

# A LATIN AMERICAN ART SERIAL

by Hans Herzog

BLOG

ABOUT ME

ESPAÑOL



*Miguel Rio Branco, Courtesy: Diário de Petrópolis*

## Miguel Rio Branco (born in 1946 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, lives and works in Rio de Janeiro)

HANS HERZOG / OCTOBER 9, 2021 / 0 COMMENTS

«I relate very much to visual expression. A movie, a projection, a photograph or a painting has to have some strength of visual impact. Art has become very descriptive. It's not anymore about ideas, it's about thematics; it may be about sociology, it may be about anthropology, it may be about politics, but it's not about visual arts anymore.» (Conversation between Miguel Rio Branco and Hans-Michael Herzog, March 2002, Rio de Janeiro, in: La Mirada, Daros Exhibitions, Zurich 2002, p. 96)

Through the eyes of a photographer

Miguel Rio Branco is a photographer through and through. Not unlike his already deceased Brazilian colleague Mario Cravo, he is almost the only one of his kind to have documented the popular Brazilian life in his photos. I have never understood how come Brazil is not swarming with young photographers who just hold up their camera to the crowd and simply click away—because there is hardly another place on earth like Brazil with such a plethora of potential subjects worth photographing.

In view of the vast number of photos by Miguel Rio Branco, it is conceivably difficult to assemble a selection of his works for an art collection that is only even halfway adequately representative of his oeuvre. Miguel himself helped me out just in time by creating «Entre os olhos, o deserto»—in my eyes his masterpiece:



*Entre os olhos, o deserto, 1997, Three-channel installation, Courtesy: Daros Latinamerica Collection, Zürich*

### **Between the eyes, the desert**

«Entre os olhos, o deserto» is a three-channel installation created by Miguel Rio Branco in 1997 for the exhibition inSITE97 in the Mexican/US-American transborder agglomeration of Tijuana/San Diego. This magnum opus, a symphonic panorama accompanied with a minimalist soundtrack of Satie's *Gymnopédie* and whale songs, took him a full two years of work to accomplish. The large-format, 3 x 9 meter projected triptych, originally made up of slides and meanwhile digitized to be presented as a loop, confronts the viewer with an opulent, eye-watering flood of hundreds of individual images laid out like an epic, cinematic narrative. A perfectly choreographed orchestration of immaculate precision slowly unfolds before our eyes and gradually casts a magic spell over us.

### **«It's about beauty and time.» (Miguel Rio Branco)**

Without rationally comprehending the individual links between the various image sequences, we repeatedly focus on details, get momentarily caught up in our own thoughts as if under hypnosis, and then immerse ourselves again into the flow of images that are carried by a serene melancholy. Miguel Rio Branco's photos tell us much about becoming and passing, about composition and deconstruction, about density and emptiness, about desert wastelands and human depth facing us in the depicted eyes: *Entre os olhos, o deserto...*

The voluptuous power of these frequently dark and sometimes mysterious images is attended by a beguiling sensuousness. We experience a highly concentrated sequence of images of an existential density. Full of poetic and emotional power and due to the permanent transformations, they also tell us much about the metamorphoses of the course of life itself.

«I want to transform reality into a poetic statement.» (Miguel Rio Branco, 2002)