

## sergio augusto porto: from the inside out, from experience to image

*The life that strikes your body - that's art. Your environment - that's art.  
Psychophysical rhythms - that's art. Intrauterine life - that's art.  
Supra-sensoriality - that's art. Imagining - that's art. Pneuma - that's art.  
Object and site appropriation - that's art!*

**Currently considering and acknowledging** the work of Sergio Augusto Porto (Rio de Janeiro 1946) means to pave the way to the appreciation of his artistic practice, throughout the years, as a result of artifice and visibility strategies, such as: the critical revamping of the perspectives on his production, and the development of exhibition devices that muster both early and new audiences, thus establishing his position within the arena and the marketplace, while in consonance with the current Brazilian art milieu.

**Researching and considering, selecting and dialoguing** have been mandatory actions for the definition of a curatorial coalition in full consonance with the artist's aspirations. To this end, in order to define a selection of works that cover a timeline spanning from the 1970s to the 2000s onwards, three conceptual paths intersect and define both material and spatial scales within Porto's production, providing meaning to the exhibition<sup>2</sup> held at Central Galeria.

**The prompting of a motion from the inside out** represents a central axis of the artist's goals. The turn of the 1960s to the 1970s, a moment of full recrudescence of the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship, saw a conceptual and material shift of experimental art from the inside out and from the outside in: the concept of workshop was broadened; situations beyond institutional control and restraint were established; experiments were carried out with no control of their results and, a scalar disruption of the nature of the artwork was radically promoted<sup>3</sup>. The whole series of photographs as well as the audiovisual piece *Reflexos* (Reflexes, 1971-1972) give rise to these qualities.

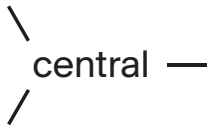
**Constantly subverting landscape.** Especially throughout the 1970s, Sergio Augusto Porto develops an idea of landscape built upon previous experiences in widely changing urban contexts (Rio de Janeiro and Brasília)<sup>4</sup>, and on the search for places on the borderline of what's natural and what's engineered. Pieces like the installation *Projeto para uma auto-estrada/ Faixa-relevo* (Project for a Highway | Strip-Relief, 1970) and the series of painting-objects *Janelas* (Windows, 1999) hint at a critical point of contact that converges the artist's historical and contemporary production. In a sense, it's about the problematization of landscape as a zone of contamination of the experience, of what is seen, experienced, recorded and what's impermanent. The most recent work on display, *Série Brasília/Paisagem fragmentada* (Brasília

1 Excerpt from the manifesto drawn up by critic and curator Frederico Morais on the occasion of the event-exhibition "Do corpo à terra" (1970). Although he didn't participate in the exhibition, held in Belo Horizonte, Porto fits the critic's conceptual description. For further reference to the quoted passage: SEFFRIN, Silvana (Org.). *Frederico Morais*. Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 2004, p. 118. (Coleção Pensamento crítico)

2 The critical essay written by professor and researcher Glória Ferreira on the occasion of her curatorship "Arte como questão: Anos 70" (2007) has been a key reference for describing these conceptual meanders. It's worth noting that Sergio Augusto Porto has participated in this exhibition, held at Instituto Tomie Ohtake. See: FERREIRA, Glória (Org.). *Arte como questão: Anos 70*. São Paulo: Instituto Tomie Ohtake, 2009.

3 This critical perception is attributable to Frederico Morais' seminal essay "Contra a arte afluyente: o corpo é o motor da obra" (*Revista de Cultura Vozes*, Rio de Janeiro, n. 1, jan-fev., 1970).

4 The artist has spent his formative years in the new capital of the country, having studied Architecture at UNB, from 1967 to 1970.



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Series | *Fragmented Landscape*, 2020), puts the spotlight on the red soil area of Brazil's central plateau, a piece of data ingrained in the artist's imagery.

**Approaching sculpture as a language to be amplified.** Throughout his journey, the artist broadens what is generally characterized or established as sculpture. Setting classical and/or modernist principles aside, the sculpture initiatives conceived by the artist allow for the understanding of various forms of representation and construction: aesthetic experiments with a variety of materials, the removal of icons, body implications and scale variations<sup>5</sup>. At one end, there's the sculptural object *Escada para lugar algum* (Ladder to Nowhere, 2012); at the other, the six-picture series *Reflexos* (Reflexes, 1971-1972).

As background for the conceptual meanders here described, both drawing and photography are indelibly present in the artist's journey, thus, the records, sketches and documents selected for this exhibition context. Within an art history perspective, Porto's work is overall grounded on the laudable mix of concepts and buzzwords from the late 1960s and early 1970s.

*Environmental art, conceptual art, situation, antiart, counter-art, guerrilla art, geração tranca-ruas, arte-dinamite, arte vivencial, propositional art, art dematerialization, multimedia art, audiovisual, public art, ephemeral art, site-specific, land art, sculpture in the expanded field, contemporary sculpture, installation, and urban intervention* are a few of the signs that define the artist's production throughout the years, building a bridge between the urges of a not so distant past and the issues that concern a currently reconfiguring art that devises new territorialities, involving the body, considering the environment, approaching photography as it hints at a capturing motion from experience to image. That's Sergio Augusto Porto's work.

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In an essay published on the occasion of Porto's inclusion in the group of artists who are represented by Central Galeria<sup>6</sup>, I've listed some names that in one way or another have shared a similar array of aspirations, initiatives and experiences in contemporary art during the early 1970s. Firstly, I mention Alfredo Fontes, Cildo Meireles, Guilherme Vaz, Luiz Alphonsus, Thereza Simões and Umberto Costa Barros among those who were closest, some of which were part of what was known as o Grupo de Brasília. Extending the list beyond the context of the experience at MAM-RIO, I also mention: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, Ascânio MMM, Carlos Zílio, Cláudio Paiva, Dileny Campos, Francisco Iñarra, Genilson Soares, Lydia Okomura, Manoel Messias, Miriam Monteiro, Odila Ferraz, Raymundo Colares, Vera Roitman and Wanda Pimentel, among many others. By getting to know this group of personalities and going further, we'll create a broader historical and human account of the past 50 years of Brazilian art.

### Diego Matos

Text originally published for the exhibition *Sergio Augusto Porto: from the inside out, from experience to image*. Central Galeria, São Paulo, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> The artist's aesthetic intentions have been highlighted by critic and writer Francisco Bittencourt in his essay "As múltiplas tendências do XIX Salão de Arte Moderna" (*Jornal do Brasil*, 1970). See: LOPES, Fernanda; PREDEBON, Aristóteles A. (Org). *Francisco Bittencourt/Arte-Dinamite*. Rio de Janeiro: Tamanduá\_Arte, 2016, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> See: *Situação, experiência e imagem: a radicalidade de Sergio Augusto Porto* (Diego Matos, February 2021).