

Mario CRAVO NETO

Mario Cravo Neto was a Brazilian photographer, born on April 20, 1947, in the city of Salvador, Bahia (where he died on August 09, 2009). In 1964, at the age of 17, he moved to Germany, where his father, the sculptor Mario Cravo Jr., was participating in the Artist in Residence program, in Berlin. It was during this period that Cravo Neto began his first experiences with sculpture and photography. In 1965, he returned to Brazil where he won an award at the first Art Biennial of Bahia and also mounted his first solo exhibition. Between 1968 and 1970, he lived in New York, where he studied at the Art Students League, under the direction of artist Jack Krueger, one of the pioneers of conceptual art. In 1970, he published his first photographic work outside of Brazil, in the catalog for the exhibition Information at New York's Museum of Modern Art. In New York, Cravo Neto also produced a series of color photographs entitled On the Subway, which were published in the magazine Camara 35, and a black and white series that explored the theme of human solitude against the backdrop of a large city. In addition to his photographic work, in his SoHo studio, he developed a series of plexglass sculptures based on the process of the "terrarium," which involved the growing of live plants in closed environments. In 1971, at the 11th International São Paulo Biennial of Art, in a special room, he showed his installation of live sculptures produced in New York, for which he was awarded the São Paulo State Governor's Sculpture Prize. Between 1971 and 1974, Cravo Neto devoted himself to the creation of in situ land art projects: with direct interventions in the natural landscapes of the desert-like Bahian sertão and the outlying of Salvador. His systematic documentation of these works fostered an intimacy with cinematographic language. In this filmic context, he made various short features, which led him to win the prestigious Embrafilme National Award for cinematography (1976), for his work on the feature-length film, Ubirajara, directed by André Luis Oliveira. In March of 1975, a near-fatal car accident left Cravo Neto with both legs immobilized for an entire year. This difficult setback, however, didn't at all curtail the artist's activities. During this period he initiated a series of small-scale models of his three-dimensional works and focused his energies on studio portraits and the appropriation of objects for use in his installations and photographic compositions. From this period emerged a unique authorial work, which Cravo Neto created out of the integration he choreographed between characters and objects: the results of which could be called as black and white photo-sculptures.

During this phases he produced emblematic works such as *Ninho de Fiberglass* (Fiberglass Nest, 1977) and *Câmaras Queimadas* (Burnt Cameras, 1977), which were exhibited, respectively, at the 14th and 15th editions of the São Paulo Biennial. These works were both commented upon by Edward Leffingwell in the preface to his book *The Eternal Now* (2002), the most comprehensive study of Mario Cravo Neto to date, featuring 136 black and white studio photographs. In the words of Leffingwell: the first link between these sited projects, the installations that followed, and the photographs for which he is known today consisted of the presentation of a nest made out of translucent fiberglass filaments gathered by some unknown avian architect from the neighborhood of his studio in Bahia. Prior to the publication of *The Eternal Now*, these black and white photographs had appeared in various books and catalogs and had been exhibited internationally in leading museums, galleries, and photographic festivals, among them: the Palazzo Fortuny, Venice (1988); the Witkin Gallery, New York (1992), Houston FotoFest, Houston (1992); the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), São Paulo (1995); the Fahey Klein Gallery, Los Angeles (1998); and Photo España, Madrid (1998), where the artist displayed his large-scale photographic impressions in the open-air exhibition throughout Madrid's Royal Botanic Garden. In 1994, the publication of *Mario Cravo Neto* (Stemmle, Zurich) accompanied a solo exhibition at Frankfurt's Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt

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