

An article by:

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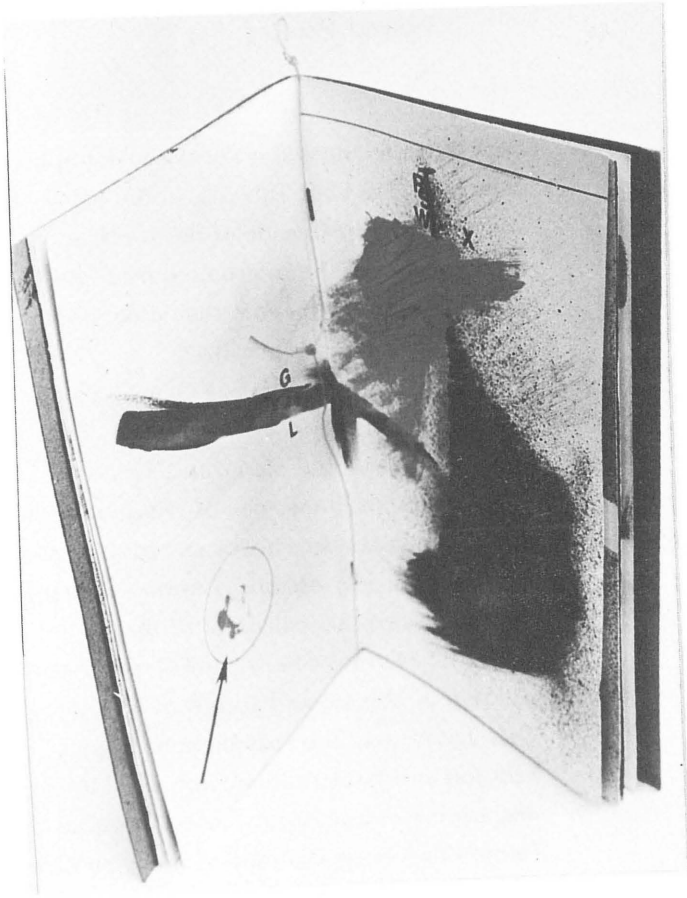
Mexican Visual Poetry

With the sole antecedent of the ideographic writing of José Juan Tablada, in the 1920s, it was not until the decade of the 1960s and then because of the international success of Brazilian concrete poetry, that visual poetry in Mexico would be revitalized.

One of its heralds was Octavio Paz, a great friend of the São Paulo Noigandres group. In books like *Blanco* and *Topoemas*, Paz displays his knowledge of Hindu thought and the mandala structures according to the idea of “signs in rotation.” Another pioneering cultivator of verbal-visual writing in the 1960s was Mathias Goeritz, the German artist resident in Mexico and author of *Messages of Gold*. Later texts and visual poems by Jack Seligson and Jesús Arellano appeared in the magazine *Punto de Partida*,¹ as well as texts by Felipe Ehrenberg, the only Mexican published in the 1975 Spanish anthology titled *Writing in Liberty*.

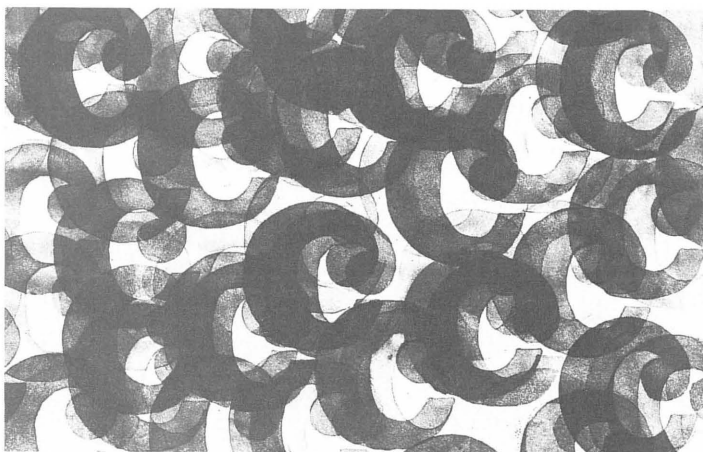
Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, in an isolated and sporadic form, a few poets and artists declared themselves interested in renovating language. Among these writers were Enrique González Rojo, Ricardo Yáñez and Roberto López Moreno. Artists’ groups like the No-Group put on performances and

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Salvador Carrillo

Sin título, libre objeto
Untitled, book object



María Eugenia Guerra

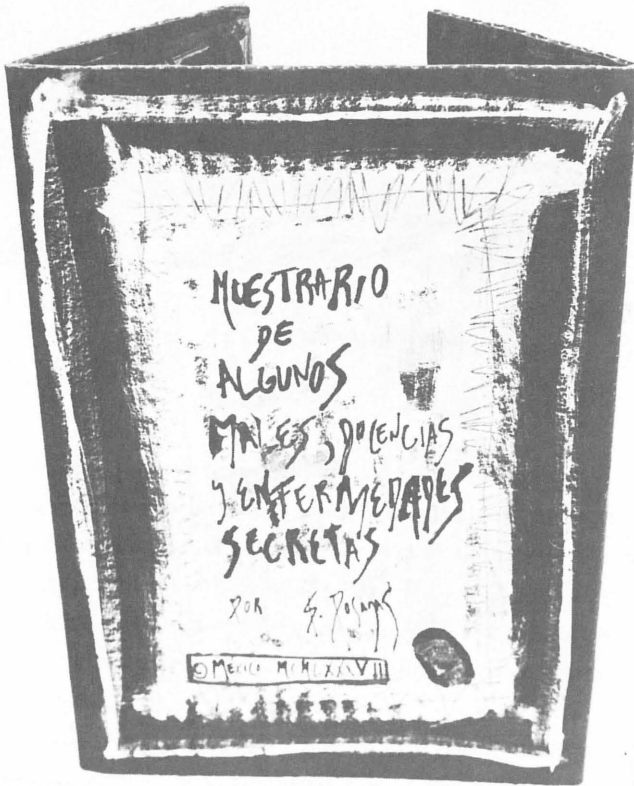
Sin título, tintas

Untitled, inks

Visual-Frame Narrative performed urban, topographical poems, etc.; Guillermo Villegas and Consuelo Deschamps staged their visual score *Andante* in 1976; Laura Elenes launched her project *Atelén* for sculpture, sound and now computer; in 1978 Pablo Espinosa's book and exhibition of semiotic poetry titled *The Semiophage* appeared.

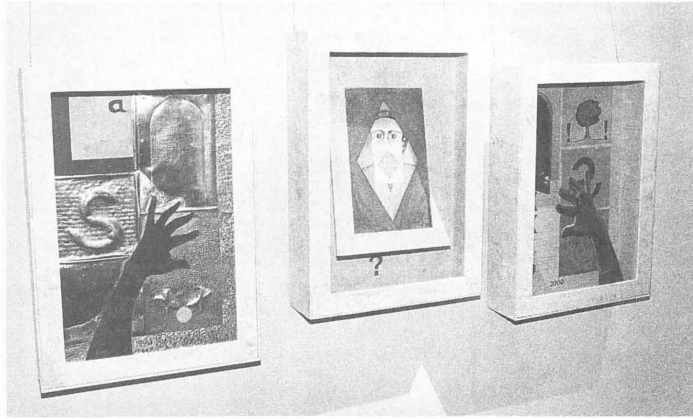
In addition to the landmarks mentioned above, throughout these years there was also an outpouring of related phenomena — book-objects, multimedia events, neographics, psychomusic. These all featured an intensive exploration of signifiers, even if indeed the majority of these projects had no greater theoretical or propositional repercussions.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 90s, with few exceptions, the art and poetry of Mexico have focused on the official and created polished, graceful jewels. Hegemonic academicism still reigns and the virtuoso specialists break lances with all that smacks of the hybrid, the mixed, the “impure.”



Felipe Posadas

Mustrario de algunos males, dolencias y enfermedades secretas
Pattern Book of Several Evils, Pains, and Secret Illnesses



Adriana Espinosa

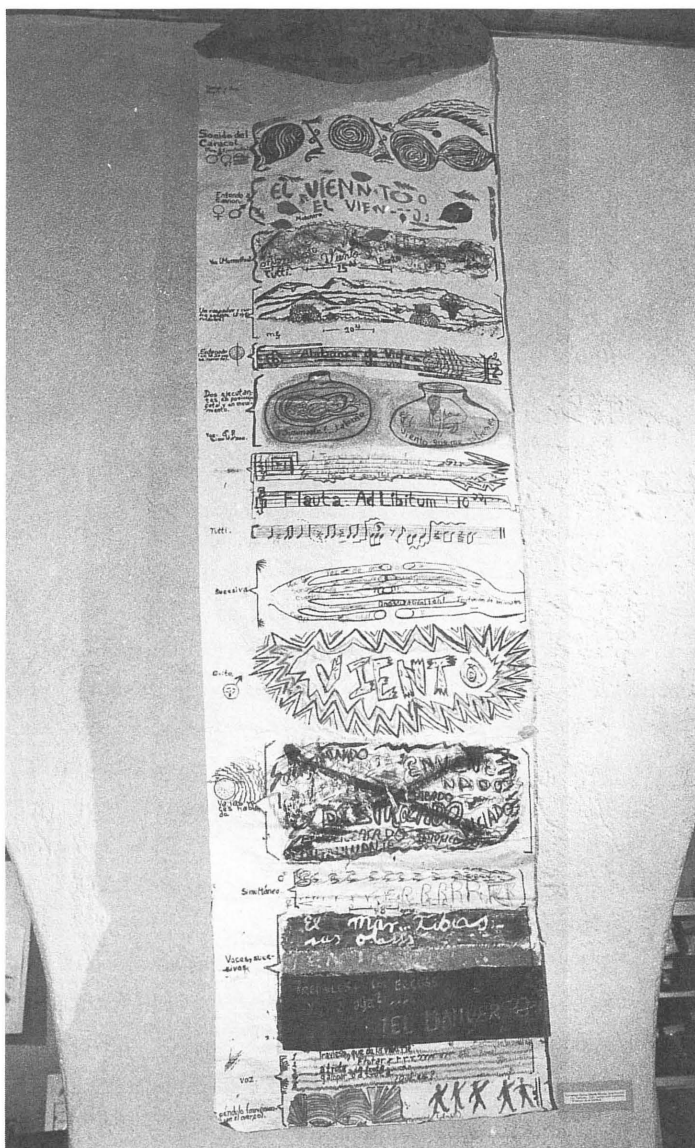
Página mutable, instalación gráfica

Mutable Page, graphic installation

In the last analysis, the *intermedia* artists constitute hardly a handful: The Santo Domingo Center with Guillermo Santamarina and Armando Sarignana; the Society of Spectacles team with Dulce Mariá López and Daniel Rivera, “El Archivero” of Jani Pecanins and Gabriel Macotela; in Monterrey the alternative press “La Palma”; in Jalapa groups close the the University Gallery; in Mexicali the PAVAC group, among others.

Given such a panorama plagued by protectionist conservatism, in 1985 the call went out for the First International Biennial of Visual and Experimental Poetry in Mexico. These exhibitions have by now been held three times. Each was realized with participation from forty-one countries, resulting in ten catalogues and two documentary publications forming a theoretical and historiographic body of material formerly nonexistent in this country.

At the same time, in each of the biennials the Mexican section under the title POEMEX has been exhibited, with the participation of thirty to forty Mexican artists and writers.



Gloria Garcia
El viento
 The Wind



Leticia Ocharán

Poe-Cia, instalación

Poe-Cia, installation

They have presented sculpture and photocopy within the tradition of *poesía visiva*, as well as visual scores and poetry action events, sound works, computer works, etc.

The participants in the Mexican section have been principally young artists in the visual arts interested in experimentation with language; among them are César Martínez, Mónica Mayer, Víctor Lerma, Felipe Posada, Adriana Espinosa, Genaro Maya, as well as better known artists like Leticia Ocharán, Felipe Ehrenberg, Laura Elenes and Jorge Perezvega. Among the writers and poets these novelties are still too excessive; the exceptions have been Lourdes Sánchez, Perla Schwartz, Carmen Boullosa and Roberto López Moreno.

Notes

¹ *Punto de Partida*, No. 18, March, 1970.