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THE EYE OF ROBERTO CABOT

Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, 2006 (17/02 - 04/04)

February, 2006, by CHRISTIAN DOMINGUEZ



Museu Praia Reflexo, 2006

Dimensions: aprox. 7 x 3 x 13 m Materials: paint, sand, floor

One of the main constants in Brazilian artistic production is the tireless search to define a clear structure on which the aesthetic proposal is based. Roberto Cabot, in his Cologne studio, introduced me to the work of Aleijadinho – the superb architect and sculptor of the 18th century – in which this constant effort is already visible. It was a major discovery for a European who had, at that time, already visited Brazil on several occasions.

The intervention, presented now by Roberto Cabot at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, also contains a strong constructive and structural substratum. The work consists of a huge painting on a wall of the museum foyer, with its reflection on the floor traced with sand. Using the space-specific characteristics, the artist creates an anamorphosis with

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beach sand that – depending on the observer's point of view - can match the reflection of the painted wall on the shiny museum floor. To accomplish the intervention, the artist had the support of Isaac, one of the 'popular artists' who build sand castles on the beach of Rio de Janeiro, masters of the sand technique.

From the strong recent work I have seen at the artist's atelier it is evident that the present installation finds its formal and conceptual origin in the concrete and neoconcrete experiences developed by some Brazilian artists in the 50s and 60s, especially in the *Metaesquemas* of the visionary Hélio Oiticica.

Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica and many other Brazilian artists and poets of the time incorporated social aspects and aimed for a constructive and structural order, this time with a deeper and more radical presence: involving the individual's participation, and through him, the participation of society as a whole.



There is no doubt that Roberto Cabot's work is consciously inscribed in this inevitable dialectic. His intervention at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro is clearly constructed on different structural levels: of the building space, of the meta-virtual space of the reflection, of the space of representation, of the museum as institutional space and finally, of the social space that corresponds to the *transmigration* of the craftsman of the beach - who works in a popular space - to the institution space, in a almost Borgian logic

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that recalls the functioning concept of “The Garden of Forking Paths” or of the “Aleph”, which the author describes as a place where all dimensions of the universe converge at the same point. Consequently the factors that configure the intervention reconstruct, one by one, historical moments of recent Brazilian art. To this, a European element is added: the use of the optical effect/concept of the reflection – and of the anamorphosis, its maquiavelian secondary product. The reflection as the ultimate analysis of the mother of all aesthetic proposals: the one that questions our identity.

— Roberto Cabot’s vision cannot now be the same as that of the great pioneers of art in Brazil of the 60s and 70s, of those who created his contemporary cultural identity. Roberto Cabot can, nowadays, see Brazil from outside as a Brazilian who constructed part of his aesthetic and social consciousness also in France, Spain and Germany, all cultures that are overloaded with cultural digestions through (virtual) centuries of *mass media*. Roberto Cabot’s vision shares the complexity of simultaneous levels and layers that is typical of the contemporary media, but the image he gives us is already inside our memory, and will leave (just as Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica) an amazing visual testimony. Cabot’s intervention at the MAM of Rio de Janeiro embraces his authentic time and his authentic people, and someday we won’t be able to be a testimony of contemporary Brazil because we simply won’t be here anymore. But, miraculously, the work will have survived the media storm of the culture of its time; it will have escaped through the interstices.

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<http://robertocabot.net/site/MAM/mpr.opening.html>