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LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Allora & Calzadilla *Gānyìng*

24 February – 13 April 2024
2/F, 27 Huqiu Road, Huangpu District, Shanghai

For Allora & Calzadilla's debut solo show in China, the Puerto Rico-based artists explore the notion of *Gānyìng* or “sympathetic resonance” – a concept originating in ancient Chinese cosmology that is also used in contemporary language to signal the everyday entanglement of forces and beings. The artists employ this notion of universal and temporal reverberation to connect significant historical moments with current global and climactic crises, amounting to an intersection of philosophy, history, and ecology – all held together formally in graceful and paradoxical balance.

Drawing upon wind and ocean currents throughout human and more-than-human history, the artists present *Aeolian Charts* (2023), a new series of large-scale watercolor works on paper which consider the poetic potential inherent in climate modelling and the visualization of global, atmospheric phenomena. Each *Aeolian Chart* plots the path of shifting wind movements using methods normally applied to predictive weather forecasting, although in this case the textual and numerical data have been replaced with noteworthy world events from maritime and climatological history, covering distant time periods and territories. As a result, new maps emerge, in which the wind patterns of the present become connective forces for events in asynchronous historical strata. Thus representations of meteorological phenomena in the past, such as the so-called “screaming” Agulhas current, as it flows at a speed of 33 knots across the Indian Ocean, near the mythical location of Mount Potalaka, the supposed original dwelling place of the Buddhist deity of Mercy (known as Guanyin in Chinese). Other *Aeolian Charts* note the first-ever recorded *jufeng* (typhoon) of 816AD, as well as a twelfth-century oracle bone found in Xiaotun, Henan province, used as a tool for weather divination.

Also installed in Allora & Calzadilla's Shanghai exhibition is the work *Penumbra* (2020), a digital shadow animation that recreates the effect of light passing through foliage in the Absalon Valley of Martinique. The outlines of dense vegetation are projected beyond it spatially, but also through time, as Allora & Calzadilla's work follows in the footsteps of poets and theoreticians Suzanne and Aimé Césaire, whose walks through this area inspired their own writings on diasporic culture and anti-colonial resistance in the Caribbean islands. Moved by a deep sense of “cosmic solidarity”—a concept closely related to *Gānyìng*—they also introduced this landscape to a group of Surrealist refugees fleeing WWII in 1941, among them Wifredo Lam, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacqueline Lamba, and André Breton. The multiple accounts of this historical, yet quasi-legendary encounter, also inspired Allora & Calzadilla's recent animation work. “The tangle of these trees that specialize in acrobatics,” said André Breton, “boost each other into the clouds, leap over cliffs and cut moaning arches over sweet sorceresses under suction cups of sticky flowers.” *Penumbra* is projected in the gallery at an angle based on a continuous, real-time simulation of the sun's location over Shanghai. The work is complemented by a musical composition by the Grammy-award-winning and Oscar-nominated composer David Lang and inspired by “shadow tones,” a psycho-acoustic phenomenon perceived when two real tones create the semblance of a third. While the notion of “sympathetic resonance” can be applied to the relations of sound and light waves, it may further be expanded to describe the influence and interdependence between human and more-than-human forces, geopolitical and geological powers, climate and historical time.

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated publication including a newly commissioned study on the implications of *Gānyìng* in contemporary, global ecopoetics. Taking the form of a polyphonic text, the scholarly work has been carried out by *ainaidea*, a Barcelona-based research group directed by writer and curator Manuel Cirauqui and associated with EINA School of Art and Design and the Autonomous University of Barcelona

(Spain). The resulting collective essay features the collaboration of Caribbean and Spanish co-authors Alba Lorca, Mireia Molina Costa, Lizette Nin, and Nicola Pecci.

About the artists

Through a complex research-oriented practice, Allora & Calzadilla critically address the entanglements between history, ecology, and geopolitics using a multiplicity of artistic media that include performance, sculpture, sound, video, photography and painting. Their dynamic engagement with the art historical results in an acute attention to both the conceptual and the material, the metaphoric as well as the factual. The Puerto Rico-based artists have studied the ephemeral nature of collective drawing with monumental sticks of chalk at the Biennial de Lima, Peru (*Chalk [Lima]*, 1998–2002); the imprints of colonial, nationalist, and military violence on the diverse populations and landscapes of Vieques, Puerto Rico (*Land Mark (Foot Prints)*, 2001–2002; *Land Mark*, 2003; *Returning a Sound*, 2004; *Under Discussion*, 2006 and *Half Mast/Full Mast*, 2011); and the resonance of playing, warping and combining music from various moments in history (*Clamor*, 2006; *Wake Up*, 2007; *Sediments Sentiments-Figures of Speech*, 2008; *Stop, Repair, Prepare: Variations on Ode to Joy for a Prepared Piano*, 2008; *Raptor's Rapture*, 2012; *Apotomē*, 2013); as well as the entanglement between biophysics, semiotics and actuality (*Growth*, 2004; *Puerto Rican Light – Cueva Vientos*, 2015).

Allora and Calzadilla live and work in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Jennifer Allora (b. 1974) received a BA from the University of Richmond in Virginia (1996) attended the Whitney Independent Study Program (1998) and received an MS from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2003); Guillermo Calzadilla (b. 1971, Cuba) received a BFA from Escuela de Artes Plásticas, San Juan, Puerto Rico (1996) and an MFA from Bard College (2001). Collaborating since 1995, recent solo exhibitions include; Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal, (2023), Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, (2022), The Menil Collection, Houston, TX, USA (2020); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA (2019); Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain (2019); Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico (2018); Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, Spain (2018); MAXXI, Rome, Italy (2018); Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada (2016); 'Puerto Rican Light (Cueva Vientos)', a DIA Art Foundation Commission (2015); Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Fabric Workshop and Museum, USA (2014); Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney, Australia (2012); Indianapolis Museum of Art, USA (2012); MoMA, New York, USA (2010); US Pavillion 54th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale Di Venezia, Italy (2011), The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway (2009); Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin, Berlin, Germany (2009); Haus der Kunst München, Munich, Germany (2008); Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2008); Serpentine Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2007).

They have participated in various biennales, such as the 56th and 51st Biennale di Venezia International Art Exhibition, Venice, Italy (2015, 2011, 2005); the 10th and 7th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2014, 2008); the 9th and 6th Mercosul Biennial, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2013, 2007); the 30th Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana Slovenia (2013); dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany (2012); the 12th and 10th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey (2011, 2007); the 29th and 14th Biennial de São Paulo, Brazil (2010, 1998); 16th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2008); the 9th Biennale de Lyon, France (2007); the 1st and 2nd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Russia (2005, 2007); the 14th, 13th and 8th Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates (2019, 2017, 2007); the 2006 Whitney Biennial, New York, NY, USA (2006); the 2nd Guangzhou Triennial, Guangdong Museum of Art, China (2005); the 6th Dakar Biennale, Senegal (2004); the 3rd Biennale Iberoamericana, Lima, Peru (2002); and the 7th Biennial de la Habana, Cuba (2000).

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