



The Institute Library  
New Haven, Connecticut

**PRESS RELEASE:** For press inquiries or a tour,  
please contact Martha Willette Lewis directly at [Gallery@Institutelibrary.org](mailto:Gallery@Institutelibrary.org)

**The Gallery Upstairs at the Institute Library presents**

***Monica Ong: Planetaria***  
***June 8 - September 8, 2021***  
***Opening reception June 12, 2021 from 5 to 7 pm***

*“We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.”*  
– Oscar Wilde from *Lady Windemere’s Fan*

We are proud to present our summer show, ***Planetaria***. Monica Ong blends poetry, astronomy, printmaking, assemblage, and personal meditations on family and working motherhood, into a compelling, tactile exhibit which telescopes between the personal and the cosmic. Chinese and Western constellations are reconfigured and refreshed into new iterations to reflect the realities of the now. Playfully taking poetry off the page as light box assemblages and handheld wheel charts with moving parts, this series seeks to imagine the sky from a feminized perspective, examining the power struggles that mythmaking elicits. A reworked tarot deck offers a new take on celestial divination. Visitors to the gallery may peruse "lost astronomy" prints made from diagrams, and scientific syntax reimaged as lyrical meditations on working motherhood and contemporary life. There is a viewmaster handheld slideshow with a custom poem-and-image series. ***Planetaria*** is designed to engage viewers with their hands and eyes to reconsider the heavens, and the meanings and stories they tell. Based on her own background and experiences, Monica Ong invites audiences across all disciplines and cultures to imagine new cosmographies, one where everyone belongs.

**Monica Ong** is a visual poet and the author of *Silent Anatomies* (2015), selected by Joy Harjo as winner of the Kore Press First Book Award in poetry. A Kundiman poetry fellow and recipient of a 2021 Connecticut Artist Fellowship, Ong has been awarded residencies most recently at the Studios at MassMoCA, Millay Colony, and Yaddo. You can find her visual poetry in *Permafrost Magazine*, *Petrichor: A Journal of Text+Image*, *Waxwing Magazine*, and forthcoming in *Scientific American*. Her work has been exhibited at New York's Center for Book Arts and as part of the Collection of American Literature at the Yale Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

The Institute Library was founded in 1826 as the Apprentices' Literary Association, an educational society dedicated to the "mutual assistance in the attainment of useful knowledge" through a shared book collection and weekly discussion meetings. It soon expanded into a full membership library with its own building, collection, and events. The library maintained a lively roster of distinguished visiting lecturers with an emphasis on liberty, freedom, and progressive ideals. To this day, the library is an active site for education, history, and civil discourse.

The Gallery Upstairs at the Institute Library focuses on timely exhibitions relating to words, books, archives, or collections, focusing on important issues surrounding social justice through the pairing of contemporary art and historic documents, often from the library collection. **Martha Willette Lewis** has been the resident curator since 2015 and has put together over 15 exhibitions to date.