

The Messenger:

Score and Performance - Raul Masu

Cinematography and Editing - Louis Henderson

Collaborators:

Gabriela Aleman (writer, Ecuador), Orlando Inoa (historian, Dominican Republic), Salomon Kroonenberg (geologist, Netherlands), Matteo Gatti (artist, Italy), Frans Snik (astronomer, Netherlands), Maritza Alvarez (photographer, Dominican Republic), Ludo Hellemans (biologist, Netherlands), and Ana Pavlisova (translator, Russia).

Acknowledgments:

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Research for *The Messenger* was possible thanks to the support of Alanica International Symposium (Russia).

The research in the Caucasus succeeded thanks to the generous openness of actor Aslanbek Galaov, filmmaker Soslan Makiev, and leader of the rescue team Constantine Gerapov.

Zaratán is curated by Natasha Hoare.

Para | Fictions

Zaratán is part of *Para | Fictions*, a cycle of sustained investigations taking as its focus the relationship between literature and visual art through the practice of six artists; Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff, Mark Geffriaud, Laure Prouvost, Oscar Santillan, and Lucy Skaer.

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Oscar Santillan *Zaratán*

22 April - 3 July 2016

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"There is one story that has ranged the whole of geography and all epochs - the tale of mariners who land on an unknown island which then sinks into the sea and drowns them because it is a living creature."

Jorge Luis Borges, *Book of Imaginary Beings*, 1957

Zaratán is a new commission by artist Oscar Santillan (1980, Ecuador). The outcome of months of research that started in Russia and ended in the Dominican Republic, this series of works create parallel realities to collected texts, myths, and histories. Titled after a creature recorded in Jorge Luis Borges' *Book of Imaginary Beings*, the project traces how we shape the unknown using the forms and tropes at our disposal and enacts Borges' referential play between encyclopedic fact and apocryphal tale. Santillan thus animates and materializes the imaginary, eschewing empirical definitions of materiality and existence. Drawing from Borges losing his sight in later life, the works also play on aspects of visibility, manipulating the dichotomy of that which is seen and that which lies beyond sight.

1. *Baneque*, 2016

Christopher Columbus and other explorers relentlessly searched for the phantom island of Baneque. Guided by a map drawn by Columbus on his first trip to the Americas, the artist travelled to the supposed coordinates of Baneque where he gathered dozens of gallons of water. The island is reconstituted using the salt water collected; as the water evaporates the salt turns into a crystallized form. The phantom becomes tangible.

2. *The Messenger*, 2016

In 2002, an avalanche killed Russian actor and filmmaker Sergei Bodrov Jr. together with 48 members of his crew, whilst filming the early scenes for his film *The Messenger*. The footage captured during the shoot remained intact in the body of a camera; the final frames of the filmstrip remain unused, the scenes never to be shot. The same physical strip of unused 35mm film is turned into a musical instrument; the soundtrack for the unseen film is produced. Santillan presents a film that documents the resulting musical score and the never-before translated script of the film.

3. *Universal History of Blindness*, 2016

The windows of the gallery space are dusted with ground dinosaur fossils and meteorites, creating transparent and opaque areas that play on blindness and seeing, and re-stage an extinction event from 65 million years ago.

4. *Traverse #1, Traverse #2, Traverse #3*, 2016

Three narratives establish a world where apparently unconnected events are related. Unreferenced quotes belong to authors Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriela Aleman, Dante Alighieri, Thomas Pynchon, and Dylan Thomas.

5. *The Enemy*, 2016

Floor Plan

