

Campuzano, Rodrigo. "Animated Vapor Art Writes a Poem in Thin Air," *The Creators Project*, August 16, 2016

## The Creators Project

# Animated Vapor Art Writes a Poem in Thin Air

Rodrigo Campuzano — Aug 16 2016



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, "Call On Water", 2016 (Photo by Franz J. Wamhof)

A liquid-based generator spells out poetic words in midair using plumes of vapor drawn from a water basin in Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's latest technology-driven artwork, *Call on Water*, now on view at the House of Electronic Arts in Basel.

Known for his multimedia installation works that deal with subjects such as surveillance and connectivity, the Mexican-Canadian artist looks to bridge the gap between technology and art. This particular work expands Lozano-Hemmer's efforts with water, a medium that is quite challenging to manipulate. "There were many challenges for the design, not least of them how to safely mix water, electronics, and high voltage in a piece that is durable and easy to maintain. We have been studying and developing methods to animate water with computers," Lozano-Hemmer tells *The Creators Project*. "For this work, we used ultrasonic atomizers such as the ones you find inside cold-air humidifiers or aromatherapy tanks. These vibrate imperceptibly and create plumes of cold water vapor when powered."



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, "Call On Water", 2016 (Photo by Franz J. Wamhof)

Lozano-Hemmer chose a series of poems by the famed poet Octavio Paz to create a playful homage, "The whole piece is an homage to Octavio Paz, a very influential writer in general, but also for me in particular as he was my uncle from my father's side. I wanted to see his words written with water vapor and erased by turbulence. His work is perfect for this ephemeral writing machine that turns poems into atmospheric phenomena that can be breathed in."

The poem that inspired the work reveals a deep relationship to the ephemeral, a charming rendition of a timeless verse:

To see the world is to spell it.

Mirror of words: where was I?

My words watch me from the puddle of my memory.

Syllables of water shine in a grove of reflections, stranded clouds, bubbles above a bottom that changes from gold to rust.



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, "Call On Water", 2016 (Photo by Franz J. Wamhof)

Call on Water is part of a series of water-based experiments that Lozano-Hemmer is developing with his crew. “At my studio, we have been developing several interactive water fountains. Despite the emergence of incredible technology for animating water, most contemporary fountains are extremely conservative: they are repetitive spectacles such as those found in Vegas or Dubai. I believe the field is wide open for experimentation.”

Call on Water is on display through August 28th at the at the House of Electronic Arts