

Art Agency, Partners

Art Agency, Partners is a bespoke art advisory firm founded in 2014, and built upon decades of combined experience, to provide counsel to many of the world's leading art collectors and institutions on collection assessment and development, estate planning, and innovative approaches to museum giving and growth.

A Museum of One's Own

Focus on Brazil



Hélio Oiticica, *Invenção da cor, Penetrável Magic Square # 5, De Luxe* (1977). Installation view at Inhotim, Photo credit: Eduardo Ortega

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Tokyo - I have been traveling for the past several weeks through the Middle East and Asia. The initial impetus for this trip was an [invitation to speak](#) in Doha about [Inhotim](#), the museum in Minas Gerais, Brazil, which I conceived in 2003 with its patron, Bernardo Paz.

For those of you not familiar with Inhotim, it is a museum of contemporary art located in 5,000 acres of gardens, forests, farms, and mountains that is focused on the permanent display of major large-scale sculptures and single-artist pavilions by several generations of artists from Latin America, Europe, the United States and Asia. It is dedicated to showing visionary works of art that belong in major museums but, by virtue of their scale, are not practical for urban museums to exhibit.

Bernardo did not set out to create such a museum. He was, like many other collectors, typically enthusiastic, inquisitive and

evolving. His rapidly developing passions for art, landscape and society began to coalesce around a dream of creating a legacy: a permanent place where people could experience art in ways that might penetrate an otherwise highly stratified socioeconomic nation through pleasure, discovery and experience.

Unlike most museums, which are in city centers and consist of networks of perfect white boxes, the art at Inhotim is scattered through the landscape in such ways that the journey is as important as the destinations. The placement and location of the works is sequenced to enhance the experience of each, to create unique encounters.

Unlike urban museums, where art fatigue tends to set in after an hour or two, visitors to Inhotim often spend the entire day there (at this point in the museum's development, it takes more than a day to see everything worth seeing). It is a place where people unschooled in the sometimes remote language of art (the majority of our audience) connect quite personally to the art, because it is integrated into their experience of a stimulating journey.

Inhotim has grown substantially in terms of land, art, and visitorship in the 11 years it has been open to the public. It has evolved from a private to a public museum: when we opened, we expected a couple of hundred visitors a week, but now find we might have more than 8,000 visitors on a sunny weekend day.

During this current trip, I've been zigzagging around the world, mostly to places that would commonly be identified as new markets for contemporary art collecting. In just four days I have met with nearly a dozen collectors—some have collected for decades, others are quite new to the pursuit—who intend to create museums. None of them seemed inspired to create a vanity monument to themselves, but rather wish to create unique environments for the display of singular collections of meaningful focus and personality. Their desire is not to ape museums they have known, but to build consequential destinations that might provide meaningful experiences for people in the communities they call home.

So, the impetus for this trip has become its theme: the growing desire by individuals—be they connoisseurs, civic patrons or both—to create institutions for the collection, display and experience of art that borrow the best of known practice in ways that can serve specific communities as well as enhance their appeal as international destinations.

In the old museum worlds of Europe and the United States, the challenge (and opportunity) for traditional public museums will be to create mutually productive public/private partnerships, such as the [enlightened marriage of The Fisher Collection with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art](#). But in old cultures that are the new lands of collecting, the potential to be innovative and create diverse models for experiencing great art, and what a museum can be, are just beginning to be imagined.