

the strange blue incandescence of mites

*a genealogy of the living, as issued
from the small*

Diego Espiritu Chávez, María Antonia González Valerio y Eduardo Ramón Trejo – April 12, 2024

• biology • collage • design • illustration • microscopic • montage • natural philosophy • natural sciences • philosophy • poetry • visual poetry

Just as the Cloud is not just a cloud, but a cluster of wires buried underground the small harbors within itself its own vast cosmology: all that is small is, in fact, all that lives. Therefore, questioning the small involves enquiring about life and nature themselves.

This poetic-visual essay takes up Mexican scientist Anita Hoffmann's research on mites and, through it, wonders what the small sounds like, how many names can one creature be given, and how lethal may something small enough to live in a water bear be.

On The Strange Blue Incandescence of Mites by Diego Espiritu

All that lives, lives somewhere. It lives in *its* place.

Territory comes first. The space where something happens, where something or someone is.

Which is why mites are such peculiar creatures. We are their territory.

Our room. Our bed. Our mattress. Our pillow. Our skin. Our very own body.

I am the mite's territory.

How many names can one creature be given?

Me with the mite. The mite in me.

The singularity here is false. It is dependent upon the microscope (fig. 362).

There is no singular mite—there are mites in the plural. An indivisible multiplicity. A hodgepodge of grubby vermin on my mattress, scurrying through my skin.

They are a bunch. Even if drawings insist on the truth of their unicity. Because *what* is, is a thing that manifests itself in *its* being.

The being of each thing, however, must be addressed from within its territory.

Things only *are* in a given place at a given time; things only *are* in as much as they are determined by a given place and by a given time.

(tranhistoricity, deep, inhuman temporality;
The mite's instantaneity, its minute evanescence)

Where are your mites, Diego?

Nowadays, critters ensue a certain fascination in philosophical stories
—or explanations.

The question of animality comes up again and again
throughout contemporary philosophical discourses, preferably
addressing cats
and dogs. Domestic habitats. Although
one may also find bears, panthers, birds.

Bugs are fundamentally different—extraterrestrials whose form is
anything but our own. And this seems to make them less anthropocentric.
This seems to allow for a decentering of anthropocentric
discourse. This seems to veer away from the speciesism past knowledge
—or past stances—is so often accused of nowadays.

No longer “Human.” Not anymore. It is all about the mite now.

Ticks. Ants. Bees. Beehives. The “social” ordering of insects.
The simulation and modelling of their behavior through
mathematical environs.

Ants regarded as multiplying dots on a cartesian plane.
For we now know of complex systems.

Do your mites make a sound, Diego?

Can you bring your ear close to the pillow—softly—and sense their rattle
as they breathe, as they scuttle?

Lend your ear too close and they will run crawl into your eardrums.
Ear mite. Incandescent. Clotted.

Mites only exist within miasma tales. I am disgusted by them.
They reek of filth and staleness. Their territory is the morbid,
mildewed humidity of an attic.

Modern hygiene—which is not quite obsessive enough—wants smooth,
sealed, chlorine-scented, pristine spaces.

I want to sleep
on a stainless
steel plate.

To take away the mites' territory.

What about skin?

I painstakingly inspect my epidermis. It seems very much my own
—at least it does to the naked eye emitting judgements
in compliance with cultured sense data.
My territory (*presa en mi epidermis*—walled up in my skin).

To learn how to regard and inhabit my own skin as a multispecies territory. To craft a world within a skin that is not mine, that is not me.

A territory cannot be owned. It is the very possibility of life.

I tuck myself in my skin—along with them. (Acariasis)

They only take up the tiniest of spaces. Except they don't. They take *me* up. And that is too much.

I will not count them.

Indeterminate hubris.

Why mites, Diego?
You have preserved them in the ether, perfectly still,
waiting inside a drawer. Eternal.

Mite taxidermy. To hold one against the light and gaze at it with every
variation of the shimmering sky.
As it spreads itself, leg-splayed against the glassy surface
of the microscope slide.

All must be rid of the sickly.

Festering rot.

Of intoxicated skin.

Inside. And out. Malfunction. Of the morbid body.
The body and its dis-ease.

The body that smells. All that lives, smells. Thick stench of scum.

Liquid dust of incandescent mite. A flurry of the remains of the living.
Inside. And out. Mite of mite. Primordial.

Death is always the matter—our own death?
Corruption. Destruction. Decay.

The diseased, always. Festering. Rank.

Or to die suddenly clean by a murmur
on the left ventricle that stops the heart
for good.

Death, always.

All that lives, lives somewhere. It lives in its place.
The mite and me. Even in death. In its death.

Neither the Milky way nor Andromeda.
Not even the explosion of the sun that fades not away.

The mite dies here and now. Incandescent.

María Antonia González Valerio
Coyoacán, Mexico City. October, 2020.

Translated by Sofía Falomir

the strange blue incandescence of mites

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how many names
within humidity.

can one creature be given?

humidity

sweat and saliva curdle

dust and breath
clogging the nostrils
foreign

extraterrestrials whose form is anything

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stench filled pores
contagious agglomeration of the
r own:
latility purges the soil
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the most important thing in the universe
for harboring not only galaxies within g
but its very own negation as black holes
before it was even created, to say "world"
was to say "life" in one booming beat of t

word 'universe'

composed inert gases
of light years away,
like alien cacti

would seem, from millions

fossils from the blue inferiority of the Devonian

they occupy a minute place in each scaffold of the living entity
a faculty perhaps only matched by bacteria and protozoa
their almost ethereal constitution implies a capacity for transparency
among tiny atoms with x number of legs
a subclass of arachnids long considered
a separate order in the ontology of the small

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scabies:

highly coo
in the air; burni
nothing stands still

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huddles

easily lost on the pupil
a blemish on the eyes where the vitreous humor floats
as if part of a primary

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the one into the many

where humans lodge ideas within ideas

and words become things

how lethal is something that could live

folds on a water bear?

seven-year-itch:
ks burst

within one of the

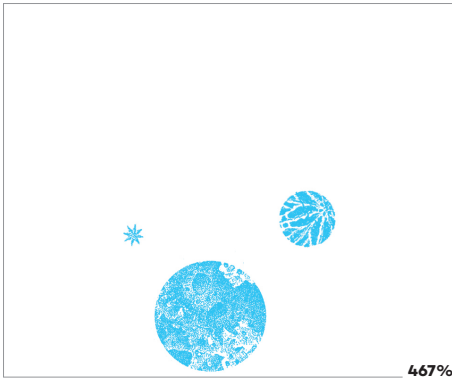
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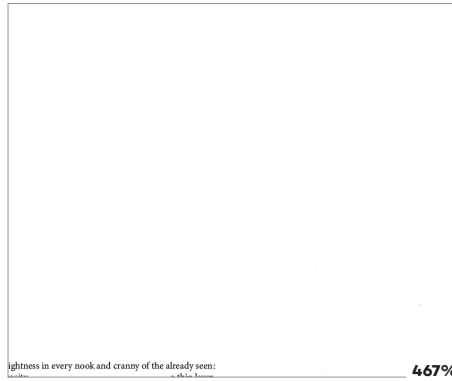
and worsens the mange;

a countenance, the never-ending itch:
in the face of the beautiful,

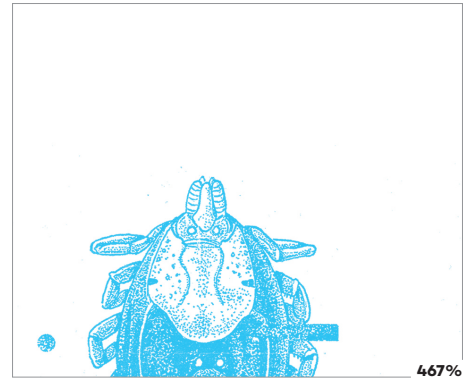
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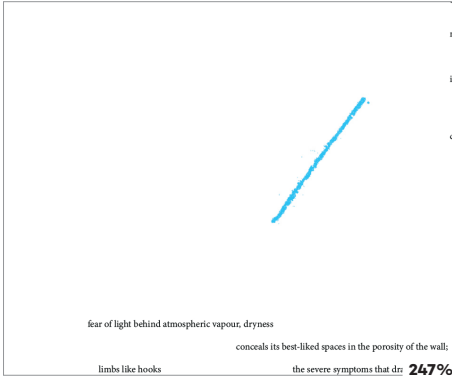
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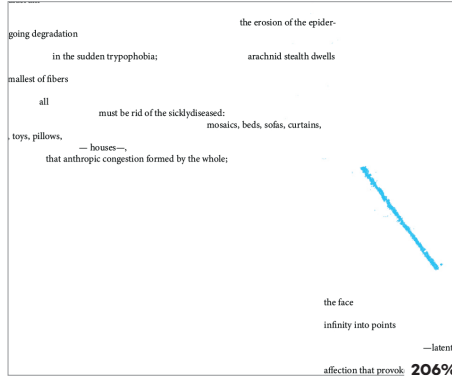
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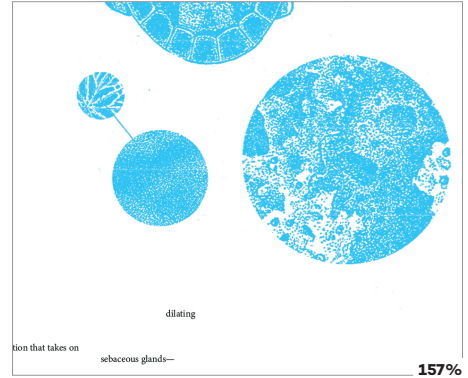
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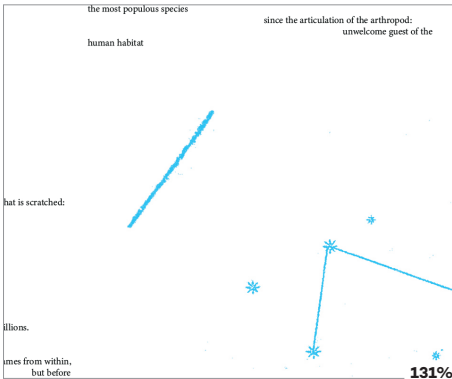
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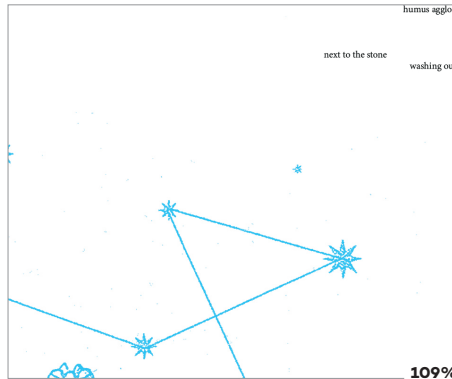
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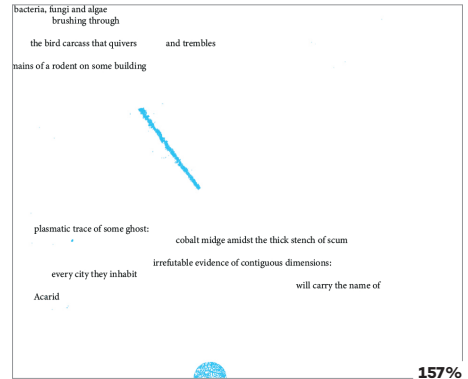
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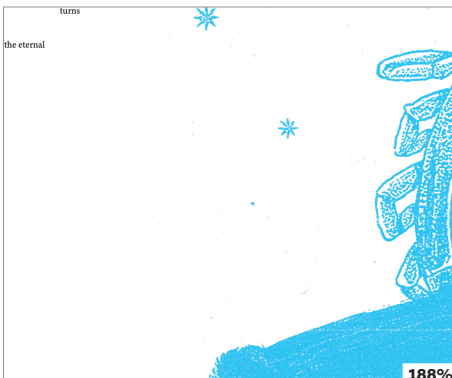
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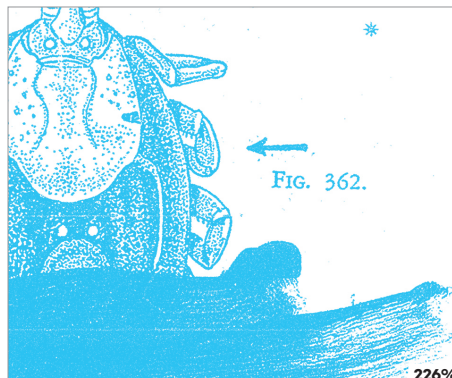
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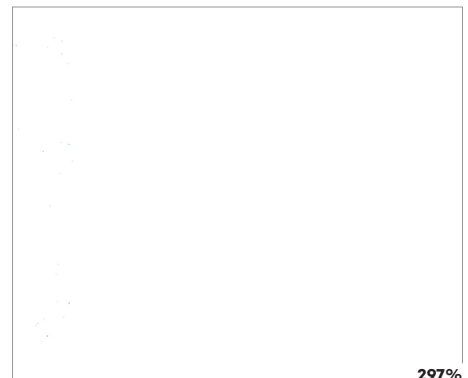
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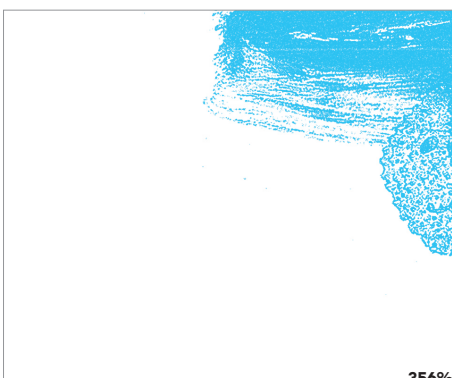
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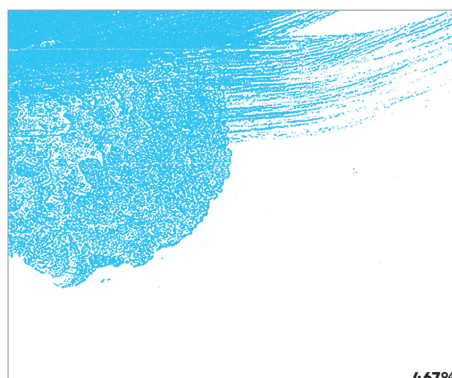
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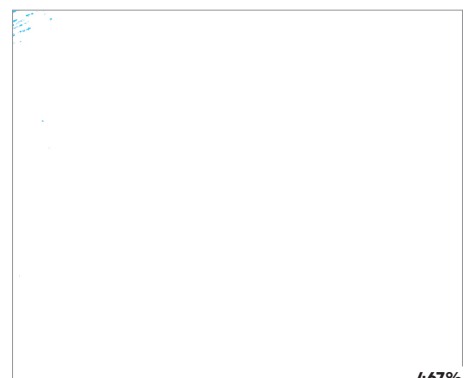
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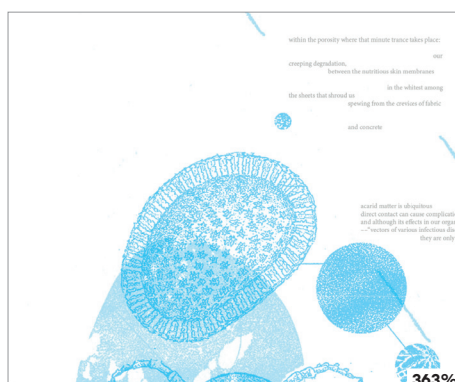
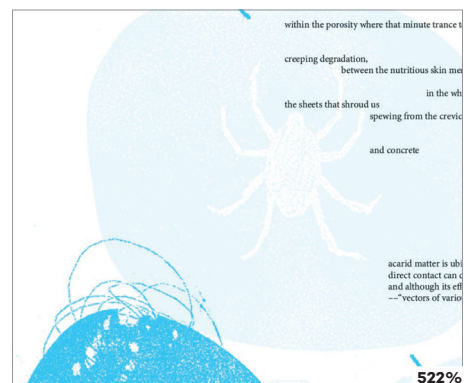
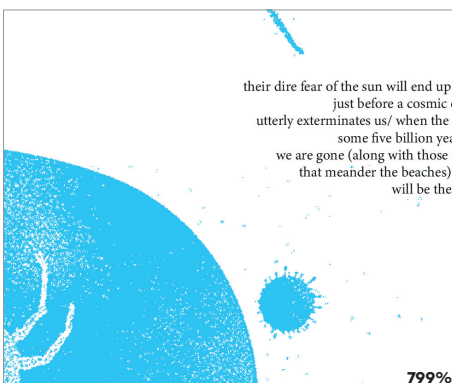
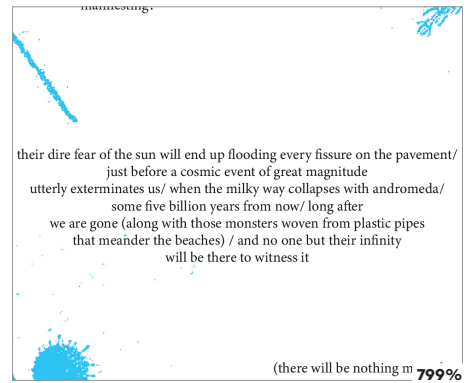
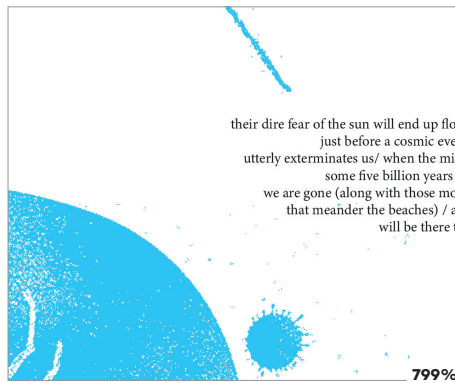
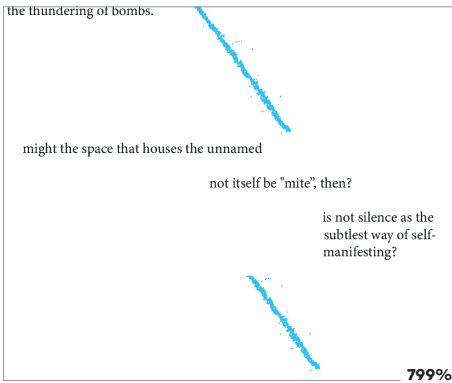
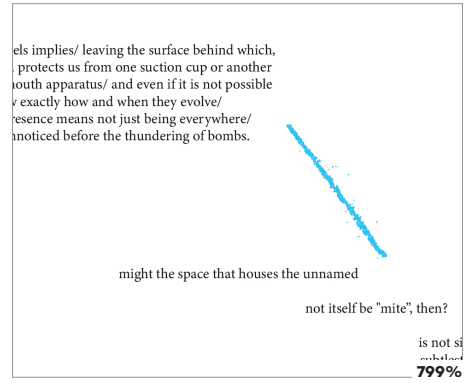
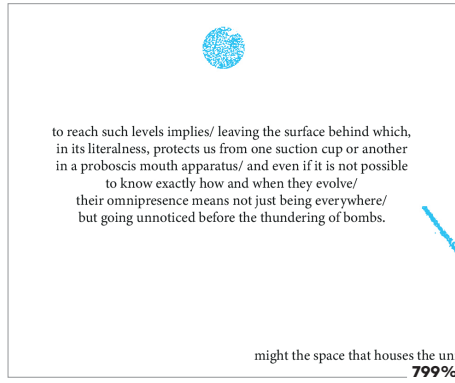
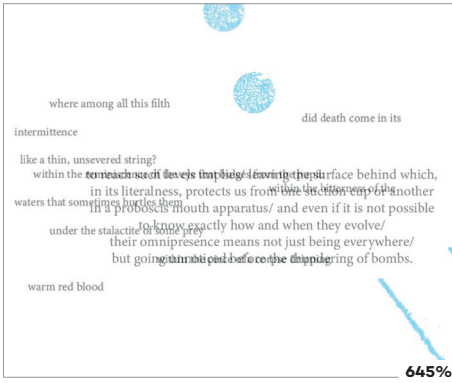
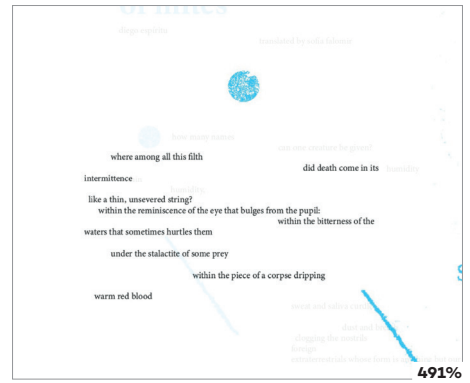
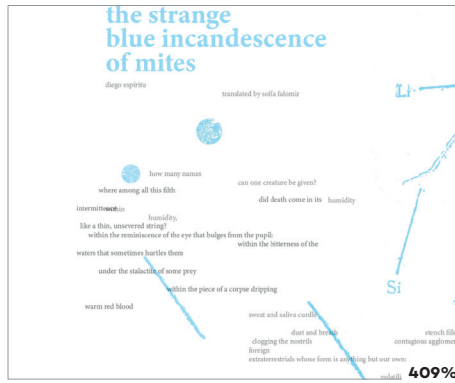
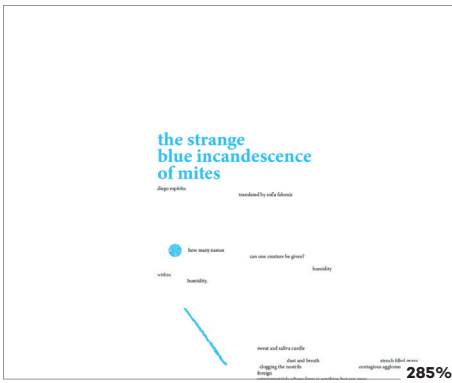
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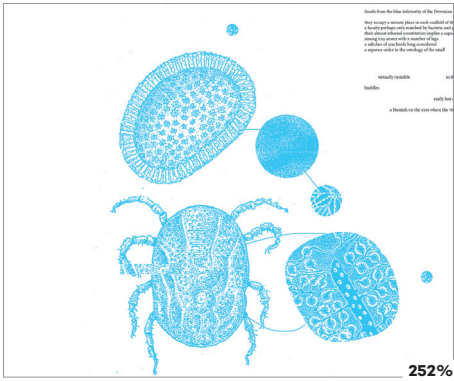


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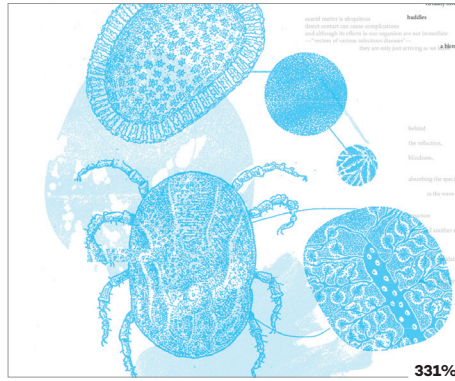


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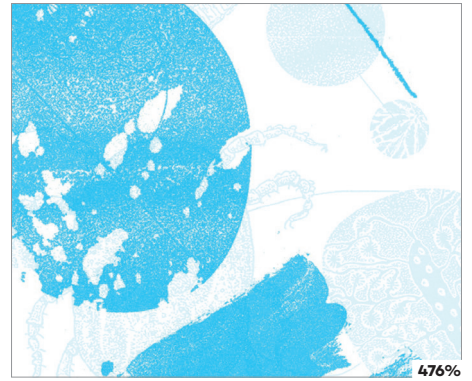




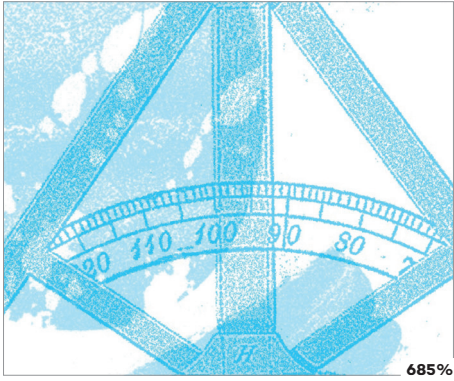
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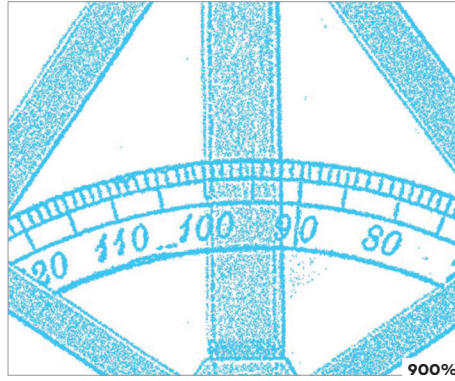
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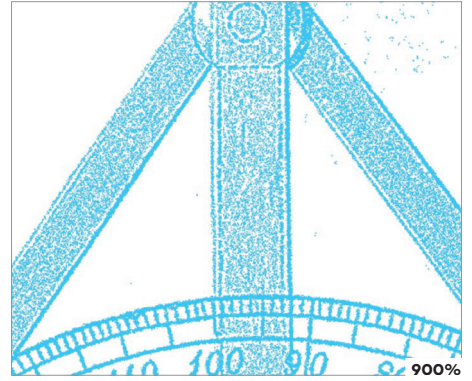
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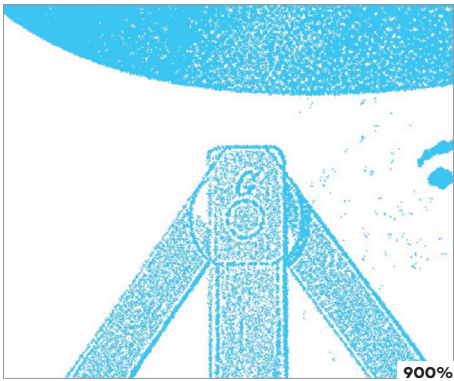
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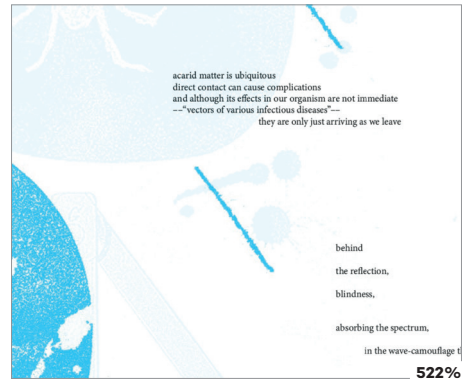
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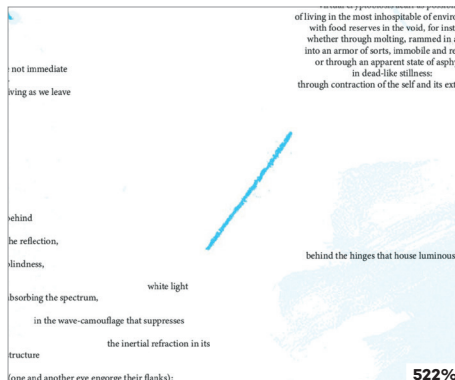
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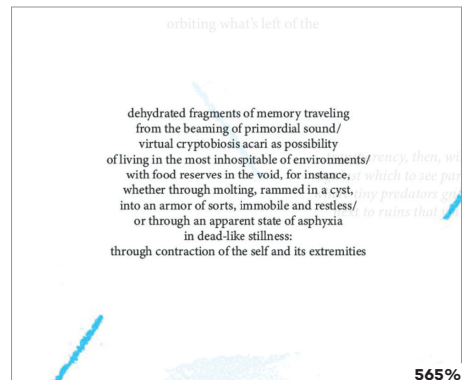
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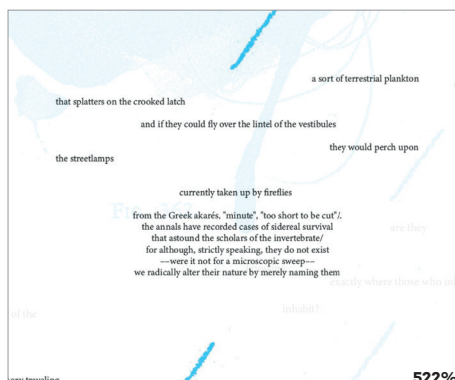
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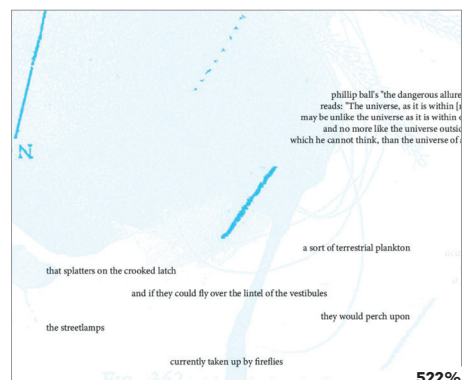
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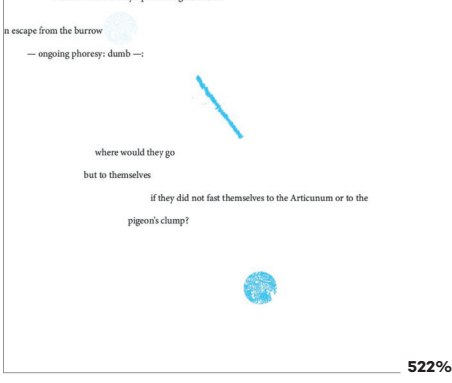
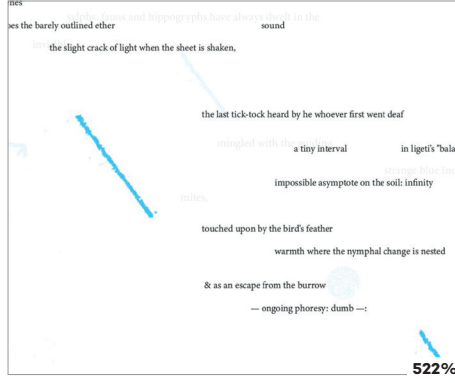
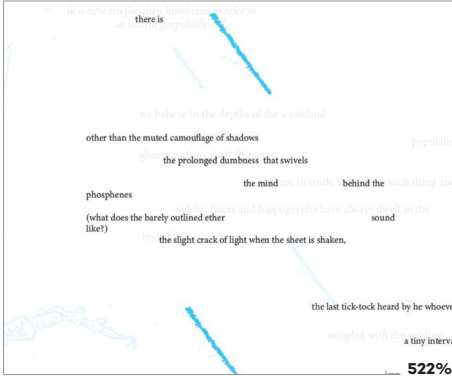
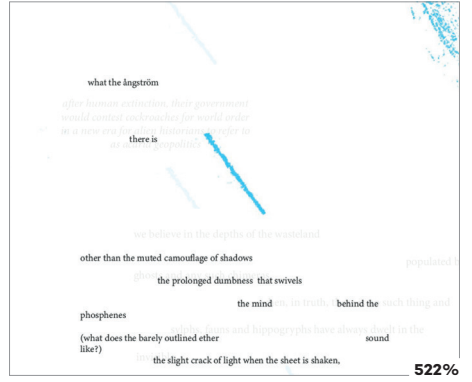
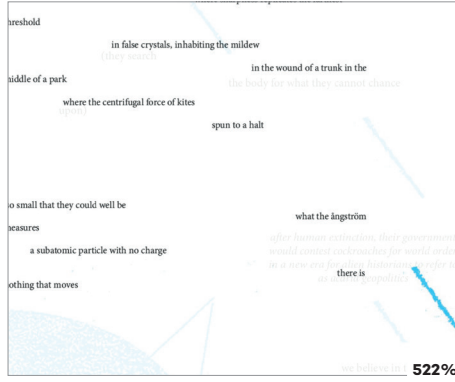
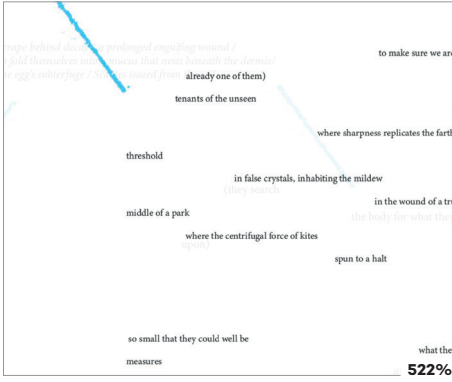
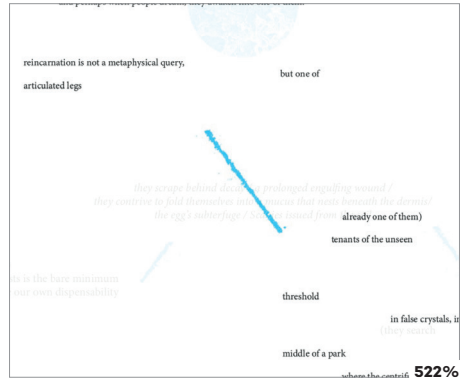
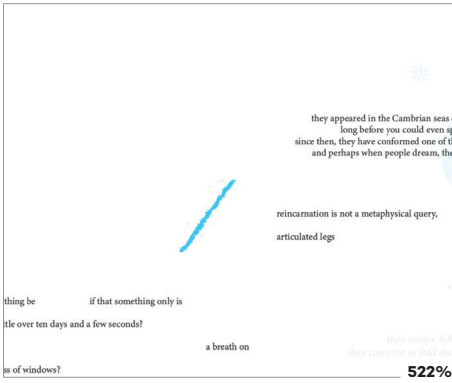
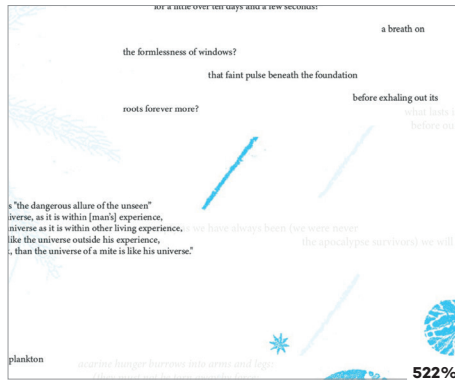
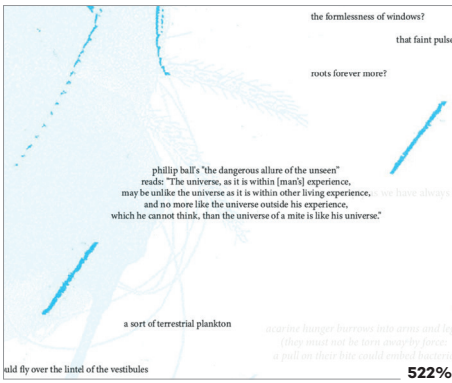
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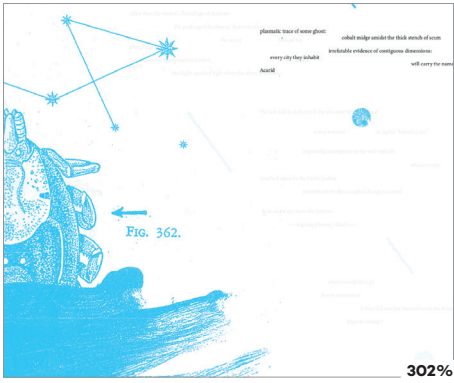
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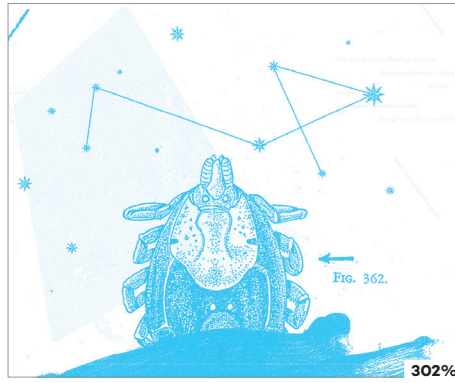
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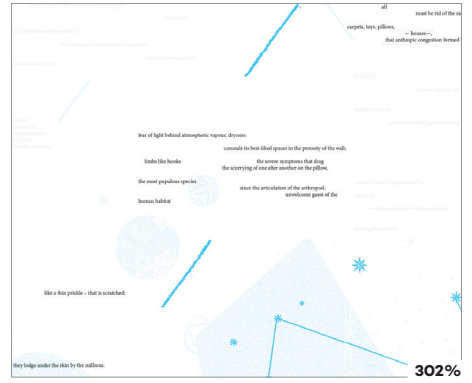
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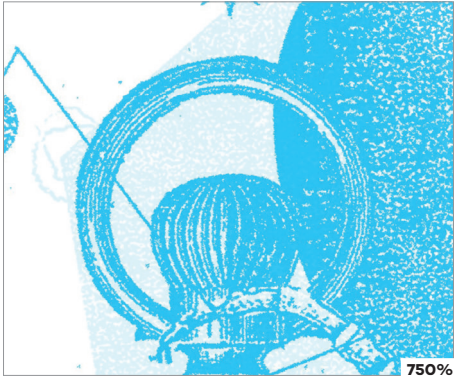
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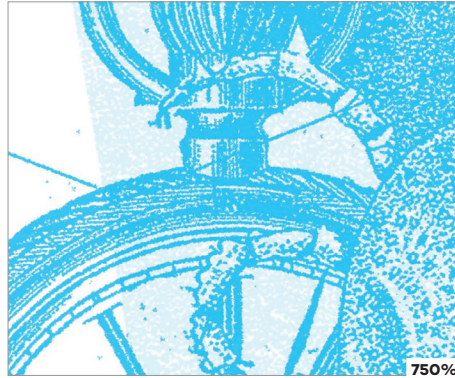
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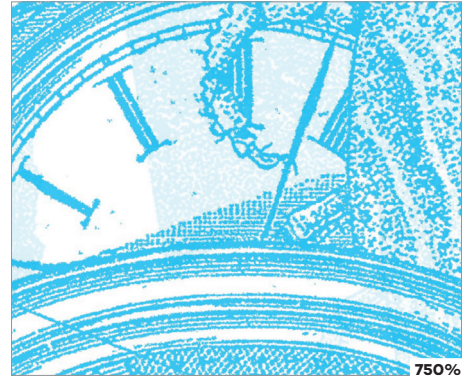
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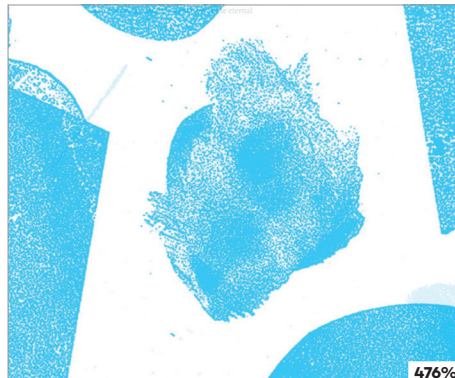
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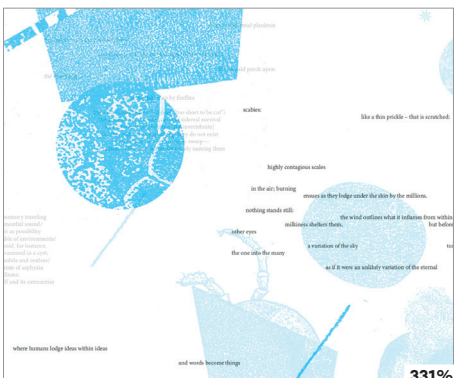
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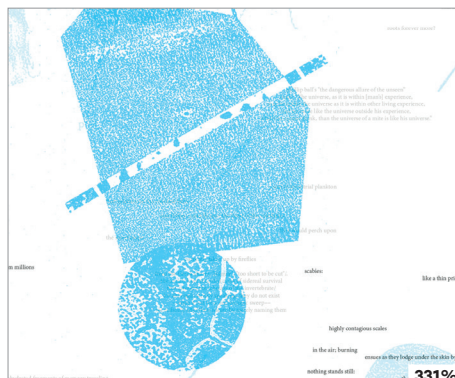
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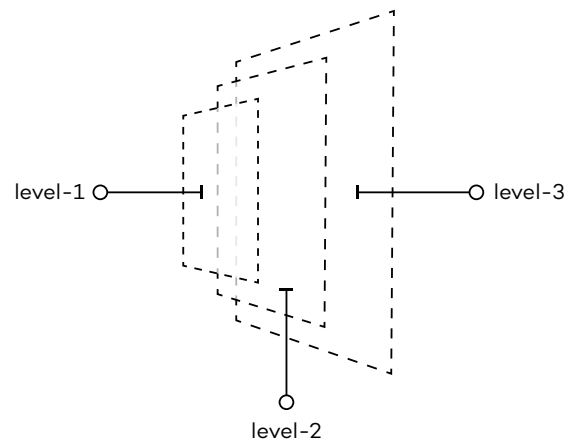
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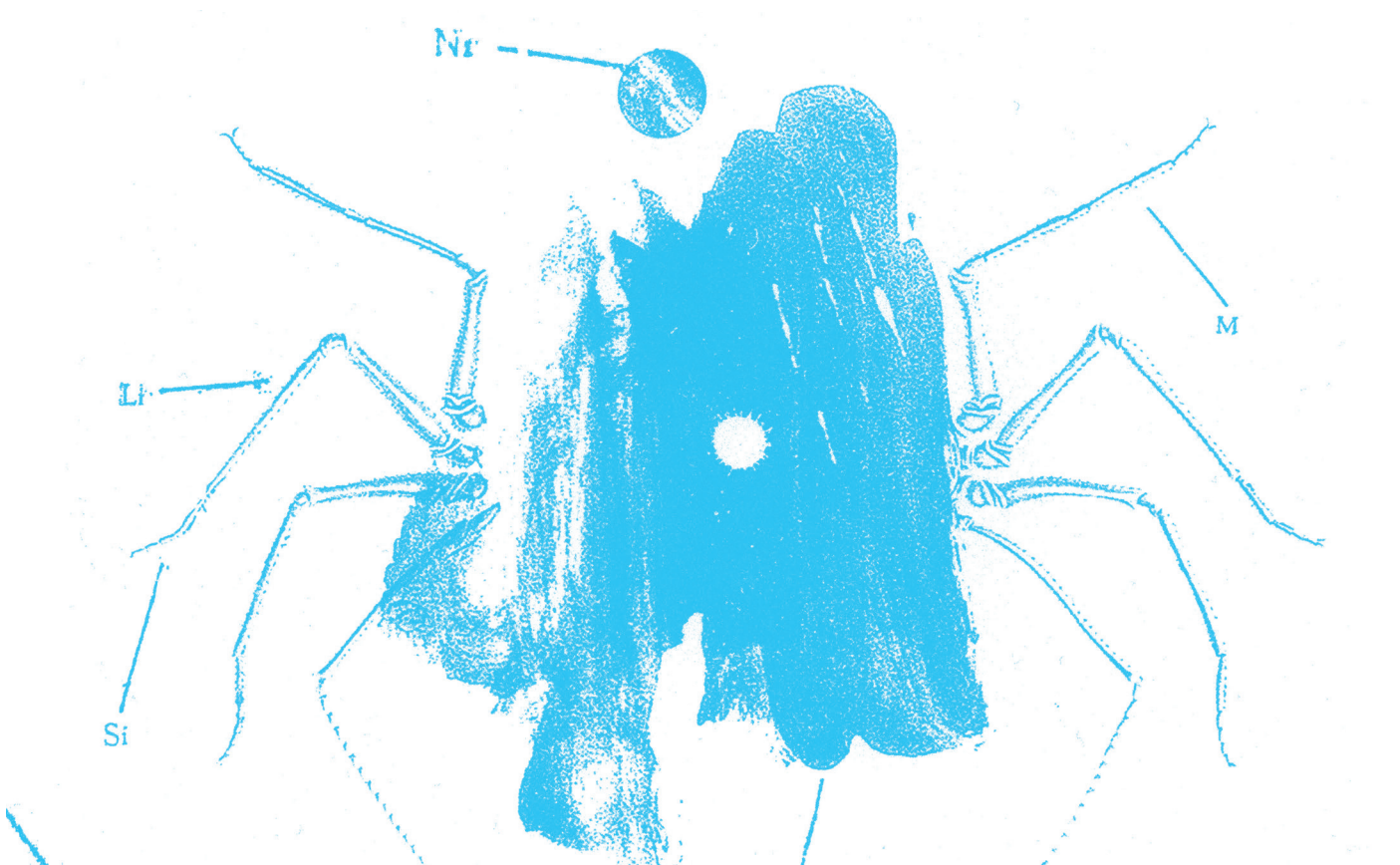
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about the authors

Diego Espíritu holds a degree in Philosophy from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). Part of the research and creation collective Arte+Ciencia of the UNAM, with whom he has exhibited at the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo de la UNAM (MUAC), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Oaxaca (MACO), and Centro Cultural España (CCEMx), among others. He teaches the expanded literature course Máquinas post-concretas on typewriter art and visual and concrete poetry.

María Antonia González Valerio (PhD) has a PhD in Philosophy and is currently a full professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). She directs the Seminar Arte+Ciencia, which brings together artists, academics, and scientists to collaborate on interdisciplinary projects, including graduate education, specialised theoretical research, artistic works, and exhibitions. Additionally, she is a curator and leads the artistic collective Bios ex Machina.

Eduardo Ramón Trejo is an illustrator and graphic designer. With an interest in visual narrative and graphic arts, he has developed in illustration through the collage technique, collaborating in various editorial and commercial projects and collective and individual exhibitions. For the last four years he has been collaborating as a freelance artist with publishing labels, brands and music bands developing illustration projects. He has collaborated with print and digital media such as GQ, Wired, Vice, Oxfam, Apple, Robb Report, Letras Libres, Tierra Adentro, Chilango, Expansión, Editorial Planeta, Penguin Random House, among others.

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