

# Art in America

FEBRUARY 2007

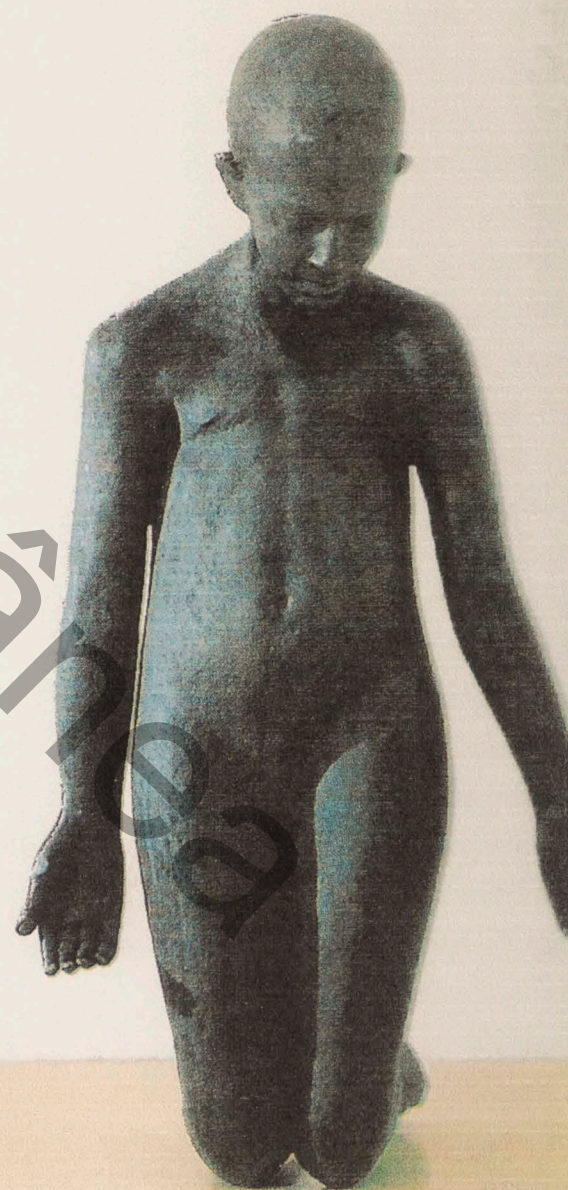
KIKI SMITH

ALLAN MCCOLLUM

HEDDA STERNE

SÃO PAULO BIENAL

REPORT FROM  
DENVER



\$5.00 USA  
\$7.00 CAN £3.50 UK

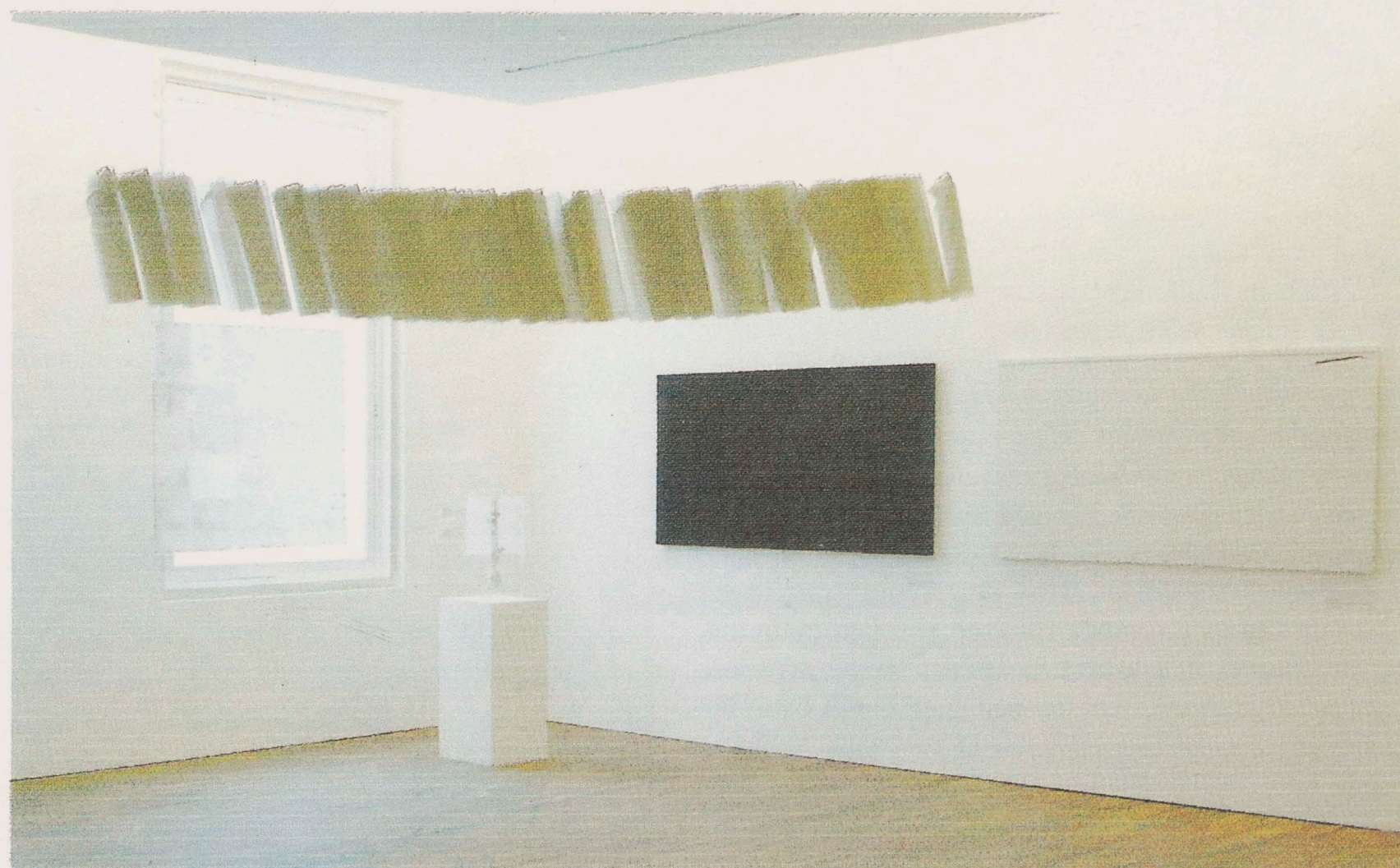
EXEMPLAR Nº 2 - p. 82 e 83

**Along with the Bienal's opening was that of the new Instituto de Arte Contemporânea, dedicated to works by four greats of Brazilian modernism linked by their geometric and Constructivist production.**

### All Around the Town

During Bienal season in São Paulo, the event's influence permeates the city's cultural and social life. León Ferrari was honored with a much-praised exhibition of his work and collections at the neo-Renaissance Pinacoteca do Estado in a historic section of the city. Amplifying recollection of his worm-ridden White House and suspended skeletons at the Bienal, this exhibition included objects highly critical of the role of the Catholic church in Latin American culture, such as his iconic *Western Christian Civilization* (1965), a 6-foot sculpture of a crucified Christ nailed to a U.S. fighter plane, as well as artifacts and art collected by Ferrari and his wife. The Pinacoteca also featured a noteworthy exhibition of the work and life of Alexander Calder, a project that drew on his history in Latin America and particularly his influence on the design of Brasília; it proposed that in designing his buildings there, Niemeyer borrowed from maquettes Calder made for sculptures to be sited at the fledgling capital city (the sculptures were never realized).

The adjacent Estação Pinacoteca, a former railway station used during the dictatorship for imprisonment and torture and now functioning



Mira Schendel: Two untitled sculptures, ca. mid-'60s, and two untitled paintings, 1986-87. All photos this page Rômulo Fialdini, at the Instituto de Arte Contemporânea, São Paulo.

as a Kunsthalle, gave over two major galleries to installations by Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles. The first featured the 16-by-6½-foot structure *Babel* (2001/2006). The gallery was illuminated by the warm radiance of radio dials from hundreds of functioning radio sets of a wide range of designs and vintages that were mounted on a cylindrical metallic structure. The space was permeated with a cacophony that implied the impossibility of creating a global village.

In another large gallery, a few stairs led to a

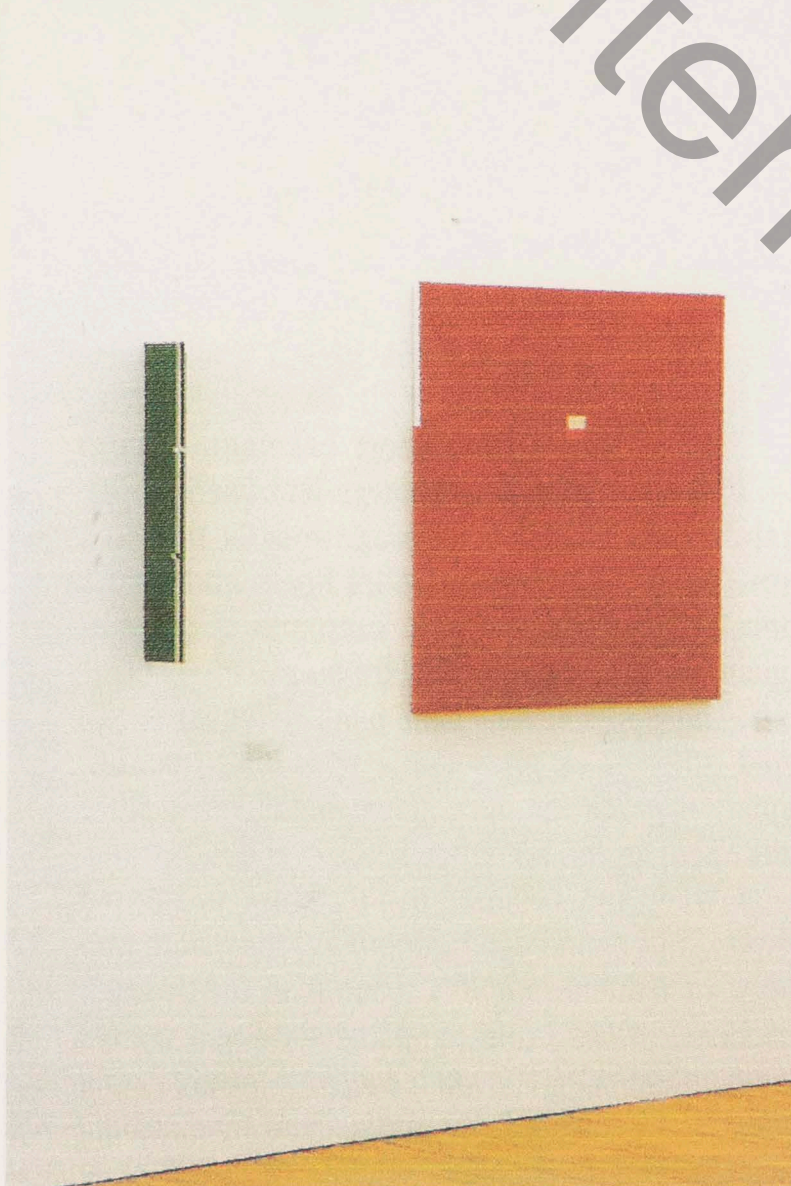
docklike platform, a viewing station for Meireles's 1997 *Marulho* (Tossing of the Sea), an expanse of floor paved with overlapping books laid out in patterns of blue and white. In a gallery joining the two installations, Meireles placed his well-known *Southern Cross* (1969), a tiny work consisting of a cubic block of oak and pine less than half an inch on a side.

São Paulo's galleries responded, as always, to the international exposure of the Bienal. Among the highlights was "Hélio Oiticica—Penetrável," the

View of Sergio Camargo's untitled wood wall reliefs and marble sculptures from the 1960s and '70s.



Willys de Castro: Active Object (left), 1961, oil on canvas on wood, and Form of Two Planes (right), 1960-61, oil on canvas.



View of Amílcar de Castro's work, including (left to right) wood sculpture, acrylic painting, steel sculpture.



realization of some of the more radical of Oiticica's experiments with interactive environments and his familiar "quasi-cinema" projections, designed in association with filmmaker Neville D'Almeida. Realized by Galeria Nara Roesler with the Hélio Oiticica Project (Rio de Janeiro) and César and Cláudio Oiticica (the artist's brothers), *Cosmococa CC4 Nocagions* was conceived in 1973 and was previously exhibited only once. Here a long, darkened lounge was lighted by the iridescent glow of a swimming pool 20 by 9 feet and 3 feet deep, made of wood and fiberboard planks supporting a vinyl pool. A thin line of small green lights outlined the pool, the ambient effect amplified by reflector lights and green gels. A recurrent 15-minute slide presentation based on additions to and removals from the cover of John Cage's book *Notation*—including lines of cocaine, a penknife, a tube and other paraphernalia—was projected on a wall. Lounging cushions and towels were provided for the comfort of those visitors who bathed, with pleasure and reverence, to the accompaniment of John Cage's compositions for prepared piano.

### New Exhibitions and Programs

From Sept. 26 to Dec. 3, the Museum of Modern Art mounted "Concreta '56, a Raiz da Forma" (The Root of the Shape), featuring pieces by 26 Concrete artists interspersed with the words of poets and viewed in relation to works by 27 designers. The exhibition sought to reveal the "DNA" of Brazilian art, poetry and design and commemorated the 50th anniversary of the first national exhibition of Concrete art. It also acknowledged a national nostalgia for that era of modernization in Brazil. Nearby, works from the museum's collection were creatively displayed in Niemeyer's Oca, a domelike structure ornamented with round windows, part of the architectural program for the park accomplished before the building of Brasília.

The Bienal's Film Fortnight presented 39 films relating to Bienal themes and exploring cinema as language. The program was highlighted by the world premiere of artist Cao Guimarães's *Andarilho* (Wanderer). Present were participating artists Lawrence Weiner of New York, Bregtje van der Haak of Amsterdam, the Canadian project Fastwürms, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster of Paris, Francesco Jodice of Mexico, Ivan Cardoso and Júlio Bressane of Rio de Janeiro, Jeanne Faust of Germany, Loulou Cherinet of Sweden and Lu Chunsheng of China.

Among the many cultural events scheduled dur-



Cildo Meireles: *Babel*, 2001/2006, radios, approx. 16 feet high. Courtesy Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo.

ing the Bienal's vernissage was the inauguration of the new Instituto de Arte Contemporânea (IAC) on the urban campus of Centro Universitário Maria Antonia. Developed by the IAC's president, Raquel Arnaud, the 6,500-square-foot nonprofit is dedicated to the preservation, cataloguing and interpretive exhibition of the work of Sergio Camargo, Mira Schendel, Willys de Castro and Amílcar de Castro. They are among the greats of Brazilian modernism, associated both by history and by an affinity for geometric and Constructivist production. The IAC featured a fine inaugural show of these artists, to be followed by changing exhibitions and educational initiatives. A wishful few meters from the Bienal, a group of Brazil's prominent dealers presented the exhibition "Paralela" to call the attention of visitors to the work of some of the country's leading artists, among them Abraham Palatinik, Adriana Varejão, Iole de Freitas, Carmela Gross, Nelson

Leirner, Leda Catunda, Nuno Ramos, Regina Silveira, Tomie Ohtake and Vik Muniz.

Whatever changes are in store as the Bienal moves toward its next incarnation, the imperatives remain the same: an international program of great interest to its international constituencies, particularly those of Latin America. Enthusiasm drives ancillary events and initiatives such as SP Arte [May 3-7], the São Paulo art fair entering its third year in the Bienal pavilion. However well or poorly funded, whatever the political and social agenda, the beat goes on. □

1. Lisette Lagnado in "Introduction," *27th Bienal de São Paulo: Como Viver Junto Guia* (Guide), São Paulo, Fundação Bienal, 2006, pp. 16-17.

2. Seminar topics included Marcel Broodthaers and such themes as "Reconstruction," "Collective Life" and "Exchanges," and featured as participants Lagnado, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Catherine David, Ernesto Neto and Paulo Herkenhoff.

3. It is not clear that Lagnado achieved this goal. For example, the presence of the work of Mark Bradford, Dan Graham, Gordon Matta-Clark, Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Rirkrit Tiravanija was underwritten by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), although the selection and curatorial organization were in the hands of Lagnado's team.

4. Dated May 19, 1971, Matta-Clark's letter noted the Brazilian military's exclusion of some Brazilian art from the Paris Biennale of 1968, censorship, arrest and imprisonment of young architects. A number of artists agreed to boycott the 1971 exhibition. For background, see James N. Green, "Clerics, Exiles, and Academics: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States, 1969-1974," *Latin American Politics and Society*, Spring 2003.

5. Other entrances were once available in the middle of the building's long glassed wall, providing much easier access for visitors as they moved from the Bienal pavilion to the nearby Museum of Modern Art. A map available in the opening week was hopelessly small and not altogether coherent.

6. From a text by Adetokunbo Abiola on the gallery Web site of Hugo's dealer, Michael Stevenson, <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/hugo/nigeria.htm>.

7. In an artist's statement provided by his New York representative, Hirschhorn described the work as a "physical map" with "no political border depicted."

*The 27th Bienal de São Paulo, "Como Viver Junto," was open to the public from Oct. 7 through Dec. 17, 2006.*

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