



HELIOFLORES

Por *El Fisgón*

Helioflores is an intelligent, clearheaded cartoonist; he has a fertile imagination and a profound ethical sense. He is, without a doubt, one of the most important Mexican cartoonists of all time.

Helioflores was born in Xalapa, Veracruz in 1938. He studied architecture at the Universidad Veracruzana and graphic design at The School of Visual Arts in New York. In 1968 he founded *La Garrapata* a humorous magazine along with Eduardo del Río (Rius), Rogelio Naranjo, and Emilio Abdalá (AB), and contributed work to *Novedades*, *El Mitote Ilustrado*, *Siempre!*, *Ovaciones* and *¿Por qué?*. Since 1971 he has worked as a editorial cartoonist for *El Universal* newspaper and occasionally contributes to *El Chamuco* magazine.

Helioflores' work as a whole is impressive: daily he synthesizes the Mexican political scene in an intelligent, knowledgeable, critical and sensible way. His style of humor is tough, profound and bitter; it provokes bitter smiles. All of his cartoons hit the mark; frequently his images have something of the profetic. Readers are made smarter thanks to his lucidity. His cartoons, flush with an absurd humor, uncover some of national politics' paradoxes. He has contributed to create a well informed and critical public opinion like few others have. Through his work one can chronicle very accurately the absurdities of Mexico's recent history.

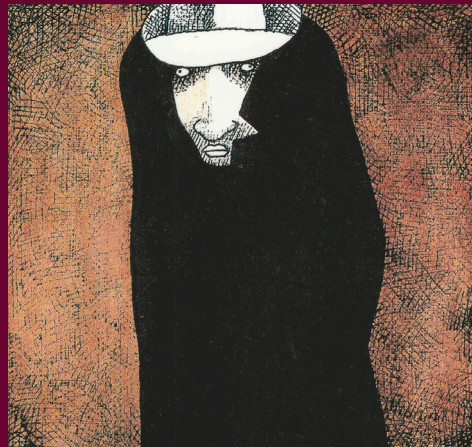
His ethical coherence is unflappable. In a corrupt journalistic millieu, him (along with several other colleagues) has not only resisted corruption, but layed the foundations for a new professional ethics; in an era in which intellectuals were seduced by political power, he demonstrated an implacable critical spirit against the powerful; in a time when dominant discourses called to defend market values, he preserved a humanistic vision; in a time of bastards, he was an honest man.

Helio is the Mexican cartoonist who has received more awards: four times he has been awarded the Premio Nacional de Periodismo, and he has received awards in international competitions in Canada, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Cuba and Yugoslavia. IN 2017 he received the Reconocimiento de Caricatura Gabriel Vargas, awarded by Mexico City's Government and the Museo del Estanquillo.

In 1968, during the student revolt, Guillermo Mendizábal, who edited my *Los Agachados*, suggested I start a political humor magazine. I responded stating how difficult it would be to do another magazine apart from the cartoon, unless there was a team in place to do it. Fortunately for history, the team was already there, since at *El Mitote* there were several cartoonists who had talent and had something to say: Rogelio Naranjo, Helio Flores and Emilio Abdalá (christened by mí as *Ab*, without knowing there was a great Czech cartoonist Adolf Born, who signed his drawings *Ab*).

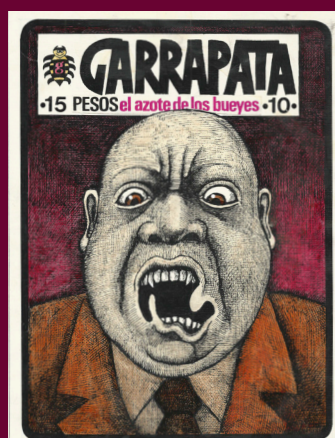
Together we founded *La Garrapata* in 1968. It did not have a director, in other words, we four were directors; each of us “directed” one issue. Helio, from the first one, created a comic strip called “*Los Garrapatos*”, with several vague characters, and one of them would become the future *Hombre de Negro*. I think it was until issue 8 that the strip, that strange strip, changed its name definitely to *El Hombre de Negro*.

Dr. Rius Frius
(Eduardo del Río, *Rius*. In *Helioflores El hombre de Negro*).



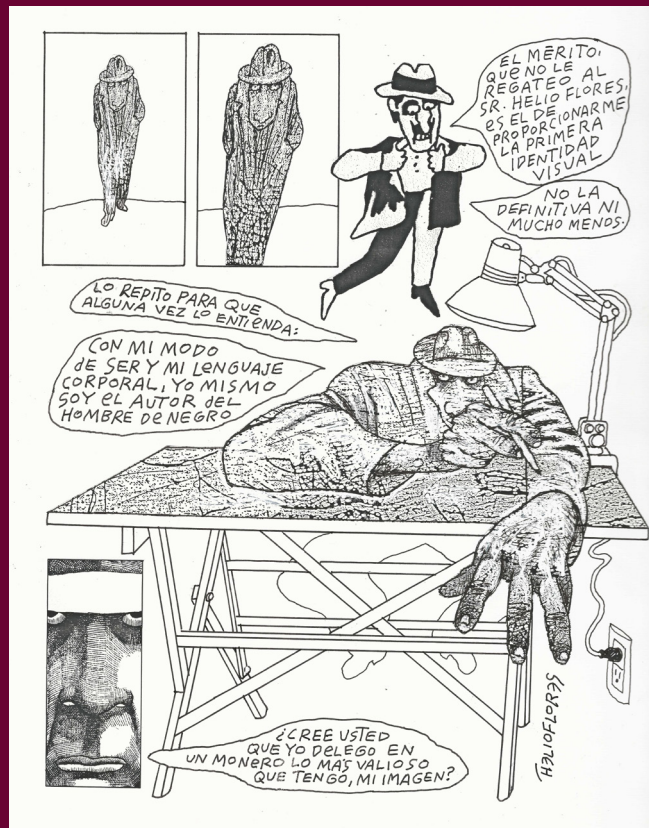
[Until 1955] only two political cartooning magazines of importance circulated: *Ahí va el Golpe!* and *El Coyote Emplumado*, both directed by Alberto Beltrán. The lack of publications where cartoonists could express themselves was an unfortunate deficiency. The cartoonists at *Por Qué?* Magazine – Emilio Abdalá *Ab*, Helioflores, Rogelio Naranjo y Eduardo del Río *Rius*– created *La Garrapata*. *El Azote de los Bueyes* which attacked for the first time on November 8, 1968, under the auspices of Editorial Posada. The founding cartoonists were directors. The magazine’s design was undertaken by each of them in turn, and the one in charge of the cover was also responsible for the 48 pages. Regular contributors included Antonio Caram, Carlos Dzib, Leonardo Vadillo and Checo Valdés; on occasions, Eduardo Lizalde, Carlos Monsiváis, Enrique Heras and Héctor Ramírez.

Mercurio López Casillas, *Siete lustros del imponderable Hombre de Negro*; in *Helioflores. El Hombre de Negro*.



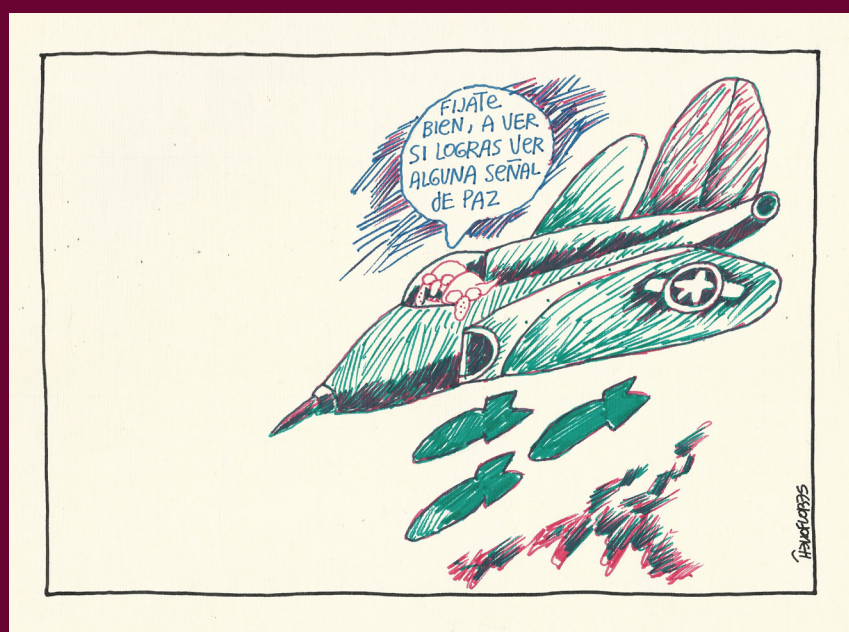
Mr. Helio Flores' merit, which I do not deny him, is giving me my first visual identity, not the definitive one.

Carlos Monsiváis speaking for the *Hombre de negro*. In *Helioflores El hombre de Negro*.



After so many years, when I see my first political cartoons, I confess that during those years I was really flying blind.

Interview with Helioflores, for *Helioflores. 50 años de cartones, crítica y humor*.



The years of the so called Cold War were a great influence for my perception of politics, since in those days I began to realize that by every means possible we were being fed the idea that there were only good and bad people; gringos were the good guys and the Russians and the Chinese were the bad ones.

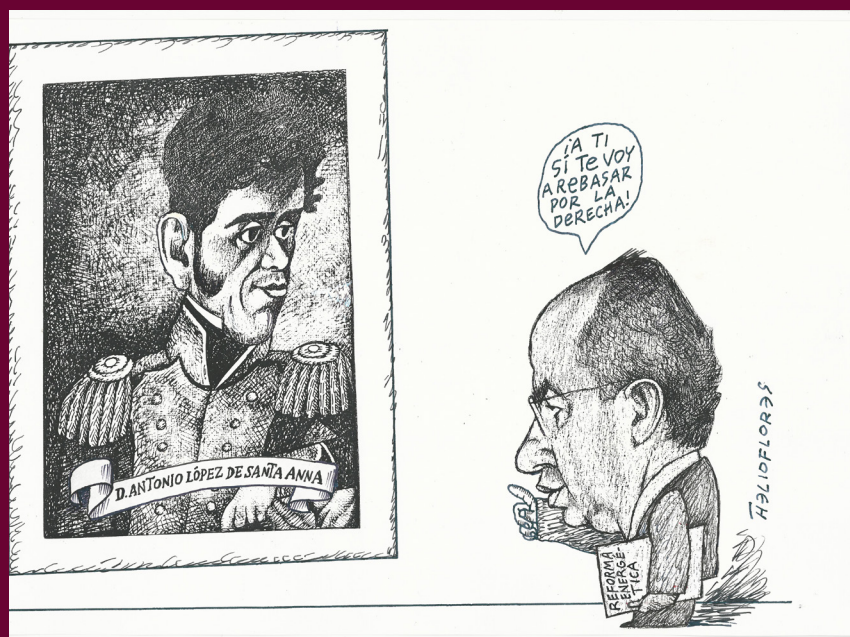
Inteviu with Heliolflores, for *Heliolflores. 50 años de cartones, crítica y humor.*



My drawings have become more realistic, that is pretty evident, volumes too, the quality of texture, whites and blacks.

What I am most attracted to when deciphering a cartoon is that exchange with the reader, in which not everything is explained; it is the reader who colcudes the idea.

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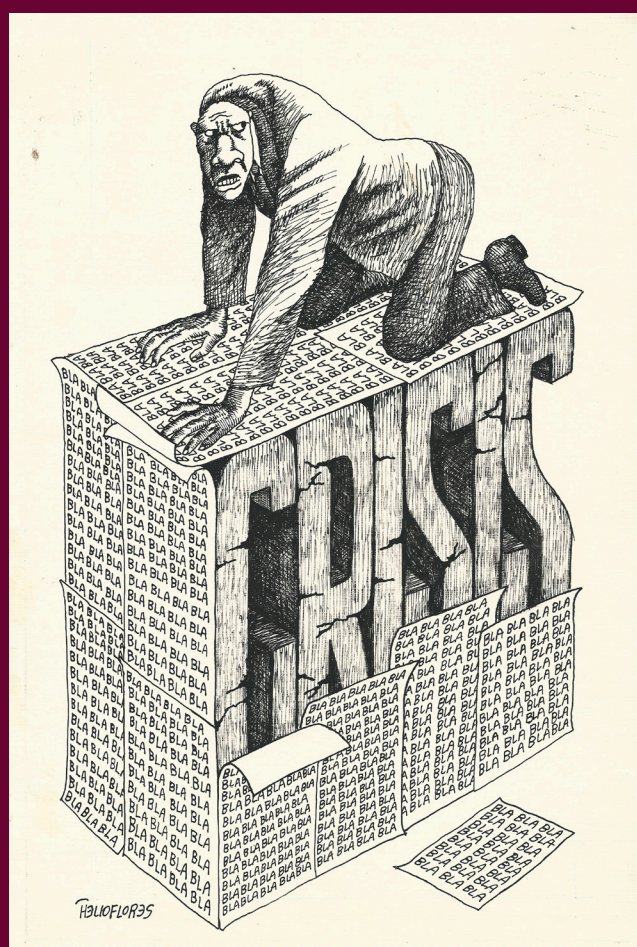
For me, cartoons express the physical presence of public characters on national and international stage; they contrast the things they say with what they do; what they say today and what they criticized a year ago, that is to say, highlighting the contradictions in their speech and their actions.

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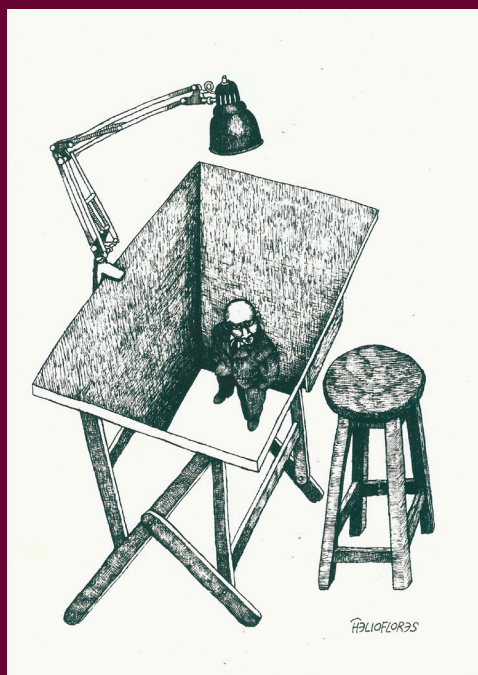
The title I choose for every work is sometimes the cartoon's concept; other times I create the cartoon without a title, some do not require it.

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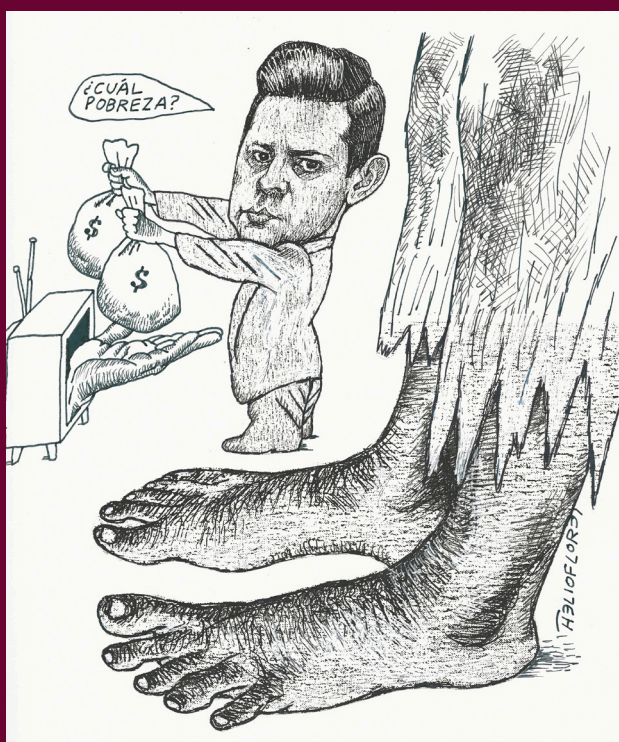
I imagine the characters as if they were in a play; I see the figures as if they were actors that need space to move. There is a need for space to, for example, include a window, and if you do not have it, you feel trapped. But to figure things out like this is a good challenge.

Interview with Helioflores, for *Helioflores. 50 años de cartones, crítica y humor.*



Today we still have censorship, but not to the extent we had during the Díaz Ordaz, Echeverría or Carlos Salinas administrations. We lived through times when you know beforehand that you could not do a cartoon of the president.

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For me it is crucial to link humor and drawing directly, and that is how I have focused my evolution as a cartoonist.

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