

REJUVENATION

REJUVENATION is a project initiated by Masha Ru and Branly López.

Masha Ru (1984, Moscow) is an artist with the background in science, living and working in Amsterdam. Masha's projects combine scientific research with a personal approach and cultural practices. www.masharu.nl

*Branly López is an expert in Mayan ancient philosophy, a former director of the City of Imagination and now a spiritual leader or *ajq'ij* in the school Eagle flight world in Guatemala. Within his school programmes, he is searching for the ways to integrate Mayan culture back to daily life and arts. Branly López is strongly engaged with the contemporary local cultural and artistic climate*

We've met in 2016 during the Dutch Design Week within Age of Wonderland where we worked together on a project BIG COSMIC DATA. Within this project, we used the ancient knowledge of the Maya as 'big cosmic data', the information we need which is already existing in the cosmos.

REPORT

In continuation of our collaborative work BIG COSMIC DATA, we wanted to do an in-depth research and develop a concept plan for a new work which addresses the notions and perceptions of time, recurrence, life cycles, and karma.

We've chosen this title for the project - REJUVENATION - for a good reason. Besides *recreation* and *rehabilitation*, the word *rejuvenation* actually reflects the idea of turning back time, as it means *making someone look or feel younger*. Today *rejuvenation* also has a connotation of obsession with becoming younger. In a way, *rejuvenation* might as well happen through *rebirth* spiritual practices, and the concept of *rebirth* refers to circular time. In the contemporary world, *rejuvenation* might have a meaning of *reincarnation*. On the other hand, according to the Cambridge dictionary *rejuvenate* means *to make an organization or system more effective by introducing new methods, ideas, or people*.

Along with looking at rejuvenation as at the new reincarnation, the project's starting research point lies in the fact that once art, science and spirituality used to be seen as a whole and were not separated into such different domains, as nowadays.

At a closer look at the ancient Maya culture, one can see that the vision of art, science and spirituality as one entity, is relevant for their philosophy to a large extent. The notions of unity, universal balance, continuity, repetition, and simultaneousness can be well traced through the Maya cultural tradition. It is interesting that in Mayan spiritual school Xicarapinic they say that Mathematics and Arts are the languages of the spirit. Through the Maya calendar, time can be seen as non-linear; and the past, the present and the future happen at the same time in the matrix of the calendar.

To engage to a larger extent with Mayan ancient philosophy and wisdom, I went to Guatemala where together with Branly López we worked with the local people who understand the concept of recurrence, non-linear time and karma. We've had a chance to communicate with the locals who live up to the Maya calendar and gladly shared their knowledge with me. This field research and communication was the crucial aspect of REJUVENATION because a large part of Mayan knowledge has been transferred orally.

Basing on the feeling and knowledge of nature and astronomy, the Maya created an intricate calendar system. The calendars which are used today are the Long Count, the Haab (secular calendar), and the Cholq'ij (sacred calendar). Each cycle of the Long Count is 2,880,000 days (7885 solar years). The Haab is a solar calendar which has 365 days and the Tzolkin or Cholq'ij as is called in the highlands in Guatemala has 260 days. The Cholq'ij calendar is a complex system of principles, values and repetitions according to the vision of time-space-cosmos of the Maya; which deals rather with feelings and experiences than with exact events.

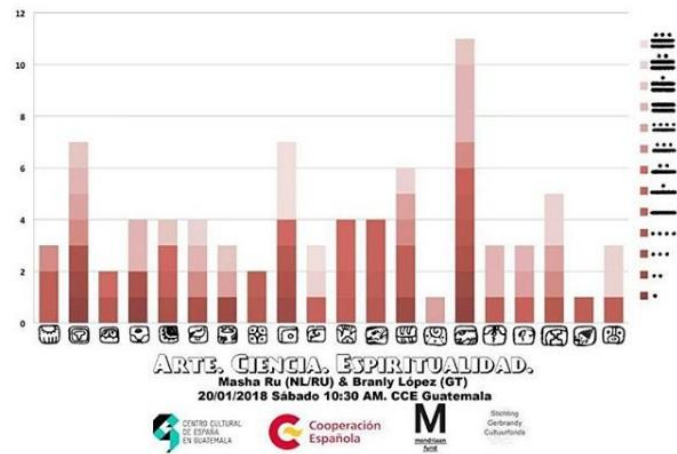
The goal of REJUVENATION was to reach a variety of public with a wide age range and various types of backgrounds and occupations. In particular, the project was addressed to artists, curators, Maya philosophy and calendar experts, art students and art enthusiasts. A special target audience was the local population of Guatemala and other countries where the Maya civilisation was born. With this project, we aimed at getting to know the Cholq'ij as a means of recurrence where art, science and spirituality meet, and at exploring the ways of artistic creation.

Our research in Guatemala started in Quetzaltenango, which is a second largest city in Guatemala. Historically in the area of Quetzaltenango, Spanish population wanted to mix with indigenous people and let them integrate into the Western system of values, instead of murder. Thus, nowadays there are a lot of people in Quetzaltenango with Mayan origin. Quetzaltenango is also the city where the main partners of the project (City of Imagination and Branly López) were based.

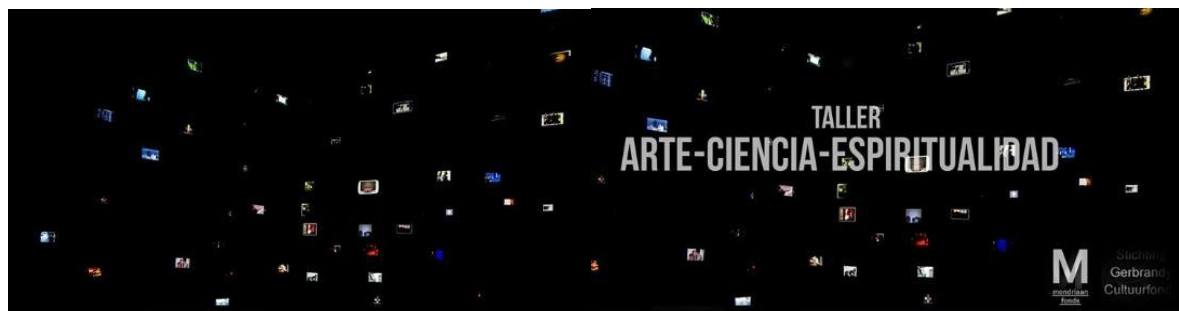
During this phase of the project, we conducted extensive participatory exchange sessions with local Mayan communities in Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, around Sololá and Lake Atitlan, which also involved a presentation in the City of Imagination. We've had a meeting with the local community at Totonicapan (in the neighbourhood of Quetzaltenango) where we shared our research on the Mayan art and culture and exchanged the ideas with the participants.



Meeting with the community of Totonicapan. Photo by Jester van Schuylenburch



Announcement of the workshop at the City of Imagination and the event Spanish Cultural



<p>DEC 13 Encuentro con Masha Ru, Xela Public · Hosted by Ciudad Imaginación</p> <p>★ Interested ✓ Going</p> <p>Wednesday, 13 December 2017 at 18:30–21:30 UTC-06 about 6 months ago</p> <p>Ciudad Imaginación 2 Calle 14A-32 Zona 1, 09001-Quetzaltenango, Quetzaltenango</p>	<p>JAN 15 Taller Arte Ciencia Cosmovisión Public · Hosted by Ciudad Imaginación</p> <p>★ Interested ✓ Going</p> <p>15 January at 18:00–21:00 UTC-06 about 5 months ago</p> <p>Ciudad Imaginación 2 Calle 14A-32 Zona 1, 09001-Quetzaltenango, Quetzaltenango</p>
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Screenshots of the Facebook event in the City of Imagination:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1747159395346910/>
<https://www.facebook.com/events/142012499758979/>

Encuentro con Masha Ru en Ciudad Imaginación en Xela!

December 15, 2017 0 Comments



Masha Ru es una artista y matemática rusa, que cuenta con un doctorado por la Universidad de Eindhoven de Tecnología. Ella desarrolló recientemente junto a Branly López un estudio en Holanda para medir el awas/karma en Eindhoven, Holanda, para encontrar patrones de eventos

Screenshot of the article on Xela in Focus

<http://www.xelainfocus.com/2017/12/encuentro-con-masha-ru-en-ciudad.html>

During the workshop at the City of Imagination, I talked about my artistic practice and about how I delve into Guatemalan artistic diversity and look for connections with the Russian and Dutch art. We also discussed the experimental process by means of which a collective data set was obtained, which was then converted to the Cholq'ij calendar. The purpose of this was discovering the possible values and principles that could strengthen the community. Therefore, creators from different areas were invited to jointly explore the interpretation of these data and be able to translate them into something material and visual. The idea was that the outcome of this workshop, as well as the creative process, would be discussed at another open event on the 25th of January at the City of Imagination. This workshop was a rsvp event with limited capacity, and was a success, as all places were taken and eventually 25 participants attended the event.

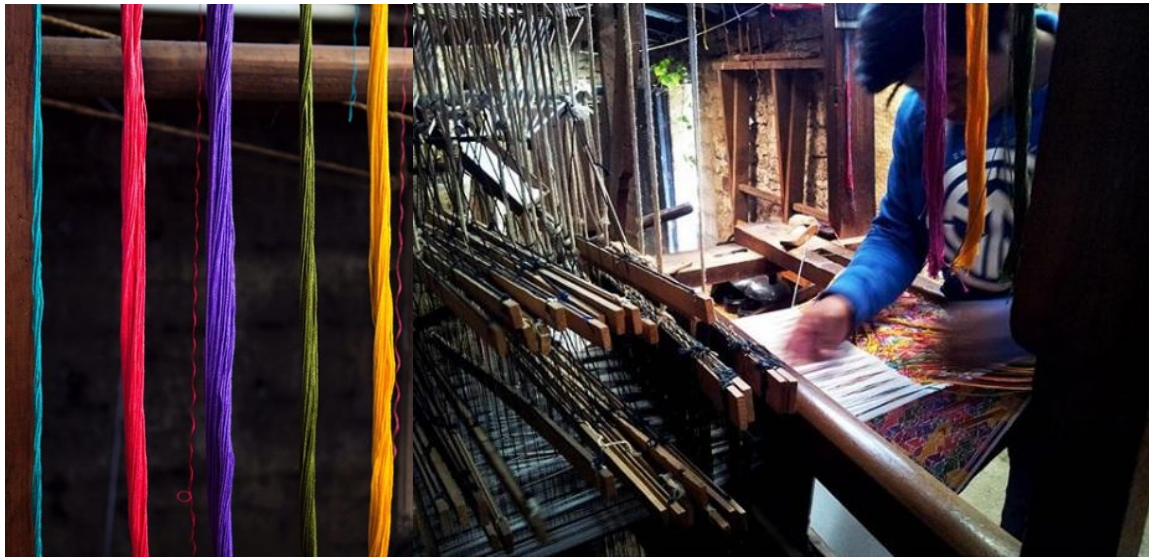


Workshop at the City of Imagination. Photos by Ielyj Ivgi

We've learned about the Mayan weaving tradition at the weaving workshop with Oscar Boj and his family. This tradition is strongly connected to the mathematics, art and Mayan cosmovision. The data we collected in Eindhoven during the BIG COSMIC DATA project served as a pattern and was woven into the cloth in the corresponding colours chosen according to the Mayan spirituality. This piece was an example of how we used the data collected in Eindhoven, how we interpreted it according to the values and principles of the Cholq'ij, and how this data was translated into a piece of art that includes mathematics, spirituality and art. The Mayan weaving tradition involves those aspects.

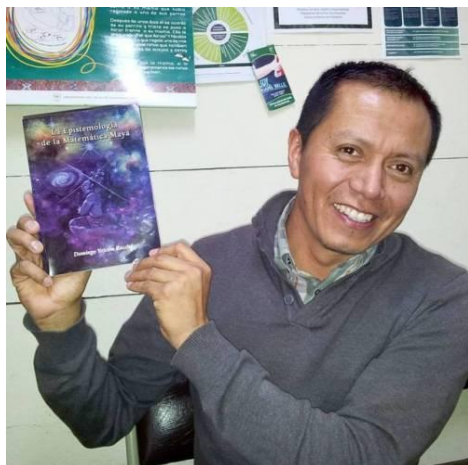


Fragment of the cloth woven in a traditional Maya technique. Photos by Ielyj Ivgi



Cloth in the process of weaving. Photos by Ielyj Ivgi

We've met scientists, philosophers and mathematicians who refer to Mayan knowledge in their work. At the invitation of Dr Domingo Yojcom Rocché, the author of the book 'Epistemology of Mayan mathematics', we gave a lecture at the El Valle University.



Meeting with Dr Domingo Yojcom Rocché, the author of the book 'Epistemology of Mayan mathematics' at CICC (cultures and science research centre) at Lake Atitlan. Photos by Jester van Schuylenburch



Lecture at the El Valle University

We've had a meeting and an interview with Pedro Guoron Ajquijay, the author of a book

'Choltun. The Story of the Thirteenth Ba'aqtun', and a meeting with Daniel Matul Morales, who wrote the book 'The Galactic Poem, Account of Time in Mayan Culture' and works at the USAC Tricentennial University in San Carlos, Guatemala. We've also encountered other spiritual guides and artists of Soth'il.

We attended the solstice celebration at Chichicastenango, Guatemala. It is an important cultural and spiritual event that lasts eight days - from 13 to 21st of December. This celebration is known as the tribute to Santo Tomas and in which Mayan ancient traditions take place with an abundance of food, music and dances. Its culmination is on the 21st with firecrackers, people swinging from a rope around a central pole known as "el palo volador" and the change of community and spiritual leaders or guides known as "cofrades".



Solstice celebration at Chichicastenango. Photo by Jester van Schuylenburch

To reach a younger audience, we carried out a workshop on mathematics and Mayan philosophy together with Branly López at Centro Educativo Comunal Mixto Santa Cruz, a high school focussed on Mayan Culture. It was a two-day event held on the 11 and 12 of January attended by 20 students.











Young audience waiting for the workshop at the a high school focussed on Mayan Culture. Photo by Jester van Schuylenburch




Fire ceremony at Centro Educativo Comunal Mixto Santa Cruz. Photo by Jester van Schuylenburch

Another meeting within REJUVENATION in Guatemala was held in the Spanish Cultural Centre in the form of mixed-media installation/exhibition. The partners, participants of the workshops and participatory sessions were invited to the event. At this stage, together with the partners of the project, we shared the experience and impressions of working on this project and reflect on its impact and influence on the local communities, artists, and all the partners involved.


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Arte, ciencia y espiritualidad

Durante este conversatorio Masha Ru y Branly López centran la conversación entorno a la conexión que existe entre el arte, espiritualidad y otras prácticas culturales

LETRAS Y PENSAMIENTO

Fecha
Sábado 20 de enero

Horario
10:30 a 12:00

Screenshot of the event announcement of the website of the Spanish Cultural Centre in Guatemala City

Together with Branly López we did a lecture 'Science, Art and Spirituality in research' at the Spanish Cultural Center (Centro Cultural De España, CCE/G) in Guatemala city.



Lecture at the Spanish Cultural Centre. Photos by Cristina Chavarria Flores

Within the project, the oral tradition, as well as the material art of the Maya, came into the picture. The artistic component of REJUVENATION, which is a conceptual one, merged with the scientific context and the notion of spirituality. I was delighted by the interest of the various audiences in the project, their attendance at the events, and their openness to share. I realised that the knowledge of the ancient Maya is immense and rich in meanings and connections. This trip has proved to be a major contribution to my artistic practice and an extremely inspiring experience. It was also an enriching experience for Branly López, his spiritual practice and for his goal of promoting the Mayan spirituality as a source of decolonizing the ways of creation or art creation. REJUVENATION was also an enriching experience for other people we met in Guatemala. According to the feedback that we got, this project stimulated them to reflect on their culture and heritage.

We would like to thank Stichting Gerbrandy Cultuurfonds for supporting REJUVENATION. The project was co-funded by Mondriaan Fund.



The text of the report was written and edited by: Masha Ru, Irene Kobalchuk, Branly López.

REJUVENATION is a collaboration of Masha Ru, Branly López, sr_labs (Pedro Domingo), Mayan weaving workshop of Oscar Boj and Tjitse Boersma. The events have been held on the platforms of Ciudad Imaginación, Spanish Cultural Center (Centro Cultural De España, CCE/G), Universidad Regional de Guatemala Sololá (UVG Altiplano), Centro Educativo Comunal Mixto Santa Cruz and Centro de Investigación Científica y Cultural. The project has been carried out with the help and support of Dr Domingo Yojcom Rocché, Catarina Monzón, David Marin, Jester Van Schuylenburch, Ielyj Ivgi and Irene Kobalchuk.

Masha Ru's blog on the journey to Guatemala and REJUVENATION project:

<http://masha-ru.tumblr.com>