



# Sol Y Luna

A portfolio of linoleum block prints by Sam Kerson

Printed by Katah

at the Dragon Dance Printmaking Studios in Trois-Rivières, Québec, Spring 2017

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Sol Y Luna,  
the Sun and the Moon,

A story that we hear again and again in the Americas in a multitude of versions. Once you begin to hear this very old story you seem to hear it everywhere. In the Popol Vuh for example the twins struggle with life and death and eventually rise into the heavens as the Sun and the Moon.

Dragon Dance Theatre worked with native communities in the Oaxaca Valley, Mexico annually from '94 until 2000.

Our first project was to make a collective creation of these cosmologies to be performed at the great Zapotec Ruins, Monte Alban. There were a hundred actors and four bands including two pre-Columbian bands. The show lasted three hours and the audience filled the ancient avenues.

My partner in Direction, Roberto Villasenor spoke to the public saying, "*the anthropologists say this city has been dead for centuries, but as we all see and feel, being here together acting out this ritual of Sol y Luna, enlivens the ancient city and brings it back to life.*"

Our method of working was to hold open workshops in Oaxaca and invite people to tell their stories related to the theme Sol y Luna. The participants, the dancers, actors and musicians were from various cultural traditions, but the directors were not. Though the tellers of the stories made every effort to tell the story as they knew it in their community or family, the directors looked at the stories in terms of the theatre production. The needs of the theatre were drama and visualization, dance and sound or music.

We, who ordered the production, looked at the elements of the various versions, that were dramatic and that fit together in the sequence determined by the overall story. In the ancient times when the world was dark, the children Sol y Luna were found by the old woman and raised by her. The children betray her, killing her husband and tricking her into eating his flesh. She is angry with them and sends her brothers to punish them. In order to escape, the children rise into the sky, becoming the sun and the moon.

The story is told in dozens of different ways; for example, in the Chichimec version the Old woman finds the twins, Sol y Luna in the rotting belly of a putrescent dog. In the Huave version, the children appear as the old

woman pulls fish from the sea; that is, the fish she pulls from the sea turn into a boy and a girl, and she names them Sol y Luna.

Dragon Dance produced this show eight different times, half of the time in Mexico and half of the time in Vermont. Each production required a poster and I, over the course of those years, made images in linoleum for each production. These images were used on posters and in publicity and then, they were archived.

In 2017, we searched through the box of old blocks and selected a series of images that told the story. Katah intended to give her own originality to this version, to that end she and Sam chose the images, in some cases reworked the images and decided to make the series in color. Katah printed the images and made the portfolios in her Dragon's lair print shop.

Serendipitously, we were joined in this book-making process by a young artist from the Oaxaca community which had given us the story in the first place. This artist, Vincente Desales, had been ten years old in 1998. At the time of this printing he was 30 and leant his skilled hand, his Zapotec spirit, and his native eye to the enterprise.

We undertook to make an edition of thirty, the first five have been purchased and are now housed in libraries that are known for their Latin American collections, among them the University of New Mexico, the University of Arizona, and British Library, Latin American collection in London.

Sam Kerson, April 2019

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Kerson', with a long, sweeping underline.

*Tech information:*

*There are 12 colored prints, including a title page and a back colophon*

*The story text is integrated into the portfolio*

*The prints are on Somerset Satin paper*

*Paper size: 38 X 56 cm (15 X 22 inches)*

*Images: 22 X 30 cm (9 X 12 inches)*

*Price: \$1700 USD*