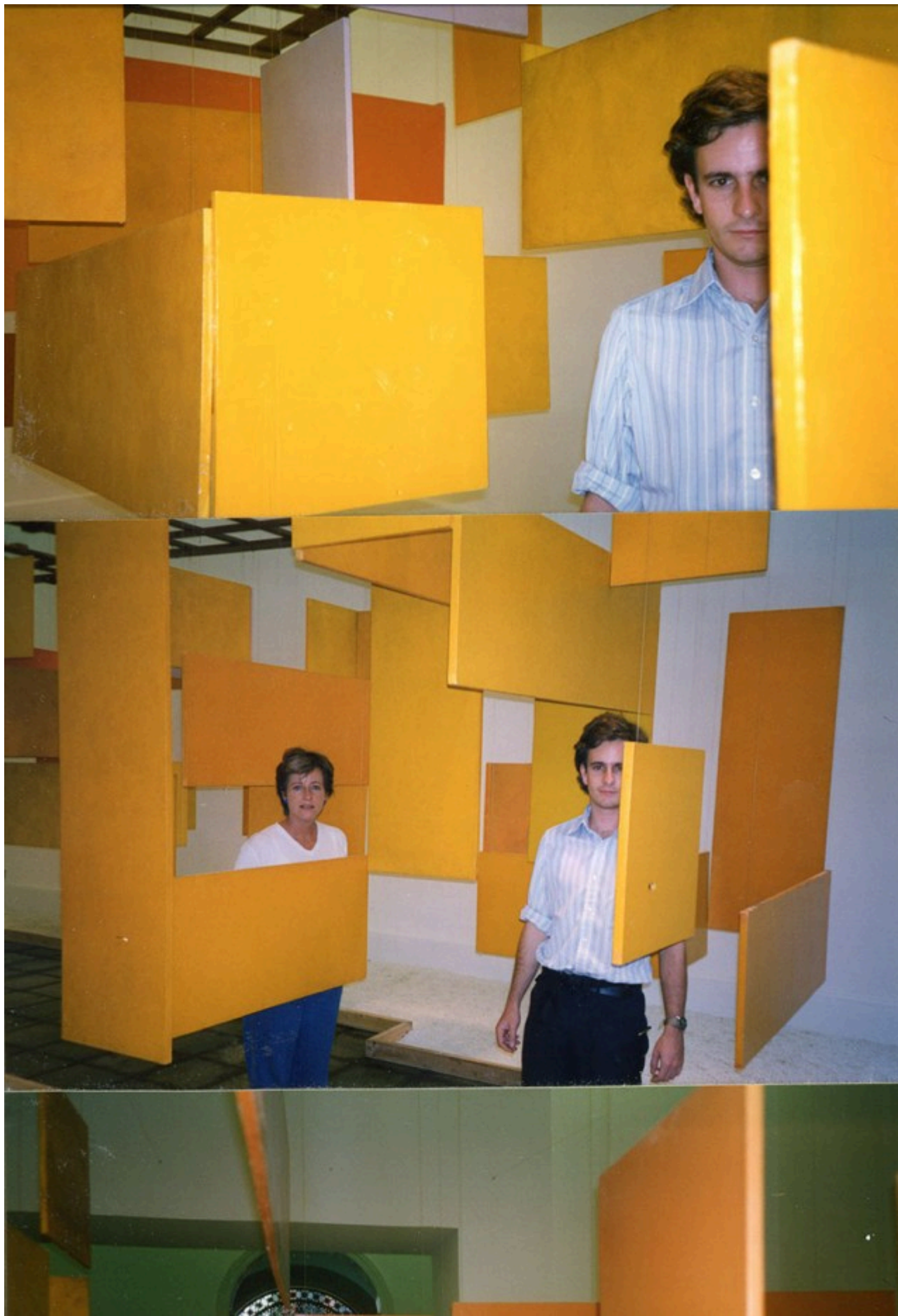


Art Agency, Partners

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.

Lost and Gone Forever



Patricia and son Guillermo Cisneros in Hélio Oiticica's *Grand Nucleus* (1960-66). Photograph taken at the Projeto Helio Oitica, Rio de Janeiro, 1994. Photo credit: Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros

By  Patricia Phelps de Cisneros

collector and co-founder, Fundación Cisneros

Published 28 February 2017 in [Passions](#)

In the early 1990s, when I was really beginning to build the Brazilian part of our Modern collection, I visited the Hélio Oiticica estate with my friend and advisor, Paulo Herkenhoff. At that time, it was an apartment where his friends had kept a lot of his work. It's more organized today.

Luciano Figueiredo, an artist who was a good friend of Oiticica, was the unofficial executor of the estate. I remember going into the apartment and it being a treasure trove: the early works were all there, the Parangolés—the wearable sculptures. That's where I discovered and understood who Oiticica really was as an artist. He still wasn't that widely known in those days. But after that visit, I really committed to collecting his work.

I saw a work called *Grand Nucleus* (1960-66). It was a series of suspended color plates that created a kind of labyrinth that you walked through. Oiticica made it at the point when his paintings were becoming spatial reliefs, when his art was moving away from the wall and color truly began to embody form. It was a very important moment in his development.

I fell desperately in love with the work. It reminded me of the kind of environmental object that I'd seen by kinetic artists in Venezuela—it felt like a Brazilian counterpart to that, this color free-floating in space.

It was such an exciting moment, discovering this great artist's production. I went with my family to see the work again. But, I didn't acquire the piece. These were the years during which the collection began to take on the scale it now has and it was still a little intimidating to think about how I would store or show these kinds of works.

Over the years, the piece got more expensive, even though nobody had bought it. I used to talk about *Grand Nucleus*, and how I wished I had bought it because I knew it would make so much sense within the collection.

Then, there was a fire in Oiticica's estate around five years ago and the piece was destroyed. It has gone forever. It has been a huge regret. I could have saved it.

Interview by Charlotte Burns