Two Voices
Interview with Angela Detanico & Rafael Lain
by Sam Steverlynck

For the past two decades, the French–Brazilian artistic duo Angela Detanico & Rafael Lain have been working on a coherent oeuvre which poetically translates a variety of linguistic, scientific and meteorological findings. At Tlön Projects' behest, they will now, for the first time, present a performance with a comprehensive staging environ-ment which brings together various connected works. The presentation will constitute a framework within Tlön Projects' Satellite Programme and its annual coopera-tion with ROZENSTRAAT – a rose is a rose is a rose in Amsterdam.

Sam Steverlynck: *Two Voices* is the name of this exhibition, but also of a series of associated works and a performance. The series' point of departure is an animation. Can you tell us more about the genesis of this work?

Angela Detanico: It basically started out as a piece of sound art. We wanted to work with the various solar and lunar cycles. People sometimes think the lunar and solar cycles are each other's opposites, but that isn't true. As the sun rising indicates the start of the day, people view the moon as the heavenly body of night. However, there are nights on which the moon isn't visible and times when you can see the moon during the day. The moon's cycle isn't synchronous with that of the sun. By following the two cycles for a while we wanted to make a sound piece on the basis of the two heavenly bodies' behaviour, give them different voices and create a dialogue characterised by overlap and silence. Then came the idea to visually translate that dialogue.

Rafael Lain: As the work was based on astronomical tables, it was important for us to work around time. We enjoy working with ratios and equivalents. So we came up with the concept of compressing a day into a minute, which created the timescale for the piece. We also used the duration of quotidian solar and lunar cycles to lay down the sound frequency for every part, played at a ratio of 1 Hertz per minute. If, on a certain day, the sun rises at 07:30 and sets at 19:30, the cycle of 12 hours or 720 minutes is played at a frequency of 720 Hertz for 30 seconds. A long summer's day, for example, on which the sun was up for 900 minutes — 900 Hertz will be played for 37.5 seconds. As the cycles change every day, every part of the sun or the moon therefore creates subtle sound variations in the piece. We echoed this minimal sound work in two simple images repre-senting the sun and the moon which appear when we hear the accompanying sound. The sun is a *dégradé* occupying the whole image and representing an entire day. The moon is a white disc that travels the sky. An iconic, graphic image.

SS: The animation also led to **28 Lunes** and **365 Soles** that are also on show here. Could you tell me more about these works?

AD: Like *Two Voices*, both were inspired by our interest in how nature is scientifically observed and described. In *Two Voices* the simple sounds and images employed reveal the complex lunar and solar variations. This sur-prises a lot of people as they view the solar and lunar cycles as simple and binary, even though we experi-ence their variation on a daily basis. Scientific texts were used to constitute images of the sun and moon in **28 Lunes** and **365 Suns**. In **28 Lunes**, 28 texts are displayed in moon shaped formats. It starts as a single curved line that defines itself before blurring back to leave room for the next text in the following moon shape, thus evolving from first to last quarter. The text is from **Sidereus Nuncius**, the treatise written in 1610 by Galileo Galilei in which he records his initial observations of the moon through a telescope. Alongside its obvious

scientific importance, it is also very moving as Galileo was very aware and even emotionally invested in the fact that he was the first human to be able to observe the moon in this way. *365 Soles* is the counterpart to *28 Lunes*. It displays 365 pages from the *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*, the 1543 book in which Nicolaus Copernicus proposed the heliocentric theory as an alternative to the then commonly accepted geocentric model of the universe. We provided the original text in Latin and depicted the word 'sol' — Latin for sun — in the centre of a disc-shaped block of text. As the 365 pages succeed one another, the audience sees the text light up with the word 'sol' in the centre of the composition.

SS: You have created various performances in the past. Is this the first time you will have this piece performed by two people reading aloud from texts about the sun and the moon? And, if so, was that done as part of a staging environment in which visitors can view *28 Lunes* and *365 Soles* beforehand or afterwards?

AD: We did this performance in Paris 2012 during the exhibition of the installation *Two Voices* at Galerie Martine Aboucaya. We had opted to turn that animation into a performance because we wanted to continue the solar-lunar dialogue in real words. We looked up texts in our library which featured the sun and then the moon. We have a thing for collecting books and texts. In Paris we read the texts ourselves. This will be the first time we have cooperated with actors and frame the arrangement with the preceding and posterior projection of *28 Lunes* and *365 Soles*.

SS: I am impressed how your works often organically originate from preceding ones. For instance, you will be introducing a new series of prints — the continuation of an existing series — with new textual excerpts which will be read aloud at this performance.

AD: That's correct. These prints convert the duration of a day into the format of a single page. The sun is always in the centre of the page. When the moon is above the sun you have two types of text, one above the other. How we use the score for the video is easily comprehensible visually. Using these words we can also see how the video was structured.

RL: Instead of working with minutes as we did in the animation, we here use characters. A whole day is the same as one page or 1,440 characters. When the sun rises is central to the text. This changes according to the seasons. The lunar texts were printed in italics on top of those about the sun.

SS: In your work text often becomes a symbol, as it does in *28 Lunes* and *365 Soles*. This is only one of the many examples in which your education harmonically comes together as proved by your fascination with typography, fonts and the idea of language as being symbolic.

RL: We started collaborating in 2002. Angela studied linguistics and semiotics at the University in São Paulo and I studied graphic design and typography. Our research is about where text and image overlap. To us, typography is an important condenser.

AD: It is important to us to bring the two together. This determines the course of our research. We are both fascinated by language and literature. These are very important to us. They constitute the basis for our endeavours.

SS: Your work often relates to the passing of time and the accompanying notion of transience. There are five bouquets on display. Are they vanitas symbols?

AD: Yes, but to us flowers also function as a notational system. Our work often revolves around fonts. We also often utilise our own writing system or coded language to encompass reality. Here we used the relationship between the order of letters of the alphabet and figures. A is 1, B is 2, etc. Here our point of departure was the word 'cycle' that we translated into bouquets. The first of which has three flowers (third letter of the alphabet, C), the second 25 (Y), the third three again (C), the fourth 12 (L) and the last bouquet five (E).

SS: This isn't the first time you have devised your own alphabet to review the relationship between a word and a symbol, is it?

RL: Early on, we employed pictographic, abstract typefaces. We shaped words by stacking objects in alphabetical order. One element is the letter A, two the letter B, etc. In this way we could create words by stacking books, boxes or sugar cubes. These were our first spatial installations that consisted of typographic systems. We then started utilising existing systems such as Braille, with which we created a sort of script by connecting its tactile dots with lines of light, rendering the characters' invisible structure visible. We examined the activities of reading and writing by working with sculpture, installations, sound, etc., but also by expanding into various other associated domains such as, for instance, cartography. *Time Zone Type*, for example, employed a system that was developed by Nathaniel Bowditch, an American mathematician, astronomer and navigator. He devised a system whereby he combined the letters of the alphabet with time zones. This is very practical for a navigation system. We used this system to create images and compile maps that constitute words.

AD: For example, the Letter A stands for the time zone the Netherlands, France, etc. are in, while Z represents the time zone for England and Portugal. If you then write a word, you utilise the various levels of the time zones. Using this combination featuring various parts of the world allows you to create a new map, a new cartography even. For example, we wrote the term 'terra incognita', which created a very unique map, with the various parts of the world in a very different order.

SS: You use all sorts of graphical representations, graphs and tables — such as maps, weather reports, the constellations of stars — that you translate into your own, poetic cartography.

RL: We are interested in different ways of depicting the world graphically as well as in things you cannot see. Take a map of the world, for instance. We can experience the world, however such a map is merely an abstract shape. Or the way time is represented by a clock. Again, this is a graphic representation. The same applies to musical scores. We use such codes to create images.

AD: The world is very complex. Humanity uses science to try and understand it. We both believe deeply in science. However, at the same time, it is a creation of reality, a fiction. We can use science's codes to under–stand the world, but simultaneously we can also try to view the world in a different way. That is the poetic approach because some things can only be understood through poetry. We need to find the balance between intellect and imagination.

RL: We often work in alphabetical order. That is fixed, but it is basically a random convention that the Letter A is the first letter in the alphabet and Z the last.

AD: That is a good example of a convention everyone accepts! We construct our reality on that convention which enables us to exchange knowledge. However, it remains merely a convention. Science is a means of understanding the world, but so is poetry. It's about combining the best of both worlds.

Two Voices
Angela Detanico & Rafael Lain

09.12.2022 – 11.12.2022

Actors:
Annabelle Hinam and Thor Louwerens

Opening Times:
Friday to Saturday 13:00—17:00
Sunday 10:00—11:00

Performance Times:
09.12.2022 17:00
10.12.2022 14:00 and 17:00
11.12.2022 11:00

A ticket for attending a performance is required.
You can book a ticket here: tlonprojects.stager.nl/web/tickets

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Translation:
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Location:
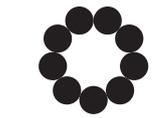ROZENSTRAAT – a rose is a rose is a rose
Rozenstraat 59, Amsterdam

For more information and images: enter@tlonprojects.org

Tlön Projects' *imaginary collection* includes works from various private collections. It constitutes the point of departure for Tlön Projects' Satellite Programme.