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Director Joao Carlos Goldberg,
Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro.

Dear Joao Carlos Goldberg

I came to visit you last October with Tunga and we discussed the possibility of my doing something, with the participation of the students at Parque Lage when I came back to Rio this coming August to make an exhibition at Galeria Sergio Porto. The exhibition is now fixed and I shall be coming to Rio at the beginning of August and staying about one month. The show opens on August 5th, so I shall be busy until then but after this I would very much like to do something at Parque Lage if it fitted in with your programme.

There is a distinct image in my mind of those beautiful rooms at the front of the building where you have exhibitions. One of the rooms has a decorated, tiled floor and a decorated ceiling if I remember rightly. That would be a wonderful site for an installation - something on the floor. I have recently made a work using bronze powder, that looks like gold, at Ikon gallery, Birmingham (I enclose the catalogue). Perhaps a 'golden' work might be right for Parque Lage. The work would be related to the decoration of the room and the history of the building, which would give students the opportunity to do some research on this. It would obviously need to be considerably simpler than the Ikon piece as that took three months to make. I envisage a project, lasting about one week, in which the students could help make a stencil or other method of laying the powder having first helped in the research leading to the shapes in which it would be laid. Thus they would be introduced to my way of making an artwork as well as the concepts behind it. In the event it may be that the idea of using 'gold' is not right and as we think about the work some other material would be more appropriate. I would rather keep this open until the project is underway.

Does this sound a possibility?

When we discussed the idea of my doing something at Parque Lage the idea was that working with students would enable the British Council in Rio to give me some financial help during my stay there. I am writing to Diana Pinto of the British Council asking them about this. It was she that suggested some form of input into education from me would be the kind of thing that they would consider. I will tell her that I have sent a proposal to you and am awaiting your reaction.

I enclose my idea for a work at Parque Lage on a separate sheet in the kind of form that it might be presented to the students <translated may be>. This is the type of proposal I would make if I was to do a project in an Art School in UK, I do not know if it is suitably worded for your students.

This is rather short notice to propose an idea for one of those front rooms where you have exhibitions. I expect you have a programme of exhibitions some months or so ahead. It would be the best of all possible worlds if I could do this project, however, I must propose an alternative idea. Now the problem is that I do not know the available spaces at Parque Lage to propose something specific. I could make a similar sort of floorwork with the students as described above, using the history and design of the place as background, in a plainer space. We could make something rich and beautiful which might refer to the decorated rooms and to the history of the place. Perhaps the way to do this would be for me to look at the available spaces in early August. I could then outline a specific project to be carried out later in the month.

I should have written to you before this. I have had various complications here which have held up final decisions on how long I would be staying in Brazil but I hope this is not too short notice to arrange something.....My Portuguese is extremely limited - I am learning, but slowly, but I am sure it will not be too difficult to get over this, making a visual work.

Yours sincerely,

Shelagh Wakely.

Shelagh Wakely.

- I have sent the catalogue I mentioned separately.

- The attached proposal is a basic outline. The first paragraph can be adapted if another space, rather than the decorated room was used.

PROPOSAL FOR AN INSTALLATION AT PARQUE LAGE, RIO DE JANEIRO.

can be adapted

The proposal is to make an installation in one of the front rooms of Parque Lage where the floor is patterned with coloured and decorated tiles and the ceiling is also highly decorated. The work will be on the floor. It will be an intricate, shimmering pattern made with "golden" powder. It will interlace with the existant tile pattern, reflecting the the ambience and history of the room and the building. The aim is to make it beautiful, intangible and ephemeral. It will be a work that cannot be appropriated or owned. It will be made of finely pulverized bronze powder, golden in colour - an illusion of gold - seductive - as the Parque Lage itself is seductive in it's theatricality.

There are four stages to this work:

The first is research on the existant decoration of the room, how the patterns were derived and why that style was chosen.

The second is to invent a pattern scheme for the gold powder which will intertwine with the existant tile pattern, bearing in mind stage one, also layering into the work some present day thoughts and ideas and using the dilapidated opulence of the site to emphasize these.

The third stage is to lay the powder on the floor, using stencils or whatever other means are appropriate (stages two and three may overlap considerably).

The fourth stage is to record the work. A suitable way to do this will need to be found bearing in mind that this will be the only remainder of the work. Indeed, it will have probably already metamorphosed into a new work in the recording.

Students would participate in all stages of the work, discussing progress and ideas.

The project would last about one week, possibly longer.

I have only spent a very short time in the Parque Lage. It may be that when I consider the site more thoroughly, also when we have done the research on the building and the decoration, that bronze powder may not be the material that best expresses what needs to be expressed. It is necessary in a project of this nature to have an initial visual idea to work from; sometimes the final work remains very close to the initial idea, sometimes there are great changes throughout the process of making the work.

Shelagh Wakely
Dune 1992.