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Iran do Espírito Santo at the Irish Museum of Modern Art



DUBLIN, IRELAND.- An exhibition of work by one of Brazil's most prominent contemporary artists, Iran do Espírito Santo, opens to the public at the Irish Museum of Modern Art on Thursday 9 November 2006. Comprising some 28 works ranging from 1999 to 2006, the exhibition includes sculpture, drawing and installation, as well as one painting - a seductive but disturbing black version of the flag of Brazil. Espírito Santo's work deals with structure, design, place, surface, space, light and material, and is based on a subtle subversion of Minimalism through abstracted everyday items.

Among the artist's favourite materials are glass, stainless steel, granite, marble and sandstone, which help to give a timeless feel to simple forms of recognisable objects such as lamps, bricks, boxes, keyholes and tins. His work is a stylish reflection on daily objects and their representation as an ideal, the functional nature of these objects disappears and they become aesthetic objects. His palette is reduced, almost exclusively to white, grey and black.

Espírito Santo's work is primarily concerned with the physical, rather than the metaphysical, and his themes are conceptual in nature. At first glance, his sculptures seem to represent simple everyday forms, however, on closer inspection they suddenly evolve into something more complex. *Untitled (Keyhole)*, 2002, for example, is a spherical visualisation of a keyhole in black basalt. Its surface reflects its surroundings, but we are of course, denied the possibility of delving into its interior and have to content ourselves with moving around it. *The Night*, 1998, is a black painting on steel which shows a series of stars on a black background. It takes some time before one notices that it is a version of the Brazilian flag in which the colours green and yellow have disappeared. This work is a response to the artist's experience of growing up in Brazil during the years of the dictatorship. In recent works such as the marble boxes *White Box*, 2003; *Grey Box*, 2003, and *Black Box*, 2003, where they are identical in technique and dimensions, colour provides a key to the interpretation of the works in their individuality and a clue about their contents.

The effects of light on the surface of the objects and their placement in architecture are highly significant. In works where the artist uses sandblasted glass, crystal or mirrors, as in *Restless 25*, 2005, the transparency of the material enables one to view the space behind the sculpture as well as the external, frontal, and lateral spaces that the work incorporates in its reflecting surfaces. The result is that the viewer's perception of the work goes beyond its clear-cut physical boundaries, expanding and taking in the setting in which it is placed. In addition, its texture also influences our perception of the weight of an object, which in the artist's work contradicts the data presented on the purely formal plane.

Iran do Espírito Santo was born in 1963 in the state of São Paulo, where he still lives and works. He has exhibited widely in museums and galleries worldwide. His works are included in the collections of many prominent international museums, including the Museum of Modern Art , New York , the Museum of Modern Art , San Francisco , and the Museum of Contemporary Art , San Diego . His works have been included in the Venice Biennale, Bienal de São Paulo and the Istanbul Biennial. Recent exhibitions include Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo , Brazil , and the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco .

The exhibition is curated by Enrique Juncosa, Director, IMMA, in collaboration with Paolo Colombo, Curator, MAXXI – Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, Rome . This is a touring exhibition organised by IMMA and MAXXI. It was first shown at MAXXI and after been shown at IMMA will travel to the Pinacoteca do Estado, São Paulo. A publication, with texts by Enrique Juncosa, Paolo Colombo and Lilian Tone, Curator, Museum of Modern Art, New York, accompanies the exhibition (price €35.00).

Photo: Iran do Espírito Santo, Candle, 1999, Aluminum, 200 x 21 dia. cm, Courtesy the artist.