

## ***Multiple paths and multiple traumas: the Inhotim Cultural Institute and its technologies of affect***

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### **Abstract**

The Instituto Cultural Inhotim is the largest collection of contemporary art in Brazil. The museum's spatial configuration is defined by an inside/outside dichotomy and influenced by the compositional signature of landscape designer Roberto Burle Marx. This organization of space and works from artists such as Chris Burden, Cildo Meireles and Doris Salcedo open another way of engaging in critical examinations of history and trauma. Through technologies of affect, the museum provides glimpses into histories of atrocities, while the idyllic landscape of the museum and the White Cube gallery model threaten to numb the viewer to the poignancy of the artworks.

**Keywords:** memory studies, affect theory, trauma, museum studies, Inhotim.

## ***Múltiples caminos y múltiples traumas: el Instituto Cultural Inhotim y sus tecnologías del afecto***

### **Resumen**

El Instituto Cultural Inhotim es la mayor colección de arte contemporáneo en Brasil. Su configuración espacial se define por una dicotomía dentro/fuera e influenciado por la firma composicional del paisajista Roberto Burle Marx. Esta organización de los espacios y las obras de artistas como Chris Burden, Cildo Meireles y Doris Salcedo sugieren otra forma de participación del público en la historia y el trauma. A través de las tecnologías del afecto, el museo ofrece atisbos de historias de atrocidades, mientras que el paisaje idílico del museo y el modelo de cubo blanco amenazan con adormecer al espectador mediante la intensidad de las obras de arte.

**Palabras clave:** estudios de la memoria, teoría de afecto, trauma, museología, Inhotim.

## **Multiple paths and multiple traumas: the Inhotim Cultural Institute and its technologies of affect**

### **Introduction**

The Inhotim Cultural Institute founded in 2002 by the mining entrepreneur Bernardo Paz is now the largest museum of contemporary art in Brazil. Its structure is a mix of several museum models, from the traditional self-contained modernist building to the sculpture garden. This article leaves from the premise that the spatial structure and the curatorial choices of the museum create, among others, a path of implication where the poignant facets of repressive historical moments are juxtaposed with the idyllic environment of the museum's landscape. This challenges the audience transiting between these spaces and proposes a new affective experience of this dialectic.

The central argument of this article is that Inhotim's multigenerative spatial structure has the potential to heighten critical thinking about violence and conflict brought forth by the artworks in its collection. More importantly, I focus on the ethics of affect, in how the juxtaposition of artworks like Cildo Meireles' *Desvio para o vermelho* or Doris Salcedo's *Neither* and the idyllic environment of the museum's landscape is twofold: on one hand, this tension between outside and inside challenges the audience proposing a new affective experience and call attention to critical questions within the Inhotim institute itself. On the other, the sensorial overload and the repeated experiences of tension and release can overwhelm the viewers and numb them to the wider political implications of the artworks. The potential of this tension and release structure is not only to highlight social and political questions, but to create critical spaces in which a myriad of questions can come forth: institutional critique, critiques of the modernist canon, critiques of mechanisms of control over the body through space, among others.

The Inhotim Cultural Institute is placed in the heart of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, and is made up of twenty-three galleries, most of them constructed specifically to house one artwork or a group of works by the same artist, as well as twenty-two outdoor sculptures spread around its 3000 acres of artificial lakes, botanical gardens, and

protected forest.<sup>1</sup> Because the galleries are permanent structures and were designed through the collaboration between architects, the museum's curators, and the artists, the spaces are simultaneously site and work specific even as they house artworks that are not site-specific (Kwon, 1997) projects themselves. It is thus specificity beyond site specific. The highly manipulated nature of the museum's environment is thus obscured by the sensation that these things were somehow born there.

Furthermore, Inhotim's labyrinthic nature leads to multiple configurations according to each visitor experience. The diverse paths within the museum intersect and challenge one another, heightening the experience of these diverse spaces, bringing new questions into the frame of view of the individuals that navigate through the museum. The museum's structure and curatorial strategies allow new forms of intertextuality that insert viewers' experience within a multitude of memories. It triggers what Michael Rothberg calls multidirectional memory, bringing different spaces and times to bear on the viewer's act of remembrance (Rothberg, 2009: 11). More importantly, it opens a space/moment in which the present can bear on the past as much as the inverse. This is possible because Inhotim's spatial configuration heightens memory's anachronistic quality and changes the body's experience of space and time.

It is the contradictions within the very space of the museum: its labyrinthic configuration and its garden/pavilion dichotomy, heightened by the difference from the "outside" world, which enhances the apperceptive process: the sense of oneself perceiving. This apperception is key as it is the central mechanism through which affect can be communicative, the manner in which it becomes a technology. The idea of technologies of affect is key to this study. In the anthropological sense, technology has been understood as both "the application of knowledge for practical ends" and "the sum of the ways in which social groups provide themselves with the (material objects) of their civilization" (Merriam-Webster dictionary). In this case, we can understand technology as the way social groups provide themselves with the affective experiences of their

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<sup>1</sup> The ever-changing nature of the museum makes its structural configuration difficult to pinpoint, thus this information has been updated according is current of January 2016. All other biographical information about the institute is from the first monograph of the museum (Pedrosa and Moura, 2009) and the recent *Monolito* journal special issue on Inhotim (*Monolito*, 2013).

civilization. Affective experiences are the dimension of the experience, beyond the verbal and conceptual categories, which are not intelligible through traditional systems of meaning making. They are those sensorial and psychological realities, which have not been systematized into a signifier-signified-referent relationship and as such cannot be transmitted through recognizable signs.

Brian Massumi already notes in his *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* that affect, or the feeling of the relation, may not be “large” enough at the level of the surface of the body to be registered consciously, or the thought process not abstract enough to recognize it (Massumi, 2002). Thus, some of these affective experiences are at the level of the untranslatable, but not the meaningless. Affect ultimately challenges Saussurian (Saussure, 1959) – and in some instances Peircian (Peirce, 1960-66), although Peirce is more concerned with the aspects of continuity of the body and their understanding of the world at this level – semiotic models, because none of the parts of the “sign” are stable (and conceptualizable) enough for a relationship between signifier and signified to be completely established.

Furthermore, semiotics as a system rooted in difference cannot encompass affect as a system grounded in analogy. The only communicable dimension of affect is at the level of analogy. Although I can never understand another’s experience (of trauma, joy, sorrow, or longing), I can relate to it by remembering my own. This is also the dimension of affect that is instrumentalizable. While the space of Berlin’s Olympic Stadium with its processional paths, symbolic ornamentation, and monumentality, for example, are a set of specific affective technologies, Inhotim’s space similarly is made of other ones.

Ultimately, Inhotim’s structuring feature is the gardens created by Roberto Burle Marx and the landscape architect’s understanding of space.<sup>2</sup> Burle Marx’s space is configured to highlight the experience of choice. Its networked and labyrinth environment exposes the body to diverse paths. This is the most important contribution of Burle Marx’s

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<sup>2</sup> Burle Marx travelled to the region in the 1980s because of his friendship with Inhotim’s founder Bernardo Paes. During this trip, the landscape artist proposed some plans for the gardens around the farm house Paes owned in the area. Today this area is less than 10% of the Inhotim grounds and Burle Marx’s contribution is much more in the wider configuration of the space of the museum, as well as his long lasting influence on Brazilian landscape design than a hands-on projecting of the Inhotim grounds, which is credited to Luiz Carlos Orsini.

landscape design to the museum's philosophy. It is a space that has the potential to drive the multitude of singulars to reflect critically about their experiences; their personal process of remembrance engaged in wider political thinking. It has the potential for this critical thinking, while simultaneously the potential for control of this impulse in the moments where the White Cube model returns.

Brian O'Doherty, in his *Inside the White Cube: Ideology of the gallery space*, explores the configuration of the museum space as traditionally "a kind of non-space, ultraspace, or ideal space where the surrounding matrix of space-time is symbolically annulled" (O'Doherty, 1999: 8). Through this annulment, the moving body and its affective potential is annulled as well. In the 'white cube', the *I* is reduced to the *Eye*, "the disembodied faculty that relates exclusively to formal visual means" (O'Doherty, 1999: 8). As such, as O'Doherty notes, in the space of the white cube, the spectator is reduced to an instance of the visual. The inside/outside dichotomy of the Inhotim space is in many ways a white cube/labyrinth one. The inside spaces are configured as the controlling and limiting white cube, but has the potential of the labyrinth to evoke affective experiences. The outside caters to the experience of choice, of molding ones environment as one lives through it, at the same time that it overwhelms the senses in its luscious and cleansed artificiality.

I explore here the spaces that constitute what I am naming Inhotim's path of implication. I use first person narratives (taken from recounting of different visitors of the museum) as transitions to recreate and reanimate the affective experiences of this path.<sup>3</sup> Bracketing this path and this narrative hopefully shows how the museum structure has the potential to either create spaces of criticality or disperse them; to promote multidirectional memory and affective experiences that bring histories of atrocities into sharper focus for the general population or imprison poignant works into the ascetic space of the White Cube. Ultimately, this study exposes a set of possibilities for thinking about trauma within the walls of the museum.

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note here that my readings of these works are not closed universes, but only options among many others, in the same way that this path is one among many within the museum.

## Inhotim's Spatial Structure

In the 1980s, Burle Marx created the project for the Inhotim botanical gardens that was later expanded by Luiz Carlos Orsini in 1999 (Pedrosa, 2009). Although the projects premises changed under Orsini, the relationship of Inhotim to the ideas of Burle Marx remains very strong. The question of configuring a space that is multigenerative and that allows for a multiplicity of maps is an important part of Inhotim's conception, and Burle Marx's thinking. It is the search for a space that configures itself organically and grows into a network of passages and clearings. Thus, there are as many experiences of the museum as there are visitors and the very construction of the museum's image escapes even those that create it.

Burle Marx's gardens are horizontal compositions that inhabit the architectural space blurring the division between outside and inside, and creating a direct relationship with the landscape, configuring experiences that are "rarely homogeneous and unified" (Vacarino, 2000: 45). This is the most interesting, and at times conflictive aspect of the Inhotim space: while many works and spaces blur the division between outside and inside –a key to the museological discourse of the White Cube– at other times, the artworks and pavilions reinforce it. Again, as with the multigenerational paths, this dichotomy is twofold: the reinsertion of the White Cube model in works such as Salcedo's *Neither* works to affectively connect the work and other non-places such as concentration camps. On another hand, the reinsertion of this model in the Inhotim space, which with its artificial configuration of landscape design evokes the constructed experience of the tropical, typical of Brazilian identity discourse, is gratuitous. It only reflects an anxiety about discarding the White Cube's affective technology, one that has been long lasting and powerful.

## Trailing the path of implication

1

*I walked into the gallery, I had been here before and the turnstile had never really caught my attention, I just went through it like everyone else that was walking in front of me. Then the wall cracked... It was a strange noise, I looked around*

*startled, the wall caught my eye, a line ran through it, it reminded me of our grandmother's old house, with the cracks running all through the corners. Her house was never this white though... I realized I found this sound very disconcerting, I made my little brother go under the thing; I didn't want to add to it... I thought the artwork was interesting, it didn't seem to do much before, but now, although I liked to know more, what I really wanted was to get out of there. Better not give wings to chance, you know?*

Chris Burden's *Samson*, placed in the Lago gallery, is a synecdoche of the suggested path of implication. In 2009, this gallery welcomed to its small opening room the 1985 work of North American artist Chris Burden ([Image 1](#)).<sup>4</sup> *Samson* is a turnstile mechanism that pushes a jack of 100 tons against the adjacent walls of the gallery. The visitors trigger the mechanism as they pass through it, a *brutal and subtle experience*: "By forcing spectators to pass through the turnstile in order to satisfy their curiosity, Burden assigns them equal culpability in the potential destruction of the gallery space".<sup>5</sup> The work implicates the viewers in the destructive potential of the apparatus and the idea of implication, of affective experiences that have the potential to pull us out of the secure space of traditional museum institutionalism and back to the current historical continuum, frames the much more violent historical nature of the works that resonate to create this path.

*Samson* imparts on those who realize the constant pressure upon the walls of the gallery a feeling of urgency: a discomfort analogous to the experience of living in a state of exception (Agamben, 2005). It is subtle yet ever present. It permeates the past, present, and future of that space and affects all those who have passed through it. Moreover, since the crack of the structure can only be felt at very specific times, the repeated experience of the piece by the same visitor can be radically different: the pressure increases and is felt more or less intensively in different moments. In turn, these

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<sup>4</sup> The piece was taken out in 2013 and this room of the gallery was rearranged, not before the cracks were covered and the walls repainted stark white.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpt from ICI's Lago gallery wall text adjacent to Chris Burden's work *Samson*. Emphasis mine.

are also the characteristics of the museum as a whole: aiming at an experience that is constantly partial, the viewers' glimpse at the whole is always fragmented and singular. The visitors that experience the attack on the walls of the Lago gallery get a glimpse into the reality of the assault of *Samson*. These unexpected jolts are particularly haunting and permeate the subsequent works in this path, as the poignancy remains latent resurging in in different moments.

The inevitable conclusion of *Samson* is the collapse of the gallery walls under the pressure exercised by the turnstile, an event to which thousands of visitors have contributed, an event that connects them no matter their spatial or temporal remove from the moment of the collapse. To allow the understanding of the work's true nature, extended time is paramount. Challenging traditional museum display strategies where the viewer is invited to move through the processional pathway engaging one (hopefully intelligible) narrative, Burden's work complicates this paradigm, its narrative not instantly revealed; the conceptual dimensions of the work peeking through at unscheduled moments. Repeated experience of the work, extended permanence is key to unveiling it and even then, its internal character may remain obscure: *Samson* may never be experienced by a viewer no matter how persistent one is.

It is a work that highlights the movement of the bodies through the gallery rather than occulting it, it demands the white cube space for his engagement with visitors. The one entrance and one exit configuration of the windowless small white space where *Samson* is installed is the epitome of the white cube model. Nevertheless, the glass wall entry and the vegetation which closes around the path that leads to this door makes this space more ambiguous, it highlights its man made asceticism. *Samson* needs the white cube to come into being, yet its goal is to attack it; it posits the safe artificialism of the gallery space while it dissipates it. Passing through *Samson*, the visitor gains access to the Lago gallery that is configured as a sequence of rooms, catering well to more traditional forms of display. This gallery rotates different pieces from the collection and is ideal for the presentation of two-dimensional works as well as smaller installations that can inhabit these simple and clean white rectangular rooms. The ideas raised by *Samson*, the tension of the constant pressure, of the constant threat of destruction, may be left behind by the

viewers as they engage with other exhibits, yet as an affective experience, it remains latent and can be brought to the surface by the encounter with works such as Doris Salcedo's *Neither* and Cildo Meireles' *Through*.

## 2

*We walked into the red one, it was great, your cousin loved it, he touched everything, opened the refrigerator, played with the bird... He didn't want to go into the dark corridor, I thought it was strange with the paint running through, but we went on... I saw the washbasin, it took me a second to get a grip on what was bothering me. Your cousin went towards it, he wanted to put his hand in the water... I pulled him back, it was a reflex... We went back through the corridor... The noise of the running water stayed with me, it reminded me of my father, how he used to say we shouldn't talk about the government, we shouldn't think about the people that were disappearing... I felt kind of sick... And people are calling for military intervention in Brazil right now... maybe they should walk through this thing, it might change their minds.*

The Cildo Meireles gallery, located in the center of the grounds, is a complex of dark, air-conditioned pavilions, that are used to house different pieces by the artist that belong to the collection; among the most important are *Desvio para o vermelho* and *Através*. Meireles' *Através* (*Through*, 1983-89) ([Image 2](#)) made up of 15 square meters of materials such as metal fences, wooden blinds, and crowd control tape laid out in what appears as an organized arrangement often occupies the larger pavilion inside the gallery because the work's limits is mimicked by the shape of the cubic gallery. The viewer can choose to stare from the borders or enter the work, stepping onto glass fragments that cover the floor. As Bartolomeu Marí argues: "*Through* is a monument to passive repression, to that unspoken but understood order that inhibits action rather than will itself" (Brett, 2008: 148). Meireles' environment limits the viewer at every turn with a mix of transparency and opacity. Although the entire artwork is visible, there seems to be no way around or out of it: wood fences and plastic walls block the path. It echoes the

experience of warped spaces, borderlands, where the only possibility of navigating between spaces is through the gaze.

*Through* deals with questions of borders and control in a society dealing with the paranoia of increasing crime and where being safe from the outside many times implies being trapped within (Moura and Pedrosa, 2009: 90). This is also what makes the piece so resonant today. Recalling the walls, fences, and other boundaries that isolate parts of the social body from others in Brazil, *Through* evokes the radical economic gaps observable in the country. The floor is covered by pieces of shattered glass, which Meireles proposes create a potentially liberating experience, “a sort of continuous metaphor for a piercing through of the gaze” (Moura and Pedrosa, 2009: 90). The artist understands the path through the work as a response to that accumulation of prohibitions, to an accumulation that leads to the crumbling of the system. The shattered glass has the potential of heightening the affective experience of piercing through the limits imposed on the body. Nevertheless, it heightens the experience of danger, it is analogous to crime scenes and car crashes. It may be felt as a release, but simultaneously latent tension.

*Through* conceptually resonates with the period Meireles lived through as a young man, the military dictatorship in Brazil. Particularly, it evokes the first decade of military control, the years of “soft” repression in which state violence was disguised in a curated affective normalcy. The government’s affective technology, its air of patriotism and economic glory resulted in a state of veiled tension, an uneasiness that *Through* reproduces. In this space, the viewer seems to be constantly threatened without knowing from what, controlled by invisible forces. Bartolomeu Marí points out how: “Meireles projects architectonic fantasies that paradoxically both restricts and releases, operating both on the immediacy of perception and on the powerful drag and pull of memory” (Marí, 2008: 149). This constant alternation between tension and release is present in the works at his gallery in Inhotim and it is also part of the relationship of the gallery and the environment surrounding it, between the outside and inside of the gallery space, between Meireles’ work and others in the museum’s collection. Like Burden’s *Samson*, *Through* also operates within the taxonomies of modernism. The grid, the ultimate modernist myth in Rosalind Krauss’ reading (Krauss, 1974), is a key component of

*Through*, as it is a key morphology of modernist architecture, the form of Brazilian architecture per excellence (Forty and Andreoli, 2004).

*Desvio para o vermelho* (*Red Shift*, 1967-84) ([Image 3](#)) is the second work of Meireles housed in the pavilion and continues this narrative of veiled repression by engaging with modernist artistic strategies, in this case the monochrome. *Desvio para o vermelho* is made up of three adjacent rooms entitled *Impregnação* (*Impregnation*), *Entorno* (*Spillage and Environment*, in Portuguese the word carries both meanings at once) and *Desvio* (*Shift*). This work encompasses the same tension present in *Through*, one that mounts as the viewer co-inhabits the environment. The first room is filled with red objects, most of them obtained by donations (or objects that the artist acquired) following a newspaper ad Meireles placed at the time of the elaboration of the work in the 1960s. The installation includes works by other artist like Rosângela Rennó, as well as a living bird that eats red food, and a refrigerator full of fresh red products. This domestic environment would seem commonplace for the Brazilian middle class in the 1960s/70s were it not for the saturation of the color red.

After the overwhelming experience of color and the many times playful encounter with the different objects in the room, viewers are drawn into a corridor: a dark narrow space where a small bottle –much too small for the amount of liquid spilled on the floor– is tipped over. The red liquid and the bottle are the only visible things in an otherwise pitch-black environment. The red liquid in *Entorno* guides the viewer around the corner to the final room. This space is the origin of the sound that gets louder as one navigates the work: the sound of running water. Also completely dark, the third room has only one object illuminated, a tilted washbasin attached to a wall at the far end of the space. The basin is stained from the red liquid that runs from the tap. The color of the water, compared to the liquid in the floor of *Entorno*, is thinly colored and the association with blood being washed away is uncanny. Few viewers move any closer to observe the washbasin. The room is small, damp and cold: the air conditioning and the closed space adding to the affect of the running water. Nevertheless, the experience is not over, and to exit the installation the viewers have to rewind their steps, return through *Entorno* and *Impregnation* to the entrance they came from.

This second passage through the installation is not random, but a carefully orchestrated operation. Here, in the second time around, the perception of the red objects, against the backdrop of the red liquid that swirls around the washbasin, gains new meaning. Suely Rolnik summarizes the experience as: “the impression is that under or behind that excessive pathological ‘normality’ of life under state terrorism [she is referring to the military dictatorship], an incessant bloodying of the vital flows of Brazilian society is in process. All is taken over, as the red takes over the whole installation” (Brett 2008: 133). Meireles’ piece is experienced anew as the viewer passes through it a second time. The color red and the everyday objects gain new affective dimensions, their meanings expand and the memory of the thin red liquid running down the washbasin refuses to be washed away and clings to everything else.<sup>6</sup> More importantly, it clings to the viewer’s imaginary and disturbs the playfulness and the comfort of the space experienced previously. Normalcy gains a new affective dimension, one that is revitalized when the viewer again encounters the normalcy of the domestic: later when outside the museum, and seemingly away from its affective grasp, they walk into their own home.

First conceptualized in 1967, only one year before the promulgation of AI-5 (Ato Institucional n.5), the law that unleashed the most violent years of the military dictatorship in Brazil, *Desvio para o vermelho* speaks to the unveiled violence of the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s in the country. The historical underpinning of *Desvio para o vermelho* and the way it is exhibited in Inhotim raises important questions about the curatorial model of the museum.<sup>7</sup> Particularly, how the placement of works like these in specific galleries isolates them from their context to the point of reinserting them in the discourse of autonomy of modern art. As well as how the idyllic landscape of Inhotim

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<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to mention that this work was at first thought in blue, but the artist later changed it to red. This signals that the red here is a deliberate affective technology that was chosen specifically because of the implications of this color.

<sup>7</sup> There are several other possible readings of this work, particularly as it relates to the monochrome and the question of the domestic. Even Meireles has been known to at times reject the more political reading of this work. Nevertheless, this reading shows the work’s affective potential to become a space of criticality, which does not impede other readings of it, nor it hampers the work from resonating with others at Inhotim and constituting another path. One clear connection is with Tunga’s *True Rouge*, a massive installation of suspended glass receptacles filled with red liquid which is found in the gallery of the same name. Juxtaposed with Tunga’s piece, Meireles’ *Desvio para o vermelho* evokes other readings surrounding questions of sensuality and chromatic saturation.

softens the harsh realities evoked by works such as Meireles' *Desvio para o vermelho*. Ultimately, the museum deals with a difficult balance. On one hand, the containment of the affective experience of the artworks to the galleries allows for there to be a stark difference between the tension felt within the galleries and the release experienced when exiting. The low temperature and dim light inside the Meireles gallery for instance is radically different from the outside: the bright, colorful clean skies and the heat of the Brazilian savanna.

Nevertheless, the isolations of the artworks can be dangerous, risking only privileging their formal characteristics and perpetuating the notion of the autonomous work of art displaced from its context, which is the fundamental guiding ideal of the white cube. This is not to deny that Meireles' work was conceptualized for the museum, it was and needs this space to have its impact, but the affective ambiance of the white cube, in its processional path, its asceticism and cleanliness has the effect of heightening a separation between art and life (O'Doherty, 1999).

Examining Meireles' work in relationship with the white cube it has been conceptualized to inhabit, it is noticeable how it subverts it while reasserting it. The red saturation is twofold: it challenges the white cleanliness of the museum space, but it also only exists because of it, as it is the whiteness that brings the red into sharper focus. It interacts with the art historical canon by evoking the monochrome, while dismantling it in its reassertion of everyday life through the objects it uses to create the saturated color field. Even further, the space of Inhotim adds to the equation the saturation of color outside the gallery with the overwhelming greens, blues, and yellows of the controlled landscape.

The configuration of only one entrance and one exit in *Through* –once the visitor enters, he has to contour the work to leave through the other door– and the dead end spatial plan of *Desvio para o vermelho*, frames the experience of the visitors in the Meireles gallery.<sup>8</sup> This space of transition is important and is a strategy of assuaging the tension while allowing for it to remain present. These spaces change the relationship –

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that *Red Shift* has always had a dead end configuration of space even before it was acquired and installed at Inhotim.

both temporal and spatial— of the audience with the act of viewing artworks. The experience of each artwork expands beyond the time and space of confronting the piece, through both the visitors' trail along Inhotim's paths and their exit. They retain the memory of that affective experience beyond the museum "walls". This is heightened also by the juxtaposition of different works in the collection that can seem at first radically different, as with Doris Salcedo's *Neither*.

### 3

*I don't think I completely got this one... It still comes to me sometimes though. I catch myself wondering what it is about. I have been in there several times, and once, when I was at Inhotim and the gallery was closed for maintenance, I found that I was disappointed I wasn't going to get to go in there again... It is quiet, but kind of disturbing... white... closed... a little strange, but nice. I like this one. You feel like you can stay in there for a long time and just think.*

In Salcedo's gallery, the question of repression suggested in works such as *Through* and *Desvio para o vermelho* is expanded to the global realm. Designed in 2008 from collaboration between the artist and architects Carlos Granada and Paula Zasnico Cardoso to permanently house the work *Neither* ([Image 4](#)), the Doris Salcedo gallery is literally a white cube structure with only one entrance, even artificial lighting, and no windows. The work was conceived in 2004 for an exhibition in the White Cube gallery in London and moved to Inhotim to inhabit the gallery constructed specifically for it.

*Neither* is made up of pieces of diamond metal fencing inlaid in the white walls of the gallery. At points it completely disappears inside the walls, while at others, it reappears, as layers of the material overlap. The material —chain-link wire fence— is common in the visual landscape of immigration and detention camps in Bosnia and concentration camps in photographs of World War II, as well as increasingly used in urban areas across the world to isolate private properties. It echoes the materials of *Through*, but the subtlety of *Neither* makes the work's explorations of borders and imprisonment creep up on the viewers and challenge them in different ways. As many of Salcedo's

works, this piece evokes helplessness and the material's attack on the gallery walls heightens the viewers' awareness of being there, highlighting the "limit of tension between architecture as protection and architecture as threat" (Pedrosa and Moura, 2009: n.p.). The whiteness and apparent subtlety of the structure simultaneously calms and suffocates. The idea of being in a space of exception, non-places where normal structures of time and space are lifted (as well as political and human rights as in Guantanamo Bay) takes a while to set in.

*Neither* is part of the gallery, the artwork is absorbed by it and exists because of it. The building becomes an index of the existence of the work. The walls of the gallery are transformed because of the fences laid in them. The piece is only possible within the architectural structure created for it. Salcedo's work is only complete within the "white cube" structure; in another architectural configuration, the claustrophobic aspect of this work might be lost, and its affect on the viewer changed. The placement of the metal fencing in the walls of the gallery unearths other questions about inside and outside, as well as transparency and opacity. The fence usually divides two areas, one where the individual can dwell and the other one cannot access; it can be seen even though it cannot be inhabited. In Salcedo's gallery, however, what is beyond the inhabitable space – that which is unattainable – also cannot be seen. The gallery turns onto itself and makes the center of the work not what is beyond the fence, or the fence itself as in Meireles' *Through*, but what is in the emptiness of this space (Pedrosa and Moura, 2009: 216).

The very binding of the fence to the walls also returns us to a running question in these works: they challenge the white cube model. This model is a recurrent question in the works of this path of implication because the white cube, ideologically, reflects a series of paradigms: control over the body, stasis, passiveness, and the scientificist claim of impartiality, of autonomy. All of these universals are central political questions, which are paramount for discussions of traumatic events such as the military dictatorship in Brazil, the Holocaust, and contemporary spaces of exception like international prisons. By calling attention to the white cube as a prison, and to the way it isolates the viewer from the social and political outside world in a mix of atemporality, cleanliness, and ahistoricism, Salcedo unveils the authoritarianism of this architectural structure and returns

the body to the *I*. Moreover, Salcedo's work does this by directly attacking the "white cube" space, by equating it to non-places in the terms of Marc Augé: a space of transition where the prisoner cannot go forth or back but is trapped in-between where his rights are lessened or eliminated (Augé, 1995). *Neither* is an installation that disrupts the reverential space of the white cube with the aggression of the concentration camp. As in Meireles' and Burden's work, Salcedo's work cannot be conceptualized without the white cube museum model and works with it while it challenges it.

Like Meireles' pieces, *Neither* evokes security versus imprisonment, but like Burden's *Samson* it expands on the idea of time. Rod Mengham argues that "as the simulacrum of concentration camp confinement, *Neither* evokes those spaces in which nothing is done except waiting; time is suspended, the prisoner's life is on hold, and history unravels into an interminable present tense" (Mengham, 2004: 11). In our contemporary affective experience of speed: information, images, and even bodies, this slowing down of experience is extremely effective. It is not felt at once, but the permanence in the space, most of the time triggered by the viewer's wish to "figure it out", potentially jolts the visitor out of the "regular" time of everyday life. Thus, the tension between inside and outside, the difference in the experience of time –and color– in *Neither* evokes political relations. The unveiled repression in states under authoritarianism is reproduced in the experience of the visitor through the interior and exterior of the gallery. In this structure, one is made aware of the growing tension that builds inside the walls, of how the whiteness, cleanliness, and static character of the piece slowly suffocates mimicking the violence experienced during military dictatorships in Brazil, as well as in other Latin American countries, Salcedo's Colombia among them.

## Conclusion

This path of implication, one among many possible others within the museum, is created by the convergence of several works that "powerfully inscribe a dimension of localizable, even corporeal memory" (Huysen, 2003: 110) into this space. By creating an affective dialectic between the subtlety and poignancy of the artworks and the release permitted by the bucolic landscape of the botanical gardens outside, the museum structure caters

to an experience of complicity of the viewers with their own, and others, history. Colonization, military dictatorship, ethnic and territorial issues, as well as the manipulation of discourses of a shared identity are all brought to the surface in the diverse works within the museum, including those discussed here.

The way these works are installed is key in making this critical and affective event possible. By walking through the glass in Meireles's *Through* or being mesmerized by the saturation of color in his *Desvio para o vermelho*, only to find oneself a few minutes later imprisoned by the limits of the former and disgusted by the remembrance of the violent history evoked by the latter, is to be pulled into the multidirectional memories embodied in these pieces. Being confronted by the cleanliness and artificiality that slowly reveals the apparatus of atrocities that is the concentration camps in Doris Salcedo's *Neither*, or to pass the turnstile and hear the crack in gallery structure as one engages with *Samson*, is to experience the museum anew. Not as a space of passive and safe contemplation, but as a space where art can give us a glimpse into ourselves, and the institution of the museum.

It is the possibility for paths that are troubling, uncomfortable and even unnerving that are central here, as they point to a limit case of museum practice. It is along these more unusual threads that the assumption of a safe institutional, contemplative, and leisure museum space is subverted. Within this spatial frame the encounter between artworks and viewers becomes a transformative event, opening the possibility for acknowledgement of one's own complicity and implication in repressive histories and their echoes in contemporary society. This is possible because these are not passive environments.

Nevertheless, the new possibilities of reflection about histories of exploitation and domination at times challenge the institution's political position. Inhotim's somewhat neocolonial relationship with the community around it and the museum's lack of financial transparency, which has caused growing accusations of money laundering, are brought to the fore by the alternating experience of politically charged works of art and the luscious botanical gardens that surround these spaces. These paths around the museum pose ethical challenges for the institution and question its impact within the local, regional, and

international spheres.<sup>9</sup> Further, the impact of the botanical gardens, the galleries, and artworks to the biomes of the region are the target of environmentalist and scholars alike. While the population of Brumadinho have spoke positively about the impact of the Institute in the economy of the region, and the publications within Minas Gerais have pointed to the way the Institute has spiked tourism in the area, nationally, the museum has been received with suspicion.<sup>10</sup> The questions of the veracity of the accusations against the museum are not the focus of this study, and whether or not the museum has had a positive impact in the economy and in the artistic milieu of the region of Minas Gerais, the question remains that the museum's configuration of space and its curatorial structure leads, through its potential for spaces of criticality, to a direct confrontation with the museum's own institutional politics.

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<sup>9</sup> See bibliography for several examples of such critiques by particularly Jotabê Medeiros and Sérgio Rodrigo Reis.

<sup>10</sup> See the bibliography for an array of articles discussing the accusations levered against the museum, as well as those defending the institution.

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