



# Cildo Meireles (Contemporary Artists (Phaidon))

*Paulo Herkenhoff*

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## **Cildo Meireles (Contemporary Artists (Phaidon))** Paulo Herkenhoff

Born in 1948, Cildo Meireles is one of Brazil's most significant artists of the post-war period. A pioneer of installation art since the 1960s, Meireles is best known for his dramatic and politically charged walk-in environments, which often incorporate sound, smell and touch alongside visual experience, requiring the viewer's full perceptual involvement. His installation *Atraves (Through, 1983-89)* confronts the viewer with a prohibitive labyrinth of grilles, meshes and barriers of all descriptions, the floor covered in shimmering yet dangerous shards of broken glass. In this and other works, surprises and contradictions combine to scramble our habitual definitions of our environment, resulting in a metaphor of the imperfect, potentially hostile world in which we live. In other works, Meireles offers an alternative - visual, political, sensual - to the real but often disappointing circumstances around us. For several decades Meireles has been included in the most significant international surveys, from the landmark 'Information' exhibition at New York's The Museum of Modern Art in 1970 to the 24th Biennial of Sao Paulo in 1998. In the Survey, Brazil-based curator and critic Paulo Herkenhoff analyses in depth the specific political and cultural context of Meireles' Brazilian art in counterpoint to the philosophical contexts of Western art history. Havana-based curator and writer Gerardo Mosquera discusses with the artist the context of his work in post-war Latin American art. In the Focus, New York curator and critic Dan Cameron navigates three environments of intense red, collectively titled *Desvio para o Vermelho (Red Shift, 1967-84)*. For the Artist's Choice, Meireles has selected a text that echoes his work's frequent evocation of paradox: 'The Garden of Forking Paths' by Jorge Luis Borges. Since the late 1960s Cildo Meireles has written detailed project descriptions as an integral aspect of his work. Ranging from the description of the 'ideological circuits' of information and commodity transactions, to speculations on theories of perception, his texts often bear witness both to individual and social crises and the transformative powers of the imagination.

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