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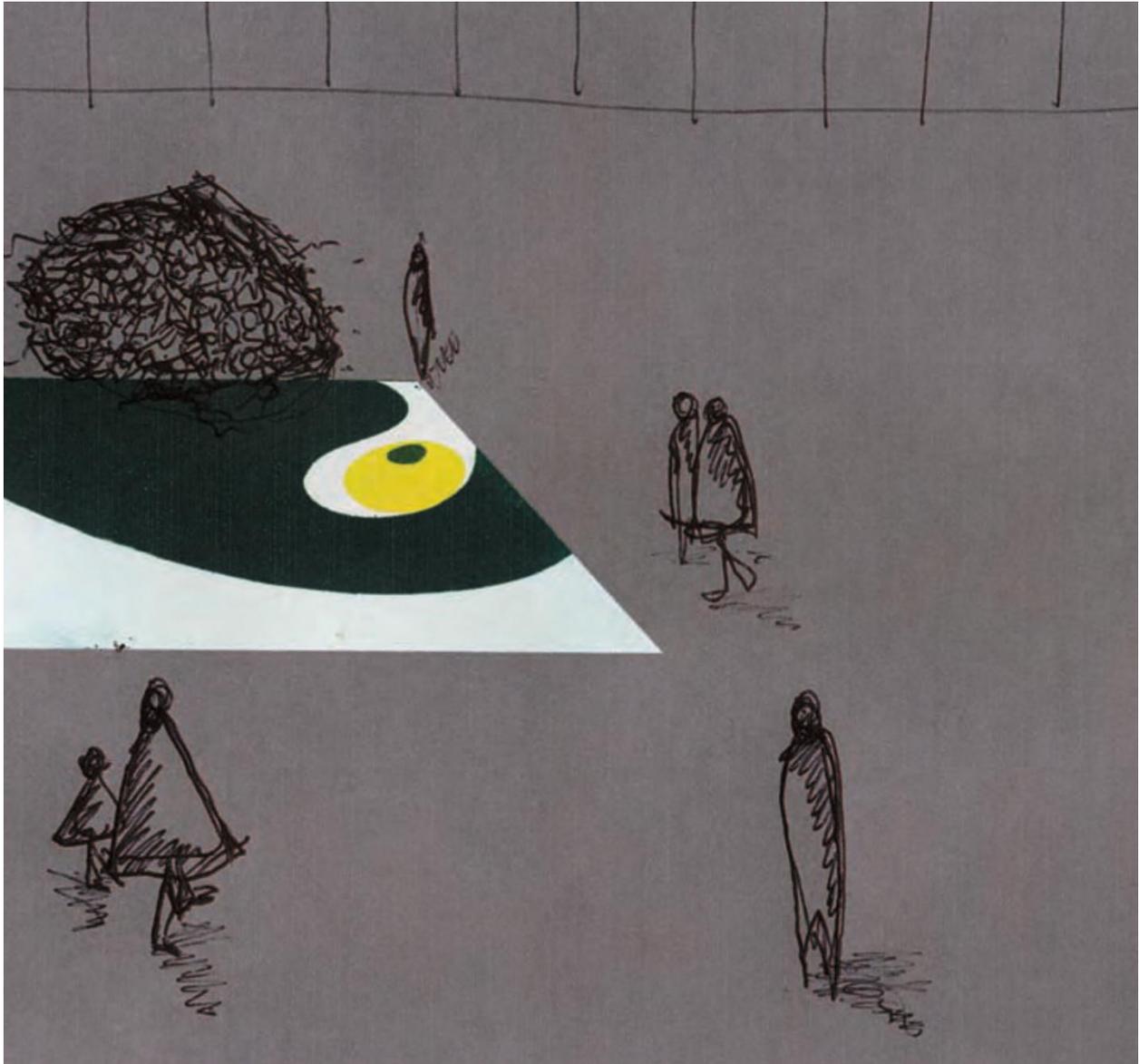


VALESKA SOARES

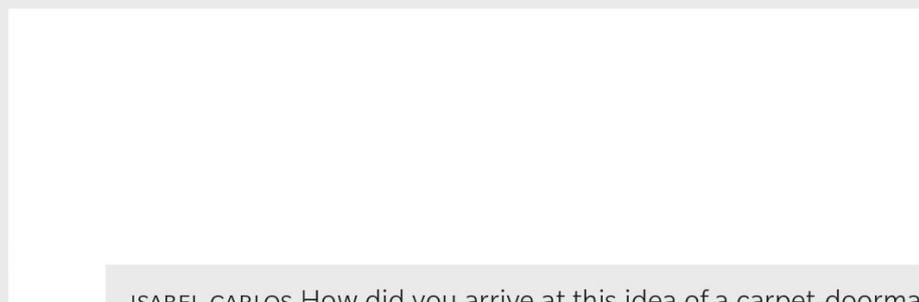
Belo Horizonte, Brasil, 1957. Vive em Nova York. *Catálogo*, 2008. Projeto. Tapete e letras de papel. Cortesia: Galeria Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo & Eleven Rivington, Nova York. **Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 1957. Lives in New York. *Catálogo* [Catalog], 2008. Project. Carpet and paper letters. Courtesy: Galeria Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo & Eleven Rivington, New York.**

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ISABEL CARLOS How did you arrive at this idea of a carpet-doormat based on the first Bienal de São Paulo catalog? VALESKA SOARES My first idea for the piece was to use only the letters, but the Bienal space is very big and required something to anchor them so they wouldn't get lost in the architecture. Then, looking at the "catalog"/book, it started to make sense to use the cover as an anchor, not only spatially but also conceptually. The graphic design of the cover and inside flap is representative of the era and is directly related to the ideas that gave rise to the Bienal project and the architecture of its space. Initially I considered different materials, but in the end the "carpet/doormat" format struck me as the most appropriate as a transitional space between the exhibition area and the Bienal archive on the third floor. The visitors have to walk across the carpet to enter the archive. ¶ Does the text of this first Bienal catalog mean something special to you or it is just a factual or historical reference? The catalog contains a lot of different information. There is a text by the president of the Bienal contextualizing the project and one by the curator contextualizing the Bienal in relation to the Biennale di Venezia. Additionally, there is an enormous amount of information such as regulations for participation, participating countries, awards, values, and observations. ¶ So is it an important historical reference? Yes, but in a way, the idea of its importance is more important than its content. I like this idea that with my letters I can write another text or catalog, or we can all reuse the letters and rewrite another text, an anagram. Make the historical text an open text. ¶ Anagrams, labyrinths, texts; these have always

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been important references in your work... Yes, I think that they are all references to paths, routes – both physical and mental ones. Exercises in representation. This work for the Bienal is also a continuation of my “editorial projects.” For some time now I have been publishing in sculpture form certain texts that are important to me: *Invisible Cities*, by Italo Calvino; *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, by Roland Barthes, etc. I have a lot of contact with Ivo Mesquita and we talk a lot. It was a natural consequence of the convergence of what I’ve been doing and the ideas he had for the Bienal project. I was interested in the sensuality and fetishism of the catalog/object he had stashed in his closet, the book/object that is becoming an object of desire as it loses its function, as the act of reading comes through other media. ¶ But by choosing the text for an exercise in artistic representation you start out from double meanings... Yes, they are references to the production of fiction, subjective triggers. I don’t believe this is possible without a spatial relationship. It is an almost theatrical relationship in which the subject is in the center, as both spectator and main character. ¶ Do you think of yourself as a sculptor for whom words are your sculptural material? I think I’m an artist who produces a form of visual intelligence; the ideas provide the material. The word sculptural strikes me as limited; in a way, it still has the traditional genres of artistic production as a referent. Artistic practice today relates more to philosophy, to thought, more than a craft-based idea. ¶ I agree. What I am trying to say is the way your work takes inspiration in ideas, texts and authors is, nevertheless, extremely plastic. It isn’t dry in a stiffer conceptual tradition; on the contrary, it always has something very sensorial about it, like the way the letters in *Catálogo* [Catalog] can be touched, crossed over, turned inside out... Of course, of course; my work has never been just mental; it allows itself to be sensual. What interests me is the eroticism of ideas, the fascination of material things. “Orthodox” conceptual art seems to me to be very bureaucratic, very rigid, with lots of rules.