

SEANKELLY

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ARTFORUM

Iran do Espírito Santo



Iran do Espírito Santo,
Globo 1 (Globe 1), 2011,
marble, 6 x 8 7/8 x 8 7/8".

A strange sort of tension filled the two rooms occupied by Iran do Espírito Santo's solo show; like the calm before a storm, it seemed to be generated by pent-up energy before its release. At the core of the Brazilian artist's work is an interest in what he describes as "the duality we live in; between the concrete world and that of ideas. It's an existential human condition; the artworks are a way of negotiating this, a need to deal with immateriality." Espírito Santo, who has exhibited consistently since the mid-1980s, has established an aesthetic that reflects his conceptual concerns by means of an obsessive attention to detail in sculptures, drawings, and wall paintings that recurrently explore form, light, and spatial folds with impeccable craftsmanship and a discerning choice in materials.

The sculptures render mundane, mass-produced, functional designs such as table lamps, cans, drinking glasses, and, in this show, overhead lights, lending them the unique aura of the art object. Seven "Globes" (all works 2011), which were here carefully placed in a row on a shelf upstairs, are solid white marble renditions of an assortment of widely disseminated lighting fixture designs. By carefully dissecting the original before crafting his own reproductions, Espírito Santo unveils the geometric relationships coined in the design, minus any imperfections, which he eliminates. From afar, against the gray-painted surroundings, these works looked like the milky glass lights they reference, but upon closer inspection, the marble revealed itself as such only to raise questions about the intrinsic functional nature of these forms. Espírito Santo's "Globes" seem to hold back the light the originals were created to release, exposing a contradiction at their core, which metaphorically implies the duality that guides the artist through an idealization of the object.

Downstairs, on the ground floor, an intervention on the back wall clearly related to the beginning of Espírito Santo's career, when he worked in a black-and-white photography lab, an activity that underlies the interest in light evident throughout his work. *Canto Escuro (Dark Corner)*, a wall painting made up of small squares in fifty-four tones from black to white, radiated from the bottom right-hand corner of the wall, simulating a refracting beam of light. In the past, Espírito Santo's wall paintings investigated

movement from left to right or top to bottom of his chosen surface. In this show, however, for the first time, the painting created a diagonal pull from the bottom right-hand corner to the middle of the wall. Individually handpainted squares resembled pixels, and together, these parts created the overall sensation of a seamless spill of light. Having worked with architects in his youth, Espírito Santo inherited a special interest in spatial folds. The fold created by Canto Escuro and the stark white lateral wall was here echoed in three mirror pieces installed in the same room. Three works from the series "Sem título (Espelho Dobrado)" (Untitled [Folded Mirror]) 2010–, occupy the three remaining walls. Each consists of a leaning mirror and another placed carefully on the ground as if attached to it. Reading the two fragments as a unit gives the mirror its "fold" and creates a vertiginous hole on the ground. "The kaleidoscopic effect in space interests me," explains Espírito Santo, "the decomposition of a fragmented space." To see this show was to experience a feeling of estranged familiarity similar to that which arises upon looking through the vertiginous hole Espírito Santo's mirror folds create: a sense of having fallen through Alice's rabbit hole only to discover a hyperorderly and artificial reality.