

## Catalogue Text: Ivo Mesquita

**XI Mostra da Gravura, Curitiba, Brazil. October, 1995**

### **Excerpt from Catalogue Text (English Translation)**

Ivo Mesquita

If Brazilian contemporary art is founded on a system of thought and representation from the Concrete and Neo-Concrete movements of the '50's and '60's, Canadian artistic production gains its impulse and identity from Conceptual Art. Besides a systematic approach to questions of art, architecture, and technology treated with a thoroughness and density specific to Canadian art, the most interesting artists in the country take the imagery of the Conceptual Art movement of the '60's as a basis of their work, always operating within a critical perspective to the system of representation and the art circuit.

I do not want to negate the importance of a production based upon the traditional supports of artistic practice (painting, drawing, sculpture, etc.) or say that it does not have its own characteristics resulting from the environment in which it was produced, but it is the conceptual and experimental aspect of Canadian artistic production of the 50's and early 60's that has given contemporary Canadian art its originality and relevance.

Hence, the two artists coming from Canada for the IX Mostra da Gravura, Curitiba can be called Neo-Conceptualists. Appearing as a reaction to the excessive formalism and mercantilism of the art of the early 60's, conceptual art prioritized the idea over the object, which gradually dematerialized. What was presented in the space of the gallery or museum was a "document" of the thoughts of the artist (text work) or of an action made by him or her (registered by images or narratives.) The incorporation of practices such as video, photography, performance, or land art, however, gradually enhanced the original drive of the movement. Thus, conceptual art started to include aspects of semiotics, feminism, and popular culture to create works which became increasingly foreign to the traditional art object.

Since the mid '80's Neo-Conceptualists internationally have been working in the divided space between art and other cultural territory, as well as between linguistic specificity and the diversity of speech. Though these artists have occasionally found themselves producing objects, painting or sculpture they are the ones who maintain the theoretic and ideological legacy of the conceptual art movement. They continue this legacy while stressing their interest in identity narratives, the traditions of oral history, and the realms of politics, art history and popular culture.

These artists operate through dislocation, hybridization, crossing and mixing, always trying to push the limits of representation and language. Similarly, these artists use their practices both to question and emphasize the systems used to produce their work, and to interrogate the systems through which they engage the world.

Terence Gower works with the systematic questioning of the myths of conscious or unconscious consensus within the artistic community. Authorship, the aura of the work of art, the value of work, style, originality, refined meaning, tradition, and cultural sophistication: these are the targets of his subtle humour and acid criticism employed in works designed “to distress those who love aesthetic plenitude, or who have an investment in the artificial continuing to look natural...”\*

By resorting to the cooperation or the appropriation of the work of other artists, technicians or artisans, Gower discards the idea of an authentic, personal work produced by the hand of the artist. He uses the suppression of authorship as a means to dissolve the myth of the art object and the artist who produces it, and division of labour as a means to create an economy of art designed to rid the art object of its aura of transcendence. Gower’s practice is an exploration of processes and relations of meaning kept in a state of suspension, and therefore open to new interventions. The context in which the work is produced often becomes its content, and the notion of esthetic gets reduced to a series of arbitrary decisions.

Curitiba is Brazil’s national center of perfumery, and Gower’s book about perfume, *Enfeuillage*, is the object of the game he has hatched for the XI Mostra da Gravura. The sense of smell is an abstract and little remembered sense in the territory of culture and its institutions, but it nonetheless demonstrates its presence in space by lending a certain aura of absence. It guides the gaze away from that which is seen, towards that which is felt. Isn’t art the privileged territory for a manifestation of the sensitive, of approaching the world through the senses?...

Ivo Mesquita

Notes

Lorna Scott Fox, “La Sensualidad de las Ideas,” in the periodical *Reforma*, Mexico, 16.09.1994, pp. 13D

Summary of the lecture, "The Curator as Cartographer" by Ivo Mesquita:

Nowadays, curators of contemporary art have become transnational citizens who visit studios, galleries, museums and shows, breaking geo-political borders to create a map of artistic production. They are similar to the cartographers who accompanied the scientific and exploratory expeditions of the past, mapping new territories as they were being discovered and explored. Currently curators are discovering a breakdown of borders between artists' areas of concern, and are taking on the added task of charting the dissolution of cultural frontiers.