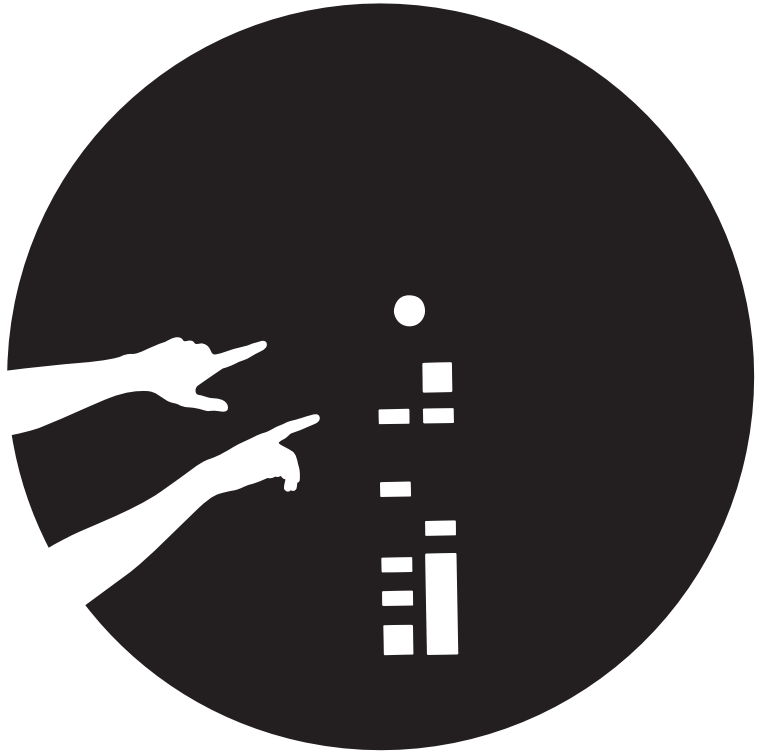


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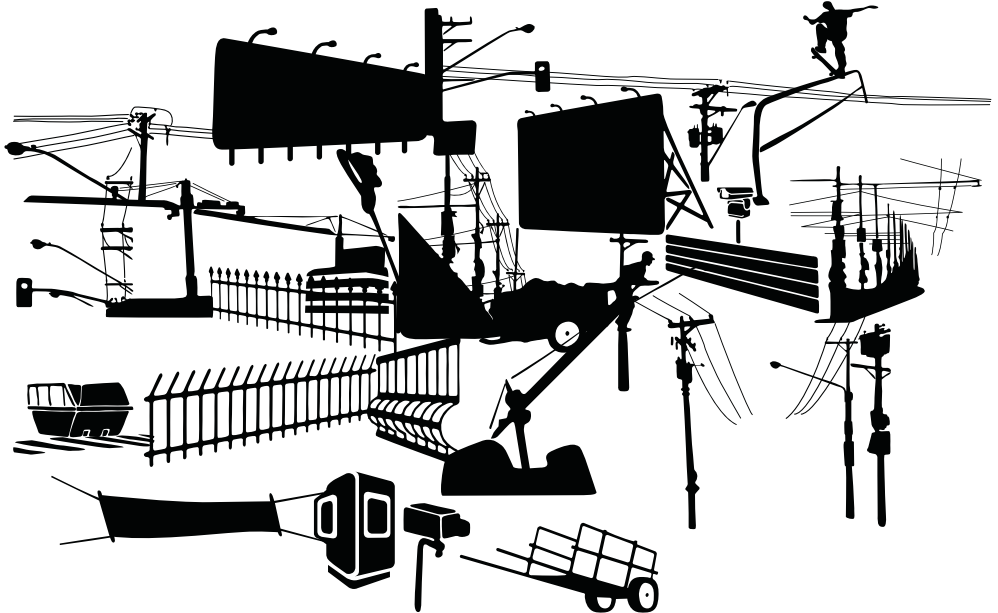
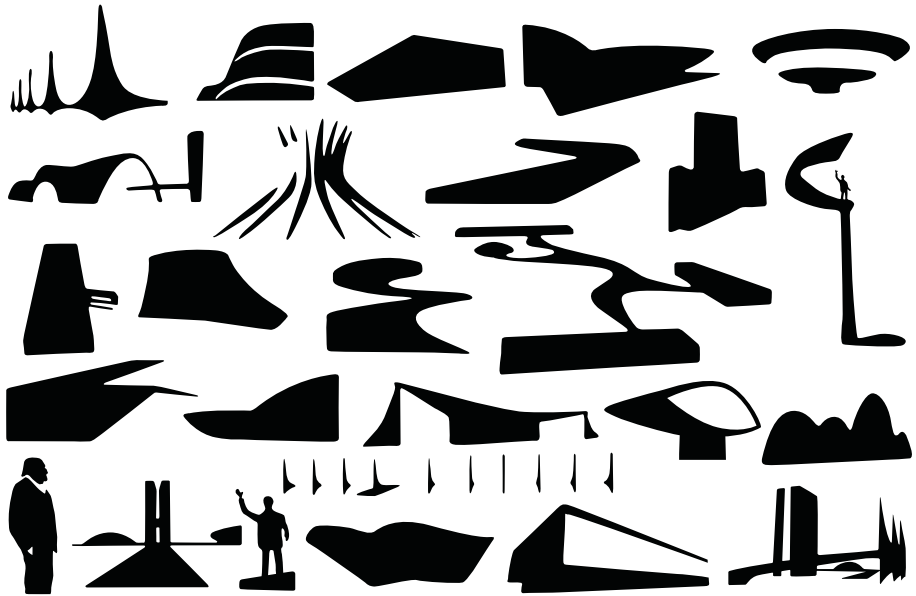


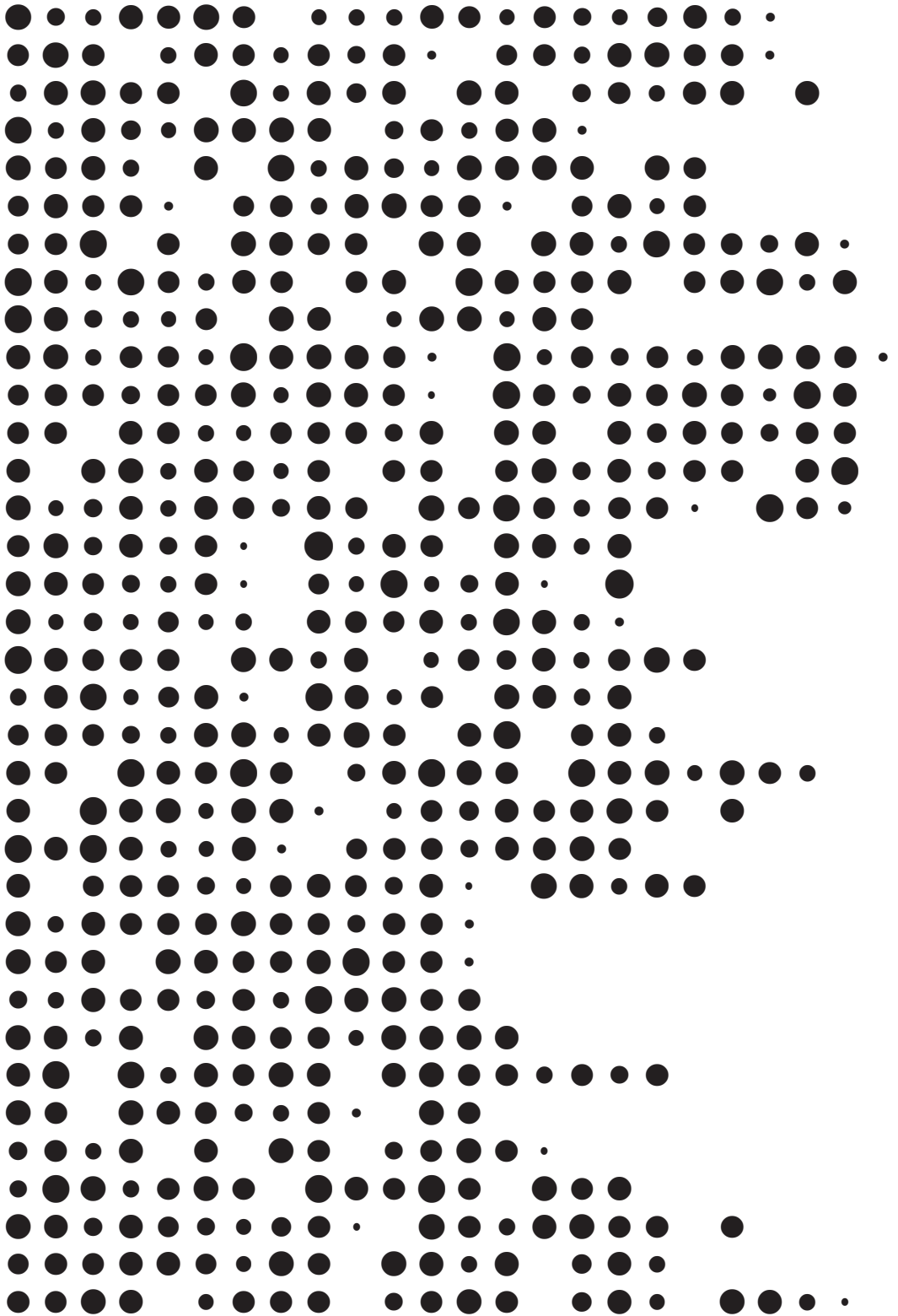
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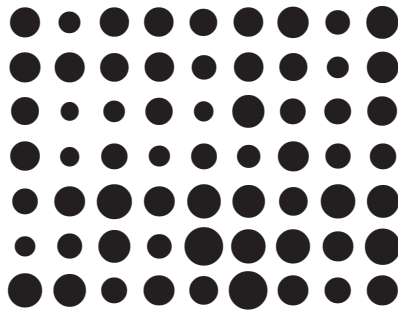
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HELVETICA CONCENTRATED		1.05
STAR NAMES	1.04	1.12
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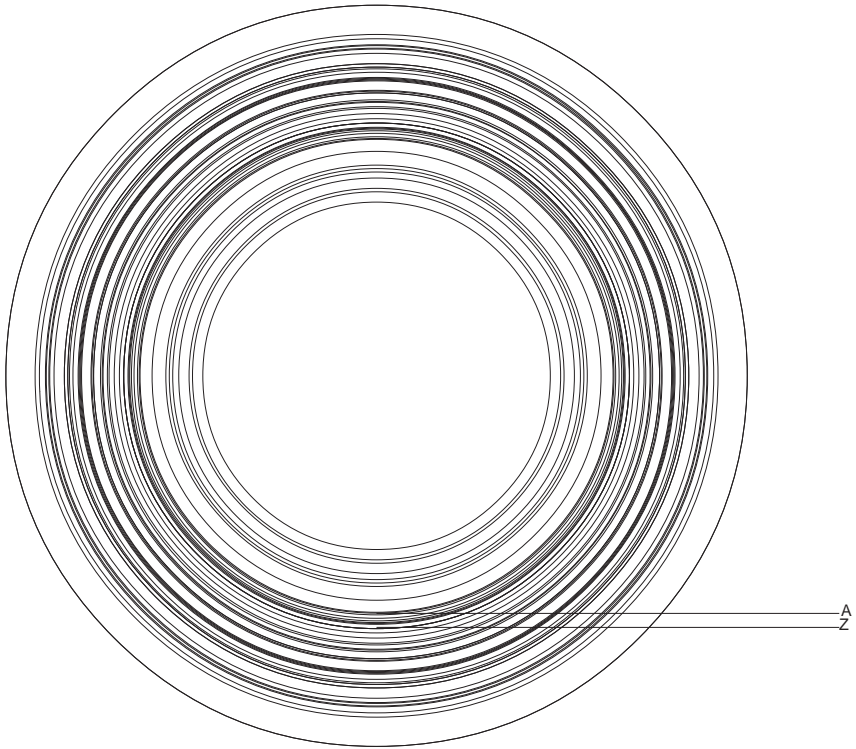




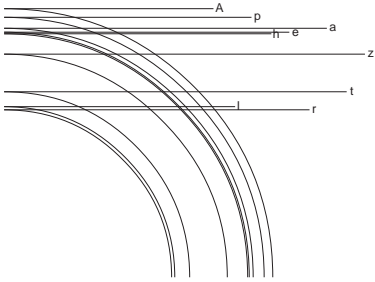
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R S T U V W X Y Z



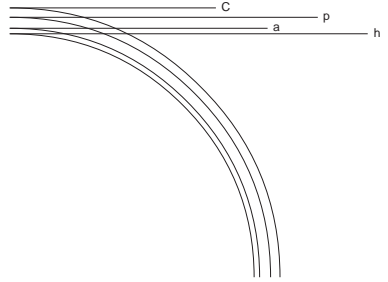
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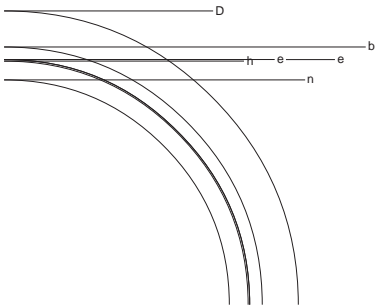
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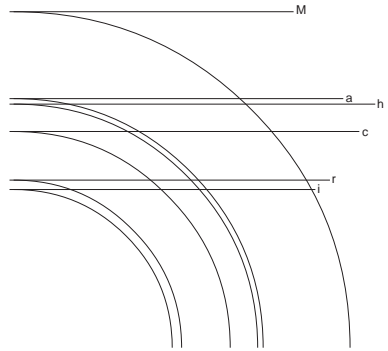
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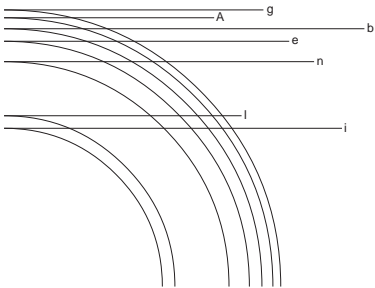
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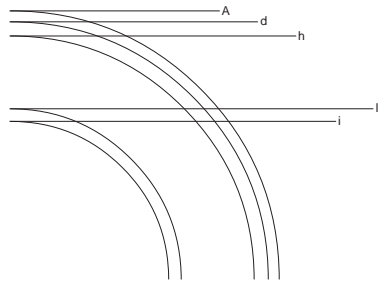
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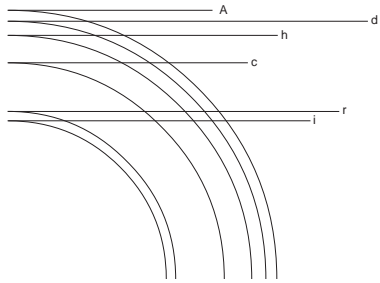
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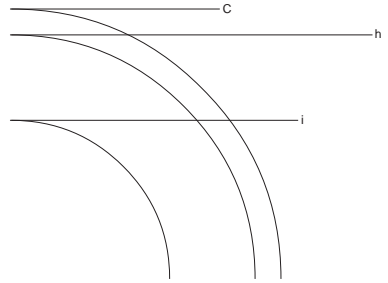
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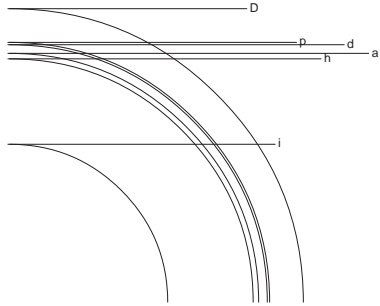
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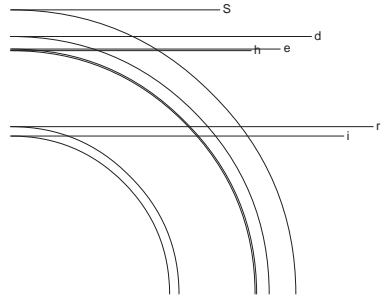
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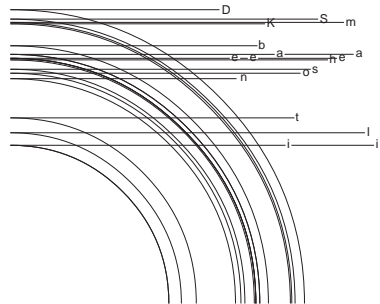
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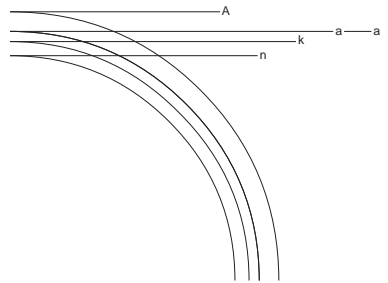
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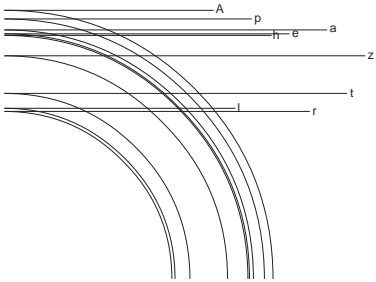
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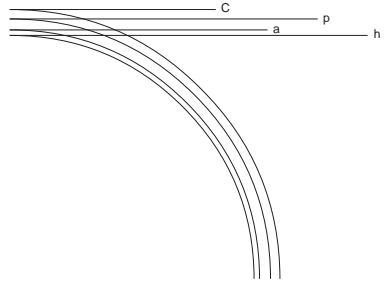
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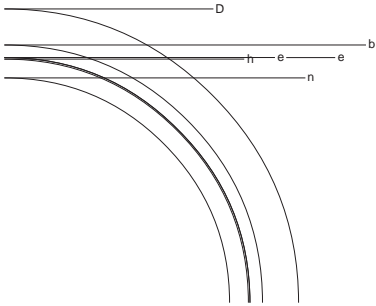
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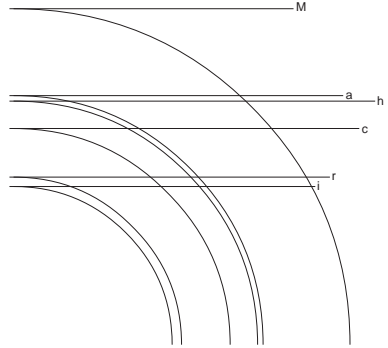
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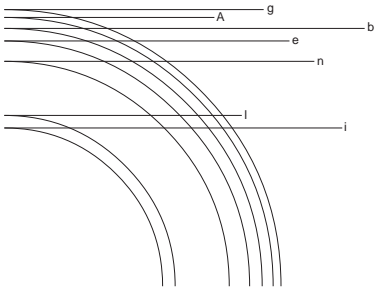
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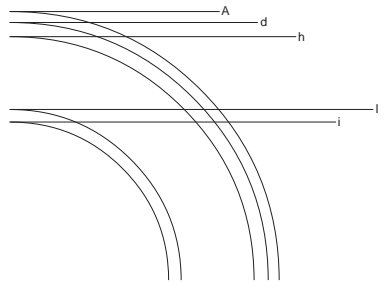
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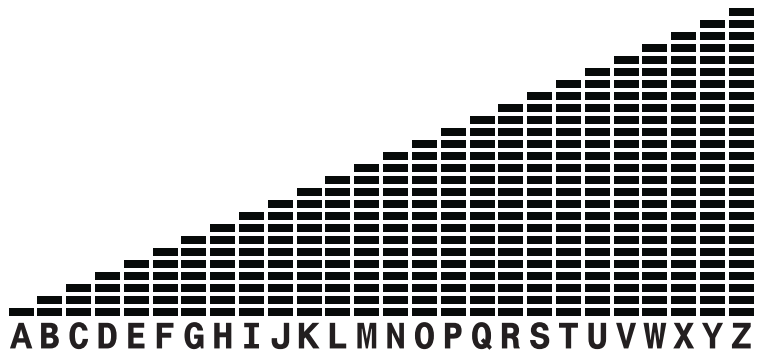


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Caph	Merope	Wasat
Algenib	Alcyone	Aludra
Deneb Kaitos Shemali	Atlas	Gomeisa
Ankaa	Pleione	Castor
Shedir	Menkib	Procyon
Diphda	Zaurak	Pollux
Achird	Beid	Azmidiske
Cih	Hyadum I	Naos
Marfak	Hyadum II	Suhail al Muhlif
Dheneb	Opik	Tegmen
Mirach	Ain	Altarf
Adhil	Aldebaran	Alsciaukat
Ruchbah	Theemim	Avior
Polaris	Sceptrum	Muscida
Achernar	Hassaleh	Al Minliar al Shuja
Torcularis Septentrionalis	Al Anz	Asellus Borealis
Baten Kaitos	Haedi	Asellus Australis
Segin	Cursa	Talitha
Metallah	Capella	Acubens
Mesarthim	Rigel	Alsu hail
Sharatan	Bellatrix	Miaplacidus
Head of Hydrus	Alnath	Turais
Alrishah	Nihal	Al Minliar al Asad
Almaak	Mintaka	Alphard
Hamal	Thabit	Alterf
Mira	Arneb	Subra
Kaffaljidhma	Meissa	Ras Elased Australis
Miram	Nair al Saif	Ras Elased Borealis
Angetenar	Alnilam	Regulus
Azha	Alnitak	Adhafera
Gorgonea Secunda	Phaet	Tania Borealis
Menkar	Saiph	Algieba
Acamar	Wezn	Tania Australis
Gorgonea Tertia	Betelgeuse	Praecipua
Algol	Menkalinan	Alkes
Gorgonea Quarta	Propus	Merak
Botein	Furud	Dubhe
Fornacis	Tejat Posterior	Zosma
Zibal	Murzim	Chort
Mirphak	Canopus	Alula Australis
Atik	Alhena	Alula Borealis
Rana	Mebstuta	Gianfar
Celaeno	Alzirr	Zavijah
Electra	Sirius	Phad
Taygeta	Adara	Alchiba
Maia	Mekbuda	Minkar
Asterope	Muliphen	Megrez

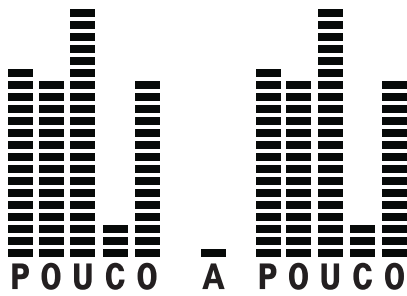
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Zaniah	Jabbah	Albiero
Acrux	Yed Prior	Alsafi
Algorab	Yed Posterior	Sham
Gacrux	Alniyat	Tarazed
Porrima	Kajam	Altair
Mimosa	Antares	Terebellum
Alioth	Kornephoros	Alshain
Auva	Marfic	Prima Giedi
Cor Caroli	Atria	Secunda Giedi
Vindemiatrix	Arrakis	Alshat
Diadem	Sabik	Dabih
Bgh	Aldhibah	Peacock
Mizar	Rasalgethi	Sadr
Spica	Sarin	Ruchba
Alcor	Lesath	Deneb Dulfim
Heze	Maasym	Rotanev
Alkaid	Shaula	Sualocin
Mufrid	Rastaban	Deneb
Agena	Sargas	Gienah Cygni
Menkent	Kuma	Albali
Thuban	Rasalhague	Kitalpha
Asellus Tertius	Cebalrai	Alderamin
Syrma	Dsiban	Sadalsuud
Arcturus	Grumium	Alfirk
Asellus Secundus	Nash	Nashira
Asellus Primus	Yildun	Azelfafage
Seginus	Kaus Meridionalis	Enif
Rigel Kentaurus	Kaus Australis	Garnet Star
Rijl al Awwa	Alathfar	Deneb Algedi
Izar	Kaus Borealis	Al Dhanab
Zuben Elgenubi	Vega	Sadalmelik
Merga	Sheliak	Alkurhah
Kocab	Ain al Rami	Alnair
Zuben Elakribi	Nunki	Baham
Nekkar	Alya	Ancha
Brachium	Deneb el Okab	Sadalachbia
Zuben Elskemali	Sulafat	Al Kalb al Rai
Pherkad Minor	Ascella	Situla
Alkalurops	Polaris Australis	Homam
Pherkad	Deneb el Okab	Matar
Ed Asich	Alfecca Meridiana	Sadalbari
Nusakan	Albaldah	Skat
Zuben Elakrab	Aladfar	Fomalhaut
Alphekka	Nodus Secundus	Fum al Samakah
Unukalhai	Arkab Prior	Scheat
Dschubba	Arkab Posterior	Salm
Graffias	Rukbat	Markab



ANTES DE MAIS NADA

L A I S S E T O M B E R

COISAS PARA CONTAR



UNA VEZ MAS



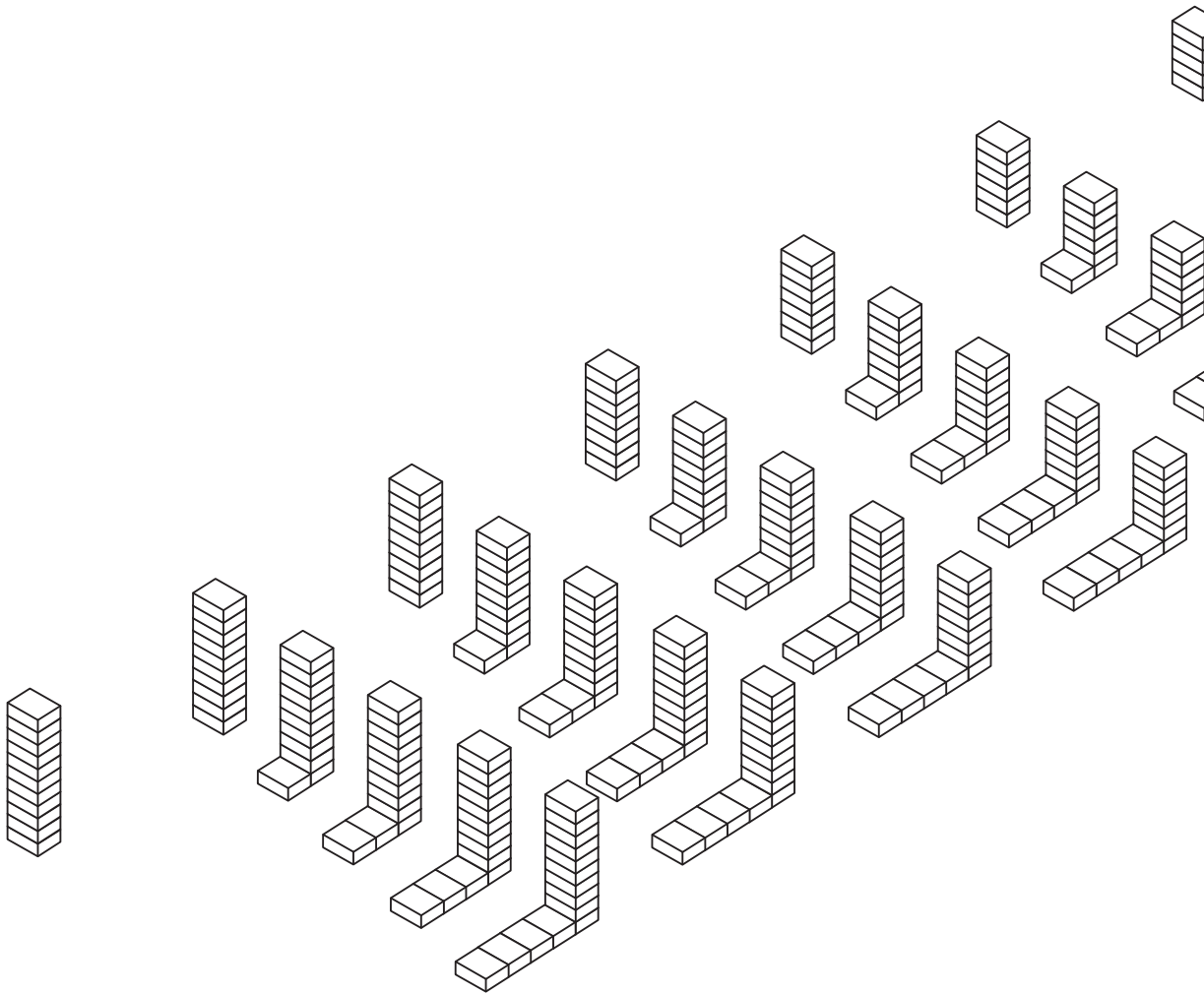
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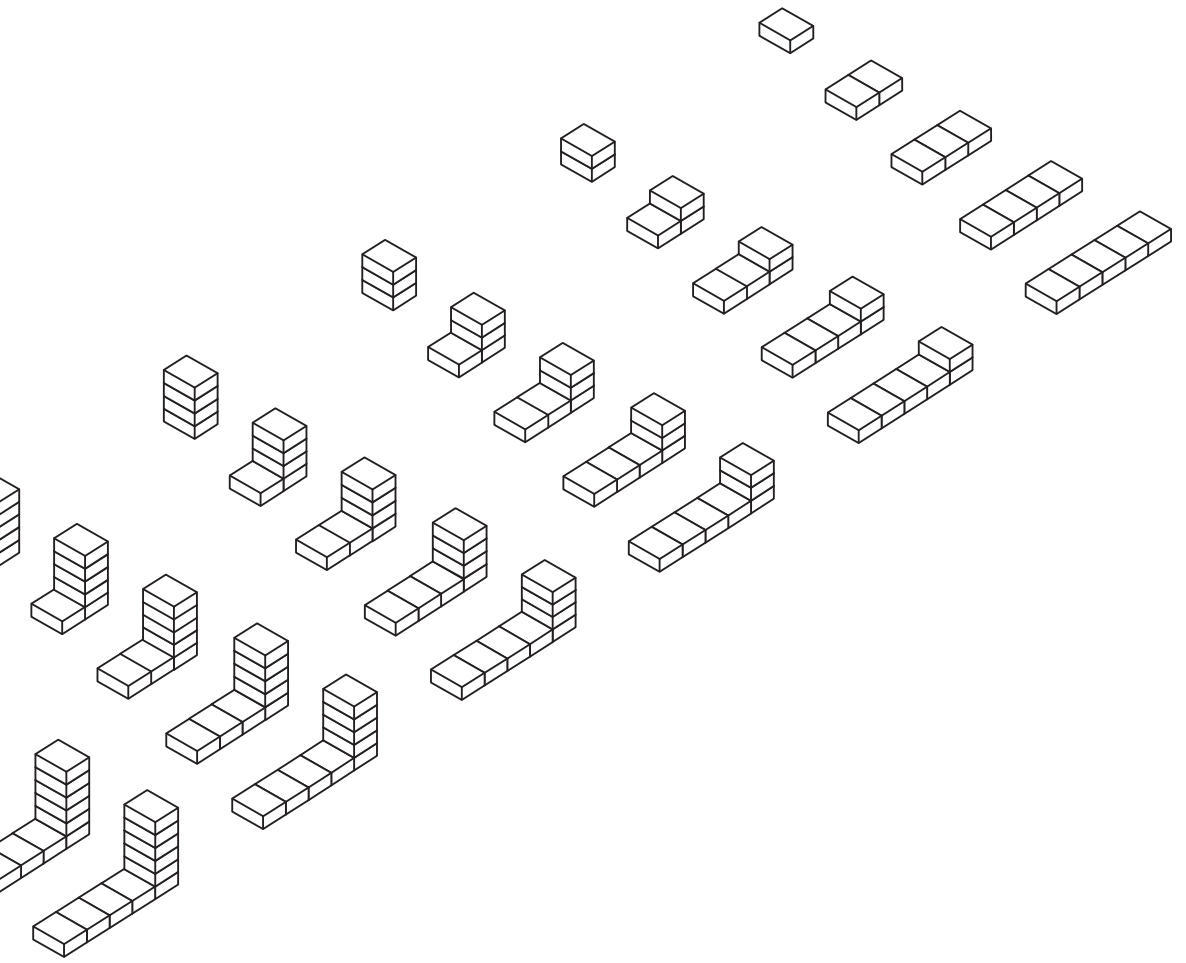
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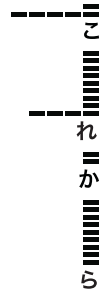
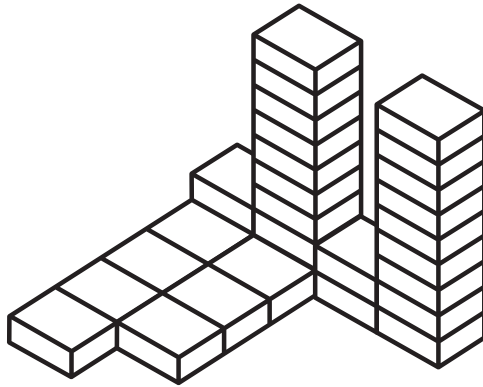
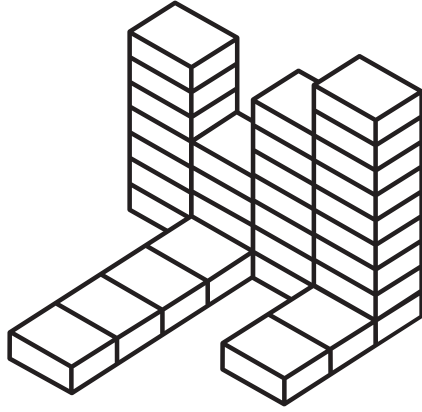
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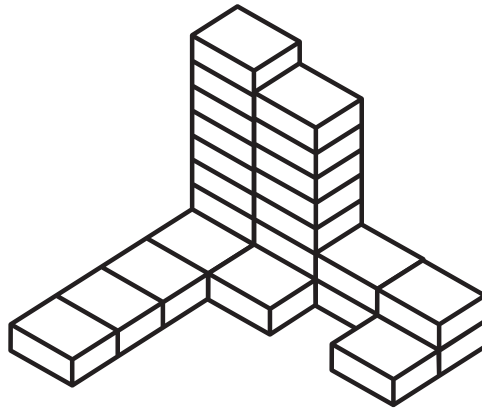
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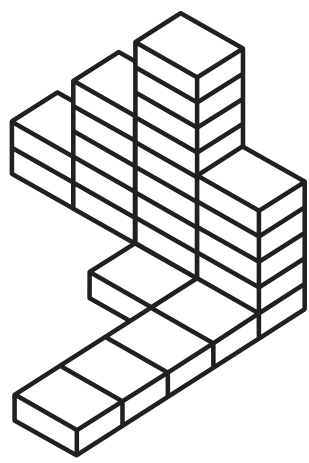








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THE WORLD JUSTIFIED,



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CENTERED,



RIGHT-ALIGNED



MZ FQE PQ ODUEFA
LYEPD OP NCTDEZ
KXDOC NO MBSCDY
JWCNB MN LARBCX
IVBMA LM KZQABW
HUALZ KL JYPZAV
GTZKY JK IXOYZU
FSYJX IJ HWNXYT
ERXIW HI GVMWXS
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BOUFT EF DSJTUP
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UHN YM XY WLCMNI
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SFLWK VW UJAKLG
REKVJ UV TIZJKF
QDJUI TU SHYIJE
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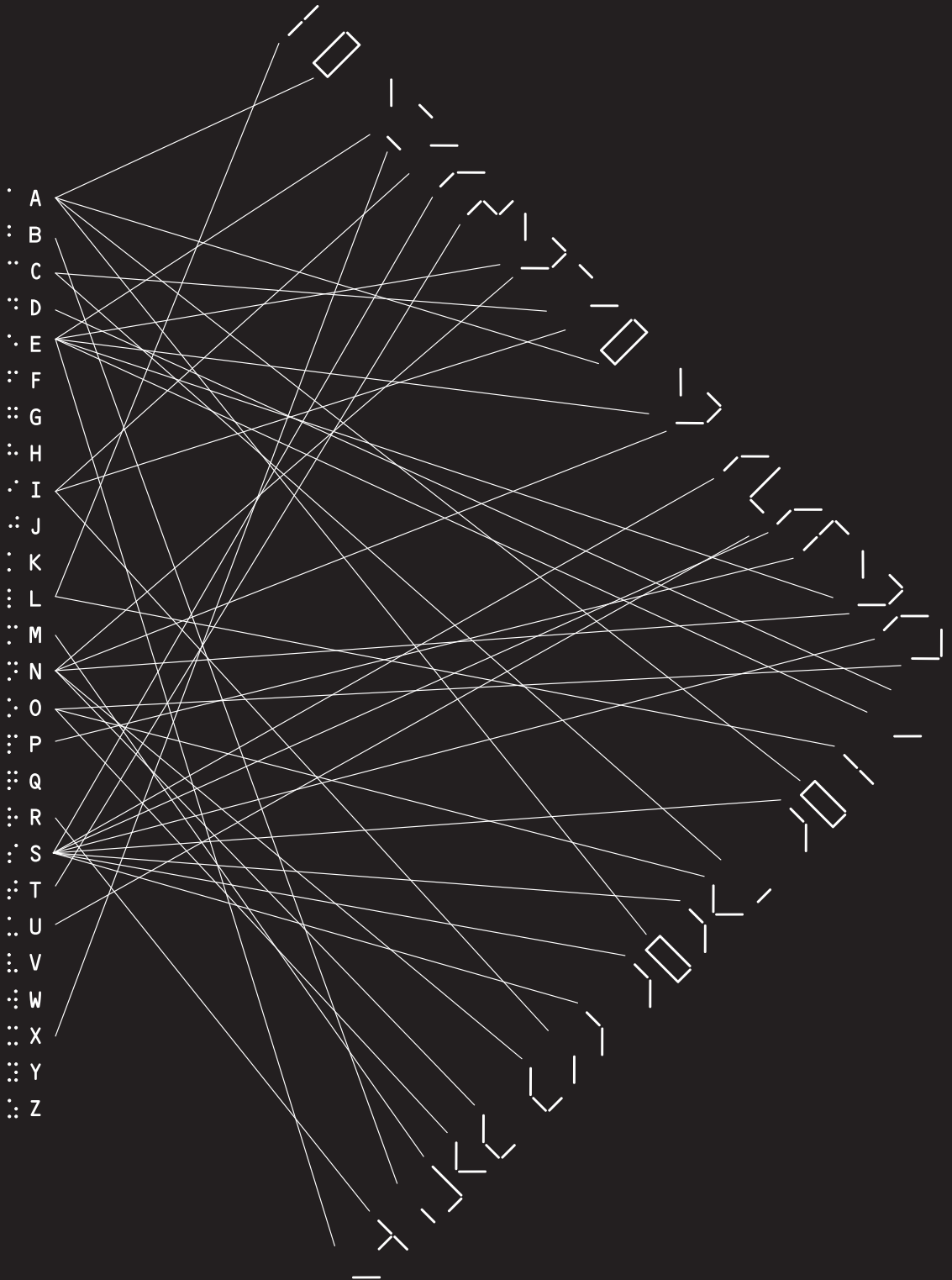
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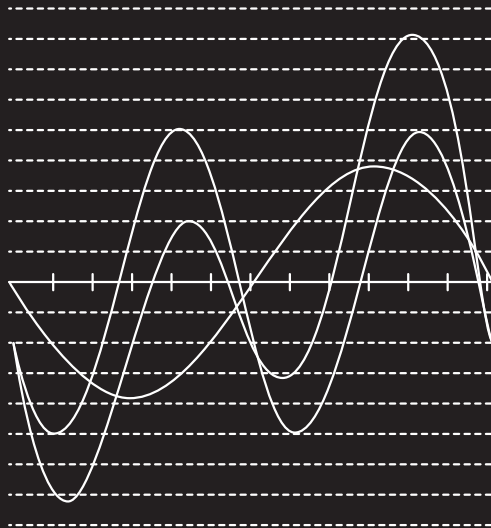
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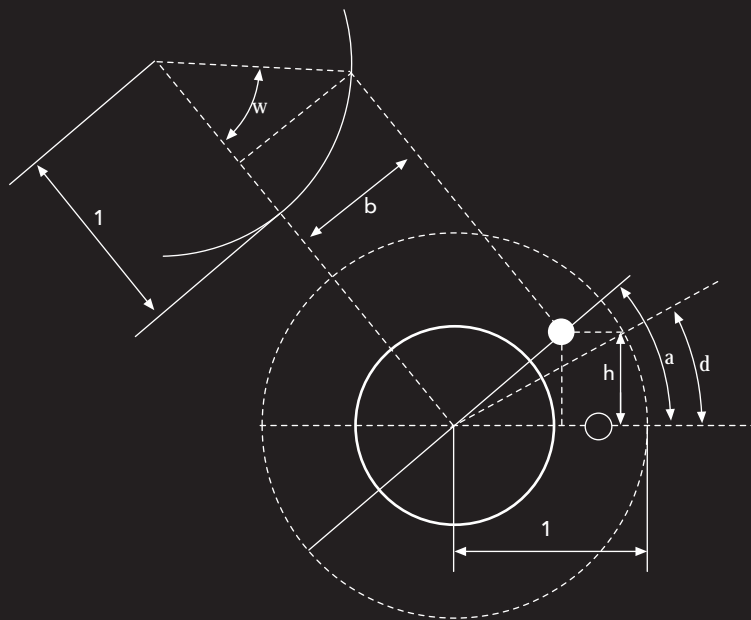
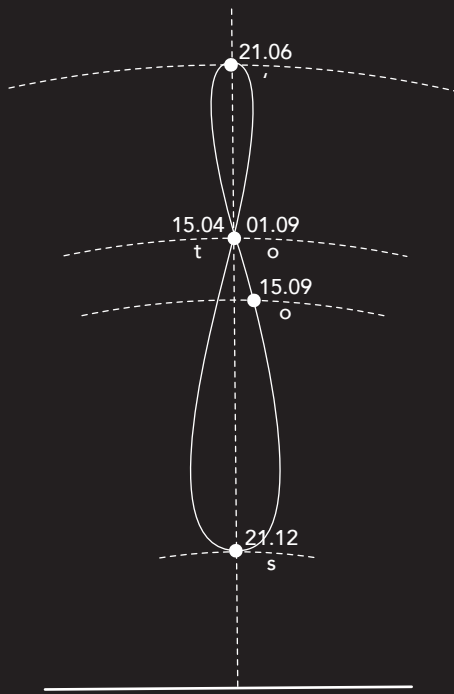
échappe à la syntaxe, remise en axe, avoir pour tourner autour or, autrement (en
après, entre-temps, la syntaxe du temps, du temps après l'air, se
après, une lettre, une lettre après l'autre, une autre : mot, pour

anagramme) mettre à nu, le silence... après tout, l'instant d'après, la lune après la lune, le soleil après la lune (en même temps) et puis, ici: un point e

e

•

$\frac{15}{12}$



M Y X W V U T S R Q P O N Z

-12



+12 -11 -10 -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0



A

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C

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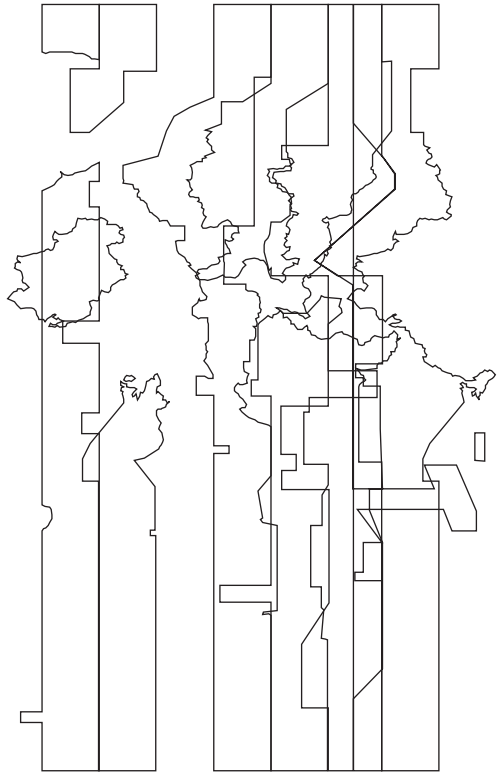
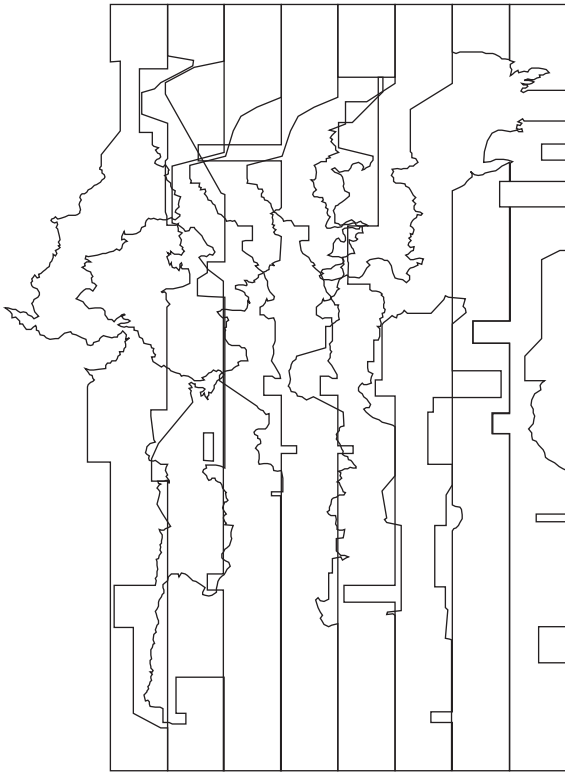
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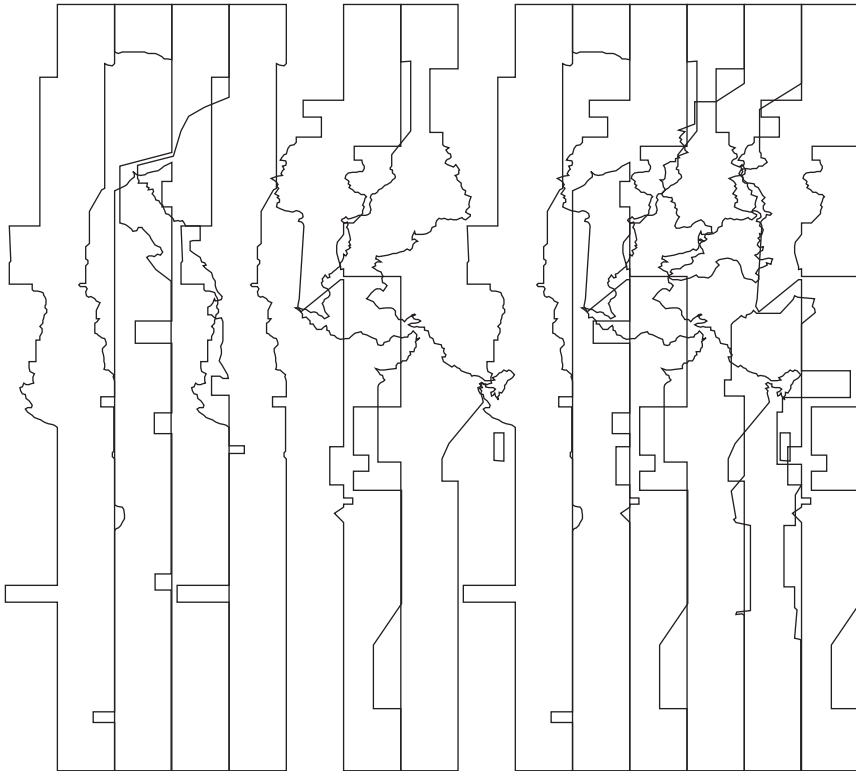
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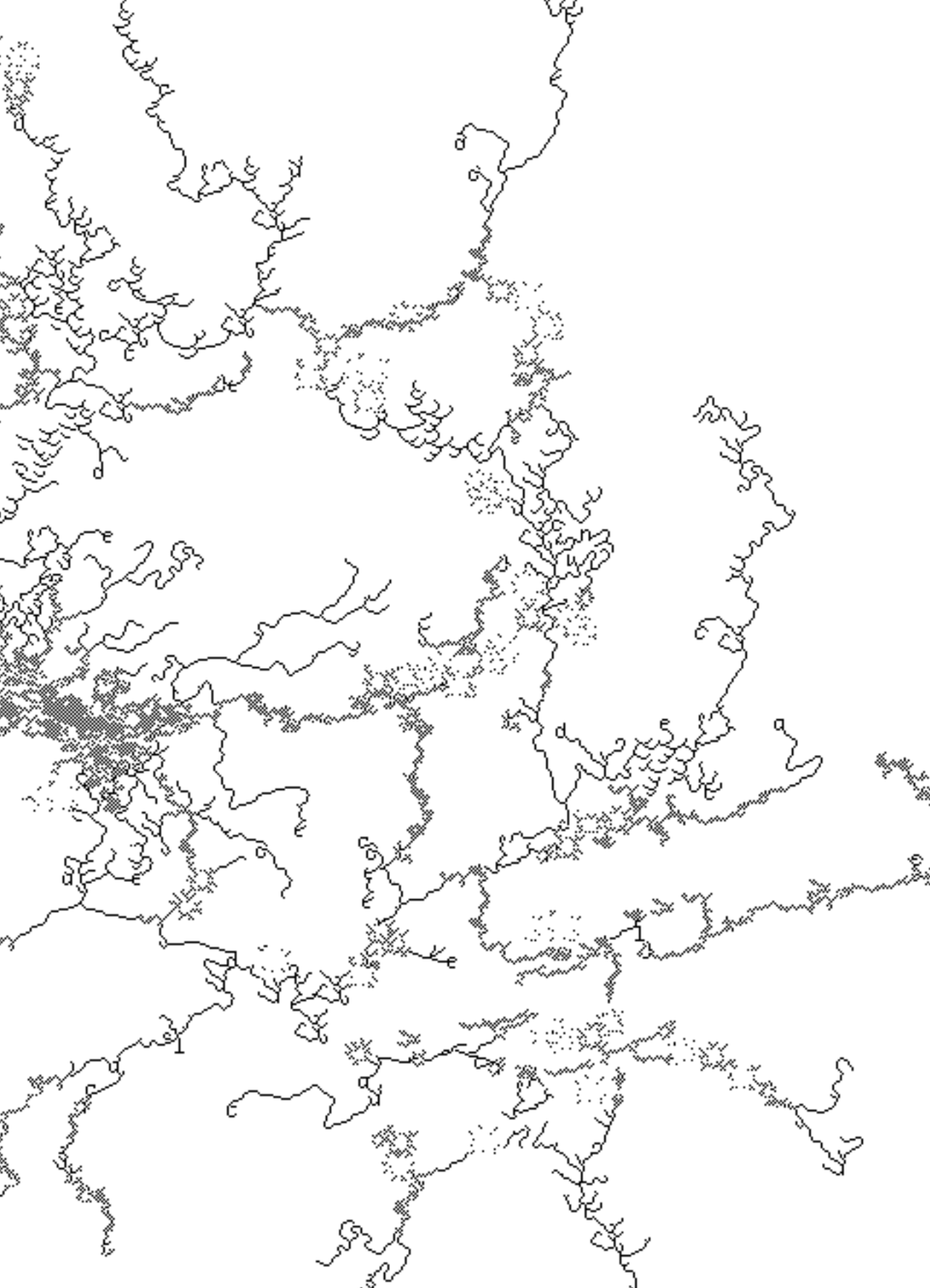
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angela
detanico

rafael
lain

AFTER
UTOPIA
art in
the age of
information
technology

michael
asbury

Shifting continents according to the logic of word processing; the gradual disintegration of the colour green from a satellite image of the Amazon; landscape accelerated by its own stillness; a question, a sign of bewilderment perhaps, appears as if by magic amidst an undecipherable bombardment of written information; the city as text; text as a collection of objects; the written word that dissolves with time; the single letter collapsed onto itself.

Fantastic as such descriptions may seem, the work of Angela Detanico and Rafael Lain is immediately familiar to us since its imagery belongs to a large extent to the everyday language of information technology. Yet this immediacy is perhaps deceitful. Behind their visual concision is an impressive erudition that is manifested through a series of layers of cultural references and general historical and philosophical associations. This essay follows some of these citations while proposing others. Inadvertently this process of exploration has produced a labyrinth-like narrative whose digressions resemble ramifications and bifurcations. It presents nevertheless a number of intersections, enough I hope to do justice to the conceptual and procedural coherence of Detanico & Lain's practice.

Working along the interstices of fine art and graphic design, in addition to possessing a strong collaborative drive, Detanico & Lain have developed a practice based on the playful displacement of meaning. If the language of the information age becomes their tool, the couple's wit allows them to avoid the seduction of the medium, where creative advancement becomes reliant on the ever more complex use of technology. They are in this sense closer to Niklas Luhmann than Marshall McLuhan, since while exploring the particularities of the medium, the idiosyncrasies of individual software programmes, their creative vision arises from systematic procedures. The couple's ability to transform systems into poetic visual games remains in fact not exclusively medium-specific. Being process-led, the work may equally involve the folding of cardboard boxes as it can appropriate a peculiar feature of a software programme or propose elegant albeit inoperable typographies. As opposed to an interest in cutting-edge technology, the software used and/or referred to in their work is today so much part of our daily lives. It is precisely this fact that allows our understanding of the irony at play in the artists' lateral use of such programmes. They have therefore an ambivalent relation to the legacy of Brazilian pioneers of the digital era such as Waldemar Cordeiro and his *Arteônica* of the early 1970s, and Eduardo Kac who since the 1980s has been at the forefront of the exploration of the relation between art and technology. However, Cordeiro's use of early computers and the development of code as a means to further his research into the nature of mark-making, the art object and its process of creation, seems to have more in common with Detanico & Lain than Kac's interest in the advancement of art through technological means.

th faded leaves, with scraps of words long
read this piece one must leave my mind eyes, like
settling of hats and of gales of racing water
in the Atlantic, when perhaps only the spray
cks the surface, or suddenly the waves appear
rs a monster. One must put aside antipathies
ies and not interrupt. One must have patient
care and let the dip be enough, whether of spide
t on a leaf or the chink of water in som

THE WAVES
2005, animation,
colour, silent,
32 sec (loop)

64 If having the computer as their principal tool makes them inextricably of the present, they do not hesitate to invoke history. Literary references are frequent in their work and vary from ancient history to 20th century classics. For example, writing over an existing text, which is a form of code making, becomes the process behind *The Waves* (2005). This video-loop was produced by animating the pages of Virginia Woolf's novel, which gives the work its title. Detanico & Lain compose the phrase 'what if suddenly nothing else moves?' by painstakingly photographing every single page in the book where the constituent words appear. The pages are then animated, flowing past the eye at an unreadable pace, that is, with the exception of one word that remains still and centred on the screen. The pace, the flow of words, is determined by the number of times each word appears in the original text, so that by coincidence or intent, the rhythm gradually decreases as if attempting to answer the question posed, or perhaps replicating the loss of momentum of a wave as it hits the sandy shores of a beach, or further still, proposing a visual parallel to the flow in Woolf's own narrative. Whichever the case, the question of course can only exist by the very negation of what it requests.

LE JOURNAL DÉCOUVERT
2005, felt tip marker
on newspaper,
147 x 272 cm

The Waves combines the processes behind two other works that the couple had previously produced: *Le Journal Découvert* (2005) and *Flatland* (2003). In *Le Journal Découvert* the artists composed

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ce

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éloquent

mystérieuse

des

mots

disparaît



FLATLAND
2003, animation,
colour, sound,
7 min 36 sec

a sentence, a poetic intervention, from words found on a series of front pages from *Le Monde* newspaper. The rest of the sheet was then blacked-out with a felt-tip marker. In a reverse process from that used by the censors during the military regime in Brazil from the 1960s to the 1980s, rather than obscuring information (even the blacked-out section of the pages remains readable – albeit with some difficulty) Detanico & Lain's process reveals content beyond that which was originally intended. This serendipitous process was repeated on a daily basis throughout one month, producing a series of poem-objects, displayed as a large grid of 3 by 8 frames.

Winner of the Nam June Paik award (2004), *Flatland* is at the origin of the artists' process of translating stills into moving images. The video is the product of a series of eight video stills taken at different moments of the day during a boat-trip along the Mekong River Delta in Vietnam. Throughout all images, Detanico & Lain systematically dissected each vertical pixel line, stretching it along the horizontal axis so that it would occupy the entire frame. The process multiplied the frames, which were then placed into an animated sequence. Not only does this exaggerate the flatness of the landscape but produces an impression of acceleration. We experience the rise and fall of daylight over the seven minutes duration of the video and forget the fact that, as in analogue film-making, movement is actually produced from still images. The sequence of images is accompanied by a concrete soundtrack edited from sounds 'collected' during the boat-trip: the repetitive tugging of the motor, the onboard radio, the passing of other boats, and so forth. As suggested in the accompanying publication, *Flatland* is also the title of Edwin A. Abbott's 'Romance of Many Dimensions' of 1884. This satire of the Victorian social strata uses spatial geometry as a metaphor for the rigid hierarchy of that period and, like Detanico & Lain's own *Flatland*, playfully transposes geometrical coordinates; in Abbott's case x, y and z.

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We can identify in *The Waves* and *Flatland* a similar process of symbolic transpositions, which is at the root of Detanico & Lain's work. This takes place, although not exclusively, through an association between graphics and the respective literary sources.

We find in Detanico & Lain's work therefore an association with an important legacy of modern art: the desire for an integration of the arts. Whether consciously or not, this is further emphasised by the multiple application of their 'designs' and their various collaborations with dancers, composers, typographers, as well as other artists. Gesamtkunstwerk, the idea of a total work of art, spread across Europe from the late 19th century. As their reference to Edwin A. Abbott's late 19th century novel already suggests, it would seem forceful to connect Ruskin or Morris and the decorative nature of the associated arts and crafts movement

to the work of Detanico & Lain. It would seem more appropriate to draw them within a loose range of subsequent cross-disciplinary developments in art and design, particularly within the constructivist tradition. Such an assumption is already capable of causing controversy, given the dichotomy that currently exists in Brazil between critics and curators whose affiliation with the field of art and technology seems irreconcilable with those associated with the legacy of constructivism and vice versa. Rather than producing a lengthy overview of the relationship between art and design over the 20th century and into the 21st, the approach here is incidental as it traces segments in a complex rhizomatic structure of historical connections and influences. The digression that follows is merely a possible historical route in which to place Detanico & Lain's processes of production and repertoire of signs, the purpose of which is to propose a historical dimension, perhaps also a theoretical context, to their practice.

Beyond the mythology that has been constructed around the 1956 exhibition *This is Tomorrow* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London we find a rarely discussed project developed by *Group 12*. The exhibition was composed of twelve independent 'exhibits' (or installations in today's terminology), each one being developed by a heterogeneous group composed of artists, architects and art/design critics. *Group 12* (formed by Lawrence Alloway, Geoffrey Holroyd and Toni del Renzio) saw communication and information theories as a means of mediating distinct fields while offering a possible circumvention of the then prevalent academicism, which they argued stagnated their respective disciplines. For Alloway, the solution arrived at 'was (to use a word that flourished later) semiotic in its treatment of images'¹, whilst according to Graham Whitham's detailed description, *Group 12*'s exhibit:

[...] resembled a magazine spread open, with a tackboard on the left and a didactic display on the process of connecting found images on the right, combining an underlying grid system with a 'discourse' system of image groupings. [...] It functioned both as an 'assembly kit' container for the photo-images and as an analogue for the mental and linguistic systems underlying our association of images.

Each photo-image suggested a distinctive sign system and was also identified with a colour-coded grouping of conceptual themes: blue panels (B) were for images with a space-time emphasis ('order-searching'); yellow (Y) for images based on some type of relationship exchange ('adaptability'); and red (R) for object-based relationships ('focussing'). The photo-images included an open hand as a spatial system for palmistry readings (B); a panel of Braille lettering (Y); an air travellers' version of a village signpost (B); a still from *Artists and Models*, showing Dean Martin drawing a Valentine symbol on Doris Day's back (R); a Dead Sea Scroll (R); a graphic anti-nuclear message – the damage area of Hiroshima nuclear explosion superimposed upon a map of the U.S. East Coast (Y); a computer depicted as a large urban building (R); a scientific diagram of the sound of Louis Armstrong's trumpet (Y); a seventeenth century cartoon of a two-faced

1. Alloway, L. 'The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty – Notes by Lawrence Alloway' in Robbins, D. (ed.) *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, exhibition catalogue, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College; Institute of Contemporary Art, London; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley, Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1990, p.53.

2. Whitham, G. 'The Twelve Exhibits', *ibid.*, p.147.

swindler (B); historical changes of cosmological images (Y); secretaries representing their telephones (R); the telephone as a standing person (R); and footprints representing the dweller's movements in a kitchen design (B).²

The similarities that Whitham's description has with the opening paragraph to this essay are quite striking. Indeed, could we not consider *Group 12*'s tackboard as a primitive version of a computer desktop? A series of computer *Windows* where the user (or participator) is free to make his/her own visual associations? Such connections may not be as coincidental as they at first seem.

Although *This is Tomorrow* is generally invoked in relation to the emergence of Pop Art in Britain, as an exhibition it arose from the ideal of synthesis of the arts. Although the Pop emphasis is usually placed upon *Group 2* (Richard Hamilton, John McHale and John Voelcker) with its installation that drew upon mass-media imagery, the exhibition as a whole was demonstrative not of a common aesthetic or theory, but of the diverse elements and influences expressed by the groups and their individual members. The initial concept for *This is Tomorrow* had been conceived by the French constructivist-oriented *Groupe Espace*. Their proposal having been rejected, was later re-evaluated and re-submitted by Theo Crosby and a group of individuals some of whom were associated with London's Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) who became known as the *Independent Group*. The other participants could be generally associated with constructivist tendencies.³

3. Whitham, G., 'Chronology', *ibid.*, p.26, 37.

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Despite a clear division in approach, the fact that the project, albeit in a re-evaluated form, went ahead is indicative of a certain proximity of interest with the initial *Groupe Espace* proposal. This is confirmed by Peter Reyner Banham's emphasis on the synthesis of the arts in his review of the exhibition and Alloway's review of John McHale's exhibition in André Bloc's *Journal Aujourd'hui: Arts et Architecture*.⁴ Alloway had also written an important survey on abstract art in Britain entitled *Nine Abstract Artists: Their Work and Theory* where he posited Victor Pasmore (another contributor to *This is Tomorrow*) within the context of the establishment of the ideals of concrete art in Britain.⁵ Like Ivan Serpa in Rio de Janeiro, Pasmore had been a great disseminator of ideas about abstraction through his teaching and collaborations. For Alloway – who had stated that after W.W.II the British pioneers of abstraction had 'either become romantics or, like Nicholson and Hepworth, at least tired of their thirtyish purity'⁶ – the re-vitalisation of geometric abstraction in Britain during the 1950s had been a consequence of Pasmore and his group being influenced by Max Bill's concepts of concrete art.⁷ The date of Alloway's publication on British abstraction is also pertinent since it occurred in the midst of *Independent Group* activity in 1954.

4. Banham, P. R., 'Not Quite Painting or Sculpture Either', *The Architect's Journal*, August 1956.

Alloway, L., 'L'Intervention du Spectateur', *Aujourd'hui: Art et Architecture*, 5 November 1955, pp.24-6.

5. Alloway, L., *Nine Abstract Artists: Their Work and Theory*, London: Alec Tiranti Ltd. 1954, p.3.

6. *Ibid.* pp.2-3.

7. *Ibid.* p.4.

One could assume that Alloway's position towards abstraction and concrete art as issues of central importance would change substantially during the following years particularly with the increasing interest in popular culture amongst *Independent Group* members. However, in 1957 – one year after *This is Tomorrow* – Richard Hamilton, arguably the artist most associated with the emergence of British Pop, together with Pasmore organised a collaborative project entitled *An Exhibit*, an environmental exhibition (exhibited twice with some variations)⁸ that has a certain resemblance with Hélio Oiticica's *Núcleos* installations being composed of 'floating panels' arranged throughout the gallery space at right angles to each other and placed at different heights.⁹

70 Other than a willingness for collaboration, it would be forceful to propose connections between Detanico & Lain and Hélio Oiticica, yet this rather long digression is necessary as a means of referring to a legacy they share, while attempting to escape from being drowned by the wave of recent excessively linear historical interpretations that connect Max Bill, Oiticica and Lygia Clark with the current generation of artists from Brazil. In other words, one should distinguish contemporary Brazilian artists' belongingness to a wider history of art from one that is geographically determined. The relationship that Detanico & Lain establish between form and content, with their strong reliance on language, evokes certain cultural legacies, some of which have nevertheless particular significance within the history of art and design in Brazil. While openly acknowledging their debt to pioneers of concrete poetry, such as Haroldo and Augusto de Campos and Décio Pignatari, their approach is neither nostalgic nor does it seek formal characteristics that could be said to pertain inextricably to the national cultural heritage.¹⁰ On the contrary, the irony and irreverence together with the complexity of the issues they engage with are undoubtedly of our time and transnational in their references. If the work is perhaps inscribable within a Brazilian 'post-conceptual' context due to common creative strategies and a culturally specific vocabulary, they are far removed from the political constraints experienced by Brazilian artists in the 1960s and 1970s. This is however not to say that their work escapes the domain of politics.

Having established the ambivalence of the artists' relation to the legacies of constructivist movements in Brazil, it is possible to return to Alloway's description of *Group 12's* interest in 'semiotics' and suggest Detanico & Lain's relationship with the work of Max Bill. A German Professor of Aesthetics deeply engaged with the Brazilian constructivist tradition, Max Bense's description of Bill's processes of creation emphasises these interconnections. Bense argued that:

8. Originally shown as: *An Exhibit*, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle Upon Tyne in 1957.

9. The overshadowed response to concrete art and the constructivist legacy by *Independent Group* members together with certain parallels with the Brazilian postwar production is discussed by the author in 'Shadows/Sombras' in Asbury, Bueno, Ferreira and Machado (eds.) *Arte&Ensaio*, n.14, edição especial Transnational Correspondence / Correspondência Transnacional, Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação, Escola de Belas Artes, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, September, 2007, pp.52-67.

10. An exception perhaps is their reference to the iconic buildings of Oscar Niemeyer, yet are those not themselves 'international' in their notoriety and at the very least hybrid in their formal qualities?

pages 72-73:
WEIGHTLESS DAYS
2006, dance performance,
approx. 50 min
collaboration with
takeshi yazaki,
megumi matsumoto and
dennis mcnulty

page 74:
BETELGEUSE
2007, ink-jet print,
silkscreen
41 x 41 cm

page 75:
SIRIUS
2007, ink-jet print,
silkscreen
41 x 41 cm

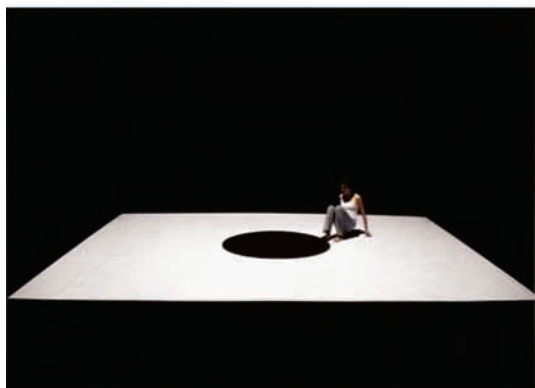
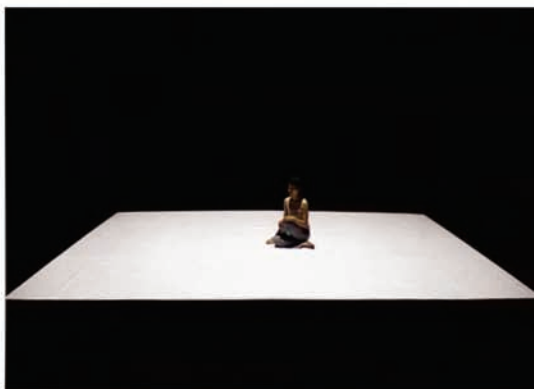
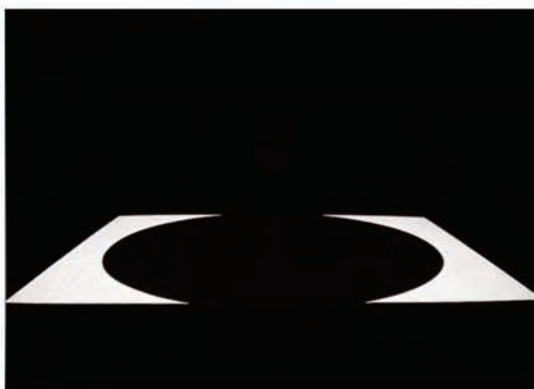
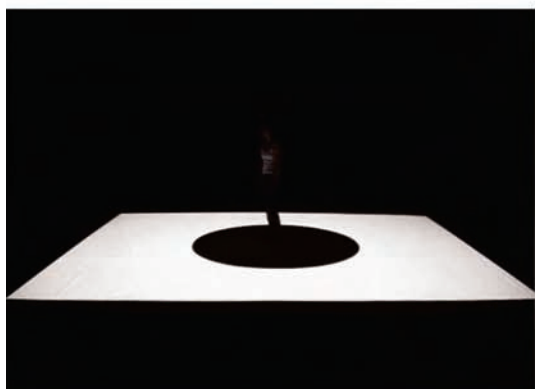
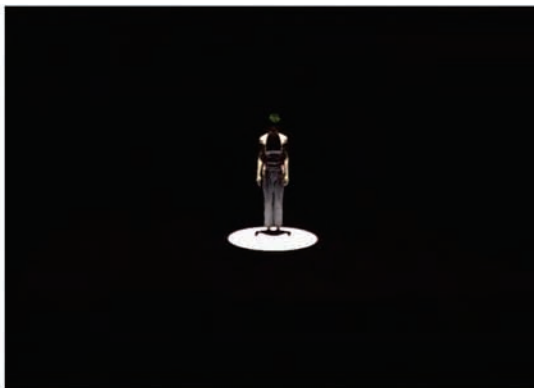
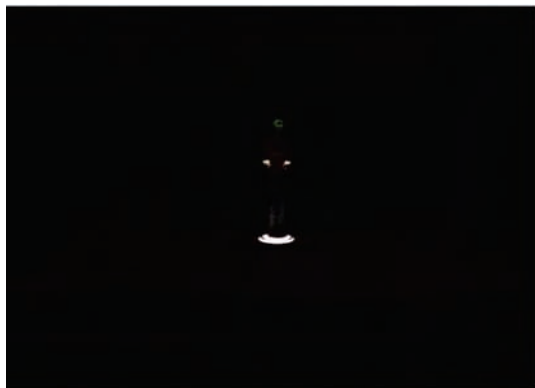
The semiotic description of Max Bill's concrete painting concerns pictures which must be understood as systems of relatively elementary polygons like squares, rectangles, triangles, etc., – as screens – but also as configurations of points and straight lines. The semiotic description of these systems uses the classification of signs which was developed by the American Charles Sanders Peirce. Accordingly a sign must be understood as a triadic function, inasmuch as it exists first by itself, then in relation to an object, and finally in relation to an interpreter. Correspondingly, the classification of signs is threefold as well: in regard to its own nature, in relation to the designated object, and in relation to the interpreter for whom it designates.¹¹

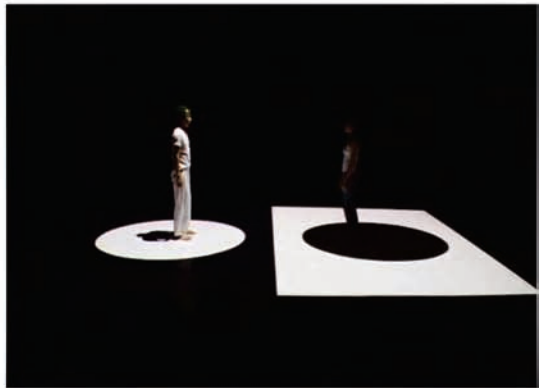
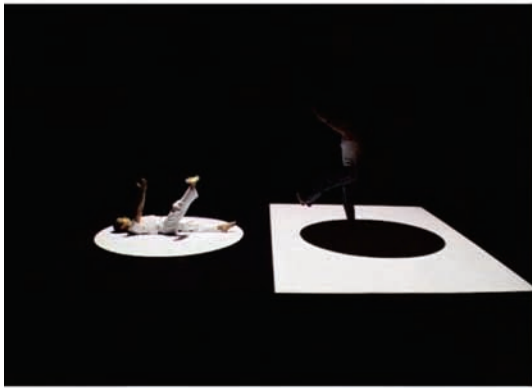
Unsurprisingly perhaps, we find in *Group 12's* display at *This is Tomorrow*, three identification colours (classification of signs), a series of images (objects), to be related by the participant (interpreter). The very structure of the display also contained three elements, tackboard, didactic display and image bank.

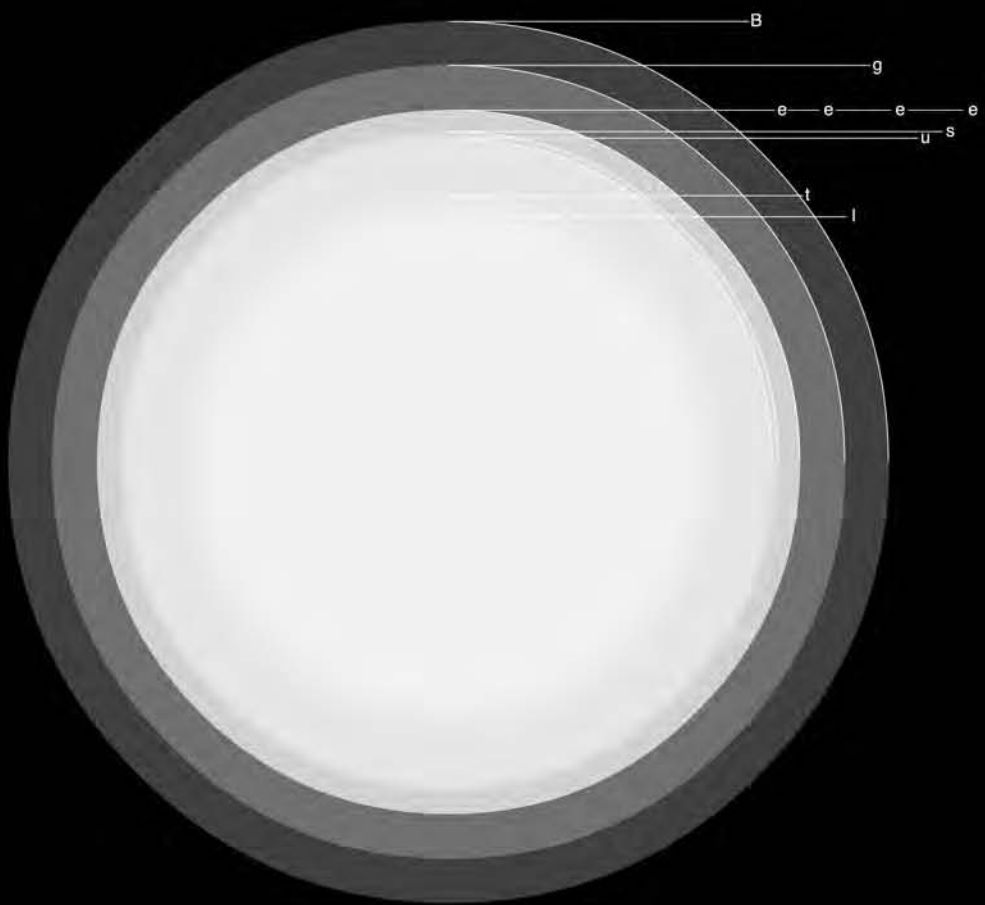
Bill had been a student at the Bauhaus and his subsequent activities reflect the issue of the integration of the arts that ran through the school's curriculum, from its origins based on art and crafts philosophy to its development into industrial design. Indeed, few artists in the 20th century could be considered to have interconnected the domains of design and art to the extent that Max Bill was able to, particularly following the establishment of the Bauhaus-inspired Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm, Germany in 1951, for which he was a founding member. Interestingly, amongst the multiple activities of the Bauhaus we find Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadisches Ballet*, which as the name suggests followed the trinity principle being divided in three acts, and having three dancers, twelve dances and eighteen costumes. Its transformation of the dancers into geometrical forms has had a significant historical repercussion in the relation between art and dance. In the context of this discussion it is perhaps sufficient to mention Lygia Pape's *Ballet Neoconcreto* (1959), where dancers disappeared altogether within the geometrical structures, Analivia Cordeiro's *M3X3* (1973), where 9 numbered dancers are filmed from above and relate to a floor-based (3 x 3) Mondrianesque grid, and Detanico & Lain's own incursion into the field of contemporary dance, *Weightless Days* (2006 – a collaboration with choreographers Takeshi Yazaki and Megumi Matsumoto and sound artist Dennis McNulty) where geometrical forms are produced by ever-changing light projections which, as far as the choreography is concerned, determine the dancer's movements. The clear geometrical nature of their contribution would invite Peirce's threefold classification of signs, yet perhaps more importantly, like the other examples cited, the means through which it was produced also finds historical precedents in Bauhaus experiments.¹² In fact, it is not the particularities of Peirce's study of semiotics that is of interest here; rather it is the dissemination of such ideas, how this influenced the rhetoric of concrete art and to what extent having a relation to such a precise and determining system of production is pertinent today.

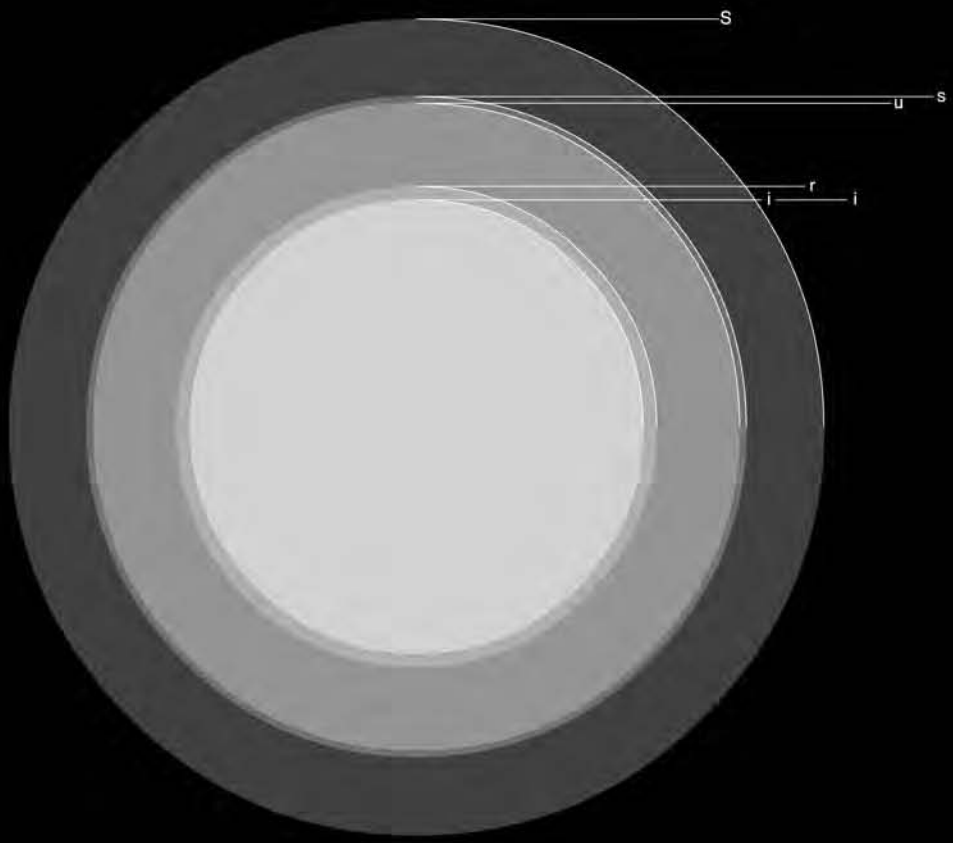
11. Bense, M., in *Max Bill*, exhibition catalogue, London: Hanover Gallery, 1966, pp.3-4. Originally published in *Studio International*, VII/3, March, 1963.

12. See for instance 'Light play/experiments with light in various forms' of 1927, in Fiedler, J. and Feierabend, P. (eds.) *Bauhaus*, Cologne: Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, p.546.











PILHA
 ANTES DE MAIS NADA
 2003, piled bricks,
 approx. 100 x 360 x 10 cm

76 Concrete art required an intellectual conception of the work of art prior to its execution, which Bill formulated as a set of 'principles':

The mysteries of the mathematical problematic, the ineffable space, the distance or proximity of infinity, the surprise of a space that starts at one side and ends on another, which at the same time is the same, the limitation without exact limits, the multiplicity which albeit forms a unity, the uniformity that is altered by the presence of a single emphasis of form, the force field composed of pure variables, parallels which cut across each other and infinity returns to itself as a presence and still the square again in all its solidity, the right angle that is not troubled by any relativity, all these realities, that seemingly have nothing to do with the quotidian life of man, are nevertheless of a transcendental importance. These forms which we handle, are the fundamental forces in which all human order is submitted to and that are precisely contained in all knowledgeable order.¹³

For Bill, concrete art was guided by principles of an epistemological nature. Here lies the political, utopian perhaps, character of concrete art: an art that while autonomous, detached from any representational role, was essentially applicable, both as form and knowledge, within society. It was in this sense immediately applicable within other disciplines, such as Bill's own work with the most diverse forms of design or, to mention a Brazilian example, in Waldemar Cordeiro's landscape designs. If Detanico & Lain's own incursions into the fields of design, information, language and so forth, draw on systematic procedures akin to those of concrete

13. Quoted in: Vergez, V., 'L'Art Concret de sa Fondation au Début des Années Quarente' in Lemoine, S. (ed.) *Art Concret*, exhibition catalogue, Mouans-Sartoux: Espace de l'Art Concret, 2000, pp.22-3. Originally published in the review *Werk* under the title *Mathematical Thought in the Art of our Times* in 1949, being reprinted in the *Pevsner, Vantongerloo, Bill* exhibition catalogue at the Kunsthhaus in Zurich that same year. (Excerpt translated from the French by the author).

PILHA
UNA VEZ MÁS
2005, piled erasers,
approx. 15 x 24 x 3 cm



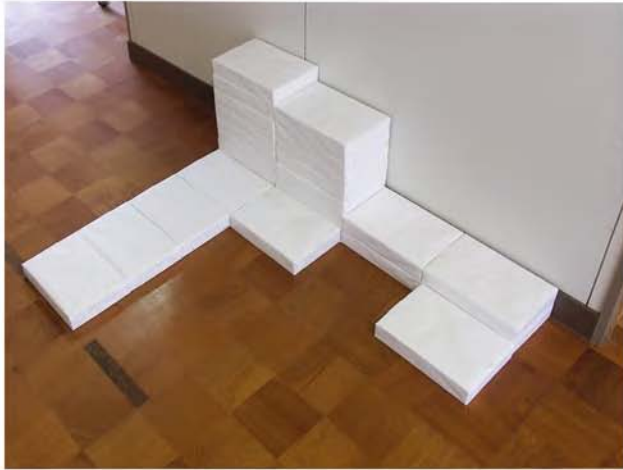
art, being of the present they are certainly more modest as far as the transcendental potential of the work is concerned. In fact, a reliance on a legacy through process is accompanied by a critical reflection on the legacy itself.

77

Such an approach is made evident in the ambivalence invoked in the title of their exhibition *After Utopia* held at the Pharos Centre for Contemporary Art in 2006. The title of the exhibition stems from both a simple fact and a complex issue. The 'fact' refers to the presentation of a selection of works produced subsequent to Detanico & Lain's first major project entitled *Utopia* (2001) commissioned by the New York-based *Big Magazine*. *Utopia* consists of a typeface designed to run within word processing programmes. Instead of capital letters it features the iconic buildings of Brazil's foremost modernist architect, Oscar Niemeyer, whilst lower-case letters – the most frequently used in standard word-processing, as curator Lisette Lagnado has already emphasised – are equated with urban interferences such as fences, skateboarders, CCTV cameras, electricity cables, in short, all those elements that escaped the utopian dream of the architect.¹⁴ The ambivalence of the work, what I believe to be its subject matter, is from where the complexity arises.

14. Lagnado, L. 'Angela Detanico + Rafael Lain', in *Ice Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture*, London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2007, p.101.

Utopia is one of a series of works that Detanico & Lain have developed in which the alphabet is transformed into symbols.



PILHA-KANA
YOMIKAKI
2006, piled paper packs,
approx. 45 x 100 x 90 cm



PILHA-KANA
MASUMASU
2006, piled staple boxes,
approx. 8 x 20 x 8 cm

78



PILHA-KANA
TSUMARI
2006, piled soil bags,
approx. 72 x 90 x 150 cm

We have already discussed the central position that Pierce held within the rhetoric of concrete art, let us now digress further into the work of one of his predecessors in the investigation of the utopian potential of symbolic language. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's grand project *Characteristica Universalis* sought to find a means of establishing a common language easily understandable by all, which at an ontological level would find the root of human rationalism, the underlying basis of all philosophical understanding. More than a universal language, it would be a means of resolving theoretical enquiries through mathematical formulations. Leibniz's grand project – his utopia – was of course unrealised, but in searching for its resolution he developed integral and differential calculus – essential tools for the engineer who through mathematics finds solutions in determining the area of complex forms and rates of change – which are, after all, computational means for understanding the world. Another of his developments was binary code, which is literally at the root of modern digital computers. There is therefore a perverse irony in the fact that Detanico & Lain's work implicitly questions notions of universality by means of a product whose very logic is a consequence of such beliefs. As their other alphabetic system *Pilha* (2003) suggests, although offering a system that is – to use Leibniz's aim for *Characteristica Universalis* – easily learnt, it remains nevertheless always dependent on the specificity of individual alphabets and languages. *Pilha* is a sculptural form of writing with which the artists select objects that have direct relations to the location. This site-specificity is sometimes taken further, such as in the case of *Pilha-Kana*, whereby its adaptation – perhaps more precisely, its translation – into the Japanese alphabetic system demanded an entirely new sculptural structure. Detanico & Lain translate the object into text and vice versa, yet their elegant solutions often obscure the complexity of adapting systems within different contexts of language and culture.

In other cases, these symbolic relations are often stretched to a limit, such as with their digital typeface *Helvetica Concentrated* (2004 – produced in collaboration with Jiri Skala) where the surface area of each letter is concentrated into a dot. Imperceptible to the naked eye, each dot remains distinct, and therefore, theoretically readable. In this sense, *Helvetica Concentrated* both affirms and subverts Richard Hamilton's description of the craft of typography:

15. Hamilton, R. 'Di(e)ter Rot(h)'; excerpts in Coles, A. (ed.) *Design and Art*, Documents of Contemporary Art series, London and Cambridge MA: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2007, p.23. Originally published in *Typographica*, 3, June 1961, and subsequently reprinted in *Richard Hamilton: Collected Works 1953-1982*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1982.

Typography is more a craft than an art – the graphic designer using type will need to be something of an artist but the typographer of today is a logician whose job is to distribute given information in the most rational way possible.¹⁵

Having developed these numerous translations of alphabetic and/or typographic systems, we find Detanico & Lain developing new works based on their previous work's inherent logic. This is the case of *Star Names* (2007), which uses *Helvetica Concentrated* as the rationale behind the process of investigating

the relationship between form and the written information in the name of the stars. They are particularly interested in the trajectory of such names within history through a series of translations, stating that 'some of them were first named in Babylonian times, then compiled by the Greeks, then, as much of the Greek culture, translated – and preserved – into Arabic.'¹⁶

As a subversion of the 'informative nature' of gallery captions, for their exhibition at Pharos, the couple also chose to produce captions for the exhibited work through *Helvetica Concentrated*, thus at one and the same time offering and concealing information. Equally, in choosing Niemeyer as the 'theme' for their *Utopia* typography the artists propose a subversive game of playing a legacy against itself. A precursor and important reference to the 18th century Enlightenment, Leibniz's ideas of a universal language are to be understood within the context of the belief in achievement of progress for humanity through order and scientific reasoning. These would not only inform the ideology, or at least its rhetoric of order and progress (as stated in the Brazilian national flag) behind the independence of Brazil, but also the explicit positivism that lay behind the nation's rapid modernisation during the 1940s and 1950s: the broader context for Lúcio Costa's urbanism and Niemeyer's architecture. There is something perversely ambivalent in Niemeyer himself. A committed communist, his projects range from ministries to casinos, art galleries to sculptural monuments, and thus proclaim an autonomy for architecture that is not dissimilar to that generally claimed for the domain of art. Moreover, how appropriate it is that in the case of their exhibition at Pharos, Detanico & Lain chose to present their own *Utopia* by quoting a passage from Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* published in 1516:

Their buildings are good, and are so uniform that a whole side of a street looks like one house. Their doors have all two leaves, which, as they are easily opened, so they shut of their own accord; and there being no property among them, every man may freely enter into any house whatsoever.¹⁷

Such an image of Utopia may appear horrifying to the modern reader given the lack of privacy, the uniformity. Isolated from its historical source it may indeed invoke the modern vision of a communist architect. Yet in the context of Nicosia, it gains a specific political significance. We are reminded here of Jacques Derrida's 'On Hospitality' where he argues that we can only consider hospitality, in the true sense of the word, to mean the welcoming of our enemies into our home, since would it not be only natural, and therefore not specially 'hospitable', to invite our friends?¹⁸ Such an idea is indeed pertinent within the ongoing discussions about the possible integration of Turkey into the European Community, in which Cyprus plays such a key role.

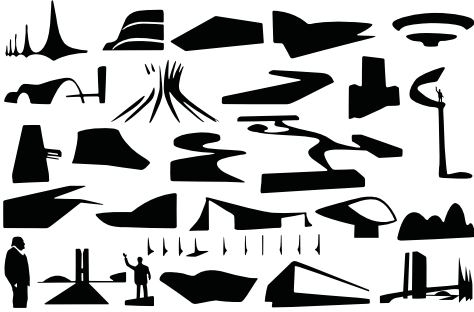
We begin to understand, through these almost immediate readings that Detanico & Lain's work conjures, its capacity to hold

16. Detanico & Lain in correspondence with the author, 12 July 2007.

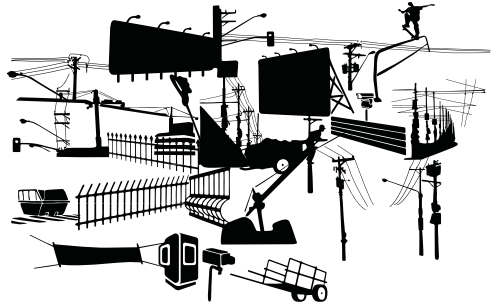
17. More, T., *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia* (On the Best State of a Republic and on the New Island of Utopia). See: Surtz E. S.J., and Hexter, J.H. (eds.) *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, V.4, New Haven, 1965.

18. Derrida, J. and Dufourmantelle, A., *Of Hospitality*, Cultural Memory in the Present, California: Stanford University Press, 2000.

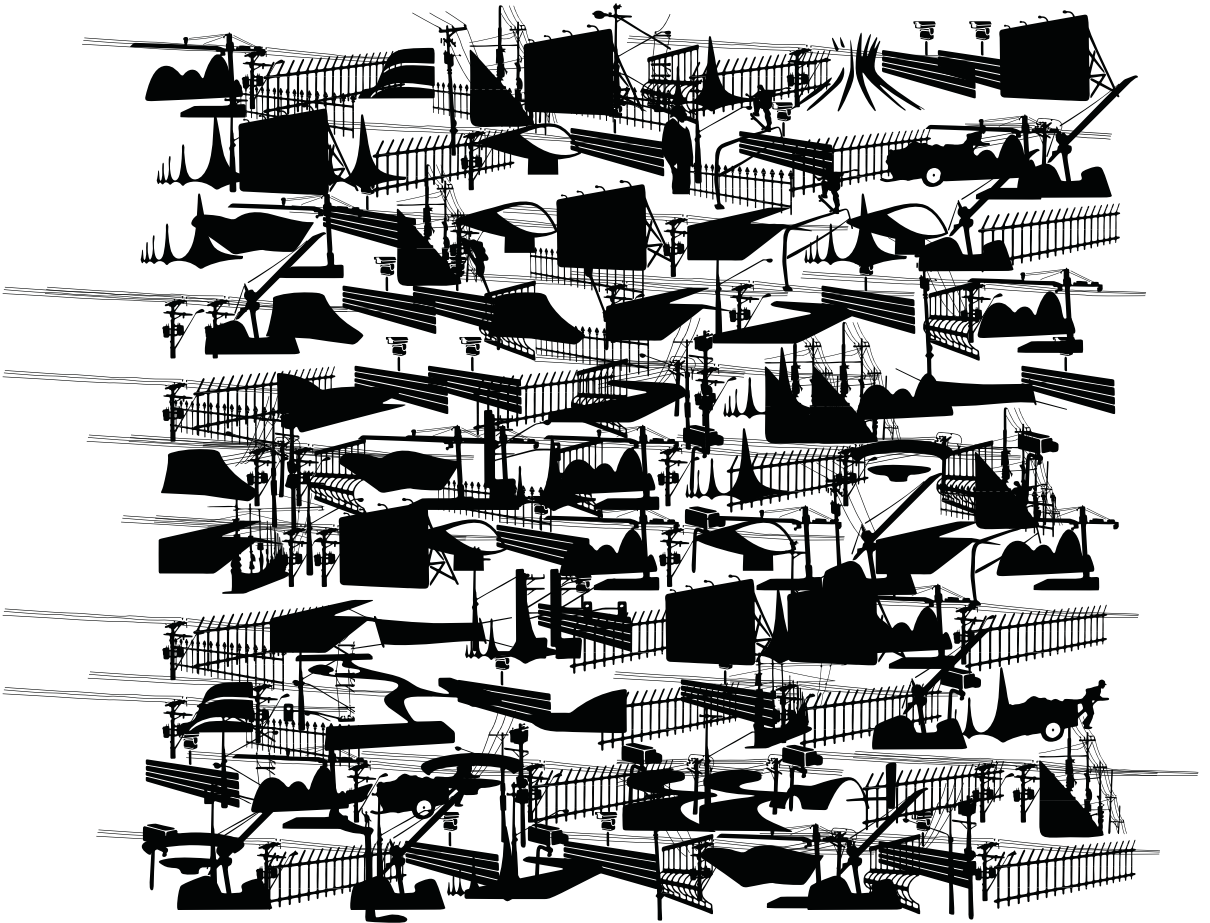
Utopia



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z



Their Buildings Are Good And Are So Uniform That A Whole Side Of A Street Looks Like One House Their Doors Have All Two Leaves Which As They Are Easily Opened So They Shut Of Their Own Accord And There Being No Property Among Them Every Man May Freely Enter Into Any House Whatsoever
UTOPIA by SIR THOMAS MORE, EXCERPT FROM BOOK II: OF THEIR TOWNS, PARTICULARLY OF AMAROT.

multiple meanings, while also maintaining a sense of specificity with the place in which it is exhibited, of being open to multiple interpretations while not abandoning altogether the guiding line of authorship. Indeed, this is a characteristic the work shares with More's *Utopia*.

More possessed an ambivalence of his own, and of his time, the Renaissance. A humanist, a scholar of ancient Greek, More was also a devout Catholic. Written on the eve of the reformation, *Utopia* at first describes the moral bankruptcy of the period in order to frame, or differentiate his 'ideal' society. Yet, as a work of fiction, it is also charged with irony and wit, where nothing is quite what it seems. It is a book loaded with scholarly codes, which hover between fiction and fact. Such ambivalence is reflected by the character Raphael Hythlodæus. In a literary device that many centuries later would become characteristic of writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, More describes encountering this character during a visit to Flanders, a visit that actually took place. The choice of name is significant and various scholarly accounts raise the fact that Hythlodæus in Greek translates as 'speaker of nonsense'. Greek scholarship is also implied by references to Homer's *Odyssey* and Plato's *Republic*. Indeed, as Carlo Ginzburg points out:

Deliniavit ... praestitti: Plato's republic is vanquished by More's *Utopia* [a statement made in the book's first edition, through a poem written in the Utopian alphabet], as a pictorial description is vanquished by the display of the real thing. But is not More's *Utopia* also a description? Yes, but a description that gives the feeling of being there.¹⁹

Ginzburg continues his argument by discussing the issue of verisimilitude that is invoked in the mischievous discussions on More's *Utopia* circulated around the time of its publication by his friends/accomplices:

'Set before our eyes', sic oculis subjectam: this was, according to Greek rhetorical tradition, the aim of ekphrasis. Through a description full of what the Greeks, the Romans, and we would have called, respectively, *enargeia*, evidential in narration, and *vidvntis*, absent things – usually works of art, either real or fictitious – or past events were to be evoked, giving the reader an uncanny feeling of reality.²⁰

Interpretations vary as to whether More's coded message about the nonsense of his narrative referred to the utopian idea itself or was simply a way in which he could be truthful about the fictional character of the book. Indeed, Raphael, which in Hebrew implies healing, is perhaps just as significant a name. Like More's character Hythlodæus, the archangel Raphael was also a travel companion (to Tobias, son of Tobit) while he healed Tobit in his old age of blindness.²¹ *Ekphrasis*, the setting before our eyes, seems indeed a significant term. More's *Utopia* thus becomes a *trompe l'oeil* that nevertheless opens one's eyes to the corruption of contemporaneous England.

19. Ginzburg, C., *No Island is an Island: Four Glances at English Literature in a World Perspective*, Italian Academy Lecture Series, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, p.4. I am grateful to Dr. Isobel Whitelegg for suggesting I read this publication.

20. *ibid.* (p.5)

21. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*: 'In the book of Tobit and Enoch, Raphael figures as one of the seven archangels who stand in the presence of God. In Tobit (12. 12, 15) he hears the prayers of holy men and brings them before God. The name [Raphael] in Hebrew [...] means "God heals", and in Enoch (10. 7) he is said to have "healed" the earth when it was defiled by the sins of fallen angels. From these Jewish speculations the figure of Raphael passed into Christian tradition. Feast day 24 Oct.' (p.1138)

The ODCC describes the 'Book of Tobit' as follows: 'One of the apocryphal books of the [Old Testament]. It relates the story of Tobit, a pious Jew of the captivity of Niveveh, who, in pursuit of his good works became poor and blind in his old age. He prayed to God to deliver him, and, remembering a debt due to him from a friend in Media, sent his son Tobias there with a companion who later revealed himself as the angel Raphael. After rescuing his kinswoman, Sarah, from the power of a demon with the assistance of the angel, who, also recovered the debt and finally helped to cure old Tobit of his blindness, Tobias married her. [...]

The book exists in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Aramaic and Hebrew versions. Its original language was Aramaic or Hebrew, and it dates probably c.200 B.C. Until modern times it was generally regarded as historical, but many now consider it a piece of folklore, the story of the grateful dead, and find traces of Persian demonology' (p.1363)
Cross, F. L., (ed.) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1957.

pages 84-85:
WHITE NOISE
2006, animation,
colour, sound,
4 min

Utopia was published only twenty-four years after Columbus 'discovered' America. This fact is reflected by Raphael Hythlodæus being of Portuguese descent – a nation of great maritime discoveries, amongst them Brazil – and that his travels took place south of the equator, beyond monstrous creatures and cannibals which so fascinated the European imaginary at that time, and which would become such a significant metaphor for Brazilian modernism through the figure of the anthropophagite. For these and many other reasons, More's *Utopia* seems a very fitting source material for the application of Detanico & Lain's *Utopia* alphabet: its geographical location, its own coded alphabet, its ambivalent comments on contemporary society gain in this way new significance.

If Raphael Hythlodæus is for More the artifice that enables healing through fiction – a response no doubt to Plato's banishing of the poet from his *Republic* – similarly, Detanico & Lain's ambivalence between the immediacy of the pun and the complex matrix of references could be interpreted as a critical response to the emptiness of postmodern irony, its disregard for history and the frequent transcendental pretensions and naïve positivism of modern art.

Another example of the critical potential of their work can be found in *White Noise* (2006), which continues the duo's interest in the association between process and meaning. Appropriating a satellite photograph of the Amazon River, the artists have deleted one by one each hue until the point at which the original colour has been banished and the image becomes entirely white. This procedure is accompanied by a sound track composed literally of white noise, which like the colour white, being the result of the combination of all other colours, is a composite of all random frequencies. As the hues of green and brown are gradually replaced by white, so the white noise intensifies, until it reaches a climactic white on white. The experience of viewing such a work is nevertheless quite distant from the logical procedure of its construction, or indeed the perverse relation that it holds with that seminal work, key reference for constructivist and concrete artists alike, Malevitch's *White on White* (1918). While observing Detanico & Lain's *White Noise*, one cannot avoid making associations with the politico-economic dilemmas that have become inextricably associated with the region: deforestation, subsistence versus multinational exploitation and ultimately (given that the image originates from a NASA satellite) of geopolitical surveillance. The title *White Noise* thus rings in our ears like a chainsaw, an interference by the white man that causes havoc to the balanced yet fragile ecosystem of the rainforest. Or perhaps such 'noise' could evoke the deluge of spam that has now become part of our shared experience, such as the email-con that has been circulating for some time describing a North American geography school book that delineates a large proportion of the



LA FLEUR INVERSE
 (PREMIÈRE PARTIE :
 INVERSE)
 2007, text set in
 inverse times, wood,
 mirrors,
 48 x 560 x 25 cm
 collaboration with
 jacques roubaud and
 françois sarhan

86 Amazon as being under US and UN control since the 1980s. However, unlike *Group 12's* superimposition of the Hiroshima fallout over the West Coast of the USA, Detanico & Lain do not present the viewer with a fact, even if it might invite reflection on such facts. It is not a work with a political message but one that invites a critical evaluation of world policies and politics: the artists do not tell us what to think but simply invite us to think.

In much the same way, Detanico & Lain's *New Roman Times* (2006) is a straightforward play on words, a displacement in the order of the name of the commonly used typeface Times New Roman, which naturally serves as the typeface for the work. If at first the displacement is almost imperceptible, such a simple act invites the viewer to reflect: is it simply a joke or does it evoke broader connotations on the insipient nature of current forms of imperialism that operate through almost imperceptible shifts? Similarly, *Inverse Times* (2007) disorientates our perceptions, our preconceptions perhaps, as we discover that these are not mirror images, and require therefore a much closer attention in order to be deciphered.

We may perhaps be tempted to search in their work a distant echo, an extrapolation perhaps, of Walter Benjamin's prognosis for the 'age of mechanical reproduction'. Much of it functions as a concept that is transferable from one support to another, as it is

often available in a diversity of media: as an image on a screen (internet, DVD, light box, etc.), an adhesive transfer on a wall, a poster, performance, or an object (boxes, bricks, books, etc.). Yet, if the aura of the 'original' is hardly traceable amidst a plethora of presentations and adaptations, it is not quite the reproducibility of the art that is at stake. How distant we are from the machine age Walter Benjamin referred to, yet re-reading Reyner Banham's announcement of the design-determined character of the second machine age – that experienced by the *Independent Group* generation, where 'our explorations into the nature of information have made it possible, on the one hand, to set electronics to work to take the drudgery out of routine thought, and on the other hand to tailor human thinking to suit the needs of some narrow-minded power-élite' – we are struck by the fact that although the nature of technology has advanced exponentially there are certain 'economic, moral and social' issues that have not been superseded.²²

22. Banham, P. R., *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, London: The Architectural Press, 1960, p.9.

If we are to consider Detanico & Lain's relatively short career, their presence at major international art-world events is testimony to the reconfiguration that the art circuit has undergone. This brings to light new problems that are quite distinct from the politically charged art produced during the dark years of dictatorship in Brazil and the restrictive international dissemination Brazilian art had during that period. Detanico & Lain find themselves navigating the treacherous waters of the intellectual property era, producing downloadable freeware that is announced to the general public via newspapers or to the gallery-going audience through give-away posters, which are piled as 'objects' within the exhibition space recalling in this particular manoeuvre the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

This reconfiguration of the international art circuit is perhaps implicitly expressed in *World Justified, Left-aligned, Centered, Right-aligned* (2004) where the logic of the word processor is again evoked. Here the *Mapa Mundi* is submitted to the graphic manipulations of text editing, playfully attributing to the simple descriptions of word alignments connotations of world politics. The couple's use of the map of the world suggests perhaps their position *vis-à-vis* the nature of the production and dissemination of art. During the 20th century we find a frequent use of the map of Brazil or of Latin America as a powerful way in which to refer to the struggles for cultural, political and economic autonomy. Examples of this strategy can be found in Joaquim Torres-Garcia's *Upside-Down Map* of 1943, Antonio Manuel's *Soy Loco Por Ti America* (I'm Crazy for You America, 1969), Anna Bella Geiger's *O Pão Nosso de Cada Dia* (Our Daily Bread, 1978) amongst many others. Detanico & Lain's manipulation of global geography, does not refer to a north-south dichotomy of power structure as Torres-Garcia highlights, nor to an identification with the precariousness and absurdity of cultural and political conditions

across Latin America as Manuel suggests, or even the discrepancy between nationalist discourse and economic misery evoked by Geiger. Detanico & Lain's world is different, it is the world of globalisation that we inhabit, where communication technology, the very language that carries the work's ironic charge, is 'transcontinental', but further still, it is the world that the couple inhabit as artists, a world of proliferation of international biennials, of incessant travel, of non-places where the specificities of the local become indistinct, a world of 'continental shifts'. Therefore, although conceptually reliant on a variety of circuits of dissemination, a natural outcome of the plurality of media that supports the work, theirs is an entirely distinct historical and political context to that of the 1960s and 70s. It is not a question of making here an apology for globalisation, on the contrary, it is a question of determining the art's distinct conditions of existence in terms of production, dissemination and reception.

The work may gain visibility, perhaps 'mobility' would be a more precise term, through a certain number of associations that it superficially evokes, yet as in the case of *Selected Landscape / Deleted Landscape* (2005) the immediacy can be deceitful. Behind the pastoral scene, with its slight breeze that shakes the leaves on the trees, that disturbs the water and makes the sunlight fluctuate with the passing of clouds, lies the brutal reality of the illusion: a misused function of a software programme.



