

situation, experience and image: the radicality of sergio augusto porto

It's been from the inside-out, through the radicalization of spaces for experimentation, that Brazilian art has operated on its most meaningful phenomena in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At this moment of full recrudescence of the civil-military dictatorship, artist groups have created under three relevant signs: the broadening of a Brazilian constructive project towards environmental and participative practice, an extensive political alignment of art to the status of guerilla and the demand for a more prosaic production, in an act of disruption between private and public, concept and physical artwork, institution, city and landscape.

Throughout his career, artist Sergio Augusto Porto (Rio de Janeiro, 1946) has responded to this radicality devised by a new generation who actually broke away from paradigms of an internationally propagated local modern project. Trained between Rio de Janeiro and Brasília, very distinct cities considering their origins and conformations, he's been part of an artistic and institutional context that has blurred the lines of a domesticated and object-oriented art. From 1967 to 1969, Porto studied architecture at Universidade de Brasília, epicenter of the new Brazilian intellectual thought in the planned capital that was still under construction. For this reason, an acute perception of space/time connections that stemmed from the immersion of the body into the landscape has been the keynote of his artistic output, both in what refers to the conflict between nature's exuberance and urban densification in Rio de Janeiro and to Brasília's planning and monumentality.

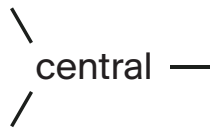
Next to people like Alfredo Fontes, Cildo Meireles, Guilherme Vaz, Luiz Alphonsus, Thereza Simões and Umberto Costa Barros¹, Sergio Porto has focused on initiatives linked to wide-ranging conceptual art: the creation of an in-depth context-aware work spectrum, subverting spatial concepts on behalf of what critics have named as "Situations". Outside the museum walls as well as the traditional studio, the artist has developed actions in which experiences on ambiance merge with ephemeral interventions on landscape, sculptural amplifications and varied photography documentation. It's no accident that many of these creations collude either as representations of his actions, or as installations within museum locations.

In *Reflexions* (1970-1974), a series of artworks and projects assembled as a photo album highlighted here, the artist demonstrates the development of situations, events or contexts that must be lived out, experienced in person or perceived by the expressive power of photography. As sentenced by critic Frederico Moraes in his seminal essay, "from the appropriation of objects it moved on to the appropriation of poetic or geographical areas or mere situations. The artwork is over"². Generally speaking, they're interventions that create "embossed-stretches" within the roadways' vastness, they comprise enlarged illusory shadows in the landscape, they accentuate geometrical senses through the material identification of spots in the outward space, they create amplified reflections in nature using mirrors, and so on. For instance, in *The Artist in Half* (1970), from the series *Reflexions*, Porto promotes an acute awareness of his bodily presence within nature's landscape. Photography operates both as artwork and documentation of this situation, uncovering what could be called an experienced space, a concept coined by German architect and philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow³.

1 One of the few publications that have tried to map this generation: MORAIS, Frederico. *Depoimento de uma Geração, 1969-1970*. Rio de Janeiro: Galeria de Arte BANERJ, 1986.

2 Reference to the first publication of the critic's essay: MORAIS, Frederico. *Contra a arte afluyente: o corpo é o motor da obra*, *Revista de Cultura Vozes*, Rio de Janeiro, n. 1, jan.- fev. 1970.

3 Publication that reveals a perception of the concept of space as the place of human experience, "experienced space": BOLLNOW, Otto Friedrich. *Human Space*. Londres: Hyphen Press, 2011.



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In that respect, the artist's poetic path draws near contemporary art icons. Like other great names from his generation, his experiences took place concomitantly to the land and environmental art practices of North-Americans such as Nancy Holt, Robert Smithson and Walter de Maria, the spatial practices focused on body awareness of German Franz Erhard Walther and the ephemeral actions and paths of Richard Long. From the Latin-American scene, a parallel may be drawn to the urban actions of Chilean Lotty Rosenfeld, also created within a dictatorial context.

For this and so many other reasons, it's pivotal to evaluate the relevance of artistic creations that have been spearheads of the late 1960s radicalities in art, but which are not yet fully integrated to history and criticism consensuses and manuals. Sergio Augusto Porto is part of this world.

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