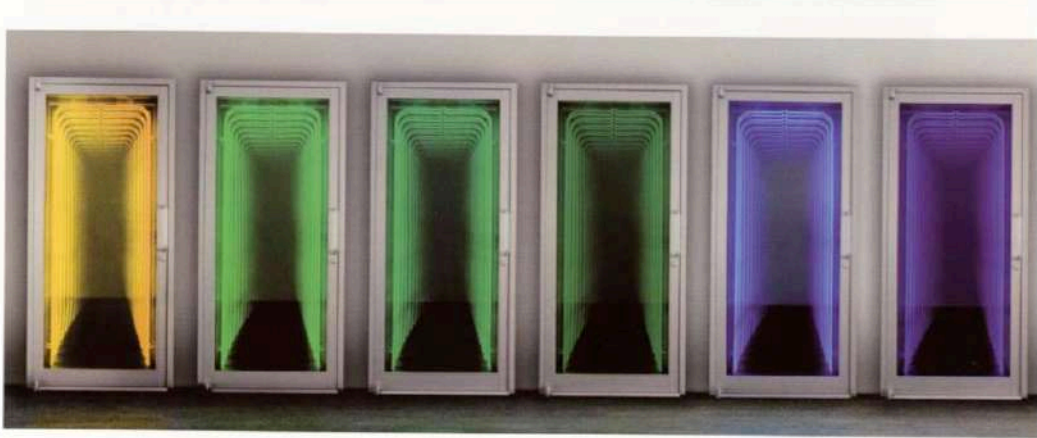


TEMPLON



IVAN NAVARRO

ANNUAL MAGAZINE, 2009



The End of the Tunnel

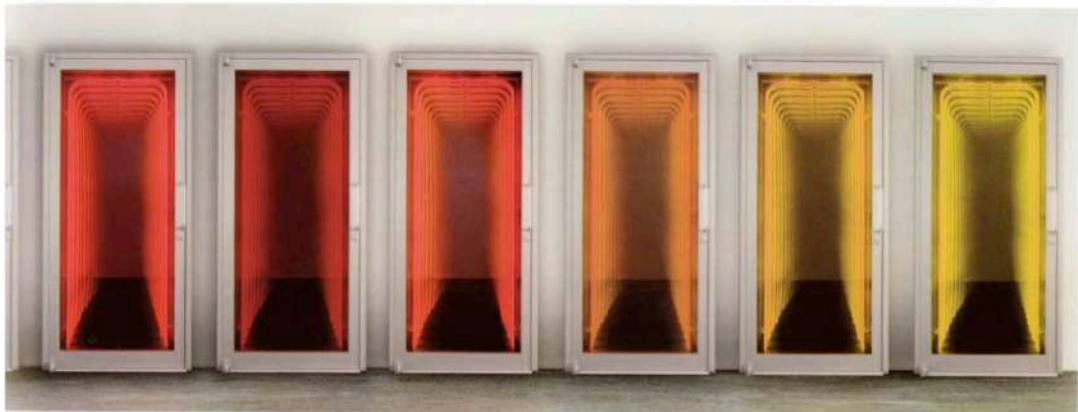
The works of Chilean artist Iván Navarro, made from neon tubes, exploit the history of art and design, as well as echoing events that occurred during the Pinochet dictatorship – and human cruelty in general.

His 2004 work *The Briefcase (Four American Citizens Killed by Pinochet)* is a black briefcase containing four neon tubes, each inscribed with the name of a man assassinated by the Chilean secret service in the 1970s as part of Operation Condor, which aimed to track down and eliminate regime opponents based abroad.

Red and Blue Electric Chair (2003) revisits the famous chair by Dutch designer Gerrit Rietveld. But the title of this fragile seat, made from coloured neon tubes, also evokes the death penalty in the United States. In *You*

Sit, You Die (2002), neon tubes form the framework of a deck-chair with a paper back printed with the name of every prisoner executed by electric chair in the State of Florida since its introduction there in 1924.

Capital Punishment is also the subject of the monumental work shown at the 2009 Venice Biennale, where Navarro represented Chile with *Death Row (2006)* – inspired by Ellsworth Kelly's *Spectrum V (1969)*, with its thirteen painted panels spanning the colour spectrum. Navarro adopted the idea of a colorimetric series, but applied it to thirteen vertical glass-doored boxes containing neons which, through a clever inter-play with two-way mirrors, created the illusion of a space opening into the wall. Although they are actually no wider than the box containing them, these



Threshold, Chilean Pavilion, Arsenal, 53rd Venice Biennale, 2009
Courtesy Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris, Photo © HERTZLIT

«colours of death» seem to be prolonged ad infinitum into a darkness which may symbolize nothingness or perhaps immortality – it's hard to say. Using the same principle, Navarro makes circular wells containing words like *ME/WE* or *ECHO* spelt out in neon – and repeated, like vertical palindromes, down into what seems like the bowels of the Earth.

Such works reactivate the ancient art of *trompe-l'œil* in the electronic age. The two-way mirrors evoke police interrogation cells; but, over and beyond any political connotation, these tunnels ultimately give Navarro's work a dimension which, if not quite supernatural (Mark Z. Danielewski's strange novel *House of Leaves* comes to mind, with its «fourth dimension» opening

up one day in the wall of an American home), is at least psychoanalytical – such is our impression, as we gaze down into these vertiginous spaces, of plunging into the innermost depths of collective memory, where crimes and atrocities (never actually portrayed, but discreetly alluded to in the titles of Navarro's works) sink into oblivion.

There is a striking contrast between the minimalist form of Iván Navarro's sculptures and the themes they evoke. The human figure is invisible, appearing unseen in Electric Chairs and the empty tunnels. Navarro's recent series *Nowhere Man (2009)* nonetheless grants the human figure a new role by reinterpreting – life-size, and in neon tubes – the pictograms designed by

German graphic artist Otl Aicher for the 1972 Munich Olympics. The success of these symbols stems from their universal impact: everyone, wherever they come from, can see a basketball-player, swimmer, footballer or gymnast in these handful of artfully arranged lines. Their universal appeal is expressed by the title *Nowhere Man*, echoing the condition of exiles from all countries (notably Chileans fleeing the Pinochet régime), wandering stateless Jews, or condemned prisoners deprived of their rights... in short, a widespread human condition, recalling the words of the Beatles song *Nowhere Man*:

*Doesn't have a point of view
Knows not where he's going to
Isn't he a bit like you and me?*

TEMPLON



IVAN NAVARRO

ANNUAL MAGAZINE, 2009

IVÁN NAVARRO



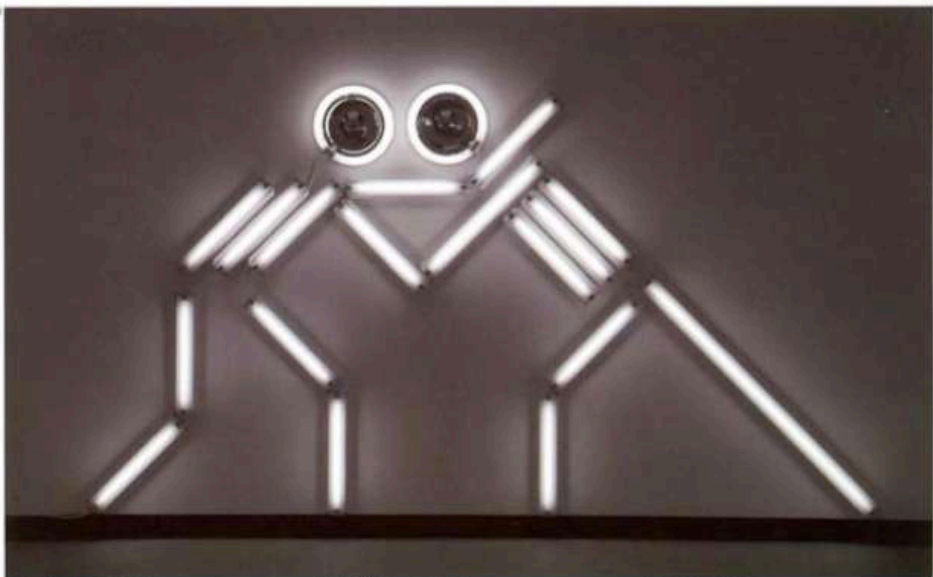
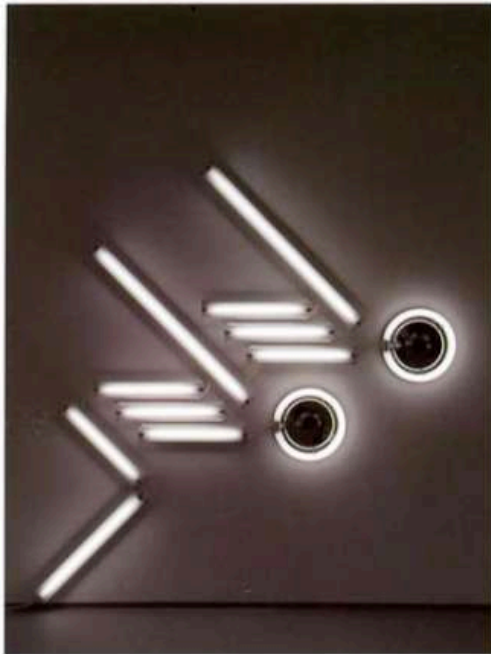
White Electric Chair, 2005
Fluorescent light tubes & electrical fixtures, audiovisual-Multimedia,
28 x 48 x 47 1/2 x 27 5/8 in (700 x 119,2 x 72 cm)
© 2005 Geste Visual Services, Paris - Photo: S. ALBERTINI

TEMPLON

ii

IVAN NAVARRO

ANNUAL MAGAZINE, 2009



1/ *Nowhere man 3, 2009*
Fluorescent light, metal fixtures and electric energy
75 5/8 x 70 1/2 in (187 x 179 cm)
Courtesy Galerie Daniel Tempson, Paris, Photo © HJETTUTTI

2/ *Nowhere man 5, 2009*
Fluorescent light, metal fixtures and electric energy
73 x 49 in (185 x 124 cm)
Courtesy Galerie Daniel Tempson, Paris, Photo © HJETTUTTI

3/ *Nowhere man 9, 2009*
Fluorescent Lights, aluminum door, mirror, one-way
mirror and electric energy, 64.5 x 118 in (164 x 300 cm)
Courtesy Galerie Daniel Tempson, Paris, Photo © HJETTUTTI