



w e l c o m e t o

# COSMOLOGYSCAPE

The name COSMOLOGYSCAPE weaves together COSMOS, the interconnectedness of all things, and LANDSCAPE, the terrain we inhabit and observe. Through this worldview that is both spiritual and grounded, artists Alisha B Wormsley and Kite have co-created the COSMOLOGYSCAPE methodology to offer space for communal dreaming and the development of tools that move across time, worlds, and possibilities.

Emerging from gatherings organized by the artists in 2020 with Black and Indigenous communities to dream and heal collectively, the participatory process is manifold. It includes retreats and workshops for dreamers to reflect on the structure and development of individual and communal dream practices and ancestral traditions; the COSMOLOGYSCAPE website which invites contributions of individual dreams to be translated into digital quilt squares using symbolic systems informed by Lakḥóta philosophy, Afrofuturism, and Black quilting traditions; and multidisciplinary artworks, including textiles, digital animation, furniture and sound, that build upon these symbolic systems and utilize computational methods to design spaces of rest and collective imagination.

COSMOLOGYSCAPE is grounded in ethical technological protocols that seek to preserve good relationships to communities, land, water, air and future generations. Free, prior, and informed consent is foundational to the artists' data governance plan. Utilizing dreamers' data with intention, the artists gather, clean, manage, and destroy the information, working against data harvesting that can potentially harm communities through surveillance and environmental impact. Dreamers receive in return restorative offerings in the form of herbal and tea recipes that address their dreams and dreaming practice. COSMOLOGYSCAPE continues to evolve across digital and physical realms to explore the power of dream work, acknowledging that the right to rest, dream, and share knowledge is unevenly shaped and conditioned by race, class, place, and circumstance.

of imagining otherwise.  
yet deeply lived practice

Cosmologyscape explores dreaming as a personal and collective act of liberation, an ephemeral

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## Wagner Gallery





DARLA MIGAN

DARLA MIGAN, Ph.D. is a philosopher, art critic and curator. She is based in Brooklyn, New York and holds the first State University of New York (SUNY) PRODIG+ Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Department of Philosophy at Stony Brook University.

◌◌SM◌◌◌◌◌◌SC◌◌AP◌◌◌ (2024–ongoing) is an experiment in collective dreaming, wherein dreaming is understood as a viable and currently underutilized form of generative technology. Together artists Kite and Alisha B Wormsley implore us to critically overcome the wholesale rejection of technology as an evil “out there” coming to get us. Instead, their project intends to overwhelm the binary that usually separates the use of complex tools (tech) from wisdom practices in resistance to empire. Originally commissioned by Creative Time as part of their 2022 open call, the artist-collaborators developed the idea for their dream project through an invitation to a Black and Indigenous makers hosted in 2020 and 2021, workshops were held to enact and test out protocols for rest and reciprocity, and participants were even encouraged to nap together over Zoom. Now in its second iteration at the Wagner Gallery, viewers are invited to acknowledge and experiment with ways of knowing that do not rely on extraction without replenishment, through the continued invitation to contribute their dreams to the online portal cosmologyscape.com and the accompanying gallery installation.

But why turn to dreaming as an urgent practice when it seems that we ought to wake all the way up? In earlier generations human beings were not driven by an existential lack attended to by triggering jolts of dopamine to organize social life. Nor were we so deeply encumbered by a constant sense of doom. Why not? We were being prepared for each aspect of life’s cycle in a community. Elders prepared young people for what was to come next in life while young people secured the material needs of their elders. Now, life under racial capitalism atomizes our relational bonds. In a system that insists on single-household economic independence without comparable structures of sustainability, neither elders nor young people today can meet the needs of the other as we had for millennia.

The aim of the current project is to create a shared vision for our abundant futures by weaving together individual dreams which are then translated into a unique symbol and encoded to appear across digital and physical modes of presentation.

Overall, the project holds open these questions: How can we continue to guide our interrelated futures in ways that breathe life flowing in from kinship structures both near and far? How can we get to understand kinship in ways that support nurturing our covenant to protect the earth and the flourishing of all? The organization of the project proceeds

from the idea that dreams expand our integration with the cosmos from the regional specificity of Indigenous ontologies.

The narratives of individual dream reports are compiled online via text typed into a query box with the instructions: “Describe your dream the best you can remember” followed by the prompt: “Enter your dream here. This will be anonymous.” Each dreamer-participant’s recollection is then rendered into a symbolic language created by the artists. Instead of coding in Python, for example, the semiotic life of dreams collected for ◌◌SM◌◌◌◌◌◌SC◌◌AP◌◌◌ appears through a unique combination of symbols. Thirteen symbols are shared from traditional Lakḥóta visual language and thirteen new shapes, drawn from African American quilting patterns such as a log cabin, and African hair braiding patterns, give each unique dream the potential to dance with the others.

“ I i m a s i n e d f u t u r e w o r l d s a s a b u n d a n t a n d s i v i l e x w h e n I s e e a h e r d o f b i s o n . I a m r e m i n d e d t h a t t h e a b u n d a n c e a l r e a d y e x i s t s , b u t t h a t i t i s t h e w a y i n w h i c h w e d i s t r i b u t e r e s o u r c e s t h a t c r e a t e s s t a r v a t i o n . ”  
- k i t e

Next, each dream is rendered in its symbolically coded semiotic arrangement and positioned in a graphic square to create a digitized visual representation of all dreams in a single design. Later, the symbolically coded dreams become digital quilt squares, collectively becoming a quilt. These patterns are then used to create artworks, including textiles, fabric, and mosaics. The dreams are also reinterpreted using algorithms to design curvatures that the artists then create furniture with, such as daybeds and benches, where visitors are invited to incite even more dreaming which could be cataloged and coded. In essence the project works like a spiral that better emulates the cyclical nature of life as described by wisdom traditions for thousands of years.

Traditionally, dreams override the dualism set up (famously by Cartesian metaphysics) between mind and matter to play a central motif in rites of passage: marking births, coming of age, adult maturity, and life as an elder. We keep the tradition and this system of consciously directed envisioning alive when we make a birthday wish each year. Even at the center of the empire we teach children that the articulation of

1 Matthew 22:15-22 “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” is a biblical reference to the gospel of Mark wherein Jesus argues against would be hypocrites who would use his name as an excuse to not pay their taxes to the worldly authority (Caesar). In this context, the gospel verse may be interpreted to mean: for whom does God give allegiance? It is not God’s allegiance that we are showing toward liberation both core as good things do, but rather that we are showing allegiance in our use of powerful tools because a variety of wisdom-tools have always guided us throughout time! Also, recall how the Christian Bible has both been used as a colonizing technology and as a liberatory tool across the African diaspora.

hope for the future is intended to manifest what does not yet exist. This same relationship between mind and matter connects our dreaming life as a species from the long ago past to more recent innovations priming us for the sentience of “artificial intelligence.” The artists claim all technology as our shared human inheritance and not only that which has been sacredly shared in the “good way,” but also knowledge which has been selectively traded, violently suppressed, and even technology which may surpass our species-level capacity for understanding altogether one day.

Similarly, scientific thinking includes not merely calibrating the efficient delivery of data through closed loops where efficiency is calculated for profit maximization. But ways of being as a wisely integrated species may also support channeling the openness of anima or energy systems ignored by the logic of commerce; taking on the challenge of slow sensuality for fuller understanding; and embracing the vulnerability necessary for correcting errors within complex systems. At Bard College’s Wihánble S’a Center for Indigenous AI, Kite’s studio-lab technicians are combining machine learning with the artist’s sound, performance, and wearable sculpture practice. Scholars, programmers, and wise ones hope to discover how to make syncopated communication with non-human intelligence possible in order to extend an invitation for respectful relationality.

Dreams reflect the body’s calibration and may act as a tuning fork for detecting emergent variability. The alternative is abandoning powerful techniques captured by the term “artificial intelligence” to their current primary purpose of enhancing control-systems where they will continue to optimize the synchronization of our personal data with corporate markets in the name of state surveillance. Dreams are an ancient built-in tool that can perhaps guide us on how to respond to the world differently than our corporate tech overlords.

Render unto Caesar?<sup>1</sup> Perhaps overcoming dualism means being strategically ambivalent about what is “theirs” and what is “ours”. Just as we are not bound to choose between either centering hundreds of years of mourning First Nations’ peoples or the betrayal felt across diaspora in the Black Blues, then perhaps we must also embrace the whole compilation of the earth’s ways just as the earth has nurtured all of who we are and whatever we are becoming. We have never known the protection of our ancestors from evil (yet another dualism introduced by European Christendom?), so why start

acting as if we could do so now by ignoring the corporate greed driving innovation? Instead, why not embrace human design whatever its origin or intended uses as part of our collective identity?

For example, to refer to the “stack” in computer programming is to refer to a visual metonymic device that serves as a virtual-world concept in relation to the analog library. In turn, the analog library (first held in private collections and later as a public repository of knowledge) is a relatively new phenomenon. Collectively our “stacks,” or our shared cross-cultural human knowledge has been sacredly shared, selectively traded, or violently suppressed. Despite tremendous increases in the distribution and circulation of networked data, one consequence of human domination and subjugation is that an expansively optimized integration of our sharable sources of wisdom has not yet come to pass.

The interface between elder and youth, while imperfectly balanced and subject to risky repetitions (such as the passing down of ill-begotten generational wealth, family curses, et cetera) seems not to suffer as much from random data breaches. On the other hand, the democratization of knowledge brought about by the printing press and expanded through the commercial internet is unprecedented (as was the invention of the wheel!). How might we orient ourselves to futural wisdom when “knowing how” feels as if it is far less connected to cooling down terabytes of smoothly transferable data and feels much closer to the warmth of hands filling bellies with recipes learned by heart. What if the Turing test could test not only for signs of intelligence narrowly construed, but also for the level of coziness of a newly emergent being?

“ I n t h e n e i s h b o r h o o d s I s e e w u p i n , w e w e r e s u r v i v i n g , b u t h o w c a n w e p l a n i f w e a r e t r y i n g t o l i v e f o t h e n e x t d a y ? I w a n t t o s a y : “ t h e r e a r e B l a c k p e o p l e i n t h e f u t u r e . ” I g i v e t h a t k a n o u a s e t o o t h e r p e o p l e a n d I a s k t h e m t o r e p l i c a t e i t a n d k e e p i t s o i n e s s o n o w t h e r e a r e B l a c k p e o p l e i n t h e f u t u r e . w e c a n r e l a x a k i t f l e b i t a n d w e c a n t h i n k a b o u t w h a t t h a t f u t u r e i s s o i n e t o b e . ”  
- B l i s h a B w o r m s l e y

In the late 2010s, Wormsley coined the phrase “There are Black

People in the Future” in response to the rapid gentrification of her Black neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania located on the unseated lands of the living Erie, Shawnee and Monongahela tribes. This single line of text making the claim to space out loud, seen from a single billboard sparked protests. After the billboard was removed by worried developers, Wormsley leveraged the censorship to create new pathways of resources to Black communities and luckily the billboard has been replicated globally, the censored phrase now readable on T-shirts from anywhere. After decades of “redlining” (a discriminatory housing policy intended to maintain de facto segregation) and after hundreds of years of chattel slavery which continues through myriad modes of social death, it is still problematic for Black people to claim their place on this land, land to which we were brought against our will.

Across two decades of her social practice as an artist and activist, Wormsley has worked to recharge the energy of communities through workshops like the one that led to ◌◌SM◌◌◌◌◌◌SC◌◌AP◌◌◌. In an earlier community-led project *River Roots Rainwater Project* at Liberty Green Park in Pittsburgh, Wormsley met with elders and youth to meditate on and create public sculpture in acknowledgment of the community’s relationship to water. One elder’s poetic inscription reminds us of what we can do with the power of language to create visions of abundance:

I c a n f l y a w a y w i t h w a t e r u n d e r m y f e e t  
- k i t e

I also dream of being in collaboration with wisdom carriers, both code makers and breakers of received modes of knowledge. We share the desire to source our power through our particular and intertwining genetic schemes to plot out sustainable possibilities for cross-world wayfinding. In my household growing up we were warned against alternative gods and made to feel wary of the spirit world. Outside of fantasizing about white Jesus on the cross sacrificing himself for the sins of the world, any attempts to communicate with Spirit (by scaring ourselves playing “Bloody Mary” or sliding a planchette with fingertips pressed tightly over a Ouija board) were strictly forbidden. In elementary school we were introduced to this genre of “dare to be scared” games in schoolyards, at afterschool daycare, or perhaps during random latchkey-kid hours while our parents were working. We were free to believe whatever we wanted before sitting down to do our homework which

was certainly intended to instill identification with empire.

Now, instead of inheriting nineteenth century European children’s games from the seized land of the U.S. suburbs, I fantasize about growing up at my West Indian Great Aunt Penny’s knee, her hands plaiting my hair in between frequent doses of cod liver oil. If sacred knowledge is not passed down at Her knee, due to the violent disruptions of ongoing European settler colonialism manifesting through new digital colonization of our diverse life-worlds, then how might ancestral knowledge still prepare the way from the past for the future through the semiotics of dreaming?

Together Wormsley and Kite show us how to gather and carry wisdom traditions, new and emergent, by reframing technology as the love of a multitude of techniques. Software and newer biohacking wetware companies attempting to build ethically might include protocols in their organizational mission for coding technology which is sensitively attuned to the history of racial modernity and the dangers of an anthropomorphism that dares to under credit non-human intelligences. However, the devil is a fantasy conjured to exclude, and the corporate proprietary codebase seems far more interested in racing to build a new slave class faster than ever.

“ e n c o u n t e r s w i t h t e c h a r e a s n e w a n d s t r a n g e a s t h e y a r e o l d a n d d u m b . ”  
- k i t e

However, Kite and Wormsley understand dream casting as an abundant technology carrying the responsibility of rootedness from elemental ego existing in harmony with water, fire, sky, and stone. These primordial elements, the very same ancient stuff of creation which makes it possible to build and run our devices, continue to direct both consciousness and receptivity making humans fellow conductors of the hum that intertwines our calibrated relays. Instead of imagining that our days are numbered due to the selfishness of a relative few, what if we lived as if we, instead, belonged to an overflowing wealth of intelligences: from the tree root blueprint mirroring our respiratory system, from the rocky river basins down to our mammalian ocean cousins, in the atmospheric life balancing microbial ecologies out to the greater cosmos through which our tiny blue dot of an earth spins.



## AT WAGNER GALLERY

For this version of *COSMOLOGYSCAPE*, Wormsley & Kite were invited to reflect on their methods of dreaming and making. This new body of work expands their research through a series of interconnected forms: a contextual diagram created with design studio Omnivore; furniture co-produced with Indigenous students from the University of Manitoba; and a “dream office” inviting visitors to rest, reflect, and enter the imaginative space of the project. Boston-area dreamers are also invited to share their dreams through the *Cosmologyscape* website, contributing to new works that continue to evolve this communal practice.

In partnership with the Wagner Gallery’s commitment to investing in artists’ visions, Kite and Wormsley are supported through a research grant by Wagner Foundation to work deeply within Boston-area communities to co-create a dream retreat and 2026 Summer Solstice public day of dreaming to envision a repeatable, rooted model for community-based dreamwork and technological collaboration.

## Wagner Foundation

**ALISHA B WORMSLEY** (Pittsburgh, PA) is an interdisciplinary artist and cultural producer whose work exists at the intersections of public art, film, craft, and social practice. Her work transforms public space and collective imagination through projects rooted in liberated futures, ritual, and community care. She is the founder of Sibyls Shrine: a residency for Black artists who M/other, creator of *There Are Black People in the Future*, co-creator of *COSMOLOGYSCAPE* with artist Kite exploring the power of collective dreaming. Her newest film-in-process, *Children of NAN: A Survival Guide*—which presents tutorials and survival strategies for future Black femmes while exploring their relationship to ritual, craft, and the natural world—has been awarded the Anonymous Was A Woman/NYFA Award, a Pittsburgh Foundation grant, and the Sundance Interdisciplinary Grant. Wormsley is a 2022 Guggenheim Fellow and is an Assistant Professor of Art in Social Practice at Carnegie Mellon University.



Boston dreamers are invited to submit their dreams to where dreams entries will transform into a digital quilt square, a tea recipe, and added to the animated collection of Boston dreams in the gallery.

**KITE** (Oglála Lakl’óta) is an artist, composer, and scholar whose work merges Lakl’óta knowledge systems with performance, sound, sculpture, and computational media. She holds a PhD from Concordia University, Montréal. Kite is Director of the Wihanble S’a Center for Indigenous AI, a National Endowment for the Humanities–designated Humanities Research Center at Bard College, where she is Distinguished Artist in Residence and Assistant Professor of American & Indigenous Studies. She is also Co-PI and Co-Director of the international Abundant Intelligences Research Program. Major projects include *COSMOLOGYSCAPE* (Creative Time, 2022–24), *Dreaming with AI* (Institute of American Indian Arts Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, 2025), *List Projects 31: Kite* (MIT List Visual Arts Center, 2025), and *Wičháłpi Owihanjke Waníča Kiŋ* (Infinite Collapsing Star) (Bockley Gallery, 2025). Her work has been featured internationally at the Whitney Biennial, São Paulo Biennial, and the 14th Shanghai Biennale. Kite is an enrolled citizen of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and lives in Catskill, NY.

Artificial Intelligences research conducted by Mark Meagher, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, Parker Prince (Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation), Abundant Intelligences Research Assistant, and Jory Thomas (Red River Michif, Manitoba Métis Federation), Abundant Intelligences Research Assistant.

Welcome to *Cosmologyscape* is also made possible by Rebecca Cosenza, Wihanble S’a Center Manager, and Mauro Tosarelli, textile design assistant.

Curated by Abigail Satinsky, Program Officer & Curator, with Maggie Wong, Gallery Coordinator. *Cosmologyscape* was first presented as a public art project by Creative Time in 2024, curated by Diya Vij, with Arantza Orengo, project manager.

Open by appointment only, free to the public  
Viewing hours:  
Wednesdays, 12-5pm  
Schedule a visit with [galler@wfound.org](mailto:galler@wfound.org)  
Location: 485 Massachusetts Ave, 2nd Floor, Cambridge, MA 02139