

TEMPLON



IVÁN NAVARRO

STIR WORLD, 1 juillet 2022

Ivan Navarro's sculptures navigate economic, political connotations of daily life

Iván Navarro with his practice oversees the political governance of Augusto Pinochet as a way to gauge the web of control and domination, be it politics or capitalism.

by Dilpreet Bhullar | Published on : Jul 01, 2022

The stifling political milieu shrinks the possibilities of creative imagination. Yet, if the daunting task of turning the constrained environment into a fecund site of artistic exploration is achieved – the propositions are well restored in the memory of the viewers.

New York-based Chilean **sculptor** Ivan Navarro is one such **conceptual artist** who grew up during the reign of the dictator General Augusto Pinochet and translates his experience into sculptural installations to arouse **sensorial experience** for his audience. At the 2009 **Venice Biennale**, when Navarro represented **Chile**, he displayed the installation *Death Row* with 13 aluminium doors that each creates the illusion of a gateway with the **neon** lights lining each frame. The colours of the **installation** were similar to those used in Ellsworth Kelly's series of 13 monochrome canvases each painted a single colour, *Spectrum 5* (1969). The presence of lights in the works extends a social commentary on the times ridden with Pinochet tactics to control the people of his country. In the evening, the long power cuts would bind the movement of the citizens to their homes. Denied electricity, inadvertently deprived the people of news broadcasts.



Death Row, 2006-2009, neon light, aluminium doors, mirror, one way mirror and electric energy
Image: Sebastiano Luciano

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In an interview with STIR, Navarro talks about colonialism, dictatorship along the imperative impact of Matta-Clark on the work *Death Row*, "I felt connected to Matta-Clark, since he was half-Chilean and lived in New York. When I arrived in the city, one of the first artworks that completely changed my perception of things was a piece that Matta-Clark had in PSI Doors, *Floors, Doors* (1976), where a large hole was cut through the third, second, and first floors of the same room. Matta-Clark seems so resonant in my work, and how the light-boxes are constructed to appear like gateways—that idea of cutting through space to reveal the endless meanings and ambiguities that exist within it. These ideas in *Death Row* are connected to minimalism, for me, it is the art of the Cold War. It is all about machismo, control politics, and colonisation. The dictatorship happened as a result of the collaboration between Chile and the US, and minimalism is just another representation of that."



Shard, 2021, LED light, paint, mirror, one way mirror and electric energy
Image: Courtesy of Galerie Templon

The celebratory illumination of the lights at once throws light on the less visible apparatus of domination to perpetuate the layers of disparity among the non-equals. The exchange between politics and art accentuated by the arrangement of lights examines the matrix of power and control while playing with the sense perception of the physical spaces. Navarro walks us through the making of the new pieces for his upcoming show at Galerie Templon in Brussels. "I will show different experiments, inspired by images of nebulae, they are paintings on etched glass, mirrors and LED light; also a piece that simulates the movement of an eclipse which is a kinetic sculpture in a constant loop changing its composition. With the new series called *Quarks*, colours and shapes are disintegrating in space. And, the new series called *Nebula*, these works are overlays of stained glass and panels of the LED light. The original images show beautiful colours that are a mix of gas and dust in the universe. I think of the film *Nostalgia de la Luz* (Nostalgia for the Light) by Patricio Guzman," he says.

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Artist Ivan Navarro
Image: Thelma Garcia

Having a close encounter with the politically stimulated environment dotted with censorship and despotism, Navarro discloses, "When I was in my late 20s I realised how influenced I was by the things I experienced during my childhood.... Now I also see and understand those experiences as tools to make me more aware of the society I live in today, which is completely controlled by capitalism." The video installation *Night of Philosophers* at **UNESCO, Paris** underscores Navarro's interest in social and political issues and how art can be a response that permeates everyday life. "I believe in art that is a genuine response to human activities. For example, for me any survival strategy - ingenious, inventive resourcefulness-is in itself a form of art that is my deepest source of inspiration."

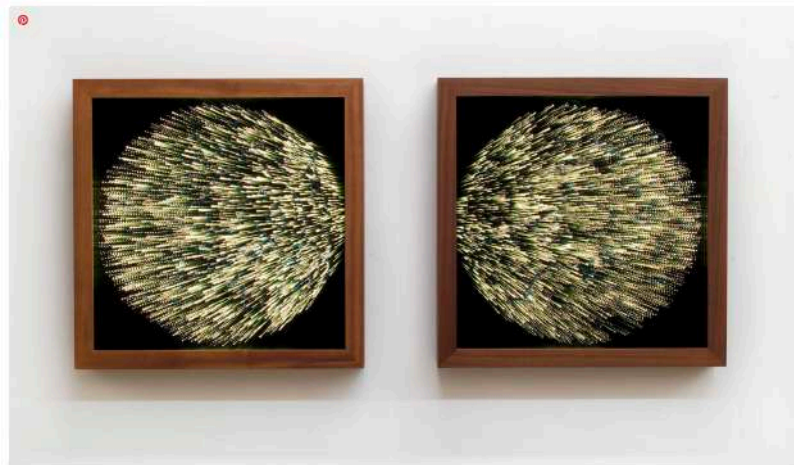


Nebula, 2021, LED light, paint, mirror, one way mirror and electric energy
Image: Courtesy of Galerie Templon

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When the political and economic implications of the works by Navarro are of conspicuous presence, the artist succinctly puts forward the mindful words, "Art is a way to subvert reality, and that can take you in different directions whether escapism or confrontation or both." Now for over two decades, Navarro has built his art practice on its participatory and relational potential. The multimedia **sculptural installations** are intended to stimulate engagement with the viewer in both political and cultural spheres. "I am interested in how the visual representation of an idea is affected by the psychological interpretation of the public. That has a lot to do with scientific perception as well. But I do not think art can be compared to a science," infers Navarro.



*Constellations South and Constellations North, LED light, paint, mirror, one way mirror and electric energy
Image: Courtesy of Galerie Templon*



Ivan Navarro, Planetarium, Paris
Video: Courtesy of Galerie Templon