

SPELL

ORGANIZED BY SIMIAN

WITH

INGVAR CRONHAMMAR, TOKE FLYVHOLM, LONE PEDERSEN,
MEGAN PLUNKETT, JAN S. HANSEN, TORA SCHULTZ,
CHRISTIAN VINDELEV, MARKUS VON PLATEN,
AND MARINA XENOFONTOS

08.08.26 – 12.09.26

Spell is an exhibition organized by the artist-run exhibition space Simian in Copenhagen, following *Painting-as-prop*, presented by Etablissement d'en face at Simian in 2024.

The exhibition features sculpture, installation, photography and painting, bringing together works by invited artists alongside those of Simian's founders.

Spell

There is a wish that everything could somehow be held in one sentence, a few words, one word, or no words at all, just something felt. Around it move interiority, prescription and monstrosity, words becoming things, things staying opaque, a blurry condition of trial, and the rules and laws around us. Power keeps inventing language for what it was already going to do, giving its own desires the shape of law.

The exhibition takes place opposite the Palais de Justice, the overwhelming nineteenth-century courthouse, often described as the largest in the world, whose architecture was admired by Hitler and studied by Albert Speer. History is not linear, it goes and comes around, not exactly repeating, not exactly released. There is something almost Escher-esque in the staircases and halls of the building, a particular kind of vertigo.

Some sentences begin in law, others in private perception, attempting to find language, written or spoken. Something is almost always left outside the sentence. The final sentence of this paragraph has six identical words in a row, and still makes grammatical sense. Whether it makes sense to speak or write this way is more a matter of subjective judgement. If someone says, "I think that that was a good exhibition", you could answer, "I think that that that that that that comes after is unnecessary".

There are sentences that seem pleased with themselves. Oscar Wilde is perhaps the most obvious name for the polished inversion, the sentence turning itself into something quotable, more as form than as authorship: "I can resist everything except temptation" or "Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future". Maybe these are not even really from Wilde. Maybe they have been synthesized, detached, polished again, and passed around in that strange condition where a name is still attached, but the words no longer really belong to anyone. It doesn't really matter. Quotes like these become bouillon cubes, small compressed stocks of existential flavor, ready to dissolve into almost any conversation. Like a you-get-what-you-deserve, judgement-awaits-you kind of saying, passing between philosophy, justice, law and atmosphere, waiting to be invoked in support of any claim, lowercased by common use over time: "an eye for an eye" or the karmic-sounding "what goes around comes around".

So perhaps the name is only a handle before the sentence travels away from it. An aphorism wants to be authorless in the end, or more than authored, like law. At a certain point the sentence is no longer just something someone said, but something you're inside, reality beginning to shift around what it names.

At that point, excess changes character and becomes arithmetic, or pretends to: what is the estimated total number of written characters on Earth, as of 2026, in humanity's normative and prescriptive texts, across all languages, printed and digital media, archives, official documents, books, and websites?

By normative and prescriptive texts are meant texts that prescribe, regulate, justify, or teach human behavior, including what people may or may not do, what is permitted or forbidden, what duties, rights, obligations, virtues, and social roles they have, what counts as right or wrong, and how individual or collective life should be organized.

This includes legal, religious, moral, ethical, social, political, professional, educational, institutional, cultural, and philosophical texts, such as constitutions, legislation, regulations, court rulings, treaties, declarations of rights, religious scriptures and rules, military doctrines, political ideologies, royal decrees, institutional codes, professional standards, medical ethics, school rules and teachings, child-rearing guidance, workplace regulations, customs, etiquette guides, cultural norms, platform policies and community guidelines.

The best answer is probably this. Not a precise, countable fact, but an order-of-magnitude estimate of humanity's written rule layer.

2026: Around 10^{13} – 10^{14} written characters, meaning 10 trillion to 100 trillion. Estimate: 30 trillion characters / 30.000.000.000.000.

The range is plausible based on Google's earlier estimate of approximately 129.9 million books by 2010 and Google Books containing roughly 2 trillion words, or about 10 trillion characters, before adding all websites, archives, PDFs, legal databases, institutional documents, and everything written since.

If all these characters were set in 11-point type, as on this paper, with standard letter spacing, and placed in one continuous line, and if that line were wrapped around the Equator, circling Earth like history coming around again and again, how many times would it wrap around? Or, otherwise, if the letters began arranging themselves into a single sentence, how far into space would the text extend, and could that sentence make sense and remain relevant to everyone on Earth?

Using the earlier estimate of 30 trillion characters, and assuming 11-point type with ordinary letter spacing, an average character width might be 2 millimeters.

Then, $30.000.000.000.000 \text{ characters} \times 2 \text{ mm} = 60.000.000 \text{ km}$.

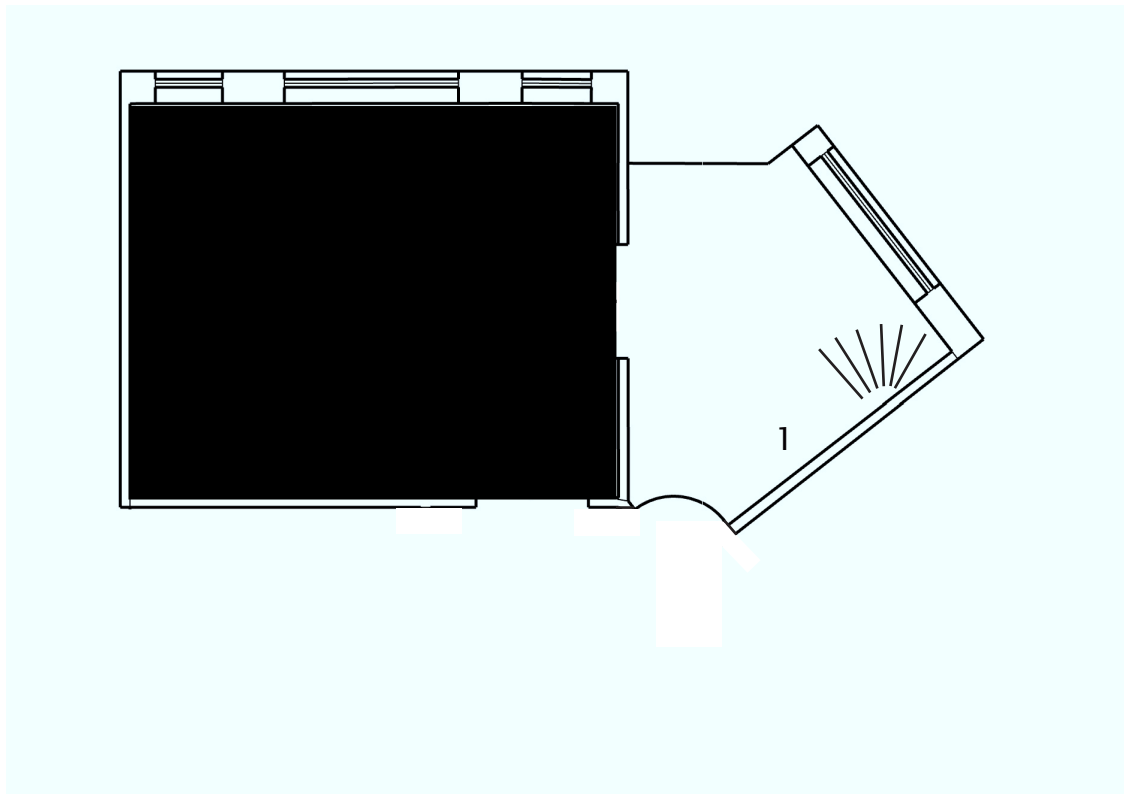
The Equator is about 40.075 km, so the line would circle Earth about 1500 times, keeping its hold.

Sent outward, it would extend about 60 million kilometers into space, a different dizziness, no longer contained, easier to write than to imagine.

For the letters to form a single sentence that made sense and was relevant to everyone on Earth, it would probably not work in any ordinary linguistic way. It might exist instead as something conceptual or poetic, a fantasy, a total sentence of law, care, fear, permission, duty, punishment, hope, instruction and control. But to be relevant to everyone, across all languages and lives, it would have to become so abstract that it stopped being a sentence.

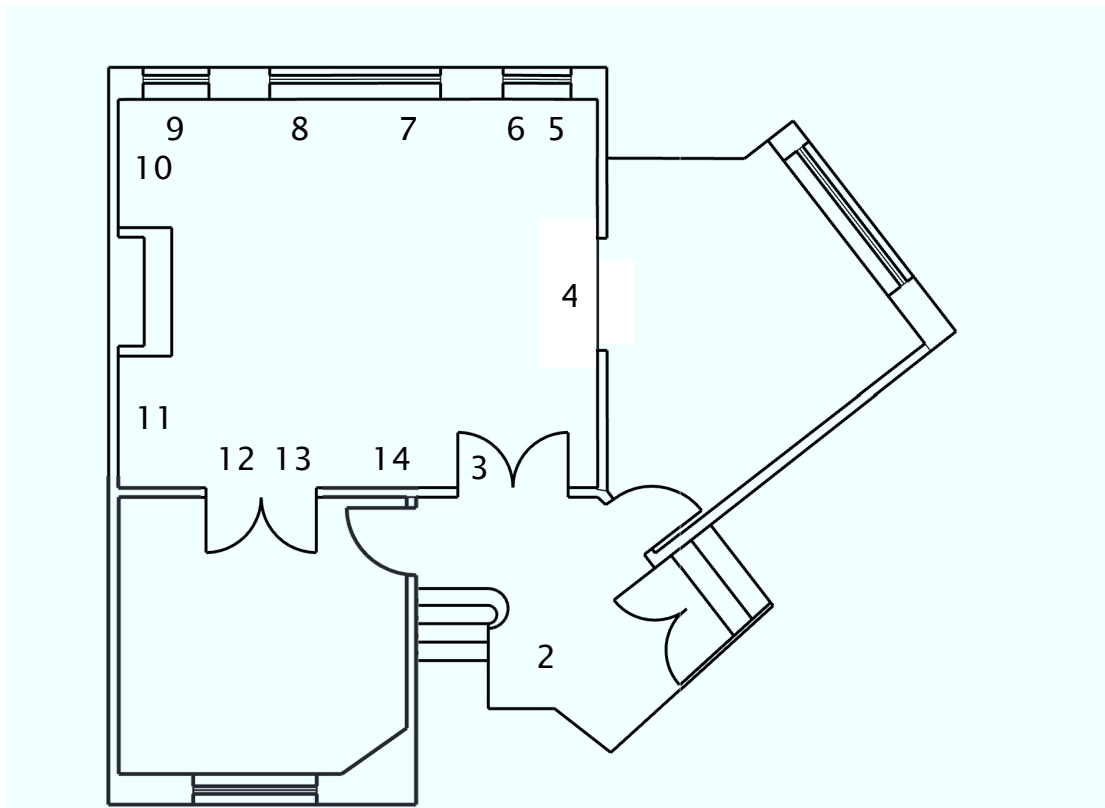
Jan S. Hansen

BASEMENT



1 JAN S. HANSEN
UNTITLED, 2026
ACRYLIC, INKJET PRINT, GESSO, CLEAR TAPE, STICKER,
ACRYLIC GEL, CLEAR ADHESIVE FILM ON CANVAS

BEL ÉTAGE



2 TOKE FLYVHOLM
EXHAUST I, 2026
FIRE HYDRANT, NYLON STOCKING, SNAIL SHELLS

3 MARINA XENOFONTOS
CONFETTI CURTAIN MADE FROM CONFETTI FABRIC LEFT
BY ALEXANDRA HADJIKYRIAKOU AT OUR SHARED STUDIO,
2023

4 MARINA XENOFONTOS
REPLICA OF CURTAIN MADE WITH DAKIS PANAGIOTOU FOR
A HOUSEWARMING PARTY FOR THE ARTIST'S APARTMENT IN
LIMASSOL IN 2020. FABRIC FOR THE ORIGINAL BOUGHT
FROM GEORGE'S MATERIAL SHOP IN LIMASSOL IN 2020.
FABRIC FOR REPLICA BOUGHT FROM KARAGIANNIS FABRIC
STORE IN ERMOU, ATHENS IN 2022. THE ORIGINAL WAS
SILVER AND BLACK POLYESTER FABRIC AND HAS BEEN
REPLICATED IN BLUE POLYESTER WITH SILVER UV-BLOCKING
POLYAMIDE COATING FABRIC

5 – 6 MARINA XENOFONTOS
CURTAINS MADE FOR THE BEDROOM IN THE ARTIST'S
BASEMENT APARTMENT IN LIMASSOL. USED BETWEEN 2011–
2013. FABRIC BOUGHT FROM GEORGE'S TEXTILES STORE IN
LIMASSOL IN 2010–2011. FLORAL PRINT SATIN FABRIC

7 MARINA XENOFONTOS
REPLICA OF A CURTAIN MADE FOR THE BEDROOM IN THE
ARTIST'S APARTMENT IN LIMASSOL. ORIGINAL USED

BETWEEN 2020–2022. FABRIC FOR THE ORIGINAL WAS
BOUGHT FROM GEORGE'S TEXTILES IN LIMASSOL, IN 2019.
FABRIC FOR AKWA IBOM BOUGHT FROM KARAGIANNIS
FABRIC STORE IN ERMOU, ATHENS IN 2022, WHITE VELVET

8 – 9 MARINA XENOFONTOS
CURTAINS MADE FOR THE GUEST BEDROOM/ STUDIO IN THE
ARTIST'S APARTMENT IN LIMASSOL. USED BETWEEN 2020–
2022. FABRIC BOUGHT FROM CHRISTAKIS
THEMISTOKLEOUS IN LIMASSOL IN 2020. PURPLE TAFFETA
FABRIC

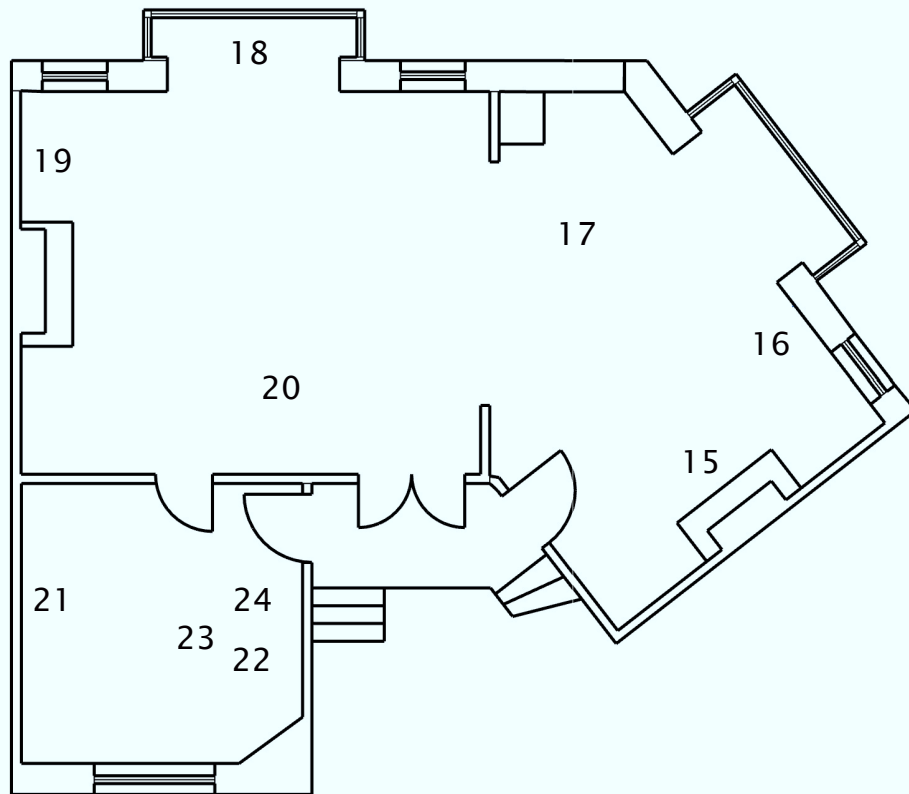
10 – 11 INGVAR CRONHAMMER
OIL LAMP, 2018
BRASS, ED. OF 33 + 2 AP

12 MARINA XENOFONTOS
CURTAIN MADE FROM ELASTIC STRIPES FABRIC BOUGHT
FROM GEORGE'S TEXTILES IN LIMASSOL IN 2011 FOR A
TAILCOAT T-SHIRT, 2025

13 MARINA XENOFONTOS
THE VIRGIN SUICIDES' LIVING ROOM, 1995. BASEMENT
STUDIO, LIMASSOL, USED 2011–13

14 INGVAR CRONHAMMER
OIL LAMP, 2018
BRASS, ED. OF 33 + 2 AP

STAIRS & 1ST FLOOR



15 TOKE FLYVHOLM
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE, 2026
BIRD SPIKES, MARBLES

16 JAN S. HANSEN
UNTITLED, 2026
ACRYLIC, INKJET PRINT, GESSO, CLEAR TAPE, ACRYLIC GEL,
CLEAR ADHESIVE FILM, PERSPEX, ACETATE ON CANVAS

17 LONE PEDERSEN
GARGOIL, 1996
PINE WOOD

18 TOKE FLYVHOLM
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE, 2026
BIRD SPIKES, MARBLES

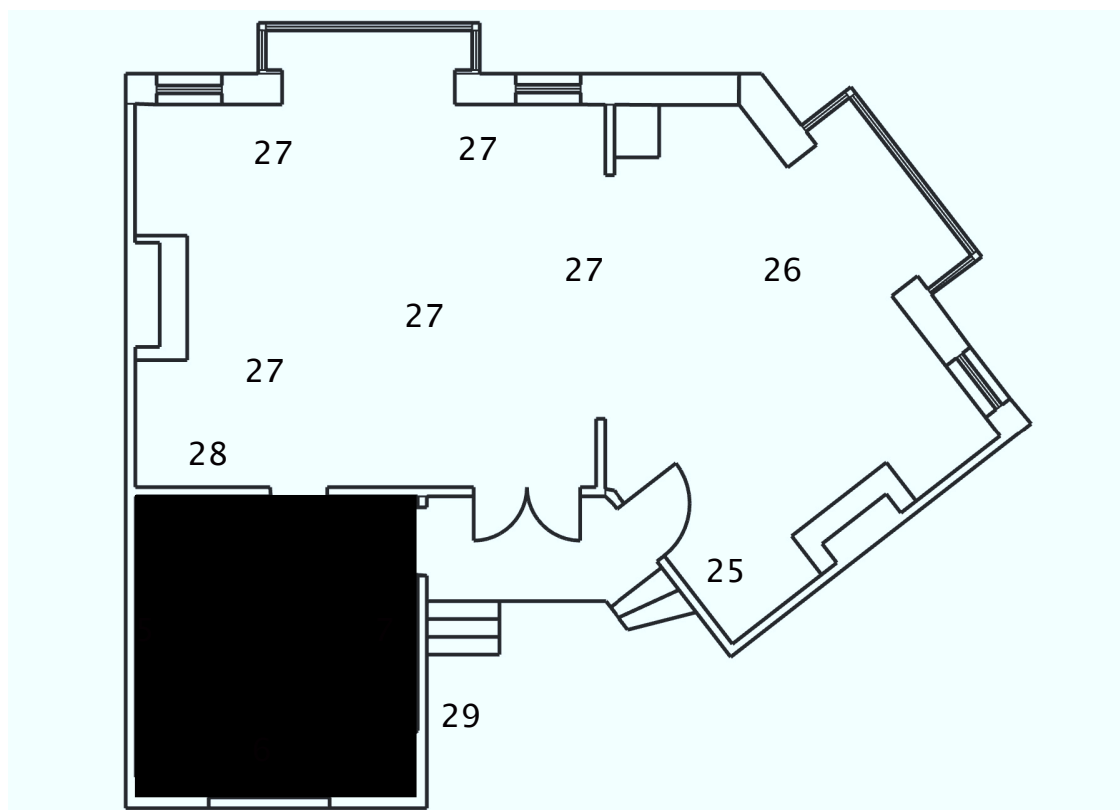
19 JAN S. HANSEN
UNTITLED, 2026
ACRYLIC, INKJET PRINT, GESSO, CLEAR TAPE, CLEAR
ADHESIVE FILM, ACETATE, COATED PAPER, CLEAR PVC ON
CANVAS

20 TORA SCHULTZ
DISCLOSE, 2025
SECRETARY (PLYWOOD, MDF, MAHOGANY STAIN)

21 JAN S. HANSEN
UNTITLED 2026
ACRYLIC, INKJET PRINT, GESSO, CLEAR TAPE, STICKER,
CLEAR ADHESIVE FILM, ACETATE ON CANVAS

22 - 24 TOKE FLYVHOLM
EXHAUST II-III, 2026
FIRE HYDRANTS, NYLON STOCKINGS, SNAIL SHELLS

STAIRS & 2ND FLOOR



25 MEGAN PLUNKETT
ANYTHING YOU NEED (GRAIL) 2025
INKJET PRINT ON PLATINE FIBRE RAG PAPER, FOAMEX
ED. OF 2 + 1 AP

26 CHRISTIAN VINDELEV
UNTITLED, 2026
WOOD, MIRROR TILES

27 MARKUS VON PLATEN
FIELD, 2026
XPS FOAM, 5 PARTS

28 LONE PEDERSEN
FABELDYR, 1996
PINE WOOD

29 LONE PEDERSEN
FABELDYR, 1996
PINE WOOD

ALL WORKS BY INGVAR CRONHAMMAR: COURTESY OF NILS STÆRK

ALL WORKS BY LONE PEDERSEN: COURTESY OF MUSEUM OVARTACI, AARHUS, DENMARK

WORK BY MEGAN PLUNKETT: COURTESY OF ALICIA VOLK

WORK BY TORA SCHULTZ: COURTESY OF PALACE ENTERPRISE & THE ARTIST

ALL WORKS BY MARINA XENOFONTOS: COURTESY FELIX GAUDLITZ & THE ARTIST

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