

The Art Happens Here: Net Art Anthology

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FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ZACHARY KAPLAN
Executive Director, Rhizome

Net Art Anthology and the connected gallery exhibition “The Art Happens Here: Net Art’s Archival Poetics” are, in many ways, a culmination and synthesis of Rhizome’s two-decades-plus trajectory as a champion of born-digital art and culture.

The Anthology is an endeavor we undertook as an organization to support greater knowledge and understanding of net art as a diverse field of practices, which was the founding focus of Rhizome in 1996.

practices, and building robust tools for preservation and access, this entire initiative will serve as an engine for further research and ongoing presentations—online and onsite—of what we believe to be the art of our time.

First and foremost, I’d like to thank our visionary partner the Carl and Marilynn Thoma and the Foundation in realizing the entirety of this three-year initiative. Carl and Marilynn Thoma and the Foundation share our deep dedication to digital art and to developing the field holistically through efforts in exhibition-making, scholarly research, and criticism. We are grateful for their commitment to Rhizome, as well as for that of others at the Foundation, in particular Jason Foumberg, Staci Boris, and Mira Burack.

Additional support was provided by Greg and Yukari Pass, Mihail Lari and Scott Murray,

Through more than three years of dedicated scholarly research, I believe we’ve written a compelling and surprising history of that field. The Anthology, moreover, showcases Rhizome’s arsenal of strengths in both the preservation and exhibition of born-digital things. It leverages a suite of preservation platforms and techniques coded and developed in house that in turn have been stress-tested by the needs of this project. This suite includes web platforms like anthology.rhizome.org and tool sets like Webrecorder and the Emulation as a Service framework (a partnership with University of Freiburg in Germany). Finally, this project makes its home at the New Museum, our affiliate since 2003, and the only institution of its kind to prioritize art and technology as the key frontier for contemporary art.

Net Art Anthology is an undertaking unprecedented in our institutional history. It is our hope that in paying such careful attention to bodies of work often under-recognized in art history, modeling prac-

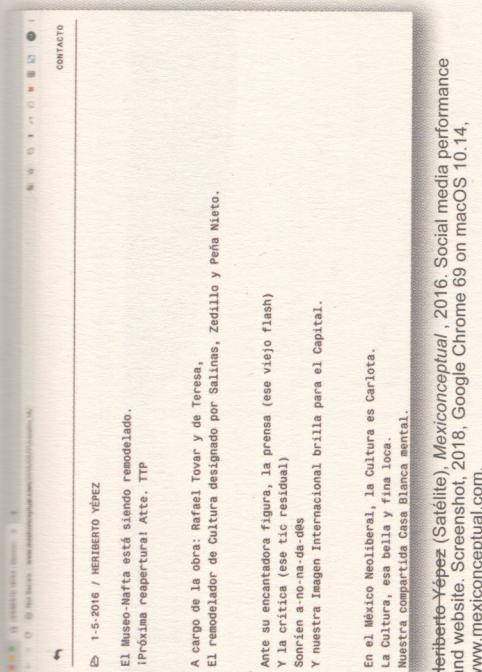
Fred Benenson, Josh Wolfe, and Lisa Schiff. We gratefully acknowledge the Royal Norwegian Consulate General in New York, the Dutch Culture USA program by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York, and the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany. I would like to extend special thanks to the Producers Council of the New Museum. Intel generously provided Intel® NUCs to present “The Art Happens Here.”

The Anthology was brought to life by Michael Connor, Artistic Director; Aria Dean, Assistant Curator; Dragan Espenschied, Preservation Director; and Lyndsey Jane Moulds, Software Curator. Every week of this intricate project was a heavy lift in a distinct way, ranging from debugging to aligning legacy browsers and varied file types to tracking down lost artifacts. Special thanks is due, as well, to others at Rhizome who built tools and undertook web production: Software Director Ilya Kreymer; Engineer Mark Beasley; Lauren Studebaker, Community

4.21 HERIBERTO YÉPEZ (SATÉLITE) *Mexiconceptual*, 2016

Mexiconceptual was an experimental art criticism project that explored new ways of making and preserving the archive through a series of critical, literary, and historiographical texts composed for, published by, and circulated through a digital environment.

Commissioned by Satélite, a curatorial project with an emphasis on institutional critique founded by curator Violeta Horcasitas, the work consisted of a website active for one month:



www.mexiconceptual.com, from April 14 to May 13, 2016. Each day, the website published one text by Heriberto Yépez, examining the relationships among Mexico, the museum sector, and the legacy of Conceptualism. The work offered a tour through five decades of conceptual art in Mexico, from 1970s figures such as “Los Grupos” and the post-Mexican conceptual artist-writer Ulises Carrión to the current era and its neoliberal cultural politics.

Twenty-four hours after a text was published, it was erased from the website. Some readers took screenshots of the posts before deletion, sharing them on social media as a distributed archive of an ephemeral work. A year after www.mexiconceptual.com ended, a 2017 print limited edition (200 copies) was published, containing the 30 original texts and a few extra ones.



Heriberto Yépez. *Satélite (Tropico)*. Limited edition print publication. Photo: Rafa Rayo García.

presence on social media and at www.borderdestroyer.com. This, along with his status as one of Mexico's more controversial and influential authors, contributed to the project's high visibility and cultural resonance, helping to establish www.mexiconceptual.com as a significant counter-history and alternative archive of Mexican contemporary art.

“Bienvenidos al Museo Neoliberal.” —Heriberto Yépez¹

From an interview with Heriberto Yépez by Violeta Horcasitas²

VIOLETA HORCASITAS

Through *Satélite*, I use collaboration with artists to generate projects. Dialogical commissions of this kind have very satisfactory implications from a curatorial

this triad: Museum, Mexico, Conceptualism. From these three word-signs came the sub-themes of each text and the general form of the work.

Satélite presentó Mexiconceptual, un proyecto de Heriberto Yépez.

Mexiconceptual publicó cada día un texto diferente con reflexiones sobre El museo, los textos desaparecían del website después de 24 horas de haber sido publicados. Ahora sólo quedan versos en las redes sociales donde: faltaron, comparados.

Mexiconceptual estuvo activo del 14 de abril al 13 de mayo de 2016.

www.mexiconceptual.com

perspective, such as being able to discuss the interests of each artist and have a much clearer idea of the piece in general. On the other hand, it is a complicated process, in which the project management also becomes part of the curatorial scope. From your standpoint, I would like to know what it meant/added/subtracted, both in terms of narrative and format, to be assigned a commission on the theme of the museum.

HERIBERTO YÉPEZ

I enjoyed it perversely, due to the constriction. In a sense, it is not a totally foreign experience to me, because I constantly work on topics chosen by others, for example, in my academic work I receive an invitation to a conference on a certain topic and prepare a paper that responds to that specific thematic invitation, already decided. In another sense, because it is an artistic commission on the theme of museum, my usual frame of writing was moved, you forced me to do something different and, then, we decided that the work would revolve around

VH

I know that your practice develops from poetry and literature, and not from contemporary art *per se*. When I invited you, I was interested in hearing the perception of other agents outside the limited circuit called “contemporary art.” Can you reflect on the different positions and approaches that can be given from other practices on the museum? What did this exercise mean for a different audience in that sense?

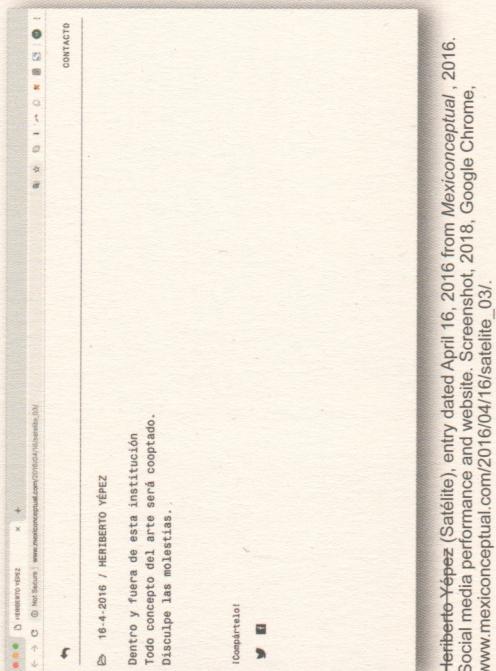
HY

I think that many readers and internet users perceive me as a literary writer, because most of what I publish goes in that direction. But I have worked as a professor of aesthetics and art theory for more than a decade. In those years, literature was my work at night, so to speak, but my day job was the theory of art, from which came, for example, my research project and co-edition of Ulises Carrón and others that are unpublished. On the other hand, my origins as a writer were within the

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What I want to say is that in my daily life I work more as a writer in the context of US-MX border



contemporary art, experimental American poetics, and the internet. With the literary world, practically, I have no major daily contact. Something that I liked about this project was that, precisely, I was able to develop on the internet in Mexico what I do every day on the border and the United States.

VH

Another interest in my work is the exploration and implementation of new exhibition formats. Almost all the curatorial projects I have done participate in such efforts, as in the case of artists whose work comes from the physical-sculptural terrain but have done a virtual project for *Satélite*, in a postinternet environment. I would like to know if *Satélite* somehow led to a rethinking in some way of your idea of the museum, and what is your perception about this platform in general.

I liked that profile of experimentation with other formats, conditions, and spaces. The museum, as a physical space, as a white cube, is not exhausted, but it does not stand on its own anymore. You have to mobilize what happens there, or make something else happen, something different. I like the idea of *Satélite* as something that has its own life, a lunar structure, for example, at the same time that it requires a strained relationship with another structure, in this case, the museum. That concept, in the sense of a regime of existence, seems to me to immediately allude to the very concept of art at this time. *Mexiconceptual* emerged from this tension.

VH

At some point you commented that this project would resignify Experimentalism in Mexico. Could you go expand on this?

HY

It's my counter-history proposal. If we drew all the figures or scenes that I approached, the image would be of a wide, hypertrophic mural, a great collage. I gathered, for example, the current experimentalism in writing with the experimentalism of the visual arts in Mexico, and that had not been done; I mixed conceptual and post-conceptual scenes from two sides of the border and different eras. I think it was a rereading, a new cartography of the experimental in Mexico. With this assembly I believe that I managed to rethink the archive of the experimental in the arts and writings in Nafta del Sur, to disturb it, to show that it has been distorted, co-opted, expropriated; that is, institutionalized, recentralized, stripped, neocolonized.

1 Heriberto Yépez (*Satélite*), entry dated April 16, 2016 from *Mexiconceptual*, April 17, 2016, www.mexiconceptual.com/2016/04/16/satelite_04/.

2 Violeta Horcasitas, "Entrevista | Heriberto Yépez," *GASTV*, May 2016, gastv.mx/intervista-heriberto-yepes-sobre-mexiconceptual/. Translated from Spanish.

Net art, which explores the internet as material and concept, involves an astonishingly diverse set of practices that now stretch back decades, incorporating any number of disciplines: painting, performance, poetry, creative code. This book considers this heterogeneous field of practice by bringing together 100 exemplary works of net art, from 1980s animations for the Brazilian Videotexto network to artist-made virtual worlds of the 2010s. Although the works vary widely, looking at them together and in context offers a deep understanding of internet culture through time, and yields new insight into our networked present.

Rhizome, an organization that has championed born-digital art and culture since its founding in 1996, selected these works for the online exhibition Net Art Anthology and its gallery-based spinoff, “The Art Happens Here,” which opened in January 2019 at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York.

Edited by Michael Connor with Aria Dean and Dragan Espenschied

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