gaia got, you know, a bit kind of co-opted a bit to turn into a little bit away from what she was talking about. So it had a bad taste in maybe scientists' mouths or a little bit from that, but yeah, she's amazing.

**Oscar Santillán** 28:11
So, if I can begin commenting on the question you placed Um. So impurity. So, let me perhaps begin on a sort of basic level for those who are listening or looking at us or watching us. So the Solaris project consisted on taking sand from the Atacama Desert in Chile, which is the driest place on our planet, the oldest desert in the world. And this sort of like in a truthful way, and an otherworldly sort of place on earth—to the point that, as many people know, NASA test the rovers for Mars, the Atacama Desert. So I decided to go to this place which has been actually, there are really prominent astronomical observatories, pre-Incan actually, that been in the in the desert for thousands of years. So it's a place that has a very interesting connection to what is beyond our atmosphere. And so I went there, and I gathered several kilograms of sand. And then I decided precisely as you mentioned, or I decided not to purify that sun for the following process which was to melt it into glass, which is usually the process for making glass consists of purifying the sand, so you will have the maximum level of silica possible. And then after that, I worked with some experts into shaping this glass into photographic lenses. And so once I get these photographic lenses are returned to the desert and photographed the desert with the eye made by itself, or from itself. So, the decision of not purifying the sand is, I would say it's it's really relevant to the project in several ways. The first one, I would say, the impurities in the glass are evidence of the ecologies living in the desert, or the desert ecologies present through its impurities. And secondly, those impurities being present in their lenses, they actually just greatly distort the images that are taken. So turning the landscape into a kind of subjective image. But it's a subjectivity that is created by the matter itself by the desert itself by the ecology itself. So in that sense, the impurity is, is really now that we are speaking about it, I'm noticing more and more that is it's it's it's really a central element to to that project. Yeah, I'm curious, like, if you have if the idea of impurity is something that had been part of your reflections in regards to your own work, or in general?

**Laurie Kang** 32:00
Yeah, I mean, I love what you said about that. Because I mean, it's, again, it's kind of embedding what is impure within the, the main character or the main object, and kind of denying any

separation, that that separation can't exist. And what does that mean for boundaries of the body between inside and outside between borders, things like that. And that's something I think about, as, you know, I make these installations that kind of try to blur distinctions between inside and outside, and the, and the architecture of the installations themselves. To me, I call them bodies. They're, they reflect the body, even though they're made with industrial materials. And so the body or the wall becomes this index of this blurring of inside and outside. So, you know, you can only apprehend that, that side is an outside in relation to you being inside. And so what does that mean? It means that that is always connected to you. And I think that that is how I was thinking about this inclusion of impurities within the tool that you made through the sand as well, and that was really fascinating to me. And somewhere else in the maybe it's in the project description, you spoke about porous membranes, which is something I speak a lot about, within my work as well, that, you know, we are always letting in as much as we are releasing out. And that constant interaction can't fully be traced, it's really messy, and kind of, in that way, makes the inside or the self inherently, quote, unquote, impure. But I think what you're doing in this case is obviously kind of subverting this notion of impurity. And thinking about that as expressability or as a way to refuse fixity. Because, you know, as we all know, a regular photographic lens has the capacity to apprehend an image, or a desert, or whatever, extremely clearly, and, you know, cleanly, and your images are really ethereal-looking. They reminded me of aura photographs, they have all these beautiful blurs. I love the line in the description saying the desert looks at itself. What does that mean, to have the thing look at itself in that way? So I think this notion of impurity feels really central to the, to the work for me when I was looking at it, but it's a kind of flipping around of what that term might normally signify. And then I think about that in my own work conceptually, but then outwardly to the bodies that we occupy, the social realities that we live in...

**Oscar Santillán** 35:00
Yeah, it really, it's, you know, it's a term that I think generally from the idea of autopoeisis, and autopoeisis—although you, you may be well familiar with the term, let's just say for the, you know, audience again. So, basically, so, these are a set of ideas or rather a theory developed by Maturana and Varela, two Chilean biologists, and, and they, they have to define as part of the research the biological research, what is considered a biological unity, like what is considered, let's say, in this sense, a human being or what is considered an entity either biological. And this was, you know, they had to struggle with it, like really trying to define this clearly. And, and they basically came out to say the following: that a biological entity is a self organizing system, is a self organizing system, that is wrapped by a porous membrane. And that porous membrane means that this is not what racist biologists views' used to have in the 19th century, which was the idea of the, white body as a pure body separated from the environment, separated from contamination. So, they really gave us, I think, a really sharp definition that tell[s] us that we as human beings are in constant mutation with environment, in constant exchange with environment. And I think, in a way, when I look back into into the Solaris project, and this, this lens really hints at it, although I would say also at a sort

of metaphysical level, because, I've said metaphysical and also critical level, which is... Normal depictions of a landscape necessarily require for the landscape to be depicted as an object. So, basically, you place the camera, and you objectify what is in front of the camera. And in this case, actually, what we get to see are images of how the desert looks, for how the desert looks at itself. And in that sense, the landscape is not any more an object to be depicted, but it is rather a subject in itself.

**Laurie Kang** 38:33
Yeah, that's beautiful. And I love that idea., and it made me think a lot about about and it's making me think about her, them again, but Elizabeth Povinelli's writings—do you know, their work, they write about "geontologies," is a term that they made that, you know, they really speak to practices of colonization, and Indigenous violence—violence against Indigenous communities. But to kind of take it a step further from, you know, Foucault and everything, it's, geontologies, takes it beyond just like, which bodies get to survive, and which bodies are not useful to the world. And it talks about what gets to count as a living body at all. And that, you know, specifically in many Indigenous communities, that a rock is not an inert mute object, it has a liveliness. And so your project made me think about this notion of geontologies a lot too. And I think what you're speaking to is also kind of enlivening the idea that, like the matter that, you know, yeah, when you try to photograph a desert, conventionally, you're trying to objectify it as though it is mute. But you're kind of flipping that around through this project in a really nice way.

**Oscar Santillán** 40:01
Yeah, what you're saying actually makes me think of something that has many other people calling Indigenous terraforming. And it really departs where [inaudible] is from science fiction, but it mostly departs from this, in my case, and I know that in perhaps similar ontologies, maybe in place in other Indigenous traditions, but in the case of the Andes, there is there is a "tirakuna," who is the earth being, there is this really fantastic research by an Peruvian anthropologist, Marisol de la Cadena on the topic of Earth beings, and just to briefly explain, what is an earth being, let's say for to illustrate this, that the earth being is a mountain, then we recognize that that mountain is that a geological element in the landscape and is, is an ecosystem, and so on and so forth. All of that absolutely recognizable from Western categories, then you also have the notion that the mountain is sacred, and also from Western, whatever it is that there is a place for the sacred. So that's, that's also translatable, let's say, and finally, and this is the earth being is also a subjectivity of its own. So the mountain is a source of subjectivity.

**Laurie Kang** 41:51
Mm hmm.

**Oscar Santillán** 41:52

And that is not any more understandable from traditional Western perspectives. So, um, so it's very interesting, because this is what I'm sort of understanding as Indigenous terraforming is not this sort of like massive extractivist change of the landscape, that new colonies in Mars are envisioned to be, but they're rather just the exercise of recognizing us as part of the ecosystems as entities that are in constant mutation within an endlessly mutating world.

**Laurie Kang** 42:47
Yeah, it makes me think of Donna Haraway's "Cthulucene," which I haven't written down because I was like, there's no way we're not going to talk about Cthulucene, at least for a second! But the Cthulucene is "made up of ongoing multi species stories and practices of becoming-with, in times that remain at stake in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen. The unfinished Cthulucene must collect up the trash of the Anthropocene, the exterminism of the Capitalocene, and chipping and shredding and layering like a mad gardener, make a much hotter compost pile for still possible past presents and futures."

**Oscar Santillán** 43:29
It's really to the point. Yeah, it is it is hard to add anything to it, but it's she's of course, so extremely inspiring, because I just wanted to add, regarding your your latest comment, that actually Donna Haraway adds another term that complements really perfectly the idea of the autopoiesis, and she had this symbiosis right as something that was was needed in that understanding, that starts with recognizing the view of Maturana and Varela that heavily influenced cybernetics, also the view that we as human beings are not one entity, but we are this self organizing system that is and this is what what is adding, right? The fact that we are in symbiosis, like in constant exchange with other ecosystems, and we are actually in fluid in a very fluid exchange with with them by means or through this porous membrane.

**Laurie Kang** 44:46
Yes

**Oscar Santillán** 44:47
In the case of humans it's our skin. The planet is the atmosphere, right?

**Laurie Kang** 44:54
Yeah, yeah, we emerge as relations. Rather than we create relationships—we are relationships in that way. Yeah. Because it's which is, that's a very symbiotic way of thinking of that. Yeah, I love that I was revisiting Donna Haraway through this and I'm like, oh, I need to read that book again. It was so inspiring.

**Oscar Santillán** 45:22

I should revisit it also, I think, because I remember it's time, right? It's been so extremely compelling and inspiring. Yeah. And, and also—needed, right? Like the type of, of mindful, really sharp criticism, plus envisioning that is really much, much needed nowadays, this compliment, I know how you feel about it. But I personally feel that nowadays, [to] only stop at criticism is not enough. It's really necessary. But we need to develop imaginaries because those 20th century ideologies that we inherited, are really not suited for what is needed at this point. Yeah. So the envisioning, I think, is also a very important quality of her reflective practice.

**Laurie Kang** 46:27
Yeah. I have one last question for you, Oscar. And let me try and word this properly. But thinking about everything we've been talking about, about the project with sand, which is a very kind of amorphous substance, you know, it shifts to whatever container it is in or it's not. And then this kind of transformative process of melting it down into these lenses that then went on to make these very hazy, ethereal images. Which reminded me of like aura photos, which took me on this other thread where I was thinking about spirituality. But I wanted to bring up a point, there's something that said in Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, that says "we are a spirit with a body, not a body with a spirit." And it made me think of your work just in terms of this relationship that you have, that you appear to have between form and formlessness through both the material interests in the sand and what you did with the sand as well as through the conceptual explorations, things that we've been talking about, like the porous membranes or impurities, or, you know, what's left in the margins kind of thing and, and how that speaks to what is decided as a form and what is formless and when do they start, you know, intermingling and getting confused with each other? And I don't know if that's much of a question, but anything that makes you think about I would love to hear about

**Oscar Santillán** 48:05
Yeah, so um, you know, I was thinking about the inevitable tensions between the mind-body problem and the way in which different cultures has helped frame it. And those differences are of course, meaningful. Although, I would say, what happens, I would like to place the question for: as for myself, like, or how is it that we can really traverse this dualism? And what can we use as a substitution to speak about the physical phenomena about our thinking, about self consciousness? And I would say that I'm tempted to think and or going back to what we were just speaking with before, about this notion of constant mutation, as I wouldn't say, I wouldn't, I wouldn't claim that could be a suitable substitute for the definition of mind and body, that whatever you think of it, is quite helpful. And also problematic. But I would say as a provisional sort of substitute for this dualism, I think the notion of constant mutation, it could be useful. Um, and, yeah, perhaps that that would be my take on this and, then the idea of, you know, in that regard, sand as water has this quality of being capable of adjusting itself to containers. Nevertheless, in a different arrangement, for instance, we need sand to make concrete, it becomes, you know, extremely solid.

So I'm very, very, in the case of you know, when you heat up sand to temperatures above, way above 1000 degrees (in centigrades) then it mutates into into glass. So, I'm really intrigued by, let's say, this sense of sand as...—the potential of sand for these continuous mutations.

**Laurie Kang** 51:07
Yeah, and I think the project really points to that ongoingness, which the photographs are but one mutation along the way. And, you know, it was so nice to go down this trail in my mind where the material keeps shifting from one phase or cycle to the next. Lastly, I just one more thing. I just wanted to—and this is not a question—I just want to share it with you, it made me think of you. There's: do you know the Tao Te Ching, the ancient Chinese philosophical text? It's a beautiful text that's just full of short passages. And I wanted to read you one of them that made me think of your work and this project. But then, because we've been talking about science fiction, it's a short one. Ursula K. Le Guin was a huge follower of the Tao Te Ching and she did a translation of the text. So I'm going to read you the original translation—which there have been many but the most popular translation—and then I'm going to read you Ursula's translation. So it's chapter 43: "The gentlest thing in the world overcomes the hardest thing in the world, that which has no substance enters where there is no space. This shows the value of non action, teaching without words, performing without actions. That is the master's way." And here's Ursula's version. She calls it "Water and Stone." "What softest in the world rushes and runs over what's hardest in the world. The immaterial enters the impenetrable. So I know the good in not doing. The wordless teaching, the profit in not doing—not many people understand it."

**Laura Tibi** 53:20
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