

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
March 1990

PROJECTS: CILDO MEIRELES

March 17 - May 1, 1990

An exhibition featuring a major sculpture by Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles opens at The Museum of Modern Art on March 17, 1990, as part of the ongoing PROJECTS series. Organized by Lynn Zelevansky, curatorial assistant in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, PROJECTS: CILDO MEIRELES offers a metaphorical critique of such social institutions as the church and state.

On view until May 1, the sculpture, titled Olvido (Oblivion), consists of a tent papered with money from North, Central, and South America. The floor within is covered with charcoal, with four-and-a-half tons of cow bones heaped around the periphery. The entire structure is encircled by a low wall made of 70,000 church candles, stacked horizontally. A low-volume recording of a chain saw emanates from the tent.

Complex and highly symbolic, Olvido comments on the displacement and destruction of indigenous Indian cultures throughout the world. The various elements represent states of natural growth and human destruction. Charcoal and bones are symbolic of the world before human tampering, while money and candles signify social institutions. Candles suggest light and salvation; but, capable of destruction, they hint of damnation. Money, though representing power, is perishable; in replacing bark and leaves as a covering for the tepee, it ironically suggests security. Bones traditionally connote

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death, but they also make up the living body. The violent sound of the chain saw--also recalling a machine gun--implies the ruin of nature by human beings.

Born in 1948, Cildo Meireles started making art at age fifteen. By 1967 he was producing works that addressed the formal and conceptual issues that would continue to occupy him. In 1970 the artist printed anti-authoritarian messages hostile to the Brazilian government on Coca-Cola bottles and on bank notes, capitalizing on existing methods of distribution to disseminate subversive ideas. Although these conceptual works are related to art movements in Europe and the United States, they actually derive from Brazilian artistic traditions. Meireles's art varies from large sculptures and installations to small, conceptual works; from figurative, emotional drawings to schematized, colorful paintings of soccer fields.

This exhibition is supported by grants from The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art and Vitae, São Paulo. Transportation assistance has been provided by Varig S.A. PROJECTS is made possible by generous grants from the Bohen Foundation and the Lannan Foundation.

The next exhibition in the series is PROJECTS: FRANZ GERTSCH, on view from May 12 to June 26, 1990

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For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.