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Brasilidade in built form: tracing national identity in modernist architecture in Brazil, 1922–1968

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ABSTRACT

BRASILIDADE IN BUILT FORM: TRACING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE IN BRAZIL, 1922–1968

by
Angela Starita

The conceptual framework of Brazilian national identity in built form changed drastically between the 1930s and the 1960s, from the Baroque of colonial-era Brazil to the improvised constructions of the poor. The advocates of these architectural imaginaries were not suggesting that these styles be copied. Instead, they used them as a type of hermeneutic for explicating how Modernism should be deployed in order for it to be authentically Brazilian. The transition from the colonial model to an aesthetics of poverty was a result of a confluence of factors. These included the country's relatively new struggle to define itself away from Portugal; the arrival of new European immigrants; growing anxiety about cultural colonization by the United States; unstable economic and political circumstances; and the questioning of the nation's myth of racial democracy.

This dissertation traces the attribution of *Brasilidade*, *i.e.*, Brazilian-ness, to various architectural forms between 1922, the year of an event popularly viewed as the emergence of Modernism in Brazil, and 1968, a year of particular importance in the country's political and architectural life. Regional and racial discourses, themselves closely related, are critical to understanding this shift in conceptualizing Modernism. Accordingly, this study moves among locations, identifying the mutual influences between the southern centers of power, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and two cities in the Northeast, Recife and Salvador. The evolution of architectural *Brasilidade* is told through four figures: Mario de Andrade

(1893–1945), Lucio Costa (1902–88), Gilberto Freyre (1900–87), and Lina Bo Bardi (1914–92). The development of mass media, and the fields of anthropology and preservation as tools of observation and regulation influenced each of these actors as they articulated a nationalist polemic based on class, race, and region.

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MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE IN BRAZIL, 1922–1968**

**by
Angela Starita**

**A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
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APPROVAL PAGE

**BRASILIDADE IN BUILT FORM: TRACING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN
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For David, Johnny, and Dad's memories of Recife

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview and Objectives

Discourse on a wide range of subjects in Brazil, from music to architecture to politics, employs the term *Brasilidade* (Brazilianness) to suggest that the subject under consideration—anything from the first curtain wall to be built in South America to the sweets made by an Afro-Brazilian nursemaid—exhibits qualities that cannot be replicated outside of Brazil or by a non-Brazilian actor. The word combines *Brazil* with the suffix *-dade* meaning “state of being,” analogous to the suffix *-ity* in English. The act of embodying Brazil, the largest nation on the South American continent formed by a combination of historic events and geographic boundaries and populated by 209 million people, is, to say the least, a tall order. While *Brasilidade* is ostensibly about the acknowledgement of this extraordinary diversity—the national character formed by the particular geographic, climatic, and historic circumstances of Brazil—the term functions as a rhetorical means of unifying these enormous differences by abstracting them. The ambiguity of the concept has let it act as a cipher for shifting ideas, much as *Italianità* was used by Italians in the early 20th century,¹ a pliable term so ambiguous that it can hold any number of meanings by any number of users regardless of political or cultural perspective.

¹ Michelangelo Sabatino’s *Pride in Modesty*, which provided ample inspiration for this dissertation, examines the ways that the notion of “Italianness” affected the ways that Modernist architecture was conceived by designers, critics, and politicians.

As used by the architects and anthropologists featured in this dissertation, *Brasilidade* frequently implied not only Brazilian character in general, but Brazilian character in response to the forces of modernity and in contrast to North America, to Europe, and, as the only Portuguese-speaking nation on the continent, to the rest of South America. In that sense, the word can best be understood as an oppositional term, a concept shaped by all that it is not.

This dissertation traces the attribution of *Brasilidade* to various architectural forms between 1922, the year of an event popularly viewed as the start of Modernism in Brazil, and 1968, a year of particular importance in the country's political and architectural life. At the beginning of this study, the Baroque Brazilian architecture of the 17th century was largely viewed as a font of national character in built form. These colonial-era buildings were cited as the model for imbuing Modernist architecture with *Brasilidade*. By the late 1950s, a number of architects, as well as artists and critics, deemed the architecture of poverty (a term that itself was freighted with meaning far beyond economic status) as the locus of national authenticity. Although the idea I am tracking was part of an architectural discourse, it was influenced as much by politics, by the burgeoning fields of anthropology and preservation, by visual artists as well as architects. Notably, the actors described here did not intend their models of architectural *Brasilidade* to provoke direct copying or translation; for instance, those who found authenticity in Brazil's colonial architecture did not intend for new construction to ape that style, nor did later architects intend to copy the improvised constructions of the poor. While the individual buildings discussed below can provide clues to the intention of their architects, by and large they must be interpreted using other channels.

The transformation of an idea is, by its nature, a task that rarely can be definitively located and attributed to one event, one government, one person. Instead, evidence must be found in a wide range of media including legislation, mass publications, paintings, exhibitions, architecture, and texts. This is particularly so when the ideas at stake are part of deeply contested notions related to patriotism and national character, unstable and highly subjective concepts. As a result, I have conceived this dissertation as a set of connected vignettes that each provide different types of evidence of a changing dialogue in relation to architectural *Brasilidade*. Each is organized around the work of one relevant figure per chapter: Mario de Andrade (1893–1945) in Chapter Two, Lucio Costa (1902–88) in Chapter Three, Gilberto Freyre (1900–87) in Chapter Four, and Lina Bo Bardi (1914–92) in Chapters Five and Six. While there were certainly channels of mutual influence among them, this organization is not meant to imply direct causality. Instead, each chapter highlights different arenas—public performance, journals, and buildings—that acted as vehicles for transmission of ideas.

It is essential to acknowledge that the actors anchoring each chapter are operating from various positions of power derived from an implicit Eurocentrism based on their race, power, and prestige. Fabiola López-Durán has shown the powerful impact of eugenics upon the Modernist discourse, and its direct influence upon Freyre as well as Costa, whose racist assumptions, she notes, had largely been erased from the historiography about his life and work.² Both men, as well as Andrade, created a set of equivalencies among various Brazilian forms of architecture, including Modernist buildings as well as those associated

² Fabiola López-Durán, *Eugenics in the Garden*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2018.

with black and indigenous Brazilians. Yet we mustn't see their attempts to formulate *Brasilidade* by integrating European, indigenous, and Afro-Brazilian influences as indicative of any change to the framework of their thinking. On the contrary, this celebration of a multiracial Brazil, which was created only to distinguish the nation on the world stage, served to further exoticize Brazil. However, in the work (if not the writing) of Lina Bo Bardi we can see a "slippage," a moment when an idea introduced solely to maintain the existing hierarchies of power, creates an opportunity for a quite different paradigm to take hold.

By most lights, Lina Bo Bardi is the outlier among the featured players that appear in this dissertation. Examining her architectural and written work first suggested the idea for this study: unlike the rhetorical sleight-of-hand used by Lucio Costa when he drew parallels among Brazilian Baroque and Modernist architecture, Bo Bardi used a strikingly different language to describe her work, descriptions that often invoked *o povo* (the people) while casting herself as a fighter for the underrepresented. Considering her close ties to a media magnate as well as her marriage to Pietro Maria Bardi, who had gone on record as a supporter of Italian Fascism,³ the revolutionary rhetoric did not ring true. Throughout her career, in fact, her language was shot through with a host of assumptions about and condescension towards her perceived audience. But what makes her work so relevant to this study is the way that her architecture—both what she designed and perhaps more importantly, the process by which she designed it—actually validated the vernacular equivalencies devised by Andrade, Costa, and Freyre. Just as a law may not immediately

³ Esther da Costa Meyer, "After the Flood: Lina Bo Bardi's Glass House," *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 16 (Winter/Spring 2002): 8.

affect change in belief systems, it gives voice to a society's better angels (or lesser demons), giving legitimacy to an idea that later is absorbed and normalized. In Bo Bardi's architecture, we can see evidence of a parallel transformation, one that rejects a hierarchy among Brazilian vernaculars.

1.1.1 The Master Narrative

This study's structure was largely formulated to identify, communicate with, and problematize an existing, oft-repeated narrative about the adoption of Modernism in Brazil, one that appears in both popular and scholarly sources. Called the "master narrative" by literary critic Saulo Gouveia, it can be encountered in studies of a variety of Brazilian arts in the 20th century—samba, capoeira, poetry, painting, and architecture. It is presented in the following pages as both a valid "text" that conveyed a powerful set of tropes regarding the expression of *Brasilidade*⁴ as well as a story filled with critical omissions. This study toggles between these two poles, as I deem both essential to the transformation in the nationalist conception of architecture. The narrative itself begins in São Paulo with a set of writers, composers, and painters staging a spectacle they called The Week of Modern Art. Designed to reject the musty academic and romantic traditions of the era, the artists brought ideas of the European avant garde to Brazil, expressly setting out to "Brazilian-ize" the ideas they encountered in their reading and travels. The anxiety about absorbing European ideas wholesale—Brazil, after all, had only been a nation since 1889 when its role as an

⁴ In *The Modernist City* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 67), James Holston has noted the power of what he calls "foundation myths," writing that they "have the function of transforming history into nature for their tellers: they present as naturally given or received, as sacred, eternal, ideal, or universal, events and relations which are in fact the products of history."

empire under a Portuguese sovereign had ended—engendered the creation of another essential element of the master narrative, the *Cannibalist Manifesto*. Written by Oswald de Andrade, the document introduced a powerful trope to cultural and political debates in Brazil. Essentially, Andrade argued that Brazilians need not fear influences outside its borders: the strength of the nation’s character, its cussed Brazilianness, like the cannibals from 16th century explorers’ accounts, would allow Brazilians to devour and digest and transform foreign ideas.

We see this concept in the master narrative’s architectural discourse: the influence and adaptation of Le Corbusier’s five points of modern architecture, followed by a celebrated, heroic period of the nation’s architecture, culminating—not without criticism—in the creation of a new national capital, Brasilia. The cannibalist theme, by the mid-1960s embedded in the story of 1920s Modernism, resurfaced in the mid-1960s, but this time articulated by a set of the country’s popular musicians associated with an artistic and political movement called Tropicália. They deployed music to criticize the totalitarian government of the era and the conservatism of the Brazilian left, refusing any notion of “purity” in Brazilian cultural production and reserving the right to cannibalize influences from abroad. They borrowed (some might say ingested) the cry of French leftist students: “It is forbidden to forbid.”

This master narrative, which will be expounded on throughout this dissertation, is critical to understanding a sea change in the conceptual framework used to understand and design architecture. The architect and city planner Lucio Costa and his Modernist contemporaries in Rio de Janeiro introduced a version of the cannibalist trope to the architectural debates of the 1930s, a rhetorical sleight-of-hand that had a vast impact on the

country's built environment. Extolling the architecture of Brazil's most powerful 17th and 18th century institutions—the church and vast agricultural plantations—Costa argued that just as *Brasilidade* shaped those earlier “international” styles, so too would it inform Modernist architecture. Using this strategy, Costa rejected the modernisms of Germany and France that aimed to rise above a particular national character, instead tethering Brazilian Modernism to the country's history, climate, topography, and racial makeup. By the late 1950s, another group of Brazilian modern architects—most notably Lina Bo Bardi and João Vilanova Artigas (1915-85)—had begun to question this paradigm. They too believed in the expression of *Brasilidade*, though they did not formulate a specific schema to act as an alternative to the Costa model. They did not point specifically to favelas, for instance, as the locus of national authenticity the way Costa pointed to the churches and houses of Minas Gerais. Nonetheless, the Paulistas wrote essays, curated exhibitions, and designed buildings meant to reveal the country's vast economic disparities and its concomitant cultural wealth, work that suggested *Brasilidade* was generated by the country's poorest citizens.

1.2 Organization and Outline

This dissertation has been organized in chronological order to provide essential background about the era's complex political landscape as it unfolded over the decades. In order to understand and contextualize the changes to the conceptual framework for *Brasilidade* as it was applied to architecture, political and cultural developments of the period have been described. A number of the most influential Brazilian practitioners in the field had direct ties to federal, state, and city governments, most notably Lucio Costa who was instrumental

in the creation and administration of the nation's new preservation agency. Therefore, political change affected the practice and rhetoric of architecture with considerable force. At the same time, national cultural debates pertinent to architectural discourse are followed, ones related to the construction of racial and regional identity. These too influenced—and were influenced by—the country's changing political structure, which can best be demonstrated using chronological organization.

The one exception to chronological order is Chapter 4, which covers the same time frame as Chapter 3 (1930–1942), but in a different geographic location. This movement among locations in Brazil is another key organizational device employed here since the subject of this dissertation relies a great deal on understanding relationships among regions. The field of architecture in 20th century Brazil was highly attuned to developments outside of the nation, most especially in Europe and the United States. Within the country, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were the locales of importance regarding new developments in architecture. Nonetheless, this dissertation “travels” among multiple locations—Rio, São Paulo, and Recife in the northeastern state of Pernambuco, with brief stops in the colonial cities of Minas Gerais and the cultural capital of Afro-Brazil, Salvador in Bahia, and the eventual political capital of Brasilia. The reasons for this peripatetic approach are two-fold: first, even if the architectural developments in the northeast or the Amazon or the interior states of Brazil held little sway in the architectural press or in the minds of the field's most powerful actors at the beginning of the 20th century, by the mid-1950s, those “peripheral” locations deeply informed visions of authentic Brazil as it would be expressed in built form from the 1960s onward. Generally, as we move through the first half of the 20th century and communication technologies became more reliable and prevalent in places farther from

the country's cultural centers, the role of periphery grew in importance, though in many ways the long-standing power dynamic between center and edge still determined how ideas were interpreted.

This study, which is divided into five chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion, begins in São Paulo, the city of the Week of Modern Art in 1922. The week is critical here for two reasons: first, one of its central figures, Mario de Andrade, a poet, novelist, and ethnomusicologist, came to have direct influence on the architectural discourse of the nation during the 1930s. As author of the *Cannibalist Manifesto*, Mario's colleague Oswald de Andrade certainly exerted great influence on the rhetoric of modernism. However, it was Mario who, in his anthropological approach to formulating Brazilian identity, proved to have greater influence on the architectural discourse, both in its reliance upon colonial architecture as a source of *Brasilidade*, and its later shift to architecture associated with a Brazilian "other"—cultures of the impoverished, the rural, the indigenous, and the Afro-Brazilian. Secondly, a review of the 1922 São Paulo milieu reveals the close relationship between Brazil's *avant garde* and its wealthiest citizens, a patronage system that helped create a Modernist movement at once creative and revolutionary while rooted in a long extant version of race and class relations.

Chapter 3 tells the story of the early career of Costa through his published essays and his architecture. He initially devoted his career to a style known as Neo-colonialism, which called for new construction to copy Brazil's colonial-era architecture. And though he later rejected that stance and became one of the nation's most devoted advocates of Modernism, it was through the neo-colonial lens that he conceived of Modernist architecture in Brazil, an architecture steeped in the particularities of the country's history,

geography, and climate. When in 1930 the populist president Getulio Vargas (1882-1954) came to power in a military coup, Costa and his like-minded colleagues took an opportunity to create a national preservation organization, the Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (SPHAN), that could realize two goals. First, it could valorize the colonial-era architecture so cherished by both the Rio and São Paulo Modernists. Secondly, SPHAN could function as an instrument for establishing modernism as a true Brazilian vernacular. SPHAN is an essential element of the master narrative for its role in establishing aesthetic values for the nation that included modernism. As we'll see this was accomplished via SPHAN's journal, which created an equivalency among art and architecture deemed essential to the Brazilian patrimony. This included articles about works by indigenous tribes as well as Afro-Brazilians. Still, a Eurocentric perspective was inherent to the writing: while churches of the country's colonial era and the pottery of the Marajó Indians were examined for their formal qualities, the former were contextualized as part of national history. The latter, instead, were treated as ahistoric artifacts, exotic and valuable, and, wondrously, all a part of Brazil.

In terms of architecture, the period covered in this chapter, 1930–1942, could be called the country's era of heroic Modernism with buildings that were lauded in the foreign press and built in support of a government that, unlike the republic before it, organized a bureaucratic state in which industrialization had recently become the country's economic motor.⁵ The term “Modernism” is used here to refer to the architectural movement associated with the United States and northern Europe grounded in major developments in

⁵ Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, “From the Patrimonial State to the Managerial State,” in Sachs, Wilhelm, and Pinheiro, *Brazil: A Century of Change*, 150.

building technology and the physical and sociological changes engendered by urbanization. In Brazil, as in so many other places, it also became a concept that represented aspirations for future development as well as a medium for expressing power on the world stage. If the architectural press of the era was to be trusted, Brazil was indeed powerful, at least in terms of aesthetic capital. *Brazil Builds*, an exhibition and catalog, sponsored by New York's Museum of Modern Art, essential to the story of Brazilian Modernist architecture, is credited with instigating extraordinary interest in the nation's built environment, with notable design magazines devoting whole issues to the ways that the Brazilians were said to be adapting the ideas of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus to their environment. While this enthusiasm would wane significantly in the early 1950s, the architecture designed in Brazil of the late 1930s and early 1940s had a clarity and confidence that thrilled critics and architects around the world.

Chapter 4, set in Recife in the northeastern state of Pernambuco, gives background on regional tensions, the purposeful creation of a northeastern identity, and the images that helped inform that identity both in the northeast and in São Paulo and Rio. Although the drive to articulate a regional identity predated him, Gilberto Freyre, the central figure in this chapter, was intimately involved in that effort. Best known for his 1933 book, *The Masters and the Slaves*, he fashioned a theory of the origins of Brazilian character based on the *engenhos* or plantations of the northeast, a theory that proved to have great currency all over the nation. Aside from his metaphoric use of architecture to describe race relations in Brazil, Freyre is essential to this study because he presented a multiracial Brazil in a positive light, appearing to reject the eugenic assumptions widely in play at the time. While the text of *The Masters and the Slaves*, as well as future texts by Freyre, belie that

impression, he nonetheless was associated with a stance viewed as quite revolutionary—Brazil’s strength lay in its confluence of races, its *mestiçagem*, mixed-race heritage. This was a position often invoked by the architects who later rejected the Baroque-Modernist paradigm fashioned by Costa.

In Freyre-ian fashion, this chapter expounds upon a building type, the *mucambo*, as a way to reveal the class and race dimensions of a discourse ostensibly about city planning. The simple houses called *mucambos* were associated with runaway slaves in the popular imagination, and were often inhabited by impoverished Afro-Brazilians living in Recife. They became the locus of a struggle between city fathers who in the name of modernization fought to raze the structures; others saw them in sentimental terms, symbols of northeastern tradition. “A Luta Contro Os Mucambos” (“The Fight Against the Mucambos”), as one magazine headline put it,⁶ should be seen in light of the Haussmanization of Rio de Janeiro, which took place approximately ten years earlier. Invoking the needs of modernization, morality and hygiene, Carlos Sampaio, Rio’s mayor, demanded the destruction of a hill in the city’s center, Morro de Castelo,⁷ a remarkable occurrence considering the city was allegedly founded on that very site.⁸ But it was home to generations of poor Afro-Brazilians who were displaced by the hill’s destruction.⁹ (Today, the hill exists only in toponymic

⁶ “A Luta Contra as Mocambos,” *O Cruzeiro*, September 25, 1941, 85.

⁷ López-Durán, *Eugenics in the Garden*, 58.

⁸ Roberto Segre, “Rio de Janeiro: Una Vocación Histórica Policéntrica,” *Revista de la Organización Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Centros Históricos*, no. 2 (December 2008), 29.

⁹ Eduardo Victorio Morettin, “Um Apóstolo do Modernismo na Exposição Internacional do Centenário: Armando Pamplona e a Independência Film,” paper presented at O Grupo de Trabalho Estudos de Cinema, Fotografia e Audiovisual do XXI Encontro da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, June 2012, 77.

memory: the Castelo subway station is just a few minutes' walk from the Ministerio de Educação e Saude building [MESP], Brazil's celebrated entry into the discourse of international Modernist architecture.) The specter of Morro de Castelo certainly informed the push to destroy the *mucambo*; its inclusion in Chapter 4 is designed to throw light on the tension between Afro-Brazilian culture as stand-in for northeastern traditions versus the realities of being a black Brazilian in the region.

The dissertation's focus returns to the southern part of the country in Chapter 5, but this time homing in on ideas shared by São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, not as rivals but as modern metropolises on a far larger scale than other cities in Brazil. Central to this chapter is the representation of multiracial Brazil in a popular magazine, *O Cruzeiro*. Akin to glossies like *Life* and *Paris Match*, *O Cruzeiro* was designed both to speak to a middle-class audience aspiring to be sophisticated and informed, and at the same time to create just such an audience. This chapter introduces a critical actor in tracing the story of *Brasilidade* as expressed in architecture, Lina Bo Bardi (1914–92), an Italian-born Brazilian architect. A founder of the esteemed Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), Bo Bardi was deeply entwined with the cultural elite of her adopted city. She also arrived in Brazil with a well-developed position about the importance of vernacular architecture as a source of a culture's authenticity. This was an idea she continually articulated in her work as a design journalist in Milan for Gio Ponti's *Domus* as well as a magazine she had founded with Bruno Zevi, *A*. During the period covered by this chapter, Bo Bardi not only continued her editorial stance via *Habitat*, a new journal she and her husband, Pietro Maria Bardi, launched in 1950, but through her first building, the Glass House (1951). The house is discussed in light of the popularization of a multiracial discourse concomitant with the

explosion of celebrated Modernist architecture typified by Oscar Niemeyer's luxury residential estate, Pampulha (1941) and Eduardo Reidy's Pedregulho housing complex (1946) for lower-middle class workers.

In Chapter 6, the story remains rooted in the south, now firmly in São Paulo but informed by Salvador via the figure of Bo Bardi. The chapter runs from 1959, the year Bo Bardi moved to Salvador, to 1968, the year her best-known work, a permanent home for Museum of Art of São Paulo, opened as well as the year that the military dictatorship entered its most repressive period. Via Bo Bardi's written, curatorial, and built work, the two cities meet largely as foils to one another, São Paulo in the role of industrialized city home to relatively recent European, Asian, and Middle Eastern immigrants, and Salvador as the locus of the country's Afro-Brazilian culture, recent migrants from the countryside, and its storied role in the founding and early history of Brazil. Despite her connections to the levers of cultural power, Bo Bardi faced numerous disadvantages as an architect in Brazil as a woman, an immigrant, and wife often perceived as secondary to her well-known and colorful spouse. For a number of reasons, she moved to the northeastern city of Salvador de Bahia in 1959, essentially traveling to the nation's political periphery in search of cultural production not influenced by commercial interests, what she deemed authentic. While a journey to locate art and artists "uninfected" by capitalism is inherently problematic for multiple reasons, her experiences in Bahia undoubtedly informed her architecture and, more to the point, helped articulate a new paradigm for expressing Brazilian national spirit in architecture.

1.3 Sources and Literature Survey

Regarding sources used, the following chapters rely heavily upon the scholarship of academics who have already revealed the central narrative of Brazilian architecture to be merely one, albeit powerful, storyline among a multiplicity of architectural developments in the country that had received only scant attention when built. The research, for instance, of Sonia Marques and Guilah Naslavsky on Luiz Nunes's Corbusian architecture for public works in Recife is a wonderful example of the scholarship that makes the story of Modernism far richer, complex, and fascinating: while the master narrative via Gilberto Freyre characterize Recife as closely tied to agricultural traditions, Nunes was part of an agency that strove to bring modern services and architecture to the region.

A goal of this study has been to bring the insights of these scholars into communication with each other and with primary sources, largely from newspapers and magazines, to understand what amounts to a radical change in perception of national identity and how that could occur in the course of thirty years. The primary sources used include periodicals, exhibition catalogs, as well as texts by the central figures. Newspaper accounts offer context for the architectural milieu of the eras and locations covered in the following chapters, while one professional journal, *A Revista do SPHAN*, and one popular weekly magazine, *O Cruzeiro*, illustrate how thoroughly the architectural discourse created in Rio de Janeiro in the 1930s was absorbed and interpreted by a mainstream publication. In addition, these sources demonstrate the ways that photography was in dialogue with other sources of knowledge production, most especially folklore, history, contemporary politics, and anthropology.

The secondary sources I depended upon can be divided into the following categories, though most of the sources discussed here fulfilled overlapping purposes: those that gave an overview of the Modernist movement in Brazil; studies that focused on Brazilian national and regional identity; those that explicated the political landscape, from oligarchic federal power to the Estado Novo to the post-World War II democracy to the institution of military rule; sources dedicated to individual architects or critics. The collection of essays *Brazil's Modern Architecture* (2004) edited by Elisabetta Andreoli and Adrian Forty has been particularly valuable in that many of the essays, all in some way dedicated to complicating the master narrative, provided a roadmap for further research. Roberto Conduru's "Tropical Tectonics" proved especially useful in that he aimed to understand how architects located the idea of "tropicality" within built form. Moreover, Guilherme Wisnik's "Doomed to Modernity," also in the Andreoli–Forty collection, succinctly laid out the European backlash against Modernist architecture in Brazil during the 1950s, and hinted at the circumstances that eventually became the subject of my study when he wrote of "the second notion of Brazilian regionalism that will become predominate at a later stage, particularly following the construction of Brasilia."¹⁰

I depended upon Luis Carranza and Fernando Luiz Lara's *Modern Architecture in Latin America* (2014) for its use of recent scholarship to provide context for the architecture of Brazil in relation to other Latin American nations also wrestling with mechanisms for creating a national identity in the aftermath of colonialism. Time and again, the work challenges received ideas about the Modernism in Latin America as merely a tropicalized

¹⁰ Guilherme Wisnik, "Doomed to Modernity," in Andreoli and Forty, *Brazil's Modern Architecture*, (New York, NY: Phaidon Press, 2009, 22–55).

version of European rationalism. *Black Into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* by Thomas Skidmore (1993) provided excellent background on the construction of race in Brazil. Especially useful were his insights on race and nationalism. Similarly, Daryle Williams' *Culture Wars in Brazil* influenced this dissertation a great deal, not least because of his incisive interpretations of the work of Lucio Costa and the national preservation agency, and their support of existing class and race hierarchies.

Christopher Dunn's *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (2001) helped me immensely by providing an endpoint, so to speak, towards which I could first direct my research and then a lens for understanding the cultural milieu of mid-1960s Brazil. Dunn wrote about a moment in popular music as inextricably tied to the political events of the day and musicians who, while eschewing traditional protest music, provided a critique of their government. This proved useful as a model when writing about the architecture in relationship to the political developments of the days. For both empirical and interpretive information regarding the Estado Novo, the post-war governments, and the first four years of the military dictatorship, the work of Thomas Skidmore (*Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* [2010]; *Politics in Brazil, 1930–1964: An Experiment in Democracy* [2007]). was invaluable, as well as a set of essays about various aspects of political organization entitled *Brazil: A Century of Change* (2009).

Although no writer I am aware of has traced the *change* in conceptual framework for identifying *Brasilidade* in architecture, the subject of national character in built form is integral to the vast majority of writing about Modernist architecture in Brazil. *Brasilidade*, in fact, is a ubiquitous subject in a wide range of scholarship, including art history and musicology. The absence of an overview of changing *Brasilidade* perhaps should be

attributed to excellent specialized scholarship regarding facets of Modernism in Brazil. For instance, Paulina Alberto's *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (2011) shows how Afro-Brazilian thinkers influenced discourse about the construction of racial identity, greatly complicating the master narrative. The need for this addition to the literature became clear while researching Chapter 4 of my study. A set of essays and articles appearing in northeastern newspapers between 1934 and 1936 revealed that Gilberto Freyre and Edison Carneiro, a Bahian ethnologist of mixed race, waged a public debate about the execution of a set of Afro-Brazilian congresses. Their disagreement signaled the degree to which black scholars refuted the assumptions that fueled Freyre's rhetoric. In *The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil* (2015), Barbara Weinstein unpacks the role of race in the formation of a regional identity of São Paulo. Among other strategies, she explores the conflation of racial categories with regional ones, pitting the northeastern states (read "rural," "backward," "black") against São Paulo ("urban," "sophisticated" "modern").

Fabiola Lopez-Duran eschews the deep-dive approach with her 2018 *Eugenics in the Garden: Transatlantic Architecture and the Crafting of Modernity*. Instead she recontextualizes well-known ideas and images of Modernism such as Ebenezer Howard's Three Magnets (1898), Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation (1952), Ministerio de Educação e Saude building (MESP), a key building in the history of Brazilian Modernism. Usually presented as novel developments in architecture and urban planning, López-Durán shows how these concepts and structures were steeped in the longstanding discourse of eugenics and social engineering. Besides shedding light on many of the actors covered in this study, López-Durán's work supports the view presented here that the promotion of a multiracial

Brazil was essentially a strategy for maintaining racial hierarchies, not exploding them. The approach of architectural historians of the American vernacular provided some useful insights. For instance, Paul Groth includes high-style architecture in his definition of “vernacular.” He writes, “It can and does include designed buildings, particularly when they are commonly accepted building types...”¹¹ By those lights, buildings like the Seagram Tower or the Air Force Academy —architecture with well-known authors and patrons—would qualify as vernacular since they surely have impacted thousands of people’s lives. A vernacular study, however, would view them as an office tower or a military school, respectively, not as singular works of architecture. In this way, Groth defines the study of vernacular architecture as one closely tied to methods of analysis, not just particular building types. In that way, a building by as renowned an architect as Oscar Niemeyer may be studied from the perspective of everyday users. Deploying that strategy, Groth effectively avoids the implicit social hierarchy of earlier definitions of the vernacular: it is no longer a matter of who designed or paid for a building, with the economic and social prestige that implies, but instead a study of who uses the space and how. This perspective shed light on Costa who essentially perceived of Modernism as a type of vernacular in order to put forward a nationalist polemic. It also proved to be valuable when evaluating two works of architecture discussed in Chapter 6, both designed to serve large swaths of the public.

¹¹ Paul Groth, “Making New Connections in Vernacular Architecture,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58 (no. 3, September 1999), 444.

Finally, when I began to take interest in Lina Bo Bardi's architecture, no published book-length biographies existed, and most of the books dedicated to her work came out of [her](#) archive at the Lina Bo and P.M. Bardi Institute in São Paulo. Today, there are scores of books and papers about the Italo-Brazilian's architecture, drawings, furniture design, and writing. In addition, there have been numerous exhibitions and associated catalogs, dedicated to some aspect of her practice or her relationship to other architects. Most importantly for future studies of Lina Bo Bardi's body of work, Zeuler Lima published his biography, *Lina Bo Bardi* (2013). It provides an excellent guide beginning with her education in Rome. The result of at least 10 years of research, the book goes far to counter the simplistic hagiography of Bo Bardi that seems to have attended the recent interest in her work. Furthermore, Lima's clear and detailed descriptions of the structural details of the architect's work, most especially the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, provided many insights into her collaborations with structural engineers and contractors, and elucidated why she had a particular fondness for the art of improvisation. Furthermore, in addition to his many published articles about aspects of Bo Bardi's oeuvre, his research report for the Rockefeller Foundation clarified many questions about the relationship among the Bardis, Nelson Rockefeller, and the art patrons/industrialists of São Paulo.

CHAPTER 2

PAULISTANOS FORMULATE THE MODERNIST MASTER NARRATIVE

2.1 Introduction

In 1911, Sao Paulo's city fathers inaugurated a new theater meant to replace the city's main venue, Theatro São José, which had burned down in a fire 13 years earlier. Just south of Sao Paulo's Praça Republica, the Municipal Theater was designed by the engineer Francisco de Paulo Ramos de Azevedo with two Italian-born architects, Claudio and Domiziano Rossi, to be reminiscent both of La Scala and Garnier's Opera House. Set on a plinth, the building boasts a rusticated ground floor with vousoirs marking its entryways and five bays of glass doors opening on to a second-floor balcony (Figure 2.1). Meant to stage the work of European opera companies, it is far better known as the site of the Week of Modern Art, February 1922, an event ostensibly meant to rid Brazilian culture of its European façade.



Figure 2.1 Theatro Muncipal, São Paulo, Souvenir of Exposição Nacional, 1922.
(Source: *Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, CDD: 769.98153.*)

The brainchild of a group of artists and writers, the Week of Modern Art stands as the starting point of what Saulo Gouveia calls Brazilian modernism's master narrative.¹² It is a compelling story, one focused on a set of artists who, in a damn-the-torpedoes spirit, defy the stultifying social and cultural norms of their day to demand art that is true to the seismic changes in everyday life brought about by technology. And being artists in a former colony, the call to arms includes a rejection of the colonizer, though in Brazil's case this was generalized to mean Europe and eventually North America. Although the notion that the Week of Modern Art functioned as the beginning of Brazil's embrace of Modernist aesthetics is simplistic, Gouveia is certainly correct that this version of events has proved to be surprisingly intransigent, used for years by esteemed critics and historians to explain the development of samba, of Brazilian Modernist art and poetry, and of the country's Modernist architecture. Slowly, though, the idea that the artists featured during the Week of Modern Art single-handedly transformed Brazilian aesthetics has been undermined. As Frederico Coelho argues in his book *A Semana Sem Fim (The Week Without End)* (2012), the story has been questioned and complicated by critics as early as the 1970s.¹³

Nonetheless, the events and texts of the master narrative are undeniably important to understand how modernism was interpreted in Brazil and what ends it was put to. Equally critical, of course, are the shadow narratives, that is, those that were left out of the "official story" or were underrepresented. But before those may be assessed for their impact upon the Modernist discourse, particularly in relation to architecture, the story as it

¹² Saulo Gouveia, "Mário de Andrade's Early Modernist Manifestos: Power, Simulated Authority, and the Domestication of the Avant-Garde Experiments," *Hispanofila* 161 (2011): 85-101.

¹³ Frederico Coelho, *A Semana Sem Fim* (São Paulo: Casa da Palavra, 2012).

has been presented most frequently by historians, ethnomusicologists, and literary scholars from the 1920s to the 1970s must be laid out, examined both for its provenance and for the trajectory it set in motion for the interpretation of modernism in the country and the conceptual frameworks used to represent national character, i.e., *Brasilidade*. After a brief description of the architectural milieu of early 20th century São Paulo, I will outline the role of patrons in supporting Brazilian Modernist aesthetics. This reveals both the political climate in which the movement came about and the allegiances of the artists and critics most identified with this first expression of Modernist ideas in Brazil. I next present the events that make up the master narrative of modernism in Brazil as created by a group of artists and intellectuals in São Paulo; I do this largely by building upon the work of both historians and literary critics. Specifically, I will describe the polemics of the Modernists, which changed over the course of the decade. This will include three touchstone events: the Week of Modern Art, a much-publicized trip to the colonial cities Minas Gerais taken by the São Paulo Modernists in 1924, and a manifesto written in 1926 by a faction of the group. These are the three essential elements of the story of Modernism in Brazil. The goal of the chapter is to demonstrate that the Modernists relied on two vernaculars to build their case for Brazilian identity: the first entailed an investigation of colonial-era art and architecture; the second, depended upon a generalized notion of indigenous culture, a reworking of the Indian hero of 19th century Brazilian literature. Furthermore, I aim to show the role of aristocratic patrons in the dissemination of Modernist ideas and how investigations of vernacular art and architecture were in service to establishing a national identity while maintaining traditional power structures. While all the central participants of the Week of Modern Art make worthy protagonists for a study of modernism in Brazil,

I focus on Mario de Andrade because his ideas greatly influenced Lucio Costa and Brazilian Modernist architects, as discussed in Chapter 2.

2.2 Architectural Landmarks of São Paulo during the 1920s

During most of the 19th century, the most cosmopolitan, cultured part of São Paulo was funded by the coffee industry and referred to as “the triangle.” It was bounded by the Rua 15 de Novembro, Rua Direita, and Rua São Bento with Praça Antonio Prado at one end. The Viaduto do Cha connects the Triangle to Parque Anhangabau, part of a central valley in the city that eventually became a network of crossing roadways. The São Paulo Railway ran out of the Estação da Luz (Figure 2.2), inaugurated in 1867 and was replaced with a new building in 1901, which functioned as the conduit between coffee plantations, the port at Santos, and the financial hub of São Paulo. The city center was surrounded by a ring of estate houses known as *chacarás*, family compounds. While this was primarily a residential area of the city, it also included hospitals, cemeteries, schools, gunpowder storehouses, and *tropas*—“resting places for mule trains.”¹⁴ Beyond this zone, the city was surrounded by the *caipira* belt, home to manual laborers, a ring with land for subsistence farming as well as agriculture to feed the inner city. By the end of the 19th century, roads from “the triangle” to *chacarás* of important families came to define the city’s boundaries. Developers had started to purchase and divide the *chacarás* into building lots. Starting at the end of the 19th century, well-heeled neighborhoods such as Jardim Europa and Jardim America grew up on these lots with mansions called *palacetes* erected to house the wealthiest Paulistanos.

¹⁴ Cristina Mehrrens, *Urban Space and National Identity in Early Twentieth Century São Paulo, Brazil: Crafting Modernity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15.

Avenida Paulista was famous for these mansions designed in ornate historicist styles (Figures 2.3 and 2.4).



Figure 2.2 Guilherme Gaensly, S.P. R. Estação da Luz, São Paulo, c.1902.
(Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro,
http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_iconografia/icon325123_1045448/icon1045404.jpg.)



Figure 2.3 Guilherme Gaensly, Avenida Paulista, c. 1902.
(Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro,
http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_iconografia/icon325123_1045448/icon1045425.jpg.)



Figure 2.4 Guilherme Gaensly, Palacete H. Burchandy, São Paulo, 1921.
(Source: Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, 013SP004023.jpg.)

Though arguably no match for Rio in terms of culture, politics, and physical beauty, São Paulo, with its influx of European immigrants and its commerce-centered culture, changed rapidly during the 1920s. The Martinelli Building (Figure 2.5) built at the Praça Antonio Prado, for instance, indicated the ambition and wealth of its immigrant population. Built by Giuseppe Martinelli (1870-1946), a butcher-turned-shipping magnate, the building was the city's first skyscraper. To assuage the rumors that the building was not structurally sound, Martinelli moved in to the top floor. The 30-story, pink-hued building, topped with a Mansard roof (Figure 2.6), opened in 1929 and quickly became the subject of poets and photographers alike including Mario de Andrade. That same year Adalberto Kemeny and Rudolf Rex Lustig made *São Paulo, A Symphonia da Metropole* (1929), a rousing celebration of the city, its energy and cosmopolitanism (Figure 2.6). There is no dearth of images of the city's theaters, churches, schools, and streets, though the skyline never lives up to the futurist vision of the movie's poster.



Figure 2.5 Predio Martinelli under construction, São Paulo, ca. 1926.
(Source: Estadão. <https://acervo.estadao.com.br/noticias/acervo.como-era-sao-paulo-sem-o-edificio-martinelli,9083,0.htm>.)



Figure 2.6 Poster for *A Symphonia da Metropole*.
(Source: IMDB.com)

While Martinelli’s skyscraper embraced a modern construction system with historicist references for its upper floors, the city was also home to what Mauro Claro has called Brazil’s first “building to be built according to a completely modern formal repertoire,” the house built by immigrant architect Gregori Warchavchik on the Rua Santa

Cruz (Figure 2.7).¹⁵ The house, unlike Edifício Martinelli, uses masonry construction but in its plan and concrete-covered façade, certainly shows Warchavchik's familiarity with experiments in residential modernism occurring in Europe. Warchavchik, born in Ukraine and educated there and in Italy, settled on brick construction because of limited availability and high cost of concrete and iron, not to mention few skilled workers. Nonetheless, he adopted the core elements of Modernist houses as his organizing principles: an open plan that maximized interaction, efficiency, light, and ventilation (Figure 2.8).¹⁶ Masonry or no masonry, the house set off a firestorm of criticism when it was completed in 1928. Critics' main objections, predictably, were either that it was not sufficiently Brazilian or not sufficiently modern. Warchavchik responded that in fact, in its simple cubic form, it highlighted the Brazilian landscape. In addition, he claimed he was deploying "the decorative and characteristic colonial tiles to create a very Brazilian house perfectly adapted to its environment."¹⁷ This wouldn't be the last time that ceramic tiles would be deployed on a building designed to fulfill tenets of European modernism, but it is worth noting that even at this moment of introducing an architecture meant to be a rupture with Brazil's past, Warchavchik needed to use a historicist element to justify his design's Brazilianness.

¹⁵ Mauro Claro, "Modern Environments: The Modernist House of Santa Cruz Street, by Gregori Warchavchik, and Other Houses of Modernity," *Vitruvius*, November 9, 2008, https://www.vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/drops/09.025/1775/en_US

¹⁶ Daniela Sandler, "The Other Way Around: The Modernist Movement in Brazil," in *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development, and Identity*, ed. Duanfang Lu (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 37.

¹⁷ Gregori Warchavchik, "A Primeira Realização da Architectura [sic] Moderna em São Paulo," *Correio Paulistano*, July 8, 1928, 3.



Figure 2.7 Gregori Warchavchik, Casa da Rua Santa Cruz, 1927-28.
(Source: Itaú Cultural. Accessed July 2016.
<https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra35597/casa-da-rua-santa-cruz-sao-paulo>.)

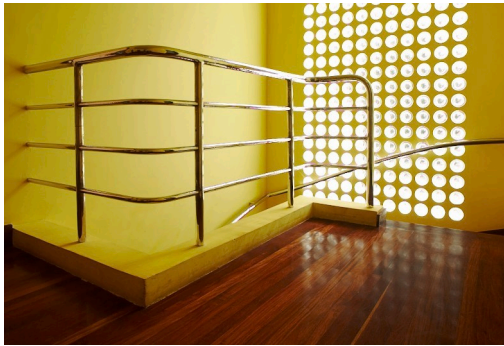


Figure 2.8 Gregori Warchavchik, Casa da Rua Santa Cruz, 1927-28. Detail of second floor landing.
(Source: ArchDaily, Brazil edition. Accessed July 2016.
<https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/01-17010/classicos-da-arquitetura-casa-Modernista-da-rua-santa-cruz-gregori-warchavchik/5627b5bde58ecee6f0000264-classicos-da-arquitetura-casa-Modernista-da-rua-santa-cruz-gregori-warchavchik-foto>.)

2.3 From Coffee to Aesthetics: Old Money Patronage of Modernism

The Modernists' relationship to their upper-class patrons set the stage for the wider acceptance of modernism, and the use of Modernist architecture for important government and private commissions. In an essay about literature that resulted from the Week of Modern Art, K. David Jackson points out that the Modernists had an allegiance to the coffee aristocracy, which he believes “probably assured that the popular Brazilian

traditions valued through its poetry, fiction, and folkloric research would remain the province and purview of urban literate models of cultural diffusion.”¹⁸ Much the same can be said regarding the acceptance of Modernist architecture in Brazil: the ties established by Andrade and company to the country’s old, powerful families during the 1920s played a considerable role in how Brazilian modern architects would frame their work and why their buildings were erected. To understand the relationship cultivated by Andrade with his upper-class supporters, it’s important to step back and consider the history of patronage in Brazil.

In analyzing the forces at play in the abolition of slavery in Brazil, Kim D. Butler describes the critical role of patronage in Brazilian society, a system based on colonialism with a male plantation owner who functioned as the arbiter of all social and economic relations for his family, his employees, and his slaves. As Butler points out that structure remained in place well into the 20th century, with many political scientists viewing patronage as the basis of the Brazilian political and social system.¹⁹ Social mobility depended upon nurturing connections with powerful allies. This was as true for the Modernists looking to make their case for a truly Brazilian art and literature as for civil servants making their way through the ranks of the growing governmental bureaucracy.

Paulo da Silva Prado (1869-1943), the most notable patron of Andrade and the Modern Art Week, came from one of the most powerful coffee families in Brazil. His uncle, Eduardo Prado, was one of the best-known industrialists of the late 19th century in

¹⁸ K. David Jackson, “Literature of the São Paulo Modern Art Week,” Prepublication Working Paper, no. 87-08 (1987): 2. Accessed May 2016.
<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/etext/llilas/tpla/8708.pdf>.

¹⁹ Kim D. Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 18.

Brazil, who, by the turn of the century, decried what he called the “denationalization of the habits of daily life.” He urged Brazilians to hold onto their own culture, an unpopular position in that era of extreme Francophilia among members of the upper class.²⁰ His father, Antonio da Silva Prado (1840-1929), had been mayor of São Paulo from 1899-1910 and had supported railroad development, increased immigration, and the end of slavery.²¹ Those last two points, of course, were deeply related: as abolition grew inevitable, more industrialists scrambled to find labor that could keep their plantations and correlated industries functioning. Men like Prado profited from the growing number of government-sponsored initiatives to bring European laborers to Brazil.²²

By the time of the Modern Art Week, the same immigrants who had arrived to replace enslaved workers had themselves become a powerful force in São Paulo politics and industry, so much so that families like the Prados felt threatened by their increasing power. By the end of the 20th century, 265,000 immigrants had arrived and been sent to coffee plantations, but this saturation of labor only satisfied the planters briefly since laborers regularly left agricultural work.²³ Many had headed to São Paulo. Between 1894 and 1920, the city’s population had grown from 23,000 to 580,000 with immigrants making up two-thirds of the city’s residents.²⁴ And as early as 1894, immigrants were

²⁰ Darrell E. Levi, *The Prados of São Paulo: An Elite Family and Social Change, 1840-1930* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 130.

²¹ Warren Dean, *The Industrialization of São Paulo 1880-1945* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1969), 45.

²² Thomas H. Holloway, “Creating the Reserve Army? The Immigration Program of São Paulo, 1886-1930,” *International Migration Review* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 191–193.

²³ Jorge Wilhelm. “Metropolises and the Far West in the Twenty-first Century,” in *Brazil: A Century of Change* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2009), 322; Holloway, “Creating the Reserve Army?” 204.

²⁴ Dean, *Industrialization of São Paulo*, 51.

outnumbering native Paulistanos in manufacturing, trade, domestic work, craft, transportation, and commerce.

Matarazzo, whose nephew later became a major player in the cultural life of São Paulo when he founded that city's Biennial and its Museum of Modern Art, and his cohorts of immigrant and first-generation Brazilian businessmen provided an impetus for the likes of Paulo Prado and other old guard grandees to take up the Modernist banner. When writing the history of Brazilian Modernism only 20 years after Modern Art Week, Andrade characterized Prado's class as essential to his understanding and embrace of modernism, an exponent of the Paulista intellectual aristocracy, he was one of the principal figures of our traditional aristocracy."²⁵

The Modernists and their patrons were also opposed to the Tenentes Rebellion of 1922, these were staged protests by junior military officers who objected to, among other things, the existing political structure called *colonelismo*, in which votes for national political candidates were delivered by back country bosses on the state level. And if the middle class military officers demanding reform were not enough to herald a sea change in power, the nouveau riche industrialists, many whose families had arrived as immigrants a generation or two before, provided the death knell for the old aristocracy. In his renowned book *The Industrialization of São Paulo, 1880-1945* (1969), historian Warren Dean presented Francesco Matarazzo (1854-1937) as the embodiment of these successful newcomers. Matarazzo arrived in Brazil as an impoverished Calabrian immigrant and

²⁵ Mario de Andrade, "Movimento Modernista" speech given at the Conferences of the of the Library of the State Department of Brazil, April 30, 1942, 29.
<file:///Users/angelastarita/Downloads/1010143415.pdf>

became an extremely successful industrialist with vast investments in concrete, wheat, and coffee. He and other immigrant entrepreneurs employed a strategy known as “import substitution,” using the manufacturing networks already established by the coffee industry to make and distribute goods that Brazilians had until that point imported from other countries.²⁶ This was not a codified policy until after World War II, so during the 1920s, it developed despite the obstructions and objections raised by the old coffee oligarchy.²⁷

In light of the extreme tumult of the political landscape, the São Paulo Brahmins may have allied themselves with the Modernists in an attempt to maintain cultural hegemony in the face of the immigrant industrialists’ meteoric success.²⁸ One critic aptly concludes that the Modern Art Week “should be understood as an official event sponsored by the political leaders of the city and state of São Paulo.”²⁹ Implicitly, Andrade supported this gambit for cultural power, though it was unlikely a conscious decision on the Modernists’ part, but a merging of mutual interests.³⁰ Nonetheless, both Mario and Oswald de Andrade made clear that they dreaded the notion of a bourgeois bureaucracy, which they saw as an enemy of art, not to mention of authentic *Brasilidade*.³¹

²⁶ Dean, *Industrialization of São Paulo*, 52-66.

²⁷ Gouveia, “Early Modernist Manifestos,” 95.

²⁸ Saulo Gouveia, “Private Patronage in Early Brazilian Modernism: Xenophobia and Internal Colonization Coded in Mário de Andrade’s ‘Noturno de Belo Horizonte,’” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 46, no. 2 (2009): 98.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁰ Saulo Gouveia, “The Catholic Crusader and the Folklorist: Alceu Amoroso Lima and Mário de Andrade as Founding Fathers of Modernist Criticism and Historiography,” *Chasqui* 41, no.1 (May 2012): 39.

³¹ Gouveia, “Private Patronage,” 93.

2.4 The São Paulo Modernists and the Week of Modern Art

In February 1922, well before Warchavchik's house or the Martinelli Building, patrons and artists were organizing an event that would make the Beaux Arts Municipal Theater the center of modernism in Brazil. Located in the Praça Republica, the theater was close to Mario de Andrade's childhood home in the cultural heart of the city. Andrade, a moving force in theorizing the notions of both Brazilian modernism and *Brasilidade*, was a Paulistano³² from an upper class mulatto family wealthy enough to keep a city house and a farm in far west São Paulo state. Andrade had initially studied piano at the Conservatory of Music and Drama, a school founded in 1906 and a short walk from the Municipal Theater. Besides performing and composing music, Andrade traveled through various Brazilian states, including those along the Amazon, where he took note of the songs and instruments of the regions. In writing about Brazilian music, he famously argued that it only came into existence in the 20th century because modernism prompted the formation of "the Brazilian race"—that is, a combination of African, European, and Indian culture. For Andrade modernism made *Brasilidade* possible.³³ During his music studies, Andrade also began to write poetry with the French Symbolists and Parnassians as his model. Andrade's São Paulo was the city's inner ring, populated with *pessoas de categoria* -- the Brahmins of the coffee industry, the Church, and the law school that had established São Paulo as an academic center when it opened in 1827.

³² Note that the term "Paulistano/a" refers to a citizen of the city of São Paulo; a "Paulista" is a resident of São Paulo state.

³³ Christopher Dunn, "Culture in Brazil: From Mestiçagem to Hybridity and the Difference It Makes" (paper delivered at the 1997 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17-19, 1997), 6.

His poems and letters are filled with geographic touchstones. In them, he roams from the wealthy neighborhoods of Jardins to the Anhangabaú Park up to the famous Trianon (Figure 2.9), a belvedere that looked down on a valley below, and the site of some of the city's most important social events. The central epiphany that he claimed prompted his adamant belief in modernism centered on his two preoccupations: the city and Brazilian vernacular culture. He had seen a painting executed by a friend who had chosen to depict Christ as a Brazilian Indian with long braids, a picture that offended Andrade's parents but sent Andrade himself, he later claimed, into a dizzying reverie as he looked over his balcony along São Paulo's Rua Aurora. He credited this painting and his subsequent reaction as he overlooked central São Paulo with revealing to him the power of Modernist aesthetics.



Figure 2.9 Guilherme Gaensly, Avenida Paulista, Belvedere do Trianon, São Paulo, ca. 1923.

(Source: Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, 002004aGA026.JPG).

Though he didn't care for the label, no one could blame his one-time mentor and fellow Modernist Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954) for dubbing him the city's resident

Futurist. He was obsessed with celebrating and documenting the city while using the onomatopoeic strategies of the French surrealist poets and the “words in liberty” of Tommaso Marinetti.³⁴ Andrade’s *Hallucinated City (Paulicea Desvairada)* (1922) is what Iumna Maria Simon called “the first poetic rendering of industrial São Paulo.”³⁵ Calling himself a Tupi (that is, a member of an indigenous tribe that had been encountered by European settlers upon their arrival at Guanabara Bay), he celebrates the complexity of the city and its many characters, its churches, sloping streets, trams, and stock exchange. At the same time, Andrade’s poetry also expresses an exuberant love for colonial-era Brazil, which for the poet functioned as a font of national genius. The true center of Brazilian culture, he argued, was not Rio but São Paulo, the original home of the *bandeirantes*, Paulistas renowned in Brazilian history and legend as intrepid explorers who left the plantations of São Paulo state in the 17th century to search for gold and precious stones in Minas Gerais. That state’s singular brilliance, Andrade believed, was its geographic isolation, making it less vulnerable to European influences.³⁶ Furthermore, Minas had a historical connection to São Paulo: Saulo Gouveia points out that in addition to the well-preserved state of its Baroque architecture, Minas’s connection to the *bandeirantes* gave Andrade impetus for deeming that state’s colonial cities the “untouched matrix of the Brazilian ‘civilization.’”³⁷

³⁴ Mario de Andrade disdained the Futurist label, for he believed Marinetti ultimately re-imprisoned his *parole in libertà* by systematizing his method (Gouveia, “Early Modernist Manifestos,” 91).

³⁵ Iumna Maria Simon, “Poetic Evolution in the Industrial Era: The Brazilian Modernists,” in *Manchester and São Paulo: Problems of Rapid Urban Growth*, ed. John D. Wirth and Robert L. Jones (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), 39.

³⁶ Caion Meneguello Natal, “Mario de Andrade em Minas Gerais: Em Busca das Origens Historicadas e Artísticas da Nação,” *História Social* 13 (2007): 197.

³⁷ Gouveia, “Private Patronage,” 105.

Andrade united with a group of like-minded artists who believed that the notion of *Brasildade* was critical to any Modernist project.³⁸ His cohort included Oswald, Anita Malfatti (1889-1964), Menotti del Picchia (1892-1988), and later, Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973), most of whom had traveled to Paris and there were exposed to the primitivism that was in vogue among artists and collectors. That experience convinced Oswald that modernism all the more suited Brazil than France since “primitivism was something that could be drawn from Brazilian cultural history and did not need to be imported.”³⁹ Known as “The Five,” the group (excluding Amaral who was still in Paris at the time), were the primary movers behind the Week of Modern Art.

The “week” (in fact, three alternate days) that they organized featured paintings and sculpture that broke with the norms of European academic art, and poetry that defied the strict formalism of Parnassianism, a French poetic style that had been adopted in Brazil. As K. David Jackson has described it, the week was “characteristic of modernism [in its] promotion of a critical consciousness of national reality, accompanied by an integration or incorporation of its most diverse elements: the Indian and the Portuguese, the piano and the *berimbau*, the jungle and the school.”⁴⁰

The event consisted of three days of “recitals,” as one newspaper put it. The presenters were called “illustrious national artists” by one writer, who noted that the most

³⁸ Otavio Leonidio, *Carradas de Razões: Lucio Costa e a Arquitetura Moderna Brasileira (1924-1951)* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora PUC, 2007), 27.

³⁹ Randal Johnson, “Tupy or not Tupy: Cannibalism and Nationalism in Contemporary Brazilian Literature and Culture,” in *On Modern Latin American Fiction*, ed. John King (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1987), 44.

⁴⁰ Jackson, “Literature of the São Paulo Modern Art Week,” n.p.

esteemed man of letters, novelist José Pereira de Graça Aranha (1868-1931) gave the opening talk entitled “The Aesthetic Emotion in Modern Art.” He warned traditionalists that they were in for a violent shock during the festival, with its free verse and transcendent music. They would need to redefine their notion that “Art is Beauty.”⁴¹ Over the course of the event, audiences would be regaled with poetry that rejected the meter and rhyme of the popular Parnassian style, music by Heitor Villa-Lobos, and paintings by, among others, Malfatti, who showed paintings with an Expressionist-inspired palette that had shocked Brazilians five years earlier (Figure 2.10). Emiliano di Cavalcanti, who designed the exhibition catalog (Figure 2.11), also showed work, as did the sculptor Victor Brecheret, all of whom showed work that featured figures in natural settings. The colors and the compositions, not to mention the subjects, were anathema to the academic painters of the established art world in Brazil—just as the week’s organizers had intended.



Figure 2.10 Anita Malfatti, *Tropical*, 1917.
(Source: ITAU Cultural. Accessed July 2016.
<https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra2046/tropical.>)

⁴¹ Quoted in Günter Berghaus, ed., *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2015).



Figure 2.11 Emiliano di Cavalcanti, cover of Week of Modern Art program, 1922. (Source: *International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*, 781791.)

On February 15, one of “the Five,” Menotti del Picchia delivered the final words of the event. Referring to jazz, electricity, God, and astronomy, del Picchia laid out the demands of the Modernists and the goal of the week’s events. He believed the *Passadistas* (old guard) viewed the Modernists variously as Bolsheviks, a cancer on prose, poetry, visual arts and music, “a scandal with two legs.” But these critics, he continued, don’t realize that while they reject the “totems of tradition,” the Modernists have great respect for the past. He demanded “death to Greece,” that is, the Parnassian poets and their *passadista* aesthetics.⁴²

⁴² Menotti del Picchia, “Arte Moderna,” *Correio Paulistano*, February 11, 1922, 2.

Arguably the most important development in painting to come out of the Week of Modern Art was the work of Tarsila do Amaral. Although she hadn't been in Brazil for modern art week, she was deeply involved with the Brazilian Modernist project. Having returned from studying in Paris a few months after the happenings in the Municipal Theater, she found herself "more Brazilian than ever" and wanting to be the painter who captured the nation on canvas. Her first provocative attempt to realize that goal was her 1923 painting, *A Negra (The Black Woman)*, a portrait of a bald, nude black woman with exaggerated features who is seated on the ground with one breast in front of her arm; the background is comprised of bands of color with one banana leaf discernible over her left shoulder (Figure 2.12). The image is allegedly based on a woman who had been born into slavery on the Amaral family's coffee estate. Response to it had been swift and polarized: in the minds of different critics, Tarsila was disloyal to Brazil by embracing Europe's primitivism or a visionary who had embraced blackness as one essential source of Brazilianness.⁴³

⁴³ See Gillian Sneed, "Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral: Gender, 'Brasilidade' and the Modernist Landscape," *Woman's Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2013), 30–39.



Figure 2.12 Tarsila do Amaral, *A Negra*, 1923.
(Source: *Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo*.)

The artists who participated in the week’s events consistently pursued what they deemed authentic Brazilian subjects using Modernist idioms of painting, music, and poetry. Notably, however, the Brazil being illustrated was not the world of the artists themselves, who all came from comfortable if not wealthy circumstances, were well educated, highly aware of artistic developments in Europe, and city dwellers. Their work, though, leaned heavily on imagery of rural Brazil, its tropical flora, and its black and indigenous citizens—an ironic, not to mention problematic, outcome that “assured that the popular Brazilian traditions valued through [the Modernists’] poetry, fiction, and folkloric research would remain the province and purview of urban, literate models of cultural diffusion.”⁴⁴ So while they were positioning themselves as artists rebelling against the country’s 19th century

⁴⁴ Jackson, K. David. “Literature of the São Paulo Modern Art Week,” n.p.

literary and visual culture, their work, while undoubtedly refreshing, was steeped in long-extant notions of power. This adherence to existing racial, regional, and economic hierarchies was furthered by their next major event, a trip to the nation's best-known colonial cities.

2.4.1 “The Journey to Rediscover Brazil”: The Modernists in Minas Gerais

At the same time that the São Paulo Modernists declared marginalized Brazilians—black and indigenous—as an essential element of national identity, they also embraced Brazilian colonial art and architecture as an authentic source of *Brasilidade*. This was made manifest in a much-celebrated trip to Minas Gerais during the Easter season of 1924. Oswald named the excursion the Journey to Rediscover Brazil, most probably a reference to the Portuguese expression for colonial exploration during the 15th and 16th centuries, *Os Descobrimentos* (The Discoveries). She and Oswald joined Mario and other luminaries of the country's avant garde and their patrons: René Thiollier, a journalist who had helped organize the Week of Modern Art; Goffredo da Silva Telles, a poet married to Carolina Penteadó, from one of the country's most powerful families; the Swiss poet Blaise Cendrars; and Oswald's son Nonê.⁴⁵ The group's old-money patronage was also represented: Paulo Prado came along with Olivia Guedes Penteadó, Carolina's mother and a Brazilian coffee heiress who had lived among the avant-garde artists and writers of Paris before returning to São Paulo to preach the Modernist doctrine. This confluence of artists and elites was mutually beneficial: Andrade and his colleagues received financial

⁴⁵ Natal, “Mario de Andrade em Minas Gerais,” 202-3; Luciano Cortez, “Por Ocasião da Descoberta do Brasil: Três Modernistas Paulistas e uma Poeta Francês no País do Ouro,” *O Eixo e a Roda* 19, no. 1 (2010): 17.

support as well as access to media outlets. The heirs of coffee fortunes “sought to extend their supremacy in the symbolic realm of high culture.”⁴⁶

The group set out for Rio de Janeiro to experience Carnival, visiting the famous *blocos* (samba schools) that spent the year preparing for their performance. Once they “breathed the diabolic perfumes” of Carnival,⁴⁷ the caravan, as one critic called the group, traveled to the countryside outside of Rio and eventually heading north to Minas where they were joined by the avant garde poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade, reaching the best known colonial cities during Easter week, which began on April 13, including Ouro Preto, Tiradentes, and São João del Rei. There they observed the rituals of Brazilian Catholicism, ones sanctioned by the church, as well as more popular expressions of the Passion. They surely visited the Church of Saint Francis of Assisi in Ouro Preto with a sculptural program by Aleijadinho, by far the most famous artist of the colonial Baroque and still a symbol of national genius; saw the houses on steep, stone-paved streets and the simplified Baroque of Igreja Matriz do Santo Antonio. Along the route, the pilgrims of modernism recorded their discoveries, which later were translated into poems, paintings, and essays. The journey allowed the group to identify and record instances of native genius that they saw as “an ethnic Other,” Kimberle Lopez aptly described, “which coexisted with [the travelers] in the same modern nation.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Gouveia, “Private Patronage,” 94.

⁴⁷ The phrase comes from Andrade’s poem “O Carnaval Carioca” written a year before the Modernists’ journey in 1924.

⁴⁸ Kimberle S. López, “*Modernismo* and the Ambivalence of the Postcolonial Experience: Cannibalism, Primitivism, and Exoticism in Mário de Andrade’s *Macunaíma*,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 35, no. 1 (1998): 27.

Influenced by the Minas trip, Tarsila and Oswald launched the next phase of Paulistano modernism, a movement referred to as Pau Brasil. Greatly influential on the discourse of Brazilian modernism, Oswald published the *Manifesto of Pau-Brasil Poetry* on March 18, 1924 in the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* with an introduction by Paulo Prado. The document, named for Brazil's original export—brazilwood—used imagery from the country's coffee plantation past, Carnival, the Bandeirantes, new skyscrapers, as well as touchstones of European modernism such as Stravinsky and Mallarmé. He argued that Brazilians would be best served by throwing off the bloodless academicism of 19th century poetry and use language more direct, concrete, and simple—a language he equated with the character of the nation's indigenous population: “the counter-weight of native originality to neutralize academic conformity.” The result, he argued, would be Brazil's next great export: its poetry.⁴⁹

The following year, Oswald published a collection of 140 poems entitled *Pau Brasil*. The collection, illustrated by Tarsila, grew directly out of the Minas sojourn. Both poems and drawings are brief sketches meant to convey a snapshot of the Mineiro scenes, what Luciano Cortez calls “almost ideograms of the landscape.”⁵⁰ The imagery hit upon history and mythology that was widely known to their audience. The collection is meant to

⁴⁹ While Oswald's proposal predictably engendered the usual criticism, his wish eventually became reality though in a form he could never have imagined, that is, the export of Bossa Nova, the jazz-inflected samba that for many people outside of Brazil still remains a symbol of the country. Largely the creation of João Gilberto, Tom Jobim, and Vinicius de Moraes, the musical style was decidedly urbane, with songs about love and landscape, specifically that of the neighborhoods of Rio. It was justifiably celebrated both as a musical style and as a “product” that simply could not be replicated or equaled by other countries. In that sense, bossa nova fulfilled the expectations first laid out by the Estado Novo and continued into the post-war era.

⁵⁰ Cortez, “Por Ocasão da Descoberta do Brasil,” 18.

be seen as “a voyage through time and space” as K. David Jackson put it, but more specifically the time and space of São Paulo. In addition to the trip to Rio and Minas, Oswald makes use of historic documents of the Portuguese explorers and colonists in Brazil, turning their chronicles into collage. For instance, Oswald’s “*Convite*” (“Invitation”) names the famed colonial town São João del Rei and simply notes its churches and aspects of its natural beauty, hills and stream. The second stanza refers to the modern pilgrim who arrives by train, comparing him to the “Paulistas” who arrived by “iron feet,” that is, by walking. His audience in Rio and São Paulo would have understood the Paulistas to be a reference to the *bandeirantes*. The collection included his “History of Brazil,” which casts the lives of impoverished Black and indigenous Brazilians as analogous to Christ’s Passion.

2.4.2 The Cannibalist Manifesto

Perhaps the best-known aspect of the master narrative of Brazilian modernism, certainly the most spectacular, is its use of cannibalism as a vehicle for accepting modernism but on Brazilian terms. The cannibal trope had been part of the most important avant garde movements in Europe including Futurism and Dadaism.⁵¹ But it had particular resonance in Brazil for its long history there. A widely known account of a 16th century explorer and Calvinist missionary, Jean de Léry, acted as a source for writers on Brazil for centuries to come. De Lery, who had traveled to the short-lived French colony in Brazil in 1556, wrote *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (1578), describing his encounters with the Tupinamba tribe near today’s Rio. His account of cannibalism acted as one of the main

⁵¹ Johnson, “Tupy or Not Tupy,” 50.

sources for a famed essay, “Of Cannibals” (ca. 1575) by Michel de Montaigne as well as a sort of foil for Claude Levi-Strauss in his account of Tupinamba and Nambikwara culture he had encountered in the mid-1930s and recorded in *Tristes Tropiques* (1955).

By the 19th century, Brazilian literature itself was haunted by lost indigenous culture particularly after independence from Portugal in 1822, when though ruled by the son of the former Portuguese monarch, Brazil searched for means to define itself as separate from its Lusitanian roots. However, as is strikingly evident in the work of its best-known writers—José de Alencar (1829-77), Joaquim Machado de Assis (1839-1908), Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto (1881-1922)—the Indian became the figure of nobility and self-sacrifice, not belligerence and cannibalism. Writing in 1948 about Alencar’s best known works, *Iracema* and *The Guarani*, literary critic Samuel Putnam pointed out that each is about love between a European and an Indian, an indigenous woman in the former and a native warrior named Peri in the latter. Putnam saw the recurring theme of miscegenation as the central tension in Alencar’s fiction, a reflection of the long-standing debate about what exactly defines Brazilianness and the anxiety over the nation’s multiracial character.⁵²

Factions of the Paulista Modernists eventually split over these opposing views of the indigenous—noble savage or cannibal? While Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral put forth the Pau Brasil manifesto, some of their colleagues from the modern art week, Plinio Salgado and Menotti del Picchia, reacted against Pau Brasil by formulating their own theory of nationalist modernism called Verde-Amarelismo (the Green-Yellow

⁵² Samuel Putnam, *Marvelous Journey: Four Centuries of Brazilian Literature* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1948): 49.

group, a reference to the Brazilian flag). Both groups agreed that understanding Brazil meant eschewing purely rational terms and valorizing “an intuitive, emotional, sentimental form of comprehension,” as Randal Johnson put it.⁵³ He points out that “the concept the two groups (Verde/Amarelo/Anta, on the one hand, and Pau-Brasil/Antropofagia, on the other) had of the Indian is the key to understanding their ultimate differences.”⁵⁴ In brief, the followers of Verde Amarelo wanted the Indian to represent Brazil’s right to exist on its own terms because the country had absorbed (to put it euphemistically) an indigenous American element. They adopted the *anta* (tapir) as their symbol since the Tupi drank the tapir’s blood before battle. Curiously, though, the proponents of Verde Amarelismo rejected the notion of the Indian as noble savage—one of del Picchia’s columns in the *Correio Paulistano* was titled “Let’s Kill Peri,” a reference to the Indian hero of *The Guarani* (1857).⁵⁵

Oswald and the followers of Pau Brasil, however, gave the metaphorical Indian a decidedly more active role. Their *Cannibalist Manifesto* appeared in the first issue of the group’s publication, the *Cannibalist Review* in May 1928. They imagined the country’s indigenous population as offering a symbol of revolt against colonialism in Brazil and around the world. In an effort to “see the world with free eyes,” a phrase with Corbusian echoes, Oswald starts the manifesto by claiming cannibalism is the central conflict of all culture, not just Brazil’s: originality, he argues, is all a matter of re-use, recasting, and collage. In the manifesto’s third line, Oswald famously wrote in English, Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question? From there, his discussion is grounded in cultural references of an

⁵³ Johnson, “Tupy or Not Tupy,” 47.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

educated 1920s Brazilian, notably, foreign ones: Catholicism, Rousseau, American movies, Surrealism, Levy-Bruhl, the Portuguese notion of *saudade*, Montaigne, taboos and totems, William James, the Bolshevik Revolution. What makes all of these sources “Brazilian,” Oswald argues, is that they are consumed by the Brazilian, who brings a character based on the particularities of Brazilian colonial history (“We expelled the dynasty. We must still expel the Brigantine spirit”); and indigenous mythology (“If God is the consciousness of the Uncreated Universe, Guaraci is the mother of the living. Jaci is the mother of plants”). Brazil, he writes, survives—or more correctly, is created—through this form of cannibalism: “The spirit refuses to conceive a spirit without a body. Anthropomorphism. Need for the cannibalistic vaccine. To maintain our equilibrium, against meridian religions. And against outside inquisitions.”⁵⁶

Literary and cinema scholar Randal Johnson interprets the *Cannibalist Manifesto* as a call to intellectuals in other developing countries and former colonies: “Reversing traditional interpretations, the New World thus becomes the source of all revolutions and all theories of primitivism, the Caraiba revolution the synthesis, the beginning and the end, of all Western revolutions. It will transcend capitalism, fascism, and communism, returning mankind to a state of primitive yet bountiful innocence.”⁵⁷ For this revolution to transpire, former colonies must consume and reconfigure the cultural imports of economically dominant cultures.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Oswald de Andrade, “Oswald de Andrade’s ‘Cannibalist Manifesto,’” translated by Leslie Bary, *Latin American Literary Review* 19, no. 38 (July–December 1991): 38–47.

⁵⁷ Johnson, “Tupy or Not Tupy,” 53.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 49–50.

2.5 Another Trip of Discovery: Mario de Andrade in Northern Brazil

The three previous sections describe the main pillars of the master narrative of modernism in Brazil during the 1920s. All three—the Week of Modern Art, the Journey to Rediscover Brazil, and the *Cannibalist Manifesto*—are built on the same premise, which by the late 1950s, engendered a change in the conceptual framework for Modernist architects in Brazil. That is, all three were conceived with the premise that authentic Brazil meant a cultural composition of the colonial Portuguese, the indigenous, and to a lesser extent, the African diaspora in Brazil. The three were composed with different emphasis to be sure, but comprised of the same elements nonetheless. In this section of the chapter, I propose another event was equally influential in the conception of Brazilian architecture, a journey made by Mario de Andrade to northern points of the country in 1927. As Andrade later proved to be the Paulistano Modernist who exerted the greatest influence on architecture, preservation, and urbanism, it is worthwhile to review this moment in his career, which can be viewed as a continuation of the Journey to Rediscover Brazil, in this case by exploring the northern coast and interior. Like the other elements of the master narrative, Mario's northern trip was also about absorbing non-Europeans as essential to Brazilian identity. However, it is fundamentally different from the approach of his Pau-Brazil colleagues, Oswald and Tarsila. While the latter consciously understood the cannibalist project to be a metaphoric one, Mario took an anthropological approach—one that was flawed in many ways, but an approach that required actual contact and study of the “other,” people of the interior who had become essential to his conception of national identity. In addition, the results of the trip—Andrade's photographs and the novel *Macunaima*, set up

a dialogue between the undeveloped north and the cosmopolitan south that eventually animated much of the country's architectural rhetoric by the late 1950s.

By 1928 Oswald and Mario had broken off contact, in part because of personal conflicts, and as the *Cannibalist Manifesto* makes clear, their uses of the Indian trope were markedly different: for Mario, indigenous culture represented a third of the Brazilian anthropological triad—along with Afro-Brazilians and Portuguese. (While Afro-Brazilians also played this authenticating function for the São Paulo Modernists, it was to a far lesser degree than the figure of the Indian. In fact, for Brazilian Modernists, the terms “indigenous” and “popular” became synonymous .)⁵⁹ While Mario both romanticized and dismissed indigenous tribes as primitive, he saw their cultural output as influencing the nation as a whole. For Oswald, the Indian, whom he saw through the lens of European explorers, was merely a symbol of action, a means for urging economically and technologically subaltern Brazil to take control of the cultural dynamic between itself and the more powerful nations of the world. Mario de Andrade wanted to investigate the role of indigenous culture in defining *Brasilidade*. Unlike Oswald, he did not only engage with an abstract notion of the indigenous to build a polemic, but believed in the necessity of documenting the indigenous peoples of Brazil. He was well versed in the canonical anthropological texts about indigenous tribes including physiognomic studies of Brazilian Indians.⁶⁰ In May, 1927 he traveled to northern Brazil with Margarida Guedes Nogueira, Dulce do Amaral Pinto (Tarsila's daughter) and Olivia Penteado as his travel companions,

⁵⁹ López, “*Modernismo*,” 26.

⁶⁰ Mário de Andrade and Pio Lourenço Corrêa, *Pio & Mário: Dialogo da vida inteira: Correspondência entre o fazendeiro Pio Lourenço Corrêa e Mário de Andrade, 1917-1945* (São Paulo: Edições SESC SP, 2009), 121.

Andrade made what was an arduous and extensive trip even by today's standards: they sailed from Rio de Janeiro to Manaus, then down the Madeira River to the Bolivian border, and then back up the Amazon and sailed east to Ilha de Marajó, just north of Belem along the Atlantic coast at the mouth of the Amazon.⁶¹ The notes he took on this trip and another to Recife the following year were the basis of his book, *O Turista Aprendiz*, which was not published as one collection until 1976, many years after his death. Unlike the journey to Minas Gerais, for this trip north Mario brought his "Codaque," as he spelled Kodak, a camera he'd bought in 1923.⁶²

The photographs he took during the trip, as Douglas Canjani contends, convincingly illustrate his familiarity with current photography of France, German, and the United States. He took (and titled) his photos with a clear goal of framing the Brazil he found in Manaus and Belem and small river towns like Tapua through the lens of modernism. These were places far west of Lusitanian influence, and hardly more Brazilianized than when Claudio Rondon's commission began to travel to the interior 20 years earlier. But Mario's project, in effect, was an inversion of Rondon's: instead of bringing Brazil to the far reaches of the nation, he recorded the cities of the north and of the Amazon on film and paper in order to expose southern Brazilians to Amazon culture

⁶¹ Douglas Canjani, "The Travel Photographs of the Brazilian Writer Mário de Andrade and Their Connection to the Modernist Visual Language," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* 57 (2013): 54, <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-901X.v0i57p51-82>

54. Ending at Marajó most certainly was not coincidental, but instead was weighted with symbolism for Mario since it was the home of pre-Columbian ceramic work that had influenced many northeastern artists in the teens and 1920s, see Aracy Amaral and Kim Mrazek Hastings, "Stages in the Formation of Brazil's Cultural Profile," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 21 (1995): 8-25.

⁶² Canjani, "Travel Photographs," 53.

while folding indigenous groups as well as other citizens of the interior into his formulation of Brazilian identity.

Along the trip, his eye was trained on quotidian details—laundry, port workers, fishermen, and he gave the photos titles that, while not condescending towards his subjects, are clearly meant for an audience of intellectuals. For instance, a photo of billowing white robes hung on a clothesline is called “Freudian Clothes” (Figure 2.13); a fisherman casting his net from a rowboat Andrade entitled “Dripping Futurism” (Figure 2.14). This last was one in a series of three that capture the action in a manner akin to a quick-stop film. Not surprisingly he was as also enthralled by the colonial influences manifest in these cities so far from São Paulo (even one as cosmopolitan as Recife) as he was by the makeshift buildings of the poor (Figures 2.15 and 2.16).



Figure 2.13 Mário de Andrade, “Roupas Freudianas,” Fortaleza, 1927.
(Source: *Acervo IEB-USP*.)



Figure 2.14 Mário de Andrade, “Pingando Futurismo,” Manaus, 1927.
(Source: *Acervo IEB-USP.*)



Figure 2.15 Mário de Andrade. Caiçara/Rio Madeira, 1927.
(Source: *Acervo IEB-USP.*)



Figure 2.16 Mário de Andrade, photograph of the beach at Bom Viagem in Recife, 1927.
(Source: *Acervo IEB-USP.*)

Upon returning to São Paulo, Andrade wrote his novel, *Macunaima* (1928), a riotous mash-up of Brazilian mythologies meant to expose the country's mixed heritage and upend the privileging of European culture imported to Brazil. It tells the story of a shape- and race-shifting man, Macunaima, born full-grown to an indigenous mother living in the Amazon. A host of comic encounters with animals and candomblé gods called *orixás* reveal Macunaima as self-absorbed, indolent, and child-like: he regularly cries, “Que preguiça!” (“Such laziness!”) while avoiding all work. He eventually heads to São Paulo, heart of the Europeanized south, in search of a lost amulet. More adventures ensue as he deconstructs the norms of urban life with his back-country antics.

Kimberle Lopez has studied the novel not as a work of fiction, but as a representation of Andrade's vision of Brazilian national identity. She points out that Andrade used the notion of the lazy native to express resistance to the work ethic of colonial culture and the notion of “order and progress” espoused by late 19th century Positivists and emblazoned on the national flag. His characters are neither idealized nor vilified, so as Lopez puts it, “Andrade's contribution lies in his de-mythification of the Primitive, as he turns exoticism upside-down in order to make Brazilian society more aware of its own otherness.”⁶³

Though he had aimed to study the culture of living tribes, his approach had been haphazard and, like Oswald and Tarsila, undoubtedly biased towards the end to which he hoped to use the information gathered. He adopted what Lopez calls “European attitudes toward the American Primitive,” primarily the ideas of ethnographer Theodor Koch-

⁶³ López, “*Modernismo*,” 27.

Grünberg (1874-1924) who traveled to northwestern Brazil to study the Taulipang indigenous tribe and wrote *Vom Roroïoma zum Orinoco*, which, according to Lopez, functioned as Andrade's central "ethnographic model" for *Macunaima*.⁶⁴ Andrade was even accused of plagiarizing from Koch-Grünberg; he responded that he had intended to copy, that that was part of his cannibalist strategy.⁶⁵ It was a clever retort that nonetheless underscored the fact that his sources about indigenous groups were European ones.

Both the *Cannibalist Manifesto* and *Macunaima* were appropriated by the youth-driven protest movements of the late 1960s, both works resurrected as vehicles for expressing outrage with the military dictatorship that had come into power in 1964 as well as the cultural conservatism of the country's left. But more immediately, some ideas of the Paulista Modernists deeply informed the next major phase of the nation's architectural discourse, specifically the written and built work of Lucio Costa during the 1930s who, taking a cue from Mario de Andrade, looked to Brazil's colonial past for authenticity, this time in built form. Costa also used Andrade's strategy of employing the nation's most powerful cultural arbiters and patrons to support his project. What Costa wrought in Rio, as well as his critics' response, would eventually recast the landmarks of Andrade's youth and those of the coffee aristocracy back in São Paulo.

⁶⁴ López, "Modernismo," 30.

⁶⁵ Leonidio, *Carradas de Razões*, 98.

CHAPTER 3

MODERNISM AS GOVERNMENT POLICY: THE CARIOCA MODERNISTS FROM 1930–42

3.1 Introduction

On the occasion of Brazil's 100th anniversary, the government of Epitácio Pessoa, the country's eleventh president, hosted Brazil's first International Exposition between September 7, 1922 and the first week of July 1923. Only six months after the Week of Modern Art in São Paulo where the beaux arts Municipal Theater had become the staging ground for a Modernist offensive, Brazil's capital was hosting an exposition meant to impress the world with the country's Parisian sensibilities. To the likes of Pessoa and Rio's elite, this represented internationalism. In addition to creating a world image, the 1922 exposition set out to explain Brazil to Brazilians themselves. That is, as a young republic—while the country had become independent in 1822, it only became a republic in 1889—the exposition offered Brazil a venue in which it could mold its self-image. But if the architecture was a measure of the country's psyche, Brazil was in a liminal, if not confused, state. One scholar has noted that the both a national fair in 1908 and the 1922 exposition demonstrated “the triumph of architectonic eclecticism, the mixture of historic styles, exoticism and extravagant inventions.”⁶⁶ Her criticism had even greater credence considering that in this same period, a group of architects was reacting against the exposition's stylistic choices by designing buildings meant to invoke the country's colonial-era architecture, found most famously in the state of Minas Gerais.

⁶⁶ Giovanna Rosso Brenna quoted in Ruth Levy, *Entre Palcios e Pavilhões: Arquitetura Efemera da Exposição Nacional de 1908* (Rio de Janeiro: EBA Publicações, 2008), 177.

Lucio Costa, an architect who in many ways set the architectural agenda for twentieth-century Brazil, was 20 years old during the year of Rio's exposition and São Paulo's Week of Modern Art. His formative years were lived in the midst of intense debate about the importance of finding an architecture that could be deemed Brazilian, rather than a simulation of European design. Costa had begun his career as a proponent of the neo-colonialist movement, but eventually came to the conclusion that Modernist architecture was better suited to meet his country's aspirations. A great admirer of Le Corbusier, he saw modernism as the most effective means for rationally addressing the social and economic problems of his day.⁶⁷ Costa's transformation from advocate for a historicist style to a believer in architecture as a motor for social change was the result of multiple factors, including the ideas he gleaned from Mario de Andrade and the São Paulo Modernists, and the radical political changes that occurred in 1930 with the rise to power of the populist leader Getulio Vargas.

In three distinct ways, Lucio Costa shepherded the development of Brazilian architecture—that is, buildings praised for their ability to represent *Brasilidade*. First, in his architectural practice he famously—and vocally—adopted modernism after being a staunch proponent of neocolonialist architecture. Secondly, Costa cofounded a federal preservation agency in 1937, a year before President Getulio Vargas instituted the Estado Novo, an authoritarian phase of his first presidency that ran from 1930 to 1945 and during which he dissolved all legislative bodies and political bodies to run the country by martial law.⁶⁸ The agency promulgated Costa's contention that the spirit of Brazil could be found

⁶⁷ Marcelo Suzuki, "Lucio e Lina," (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2010), 94.

⁶⁸ Thomas Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007 (1967)): 21–29.

in colonial-era buildings that would serve as a model for Modernist architecture. In that way, Costa picked up on Mario de Andrade's ideas and furthered them via the agency's journal. Finally, he famously nurtured Oscar Niemeyer's talent, providing critical opportunities to showcase the younger man's architecture. While Brasilia offers an example of this relationship on a grand scale, the Costa-Niemeyer alliance was forged with the building of the Ministry of Health and Education (1936), the Brazilian Pavilion for the 1939 New York World's Fair, and the Grande Hotel of Ouro Preto (1940), discussed below.

All of Costa's accomplishments are essential to the master narrative of the adoption of modernism in Brazil, most especially his "invention"—as Marcelo Suzuki put it—of a "correct" Brazilian architectural history cast as the ancestor of modern architecture.⁶⁹ That is, Costa deployed one of the discourses of the São Paulo Modernists—i.e., their advocacy of Brazil's colonial architecture as an example of national identity in built form—to mold architectural discourse in Rio during the 15-year period of the populist dictatorship of Getulio Vargas. Vargas's reorganization of Brazilian government had a direct impact on the dissemination of architectural ideas and images, offering Costa and his colleagues, including Mario de Andrade, the opportunity not only to recast ideas about aesthetics in the nation's capital, but also to encourage the adoption of modernism in Brazil as a whole.

However, as frequently as this particular story has been told, a close review of Costa's writing as he shifted from being a supporter of neocolonialism to modernism, as well as his work with the preservation agency and the architecture he designed with Oscar Niemeyer, reveals a more subtle polemic on Costa's part. Instead of conceiving of modernism as a universal, transcultural phenomenon, he presented modernism as a form

⁶⁹ Suzuki, *Lucio e Lina*, 36.

of architecture that could be molded into a vernacular particular to Brazil. He did so by setting up a parallel among vernacular arts and architecture: the indigenous = the colonial = the modern. This proved to be a highly successful strategy for normalizing modernism, making it, as many scholars have noted, as integral to Brazilian domestic architecture as to the monumental and commercial structures found there. Furthermore, as will become evident in later chapters, this rhetorical device—making modernism a form of architecture that could be assessed in light of its “Brazilianness”—eventually engendered a radical change in the conceptual framework of Modernist architects in Brazil, one that Costa and his Modernist colleagues could not have foreseen.

3.2 The Revolution of 1930

A crucial development in Brazil that made Costa’s influence and prominence possible was a military coup that ushered in a new era of government. Getulio Dorneles Vargas (1882–1954) had been governor of Rio Grande do Sul, a state in the southern part of the country populated by a large number of ranches. Vargas came from a politically connected family and, while only in his late twenties, served as a congressman and later governor of the state. His first administrative federal role was as finance minister in 1926 under President Washington Luis, the last of the country’s presidents selected from among the country’s coffee elite. Luis, from São Paulo, had chosen Julio Prestes as his presumed heir after Luis’s term came to end. While this choosing of a party colleague as the next president was standard at the time, Luis made the mistake of choosing another São Paulo native. Until this time, it was understood that the country’s most powerful states would transfer the presidency amongst themselves, so if São Paulo held the presidency, it was expected that

the next president would come from Minas or Rio. In addition to this political gaff, Luis had not understood the degree of unrest that marked the country's military leadership—what one set of scholars called “a new national elite.” This unrest was particularly notable amongst the military's junior officers who, as followers of Auguste Comte, saw themselves as leaders better able to transform Brazil into a modern, technocratic state.⁷⁰

In March 1930, Prestes ran against Vargas and won, but the young military leaders claimed that the voting process had been tampered. As a result of a changing political hierarchy in the interior, Vargas effectively organized military and political forces from Rio Grande do Sul and Rio de Janeiro to support his march to the capital, where he wrested control from the Paulistano faction represented by Prestes and Luis. He entered Rio in October 1930 and by November 4 took his place as the country's president.⁷¹

The Vargas presidency was immediately understood as a new era in Brazil, a definite break with the fifty-year oligarchy and the first time that a candidate had taken the presidency without the blessing of the incumbent administration. This radical shift in Brazilian politics was signaled by the figure of Vargas himself: while he came from a powerful family, he was a rancher, not part of the country's “coffee and milk” elite (an expression referring to São Paulo and Minas for the products their regions produced). It also was reflected in the economic programs he put into place to support his developmentalist philosophy, especially those that exerted strict control over Brazil's

⁷⁰ Afrânio Garcia and Moacir Palmeira, “Traces of the Big House and the Slave Quarters: Social Transformation in Rural Brazil during the Twentieth Century,” in *Brazil: A Century of Change*, ed. Ignacy Sachs, Jorge Wilhelm, and Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, trans. Robert N. Anderson (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2009), 31.

⁷¹ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 3–6; Paulo Singer, “Economic Evolution and the International Connection,” in Sachs, Wilhelm, and Pinheiro, *Brazil*, 68–69.

exports and that expanded domestic manufacturing to curb imports. Most notably, he created the Coffee Institute and the Sugar and Alcohol Institute, agencies dedicated to controlling how much of these essential export products could be grown or produced, how much sold abroad, and how much destroyed in order to keep demand high.⁷²

Self-sufficiency was a critical goal of the Vargas administration.⁷³ The president emphasized greater self-reliance by creating a system of import substitutions and more manufacturing, most notably with the founding of the National Steel Company and the construction of its Volta Redonda integrated steel mill in 1941, funded by the United States to convince Brazil to join the Allies during World War II.⁷⁴ At the same time, the country needed far greater transportation infrastructure for moving goods across its wide territory. Although railways were the initial focus of transportation initiatives, the automobile soon gained primacy since road construction required far less up-front capital than building rail lines.⁷⁵ And, like the Italian Futurists' obsession with personal speed, Brazil, in the figure of Vargas, came to value the car as a symbol of modernity. Kubitschek furthered this idea with the development of the automobile industry in the 1950s, not to mention the autocentric design of Brasilia built under Kubitschek's administration.

Although his administration presented him as affable, a supporter of the arts, and disinterested in censorship, almost immediately upon taking office Vargas set up agencies to control communication on many fronts—in the classroom, on the airwaves, and in print;

⁷² Garcia and Palmeira, "Traces of the Big House," 31–32.

⁷³ Aleca LeBlanc, "Building the Tropical World of Tomorrow: The Construction of *Brasilidade* at the 1939 New York World's Fair," *Hemisphere: Visual Cultures of the Americas* 2, no. 1 (2009): 35, <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hemisphere/vol2/iss1/5>.

⁷⁴ Richard Williams, *Brazil, Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009): 101; Singer, "Economic Evolution," 76–77.

⁷⁵ Singer, "Economic Evolution," 78.

the latter included both privately-owned newspapers and the journals of government agencies. His minister of culture, Gustavo Capanema, established the Department of the Press and Propaganda (DIP) to influence the copy of newspapers and magazines, radio shows, and textbooks.⁷⁶ He used these tools—not to mention widespread educational reforms leading to compulsory attendance at high school for all—to create national imagery through mass media.⁷⁷

After a Communist coup failed to topple Vargas in 1937, he asserted a far more authoritarian stance towards governing in general and leftist critics in particular, establishing what he called the Estado Novo.⁷⁸ Portugal's Antonio Salazar adopted the same phrase in 1933 for his own dictatorial rule, although it was Italian fascism that Vargas used as his model for imagery.⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, in this period Vargas legitimated his control of media with the passing of the Decree Law 1915 in December 1939, which widely broadened the purview of the administration's propaganda wing and allowed for far more censorship and government-controlled publications.⁸⁰

That is not to say that Vargas hadn't already understood the importance of mass media: in fact, when he was Minister of Finance from 1926 to 1927, he enthusiastically

⁷⁶ See Francisco Sales Tranjano, Filho,. "The Many Faces of a Para-Fascist Culture: Architecture, Politics and Power in Vargas' Regime (1930-1945)," *Fascism* 7, no. 2 (17 October 2018): 175–212; Renato Ortiz, "Culture and Society," in Sachs, Wilhelm, and Pinheiro, *Brazil, Brazil: A Century of Change* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2009): 129.

⁷⁷ Paulo Rennes Marçal Ribeiro, "Historia da Educação Escolar no Brasil: Notas para uma Reflexão," *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)* [online] 4 (1993): 15–30,. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0103-863X1993000100003>; Ortiz, "Culture and Society," 129.

⁷⁸ Singer, "Economic Evolution," 76.

⁷⁹ Williams, *Brazil*, 20.

⁸⁰ Tania Regina de Luca, "The Production of the Press and Propaganda Department (DIP) in U.S. Collections: A Case Study," *Revista Brasileira de Historia* 31, no. 61 (2011): 271–296, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-01882011000100014>.

arranged a loan for his friend, the media magnate Francisco de Assis Chateaubriand, known as Châto, to found a four-color weekly entitled *O Cruzeiro* that was modeled on glossies like *Photoplay*; the weekly began publication in 1928.⁸¹ Once Vargas became president, the magazine regularly described him and his government in glowing terms, characterizing his leadership as one that had transformed Brazil into a progressive, modern state, all in keeping with the image that Assis Chateaubriand had fashioned for the magazine itself. After World War II, Châto brought the same sensibility to the Museum of São Paulo, which he co-founded with Pietro and Lina Bo Bardi.

3.3 The Rise of Neocolonialism as the True Brazilian Architecture

Since Brazil's first republic, which was declared in 1889 and lasted until the mid-1920s, the country has experimented with its self-identity by reconfiguring the central spaces of Rio. The city became a laboratory for the ideas of both the old guard coffee-funded plutocrats and a newly formed professional class that saw modernity as a chance to increase their own opportunities by expanding the country's industry, transportation, media, and international visibility. As a result, Rio underwent several major alterations to its street grid and even its topography to suit a burgeoning notion of modernity.

By the turn of the twentieth century, almost 692,000 people lived in Rio.⁸² Critics complained that the city had become overpopulated by beggars, street hawkers, *Candomblé* practitioners, unshod children, laundry lines, and other signs of loud, unkempt, working

⁸¹ Andréa Coelho and Denise dos Santos Rodrigues, "O Cruzeiro, A Maior e Melhor Revista da América Latina," *Os Cadernos da Comunicação* (RJ: Secretaria Especial de Comunicação Social da Prefeitura do Rio de Janeiro, Junho 2002), n.p.

⁸² *Avenida Rio Branco, 100 Anos* (Rio de Janeiro: Prefeito da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2003), 18.

class, and racially-mixed crowds. Capitalizing on these complaints while also trying to respond to the genuinely degraded housing conditions, President Rodrigues Alves (1848–1919) appointed Francisco Peirera Passos (1836–1913) as the Federal District’s mayor and tasked him with spearheading a change in the city’s layout; he held the position from 1902 to 1906. Peirera Passos, an engineer and the son of a coffee baron, had spent 1857–60 as a student in Paris and greatly admired the changes wrought by Baron Haussmann. As part of his city plan, Pereira Passos created many new avenues and enlarged existing roads, including Avenida Atlantico with its paving stones arranged in black-and-white waves, now an iconic image of Rio.

Pereira Passos’s expansion of the city’s port and the building of Avenida Central (renamed Avenida Rio Branco in 1912) functioned as the fundamental infrastructure project that gave rise to other significant changes to the central city. To create the boulevard’s wide vista, Pereira Passos needed to alter or raze a significant part of the city’s colonial-era plan, including a number of historically important sites. The city knocked down approximately 2,700 buildings, but erected only 120 to house those who had been displaced.⁸³ In addition to these interventions, the city’s new buildings along the Avenida Central were designed to recollect Haussmann’s Paris. The avenue was filled with grand palazzi of a similar style: the National Library, the Theatro Municipal, and the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (1908), which eventually became the Museu Nacional de Belas Artes. Upon Avenida Central’s opening on November 15, 1905, citizens shouted, “Vive la France!”⁸⁴

⁸³ Gloria Kok, *Rio de Janeiro da Epoca da Avenida Central* (São Paulo: BEI Comunicação, 2005), 32, 52.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

Among members of the architecture firmament, there rose a distinct fear that the physical fabric of the city was disappearing and with it the city's identity. And, copying their French colleagues, the powerbrokers of Rio saw their city as a proxy for the country as a whole: that is, if Rio de Janeiro should succumb to Haussmanization, the whole of Brazil would be hijacked by this imposed European style. Having been a colonized nation, Brazilians were highly attuned to asserting themselves as proudly distinct from their former European masters. Ironically, though, the critics of the neo-classical buildings of Avenida Central advocated architects imitate the Brazilian Baroque architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, adaptations of architectural forms brought from Europe by the Portuguese. Dubbed "neocolonialism," it was an assertion of independence from the eclectic and Art Nouveau styles.⁸⁵ Advocates of neocolonialism saw themselves as standing against "exotic" (i.e., foreign) styles and defenders of Brazilian autonomy.⁸⁶ Their most vocal proponent was architect and archaeologist Ricardo Severo (1869–1940), who coined the expression "Neocolonial Movement" in Brazil in 1910, though it was an expression used throughout Latin America in the early twentieth century. Born in Lisbon but exiled to São Paulo after participating in a fight to overthrow the Portuguese monarchy, Severo married into a powerful coffee family and worked as an engineer before becoming director of the city's arts lyceum. He was deeply invested in demonstrating Brazilian culture as an entity derived from the Portuguese. As a result, he favored the architecture of

⁸⁵ Caion Meneguello Natal, "A Retórica da Tradição: Tempos e Espaços da Arquitetura Neocolonial no Brasil, 1914-1930," in *Patrimônio Cultural: Políticas e Perspectivas de Preservação no Brasil*, ed. Márcia Chuva and Antonio Gilberto Ramos Nogueira (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: MAUAD Editora Ltda, 2012), 128.

⁸⁶ Otavio Leonidio, *Carradas de Razoos: Lucio Costa e a Arquitetura Moderna Brasileira (1924-1951)* (São Paulo: Loyola, 2010), 31.

colonial Brazil, especially the estate houses and churches of Minas Gerais and Bahia. He saw the eclecticism being practiced in Rio as an expression of a French influence that had been introduced by the Portuguese court in Brazil and a threat to the Lusitanian influence in Brazil.⁸⁷ Ironically, to Severo the fight for an authentic Brazilian architecture meant repelling the influence of European nations more powerful than Portugal.

His younger colleague, José Marianno Filho (1881–1946),⁸⁸ a doctor from a distinguished family in Recife, was equally dedicated to neocolonialism. A well-respected voice in architectural pedagogy and criticism, he wrote extensively and passionately about the need for a national architecture and the importance of not losing Brazilian identity to a confused *mélange* of European styles that neither carried the particularities of Brazilian history in its structure or materials nor was suited to the country’s climate or way of living. In addition to writing, he ran a series of courses about “the Brazilian house” that stressed merging the spirit of the country’s past into current living. He rejected the eclectic, not because he felt it did not respond to the spirit of the technological age (as was the case in Germany and France), but rather because in his estimation it did not express the spirit of Brazil. During the 1920s, Lucio Costa became the clear standard bearer for Severo and Marianno Filho’s ideas, the latter calling his young student “the most valuable cadet in the traditionalist army.”⁸⁹ In order to understand Costa’s position and significance, it is important to briefly consider his background and history, including his first experiences with the Brazilian colonial architecture he had admired via drawings and photographs.

⁸⁷ Natal, “A Retórica da Tradição,” 127.

⁸⁸ In publications, his name is variously spelled as *Mariano* or *Marianno*. I use the second spelling throughout this document.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Leonidio, *Carradas de Razões*, 32.

3.3.1 Lucio Costa, Neocolonialist

Lucio Costa (1902–98) was born in Toulon, France, the son of a middle-class Brazilian family hailing from Minas Gerais but living abroad due to his father’s work as a maritime engineer. Costa lived in Rio de Janeiro until he was 8 years old, when the family moved to Newcastle, England where he attended grammar school. He went to high school at the Collège National de Montraux in Switzerland. In 1917, he returned to Brazil to attend the general course of the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (ENBA) in Rio de Janeiro, which, following the traditional beaux arts curriculum, consisted of an education in drawing by copying classical statues and buildings. While still a student, he formed his first firm in 1922 with Fernando Valentim, and the two designed a number of private houses in an eclectic style.⁹⁰ During this time, Costa entered several competitions sponsored by the Sociedade Brasileira de Belas Artes and overseen by José Marianno Filho. He won one that required him to design a house meant to recall the estate houses of seventeenth-century Brazil. He reflected on that design in an essay he later wrote for the widely read newspaper *A Noite*, “A Alma dos Nossos Lares” (“The Soul of Our Homes”) on March 19, 1924.⁹¹ In the piece, Costa defended the need for a national architecture. Drawing on his years traveling through Europe as a child and teenager, he noted that he had “become accustomed to seeing in every new country a characteristic architecture that reflected the environment, genius, race, way of life, and the necessities that climate dictated; an architecture that transformed in stone and condensed in a marvelous synthesis an entire epoch, an entire

⁹⁰ Ana Slade, “Arquitetura Moderna Brasileira e as Experiências de Lucio Costa na Década de 1920,” *Arte & Ensaio*, 15 (2007): 43.

https://www.ppgav.eba.ufrj.br/wpcontent/uploads/2012/01/ae15_Ana_Slade.pdf

⁹¹ Slade, “Arquitetura Moderna Brasileira,” 48.

civilization, and an entire soul of a people.”⁹² While he would not expect such a complete vision in the architecture of a nation as young as Brazil—a nation still *em caldamento*, or, in formation — he did believe the country should, at the very least, be on “a journey,” moving towards an architecture of self-expression. And that, he argues, could logically be found in “Brasil-colônia.” He pointed out construction details that he noted while working on the estate house competition that convinced him that colonial Brazil was the natural wellspring of a national architecture.

In 1924, Marianno Filho encouraged Costa to travel to the colonial cities of Minas Gerais, home to some of the best-preserved examples of Brazilian Baroque architecture and, as mentioned in Chapter One, a state with historic connections to settlers from São Paulo known as the *bandeirantes*.⁹³ The goal of Costa’s trip, which was funded by Marianno Filho, was to accrue information about colonial construction details and ornamental elements.⁹⁴ In March, Costa traveled to Diamantina, with brief stops in Sabará, Mariana, and Ouro Preto; the latter city was had been the state capital until the construction of the planned city Belo Horizonte in the late nineteenth century. He made copious notes, drawings, and watercolors of the sites he visited, such as the Igreja Nossa Senhora do Carmo in Diamantina, renowned for its opulent interior, and Igreja de São Francisco in Ouro Preto, designed by Aleijadinho who, as noted in Chapter One, was a hero to the São

⁹² Costa, Lucio. “A alma dos nossos lares.” *A Noite* (RJ) March 19, 1924: 1.

⁹³ In North American terms, the *bandeirantes* are loosely equivalent to the miners and settlers who were among the first white pioneers in the western parts of the United States; it is a term freighted with the same sort of attendant mythology about pioneers claiming “wild” territories for the nation.

⁹⁴ Gaia Piccarolo, “Lucio Costa’s Luso-Brazilian Roots,” in *Latin American Modern Architectures: Ambiguous Territories*, ed. Patricio del Real and Helen Gyger (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 34.

Paulo Modernists and a symbol of Brazilian genius. Costa also took note of everyday buildings, studying, for instance, the *muxarabi* of colonial houses, understanding them to be a translation of Moorish architecture in Iberia⁹⁵ (Figure 3.1).

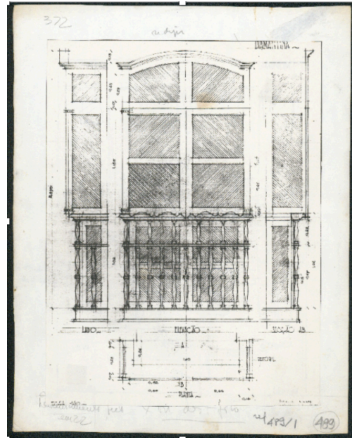


Figure 3.1 Lucio Costa, Line drawing: Patrimônio, levantamento de Muxarabi em Diamantina.

(Source: *Acervo Lucio Costa, IV E 01-00013 L*. Accessed September 2016.

<http://www.jobim.org/lucio/handle/2010.3/326>)

While Costa's correspondence during his Mineiro residency does not reveal any doubts about the neo-colonialist project, his first published essay upon his return to Rio shows Costa is wrestling with the wisdom of pursuing a historicist style. In the essay, which appeared in *A Noite* on June 18, 1924, he praised the value of authenticity, a quality he implied was lacking in the architecture of the neo-colonialists. Costa informed readers that he would like to give them his impressions of the colonial cities he visited, the sort of essay that on the face of it was quite in keeping with the growing push to see Minas as the locus of "the symbolic epitome of the nation," as Mario de Andrade called it.⁹⁶ Appearing on the

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁶ Guilherme Wisnik, "Plástica e Anonimato: Modernidade e Tradição em Lucio Costa e Mário de Andrade," *Novos Estudos* 79 (November 2007), 178.

paper's front page well above the fold, Costa's essay, entitled "Considerations on Our Taste and Style," sat under a boldface headline reading: "An architect with national sentiment." In Minas, he wrote, he found buildings that suited *our* climate, *our* landscape. The "extremely interesting" details that engaged him—wooden ceilings with visible beams, jalousie windows, porches, balconies with balustrade—demonstrate, according to Costa, how deeply colonial-era builders understood Minas' geography and climate. He decried any architecture that did not understand the importance of place, including neo-colonial buildings that contained "a balcony that can hardly fit a chair, lanterns that don't light, tiles that support nothing." That is, scenography had no place in architecture, and what he had found in Ouro Preto, Mariana, and Sabará—the towns he had traveled to—were buildings comprised of "a style entirely different from the cooked-up colonial, the colonial of the laboratory, that in recent years I've followed..."⁹⁷

Furthermore, the colonial-era craftsmen not only respected location and climate, but also reflected "the spirit of the age" by using the most efficient and advanced building techniques of the day, both for churches and houses. This is what Costa referred to as a national style, one that would develop over time with sensitivity to geography and technology. A national style, he wrote, "would come by itself. There's no need for stylized parrots and pineapples [...] It's enough that each architect and each client sincerely has the desire to make a work that meets its goals in the best way possible. A composition that satisfies the eye and soothes the spirit. Let's be simple, let's be sincere. Let's avoid the lie. Let's avoid the ridiculous."⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Lucio Costa, "Considerações sobre o nosso gosto e estilo." *A Noite* (RJ) June 18, 1924: 1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Although Costa continued to work in the neo-colonialist vein for several more years, he clearly had doubts about the enterprise, perhaps seeing in it a caricature of *Brasilidade*, a version of the parrot-and-pineapple paradigm he so forcefully disdained. By 1930, he had become convinced that his ideas about authenticity and “the spirit of the age” were far more aligned with modernism than with neo-colonialism. Guilherme Wisnik points out that the reasons for Costa’s transition from neocolonialism to modernism have not been definitively established;⁹⁹ there is no story of a Modernist epiphany á la Mario de Andrade on the balcony of his parents’ apartment contemplating the indigenous Christ. In fact, years after working with Le Corbusier, Costa famously confessed that he had been unimpressed by the Franco-Swiss architect upon hearing him speak in Rio in 1929 and had left Le Corbusier’s talk early. Nonetheless, it is possible to make some suppositions about the reasons for his change in allegiance, a change that came with a considerably high price, as will be seen below. First, his embrace of modernism may have been tied to an idealism that Norma Evenson attributes to all young intellectuals of the era—that is, the draw of the modern to create a tabula rasa for the country. She wrote in her 1973 comparative study of Brasilia and Rio, “It [modernism] spoke enthusiastically of a new life in which modern technology would be instrumental in solving the major problems of mankind—a message which would be all the more appealing in an unindustrialized country like Brazil.”¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, Costa adopted the positions put forth by Mario de Andrade, whose praise for the colonial architecture of Brazil was in service to the project of articulating national identity. Like Andrade, Costa was intrigued by structures of the era driven by site

⁹⁹ Wisnik, “Plástica,” 173.

¹⁰⁰ Norma Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1973), 79.

and materials that resulted in similar, if not uniform, architectural solutions, i.e., a vernacular. His advocacy of modernism was not separate from his admiration of the colonial. Indeed, as Otavio Leonidio has pointed out, “The neocolonial *ideario* coincided many times with Modernist ideas especially regarding the question of *Brasilidade*.”¹⁰¹ Just as his investigations of colonial architecture looked for the rationale behind the design decisions of the old *portugas* (Portuguese immigrants), decisions that he believed had been misinterpreted over the centuries, so Costa aspired to a contemporary architecture that would be equally driven by the particularities of location, materials, and construction methods. For him, an appeal of European modernism was its emphasis on structure and an “honest” expression of materials through rational design solutions.¹⁰² By 1930, the tenets of modern architecture did not strike Costa as dissonant with the search for a Brazilian one.

3.4 Lucio Costa, Modernist

Lucio Costa’s growing affinity for modernism was influenced by the work of Mario de Andrade, whose advocacy for modern art and poetry did not begin to have an impact on his vision of architecture until after his investigations of regional art and design in the northeast starting in 1927. Critical to both men’s thinking was the role of the vernacular. Guilherme Wisnik has shown that both Mario de Andrade and Lucio Costa saw a parallel between the vernacular (which Wisnik calls “popular”) and modern architecture; they understood both as “anti-authorial,” and expressing an innate uniformity—what Costa

¹⁰¹ Leonidio, *Carradas as Razões*, 30.

¹⁰² Lauro Cavalcanti, *Moderno e Brasileiro: A História de Uma Nova Linguagem na Arquitetura (1930-60)* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2006), 49; Valerie Fraser, *Building the New World: Studies in the Modern Architecture of Latin America 1930-1960* (New York, NY: Verso, 2000), 171.

called “a family air” whatever the program. Andrade praised modern architecture, in contrast to the eclecticism of the nineteenth century, saying that its elements are “subordinate to a discipline, a rhythm—the start of a true style in the best sense of the word.”¹⁰³ To both men, Modernist architecture’s value was its expression of an era, location, and people, and not divorced from history. Mario once quipped that had he owned a house by the Brazilian Modernist Gregori Warchavchik, he would need to furnish it with Louis XIV furniture, a sentiment that appealed to Costa who saw no conflict between his reverence for the colonial and his new commitment to modernism as the appropriate style of contemporary Brazilian architecture.¹⁰⁴

Costa’s new allegiance to modernism soon brought him into direct conflict with his former mentors, most especially José Marianno Filho. In December 1930, he became director of the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (ENBA), the country’s beaux arts academy. Costa was the youngest director in the school’s history and the first architect to hold the position. He immediately hired new professors who ascribed to Modernist ideals, and on December 29, he told the newspaper *O Globo* that the way architecture was taught at ENBA needed to be completely revised and the school’s entire philosophy needed to change. “[The] current [curriculum] is an absolute failure” he said, because, as he saw it, ENBA was teaching people to copy, not to understand and express structure.¹⁰⁵ He explained that the school had tragically separated design from construction, which resulted in scenography, as he put it. Accordingly, Costa proposed a new curriculum that highlighted urbanism and landscape, taught new construction techniques, and separated the study of

¹⁰³ Quoted in Wisnik, “Plástica,” 173.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Leonidio, *Carradas de Razões*, 57.

architecture from other arts.¹⁰⁶ He restructured requirements for travel grants and organized the Revolutionary Salon of 1931, which included work by Candido Portinari, Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral. He thus aligned himself with the Paulista Modernists.

A few months later, Marianno Filho, feeling betrayed by Costa, said that his former student was part of an international Jewish conspiracy to bring modernism to the world and thereby wipe out the particularities of a country's architecture. Despite backing from colleagues including Frank Lloyd Wright, who was in Rio during student protests to support him, Costa was dismissed from the directorship on September 18, 1931, a short ten months after he had taken the position. ENBA's days of relevance, though, were numbered. In addition to the new schools of architecture that were established in Rio and São Paulo immediately following World War II, the world architecture community soon lauded the work of the country's Modernists. Furthermore, as Lara and Carranza have pointed out, the ENBA strike helped to solidify a bond among the students present during Costa's term.¹⁰⁷

3.5 Formation of SPHAN: Choosing the Correct Brazilian Past

Thomas Skidmore, referring to the anticipated presidential election of 1938, wrote of the president, "Vargas, wishing as always to preserve maximum room for maneuver, adopted a strategy of equivocation."¹⁰⁸ Much the same could be said for his approach to Brazilian architecture. While he certainly maintained tight control over the work and message of his

¹⁰⁶ Caio Nogueira Hosannah Cordeiro, "A Reforma Lucio Costa e Ensino da Arquitetura e do urbanismo da ENBA à FNA," *Anais do IX Seminário Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas* (2012), 953, http://www.histedbr.fe.unicamp.br/acer_histedbr/seminario/seminario9/PDFs/2.19.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Luis E. Carranza and Fernando Luiz Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014), 62–63.

¹⁰⁸ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 25.

various ministries, he was canny enough to recognize that different types of imagery could be deployed concurrently, that the public could read multiple signs meant to convey quite different aspects of his government.¹⁰⁹ By not insisting upon one official architectural style, he also demonstrated that he saw the modern movement as a stylistic one, not a generator of a new system of living and thought. Of course, for Vargas, that was the role of the Estado Novo.

Vargas early on showed that he understood preservation to be an important element of establishing a national mythology and one “integral to the project of modernization.”¹¹⁰ The minister of culture, Gustavo Capanema—who two years later would establish the Press and Propaganda Department (DIP)—called for the formation of a preservation agency under the Ministry of Education and Health (MESP) in 1937. The Vargas government supported the initiative. Called the Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (SPHAN)—the Service for Historic and Artistic Heritage. Mario de Andrade, by then living in Rio, was invited to join the service and write its initial creed. Not only did he write for the SPHAN journal, discussed below, he took frequent trips around São Paulo state in search of historically worthy structures. Though he despaired that São Paulo had few sites compared to Minas, Pernambuco, or Bahia (all locations with many colonial-era buildings), he carefully documented potential candidates with notes and photographs.¹¹¹

At the same time that the new government prioritized preservation, a number of

¹⁰⁹ LeBlanc, “Building the Tropical World of Tomorrow,” 34.

¹¹⁰ Cavalcanti, quoted in Williams, *Brazil*, 42.

¹¹¹ Maria Luisa Bressan Pinheiro, “Mario de Andrade e Lucio Costa no Número Inaugural da *Revista do SPHAN*,” *Revista CPC* 13, no. 25 (2018): 59.

powerful actors in the world of art and culture in Brazil saw an opportunity to harness the new government's powers to develop a sophisticated strategy for valuing the colonial-era past while advocating for a Modernist architectural future. This confluence of interests made for an exceptionally effective machine for spreading the Modernist word.

Richard Williams has noted that the “architectural nucleus of SPHAN” consisted of Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, and Carlos Leão, three Modernists who at the time were engaged with Le Corbusier in the design of a building to house the MESP, which came to be deemed an early triumph of modernism in Brazil. The group's role in modern Brazil was the “construction of symbolic national capital.”¹¹² Crucial to that project was determining a narrative of the country's history that would make modernism the natural next step. Using Costa's rhetorical strategy, they argued that clarity of structure and consideration of local climate and topography had been essential to colonial-era Baroque in Brazil. Therefore, preserving the Portuguese-built heritage was essential before (or more accurately, during) the embrace of Modernism, which (again using Costa's argument) was similarly committed to “honesty” in structure and being responsive to site. As Lauro Cavalcanti aptly put it, “Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer planned the capital of the future at the same time as they remodelled the face of the symbolic capital of our colonial past.”¹¹³ Of course, such a position left many works undocumented, for instance, architecture by other immigrant groups.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, having all Modernists in such a critical role explains, to a great extent, why Modernism became an architectural language that was largely accepted by the public, not only for administrative buildings but residential ones as

¹¹² Cavalcanti, *Moderno e Brasileiro*, 10.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁴ Williams, *Brazil*, 42.

well.¹¹⁵

Integral to the work at SPHAN was the creation of a journal to disseminate the ideas of the new agency (and by extension, the Estado Novo), called simply *A Revista do Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*. Yet the journal's very first sentence declared that it was not a tool of SPHAN's propaganda. Instead, wrote Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, director from 1937 to 1967, the journal was intended to gather in one place the work being done in historic preservation around the country. Mentioning years of study done by disparate organizations, Andrade promised to organize these separate endeavors to make them available in one centralized location. That the agency as well as the journal was a part of a modernizing mission to catch up with developed countries was made clear when Andrade quoted, in English, an unnamed British writer who said in relationship to the country's patrimony, "a most irritating state of ignorance exists on the part of Brazilians." Andrade agreed with the critic but argued that this was not a result of lack of interest but lack of a systemized plan to research and communicate the country's rich heritage. SPHAN would provide the information Brazilians needed and for which they longed.

The first edition's table of contents reveals the type of monuments SPHAN's members valued, and the buildings they saw as essential to the country's historic heritage. Following Andrade's letter was an article about a sixteenth-century fort where the Portuguese fought and triumphed over a local Indian tribe and an essay by Gilberto Freyre, the renowned sociologist. Freyre's work contended that a common Portuguese gene could

¹¹⁵ Fernando Luiz Lara's *The Rise of Popular Modernist Architecture in Brazil* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2008) documents middle class houses built in Minas Gerais during the post-war era that were Modernist in both plan and elevation.

be found among all Lusophone colonies.¹¹⁶ Those elements underscore Gaia Piccorolo's argument that the creation of SPHAN was designed not only to communicate within the domestic design establishment, but also "represented an important instrument of the government's cultural strategy to establish stronger relationships with the former colonizers within the framework of Brazil's affirmation as a world power."¹¹⁷

Most of the first issue was dedicated to studies of particular colonial-era buildings, but also included a long historiography of Brazilian anthropology, as well as an article by Edgar Roquette Pinto, the first director of Brazil's National Museum, about evolutionary stages in an Amazon tribe's art production. A perusal of the first edition's photographs reveal two central subjects: the particularities of colonial-era churches in Minas and Pernambuco and, the art of indigenous groups. Roquette Pinto, for instance, accompanied his essay with photographs of ceramics from the region of Marajó, a textile produced by Parecis Indians, and a young Nambikuara man in the act of projecting a bow (Figure 3.2). Roquette Pinto's focus on the man's pose, though certainly suggestive of the "anthropological gaze" here meant to define national character, is remarkably similar to images that would soon become famous in the popular press: by the mid-1940s, the national weekly magazine *O Cruzeiro*'s photographers led the charge in documenting indigenous life in Brazil, paying particular attention to the relationship between the body and technology (Figure 3.3).

¹¹⁶ Gilberto Freyre, "Sugestões para o estudo da arte brasileira em relação com a de Portugal e a das Colonias," *Revista do Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* 1 (1937): 41–44.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.



Fig. 3
Índio Nambikwara recolhendo por elevação
Foto Foquette-Pinto

Figure 3.2 From first edition of *Revista do SPHAN*, “Estilização,” 12 June 1937, 60.



Figure 3.3 Jean Manzon, “Os Donos da Terra,” *O Cruzeiro*, 16 August 1947, page 24.

This first issue of the SPHAN journal put particular emphasis on anonymity, whether speaking of an immigrant builder from Portugal or a Marajó ceramicist. The

issue's best-known essay, Lucio Costa's "Necessary Documentation"—one of only three essays that he wrote for the SPHAN journal between 1937 and 1946 although he was with the agency's director of studies and landmarks until 1972—forcefully argues for valuing anonymity in architecture. This, as we will see shortly, was a structural pillar for Costa's argument in favor of modern architecture as the language that Brazilian designers should embrace. Costa opened his essay by arguing that for the most part Brazilian architecture remained an unexplored field. While historians have studied churches and convents, he wrote, few if any had considered civic or residential architecture, an absence that he attributed to a belief that there was nothing of note to be discovered among these structures. Costa begged to differ: "Now then, popular architecture in Portugal, in our view, is of greater interest than 'erudite' architecture—using here, for lack of a better term, Mario de Andrade's expression to distinguish the art of the people from that of the scholarly."¹¹⁸ He described the building techniques of early *portugas*, proving himself almost as interested in who constructed the buildings as the structures themselves. In addition to master carpenters from Portugal, he singled out black workmen, who eventually learned methods of construction from the Europeans and displayed what uneducated whites had shown before them: "the same manner of someone discovering something new without having quite yet understood it correctly, without a shred of *maîtrise*."¹¹⁹ Costa saw this lack of sophistication as an advantage, and indeed a hallmark, of the vernacular buildings he urged historians to study. They lack the grandeur of European villas, he said, but what they exhibit is of far greater importance to the young

¹¹⁸ Lucio Costa, "Necessary Documentation," trans. Marta Caldeira, Farès el-Dahdah, *Future Anterior* 6, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 49.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

nation: they offer “the opportunity [to use it] as new research material, and to also ensure that we modern architects take advantage of the lessons of over three hundred years of experience, so as not to reproduce an aspect that is already dead.”¹²⁰ These simple houses, he argued, are the only ones of the colonial era (a period he did not define specifically), that “continue[s] to be ‘alive’ throughout the country despite having so fragile an aspect.”¹²¹

His readings of these elements notably counter European notions of “the tropics.” Turning to specific examples, Costa considered the extended eaves typical of a Portuguese-built house, referring both to existing buildings as well as examples from “well-known engravings.” Noting that it was commonly thought to provide protection from intense sun, “a simple section shows how in most cases such protection would have been insufficient.” He concluded that the true purpose of the eaves was to move rain off the roof and away from walls. Another example argued that over time, Brazilian builders made greater perforations in the wall, which did not result in hotter interiors, as he said was commonly believed, but rather created excellent ventilation—much as modern architects were designing with glass walls. The illustration followed 330 years of building facades, showing six examples with the last being a ribbon window extended across a suspended volume (Figure 3.4).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

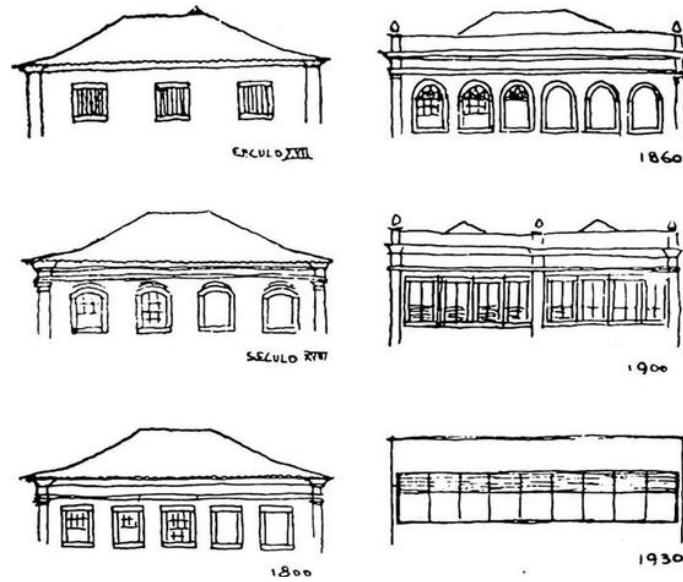


Figure 3.4 Lucio Costa. Illustration from “Necessary Documentation,” in *Revista do SPHAN*, 12 June 1937, 54–55.

Again using language that implies natural progression, Costa stated that Brazil’s architectural development had unfolded with integrity until 1910. “Faithful to the good Portuguese tradition of openness, they naturally applied to their plain constructions all the new possibilities of modern techniques....” These included thin support columns, open verandas and freestanding stairways.¹²²

Yet this natural architectural progress was cut short, Costa observed, due to three factors. First, poor architectural education offered students “‘techno-decorative’ baggage that bore no relationship to life.” Second, the rise of cinema corrupted architects and clients alike, who demanded the sorts of buildings—particularly, houses—offered on film: not the “simple but honest houses” Brazilian master builders had provided for generations, but architectural confections that had no relationship to Brazil.¹²³ With these developments, the neo-colonist movement arose in an effort to counter the craze for “little

¹²² *Ibid.*, 54.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 56.

castles” or “Americanized Spanish houses.” The result of this celluloid-induced architecture was the rise of the neo-colonial movement, of which Costa admitted he was a part. But now he viewed the ‘traditionalist’ movement as disconnected from everyday life: “true tradition,” as he put it, rested with master builders who knew how to adapt to changing customs “with simplicity and good sense.” While not copying cinematic architecture, the traditionalists were mining the country’s colonial architecture, causing Costa to quip: “If we are faking for the sake of faking, we should at least fake something of our own.” He ended the essay by conjuring an image of a lone, simple figure as the only source for Brazil’s architecture, “the master builder so often maligned, the old *portuga* of 1910.”¹²⁴

In writing “Necessary Documentation,” an essay that appeared in the very first edition of the official publication of a newly formed governmental agency, Costa set out to meet the following goals: first, he looked to greatly expand the scope of architectural research by calling for the study of vernacular buildings, what he variously called “rural constructions” and “popular architecture.” This expanded field could more easily fulfill the goal of establishing national identity in built form since, as Costa saw it, these humble buildings were where “the qualities of a race are best shown.” Secondly, by applying biological terminology to buildings—distinguishing between living and dead, characterizing changes in building types as evolutionary—he posited modernism as the culmination of this architectural progression, or at least as the next stage of “life.”

Additionally, the journal of SPHAN further expanded the field of the Brazilian vernacular by presenting the arts of various indigenous groups, treating them with the same

¹²⁴ Ibid.

erudition as various articles about Portuguese-built churches and estate house chairs. While there is only one reference to indigenous architecture among the journal's issues, the consideration of textiles, jewelry, and ceramics as equal to white Brazilian artistic output suggests that SPHAN was arguing that multiple vernaculars existed, all of which could be considered authentically Brazilian.

3.6 The Official Story in Built Form

At the same time that Costa was crafting his foundational narrative of modern architecture, he was gathering a team of architects to design the new building for the Ministry of Education and Public Health (MESP). The building—and the story of how it was built—is an essential aspect of the official narrative of Modernist architecture in Brazil. Costa assembled other designers who had entered and lost the MESP competition, including Oscar Niemeyer, Ernâni Vasconcellos (1912–89), Affonso Eduardo Reidy (1909–64), Carlos Leão (1906–83), and Jorge Machado Moreira (1904–92). All had been deeply influenced by Le Corbusier's writing and designs, so Costa wrote to the Swiss-born architect, requesting Le Corbusier act as a consultant on the project. Le Corbusier agreed to travel to Brazil for six weeks to work both on the MESP and the city university then being built. He had visited Rio once before, in 1929. It was a remarkable coup: as Costa later said, Le Corbusier was studied in Brazil “not as one example among several others, but as the Holy Scripture of Architecture.”¹²⁵ Costa and his colleagues were particularly drawn to Corbu's “high social principles.”

¹²⁵ Quoted in Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 79.

On his return to Rio de Janeiro in 1936, Le Corbusier argued that a different site should be used for the MESP, one closer to the coastline and the airport, not in the city center. The building he designed for the site had a horizontal orientation set on *pilotis*. It hovered over a plaza, opening up ground space and exploding the usual footprint of an office building.¹²⁶ The building included two curtain walls—the southern exposure made of unobstructed glass, the northern covered with *brises-soleils* to provide shade.

While the Costa team was highly influenced by Le Corbusier's work, they did not hesitate to alter his plans in ways that they found more suitable for the program. Although they maintained his curtain wall on the building's north elevation—the first ever built in the Americas—the Brazilian team rejected the horizontality of the Swiss architect's office slab. Instead, Costa's group decided upon a more vertical massing, fourteen-stories high (Figures 3.5 and 3.6). Le Corbusier called for placing the building on *pilotis*, but it was Niemeyer who doubled their height so that a perpendicular mass to hold an exhibition hall and an auditorium could pass underneath the main structure. On top of that roof, Roberto Burle Marx, the renowned landscape designer, placed a public garden that for the first time included native Brazilian plants, before then considered unfit for display.¹²⁷ So while the Brazilians revered the master's ideas and felt his participation to be critical to the project, the MESP team adapted Le Corbusier's design in a way that better-suited the national image they were forging, one meant to be understood by Brazilians themselves first and foremost. To paraphrase Valerie Fraser, the Brazilians cannibalized Le Corbusier. In doing so, they made an impact domestically, while raising the profile of Latin American

¹²⁶ Fraser, *Building the New World*, 154.

¹²⁷ Cavalcanti, *Moderno e Brasileiro*, 417.

architecture internationally. In addition to the architecture itself, this act of defiance and self-assuredness remains an essential part of telling the story of Brazilian modernism.

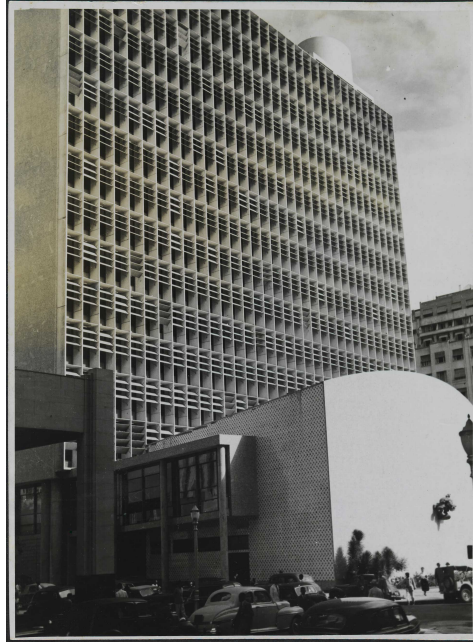


Figure 3.5 Lucio Costa et al. Ministério de Educação e Saúde Pública, view of north elevation.

(Source: Biblioteca Nacional Acervo Digital.)

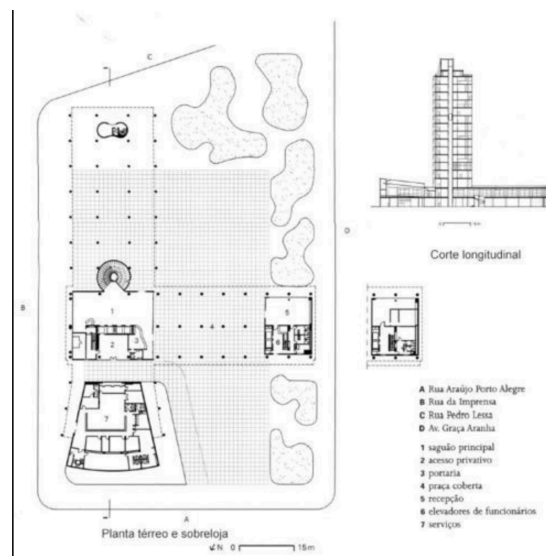


Figure 3.6 Lucio Costa et al. Ministério de Educação e Saúde Pública, site plan (left) and longitudinal section (above right).

Until this period, the modern architecture of Brazil had been a copy of European aesthetics but with masonry structures, most famously in the Warchavchik house. Roberto Conduru has pointed out that by the time the MESP emerged, Brazilian architects saw the challenges of adapting “the principles of the Modern Movement both to the climatic variety within such a vast country and to its technical, artistic and social inadequacies.”¹²⁸ The variations that the Costa team made on Le Corbusier’s design—particularly their deployment of brises soleil—he argues, made the building a success because it deployed the idiom of European modernism while interrupting the monotony of the International style.

In addition to illustrating Brazil’s state-of-the art architecture, the MESP building fulfilled Vargas’s political goals. He was fully aware that architecture offered as a potent means of signaling his commitment to the notion of “Brazil’s progress, industrialization, independence, and national identity as a modernizing nation.”¹²⁹ This vision was shared by Juscelino Kubitschek—then mayor of Minas’s capital, Belo Horizonte, and later the Brazilian president who became the patron of Brasilia. Both recognized the power of built form to garner respect on the world stage. Vargas’s projects, though on a far smaller scale than the future capital city, were just as momentous for Brazilian architecture. As James Holston recognized in his classic study of Brasilia, *The Modernist City* (1989), during the Vargas era “perhaps more than any other cultural expression in Brazil, modern architecture became for the government the symbol of Brazil’s emergence as a modern nation.”¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Roberto Conduru, “Tropical Tectonics,” in *Brazil’s Modern Architecture*, ed. Elisabetta Andreoli and Adrian Forty (New York, NY: Phaidon, 2007), 33.

¹²⁹ James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989): 96.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

Breaking with colonial aesthetics also meant breaking with the country's underdeveloped past. Yet as Holston points out, that rupture had different meanings for different actors:

For the architects, immersed in the political history of modernism in Europe, this symbolic rupture was interpreted as the opportunity to break with the capitalism of that past. For them, the anticolonialism of modern architecture signified anticapitalism as well. But for its leaders, this symbolic anticolonialism was associated with modernization and nationalism and not socialist revolution.¹³¹

To underscore his point, Holston relays a story about a Brazilian general who objected to the Capanema Palace because he detected the shape of a hammer and sickle in the building's plan.¹³² Such was the import assigned to the built environment as metaphor, a hotly contested arena that Lucio Costa had no intention of sacrificing to advocates of architecture that mimicked the colonial or classical.

SPHAN's agenda as expressed through in its journal makes it clear that Costa, Mario de Andrade, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, and the other leaders of the nation's preservation agency set out to invent a Brazil patrimony consisting of both Portuguese and indigenous elements, establishing each as a type of Brazilian vernacular. In two prominent works of architecture of the era—the Brazilian Pavilion of the New York World's Fair and the Grande Hotel at Ouro Preto—we see the same operation at work with modernism. Cast as a Brazilian vernacular, modernism offered a strategy that made the adoption of an architecture style developed in Europe and North America unthreatening to national patrimony.

The Brazilian Pavilion (Figures 3.7 and 3.8) designed by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer—the first- and second-place winners, respectively, of a national competition—

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 97.

fulfilled the requirements, outlined in the competition brief, that the building be a reflection of the Brazilian spirit but without resorting to imitative styles (i.e., the neocolonial). It also had to be contemporary, in keeping with the fair's theme "World of Tomorrow."¹³³ It was an example of the Costa-Niemeyer partnership: although Costa won the competition, he recognized the superior aspects of Niemeyer's design. Inviting the younger man to join him in New York, the final result was a combination of their two proposals.¹³⁴



Figure 3.7 Cover of *Pavilhão do Brasil: Feira Mundial de Nova York de 1939*. Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa. Brazilian Pavilion exterior view. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional Acervo Digital.)

¹³³ LeBlanc, "Building the Tropical World of Tomorrow," 36.

¹³⁴ Carranza and Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 105-106.



Figure 3.8 Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa. Brazilian Pavilion, site plan from *Pavilhão do Brasil: Feira Mundial de Nova York de 1939*. (Source: *Biblioteca Nacional Acervo Digital*.)

On approaching the pavilion, its most notable feature was a curved ramp that simultaneously led visitors into the building while providing multiple vistas of the landscaped garden. Although often credited to Roberto Burle Marx, the garden was executed by an American landscape architect, Thomas D. Price.¹³⁵ Nonetheless, the garden showcased Brazilian plants just as Burle Marx had done at the MESP. Raised on *pilotis*, the building featured large spaces unencumbered by visible supports and its elevations fluctuated between indoors and out, with open spaces and those enclosed by *brises soleils*. In short, the pavilion invoked the tenets of Le Corbusier but was adapted to work in a southern hemisphere nation. This was all done “without recourse to deracinated

¹³⁵ Oigres Leici Cordeiro de Macedo, “Pavilhão Brasileiro na Feira de Nova York, Iconografia Remanescente” (presentation at ‘Usos do Passado’ — XII Encontro Regional de História, ANPUH-RJ, 2006), 3.

internationalism or the excessive exotica so typical of non-European pavilions built at world's fairs."¹³⁶

The exhibitions—their subjects and curation—struck a different chord. Visitors could see exhibits about the nation's cordage industry entitled "Brazil's Resources of Fiber Can Supply the World" or dance to *samba*, *choro*, and music by the country's classical composers.¹³⁷ They could walk through Burle Marx's garden, which had been stocked with storks and snakes native to Brazil. Or they could spend time in the pavilion's largest exhibit, one dedicated to coffee. In addition to telling the story of the cultivation and distribution of the country's best-known export, the exhibit included a highly popular coffee bar with white female servers and Brazilian musicians playing in a setting meant to invoke the tropics.¹³⁸ Agricultural exhibits introduced visitors to native plants like manioc, while snakes and birds native to Brazil were part of the pavilion's garden, including herons, egrets, and spoonbills.¹³⁹ A large exhibit about Brazilian medicine and photographs of the MESP under construction and of Ouro Preto also appeared in the pavilion.¹⁴⁰

The Brazilians were highly aware of how they were perceived abroad, and sought to change the image of their nation as a banana republic, at once exotic and backwards. To what degree did the pavilion succeed in forging a modern image for Brazil? Roberto Conduru has argued that the architects and government promoters were determined to

¹³⁶ Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 209.

¹³⁷ LeBlanc, "Building the Tropical World of Tomorrow," 31.

¹³⁸ Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil*, 203; LeBlanc, "Building the Tropical World of Tomorrow," 31.

¹³⁹ Macedo, "Pavilhão Brasileiro na Feira de Nova York," 6.

¹⁴⁰ LeBlanc, "Building the Tropical World of Tomorrow," 31; Carranza and Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 107.

prove that Brazil was not a place to be exoticized; they “refused to play the part of ‘other’ to the West.”¹⁴¹ Yet Daryle Williams has shown that to an extent they did just that when it came to the subject of coffee: despite the fall in coffee prices that caused the country’s economic crisis in 1930, the Brazilian delegation indulged and even promoted the stereotype of Brazil as a coffee Eden, knowing that it would be popular with fairgoers while presenting Brazil as a player in the world market. It was, Williams notes, a somewhat ironic strategy considering that the Vargas government hoped the pavilion’s success would help secure U.S. assistance to start a Brazilian steel industry and to lessen the country’s dependence on the coffee market.¹⁴²

The pavilion proved to be highly successful, lauded for not falling prey to “quaint” architecture, as the *New York Times* put it, for making a bold statement that clearly contradicted the image of the nation as a backwater. In short, it made “a very clear statement about Brazil as a country of the future.”¹⁴³ How was the pavilion perceived at home? Certainly, a Vargas-biased publication like *O Cruzeiro* celebrated the futurist quality of the building, boasting that it “distinguished itself through its great artistic originality.”¹⁴⁴ Still, Daryle Williams points out that behind this validation was a critical question: “Was this *modernismo* also *brasileiro*?”¹⁴⁵ Noting that the term “tropical modernism” was frequently used by the Brazilian promoters to describe the pavilion, Aleca LeBlanc has answered that question by arguing that rhetoric as much as any design decisions helped promote that vision of the architecture. Equally powerful were the choice

¹⁴¹ Conduru, “Tropical Tectonics,” 62.

¹⁴² Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil*, 205.

¹⁴³ Fraser, *Building the New World*, 184.

¹⁴⁴ “A Pavilhao do Brasil na Fiera de Nova York,” *O Cruzeiro*, July 15, 1939, 10–11.

¹⁴⁵ D. Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil*, 209.

of exhibits and their presentation. Characterizing the exhibits as a form of “self-exoticization,” she shows that by juxtaposing Modernist architecture with Brazilian culture and products, the designers offered a corrective to American views of Brazil, pointing out that exporting coffee and dancing samba did not mean that the country was aesthetically or technologically backwards.¹⁴⁶ Costa, Niemeyer, their colleagues at SPHAN, and the Vargas government itself were using modernism to play to two audiences, the domestic and the international. On the one hand, it was an impressive envelope in which to wrap traditional Brazilian exports and present them to the world. On the other hand, the first-world signifiers of modernism spoke to Brazilians who wanted to be taken seriously on the world stage. That is to say, the presentation of tropical Brazil was not a concession to foreigners’ perceptions of Brazil; rather, it was a means to demonstrate that the nation’s climate, topography, and export products did not preclude Brazil from being modern.

The architectural press unanimously gave high praise to the work of Costa and Niemeyer at the world’s fair. The architects’ solution for representing regional particularity in a Modernist building became a subject of considerable debate and without doubt changed the conversation about whom Modernist architecture should serve and what form it should take.

The World’s Fair Pavilion was quickly followed by another Costa-Niemeyer collaboration, the Grande Hotel of Ouro Preto, a colonial city famed for its intact seventeenth- and eighteenth-century architecture. The hotel continued the discourse that here was directed at a domestic audience. In the national imaginary—or at least the imaginary created by the Modernists and their neo-colonial colleagues—the city

¹⁴⁶ LeBlanc, “Building the Tropical World of Tomorrow,” 32.

represented a revered era in Brazilian history: it celebrated white pioneers who left São Paulo in search of indigenous men and women to enslave as well as gold and other precious metals. By all accounts, the city was the focus of both Modernists and the Vargas administration, both of whom saw the rhetorical value of highlighting this piece of national history.¹⁴⁷ In fact, the first set of buildings in Brazil to be named a national monument was in Ouro Preto in 1933, four years before the founding of SPHAN.¹⁴⁸

The government of the state of Minas Gerais asked SPHAN to arrange for a hotel to be designed and built in the city on empty parcels of land in the historic district where other buildings had collapsed.¹⁴⁹ Most likely, the request was part of a program to encourage tourism in the area under the guise of Brazilians exploring their heritage. SPHAN agreed to the plan. After considerable campaigning on Costa's part, the preservation agency's director, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, eventually awarded the commission of the Grande Hotel of Ouro Preto to Oscar Niemeyer. Following the contour of the plot of land, Niemeyer designed a long, four-story building to contend with the site's shallow depth. The hotel's larger rooms were double-height and connected by a spiral staircase, while smaller rooms were located on a single floor; both were reached via a single corridor. Balconies were fitted with wooden trellises for protection from the sun, while nodding to the *muxarabi* of colonial homes.

Niemeyer's design called for a flat roof covered in grass so that the new hotel would further blend into the landscape from the perspective of motorists driving into the city from

¹⁴⁷ Williams, *Brazil*, 35; Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil*, 92–93, 254.

¹⁴⁸ Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil*, 92–94.

¹⁴⁹ Cavalcanti, "The Role of Modernists," 21.

a higher elevation.¹⁵⁰ But to satisfy more traditional critics, Costa convinced a reluctant Niemeyer to line the roof with ceramic tiles, echoing a material of the colonial-era buildings. Despite this compromise clearly meant to satisfy the neocolonial critics, the overall rhetoric used to explain the hotel design compared the Modernist building, not to its colonial surroundings, but to traditional wattle-and-daub construction, using squared columns to further reinforce this connection.¹⁵¹

The tiles proved to be a wise compromise, as the building was declared a success all around and was an early example of the marriage of modernism to regionalism in Brazil.¹⁵² The magazine *O Cruzeiro*, invested in both modernization and modernism, went so far as to place the hotel among the pantheon of historic, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sites in Minas in its 1944 article about the city. The article included two photographs, one of the renowned church Our Lady of Carmo and the other of Niemeyer's hotel (Figure 3.9).



Figure 3.9 “Ouro Preto,” *O Cruzeiro*, 19 August 1944, 16–17. (Source: Hemeroteca Digital, Biblioteca Nacional.)

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵² Carranza and Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 108.

The resulting structure gave the Rio Modernists an opportunity to demonstrate that a modern building could exist and even enhance a colonial setting. As a result, the Rio Modernists were now vested with the authority to determine which buildings (and therefore which aspects of the nation's history) were worthy of preserving. At the same time, since the hotel had, as Fernando Luiz Lara put it, "neutralized" the views of critics who had argued that modernism lacked national character, the Carioca team could employ their positions in and connections to the federal government to influence the country's architecture going forward.¹⁵³

Seeing the start of the Vargas government as an opportunity for significant change in the country's architectural discourse, Lucio Costa, among others, used multiple channels to valorize modernism by demonstrating that it could signify progress and the Brazilian spirit at once. As has been shown, this was accomplished by revising the rhetoric of European modernism, which viewed itself as a break with historic influences, and framing Brazilian modernism as one among multiple vernaculars produced in the country. While Lucio Costa, like Mario de Andrade before him, saw colonial-era architecture as the conceptual framework for understanding modernism in Brazil, he and his SPHAN cohort also highlighted art made by indigenous makers to further underscore Brazil as a country whose history, ethnic make-up, and needs were distinct from other nations. Although the Cariocas had a well-defined discourse for contextualizing modernism, their rhetoric depended upon a set of equivalencies that, while downplaying the eclecticism of the nineteenth century, highlighted the cultural output of non-white Brazilians. That strategy

¹⁵³ Lara, "Designed Memories," 88.

eventually provided an opening for architects and critics who wanted to complicate Brazilian modernism and the official narrative that the Paulistano and Carioca Modernists created by introducing the art of subaltern groups. The next chapter follows the work of Gilberto Freyre, a sociologist whose writing and advocacy greatly accelerated interest in and the eventual valorization of the cultures of non-white Brazil.

CHAPTER 4

AN AFRO-BRAZILIAN IDENTITY FOR THE MODERNIST NARRATIVE

4.1 Introduction

While Mario de Andrade and Lucio Costa referred to multiple regions in Brazil in their formulation of Brazilian modernism, they themselves were deeply rooted in the power centers in the south, that is, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Nonetheless, in the northeastern part of Brazil, the role of architecture in the process of modernization was a subject of considerable debate, though in a form quite different from that in the south. Part of a once powerful region that had become marginalized in the country's political and economic life, the northeastern states took steps to both distinguish themselves as a distinct region and to highlight their cultural contributions. Their efforts were somewhat analogous to Brazil's broader attempts to be recognized as a major player on the world stage. The sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987) became a key figure in the formulation of northeastern identity, a discourse that soon had an extraordinary impact upon Brazilian identity as a whole.

The polemic of the northeast shared a great deal with that of Lucio Costa and SPHAN. Both discourses referred to the country's colonial past as a source of authenticity and a guide for the country's future. As a result, both perceived the Portuguese contribution to Brazilian culture as the nation's central strength. While Costa, and Andrade before him, looked to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Minas Gerais for an architectural model, Freyre valorized the northeast, primarily Pernambuco and Bahia, in his search to understand the roots of Brazilian culture. In particular, he believed that the Brazilian

character had been largely formed in the crucible of plantation life of the northeast. Home to the nation's sugar cane industry beginning in the sixteenth century, the region also was associated with the culture of Afro-Brazil. Freyre's ideas were formulated during an era in which the northeast was seeking an identity separate from the rest of Brazil. It wanted a new identity that would counter the famous images of it being backwards, rural, and impoverished—images that were fueled by the widespread belief that the region's large black community would keep it forever *retardataire*. Despite his own education in eugenicist thought, Freyre fashioned a creationist myth for Brazil that validated and celebrated Afro-Brazilian traditions as an essential component of Brazilian culture.

Freyre built his arguments on building structures, using architecture as the vehicle through which to describe plantation life. As such, maps and illustrations of estate houses and slave quarters brought a spatial dimension to his understanding of the relationships between races that he believed had cast the die of Brazilian character. Like Freyre, most actors in this chapter use architecture almost exclusively on a metaphoric level, but multiple debates and developments did unfold in the region related to actual buildings. First, a housing type called the *mucambo*, eventually associated with impoverished Afro-Brazilians, became the focus of considerable attention by northeastern politicians and anthropologists who debated whether it was a worthy symbol of northeastern tradition and identity or an architectural scourge to be demolished. Second, a group of architects working for the northeastern state of Pernambuco designed a set of buildings for various public programs using the International Style idiom. These two sets of structures—the modest, rudimentary *mucambos* and state-of-the-art schools, hospital, and pasteurizing plant—will be discussed below in light of the story that Freyre was crafting about northeastern

exceptionalism to highlight those aspects of regional culture that he chose to emphasize. The narrative he created did not only influence the fields of anthropology and sociology in Brazil. Eventually, it also informed the thinking of architects in the south—including Lucio Costa and his colleagues at SPHAN, and later those interested in dismantling Costa’s carefully constructed discourse about the source of architectural authenticity in Brazil.

4.2 The Creation of the Northeast as a Distinct Region

Today, symbols of northeastern Brazil are universally recognized: the sly gymnastics of capoeira; João Gilberto’s whispery tenor; and the flowing white dresses of the Salvador Baiana. Durval Albuquerque points out, though, that the northeast so touted and dissected in academic and touristic circles, is not so much a geographic location as an amalgam of images, texts, and memories. Before the 1920s, the area that came to be known as “the northeast” did not exist as a point of reference separate from the North, which itself stood in contrast to the South, seat of the country’s economic, political, and cultural power. In his review of newspaper language during the first two decades of the twentieth century, Albuquerque found that the term “north” prevailed, with “northeast” not making an appearance until the early 1920s.¹⁵⁴ A review of issues of the newspaper *Diario de Pernambuco* in 1922 confirm his findings: both terms are used more or less interchangeably.

The creation of the “northeast” *topos*—with its distinct literature, music, and film—came about due to very conscious efforts on the part of the regions political and cultural

¹⁵⁴ Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr., “Weaving Tradition: The Invention of the Brazilian Northeast,” trans. Laurence Hallewell, *Latin American Perspectives* 31, no. 2 (March 2004): 45.

leaders and economic power brokers (the manufacturers of sugar and cotton). In the face of dropping sugar prices and far greater investment in infrastructure in the southern part of the country, northeasterners perceived that the area needed to be distinguished from the rest of the country to avoid economic marginalization by southern Brazil. As indicated by the Modern Art Week of 1922, the involved formulating an identity quite unrelated to the agricultural north.¹⁵⁵ To create greater regional power, local leaders started to think in terms of region instead of state. Since Afro-Brazilians—descendants of enslaved men and women who had worked the area’s sugar fields—comprised a significant part of the population, the leaders of cities such as Recife, Salvador, and Fortaleza, upper class and largely white, looked to the traditions of the African diaspora to create a regional identity. That is to say, that the northeastern regionalist movement was based on a longing for the area’s more powerful past as a sugar-producing, slaveholding region.¹⁵⁶

Perceptions of the northeast held by the rest of Brazil were largely created via two distinct sets of images that underpinned the northeastern regional movement and the south’s opinion of those states. The first were engravings made by Dutch artists of sugar plantations in Bahia and Pernambuco. While intended to be records of the new world for European audiences, these images became important self-signifiers to upper class Brazilians who knew them first through private collections and later through mass reproduction. The second common imagery of the northeast that was distributed around the country included photographs and drawings of the region after it had suffered cataclysmic

¹⁵⁵ Gerald Michael Greenfield, *The Realities of Images: Imperial Brazil and the Great Drought* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 2001), xvi.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Burke and Maria Lucia G. Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory in the Tropics* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Ltd, 2008), 44.

droughts in the late nineteenth century. What follows is a contextualization of both sets of images.

4.2.1 The Northeast in Dutch Painting

The paintings derived from the Dutch occupation of northeast Brazil, widely reproduced and distributed, helped to formulate the vision of the region as rural/rustic, underdeveloped, picturesque, and populated by Afro-Brazilians. Between 1549 and 1763, the region was home to the country's capital city, Salvador, Bahia, a logical locale for administering the important sugar trade that the Portuguese had established in the region. Sugar cane was grown on the *engenhos* or plantations of Bahia and Pernambuco starting in the mid-fifteenth century, but did not become central to the colony's economics until the sixteenth century.

For a three hundred year period beginning in the 1530s, four million people were brought to Brazil as slaves to work on the *engenhos*. Today, the country is home to the largest African diaspora.¹⁵⁷ Four times as many enslaved men and women were brought to Brazil than to any other location in the Americas, arriving via the slave market in Salvador. Initially, in the mid-sixteenth century, brought to work the colony's sugar plantations, some slaves were eventually transported south to work in the mines during the gold rush of the late seventeenth century in Minas Gerais, and to work on the coffee plantations in São Paulo state. Nonetheless, the Northeast remains home to the country's largest Afro-Brazilian population and is identified as such in the national imagination.

¹⁵⁷ Kim D. Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 3.

The sugar trade—and its attendant images—grew exponentially under the rule of the Dutch, who wrested control of Pernambuco from Portugal in 1630. During their twenty-four year reign, the Dutch used northeastern sugar cane to supply their Amsterdam refiners with as much as 24,000 tons per year.¹⁵⁸ The West India Company named Johan Maurits, Count of Nassau-Siegen (1604–79), as the territory’s governor, and Recife became the colony’s capital. Maurits encouraged scientific exploration of northern Brazil, and he commissioned the artist Frans Post (1612–80), younger brother of architect Pieter Post who designed the city plan of Recife under the Dutch, to travel with him to Brazil. Working with a German naturalist, Georg Markgraf (1610–44), Post’s mission was to precisely convey the flora and fauna of Brazil, as well as the processing of sugar. This entailed painting cane plants, the buildings of the *engenhos*, and the people who worked them—slaves and masters alike¹⁵⁹ (Figure 4.1). A recent study found that slavery was one of the most frequent subjects depicted in Dutch paintings of the era.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Mark Johnston, “The Sugar Trade in the West Indies and Brazil between 1492 and 1700,” <https://www.lib.umn.edu/bell/tradeproducts/sugar>.

¹⁵⁹ Michiel van Groesen, *Amsterdam’s Atlantic: Print Culture and the Making of Dutch Brazil* (Philadelphia, PA: U Penn Press, 2016).

¹⁶⁰ Lucas Bacic, et al., “Dutch Maps of Pernambuco from the Seventh [sic] Century: The Technique and the Metafunctions of the Graphical Language,” in *Design Frontiers*, Eighth Conference of the International Committee for Design History & Design Studies (ICDHS 2012), ed. Priscila Lena Farias, Anna Calvera, Marcos da Costa Braga, and Zuleica Schincariol (São Paulo: Blucher, 2012), 413.



Figure 4.1 Frans Post, *Brazilian Landscape with a Worker's House*, ca. 1655. (Source: LACMA, <https://collections.lacma.org/node/209115>).

While Post's paintings of Brazil were a form of scientific inquiry in their attempt to categorize flora of Dutch Brazil, they can also be understood as a means of controlling the colony by presenting "the landscape as capital," to borrow a phrase from Elizabeth Sutton's description of paintings of sugar plantations in Dutch Suriname.¹⁶¹ By illustrating the means of production and the hierarchy of labor in the process of collecting, cleaning, and packaging sugar cane, Post created images of Brazil that, although intended for a European audience, informed Brazilians' view of themselves well into the twentieth century. His work is cited in *Roots of Brazil* (1936), Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's groundbreaking work meant to parse the origins of Brazilian character, as well as Gilberto Freyre's preface to the first edition of *The Masters and the Slaves*. Both credit Post's

¹⁶¹ Sutton, Elizabeth. "Bittersweet: Sugar, Slavery, and Science in Dutch Suriname." In *Midwestern Arcadia: Essays in Honor of Alison Kettering*, edited by Dawn Odell and Jessica Buskirk, 143–153. Northfield, MN: Carleton College, 2014. <https://apps.carleton.edu/kettering/assets/Sutton.pdf>

images, among others, as providing, as Freyre put it, the “iconography of slavery and patriarchal life.”¹⁶²

The provenance of one Post painting provides an uncanny snapshot of the geography of power as it existed in mid-twentieth-century Brazil and illustrates how the imagery of sugar production was essential to the Brazilian elite long after the country’s supremacy in that market. Post’s “The Sugar Mill” (Figure 4.2), which had been owned by a collector in Amsterdam until 1935, came into a private collection in Pernambuco until it was purchased by one A.C. Cavalcanti in 1937. Five years later, Dr. Caio de Lima Cavalcanti, a diplomat born on a renowned *engenho* in Pernambuco (and whose brother was the state’s governor), bought the painting and kept it his home in Rio. The painting remained in Caio’s possession until 1972, when São Paulo art collector Mário Pimenta Camargo purchased it. The latter’s wife and co-collector, Beatriz, became the first female president of the Museum of Art of São Paulo in 2013, the founding of which will be discussed in Chapter 4. In 1984, “The Sugar Mill” was sold by Christie’s in London to Walther Moreira Salles, an extremely wealthy banker from Minas Gerais who founded the Moreira Salles Institute, an archive of Brazilian photography with galleries in São Paulo and Rio. The Institute’s collection of photographs played equally important roles in fashioning ideas about the northeast.¹⁶³ The paintings derived from the Dutch occupation of northeast Brazil, widely reproduced and distributed helped to formulate the vision of the

¹⁶² Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1945), xlvii.

¹⁶³ Sotheby’s, “Item 44: Property from the Estate of Lúcia Moreira Salles, Frans Jansz. Post, *The Sugar Mill*,” in “Auction Results: Old Master Paintings, European Sculpture & Antiquities, 04 June 2009, 2:00 pm EDT, New York.” Accessed May 2016.
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2009/old-master-paintings-european-sculpture-antiquities-n08560/lot.44.html?locale=en>.

region as rural/rustic, underdeveloped, picturesque, and populated by Afro-Brazilian workers under white rule.



Figure 4.2 Frans Post, *The Sugar Mill*, ca. 1660.

(Source: Sotheby's. Accessed May 2016,

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2009/old-master-paintings-european-sculpture-antiquities-n08560/lot.44.html?locale=en.>)

4.2.2 Images of Drought

From 1877 to 1888, five states in the northeastern part of Brazil suffered from severe drought. Known in the national imagination as the Great Drought, the crisis caused extraordinary deprivation across the region in all but the coastal cities. Mass crop failure eventually caused the deaths of between 200,000 and 500,000 people. The residents of these dry interior plains, called the *sertão*, had, until the drought, largely survived through small-scale farming and raising cattle. As a result of the devastating drought, they became migrants known as *retirantes* or *flagelados*, moving in the thousands to the Amazon to find work as rubber tappers, to coastal cities in the north, or to the south of Brazil to work on

the coffee plantations.¹⁶⁴ Fortaleza, the capital city of Ceará, the state worst hit by the drought, was overwhelmed by the influx of *sertanejos*. Recife, farther south, received an even larger number of migrants, some planning to stay in the Pernambuco capital, others in transit to the South since the major shipping lines left from Recife. The region experienced further droughts in 1888–89, 1900, 1903–04, and yet again from 1915 to 1930.¹⁶⁵

The droughts served as the subject of some of the first images of the North that many Southerners had ever seen. This was the era of the country's first illustrated publications and, through them, Cariocas and Paulistanos witnessed vast, abandoned plains littered with dead cattle and shocking images of naked, skeletal children with distended stomachs (Figure 4.3). These appeared in the illustrated review *O Besouro*, a publication that was one of the first in Brazil to integrate photography into a mass-produced publication.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Gerald Michael Greenfield, "Migrant Behavior and Elite Attitudes: Brazil's Great Drought, 1877–1879," *The Americas* 43, no. 1 (July 1986): 69.

¹⁶⁵ Greenfield, *The Realities of Images*, xiii.

¹⁶⁶ Joaquim Marçal Ferreira de Andrade and Rosângela Logatto, "Imagens da Seca de 1877-78 no Ceará," *Anais Biblioteca Nacional* 114 (1994): 74.



Figure 4.3 *O Besouro* (Rio de Janeiro), July 20, 1878, 1. Drawing by Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro with photographs by Joaquim Antonio Correa.
 (Source: Ferreira de Andrade, Joaquim Marçal and Rosângela Logatto, “Imagens da Seca de 1877-78 no Ceará.”)

The devastation of land and people conveyed through these images triggered a host of reactions: horror, guilt, and eventually financial support from the federal government. When drought recovery became a national concern, northeastern leaders saw an opportunity to keep federal dollars coming into the region. Eventually, these moneys were funneled through a national agency called the Inspectorate of Works Against the Drought (*Inspetoria de Obras Contra as Secas*—IOCS), an agency that “became the institutional locus of a regionalist discourse that grew increasingly more inflammatory....”¹⁶⁷

That is not to say that the politically powerful of the Northeast had particular sympathy for the migrants that flooded the cities. Many of them were *caboclos*—mixed race people part white, part indigenous. Numerous regional leaders viewed the drought as a result of the sertenejos’ *preguiça*, that is, their laziness and lack of ingenuity: why hadn’t

¹⁶⁷ Muniz de Albuquerque Jr., “Weaving Tradition,” 46.

artesian wells been dug; why hadn't reservoirs been created in a land known for periods of aridity? Gerald Greenfield, who has written extensively about the Brazilian elites' response to the Great Drought, points out the many commonalities of the upper classes of the South and the Northeast, including in education and political interests: "Elite discourse on the Great Drought clearly evidenced both shared language and shared understandings," he writes. "This discourse had formative power; it created and disseminated particular constructions of the national reality."¹⁶⁸ Regardless of where they lived, the elites concurred that the droughts were the fault of the uneducated, unambitious *sertanejos*.

Federal aid diminished, and in 1878 the national government organized a conference about modernizing agriculture. Remarkably, no representatives from the northeastern states were invited to attend.¹⁶⁹ The participants—all from Brazil's wealthier states—debated tenets of scientific racism, wondering if northern failures were the result of the region's enervating, desultory climate.¹⁷⁰ Surely at least some of those present must have noted that such a claim was also leveled at Brazil by northern hemisphere countries.

The depiction of the Great Drought helped solidify dichotomous notions of North and South, with the latter understood as a place of destitution, a burden to the "order and progress" promised by the country's Positivist motto. For the North, these images told a formidable story of the region's history, its national importance, and its neglect at the hands of Southerners who were rushing to modernize the nation in the image of Europe.

¹⁶⁸ Greenfield, *The Realities of Images*, xvi.

¹⁶⁹ Gerald Michael Greenfield, "The Great Drought and Elite Discourse in Imperial Brazil," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 3 (1992): 392.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 394–5.

4.3 Architectural Milieu of Recife

Despite its subaltern economic position in relation to the southern parts of the country—a position that remained largely unchanged at the beginning of the twentieth century—Recife was still an important port city in conversation with the rest of Brazil and points beyond. As a radio station’s motto put it, Recife was the city that “spoke to the world.” In the 1920s and 30s, the city was undergoing a cultural efflorescence. During this period, the regional music known as *frevo* was born, an art form that the Pernambucan elite characterized as the state’s “primary urban cultural symbol of resistance against the nationalizing efforts of Brazil’s state-supported cultural machine from Rio de Janeiro.”¹⁷¹ At the same time, the city developed a movie industry that made fictional and documentary films—a period known among film historians as The Recife Cycle.¹⁷²

Architecturally speaking, the region’s intellectual class was aware of the latest developments in Europe. For instance, Manuel Bandeira, a celebrated Pernambucan poet, wrote several columns for *A Provincia*, a daily newspaper, interpreting the ideas of Le Corbusier. In his columns, he supposed—fairly or not—that many people would misunderstand Le Corbusier as wanting to destroy colonial architecture. He reported on Le Corbusier’s 1929 visit to the school of Beaux-Arts in Rio, describing the Swiss architect as “a sensible Modernist” and modern architecture as “stripped of ornaments ... [its] artistic emotion originates only from simple, clear and sharp relations.”¹⁷³ Bandeira concluded that

¹⁷¹ Larry Crook, *Brazilian Music: Northeastern Traditions and the Heartbeat of a Modern Nation* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 143.

¹⁷² Alexandre Figueriôa, *O Cinema Super 8 em Pernambuco: Do Lazer Domestico à Resistencia Cultural* (Recife: FUNDARPE, 1994), 25.

¹⁷³ Manuel Bandeira, “Le Corbusier na Escola de Bellas Artes,” *A Provincia*, December 22, 1929, 2:3.

“it is not enough to repeat like a parrot Le Corbusier’s axiom: a house is a machine for living. As he said in his talk, who lives in a house is a man, and a man in a house thinks....” In Bandeira’s view, Le Corbusier’s urbanism would let Recife be a modern city—one graced with an architecture dependent on new technologies—that would co-exist with the city’s famous nineteenth-century houses, the *sobrados* of the urbanized gentry. He claimed that had Le Corbusier been in charge of recent urban planning in the city, he would have preserved a colonial-era church that was razed in 1914.¹⁷⁴ Regardless that his perception of Le Corbusier’s respect for historic urban fabric may have been misguided, Bandeira and his readers were not isolated from contemporary debates about architecture and urbanism.

While Freyre was using architecture as the central metaphor of his treatises on the development of Brazilian character, a group of architects arrived in Recife to design buildings that were to take the principles of European modernism and apply them to Brazilian—and specifically Pernambucan—needs. The work of this group supports what the doctor Aluizio Bezerra Coutinho argued in his 1930 thesis about Le Corbusier: Corbusian ideas had already been received by the Pernambucans before Cariocas or Paulistanos.¹⁷⁵ The leader of this short-lived effort was Luiz Nunes (1909–37), a Modernist whose brief career centered on public works in Recife. The ENBA graduate came to the Pernambucan capital at the behest of Governor Carlos de Lima Cavalcanti (1892–1967), and eventually became director of the state’s Architecture and Construction Agency or *Diretoria de Arquitetura e Construções* (DAC). He was charged with “rationalizing and

¹⁷⁴ Manuel Bandeira, “As Novas Concepções do Urbanismo,” *A Província*, January 1, 1930, 2:1.

¹⁷⁵ Sonia Marques and Guilah Navlavsky, “Eu vi o modernismo nascer...foi no Recife,” *Arquitextos*, April 2011. Accessed June 2016.

<https://www.vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/11.131/3826%3E>

modernizing” a number of projects for public use, including area schools. Nunes, along with a team that included Joaquim Cardoso (1897–1974)—the engineer who would later make Oscar Niemeyer’s curving designs a physical possibility—and a very young Roberto Burle Marx (1909–94), worked at a furious pace. During its four-month existence, DAC designed and constructed a milk pasteurizing plant (Figure 4.4), a school for mentally ill children, a military hospital, and the Alberto Torres Rural School.¹⁷⁶ Besides demonstrating the commitment of Cavalcanti, a Vargas supporter, to a “new Brazil” that provided services for the public, these projects show that at this point in Recife, modernism was the architectural language for the buildings that would house these new or newly rationalized services. Furthermore, it is important to note that the functions of these buildings often reflected the awareness and embrace of the science of public health that has been so well documented as a rationalization for modern design, everything from the Frankfurt kitchen to New York apartment buildings designed expressly for recovering tuberculosis patients.

¹⁷⁶ Marques and Navlavsky, “Eu vi o modernismo nascer;” Hugo Segawa, *Architecture of Brazil, 1900–1990*, third ed. (New York: Springer, 2010), 85–88; Laura Alecrim and Luiz Amorim, “A Forma Segue o Leite o Leite segue a Forma?” *Arquitextos*, June 2010. Accessed July 2017.

<https://www.vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/11.121/3426%3E>

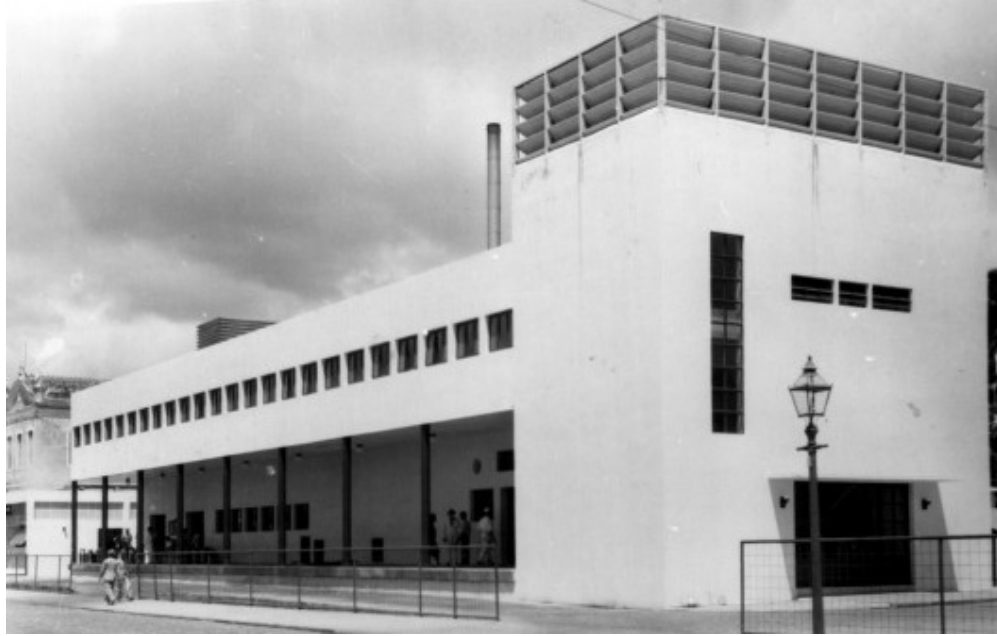


Figure 4.4 Luiz Nunes, Usina Higienizadora de Leite, Recife, 1934.
(Source: Museu da Cidade do Recife, Tombo 0749. Foto AB as found in Marques and Navlavsky.)

4.3.1 Recife Debates the *Mucambo*

In the same period that *Bandeira's* columns were published and DAC's Modernist architectural program emerged, Recife's intellectual class was engaged with the question of how "a house in the tropics" should properly be defined.¹⁷⁷ Much of the debate focused on the nature of a housing type called the *mucambo*. Its origins, roles, and influences sat at the exact intersection of the science of hygiene, the struggle to create an identity separate from the rest of Brazil, the Vargas administration's call for improved public facilities, a fear of communism, and the role of race in defining national identity. Interestingly, at the same moment that the housing type was vilified by urbanists and politicians,

¹⁷⁷ José Tavares Correia de Lira, "A Construção Discursiva da Casa Popular no Recife (Década de 30)," *Análise Social, Quarta Série*, 29, no. 127 *Habitação na Cidade Industrial 1870–1950* (1994): 734.

anthropologists began to study it as a form of regional authenticity and Afro-Brazilian culture.

Until the first quarter of the twentieth century, *mucambo* referred to a runaway slave complex, also called a *quilombo*. Allegedly comprised of small clay dwellings, *mucambos* were symbols of rebellion against slavery. As a locale for refugees, it was by definition remote and associated with the rural.¹⁷⁸ The most famous quilombo was said to have housed Zumbi, a man who escaped slavery in the sixteenth century and took refuge in the quilombo in Palmares, Pernambuco, thereafter leading ex-slaves in a fight against the colonizing Dutch and Portuguese. Palmares existed for more than sixty years before it was razed by the Portuguese in 1694. Long a legend among Afro-Brazilians, Zumbi today is regarded as a national hero.

By the 1920s, *mucambos*' association with rural settings had given way to a correlation with city ills.¹⁷⁹ In 1929 the mayor of Recife, Francisco Costa Maia called for their demolition. His position was taken up by Amaury Medeiros, a well-known public health expert who came to be one of the most vocal critics of the *mucambo*. As the state's director of the Department of Public Health, he had led the League Against Tuberculosis, a campaign to prevent the spread of the disease and to make treatment accessible to large

²⁶ Ricardo Leite, "Recife dos Morros e Córregos: A Frigorosa Derrota do Exterminador de Mucambos e sua Liga Social em Casa Amarela," (presentation at the *X Encontro Nacional de História Oral*, Recife, April 26–30, 2010). Accessed July 2017. http://www.encontro2010.historiaoral.org.br/resources/anais/2/1270423029_ARQUIVO_RECIFEDOSMORROSECORREGOS.05012010.pdf

¹⁷⁹ Jacqueline de Cássia Pinheiro, "A Importancia da Formação e Do Desenvolvimento dos Mucambos Para a Recife dos Anos 1930 e 1940," *Cadernos do CNLF* 14, no. 2 (2010): 184–185; Leite, "Recife dos Morros e Córregos."

numbers of citizens.¹⁸⁰ He became an active member of the newly-formed Society of Enemies of the Mucambo, a position he took using a combination of his medical expertise and a call for a modernized Pernambuco.

Just as important as arguments for sanitary conditions were those that espoused a political stance, mainly a fear that such compounds of impoverished residents could foment revolution. Agamemnon Magalhães, the national Minister of Labor from 1934 to 1937 and governor of Pernambuco from 1937 to 1945, wrote a myriad articles for the newspaper *Folha de Manhã* deriding the *mucambo* as a scourge on society that reflected barbarism and social degradation.¹⁸¹ He was joined in these regular tirades by the architect José Marianno Filho, who used his national platform to advocate for the destruction of the *mucambo*. Recall that Marianno Filho was the country's premier advocate for what he saw as traditional Brazilian architecture, that is the colonial-era buildings typified by Minas cities such as Ouro Preto. Anyone that countered his Lusitanian ideal was subject to critical scrutiny at best, racist diatribes at worst. A native of Pernambuco, Marianno Filho saw the *mucambos* as hives of worker dissatisfaction and dissolution (and therefore potential hotbeds of communism). While he acknowledged the connection between the current day *mucambo* and the community of Palmares, for him it was a nefarious association, and one he connected to the urban makeshift dwellings know as *favelas*. He wrote, "The return to primary life allows blacks to satisfy their racial trends, fetishistic practices, dances,

¹⁸⁰ Virginia Barbosa, "Liga Pernambucana Contra a Tuberculose," published October 29 2008 and updated September 14, 2009. Accessed May 2016.

http://basilio.fundaj.gov.br/pesquisaescolar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=306%3Aliga-pernambucana-contratuberculose&catid=47%3Aletreiro&Itemid=1

¹⁸¹ Leite, "Recife dos Morros e Córregos."

macumbas, etc. The favelas of Rio de Janeiro as the Mucambos of Recife, are pure African survivals as were the Quilombo dos Palmares in XVII century.”¹⁸²

Not surprisingly, he had also called for Rio’s favelas to be razed, arguing that they were associated with black Brazilians and therefore inferior. By a similar logic, modernism had no place in Brazil since in Marianno Filho’s eyes it was indicative of a Jewish and communist cabal.¹⁸³ In place of *mucambos*, he suggested the building of garden cities for workers that would be located on the outskirts of urban areas. In addition to housing workers in residences that Mariano Filho thought of as salubrious and righteous, the scheme had the added benefit of nurturing workers’ love for the land, a dedication to gardening that (purportedly) would quell any penchant for drink and debauchery.¹⁸⁴

In the same period, however, noted scholars of the region’s folk traditions began studying the *mucambo* as a means to understand African influences in Brazil. For instance, Arthur Ramos (1903–49), a revered psychiatrist and ethnologist from Alagoas, a state just west of Pernambuco, made the *mucambo* one of his central subjects of study. Considered the father of African studies in Brazil, Ramos did much research on the etymology of the word *mucambo*, finding it to be of Yoruban origin. Even so, he claimed that the architecture was more influenced by Congolese peoples who practiced sophisticated construction methods”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Quoted in Pinheiro, “A Importancia da Formação,” 186.

¹⁸³ José Tavares Correia de Lira, “Urbanismo e Seu Otro,” *Estudos Urbanos e Regionais* (May 1999), 47–78. 62–3.

¹⁸⁴ José Marianno Filho, *Debates Sobre Estética e Urbanismo* (Rio de Janeiro: Est. de artes graf. C. Mendes Junior, 1943), 14.

¹⁸⁵ José Correia de Lira, “A construção discursiva da casa popular no Recife (decade de 30).” *Análise Social, Quarta Série*, 29, no. 127, Habitação Nacidade Industrial 1870–1950 (1994), 733.

Freyre, took up the debate over the *mucambo*, viewing it as a symbolic vehicle for preserving the northeastern way of life. But first it needed to be set free of an urban context and brought back to its original intent: a stand-alone structure that responded masterfully and inexpensively to the demands of the region. An outline of Freyre's life and work follows, since his ideas were hugely influential on Brazilian thought regarding national identity.

4.4 The Work of Gilberto Freyre

Gilberto Freyre (1900-87), a native of Recife who is viewed as one of the most important Brazilian thinkers of the twentieth century, used his city as a lens through which to analyze the entirety of the country, its origins, and its character. While by the 1960s his ideas were the object of critique, he remains a lauded and central figure for his pioneering work that examined the founding of Brazil, Brazilian race relations, the country's relationship to Portugal and Europe, and implicitly, its relationship with the United States.¹⁸⁶ Slavery stood at the heart of his investigations, most notably in his groundbreaking *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933), still considered to be his greatest work and an early (though not first) iteration of repeated themes explored throughout his career. And it was Freyre who coined the oft-used term "racial democracy" to describe the alleged lack of racism in Brazilian society.

A gifted student from an upper-middle class family, Freyre won a full scholarship

¹⁸⁶ Thomas Skidmore notes that this culminated in the early 1960s, with one critic proposing that Freyre be canonized. I mention that here to point out the degree to which he was revered and, in some quarters, still is. No matter one's position on his ideas, there is no question that Freyre formulated and popularized an entirely new way of conceiving of Brazilian character and thus the nation's future.

to attend Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Arriving at a Baptist college in southern Texas in 1918 proved to be a trying introduction to life in North America. Besides noting his fellow classmates' lack of knowledge or interest in Latin America, Freyre was most disturbed by segregation and violence directed at African Americans. Thomas Skidmore argues that it was this experience in Texas that acted as a crucible for Freyre's reading of slavery in Brazil.¹⁸⁷

Even though Freyre had converted to Protestantism at the age of seventeen, his time among the Baptists of Waco convinced him that Roman Catholicism was the more truly Brazilian religion and subsequently he returned to the Church. To Freyre, the clearly drawn race lines as well as the casual brutality of the American South were the result of Anglo Saxon culture informed by Protestantism.¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, he continued to admire the American South for what he saw as a rejection of both industrialism and a universalizing cosmopolitanism, which he associated with bourgeois Jewish, urban culture. In a 1921 diary entry, he wrote of cosmopolitanism: "its victory would turn the world into a vast home filled with bric-à-brac."¹⁸⁹ As will become clear below, he found architecture metaphors particularly effective for conveying his ideas.

Although he rejected the notion that industrialization equaled progress, Freyre also understood his country to have a diminished position of power in world relations partly due to insufficient development of the country's natural resources. At this point in his career, Freyre attributed Brazil's economic torpor to race and miscegenation. Like many

¹⁸⁷ Thomas E. Skidmore, "Raizes de Gilbert Freyre," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34, no. 1 (Feb. 2002): 4–5.

¹⁸⁸ Burke and Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre*, 275.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 317–18.

white social scientists of the era puzzling over post-abolition race relations and its impact on national identity, he turned to the concepts of eugenics and the importance of “whitifying” the Brazilian people, a popular notion in Latin America during the 1920s that was based on an anxiety that the population was becoming increasingly black.¹⁹⁰ In this, he was influenced by the ideas of American eugenicist Charles Benedict Davenport and equally admired the United States for its imposition of social eugenics on new immigrants. Noting the great numbers of Jews and Italians entering the country during his years in North America, Freyre lauded the selection process used at Ellis Island—that is, the rejection of the sick or handicapped—and further approved of the Americanization process demanded of new citizens that forced them to give up their traditions in order to be truly American.¹⁹¹ The contradictions inherent in this position coming from an anthropologist and writer who would soon work to preserve (and in many ways, create) the traditions of his home region are not worth expounding upon here. Suffice it to say, that Freyre assumed that while some cultures were worth emulating, others needed a civilizing influence.

After finishing his undergraduate degree in three years, Freyre attended Columbia University. He frequently claimed to have studied under famed cultural anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942), although recent scholarship has shown that, while he did encounter Boas on several occasions, he was never his student.¹⁹² Nonetheless, Boas’s ideas clearly had an impact upon him. Frequently cited as the father of a younger

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 273.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁹² Cristina Bastos, “Luso-tropicalism Debunked, Again: Race, Racism, and Racialism in Three Portuguese-Speaking Societies,” in *Luso-tropicalism and Its Discontents: The Making and Unmaking of Racial Exceptionalism*, ed. Warwick Anderson, Ricardo Roque, and Ricardo Ventura Santos (New York, NY: Berghahn, 2019).

generation's approach to anthropology, Boas radicalized the field by rejecting scientific racism and instead advocated that a culture be understood through its particular history and circumstances.¹⁹³ For his master's thesis, Freyre described Brazil's nineteenth-century social life, a period in the nation's history that he characterized as the "bridge" between modern and colonial, remnants of which could still be found in the Northeast. It was, as Skidmore notes, "a contrast that eventually led to Freyre's 'valorisation' of the same past that so many of his Brazilian peers felt exemplified their country's backwardness."¹⁹⁴

Freyre returned to Pernambuco in 1923, deciding not to pursue further education but to work as a public intellectual in order to reach a larger public via books and newspaper essays.¹⁹⁵ Despite Recife's cultural vibrancy, Freyre found it lacking because, in his eyes, Recife's had forsworn their local identity in an effort to embrace modernism.¹⁹⁶ His return to Pernambuco was set against a background of considerable political turmoil, both locally and nationally, that culminated with the rise to power of Getulio Vargas in 1930. The country's growing middle class—merchants, bureaucrats, and manufacturers—grew increasingly disenchanted with the country's long-standing oligarchic rule, and that was expressed via different political developments: the year before Freyre's return to Brazil, the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) was founded in Rio, and a group of junior army officers staged a revolt at a fort in Copacabana to overthrow President Epitacio Pessoa and enact far-reaching social reforms.

¹⁹³ Herbert S. Lewis, "The Passion of Franz Boas," *American Anthropologist* 103, no. 2 (2001): 447.

¹⁹⁴ Skidmore, "Raizes de Gilbert Freyre," 7.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁹⁶ Burke and Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre*, 43.

During this period, Freyre became a critical actor in the creation of the “Northeast” as a part of Brazil distinct from the rest of the country. He offered the region, and eventually the country, a new vision of itself that rejected racial purity. Yet in an era when the middle class were demanding greater political power, his ideas were predicated on a highly quixotic view of elite Brazilian society and its relationship to the land and its laborers, framing plantation society as an authentic Brazil in need of preservation. He worked to recover Brazilian folkways, believing that by recognizing the history of its “native” traditions, Brazil would be inoculated from the totalizing effects of modern (read European and North American) culture. In that way, he was somewhat akin to the Paulistana modern artists, who had turned to national and regional themes for their work, though without the nostalgia that permeated the sociologist’s writing. During the 1920s, Freyre and other noted intellectuals and politicians from Pernambuco had “wanted to get rid of the ‘different Northeast’ that clogged up the bookstores, some genuine, others not so’ and construct a single homogenous image of the regions and a unique text.”¹⁹⁷

4.4.1 The Regionalist Manifesto

In February 1926, Gilberto Freyre organized the First Congress of Brazilian Regionalism in Recife, the capital city of Pernambuco. Here, he delivered what he called a “manifesto”¹⁹⁸ in which he set out to define the goals of the regionalist movement of the Northeast and critique the governmental structures that, by imposing political boundaries,

¹⁹⁷ Albuquerque Jr., “Weaving Tradition,” 46.

¹⁹⁸ Although Tommaso Marinetti did not speak in Brazil until May that year, his writing was already well known to many in Brazil. Jeffrey T. Schnapp and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, “Brazilian Velocities: On Marinetti’s 1926 Trip to South America,” *South Central Review* 13, no. 2/3 (Summer–Autumn, 1996): 106.

had disempowered “natural” allegiances across regions. “It’s a group of regions that truly comprise Brazil,” he said, rather than states.¹⁹⁹ He emphasized that he and his colleagues did not see their movement as one focused on separatism. On the contrary, they were fostering connections across regions that honored the differences among them. The true separatists, he argued, were the proponents of state boundaries, including President Arthur Bernardes (1875–1955, president from 1922–26).

In addition to listing dozens of intellectuals that supported the regional movement, Freyre used much of the manifesto detailing the foodstuffs particular to the region, describing the cakes, puddings, and candies that, as he put it, never taste as good as when made by the hands of a black female cook.²⁰⁰ The copious descriptions of sweets allowed Freyre to mention the region’s history as a sugar producer and make a pointed comparison to the south’s economic driver: “Sugar production was as major an import item as coffee is today.” He reminded readers that the country’s African descendants, whom he viewed as the originators and keepers of some of Brazil’s most important traditions, lived largely in the Northeast. It was “a region that already greatly contributed to Brazilian culture, or we might say civilization, its authenticity and originality and not just its sweetness and flavor.”²⁰¹

He deployed these details of daily life to critique what he saw as a federal (and southern) tendency to absorb influences from Europe as well as the United States. In one passage, Freyre decried “exotic clothing, velvets for the cold, furs for cold temperatures that don’t exist here —our movement wants to substitute these not for other clothes made

¹⁹⁹ Freyre, *Regionalist Manifesto*, 18.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

by foreign designers but for dresses or simply tunics stitched slowly at home.”²⁰² The line casts the “heroically poor” northeasterners as unpretentious and humble, wise as modern-day Ancients utterly familiar with the largesse and limitations of their environment.

Like their understanding of cuisine and fashion, Freyre’s Northeasterners had an innate knowledge of architecture that was rooted in their geography. In section V of the manifesto, subtitled “In Praise of the Mucambo,” the author railed against Modernists’ open plan, which he maintained was a foolish idea in climates where shade and darkness provide welcome respite from the heat. The same went for large boulevards designed for cold climates in contrast to the narrow, winding streets that came to Brazil via Portugal and the culture of Andalusí Muslims. He distinguished between the *mucambo* as a housing type and the environments in which they were found. His colleague, the sanitation specialist Saturnino Brito, had condemned the *mucambos* as havens of disease and dissolution, densely sited “sepulchers,” as Freyre called them. But the *mucambo* in its original state was the exemplar of good design that responded to users’ needs: when built on a spacious (read rural) site, the building type created harmony between human and nature by protecting its inhabitants from sweltering temperatures. In Freyre’s telling, the *mucambo* revealed the developed world’s distance from an intelligence rooted in locale. Noting that he had traveled extensively in the United States and Europe, he personally witnessed how modernism ruthlessly destroyed all hints of regional particularity. The *mucambo*, though, was quite the opposite: painted bright colors, these simple, “honest” houses were filled with “Oriental and African reminiscences.” He suspected that more technologically advanced nations were just beginning to recognize the need for the kind of sensuality and

²⁰² Ibid., 16.

regional knowledge represented by the *mucambo*, itself a metaphor of the Northeast. “For all its primitivism,” Freyre wrote, “the mucambo is a merit to the region and by extension, a merit to Brazil, and more than that, it’s a merit to the tropics: these cursed tropics that only now Europeans and North Americans are rediscovering and finding merit, instead of ethnographic curiosities or alarming, pathologic motives.”²⁰³

While the *Regionalist Manifesto* claimed to stand for the rights of all of the country’s regions, it highlighted only the Northeast; the history of other regions was never expounded upon. Indeed, at one point it noted: “There is no region in Brazil as filled with illustrious and sharpness of character.”²⁰⁴ Freyre implied that the essence of *Brasilidade* could be found only in the Northeast; to neglect the region was to lose national character.

This declaration of Northeastern superiority highlights a significant problem in the manifesto’s argument, as well as in its literary structure. The essay depends upon a set of stated and implied dichotomies: men and women; black and white; masters and servants; tradition and modernity; the plantation and the city; regional and federal; the south and the north. As we will see below, these binaries became central to Freyre’s best-known books. However, he concurrently employed synecdoche as a strategy for making his argument: the Northeast is representative of Brazil as a whole, and just as the world powers have ignored Brazil, so the south has neglected the northeastern part of the country. This central contradiction in Freyre’s work—that the Northeast is both a region of singular brilliance in opposition to the south yet representative of the country as a whole—shows his essay not to be so much a manifesto arguing for regionalism but a critique of the modernism of the

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

south, which he viewed as an uncritical absorption of American and European ideas. Greenfield has observed that the Regionalist Manifesto was a “self-conscious opposition to the aggressive assertion of modernism that issued from São Paulo’s famous Modern Art Week.”²⁰⁵

As will be discussed below, both *The Masters and the Slaves* and *The Mansions and the Shanties* set out to understand northeastern life (again through the lens of Pernambuco) with the goal of proving that racial mixing, both biologically and culturally, did not damn Brazil to economic, social, and political failure. Rather, it was the very source of Brazil’s strength. To understand this power—and implicitly, to unleash it—Freyre felt that Brazilians needed to understand the genesis of the country’s race relations. Therefore, sugar plantations—the point of origin of black-white relations in Brazil—should be a crucial subject of study, one he took on in his best-known book, *The Masters and the Slaves*.

4.4.2 Freyre’s *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933) and *The Mansions and the Shanties* (1936)

Without doubt, Freyre’s greatest contribution to Brazilian anthropology was what in English is translated as *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (1933). The book, which met with immediate critical success, presents Freyre’s version of colonialism in Brazil (one that Thomas Skidmore notes is more narrative than rigorous scholarship), using buildings as physical metaphors for colonial

²⁰⁵ Greenfield, *The Realities of Images*, 105.

Brazilian culture. In fact the Portuguese title, *Casa-Grande e Senzala*, means “the big house and the slave quarters.” While the English title accurately conveys the subject of the book—i.e., the ways that slavery informed the development of Brazilian society—it obscures the architectural metaphor that is central to understanding Freyre’s interpretation of Brazilian racial mixing (called *mestiçagem* in Portuguese). In the 1945 introduction to the first English edition, Freyre notes the difference between the Portuguese and the English titles, remarking that the architectural title is symbolic of “the cultural antagonism and social distance between masters and slaves, whites and blacks, Europeans and Africans, as marked by the residence of each group in Brazil from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.”²⁰⁶ He goes on to say that the architectural title is meant to give a clear visual image to complex historic relationships that cannot be so easily apprehended. Much of the relationship between the enslaved and plantation masters he saw in spatial terms, so much so that he wrote a lesser-known companion book entitled *The Mansions and the Shanties* (*Sobrados e Mucambos*, 1936). The first book had described life on rural estates; the second traced the movement to cities starting in the early nineteenth century.

While some scholars before him saw the country as struggling futilely against obstacles of race and climate, Freyre recast both as advantages that were particular to Brazil. Freyre’s polemic had been made, in part, by several writers during the 1910s as World War I provoked a review of Brazil’s national character in relationship to the European powers.²⁰⁷ Yet readers were far more receptive to the notion that race was not a hindrance to Brazilian success when Freyre published *The Masters and the Slaves*. This

²⁰⁶ Freyre, *Masters and the Slaves*, xvi.

²⁰⁷ Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 164–67.

may have been a result of both the narrative quality of Freyre's writing as well as the growing interest in non-white Brazilian culture. For instance, samba—which upper class, white society had formerly disdained—quickly became a symbol of Brazilian popular culture during the 1920s, with the first samba “Pelo Telefone” recorded in 1916.²⁰⁸ Freyre's work was immediately embraced by a wide range of intellectuals because it offered a potentially affirmative vision of the nation's future.²⁰⁹

Arguing that culture played a far more important role in defining Brazilian character than biology, Freyre maintained that the most important problems afflicting the nation were based on its history of slavery, *not* its racial mixing. He distinguished between “slaves” and “Africans,” noting that while slavery may have provoked many of the country's social ills, they were not indicative of the strengths or weaknesses of “Africans.” That is, a slave's lack of industry, his cunning or his sexual decadence was a result of deformations of character brought about by slavery, not by African biology. Furthermore, much of the book—like the *Manifesto Regional 1926*—catalogs the multiple ways that the races mixed culturally, with particular stress on the contributions of Afro-Brazilians. Freyre famously wrote in the opening of Chapter 4 of *The Masters and the Slaves*,

Every Brazilian, even the light-skinned fair-haired one, carries about with him on his soul, when not on soul and body alike—for there are many in Brazil with the mongrel mark of the genipap [birthmark indicating mixed race]—the shadow or at least the birthmark, of the aborigine or the Negro. Along the seaboard, from Maranhão to Rio Grande do Sul, it is chiefly the Negro. The influence of the African, either direct or vague and remote. In our affections, our excessive mimicry, our Catholicism, which so delights the senses, our music, our gait, our speech, our cradle songs—in everything

²⁰⁸ The song is such a well-known piece of Brazilian identity of the twentieth century that Gilberto Gil revisited it in 1998, but with a revised title, “Pela Internet.”

²⁰⁹ Skidmore, “Raizes de Gilberto Freyre,” 13.

that is a sincere expression of our lives, we almost all of us bear the mark of that influence.²¹⁰

As the excerpt makes clear, *The Masters and the Slaves* purports to address the role of indigenous people as well as Afro-Brazilians, but it is far more weighted towards the country's African diaspora. In Freyre's view, to nurture the northeast—home to Brazil's largest population of black citizens—was to nurture the “true Brazil.”

Like the manifesto, the book lavishes attention on the details of northeastern Brazilian traditions, the people's foods, and their sex lives. This confluence of desire and consumption is central to Freyre's deeply romanticized vision of the sugar plantation as a locus of sympathetic relations between the races. It turns on a portrayal of the Portuguese as suitable colonizers of the tropics. As a result of their contact with North African culture, Freyre claimed that the Portuguese approached the colonizing of southern hemisphere territories with a benevolence that could not be found among their northern European counterparts. (He did not address colonialism under the Spanish who presumably were as affected by Islamic culture as the Portuguese.) Freyre explored this idea at length during the 1950s, eventually coining the term *Lusotropicalismo*, i.e., Portuguese tropicalism.

Freyre saw *The Mansions and the Shanties* as the second volume to *The Masters and the Slaves*, as it documented the move from plantation to cities. He characterized the transition to urban space as the end of the personal ties between blacks and whites, leading to greater anomie in Brazilian society.²¹¹ He conducted wide ranging research for the book

²¹⁰ Freyre, *Masters and the Slaves*, 278.

²¹¹ José Luiz Passos and Valéria Costa e Silva make a compelling argument that the work of Georg Simmel “permeates the entire book [*The Masters and the Slaves*].” “Gilberto Freyre's Concept of Culture in *The Masters and the Slaves*” in *Brazil in the Making: Facets of National Identity*, ed. Carmen Nava and Ludwig Lauerhass (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 60.

using nineteenth-century newspapers, and depended upon the accounts of numerous writers from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. These included many Europeans who had made copious observations about the landscape, food, housing, and social traditions of various parts of Brazil. Other sources were upper class bureaucrats or academics. While Freyre occasionally argued with these authors' conclusions, he never doubted or in any way problematized their observations and recollections, instead taking their word as empirical information. His critics would later take note of this weakness in his work.

Using several of these sources, Freyre built a picture of the *mucambo*, though the image is not always a consistent one. For the most part, he described the housing type as one constructed of clay or *pau a pique* (wattle-and-daub construction) with a roof made of weaved straw or grass and an earthen floor, the former a solution brought from Africa. Although he usually found Brazil's genius in a combination of Portuguese, African, or indigenous elements, in the case of the *mucambo* the "native" solutions, that is, those that are directly borrowed from Africa, were best. He believed lesser models used tin roofs that trapped heat inside, an example of the rejection of tropical know-how for European innovation that in the case of the *mucambo* proved to be deleterious.²¹² This is an example of Freyre allying himself with a group of Brazilian anthropologists who searched for the origins of black Brazilian traditions in West Africa. They deemed certain traditions "Nagô Africa," that is, authentic—rituals and behaviors taken directly from an African source.²¹³

²¹² Gilberto Freyre, *The Mansions and the Shanties*, translated by Harriet de Onis, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 169.

²¹³ Yvonne Maggie, "No Underskirts in Africa: Edison Carneiro and the 'Lineages' of Afro-Brazilian Religious Anthropology," trans. David Rogers, *Sociologia & Anthropologia* 5, no. 1 (April 2015): 104.

Freyre's approach fell squarely in line, his search for authenticity extending from religious traditions to music to discerning where specifically in Africa Brazil's slaves originated.

While he repeatedly noted that he did not approve of many contemporary versions of the *mucambo*, he found laudatory qualities in what he presented as the *mucambo*'s original plans and materials. "What I am referring to is the plan in its pure or ideal aspect, and the materials, which combine to give better ventilation and lighting than those to be found in the typically patriarchal dwellings—with their interior bedrooms, their halls, their clammy walls—and the middle-class houses."²¹⁴ Yet the *mucambo* was a product of white and black contact: "The ideal house for the tropical areas of Brazil would be one which did not eschew the materials used by the natives and the Africans, nor their building design, but which made better use of the native and African experience."²¹⁵

In short, *The Mansions and the Shanties* extended the arguments of *The Masters and the Slaves* to architecture or, more precisely, employed architecture to underscore Freyre's thesis: the combination of African and Portuguese character was the source of Brazilian distinction. Just as the nation's language, food, and customs benefitted from African influence, so its architecture proved that Africa was a source of Brazil's brilliance, not the cause of its deficiencies. As we will see below, the notion that miscegenation was not Brazil's Achilles heel but its very power became central to the rhetoric of Northeastern regionalism. Eventually, as Maria Pallares-Burke notes, *mestiçagem* as a Brazilian strength

²¹⁴ Freyre, *Mansions and the Shanties*, 168.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

became “one of the characteristics to be valorized not only as part of local identity but a national one as well.”²¹⁶

This vision of African contributions to Brazil, it is important to note, is a white elite perspective. Christopher Dunn points out “that Freyre does not celebrate African culture on its own terms, but rather subjugates it as a salutary ‘contribution’ to what he later would call a ‘New World in the Tropics.’”²¹⁷ The commemoration of African culture only to defang the prevailing European notion that Brazilian blackness damned the country to inferiority became central to critiques of Freyre’s work beginning in the 1960s. More immediately, it led to a break with colleagues who eventually organized a Salvador-based congress as a refutation of the Freyreian vision of Afro Brazilians in modern Brazil.

Both in Freyre’s time and today, scholars have critiqued his ideas and those of the Pernambuco regionalists for their generalizing ideas of culture—merging a multiplicity of traditions under the heading of “northeast.” Some have argued that Freyre’s cultural hierarchies replicated the racist assumptions of the genetic categories favored by eugenicists. Still others, like the scholar Edison Carneiro, rejected Freyre’s vision of the master-slave relationship as one that had moments of shared empathy and adopted culture. Carneiro saw black Brazilians as holding a decidedly subaltern position in relation to their white counterparts. Unlike Freyre, he believed that the cultural influence of black Brazilians was not welcomed by whites but occurred *despite* the objections of the white

²¹⁶ Maria Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: Um Vitoriano dos Trópicos* (São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2005), 327.

²¹⁷ Dunn, Christopher Dunn, “Culture in Brazil: From Mestiçagem to Hybridity and the Difference It Makes,” Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association*, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17–19, 1997, 4.

power structure.²¹⁸ He also disagreed that there was a need to establish ties between historic Africa and Afro-Brazilian traditions. This last caused a great rift between him and Freyre, one that presaged a parallel argument among Brazilian cultural critics and artists alike: that is, in the drive to create a national art and architecture, should Brazilians look to the country's past as a source of authenticity or should it instead look to existing realities in Brazil as the font of *Brasilidade* for artists and designers?

4.5 SPHAN Declares a Winner in the Mucambo Debate

In 1937, the Serviço Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (SPHAN) published its first of a series of essays printed as short books. The agency, eventually housed in the new, Modernist building for the Ministério de Educação e Saúde, had been formed that same year. With Melo Rodrigo Andrade as its director, SPHAN boasted some of the most important cultural figures in the nation, including Mario de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, and Lucio Costa as its founding members. In its efforts to define Brazilian culture, the agency determined a publishing program that included a journal, *A Revista do SPHAN*, and books that were distributed to libraries, museums, schools, and other organizations and individuals who would both take in the SPHAN message and be in a position to further disseminate it. The first of these was entitled *Mucambos of the Northeast: Some Notes on the Most Primitive Type Popular House of Northeast Brazil* and was written by Gilberto Freyre (Figure 4.5).

²¹⁸ Anadelia A. Romo, "Rethinking Race and Culture in Brazil's First Afro-Brazilian Congress of 1934," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 39, no. 1 (February 2007): 49.

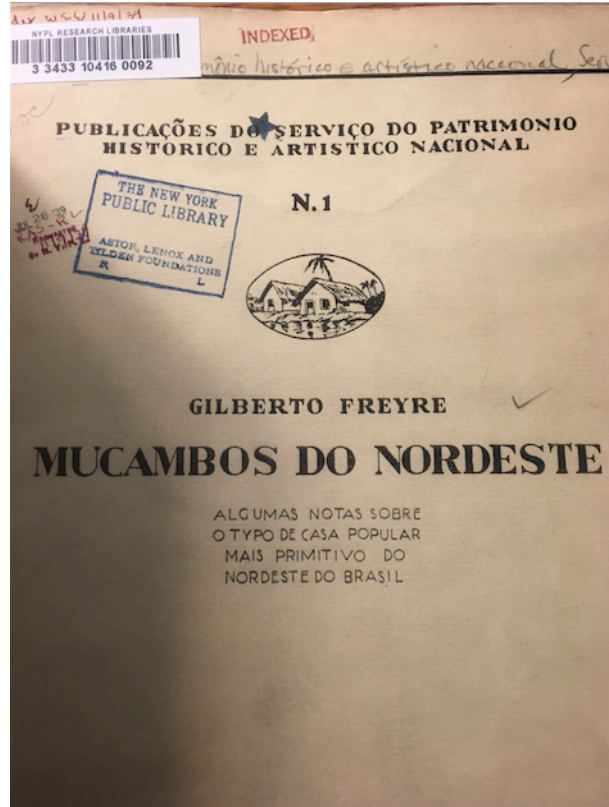


Figure 4.5 Gilberto Freyre, *Mucambos do Nordeste*. No. 1 in Publications of SPHAN series, 1937.
(Source: New York Public Library.)

Not surprisingly, the essay follows much the same line of thought about *mucambos* as that laid out in *The Mansions and the Shanties*, published the year before. After briefly discussing its history as a word denoting hideout or escape house, Freyre explained that he had consciously chosen the word *mucambo* to underscore that its inhabitants were of African descent. He stated that the houses too were descendants of shelters built in parts of West Africa, distant cousins of similarly rudimentary houses in the South Pacific. For much of the essay, he described the *mucambo* in contrast to the building types found in Brazil that grew out of what he claimed to be European traditions. In sum, Freyre seemed intent upon establishing a direct connection between Afro-Brazilians and Africa and further viewing them as culturally aligned with other southern hemisphere cultures, in direct

contrast to the nation's white population. In the same moment, he understood the *mucambo* to be the result of European action: referring to the housing type as “syncretic,” he argued that it was “born of the intervention of whites in the tropics.” This interpretation of syncretism, which conflates the agency of colonizer and enslaved, shows Freyre deploying the *mucambo* as more evidence of Lusotropicalism and its superiority to the Anglo-Saxon-based colonialism of the United States.²¹⁹

The publication includes copious illustrations that visually support Freyre's romantic notion of the *mucambo* as extension of benevolent race relations if placed in rural, uncongested settings. There are paintings by Dmitri Ismailovich showing *mucambos* among coconut trees in Olinda (a small city adjacent to Recife) and in Santo Amaro (a neighborhood of Recife). The paintings were followed by ten pages of drawings by Manuel Bandeira, who had illustrated the first edition of *The Mansions and the Shanties*. Bandeira's drawings are similar in layout and focus as Lucio Costa's in “Necessary Documentation” (Figure 4.6), in that he used a comparative method and focused on materials and construction methods. Yet the goals of their illustrations were different: Costa wanted to demonstrate how modernism aligned with colonial building practices. Bandeira, and presumably Freyre, wanted to illustrate both the *mucambo*'s rootedness in particular locations and the ways in which their anonymous designers employed materials of local provenance. Bandeira's drawings move from external views of the houses to increasingly detailed views, eventually homing in on particularities of layout and construction. In one, he shows a pau-a-pique-constructed *mucambo* with details of a roof made from sugar cane palm, another with a capim (grass) roof, and yet a third with feathers. Unlike the

²¹⁹ Gilberto Freyre, *Mucambos do Nordeste* (Rio de Janeiro: SPHAN, 1937).

photograph of barracks-like *mucambos* featured in an *O Cruzeiro* article four years later (Figures 4.7–4.9), these *mucambos* are all located in bucolic settings, unaffected by urban ills.

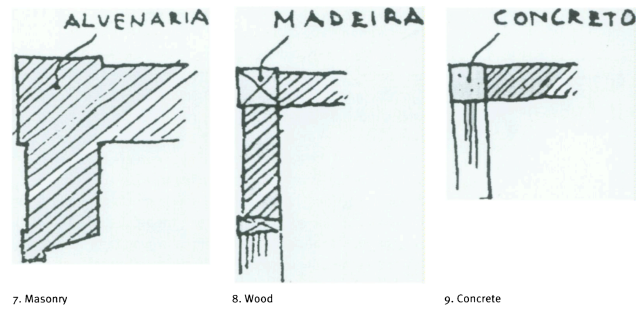


Figure 4.6 Lucio Costa, illustration for “Necessary Documentation” comparing building methods and materials, from masonry to wood to concrete.
(Source: Lucio Costa, “Necessary Documentation,” trans. Marta Caldeira and Farès el-Dahdah, *Future Anterior* 6, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 48–57. 1937.)



Figure 4.7 Illustrations by Manuel Bandeira in Freyre, *Mucambos do Nordeste*.
(Source: NYPL.)

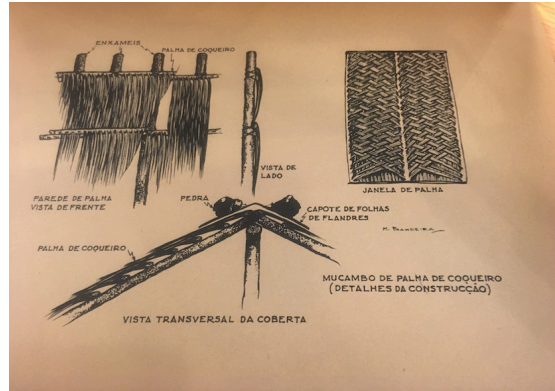


Figure 4.8 Illustrations by Manuel Bandeira in Freyre, *Mucambos do Nordeste*, p#.
(Source: NYPL.)

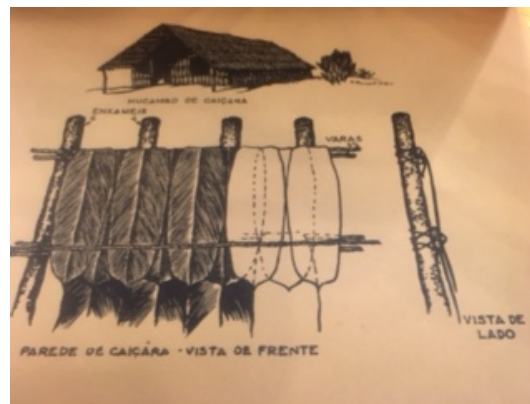


Figure 4.9 Illustrations by Manuel Bandeira in Freyre, *Mucambos do Nordeste*.
(Source: NYPL.)

From the content of the essay to the publisher to the praise for Costa in Freyre's introduction, the informed architect, designer, urban planner, or politician reading *Os Mucambos do Nordeste* understood Freyre's ideas had the blessing of the Rio architectural firmament as well as the Vargas regime. Both had made a point of highlighting the virtues of communities on the periphery of the Brazilian metropolises as an essential component of Brazilian modernity. Ironically, in attempting to make his region relevant to the political and cultural discourse of the day, Freyre depended upon nostalgia that drew more on the imagery of Frans Post than on the social and political needs suggested by photos of the

area's multiple droughts or by the architectural programs of DAC and Luiz Nunes that had set out to provide education, health care, and pasteurized milk to the region's public. But Freyre's thesis was a useful one for Costa and SPHAN. As the articles in the first issue of their journal made clear—Roquette-Pinto on the ceramics of the Marajó, Mario de Andrade explaining the significance of a seventeenth-century chapel in São Paulo state—they were taking an anthropological view of the country outside of Rio and the city of São Paulo; Freyre's work was in keeping with this position, which ironically situated the Northeast as "other." The *mucambo* was evidence of yet another distinctive Brazilian vernacular informed by Brazilian genius, much as modernism would soon be. The valorization of the *mucambo*, candomblé, capoeira, and other symbols of the Northeast were absorbed into the narrative of Brazilian modernism, with its totalizing impact on any contradictory discourse. Nonetheless, the *mucambo* as a building type did not have a direct formal effect upon architecture in Brazil. But as representative of Freyre's ideas, it did provide an example of national authenticity that was associated with poor Afro-Brazilians. It created a conceptual opening to be investigated by architects and critics who would begin to question the wisdom of the SPHAN-approved narrative and its expression in architectural form.

Chapter 5

POPULARIZING A MULTIRACIAL BRAZIL, 1942–1959

5.1 Introduction

By the end of the first Vargas administration, notions of colonial, indigenous, and African cultures were united in the Brazilian popular imagination. Although already a powerful trope in painting and literature, this discourse of “three sad races,” as the Brazilian poet Olavo Bilac put it, was by the end of World War II an ever more present theme in movies, theater, dance, and music. This chapter explores the degree to which that multi-racial identity began to assert itself in architecture, a field that was highly entwined with political and cultural notions of modernism and *Brasilidade*.

Returning to the southern part of the country, we find the ideas promulgated by both Gilberto Freyre and SPHAN being adopted and disseminated via political and cultural institutions in Rio and São Paulo. What was once the subject matter of sociology conferences and preservationists’ journals had become a mainstream truism—that Brazil’s multiracial identity was worthy of celebration and a means of distinguishing the country from other all other nations. That is not to say that the essentially white, European-based perspective of the country’s powerful was questioned. Instead, the generalized multiracial identity that had been promulgated well before the 1950s now was shifting into one that began to investigate the specifics of the African diaspora in Brazil—as well as the nation’s indigenous groups—and communicate those ideas to the public. This was done via channels that reached large numbers of Brazilians: the federal government and the popular

press (here represented by the weekly magazine *O Cruzeiro*), which promoted a popular form of anthropology regarding indigenous and Black Brazilian communities.

The following section will trace the promotion of a multiracial Brazilian identity as it played out in São Paulo amongst a set of the era's cultural arbiters: Assis Chateaubriand (1892–1968), Pietro Maria Bardi (1900–99), and Lina Bo Bardi (1914–92) I take this route for two reasons: first, the three collaborated on the newly organized Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) that acted as a powerful cultural force via its exhibitions and its publication, *Habitat*. The museum functioned as a conduit of current arguments in art and culture as they pertained to Brazilian identity. Second, Chateaubriand treated the MASP as yet another vehicle for shaping post-oligarchy Brazil. Similarly, the Bardis believed that they needed to play mentor to a nation they saw as naïve and unformed in its tastes.

Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I will review Bo Bardi's single built work of this period, the Glass House (1951), both as a reflection of the forces dictating the era's debates about Brazilian identity and in relation to the architecture valorized by Philip Goodwin in his catalog for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *Brazil Builds* (1943). An examination of Bo Bardi's career in Brazil reveals that in many ways she acted as a bellwether of the nation's architectural developments: in this period, she did not lead changes in the country's architectural scene, so much as she reflected the shift from the aspirational qualities of Niemeyer and the Rio School to the realism of design and design rhetoric in São Paulo. In this chapter, I present her as a figure who responded to the convergence of these different regional discourses, compared them to her own work, and began to reflect them in her practice, both built and written.

5.2 Valorizing a Multiracial Brazil through Government and Media

Politics, popular culture, and architecture were so entwined in this era that it is necessary to consider them, once again, before addressing built form. In addition to reflecting an emerging vision of Brazil as a nation free of racial prejudice, merging the Afro-Brazilian, the Portuguese, and the indigenous made for an unpredictable and highly malleable narrative. This was a particularly useful asset for the architectural tastes of Getulio Vargas, who, much like Benito Mussolini in Italy, strategically supported different styles of building to represent a nation both grounded in its vernacular and poised to participate fully in the technology of the world's developed countries.²²⁰

Essential to this effort was Vargas's support, as well as that of the Ministerio de Educação e Saude (MES) director Gustavo Capanema.²²¹ Cultured and well-connected, Capanema led this newly created agency in the belief that "education" not only referred to schools, but also to museums, theaters, and the preservation of historic buildings. He saw his mission as creating a cultured middle class. As one scholar put it, "his ministry, among other attributes, set out to formulate a civic-pedagogic project to create a 'new Brazilian man.'"²²²

Capanema drew well-known Brazilian critics and writers into the agency's fold, men like Mario de Andrade who understood the MES as a vehicle for spreading the ideas forged in 1922. "For the intellectuals," Andrade wrote, "the Ministry of Education opened

²²⁰ Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, "Italian Architects and Fascist Politics: An Evaluation of the Rationalist's Role in Regime Building," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 39 (May 1980): 114.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

²²² Roney Cytrynowicz, "Imagens, Politicias e Leitruas do Arquivo Capanema," *Historia, Ciencias, Saude* 8 (July-August 2001): 472.

the possibility of a space for the development of their work, from which they assumed that it could be smuggled, so to speak, into the broader revolutionary content they believed their works could bring.”²²³

Capanema promoted scores of cultural events and funded curatorial, dance, music, literature, and art initiatives to further the idea of pride in a multiracial Brazil. The government frequently married these projects with a nationalist discourse and encouraged artists who used traditions connected to indigenous and black Brazil. For this iteration of *Brasilidade*, non-white Brazil was highlighted for three purposes: to show the country’s distinctiveness in relationship to other Latin American nations; to allay fears that modernity would undermine Brazil’s singularity; and to depict the Vargas government as a champion of the working class Brazilian. The main objective of the latter was to keep communist detractors out of power.

The MES encouraged other fields to promote multiracial heritage as the driving force of the new Brazilian. In popular music, the rise of samba was touted as an urbanized version of the Afro-Brazilian *blocos* (or clubs) that performed during Carnival.²²⁴ A group of classical Brazilian composers were grateful to the agency and the federal government for letting them explore “national themes in theater and giving Brazilian writers and audiences the opportunity to hear work in the idiom of our race,” as Heitor Villa Lobos put

²²³ Simon Schwartzman, Helena Maria Bousquet Bomeny, and Vanda Maria Ribeiro Costa,

Tempos de Capanema (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1984), 81.

²²⁴ Philip Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).

it in a letter to Vargas.²²⁵ Plays took on subjects related to black and indigenous Brazilians, even though still through a colonial lens.²²⁶

As an example, it is worth reviewing Karla Guilherme Carloni's research on the Vargas administration's dance patronage, as it reveals the ways in which this regime used the multiracial narrative to meet its political ends. Carloni studied the formation of a dance troupe that incorporated dances and rhythms from Pernambuco (*freve*) and Bahia (*macumba* and the rituals of *candomblé*) to create the "corpo mestiço," the mixed-race body. The term was coined by Eros Volúcia (1914–2004), a dancer who, with much government backing, formed a national dance company that highlighted these dances after a trip she took through Brazil in search of "true national identity."²²⁷

In addition to funding artistic endeavors that supported a Brazilian identity not based solely on Portuguese influence, the federal government of Vargas and his direct predecessors used legislation to reinforce this vision. That is most evident in the policy changes made regarding the country's many indigenous groups, most in states far from the power centers along the coast. Brazil was, in this sense, much like Portugal: although one of the smallest nations in Europe, Portugal saw itself in relation to its former Lusophone territories in west Africa, east Africa, India, and China in what Omar Ribeiro Thomaz calls "the deterritorialized perception of the nation."²²⁸ Although politically under the aegis of

²²⁵ Quoted in Karla Guilherme Carloni, "Em Busca da Identidade Nacional: Bailarinas Dançam Maracatu, Samba, Macuba, e Frevo nos Palcos do Rio de Janeiro (1930–1945)," *ArtCultura* 16, no. 29 (2014): 171.

²²⁶ Victor Hugo Adler Pereira, *A Musa Carrancuda: Teatro e Poder no Estado Novo* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas Editora, 1998).

²²⁷ Carloni, "Em Busca da Identidade Nacional," 174.

²²⁸ Omar Ribeiro Thomaz, "'The Good-Hearted Portuguese People': Anthropology of Nation, Anthropology of Empire," in *Empires, Nations, and Natives: Anthropology and*

one nation, Brazil's far flung regions spanned thousands of miles and engendered a similar sense of deterritorialization for those who attempted to formulate a singular identity for a nation of such massive dimensions and extraordinary topographical and cultural diversity. It was a problem given consideration ever since the country's founding—and emphasized during war with Paraguay between 1864 and 1870—one that forced Brazil to more effectively defend its interior borders and to better understand and exploit its natural resources, including its indigenous citizens.²²⁹

In striving for nationhood, other Latin American countries had also searched for ways to fold indigenous populations into the state while deploying Indian imagery and traditions as national symbols. The first to enact a stated policy to meet these ends was Mexico; highly influenced by the ideas of Manuel Gamio (1883–1960), a student of Franz Boas, it used the field of anthropology to launch what was called the *indigenismo* movement.²³⁰ Gamio led a set of initiatives to valorize indigenous tribes in order to provide Mexico with a cultured, accomplished history. What made Brazil significantly different from Mexico was twofold: first it had no pre-Columbian architecture that could be deployed as evidence of a once powerful civilization.²³¹ Second, it lacked a systematized “anthropology-based training in the tasks involved in governing indigenous populations.”

State-Making, ed. Benoît de L'Estoile, Federico Neiburg, and Lygia Sigaud (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 59.

²²⁹ Todd Diacon, *Stringing Together a Nation: Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon and the Construction of a Modern Brazil, 1906–1930* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004): 15.

²³⁰ Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima, “Indigenism in Brazil: The International Migration of State Policies,” in L'Estoile, Neiburg, and Sigaud, *Empires, Nations, and Natives*, 201.

²³¹ Sandra Vivanco, “Trope of the Tropics: the Baroque in Modern Brazilian Architecture, 1940–1950,” in *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America*, ed. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 194.

Instead, SPI used publications by the North American Bureau of Indian Affairs as its central source of information from outside the nation.²³²

Brazil's practices regarding its indigenous tribes were largely inherited from Portugal's *sertenista* policy, a word coined by the Portuguese from their word *sertão* meaning interior lands. Dating to early Portuguese conquests in Africa, the *sertenista* practice consisted of exploration, data collection about geography and peoples, and adding new geographical information to Portugal's extant store of knowledge resulting from maritime explorations. This accrued atlas of knowledge was critical to commercial and military initiatives.²³³

The best-known example of the *sertenista* approach to indigenous communities in Brazil was the Rondon Expedition, a twenty-year journey led by army Marshall Cândido Rondon (1865–1958). The expedition took as its ostensible mission the installation of a telegraph system to unite the nation technologically. Along the way, Rondon, a Comptian positivist in the tradition of the Brazilian military, documented flora and fauna, and, not incidentally, inculcated inhabitants of the country's far-flung territories into the traditions of Brazil. Many had never heard of this nation, let alone felt a patriotic attachment towards. Rondon became the first director of the *Serviço de Proteção ao Índio* (SPI) (the Indian Protection Service), the federal agency founded in 1910 to handle concerns related to indigenous people—of which there were approximately 200 distinct groups, all referred to as “Indians”—and their land. Its goals were, in short, to protect the indigenous, who were

²³² Lima, “Indigenism in Brazil,” 207.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 198–99.

legally categorized as mentally defective, while preparing them to be workers, settled in one location, and folded into Brazilian society.²³⁴

Although the Vargas administration initially had little interest in the workings of the SPI, by the early 1940s, the regime recognized in the country's indigenous population a means of distinguishing the Brazilian character from all others while concomitantly attempting to take full control of all the land within its borders. To that end, Vargas furthered the Rondon program with a policy called the Westward March, a large-scale campaign started in the 1930s and designed to modernize the far reaches of the country's borders;²³⁵ presumably, it also sought to bring all residents under systematic, federal control. In the words of Carlos Augusto da Rocha Freire, Vargas viewed the Westward March as an "integrated alliance between the campaign of the founders of Brazilian nationality—namely, the bandeirantes and sertanistas—and the processes of modern culture."²³⁶ That is, the president conceived of modernity in terms of region and race: the Portuguese descendants of São Paulo and Minas Gerais joining forces with the sertanistas of the northeastern interior to pacify the indigenous of the Amazonian states.

In this same period, the field of anthropology was rejecting the *sertenista*-influenced version of Brazil's indigenist policy and dramatically revising anthropological methods. By then, the notion of recording the material culture of indigenous populations while working to assimilate tribe members into mainstream Brazilian society faced harsh criticism from anthropologists who saw the policy as a form of cultural genocide. Led by

²³⁴ See Diacon, *Stringing Together a Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.)

²³⁵ Tracey Devine Guzmán, *Native and National in Brazil: Indigeneity after Independence* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 109.

²³⁶ Freire quoted in Guzmán, *Native and National*, 136.

Darcy Ribeiro (1922–97), the new anthropologists militated for an approach that would allow SPI to encourage the continued autonomous existence of the many indigenous groups within Brazil’s borders, instead of employing an acculturation policy that was in Ribeiro’s words “ethnology with practical aims.”²³⁷ The ideas of the young anthropologists, it so happened, elided well with the Vargas administration’s demands for technocratic rationalism, and the government subsequently commanded the SPI to find a more scientific approach to administering its indigenous populations. This resulted in a revised training program for personnel and a newly created civil servant category for ethnologist.²³⁸ This approach to the rights and interests of Brazil’s indigenous communities continued well into the 1970s.

The Estado Novo promoted Afro-Brazilian culture with equal vigor; in the words of one scholar, the “reconsideration of the importance of African cultural influence was the single most important element in Brazil’s collective inquiry into national character.”²³⁹ Unlike the government’s promotion of indigenous Brazil—largely in the guise of anthropological inquiry—its endorsement of black Brazilian culture was accomplished through entertainment, largely musical forms from the Northeastern region of the country and carnival celebrations.²⁴⁰ While it funded samba schools, the state also made demands on the music chosen and the arrangements used. Carnival processions needed to build their

²³⁷ Quoted in Lima, “Indigenism in Brazil,” 209–210.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

²³⁹ Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 60.

²⁴⁰ Robin E. Sheriff, “The Theft of Carnival: National Spectacle and Racial Politics in Rio de Janeiro,” *Cultural Anthropology* 14, no. 1 (February 1999): 14.

annual themes upon patriotic subjects.²⁴¹ Music by Afro-Brazilians was also used to disseminate images of Brazil around the world. This was famously accomplished via Carmen Miranda—known as the White Ambassadress of Samba.²⁴² Miranda was sent abroad by the Vargas government with the express idea of presenting an image of Brazil as exotic, a country influenced by black culture but reassuringly Caucasian.

Yet, at the same moment that candomblé and capoeira were being written about and photographed in academic circles and in the mass media, another powerful government agency returned to the images of the northeast first inscribed by Dutch colonialism and prized by Brazil's white elite. A case in point is the 1942 exhibition organized by the Ministry of Health and Education entitled *Exposição Frans Post*. The show focused on the Northeast, which was still home to the nation's largest black community, but viewed through the work of the Dutch painter whose canvases of sixteenth century Brazil were regularly reproduced in the twentieth century. The exhibition brought together twenty-four paintings from a variety of collections, seven of which had never been publicly exhibited. Each of the canvases portrayed Pernambucan landscapes, some of sugar mills, others of shanties. All included representations of slaves, whether as distant figures in a landscape of the wet lowlands around Recife or as more defined figures shown at work or around the slave quarters. Diplomat and journalist Ribeiro Couto (1898–1963) wrote the exhibition catalog's central essay, using the opportunity less to explore the art historical context of Post's work so much as to extol the paintings for their demonstration of Brazilian genius,

²⁴¹ McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 59–60; Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 26.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

as he put it, and the necessity of the Portuguese element that no Dutchman could approximate. “Through the work of Frans Post we are convinced of the invincible cultural force of Portugal, there transplanted with Indians and black slaves at their service. There’s not one painting by Post, those he executed in Pernambuco and those he painted after until his death (1680), that shows us the ‘true’ Dutch influence on Pernambucan civilization.”²⁴³ Couto’s ideas bear great resemblance to those of Gilberto Freyre’s: his work emphasized what he saw as the chemistry among indigenous, black, and Portuguese in the formation of Brazil’s singular brilliance. Couto’s essay foreshadowed a term that Freyre coined ten years later, “lusotropicalismo”: the alleged Portuguese talent for integrating with southern hemisphere cultures, providing a benevolent form of colonialism.

5.3 *O Cruzeiro* Promotes a Multiracial Brazil

As a popular and national weekly magazine owned by a well-connected man who believed in promoting a vision of Brazil as affluent and sophisticated, *O Cruzeiro* provides an excellent window on the sorts of imagery deemed palatable and appropriate for an aspiring bourgeois audience. The magazine was owned by Assis Chateaubriand who controlled more than thirty newspapers, thirty-five radio stations, eighteen television stations, as well as magazines for adults and children. From its outset, Chateaubriand intended the magazine “to cover the political transformations in the country after the 1930 revolution.”²⁴⁴ As

²⁴³ Ministério da Educação e Saude, Brasil e Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, “Frans Post: Exposição” (Rio de Janeiro, 1942).

²⁴⁴ Sérgio Burgi, “New Mapping on Photography in Brazil,” Dutch Culture: Mapping Brazil — Photography: Photojournalism in Brazil (1940-1960). Accessed June 2018, <https://dutchculture.nl/en/mapping/mapping-brazil-photography-photojournalism-brazil-1940-1960>

the consummate insider, he had both watched (and in some cases provoked) volatile changes in Brazilian politics and learned to negotiate among varying regimes with assured finesse sometimes, a ham-fisted, no-holds-barred approach at others. *O Cruzeiro* was the crown jewel of his media empire, and Chateaubriand saw it as a form of cultural modernity, “the contemporary of skyscrapers,” as he put it in the magazine’s first edition.²⁴⁵ With the largest circulation of any journal in the country, it also played “a fundamental role for the evolution of the use of photography in journalism in Brazil.”²⁴⁶

O Cruzeiro highlighted American-style consumerism both through its advertising and in articles that offered uncritical views of affluent North American lifestyles. This tendency continued and was amplified after World War II when Eurício Dutra, one of Vargas’s protégés, became president in 1945. The post-war period in Brazil was one of economic liberalism, but within a year of Dutra’s presidency such unfettered capitalism ran smack into the country’s deficits and a highly unbalanced relationship between its export and import markets.²⁴⁷ Realizing that the gap between imports and exports was growing dangerously wide, Dutra re-imposed Vargas-era government controls, which had the effect of limiting the import of international goods. This unintentionally boosted domestic industries, since middle class Brazilians were no longer willing to defer consumer-goods gratification. As any perusal of the era’s advertising in newspapers and

²⁴⁵ Helouisa Costa, “Entre O Local e O Global: A Invenção da Revista *O Cruzeiro*,” in *As Origines do Fotojornalismo no Brasil: Um Olhar Sobre O Cruzeiro*, ed. Helouise Costa and Sérgio Burgi (São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 2012), 12.

²⁴⁶ Marcelo Eduardo and Júlio Pedro Araújo, “Por Meio de Jean Manzon: A Reestruturação do Fotojornalismo na Revista *O Cruzeiro*,” *Temática* 11, no. 3 (March 2015): 181.

²⁴⁷ Thomas Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 69.

magazines makes clear, *O Cruzeiro*'s editors wanted Brazilians to take part in the cold-war bounty of cars and washing machines like their neighbors to the north.

In 1942, the magazine also began to run features with a decidedly more anthropological focus, long photo essays about Brazilian groups outside the white mainstream. That was the year French photographer Jean Manzon took over as editor, making *O Cruzeiro* a vehicle for photojournalism much like *Life* magazine in the United States.²⁴⁸ Before arriving at the magazine, Manzon, who had photographed for *Match* and *Vu*, became photo director at the Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP), which the Vargas administration had established to influence various media outlets for “the elucidation of national opinion on the doctrinal guidelines of the regime, in defense of culture, spiritual unity and Brazilian civilization.”²⁴⁹ Given Vargas’s role in the initial funding of the magazine and Manzon’s former position, it is hardly surprising that *O Cruzeiro* functioned as a mouthpiece for the Estado Novo, one made all the more effective because of its fine photography.

Under Manzon, *O Cruzeiro* highlighted black and especially indigenous Brazilians through frequent and usually sympathetic portrayals of their communities (Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3). The magazine frequently acted as a collaborator on the Westward March with extensive coverage of “primitive Brazil.”²⁵⁰ That is not to say that the photographers and writers themselves intended to exoticize their subjects. To the contrary, they saw their work as part of an effort to humanize these marginalized Brazilians for an upper and middle class

²⁴⁸ Costa, “Entre o Local e o Global,” 21.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 19; Eduardo and Araújo, “Por Meio de Jean Manzon,” 183.

²⁵⁰ Lima, “Indigenism in Brazil,” 209.

white audience. Writing about *O Cruzeiro*'s great role in this push for images of indigenous and black citizens, Sérgio Burgi, director of the photo archive Instituto Moreira Salles, noted that after World War II the magazine's editors "opposed the recurrent use of sensationalist photo stories and supported a form of photojournalism that showed a greater commitment to an objective, documentary perspective."



Figure 5.1 Cover page of “1947 – Bandeira” (“1947 – Flag”), *O Cruzeiro*, August 23, 1947, 8–13. Photos and text by Jean Manzon. The article follows a set of *sertanista* brothers meeting an indigenous tribe, the Xavante, in Mato Grosso. The article’s title comes from an image in which one of the brothers presents a tribesman with a Brazilian flag.



Figure 5.2 Cover page of “As Noivas dos Deuses Sanguinários” (“The Brides of the Blood Gods”), *O Cruzeiro*, September 15, 1951. Photos by José Medeiros; text by Arlindo Silva. The piece describes the initiation rites of a *candomblé* cult in Bahia. Six years later, Medeiros published his photographs in a book entitled *Candomblé*.

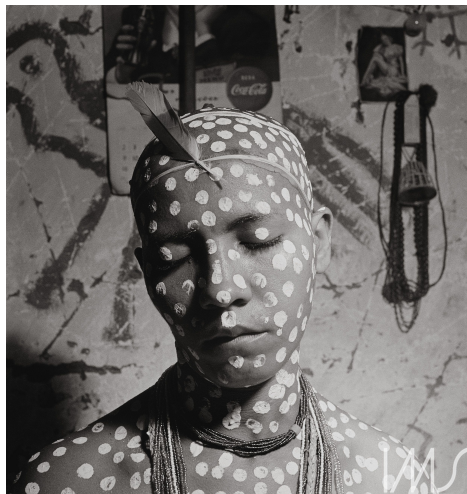


Figure 5.3 José Medeiros, from “As Noivas dos Deuses Sanguinários,” *O Cruzeiro*, 15 September 1951.
(Source: Instituto Moreira Salles.)

These photo essays could be accused of sensationalizing the lives and rituals of non-white Brazilians, even if only in revealing the very different forms of living, dressing, and worshipping that occurred within the nation's borders. They also shared some commonalities with the eugenic studies carried out by Edgar Roquette Pinto to categorize the country's "racial types"²⁵¹—most notably in the way both anthropologist and magazine photographers choose to make close-up frontal portraits of their subjects (Figure 5.4). Yet the photography, especially that by Medeiros, expressed more than a prurient fascination; they also demonstrate a genuine engagement with and empathy for the subjects who, in many cases, seem not to be representative stand-ins for a particular group, but rather individuated actors working within the parameters of cultural norms that presumably were foreign to the average *O Cruzeiro* reader.

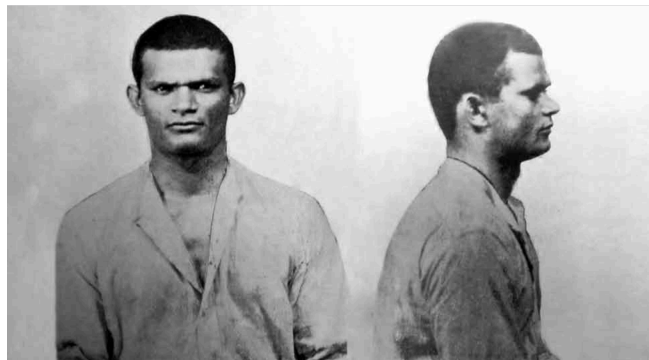


Figure 5.4 Edgar Roquette-Pinto, Photograph of a “Melandermo,” 1929.
(Source: Vanderlei de Souza, “The portrait of a Nation: Edgard Roquette-Pinto’s Study on the Brazilian ‘Anthropological Types’, 1910–1920,” 653.)

²⁵¹ Vanderlei de Souza, “The Portrait of a Nation: Edgard Roquette-Pinto’s Study on the Brazilian ‘Anthropological Types’, 1910–1920,” *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi: Ciências Humanas* 7, no. 3 (Sept–Dec 2012): 645–669, DOI: 10.1590/S1981-81222012000300003.

5.4 The MASP and *Habitat* Reflect the Multiracial Narrative

Pietro Maria and Lina Bo Bardi arrived from Italy in 1946 to mount three shows of Italian painting in Rio de Janeiro. During those exhibitions, Chateaubriand decided that, considering Pietro's long experience as a gallery owner, critic, and art collector in Italy, he would be an apt partner for building a collection at Chateaubriand's new museum in São Paulo. As a bonus, Pietro and his young wife—an architect, journalist, and industrial designer—had a very definite curatorial vision. The Bardis agreed and moved to São Paulo, both seeing the museum as a pedagogical tool for promoting their interpretation of modernism, which like Lucio Costa's, did not reject the past, but instead established a particular historic lineage. For Costa, colonial-era art and architecture was the model and driving force for Brazilian modernism, making “the case for the parallel existence of conservation and modernism as truly Brazilian.”²⁵² Specifically, as we saw in Chapter Two, Costa and SPHAN cared about conservation of Baroque buildings. The Bardis, by contrast, believed that the country's folk arts should provide the *Kunstwollen* for the country's modernism. This different approach proved to be critical to a generation of younger artists in years to come.

The Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), which opened in 1947, was housed in the office building of the Diarios Associados, Chateaubriand's media syndicate. Here, the Bardis offered their audience—the upper and middle classes of São Paulo—exhibitions of contemporary art and design after first mounting a time line of Western art history in their “Exposição Didactico.” Both Lina and Pietro believed that the city's nouveau riche had

²⁵² Vivanco, “Trope of the Tropics,” 195.

little to no cultural education and saw themselves as knowing mentors to an uninformed audience that had lived in the city for no more than a generation and was concerned primarily with conspicuous consumption. After setting up the parameters of art history as they saw them, the Bardis offered shows dedicated to Candido Portinari, a renowned Brazilian painter who designed mosaics for the MES building; Alexander Calder; Flávio de Carvalho; contemporary chairs; “aspects of Expressionism”; and contemporary sculpture.²⁵³

5.4.1 The MASP’s Curatorial Stance

For the last show of 1948, the Bardis took a different tack and asked their audience to consider the ceramic art of Pernambuco, a state in the northeastern part of the country known for its arid plains called the *sertão* and its mix of African, indigenous, and European cultures. The exhibition, entitled “Ceramica Nordestina,” featured the work of several ceramicists, most notably Severino and Vitalino.

In Italy, Bo Bardi’s articles for *Domus* and *A*, a magazine she founded with Bruno Zevi, frequently explored what she called popular arts, so the choice of subject for the MASP 1948 exhibition was to an extent predictable. A search for authentic national culture had been on her mind since the early 1940s. In an interview, Marcelo Ferraz, one of Bo’s collaborators during the 1970s and ‘80s, described a trip that Bo said she took through Italy just after World War II, reminiscent of the one undertaken by Eros Volúcia in Brazil. Bo claimed that she had been searching for evidence of folk culture²⁵⁴ not erased by commerce

²⁵³ Arquivo histórico do MASP. Accessed May, 2014.

²⁵⁴ I am using the terms “folk” and “folklore” here to indicate objects created by artists working in a vernacular rooted in a particular location. It is worth noting, however, that

and advertising, and that almost no trace of genuine Italian folk arts remained. As she made clear in many interviews, she saw her arrival in Brazil as a chance to champion a native culture that had not yet been subsumed by capitalism. *Ceramica Nordestina* was her first curatorial effort to that end.

The exhibition consisted of ceramics acquired during a trip to Pernambuco made by the artist Augusto Rodrigues. He collected examples of clay figurines and ex-votos from all over the state. A 1945 map (Figures 5.5 and 5.6) shows some of the state's major highways highlighted and annotated with remarks about the type of artwork one could find in different locations, as well as the names of better-known artists. For instance, an arrow is extended from the city of Palmares and the unnamed annotator listed types of ceramic work to be found, there including those known as "mamulengos"—puppets with ceramic heads associated with Pernambuco—and figures from the "*bumba meu boi*," a popular folk tale about the death and resurrection of a bull.

Bo Bardi herself decried the term "foclore," which in Italian and Portuguese connote nostalgia and sentimentality.

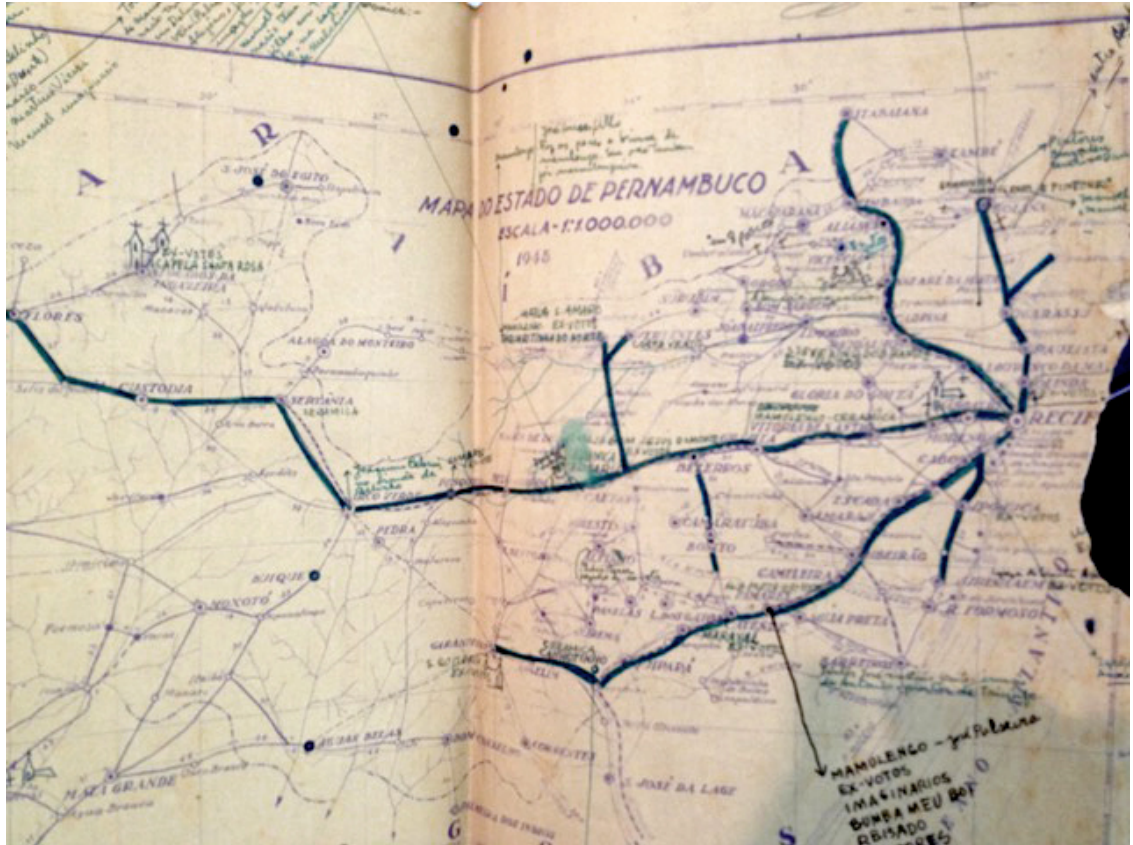


Figure 5.5 Detail of map of Pernambuco showing the location of folk artists in the state.
(Source: Instituto P.M. e Lina Bo Bardi.)

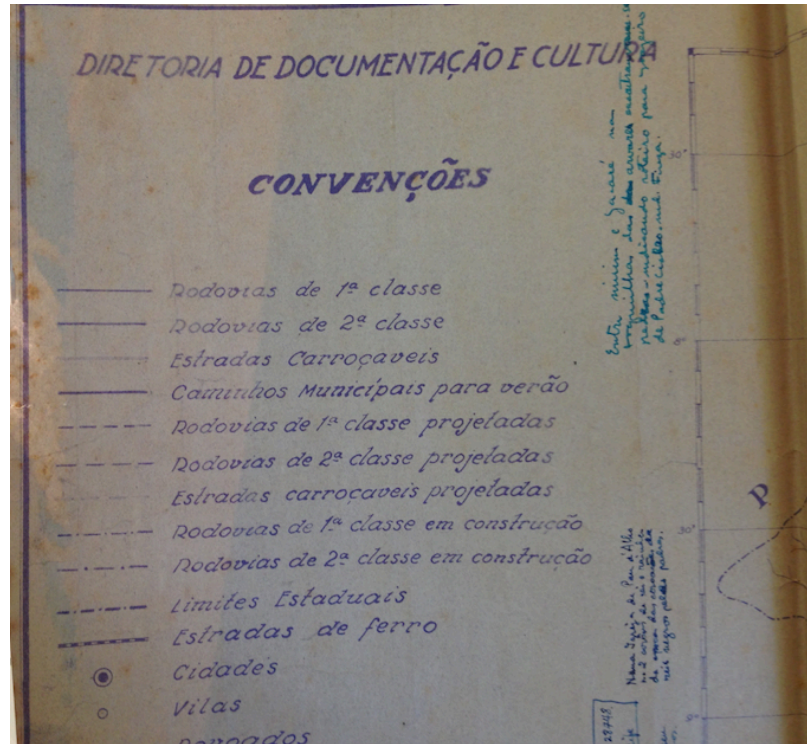


Figure 5.6 Detail of map of Pernambuco, with legend indicating quality of roads and sizes of towns.
 (Source: Instituto P.M. e Lina Bo Bardi.)

The writer of an unsigned article in the *Diario de Pernambuco* about the resulting exhibition found the Paulista interest in northern folk arts amusing. “The ‘boneco de barro’ [clay figurine] came down from Caruarú [an interior Pernambucan city] and took São Paulo by force. At least that’s the news we hear in the state of bandits,” he wrote, referring to Pernambuco’s history as home of frontiersmen. The writer noted that the exhibition at the MASP was not of objects that could be made by machines or mass-produced, and that its handmade art would provide audiences with knowledge of what he called “a most interesting aspect of popular art, establishing contact with art of the people in its purest form.” The article’s subtitle, the writer pointed out, underscores the exhibition as a lesson in national self-knowledge for the people of São Paulo: “An exhibition of northeastern

ceramics, ex-votos and *mamulengos*, constitute an unprecedented occurrence in the artistic life of the South.”²⁵⁵

After this “roots” exhibition, the Bardis strategically mounted a show about the work of Richard Neutra, the Austrian architect whose work is synonymous with California modernism. Pietro wrote the catalog essay, in which he lauded Neutra for his clarity and responsiveness to site and contrasted him to unnamed false Modernists whose work depended solely on Corbusian ticks. “The ‘pilotis’ and the cantilever are, among the disciples of Le Corbusier, the equivalent of the shell and the volute in the baroque,” he wrote.²⁵⁶ In their curatorial decisions, the Bardis were making the MASP the museological equivalent of the SPHAN journal, toggling between “high” art and traditional work from different regions of Brazil.

On April 21 of that year, two days after the country celebrated its first Day of the Indian, the Bardis again gave the São Paulo public a lesson in *Brasilidade*, this time with an exhibition of indigenous art. In an unsigned essay in the exhibition catalog, a writer, almost certainly one of the Bardis, argued that the public should be educated about the making of indigenous art in part because it sheds light on the work of some modern artists like Picasso and Lipschitz who had turned to indigenous art forms for inspiration.

The Bardis’ fascination with indigenous and vernacular culture was by no means unique among the country’s intellectuals and cultural elites: in Brazil alone the number of articles, exhibitions, and books about related topics were numerous. Luis Saia had written

²⁵⁵ “A Escultura Popular de Pernambuco no ‘Museu de Arte de São Paulo’,” *Diario de Pernambuco*, Recife, Brazil, January 7, 1949.

²⁵⁶ *Richard Neutra*, Catalog of MASP exhibition, 1949. Arquivo Biblioteca e Centro de Documentação do MASP.

Escultura Popular Brasileira (Popular Brazilian Sculpture) in 1941 and eight years later his colleague Mario Barata published *Conceito e Metodologia das Artes Populares, (Concept and Methodology of Popular Arts)*. A year after *Ceramica Nordestina*, the Arquivo Folclorico da Discoteca Publica Municipal of São Paulo mounted an exhibition of its collection and published an accompanying catalog. This brief list, it should be noted, excludes the articles that the Bardis themselves published in *Habitat*, the design magazine they founded as part of their educational mission at the MASP.

5.4.2 Bo Bardi's Articles for *Habitat*

Published between 1950 and 1965, *Habitat* was only directly written and edited by the Bardis from its inception until the end of 1953. Bo Bardi wrote, illustrated, and laid out the magazine's first fifteen issues.²⁵⁷ Her published work in Italy offers abundant evidence that the editorial stance she took before meeting, working with, and marrying Pietro was very similar to that of *Habitat*. As shown below, her journalism in Italy demonstrates her lifelong strategy of assessing Modernist architecture through the lens of vernacular design.

After graduating with a degree in architecture from the University of Rome in 1939, Bo Bardi moved to Milan to work as a design journalist for *Domus*, *Lo Stile*, and *A*. Those articles show her articulating a clear vision of her architectural values, ones that perhaps not incidentally were quite similar to those of Gio Ponti (1891–1979), the founder of *Domus* who with Bernard Rudofsky (1905–1988) championed the Mediterranean villa as

²⁵⁷ Cecilia Braschi, “Lina Bo Bardi and the Magazine Habitat,” in *Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions*, <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/magazine/lina-bo-bardi-and-the-magazine-habitat/>. Accessed 10 June 2018.

a paradigm of good design that should be emulated by Modernist architects. Bardi regularly wrote about architecture she deemed, in the parlance of the era and place, to be “rural, “spontaneous,” and “minor.”

Bo Bardi’s article “Architecture and Nature: The House in the Landscape” appeared in *Domus* in November 1943. It offers an excellent window into her thinking and most thoroughly sums up the design values towards which she drove in other articles of this period. In the article, she credited the modern movement in architecture (a period she did not specifically designate) with its dispensing of what she said is essentially the nineteenth century’s fascination with “superficial aestheticism” and “academic formalism.”²⁵⁸ Instead, modernism values a site’s “soil, climate, environment, life that with marvelous primitivism” was embodied in rural houses, most perfectly in the Mediterranean villa. She pointed out that her article was not an exercise in nostalgia or folklore. Rather, her analysis of rural houses was meant to show how “authentic” building was akin to the best of modern architecture, which should use modern technology to serve the life and work of contemporary men and women. She wrote, “The primordial instinct for shelter that inspired cabins of straw and branches, cone-shaped roofs, cubes of massive stone blocks, that we encounter anew today, after a profound evolution, in the architecture of houses that [...] preserve the ‘purity’ of spontaneous and primordial forms from which they are derived.” Opposed to this was what she called “traditional architecture,” i.e., construction that separates the house from nature. She went on to laud buildings that used local traditions and materials (e.g., adobe in New Mexico, unglazed brick and linseed-treated wood in

²⁵⁸ Lina Bo Bardi, “Arquitetura e Natureza: A Casa na Paisagem,” *Domus*, no. 191 (November 1943): 464–71.

Southern California); that responded formally to the landscape while rejecting stylistic airs for the sake of ornament or fashion; and that used current technology in consideration of “the civilized exigencies of modern life,” as she described one California house with a central space enclosed by three walls of glass to maximize views.

At *Habitat*, this editorial stance was further expanded to specifically address art and architectural traditions in Brazil, albeit the ones that Bo Bardi identified as authentic. In the first issue of *Habitat* (Figure 5.7), for instance, she wrote about the logic of using durable coconut shells as bowls, while making much of hammocks as models for contemporary sofas: “On the boats that sail the rivers of the northern part of the country, the hammock is, as is true all over Brazil, at once a bed and an armchair. The perfect adherence to the shape of the body, the undulating movement, make it one of the most perfect vehicles for rest.”²⁵⁹

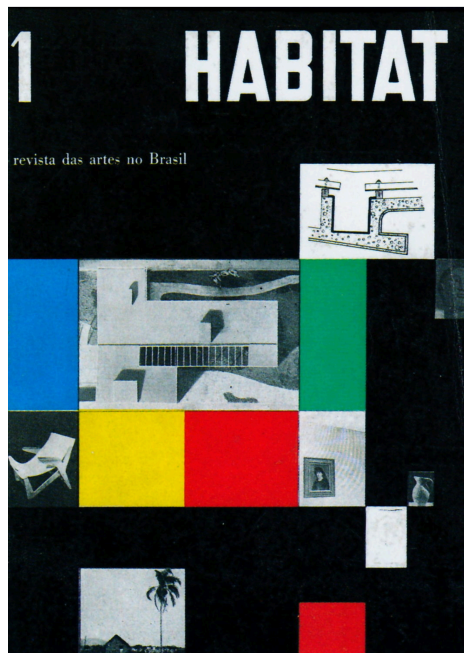


Figure 5.7 Cover of the first issue of *Habitat*, October-December, 1950.
(Source: Lina Bo Bardi, 3rd edition (São Paulo: Instituto Lina Bo e P.M. Bardi, 2008), 64.)

²⁵⁹ Lina Bo Bardi, n.t., *Habitat* (October–December 1950): 56.

At *Domus*, most of her articles engaged in a detailed formal analysis of the buildings she admired, while her work for *Habitat* was directly polemical: she regularly spoke to her readers about the importance of vernacular art and design. “Another primitive painter?” she asks at the start of an article from 1952 about a folk artist. “One more, and it won’t be the last.” She defended her position as one meant to counter hierarchies in art as well as to offer a stand against commercialism. She urged her readers to see the folk artist as the true source of great art.

The first issue of *Habitat* included a typical piece by Bo Bardi that described architecture grounded in a particular locale by unnamed builders in impoverished circumstances. Entitled “Amazônas: O Povo Arquiteto (“Amazônas: the People as Architect”) (Figure 5.8), the article begins with a definition of “society” as “a group of citizens together free of class distinctions.” Although this included all people—everyone from Einstein to a lone soldier in Korea—Bo wrote that much could be learned from the poor of Brazil’s interior. The essay then quickly honed in on the state of Amazônas as a place that offered a style of residential architecture that was “extremely functional and very aesthetic, agreeable, and providing scenes of daily life, that make manifest the happiness of simple man.” The piece is illustrated with photographs of small wooden houses with thatched roofs and open interiors that provide shelter from heat and rain. All are modest and closely tied to their surroundings, whether in a jungle setting or along a river. Bardi wrote multiple articles that followed the same theme to answer a question she posed in the third issue: “Why are the people the best architect?”

Her best known essay from *Habitat*, “Bela Criança” (“Beautiful Child”), was

published in 1952 in response to numerous European architects who had started to dismiss Brazil's Modernist architecture as mere formalism.²⁶⁰ She agreed that Brazil's modern architecture was flawed on several fronts—some buildings had been poorly constructed, and Niemeyer's "free-form constructions" may have been undisciplined—but the country's Modernism was animated by its "intimate poetry of the Brazilian land." She cited rural wattle-and-daub construction as the true inspiration for modern architects in Brazil, and in sharp contrast to Costa, saw no connection between the work of her contemporaries and the "architecture of the Jesuits." She went on to paint a picture of a Brazilian *sertanista* "who has never known the great cities or the monuments of civilisation, who cannot refer to a tradition that stretches back thousands of years, but whose achievements—things made possible only because of his singular pride—cause men from ancient civilisations to stop and stare." This simple figure, she concluded, was the true source of Brazil's architectural creativity, which depended on twentieth century technology in concert with an art she called primitive. She then decried architecture that hewed to a formula instead of recognizing what she saw as true Modernism: "shaped by a love of humanity, and has nothing whatsoever to do with exterior forms and formalist acrobatics." Importantly, she argued that Brazil must be viewed on its own terms—not in relationship to Europe—and that required her to discard the long-established Baroque-as-forerunner-of-Brazilian-Modernism that gave Costa, Niemeyer, and others so much authority both in Brazil and abroad. Instead, she deployed landscape, climate, and some ill-defined form of indigenous culture to understand and justify the country's contemporary design in the early 1950s.

²⁶⁰ Lina Bo Bardi, "Bela Criança," *Habitat 2* (January–March 1951): 3.

In writing about rural, vernacular architecture, Bo Bardi was stepping outside of the purview of contemporary design magazines in Brazil,²⁶¹ but in continually referring to “o povo,” she was also reflecting a common development in the country’s rhetoric of both the arts and politics, as we saw above in *O Cruzeiro*. According to music historian Christopher Dunn, “The articulation of a mestiço nationality coincided with the construction of the *povo* (masses) as a social and political category.”²⁶² Ironically, adopting such vague terminology resulted in a conflation of indigenous and African cultures, a reinforcement of a dichotomy between Brazilian norm and Brazilian other.



Figure 5.8 “Amazônias: O Povo Arquiteto,” *Habitat 1* (October–December, 1950): 70–71.

²⁶¹ Fabiana Terenzi Stuchi, “Revista Habitat: Um Olhar Moderno Sobre Os Anos 50 em São Paulo” (PhD diss., School of Architecture and Urbanism, University of Sao Paulo, 2007), 67.

²⁶² Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 27.

Despite much of its content, the journal was in no way an “outsider” publication; to the contrary, not only was it under the purview of Châto’s *Diario Associados*, but the very first edition included a letter from Nelson Rockefeller, who had been deeply involved in US-Latin American affairs since the 1930s. The letter expounded upon the political importance of art, a point that Rockefeller had made at the opening of the Museum of Modern Art.²⁶³

The pages of *Habitat* also reveal Bo Bardi to have been a keen observer of contemporary architecture. The most notable of her essays on this score is “Two Works by Oscar Niemeyer” (Jan–March 1951) and “The Houses of João Vilanova Artigas.” The first presented Niemeyer as an architect who imagines the plastic possibilities of modern materials far more than many of his European colleagues, excepting Pier Luigi Nervi and Erich Mendelsohn. Furthermore, she cut Niemeyer free of the Costa-SPHAN dictate of Brazilian-modernism-as-parallel to the country’s Baroque.

The plastic demand of these new forms is felt instinctively by Oscar Niemeyer, who moves further away from the structure of the “cage” in his search for a plastic that is not baroque, because the baroque in architecture is still a complete aesthetic expression of craftsmanship, while in the search for free forms, modern architecture is concerned with man, and in the expression of these free forms there is the search for the perfection of forms that we call “blossomed,” perfect forms derived from the perfection of the machine.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Nelson A. Rockefeller letter in *Habitat* (October–December, 1950); Zeuler R. M. A. Lima, “Nelson A. Rockefeller and Art Patronage in Brazil after World War II: Assis Chateaubriand, the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) and the Museu de Arte Moderna (MAM),” Last accessed January 2019. <http://rockarch.issuelab.org/resource/nelson-a-rockefeller-and-art-patronage-in-brazil-after-world-war-ii-assis-chateaubriand-the-museu-de-arte-de-sao-paulo-masp-and-the-musee-de-arte-moderna-mam.html>

²⁶⁴ Quoted in Silvana Rubino and Marina Grinover, ed., *Lina por Escrito* (São Paulo: COSAC NAIKY, 2009), 74.

In the work of Vilanova Artigas (1915–85), Bo Bardi found not a boundary-pushing use of materials so much as architecture that provoked the middle class (Figure 5.9). She applauded the open layout of his homes, their honesty and clarity. Believing that such values would shock bourgeois visitors to demand heavy curtains and high hedges, she dramatically declared the houses to be embodiments of the social and ethical tenets underpinning the modern movement: “They are not against man, being as far as possible from the fortress house, the closed house, the house with interior and exterior, the denunciation of an epoch of mortal hatred.”



Figure 5.9 “Casas de Vilanova Artigas,” *Habitat 1* (October–December, 1950): 2-3.

Whether writing about Modernist or vernacular architecture, Bo Bardi’s design values remained consistent: finding innovative ways to use available materials; designing to undercut middle class values, which she understood as avaricious and antithetical to

community; praising design ideas of impoverished Brazilians living in rural communities, putting particular emphasis on clarity and openness; and finally, being responsive to user and place. All of these were in keeping with tenets of modernism; by highlighting the vernacular of poverty, she saw herself as renewing that movement. Nonetheless, Bardi relied upon a familiar distinction: the vernacular is made by nameless artists (“the people”) working in what she assumed to be an unchanged tradition, while the contemporary architect is a genius designer and singular hero, who in Bo Bardi’s telling, is often pitted against commercial and political forces.

5.5 Architectural Responses to a Multiracial *Brasilidade*

As we saw above, both Lina Bo Bardi’s exhibitions and her writing presented indigenous art and culture as parallel to European-based art. Her architecture of this period—namely the house she built for herself and Pietro—followed a notably similar line of argument: its front-facing elements demonstrate the designer’s deep engagement with the architectural debates of the era, what Marcelo Ferraz observed as “all the lessons of the modern movement, all the eagerness to build and experiment, repressed and bottled up during the war years.”²⁶⁵ A glass box set on pilotis, it recalls both the Farnsworth House and the Villa Savoye, that is, twentieth-century icons of architectural modernism. Its rear, by contrast, finds the architect dallying with a version of Brazilian vernacular designed as a counterpoint to the house’s stunning, high Modernist elements. As discussed later in this chapter, the Glass House, as it came to be known, was envisioned by Bo Bardi as a physical

²⁶⁵ Lina Bo Bardi, *Casa de Vidro/The Glass House, 1950–1951* (Lisbon: Editorial Blau, 1999), n.p.

demonstration of the values she had been promoting via the MASP and *Habitat*. Before moving to Bo Bardi's first completed project, however, a brief discussion of two landmark works of architecture in Brazil is in order. They function as examples of the era's design milieu and its responses to criticism from abroad.

5.5.1. Pampulha (1941) and Pedregulho (1946)

The international reception of Brazilian architecture during and directly preceding World War II was exemplified by *Brazil Builds* (1943), an exhibition and subsequent book by New York's Museum of Modern Art, that set the initial laudatory tone towards Brazilian architecture. The show spurred international interest in Brazil's modern architecture and greatly influenced how it was perceived well into the 1950s. The book was divided into two sections, Old and Modern, the first comprised almost entirely of photographs of seventeenth-century churches in Minas Gerais and Bahia. The second section consisted largely of photographs featuring houses and government buildings built from 1937 to 1942. That is, Goodwin hewed to Lucio Costa's thesis, which highlighted affinities between Brazilian modern architecture and the country's Baroque.

When Bo Bardi began to design the Glass House, she was aware that Goodwin's thesis was starting to come under fire, most famously by Max Bill, the Swiss architect who leveled withering criticism at Modernist architecture in Brazil. He argued that his Brazilian colleagues did not create form dictated by social program, but created what were essentially stage sets of Modernism, what he called "anti-social academicism."²⁶⁶ The one exception to his critique was Affonso Reidy's Pedregulho housing complex (1946) in Rio, which he

²⁶⁶ Max Bill, "Report on Brazil," *Architectural Review* (October 1954): 238–239.

viewed as “completely successful from the standpoint of town planning as it is architecturally and socially.”²⁶⁷ Ernesto Rogers, who shared Bill’s doubts about the state of Brazilian architecture, also found the project worthy, writing in *Casabella-Continuita* in 1954 that it represented “a happy fusion of the natural and cultivated traditions of Brazil.”²⁶⁸

Reidy, a member of the team that designed the MESP, worked as the lead architect for the city’s public housing agency. His wife, the formidable Carmen Portinho, was the agency’s director, an extraordinary advocate among public servants for quality residences for the ever-growing population of Rio as it swelled with men and women migrating from rural areas. Reidy built Pedregulho (1946) to accommodate these newcomers to the city in a complex that provided housing as well as a health center, laundry, nursery, school, pool, children’s theater, kindergarten, and multiple public spaces. The seven-building complex’s best-known structure—the one featured in any story about Pedregulho—is Block A. It is curvilinear in plan, an apartment block built into a hill in Rio in the Benfica neighborhood. Set on pilotis, Block A consists of a seven-story building with 272 apartments, many with views of Guanabara Bay. A walkway separating the upper and lower sections of the building functions as a “street in the sky” and was meant to offer residents multipurpose, covered outdoor space that took advantage of the location’s vista. In designing the project, Reidy looked to precedents such as Le Corbusier’s plans for Rio and Algiers, as well as the Crescent at Bath.²⁶⁹ Alvar Aalto’s Baker House had been completed in 1948, and its

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁶⁸ Despite his own ambivalence about Niemeyer’s designs, Rogers argues that any criticism is inevitably rooted in one’s home culture, a retort to Max Bill’s Eurocentric stance.

²⁶⁹ Rafael Spindler da Silva, “Conjunto Pedregulho e Algumas Relacoes Compositivas,”

sinuous form may have also appealed to Reidy as a precedent outside of Brazil of a large-scale residential building taking an organic form.²⁷⁰ Building on these noted projects from abroad, Reidy also referred to the S-curved plan as a signifier of the nation's Baroque architecture.

Like Lucio Costa at Guinle Park (1948)—an apartment house for upper middle class residents in the upscale Laranjeiras section of Rio—Reidy referred to the *muxarabis* of colonial Brazil by creating a permeable screen of tiles on the building's façade. On the intermediary “street” level, he included vertical *brise soleils*. Both elements provide filtered light, air, and privacy using a design element that assured one and all that this iteration of modernity was uniquely Brazilian.

The development had a distinct social engineering program. Residents were rigorously screened and encouraged to maintain a particular level of cleanliness, so much so that the government provided each resident with free laundry detergent as encouragement to use the buildings' centralized laundry service, a new concept to the residents and one they resisted.²⁷¹ By ridding residents of laundry lines, “the architects [...] completely failed to understand the social role of laundry [...]. Eliminating [it] eliminated a crucial means of socialization.”²⁷² Eventually, the complex fell into disrepair and has since become a dangerous, crime-ridden location. *Central Station*, the 1998 Walter Salles film, portrays Pedregulho as a place where crimes are committed with no intervention from police or government authorities.

Cadernos de Arquitetura e Urbanismo 12, no. 13 (December 2005): 83.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁷¹ Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss and Sabine von Fischer, “How to Read Two Monoliths,” *Cabinet* (Spring 2002), <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/6/monoliths.php>.

²⁷² Richard Williams, *Brazil*, 88.

The other touchstone of Brazilian Modernist residential architecture during this period is Pampulha (1941), a luxury housing complex designed by Oscar Niemeyer in the state of Minas Gerais at the request of Juscelino Kubitschek (1902–76), then-mayor of Belo Horizonte. Niemeyer designed a casino, a yacht club, a ballroom, and a hotel—though the last was never built—all organized around an artificial lake. A church was also included in the ensemble, comprised of four parabolic vaults, the tallest holding the altar for mass with smaller vaults for sacristy and rectory.²⁷³ Its street-facing façade makes a nod to Portuguese colonial influence in that it is decorated with a mural made of *azulejos* by Candido Portinari, the same artist who created the murals at the MESP building to signify the country’s Lusitanian roots. (Such a decorative program caused Norma Evenson to observe that Brazilian designers were “clearly unconvinced that ornament was crime.”)²⁷⁴ The yacht club deployed a butterfly roof to separate interior programs, and as Fernando Lara showed in his survey of middle class houses in Minas, thanks to Pampulha, that roofline became a symbol of modernism even for fairly modest houses in Brazil.²⁷⁵ Goodwin notes in *Brazil Builds* that Niemeyer designed the casino with material pleasure in mind: “The interior is especially brilliant by night; pink mirrored walls, polished onyx ramps, and shining steel columns create a gaiety wholly suited to the purpose of the building.”²⁷⁶ Like

²⁷³ Niemeyer refused to include a confessional in the church, arguing that it would imply guilt for the pleasures derived in the rest of the complex (Valerie Fraser, *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America* (New York: Verso, 2000), 189). This, among other factors, may have played a part in the church not being consecrated until 1959, sixteen years after the completion of Pampulha.

²⁷⁴ Norma Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and Brasília* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 86.

²⁷⁵ Lara, *Modernist Architecture in Brazil*.

²⁷⁶ Philip Lippincott Goodwin, *Brazil Builds: Architecture New and Old, 1652–1942* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1943), 182.

his 1939 World's Fair Pavilion, the casino directs the newly minted middle class through large open rooms that, using ramps, mirrors and great expanses of glass, framed users for each other and for themselves as participants in glamorous, eroticized spaces.²⁷⁷ The fourth building, the dance hall (Casa do Baile), is situated on a peninsula of land that juts into the lake: visitors were to follow a path created by an undulating concrete canopy and a Roberto Burle Marx garden to arrive at the central space and dance hall.

Niemeyer intended the Casa do Baile, unlike the rest of the complex, to be a space for all, regardless of class. However, it failed to draw an audience since it was too far from the city center and provided no public transportation for those who could not afford cars.²⁷⁸ The other buildings also remained unused: poor sewage had polluted the lake, making it unfit for boating and the yacht club obsolete; the church was not consecrated until sixteen years after the completion of Pampulha; and the casino became a museum of modern art when gambling was outlawed in the city in 1946. As Luiz Recamán damningly wrote in 2004, “nothing could be more introverted than this display of exotic, yet useless, architectural novelties around a lake.”²⁷⁹

Despite this rather tragic outcome of city planning and public engagement, the complex is undoubtedly a hallmark of Brazilian architecture, and it marked a decisive moment in the development of Niemeyer's architectural language. He adapted Le Corbusier's tenets of design, most especially the architectural promenade, to create a

²⁷⁷ Luis E. Carranza and Fernando Luiz Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014), 110–12; Richard Williams, *Brazil*, 75–76).

²⁷⁸ Luiz Recamán, “High-Speed Urbanization,” in *Brazil's Modern Architecture*, ed. Elisabetta Andreoli and Adrian Forty (New York, NY: Phaidon, 2007), 119.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 119–121.

modernism imbued with the sensual movement of the Baroque. Carranza and Lara write, “In this way, the Pampulha buildings begin to address and solve the conflict between local and international references, representation and abstraction, and industrialization and artisanal construction.”²⁸⁰

Despite not meeting all the social goals of either their funders or their architects, both Pedregulho and Pampulha were conceived as examples of *Brasilidade* in built form. Both make reference to the colonial while also interacting with the sites’ natural elements such as topography, flora, vistas, or a combination of all three. Sandra Vivanco described this phenomenon in Reidy’s project: “Pedregulho could only exist at São Cristóvão. Furthermore, the way in which the hill is hugged by the undulating housing block allows it to explode through the open third floor reaching beyond framed views of the bay and surrounding mountains to create an intermediate order between cultural affirmation and natural mimesis.”²⁸¹

A growing number of domestic critics argued, however, that these projects—even Pedregulho with its middle-class aspirations—did not reckon with the great divide between the country’s economic reality and its ambitions, what has come to be called its “modernism without modernity.” That is not to say that a luminary of Carioca architecture like Niemeyer was opposed or indifferent to the growing class disparities and the need for

²⁸⁰ Carranza and Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 112; Goodwin’s appraisal of Pampulha focused on the monumentality of the complex, its formal daring, and its mastery over a once barren landscape. His one criticism of Pampulha “is the weakness of color, smallness of design and antique look of the tiles, so unrelated to the buildings they cover” (Goodwin, *Brazil Builds*, 90). He recommends the Brazilians turn to tiles with “a big free use of large pattern,” clearly not perceiving the importance of the *azulejos* as visual bond to the nation’s Baroque.

²⁸¹ Vivanco, “Trope of the Tropics,” 198.

recreation, education, and infrastructure projects serving poor Brazilians. To the contrary, he was painfully aware of the needs of the indigent of the country. “I believed, as I still do,” he wrote in 1958, “that unless there is a just distribution of wealth—which can reach all sectors of the populace—the basic objective of architecture, that is its social ballast, would be sacrificed, and our role of architect relegated only to wait upon the whims of the wealthy.”²⁸² For Niemeyer, the absence of either the technology or know-how needed to support the building trades meant that architects were often left to represent aspirations for the country rather than providing needed services. While he acknowledged the criticism of men like Bill and other detractors, he argued that the beauty of form also had power to uplift a people, and given the state of the nation, beauty was frequently his only weapon against despair.²⁸³

5.5.2 Lina Bo Bardi’s Glass House (1951)

Although Lina Bo Bardi was in a unique position to absorb and respond to this crisis of architecture’s relationship to national identity, upon her arrival in Brazil in 1946 she was saddled with several disadvantages. For one thing, she was an immigrant who by the early 1950s came under particular scrutiny because of her husband Pietro’s connection to the Italian Fascists. Furthermore, as a woman, she needed to prove her credentials as an architect who was fully aware of current debates in design, one to be taken seriously and not merely the wife of a wealthy art dealer.²⁸⁴ In contrast to these drawbacks, she and

²⁸² Quoted in Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 93.

²⁸³ Fraser, *Building the New World*, 189

²⁸⁴ Esther da Costa Meyer, “After the Flood,” *Harvard Design Magazine* 16 (Spring/Summer 2002). Last accessed February 2019.

<http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/16/after-the-flood>.

Pietro's alliance with Chato, and their work building the MASP, gave her access to the media and Brazil's cultural powerbrokers. She heard these debates as they played out among the Chateaubriands and Penteados, wealthy actors who could quickly and effectively push a particular agenda, be it political or otherwise. At the same time, many of the country's most prominent artists and musicians regularly visited the Bardis.²⁸⁵

Bo Bardi's first built project, her house in São Paulo, gave her an opportunity to test the ideas she had been championing for years as a writer. The house exemplifies how she followed developments in European and American modernism of the so-called International Style while fostering a fascination with the vernacular. This last often consisted of ideas that conflated various indigenous and African-diasporic influences under the title of "the northeast." The house was constructed in a newly laid out neighborhood of São Paulo named Morumbi, (or Morumby as it was spelled in the original site plans), the site of a former tea plantation. She advocated for new trees to be planted on her property to make up for those cut down by the developer.²⁸⁶ Eventually, the site grew back much of its lush greenery. For Bo Bardi, it was an excellent location in which to examine her fascination with the overlap of modernism and the vernacular.

Bardi once claimed that she avoided designing houses since most she found most clients to be boringly middle class. In fact, she only built three houses during her career. Despite this alleged lack of interest in the residential, she started with a house for obvious reasons: she was a young, untested architect who had the wealth to build an extraordinary house in an extraordinary setting. In addition to acting as a signpost of the Bardis' taste and

²⁸⁵ Zeuler R. M. de A. Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2013), 62.

²⁸⁶ Meyer, "After the Flood."

wealth to the patrons of their various cultural enterprises, the house also acted as a sort of calling card for Bo Bardi's architectural career, the first building in her portfolio. But starting her built work with the design of a house also made sense in terms of recent Brazilian architectural history, although there is no evidence that she considered that when beginning work. Nonetheless, as Andreoli and Forty explain, Modernist twentieth-century house design in Brazil was freighted with a history that Gilberto Freyre clearly pointed to in *The Masters and the Slaves*.

Arguing that the structure of family profoundly shaped Brazilian culture, Freyre described the relationship between upper class families and their slaves as acted out within a series of buildings—the big house and slave quarters. Forte notes that these estate houses displayed contradictory impulses—outward-facing via verandahs and balconies, inward-facing via interior courtyards. According to João Masao Kamita, modern architects in Brazil wanted to connect to this history formally while disengaging from the race-coded aspects of the design itself. The influence of the exterior-facing big house can certainly be seen in any number of notable Modernist houses of the era, including Bo Bardi's Glass House.²⁸⁷

Bardi visually communicated with the natural world surrounding her house via a front façade of ceiling-to-floor glass walls, the main floor propped on slender pilotis against a hillside site. The image was so striking that it was featured in the Morumbi housing estate advertising with the slogan “Art and Nature.”²⁸⁸ It looked out on what Bardi later recalled as the tea plantation's few remaining buildings that allegedly had housed runaway slaves.

²⁸⁷ Kamita, João Masao Kamita, “The Modern Brazilian House,” in Andreoli and Forty, *Brazil's Modern Architecture*, 144–146.

²⁸⁸ Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi*, 58.

In a 1986 essay, she described at length the birds and plants all visible from what was essentially a viewing platform just above the tree line. “It was a great reserve of Brazilian Forest, full of wildlife: ocelot, armadillo, small deer, cavy opossum, sloth...” In fact, Bo Bardi’s original design called for more organic materials to be used in the house’s construction (e.g., tree trunks instead of concrete for pilotis), but for reasons unknown, she opted for a more obvious machine aesthetic.²⁸⁹

The interior-facing aspects of the house were largely about visual effect, not an accessible space for recreation such as the poolside landscape at Niemeyer’s Canoas House (1953). The “courtyard,” more akin to an open-roofed light well built around an existing tree, is visible from the living and dining rooms. The interior- and exterior-facing elements of the house make great visual statements about the value of flora and fauna. Functionally, however, the house is sealed off from both. In that way, her design was akin to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House²⁹⁰ completed in 1951 and Philip Johnson’s Glass House from 1949. All three houses build on the early-twentieth-century fashion of using landscape as “ornament” for a home’s interior, a tradition that came out of the availability of plate glass.²⁹¹ In that sense, Bo Bardi’s vision was more akin to European cold weather design than that of her Brazilian colleagues who, like designers in Southern California, were creating spaces more permeable to nature.

The Glass House’s rear, however, had a quite different relationship to the landscape than its front. Behind the more public areas of the house are servants’ quarters, pantry, and

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 62.

²⁹⁰ Meyer, “After the Flood,” n.p. for digital version of article.

²⁹¹ Sandy Isenstadt, *The Modern American House: Spaciousness and Middle-Class Identity* (New York: NY Cambridge University Press, 2014), 215–249.

laundry, following the era's class and gender conventions.²⁹² Nonetheless, the rear is a useful area to consider when thinking about the architect's vision of vernacular architecture and its uses. The back façade of the house is, as Zeuler Lima put it, "rooted in the simple popular rural traditions that Bo Bardi prized."²⁹³ He notes that while the east (glass) façade was for entertaining important visitors related to the Bardis' ambitions as cultural kingmakers, Bo Bardi seemed to use the rear (which her student and collaborator Marcelo Suzuki referred to as "the heavy side") as a laboratory for working out her ideas about architecture's relationship to landscape and class. With masonry walls and wood-shuttered windows, the rear end looks like a solid farmhouse, utterly disconnected from the lithe, transparent front. Moreover, from this end of the house, the lush surroundings are immediately accessible. In a 1953 article about the house in *Habitat*, Bo Bardi noted that she had installed "two brick and adobe ovens built by *Caboclos*," in the house's backyard (Figure 5.10).²⁹⁴ Using the Portuguese word for a person of mixed-race—usually white and indigenous—she demonstrated, if somewhat condescendingly, that she was both aware of and valued local residents' traditions. She likewise made a purposeful show of valuing local inhabitants and traditions, although the conditions of the former tea plantation may have been less than ideal.

²⁹² Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi*, 62.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*



Figure 5.10 Back of Lina Bo Bardi’s Glass House with oven at right.
(Source: Photo by Zeuler R.M.A. Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi*, 61).

Over the years, Bo Bardi went on to build other structures on the property, including a separate studio for herself—a wooden cabin set on concrete blocks with wooden and thatched roof—where she more fully made reference to local “poor” architecture and designed a building more fully integrated into the landscape. But this was far in the future: as Zeuler Lima aptly put it, “It would take Bo Bardi at least another decade to begin fine-tuning the connection between her aesthetic quest and the ethical discourse she professed in her articles for Italian magazines and *Habitat*.”²⁹⁵

Despite writing about the need for a built connection to the local vernacular, the house was essentially an essay in architectural schizophrenia—European modernism versus Paulistana rural shelter. The house reflected Brazilian architecture’s struggle to

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

define itself between the forces of the “international style”—intended to stand outside of political, cultural, and architectural history—and the ever-expanding definition of *Brasildade* and how that would be expressed in built form.

Bo Bardi’s work provides an excellent record of how the expanding vision of Brazilian identity could be found in architectural discourse while simultaneously illustrating that such a use of the vernacular for nationalist ends had precedents in other parts of the world—in Bo Bardi’s case, in Italy. The dilemma that Bardi faced—of designing buildings that did not neglect or ignore the nation’s realities—was hardly hers alone. In a notorious 1951 essay entitled “The Biennial Is Against Brazilian Artists,” João Vilanova Artigas made just that point. In the same year of the city’s first biennial, which had been organized by São Paulo’s Museum of Modern Art, Artigas, the architect whom Bo Bardi had praised so fulsomely the year before as a designer of the *épater-les-bourgeois* variety, railed against the event as an excuse for the profit of art collectors and the intrusion of North American imperialism. He wrote that the ruling class had few worries “because the artists are a sector of the people that no longer offers danger, because from now on (victory of the Biennial) they will be focused on the research of abstract art, far from the danger of agitating in their artistic productions the problems of the people, the popular revolt, against the misery and delay in which we live [...]. The path they will have taken is that of an art that does not consider objective things, realities and will not deviate from them.”²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ João Vilanova Artigas, “A Bienal é Contra os Artistas Brasileiros,” in *Caminhos da Arquitetura* (São Paulo: CosacNaify, 2004), 30-34.

His words, of course, begged the question: how would Brazilian architects avoid a similar fate? In the next and final chapter, I will present two major works of architecture—one by Bo Bardi the other by Artigas—that demonstrate how the architectural discourse in Brazil finally made a full transition from the colonial to the buildings of the poor as the controlling metaphor of national authenticity in built form.

CHAPTER 6

THE AESTHETICS OF POVERTY INFORM MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE, 1959–1968

6.1 Introduction

When Lucio Costa presented the Brazilian Baroque of the 17th and 18th centuries as evidence of the nation's cultural strengths in the face of a European colonizer, he did so as a classically educated, upper class Brazilian who had inherited the ideas of the early republic and expanded upon them using the tools suddenly available in the populist Vargas era. He communicated to an audience much like himself—educated in European traditions and looking to distinguish Brazil within that context. The founding of the Ministry of Education and Health and SPHAN, the nation's preservation organization, provided Costa and his like-minded peers with a platform for connecting the centuries-old national pride in Portuguese-inflected architecture to the Modernist architecture from developed nations. As shown in Chapter Two, Costa used close formal analysis of buildings highly familiar to his relatively small audience of architects, curators, and critics, as proof that, regardless of era or materials, the Brazilian Baroque was itself modern in its response to site and climate and in its use of materials.

By the early 1940s, anthropologists, photographers, reporters, and editors started to bring the customs of distant locations within the nation's border into people's living rooms, museums, and classrooms by reframing Brazil as a nation of abundance instead of one of defects and deficits. Through the development of both mass media and the field of anthropology as tools of observation and regulation, these actors accomplished what the

building of the new capital, Brasilia, purportedly set out to do: create an image of Brazil representative of the peoples who lived within its borders.

By the late 1950s, these factors—the valorization of the Brazilian Baroque and the popularization of the nation’s “other”— provided evidence that in the hands of a group of architects working in São Paulo led to quite a different conclusion from those of the SPHAN cohort. The Paulistas referred to in this chapter were not a cohesive group. They included João Vilanova Artigas (1915–85), and a set of his students who called themselves Grupo Arquitetura Nova (Sérgio Ferro, Rodrigo Lefevre, and Flávio Império) and Lina Bo Bardi, who while an admirer of Artigas’ work, was not in the same academic circle. Nonetheless, they are grouped together here because, despite their different analyses of the Brazilian architectural scene under a military government that came to power in 1964, all rejected the colonial as the framework for understanding *Brasilidade* in architecture. Instead, they had absorbed the image of multicultural Brazil as it had been presented in publications, from the SPHAN journal to *O Cruzeiro*, to formulate a national architectural identity.

This chapter provides context for understanding the ideas of two of these architects who began to look for an authentic Brazil not in the colonial cities of Minas but in a generalized notion of regional vernaculars associated with the country’s poor, a development that will first be explicated via the curatorial of Lina Bo Bardi. Her adoption of an aesthetics of poverty must be understood in light of a number of events: the building of Brasilia, the collapse of democracy in Brazil, the beginning of the military dictatorship in 1964, and its decisive assertion of authoritarian control four years later. As shown in Chapter Four, there were already multiple factors causing *Brasilidade* to be redefined away

from the colonial, Portuguese-influenced architecture, but the radical political events of the 1960s greatly accelerated the search to locate national authenticity in a new source. Furthermore, designers like Bo Bardi were not suggesting that *Brasilidade* could be found in one city or one set of buildings—unlike their Paulista Modernist forbears, there would be no celebrated sojourn to Mangueira, a well-known favela in Rio, or to a rural village in the interior. Theirs was not a position that was formulated with the clarity of Costa’s colonial–Modernist paradigm. Their conceptual framework was far more abstract and pointed only to miscellaneous material evidence as a model for a new architectural discourse via the cultural output of the poor, a category frequently associated and conflated with “Afro-Brazilian,” “indigenous,” and “sertanejo.” In some ways, this renewed search for authenticity could be said to be one that defined itself in opposition to a number of phenomena of the era. First among those was the conception and construction of the new capital city, Brasilia.

6.2 Building Brasilia

Although their media differed, Lucio Costa and Gilberto Freyre both framed their arguments in regional discourses to conclude that Brazil need not be predominately white to be as successful as its European counterparts. In that way, they were gathering evidence not only for their confreres but for colleagues in developed nations as well. *Brazil Builds*—the exhibition and the catalog—speaks to how successfully that idea was communicated abroad. By the late 1950s, the two men were taking notably different approaches to defining *Brasilidade*. In 1951, Freyre accepted an invitation from António de Oliveira Salazar, the dictatorial prime minister of Portugal from 1932–1968, to travel to the

Lusophone nations around the world at Portugal's expense.²⁹⁷ The result was a series of books dedicated to a concept Freyre called Lusotropicalism. In short, he argued that of all European colonizers, the Portuguese had particular affinities with their subjects, in part because they “were themselves the fruit of interracial and intercultural mixing” —having had contact with Muslims and Jews, North Africa and Europe.²⁹⁸ Meanwhile, the trajectory launched by Vargas's Estado Novo that set out to create a more democratic nation than its coffee baron predecessors was being physically realized in the interior state of Goias with the building of Brasilia. It was Lucio Costa who took on the grandest enterprise in defining Brazilian identity in physical form when he entered the competition to design the city's layout. Unlike his competitors, some of whom had devised complex, detailed schemes for the city's infrastructure, Costa offered a far more abstract and, arguably, spiritual proposal: a strikingly simple set of drawings centered on two crossed lines and a swooping arc.²⁹⁹ Perhaps the best example of a multivalent image in architecture, the trinity of drawings was interpreted as a crucifix, a plane, and even a hammock—the bed of the Amazon (Figure 6.1). Of course the power of the design was its suggestion of all three, reflecting the nation's religiosity, its modernity, and its simple, vernacular roots.

²⁹⁷ Peter Burke and Maria Lucia G. Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory in the Tropics* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Ltd, 2008), 119.

²⁹⁸ Robert Wegner and Vanderlei Sebastião de Souza, “Eugenics, Genetics and Anthropology in Brazil,” In *Lusotropicalism and Its Discontents* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2019), 89–111.

²⁹⁹ James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 95.

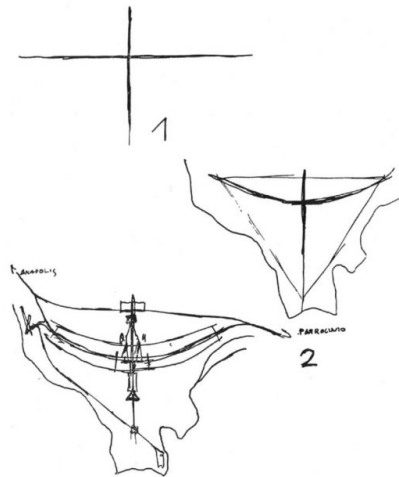


Figure 6.1 Lucio Costa, Competition sketches for the Master Plan of Brasilia, 1957.

The idea of a capital in the interior of the country had been toyed with since the late 18th century, and revisited multiple times in the ensuing years, with the intention of more effectively uniting the vast Brazilian territory than any city along the country’s coastline could. But the plan was not realized until the presidency of the centrist politician Juscelino Kubitschek (1902-76). Having served as mayor of Belo Horizonte and governor of Minas Gerais, the power behind Niemeyer’s Pampulha won the presidential election of 1955, but with only 35 per cent of the vote. Having thwarted a conservative coup before he even took office, and wanting to appease the leftist party of his vice president, he proposed a list of 31 projects that would accomplish “fifty years in five.”³⁰⁰ This included a remarkably ambitious goal: to build a new city that would replace Rio de Janeiro as the nation’s capital. Famously constructed along two central axes, Brasilia created an architectural language

³⁰⁰ Thomas Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* (New York, NY: Oxford, 2010), 147; Luis E. Carranza and Fernando Luiz Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014), 199.

wholly disconnected from site, one that was based on an interpretation of Corbusian notions of zoning, transportation, materials, and urbanism. The Monumental Axis holds the buildings of government, such as the Supreme Court, the Planalto Palace (the presidential residence), and the Congress—two towers for the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, as well as embassies, and other governmental agencies. The residential axis runs along a 12-kilometer highway made up of so-called Superquadras (Super blocks). These are six-story apartment buildings arranged around a square intended as discrete neighborhoods with their own elementary schools and shops. They were reserved for the government’s bureaucratic workers, though that had not been the architect’s intention. As a result, the city was not only programmatically separated but divided by class as well. Designed to communicate progress and egalitarianism, the city was famously constructed by poor, often unskilled laborers using unsophisticated methods, who later, as James Holston showed, “remained systematically excluded” from residing in the planned city (Figure 6.2).³⁰¹ Still, as Farès El-Dahdah has noted, the workers remained on the city’s periphery precisely because conditions there still superior to the ones they had know in their hometowns.³⁰² They famously stayed in improvised housing and eventually built what became known as “satellite cities.” But the planned aspects of Brasilia were a projection of the country’s aspirations and as such the representation of poverty had no place in the new capital. Richard Williams has noted the poignancy inherent in the construction of the

³⁰¹ James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 204.

³⁰² Farès El-Dahdah, ed., *Brasilia’s Superquadras* (New York, NY: Harvard GSD/Prestel, 2005), 13.

city: “Brasilia represents both the chief materialization of the developmentalist ideology in Brazil and its end.”³⁰³



Figure 6.2 Marcel Gautherot. Construction of dome in Brasilia. 1959.
(Source: Photo Instituto Moreira Salles.)

In 1958 Oscar Niemeyer acknowledged this aspect of his design work. In an article entitled “Testimony,” published in *Módulo*, the journal he and colleagues founded in 1955 (published in Portuguese and English), he declares a “new stage” in his career, one resulting from his travels, his designs for Brasilia and the Museum of Modern Art in Caracas, and “a cold and frank review of my work as an architect.” Niemeyer describes his former reservations about architecture in Brazil, having believed it to be ultimately a

³⁰³ Richard J. Williams, *Brazil*, Modern Architectures in History series (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 133.

vehicle for the rich. “This mistrust,” he writes, “engendered by the social contradictions with relation to the objectives of our profession, which led me to a series of shortcomings, amongst which I would accentuate an excessive tendency toward originality, incentivated [sic] by the interested parties themselves who were desirous of giving to their buildings something showy and spectacular to be talked about.” Essentially, he announces that while he has always believed that architecture could never be at its best until there was greater economic parity among classes, he now would respond to that fact by taking fewer commissions and focusing on pure geometric forms. “In this respect, I have become interested in compact solutions, simple and geometric: problems of hierarchy and architectonic character; the fitness of unity and harmony among the buildings; and further, that these no longer be expressed through their secondary elements, but rather through the structure itself, duly integrated within the plastic conception.”

6.3. A Fragile Democracy

Regardless of Niemeyer’s doubts about the power of architecture to instigate social and political change, his Brasilia, along with many works of architecture of the 1950s including Pampulha and Pedregulho, were part of an architectural, not to mention industrial, efflorescence that concomitantly reflected and affirmed a surge in post-war national confidence.³⁰⁴ Despite a political landscape shot through with scandal and corruption, the nation had rid itself of Vargas and adopted what one economist has called “a government that reasonably deserved to be called a democracy. A democracy of elites to be sure, but a

³⁰⁴ Thomas Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 146.

government in which the electorate was defined in broad terms, elections were free, and the will of the people began to be manifest.”³⁰⁵

Import substitution continued to be an essential part of the Brazilian economy, just as Vargas had promoted during the Estado Novo. This led, in part, to great expansion of industry in the fields of petrochemicals, machinery, automobiles, and electrical systems. During this period, national public service companies were formed such as Petrobras (1953) and an antecedent to Telebras (1954), respectively Brazil’s gas and telephone conglomerates. At the same time, the country’s agricultural businesses declined greatly in value, leading farm workers to migrate to cities, a trend that had started in the 1930s, but greatly accelerated 20 years later.³⁰⁶ According to Afrânio Garcia and Moacir Palmeira, this urbanization of Brazil could be more accurately called a de-ruralization: farm laborers whose families for generations had been supported on large agricultural estates, moved to cities. They were wholly unprepared to find new kinds of work. While their lives in rural zones under an essentially feudal system were far from comfortable, the basic services that landowners did provide were not easily available in cities.³⁰⁷

Chief among these was housing. Although favelas had been part of the Brazilian cityscape at least since 1897 with the creation of Providência in Rio, they expanded exponentially in the 1950s, as more rural citizens moved to cities for work. When he visited

³⁰⁵ Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, “From the Patrimonial State to the Managerial State,” in *Brazil: A Century of Change*, Ignacy Sachs, Jorge Wilhelm, and Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, eds. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 154.

³⁰⁶ Thomas Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 152.

³⁰⁷ Afrânio Garcia and Moacir Palmeira, “Traces of the Big House and the Slave Quarters: Social Transformation in Rural Brazil during the Twentieth Century,” in Sachs, Wilhelm, and Pinheiro, *Brazil: A Century of Change*, 40.

Rio de Janeiro in 1929, Le Corbusier had commented upon the ingenuity of the favela dweller who built his house on stilts against a hillside with its extraordinary view of Guanabara Bay. This romantic vision persisted well into the 1950s and '60s, perpetuated by some progressives who expressed criticism of the industrialized, Modernist fantasy represented by Brasilia yet indulged in what could be argued was an equally distorted fantasy, the notion of the favela as the nation's source of cultural authenticity. Most famously, Hélio Oiticica, the renowned visual artist, took up residence in a favela and made some of his best known art for the samba school located there, clothing made of fabric, plastic and string that became symbols of the ingenuity of the poor. He saw these surreal outfits as a critique of the disjunction he perceived between economic reality and national aspirations.³⁰⁸

This disjunction fueled the criticism leveled by Lina Bo Bardi and her fellow Paulistas.³⁰⁹ Their primary response to the Niemeyer-Costa architectural axis was to build structures with programs meant to accommodate large groups of people—schools, museums, recreation centers—using materials signifying simplicity and roughness, primarily concrete. Their strategy regarding program can be seen as parallel to the expansion of audience served by the federal government that occurred in 1930 with the end of the oligarchic republic and the start of the populist dictatorship, which aimed to provide services to *o povo* (the people), an aim made manifest in the MESP building. But it was

³⁰⁸ Elisa Wouk Almino, "Tripping Through Hélio Oiticica's Mythical World." *Hyperallergic* Dec 22, 2016. <https://hyperallergic.com/345190/tripping-through-helio-oiticicas-mythical-world/>

³⁰⁹ Roberto Conduru, "Tropical Tectonics," in *Brazil's Modern Architecture*, ed. Elisabetta Andreoli and Adrian Forty (New York, NY: Phaidon, 2007), 82.

the second point—deployment of materials—that during this period distinguished the Paulistas from the architecture in Brazil associated with Rio and Oscar Niemeyer that had been touted abroad and at home. Artigas, who greatly respected Niemeyer and went on public record to praise the Carioca’s “Testimony,” described their differences succinctly as one essentially about the way each chose to present materials: “Oscar and I have the same worries and find the same problems [...], but whereas he always strives to solve the contradictions in a harmonious synthesis, I plainly expose them. In my opinion, the architect’s role does not consist in an adaptation; we should not conceal the existing struggles with an elegant mask, we need fearlessly to reveal them.”³¹⁰

6.4 Military Dictatorship and the Valorizing of an Aesthetic of Poverty

In the years directly after Brasilia’s inauguration as the country’s new capital on April 21, 1960, there were an increasing number of contradictions to expose: despite the great industrialization of the previous decade, the country suffered significant economic setback, a fact reflected in its fast-changing political landscape. Kubitschek lost reelection to Jânio Quadros, a progressive populist who resigned within eight months, and was replaced by João Goulart. He was viewed as too left-leaning by the military officers, who had become the central arbiters of power in Brazil. When in early 1964, Goulart was confronted with an ultimatum by the country’s moderate leaders to stop supporting the left or lose power, he failed to meet their demands.³¹¹ He was overthrown on March 31, 1964, and replaced

³¹⁰ Felipe Contier and Renato Anelli, “João Vilanova Artigas and the Meanings of Concrete in Brazil.” *The Journal of Architecture* 20, no. 3: 468. DOI:10.1080/13602365.2015.1048698.

³¹¹ Thomas Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930–1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1967]), 294–296.

by General Olimpio Mourão Filho, thus initiating the military dictatorship. A set of increasingly repressive measures called Institutional Acts were put into place, Institutional Act-5 (AI-5) imposed in December, 1968 effectively dissolved congress, dissolved constitutional rights, imposed strict censorship codes, forbade political gatherings without permission. In short, the full power to the military government had full power. The regime also resulted in what Renato Ortiz has called “authoritarian modernization,”—greatly expanded markets for consumer goods as well as the creation of mass media conglomerates.³¹²

The new status quo was brutally enforced: tens of thousands of people were arrested (estimates vary from 10–50,000) many of whom were held, tortured, and in at least 300 cases, murdered.³¹³ In a grim historic reference, a particularly infamous group of enforcers were named OBAN, short for *Operação Bandeirantes*, a nod to the 17th-century Paulista prospectors and slaveholders.

The alacrity and severity of these political developments surely jolted the architectural community, with some of its best-known practitioners, including Oscar Niemeyer, known to be Communists and/or supporters of parties on the left. For some, military rule eventually led to arrest and exile—self-imposed or otherwise; for others, the result was a dearth of commissions and considerable cautiousness about expressing criticism. Yet during the period between the start of the dictatorship and the imposition of

³¹² Renato Ortiz “Culture and Society,” in Sachs, Wilhelm, and Pinheiro (*Brazil: A Century of Change*), 132.

³¹³ Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, “Political Transition and the (Un)rule of Law in the Republic,” in Sachs, Wilhelm, and Pinheiro, *Brazil: A Century of Change* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2009), 199.

AI-5, there was still a window in which some designers began to formulate a response to this turn of events. Richard Williams has noted that resistance to the military dictatorship took shape in a discourse rooted in revealing the nation's economic disparities. "The idea of poverty assumed special importance here, becoming a field of action. For many on the left, architects or not, poverty became something with which to identify."³¹⁴

6.4.1 "Bahia in Ibirapuera"

A particularly enlightening example of the embrace of an "arquitetura pobre," among left-leaning designers of the era, is not a building at all, but an exhibition that had been designed as a protest against the biennale and the privileging of "high" art meant for international audiences. Referred to as "Bahia" or "Bahia in Ibirapuera," the show was curated by Lina Bo Bardi, who since building the Glass House, had taken several steps to forge an architectural career independent of her life with Pietro Bardi and the MASP, though she remained inextricably tied to both man and institution for the rest of her life. After a failed attempt to secure a professorship in São Paulo, Bo Bardi began to teach in the Federal University of Bahia in Salvador. This five-year period of her life, from 1959 until the 1964 military coup, has been highlighted as a formative moment in the architect's career, not least by Bo Bardi herself.³¹⁵ Besides her teaching, she contributed to the city's intellectual life with her regular newspaper column for Salvador's *Diario de Noticias* and her close alliance with the city's theater world. In architectural terms, her work of this period was

³¹⁴ Richard J. Williams, *Brazil*, 134.

³¹⁵ In 1967, she published an essay and photo montage in the journal *Mirante das Artes* to describe her five years in Bahia, the struggles she encountered there and the extraordinary creative efflorescence she experienced working with other artists including the filmmaker Glauber Rocha.

largely focused on the Solar do Unhão, a 17th- century building that she converted into a museum of Bahian popular culture. Her central intervention was the creation of a majestic, spiral wooden staircase whose joints, she said, had been inspired by those she had seen on a simple oxcart (Figure 6.3). Her work reimagining an extant colonial building parallels her curatorial focus on objects repurposed for new uses, and foreshadows the building projects late in her career when she refused to raze existing buildings but worked to restore or re-contextualize them.



Figure 6.3 Lina Bo Bardi, stairway at Solar do Unhão, Salvador, Bahia, 1959.
(Source: *Architectural League*, photo by Sabrina Gledhill.)

During this period, Bo Bardi was engaged in a public and private debate with her friend Bruno Zevi that highlights her views about “poverty” as a category of vernacular design. She questioned if modernism had fallen into the trap of formalism and strayed too

far from its founding ideals.³¹⁶ This was a theme consistent with her architecture and writing of this period when she referred to her work as *arquitettura pobre*, a nod to the *arte povera* movement in Italy that valued inexpensive or found materials, assemblage, and theater to critique commercialism. Besides using natural elements in their work, artists also employed objects from industry or created work referring to the industrial aspects of urban life and set them in contrast to simpler, less-refined materials.

Bo Bardi's "Bahia" exhibition makes clear how much she concurred with the Italians' approach. First, it must be noted that she staged the show at the time of the Fifth São Paulo Biennial in 1959, the first to be held in Ibirapuera Park with its new Niemeyer-designed pavilion. The year before, the architect had publicly denounced Brasília as Niemeyer taking a "formal position that denies all human values and all achievements of Brazilian architecture."³¹⁷ At the same time, she expressed admiration for Niemeyer's bravery at attempting to create a more equitable future for the country. As Bruno Zevi described it, for Bo Bardi, the architecture was a secondary concern: what she cared about was the city's attempt to break from the colonial coast, as he put it, and to have "the courage to face the world with the cultural values of poverty, in short, an irreversible act of rupture and liberation."³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Zeuler R. M. de A. Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2013), 74.

³¹⁷ Lina Bo Bardi, "arquitetura o Arquitetura?" *Diario de Noticias de Salvador*, no. 2, sec. 14, 1958, in Silvana Rubino and Marina Grinover, ed., *Lina por Escrito* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2009), 92–93.

³¹⁸ Bruno Zevi, "The Art of the Poor Terrifies the Generals," *Tempos de Grossura: O Design no Impasse*, ed. Lina Bo Bardi (São Paulo: Instituto Lina Bo e P.M. Bardi, 1994), 6. English translation of "L' arte dei poveri fa paura ai generali" originally published in *L'Espresso* (Rome) March 14, 1965, 18.

Bo Bardi's definition of "the cultural values of poverty" were on view at her 1959 exhibition, which she co-curated with theater director Martim Gonçalves. They used few text cards identifying era or artist. Instead, they divided the exhibition into loose thematic sections: tools, *ex-votos*, clothing, toys, *orixás*, tapestries. Bo Bardi mounted photos of unnamed Bahian residents black-and-white images that recall ethnographic documents. One area was reserved for demonstrations of capoeira and another for objects related to *candomblé*. Afro-Brazilian songs were played continuously using percussion instruments from Bahia. Visitors tromped through eucalyptus leaves strewn along the exhibition floor; white fabric draped across the ceiling functioned as an artificial sky, and a jacaranda tree sat at the physical center of the show (Figure 6.4). In its determination to create a bit of Bahia in the heart of São Paulo, the exhibition prefigures the "situationals" of Hélio Oiticica, where sand and hammocks and parrots transform museums into a tourist's vision of the tropics. "Bahia," though, lacks the implicit criticism of Oiticica's set-pieces: instead, Bo Bardi and Gonçalves' exhibition sets itself in opposition to the Biennial itself. In its placement and content, the exhibition implies that in the rush to recognize contemporary artists deemed valuable by a world art market, anonymous artist working in a traditional vein have been overlooked and devalued. Furthermore, with the exhibition, Bo Bardi wanted to emphasize the ingenuity with which "poor" artists made work from whatever materials were available—bits of fabric, clay, sisal rope, rubber from tires. Many of the objects on display were fashioned out of materials originally used for other purposes such as oil cans converted into lanterns or toys.



Figure 6.4 Installation View, “Bahia,” September 21 to December 31, 1959.
 (Source: Lina Bo Bardi, 3rd edition (São Paulo: Instituto Lina Bo e P.M. Bardi, 2008), 137.)

Bo Bardi used the vernacular to define, however vaguely, a regional spirit that was meant to represent authentic *Brasileidade*. Her decontextualized version of “Bahia” was primarily a tool for her polemic against the Biennial’s version of “Brazil,” not an investigation of the evolution and complexities of Bahian art and artists. That said, “Bahia” made manifest in a very dramatic way the arguments that had been brewing in artistic and architectural circles and, as Zeuler Lima put it, “expanded the geography of cultural debate in Brazil”³¹⁹

6.5 Architectural Responses to Brasilia and the Military Government

With the economic crisis and ensuing rise of the military dictatorship, came what Luiz Periera called “the collapse of the populist pact established by Vargas.”³²⁰ Those events

³¹⁹ Lima, Zeuler R.M. de A. “Preservation as Confrontation: The Work of Lina Bo Bardi,” *Future Anterior* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 27.

³²⁰ Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, “From the Patrimonial State,” 154.

greatly intensified the cultural debate referred to by Lima. The central question raised by Niemeyer in “Testimony,” i.e., how can an architect with leftist politics make work sponsored by a right-wing government, became all the more relevant. Initially, the critique of the Paulistas, including Bo Bardi, was directed at two targets: the repression imposed by the nation’s generals at the helm of the federal government and the architectural discourse coming out of Rio that they saw as a vehicle for expressing an aspirational Brazil looking towards the United States and Western Europe than to Brazil itself, both its extreme economic disparities and its rich culture. In physical terms, both arguments were expressed by material choices, specifically the handling of concrete, as well as by programmatic decisions that favored spaces that could hold mass gatherings of the public, as noted above. The following two sections provide examples of architecture that offered this two-part critique by building what Lina Bo Bardi called “arquitetura pobre.”

6.5.1 João Vilanova Artigas’s FAU-USP

At the apex of their careers, both Artigas and Bo Bardi, just as Niemeyer had at Brasilia, were using concrete to build monumental buildings with complex programs. But in the case of the São Paulo architects, the material was used to communicate a different Brazil to the world, a nation of contrasts, with much industry and much poverty. Though an expensive material during World War II, concrete was by the late 1950s widely available and relatively inexpensive. In addition, relatively unskilled workers could be hired to use the material, as was evident with the building of Brasilia and the famous army of *candangos*, rural Brazilians who flocked to the proposed city in search of work, many of whom lived with their families in squatter settlements called Sacolândia, named after the

empty concrete sacks they used to waterproof their roofs (Figure 6.5). Its cheapness coupled with its potential for communicating a rough-hewn aesthetic, conveyed what Lina Bo Bardi called “*grossura*”—rudeness, the opposite of refined, finished, or smooth. For the Paulistas this roughness was a useful vehicle for registering protest of economic disparity in the country, as well as expressing admiration for simplicity.



Figure 6.5 Marcel Gautherot, Sacolândia, c. 1958.
(Source: Instituto Moreira Salles.)

João Vilanova Artigas’s best-known building, the Faculdade de Urbanismo e Arquitetura of the Universidade de São Paulo (FAU-USP, 1961–69), provides an excellent example of how *Brasilidade* in built form meant building for a large public coming from a wide array of economic backgrounds. Artigas had been a professor at the university and as a vocal member of the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (PCB), wrote frequently about the ways the nation’s federal government cooperated with North American imperialism. He was closely involved with developing the curriculum at FAU-USP, which emphasized

technical expertise as well as history via a “centre for folkloric studies.”³²¹ He maintained a deep interest in pedagogy, believing in education as essential to revolution and his architecture school on the university campus can certainly be read as a formal attempt to engender collaboration, community, visibility, and debate. These would all be in keeping with Ana Maria León’s salient point that by the mid-1960s, the tenets of Paolo Freire’s literacy movement were deeply influential on visual and theater artists as well as educators of the era in its emphasis on participation.³²²

Artigas’s extraordinary school is essentially a supported roof covering large ramped spaces with few enclosing walls, at once massive and light. The whole structure is open to the verdant landscape of the campus, quite separate from the rest of the city. While there are classrooms at the FAU, they are on the periphery and generally quite small. The obvious focus of the building is its central space where critiques are held, models are built, and, perhaps most provocatively for 1969—the year of its completion—people could gather in large numbers (Figure 6.6).

³²¹ Ana Maria León, “Designing Dissent: Vilanova Artigas and the São Paulo School of Architecture.” *Architecture and the Paradox of Dissidence*, ed. Ines Weizman (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013) 79.

³²² León, “Designing Dissent,” 80.



Figure 6.6 João Vilanova Artigas, FAU-USP, 1966-69. View of central hall.
(Source: *Atlas of Places*. Accessed January 2, 2020.
<https://www.atlasofplaces.com/architecture/fau-usp/>)

What made that central meeting space possible—open to the elements on all sides—was its concrete construction. The roof is supported on tapered, triangular supports designed to emphasize the grand size of the roof in contrast to the 12 delicate legs supporting it (Figure 6.7).³²³ It was a theatrical effect, “mix[ing] the truth of materials and structural behaviour with the figurative tradition of Latin American monumentality”³²⁴ The concrete of the building’s exterior is purposely rough with all formwork revealed, a decision made during the planning phase as his drawings show. The “rudeness” of the façade functions both as a reminder of the workers behind the construction of the building as some critics have argued, as well as a symbol of Brazil as economically impoverished.

³²³ Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 126.

³²⁴ Felipe Contier and Renato Anelli, “João Vilanova Artigas and the Meanings of Concrete in Brazil,” *The Journal of Architecture* 20, no. 3 (2015): 469. DOI:10.1080/13602365.2015.1048698.

One scholar posits the theory that Artigas set out to create a sort of post-industrial artifact. “The actually ruinous condition of parts of the FAU-USP building (its leaky ceiling, for example, dripping with salactites) seems part of the aesthetic programme rather than a negation of it. The appalling physical state of Reidy’s Pedregulho by contrast seems only to indicate its failure.”³²⁵ Whether or not it was Artigas intended for aspects of the building to fail through neglect, he certainly deployed materials in ways that made his political critique manifest.



Figure 6.7 João Vilanova Artigas, School of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (FAU-USP), 1969.

(Source: ArchDaily. Accessed January 2, 2020. <https://www.archdaily.com/799088/ad-classics-faculty-of-architecture-and-urbanism-university-of-sao-paulo-fau-usp-joao-vilanova-artigas-and-carlos-cascaldi>)

³²⁵ Richard Williams, *Brazil*, 146.



Figure 6.8 Central hall of FAU-USP.

(Source: *Atlas of Places*. Accessed January 2, 2020.

<https://www.atlasofplaces.com/architecture/fau-usp/>)

6.5.2 Lina Bo Bardi's MASP

In 1957, Bo Bardi had won the commission to design a new building for the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, the museum she and Pietro had founded with Assis Chateaubriand, which had been located in the media magnate's office building. The site was an important one in São Paulo's social and cultural life, situated on Avenida Paulista. During Mario de Andrade's youth, coffee barons and those in their social sphere built their mansions, or *palacetes*, along the avenue and met at the Trianon Belvedere— a civic hall, ballroom, teahouse, and hall with a circular patio that overlooked a set of gardens and the Anhangabau Valley. The site sat across from the Trianon Park, which even today is filled with a

combination of landscaped gardens and lush, wooded areas. Most of the belvedere complex was razed in 1951 to make way for the pavilion for the first São Paulo Bienal. Bo Bardi once claimed that one day while walking past the site, she “realized that this was the *only* place to build the MASP, the only site, in view of its special place in the popular imagination, worthy of housing the first museum of art in Latin America.”³²⁶

Bo Bardi was hardly a reliable narrator³²⁷ but the veracity of the story is immaterial: what’s clear is that the architect, either before or after she took on the commission, understood the building in light of the history of its site as a locus of social interaction along a boulevard of private homes. According to Caffey and Campagnol, by 1960, she had decided upon the museum’s final design. By that time, Avenida Paulista had become less residential and was transforming into a boulevard of office towers with a growing “prominence as the city’s new commercial and cultural center.”³²⁸

In designing the museum, Bo Bardi naturally needed to consider how best to exhibit art, create space for other programmatic needs, and respond to the site, a hill with its highest point at Avenida Paulista (Figure 6.8). She decided to treat the street level as an entry point to the museum with offices, classrooms, a library, and galleries in a terraced concrete structure built into a hill and covered with plants (Figure 6.9). According to Zeuler

³²⁶ Daniele Pisani, “Too Beautiful to Be True: Lina Bo Bardi’s MASP, Or an Architected Lie.” Essay based on author’s research as visiting professor at FAU-USP, 2014-15, 2.

https://www.academia.edu/37653587/Too_beautiful_to_be_true_Lina_Bo_Bardi_s_MASP_or_an_architected_lie

³²⁷ Her tendency to embroider her life story was suspected by Esther da Costa Meyer in her essay, “After the Flood: Lina Bo Bardi’s Glass House,” and the work of Zeuler Lima among others confirms her hunch. In an interview with this author, her one time collaborator, Marcelo Suzuki, affirmed that Bo Bardi enjoyed improvising her stories and playing the role of verbal flamethrower.

³²⁸ Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi*, 72.

Lima, she conceived of this area as the civic hall, echoing the function of the original Trianon belvedere.

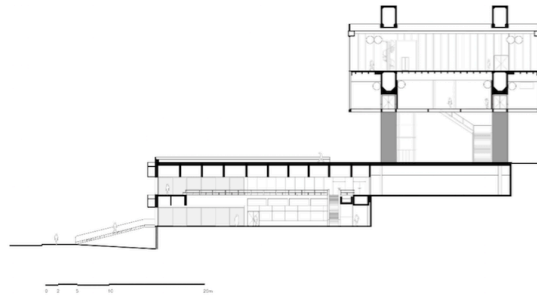


Figure 6.9 Sectional site plan of MASP, Avenida Paulista at the highest point.
(Source: Divisare. Accessed January 4, 2020. <https://divisare.com/projects/309396-metro-arquitetos-associados-lina-bo-bardi-ilana-bessler-romullo-baratto-picture-gallery-in-transformation>)



Figure 6.10 MASP ca. 1968.
(Source: Arquivo Biblioteca e Centro de Documentação do MASP.)

To display the MASP's permanent collection, Bo Bardi devised the museum's most striking element, a glass gallery lifted off the ground and suspended from two beams 70

meters in length. This last, she claimed, was the result of a stipulation made by the property donors that the museum not block views of the valley below. “I never set out to make the largest free span in the world,” she told an audience in 1990. “It so happens that the plot was donated on the condition that a Belvedere would be there, with a view of downtown São Paulo.”³²⁹ Both Daniele Pisani and Zeuler Lima have shown that there are many inconsistencies in the stories told by the Bardis and Chateaubriand regarding the requirements of the site and how the MASP finally came to be built there. Not only were their public statements contradictory, but the archival documents related to the determination of site provide a more complex and murky story than any of the museum’s central figures provided in interviews. Whatever the truth about stipulations put on the site, we do know that Bo Bardi had designed an unrealized project that took a similar form for a museum in a coastal city in São Paulo state (Figure 6.10). It featured a glass space suspended from five beams that, instead of running the length of the gallery, were perpendicular to it, separated at regular intervals. But the space beneath that museum doesn’t figure prominently in Bo Bardi’s collages and drawings, and presumably her conception, of the project. Not so for the MASP, where the plaza between the two parts of the museum clearly engaged her as evident in her drawings and writing even before the inauguration of the museum in 1968 (Figures 6.11 and 6.12). The space was to function as a social gathering point as it had been in its civic hall days, but in this iteration not for the city’s elite alone. She imagined the plaza as a new Trianon, a communal space but now made available to a working- and middle-class public. She expected “the common people to go there and see outdoor exhibitions and chat, listen to music, watch films,” a place

³²⁹ Lina Bo Bardi quoted in Pisani, “Too Beautiful to Be True,” 174.

where there would be “children playing in the morning and afternoon sun. And a band, a kind of popular bad taste, but which could be meaningful.”³³⁰



Figure 6.11 Lina Bo Bardi, photo montage of “Museum at the Seashore” (unbuilt), São Vicente, São Paulo, unbuilt.
(Source: *Lina Bo Bardi. São Paulo: Instituto Lina Bo e P.M. Bardi, 3rd edition, 2008.*)



Figure 6.12 Lina Bo Bardi, drawing of plaza level of MASP, November 5, 1965.
(Source: *Lina Bo Bardi. São Paulo: Instituto Lina Bo e P.M. Bardi, 3rd edition, 2008.*)

³³⁰ Quoted in Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi*, 131.



Figure 6.13 Lina Bo Bardi, Preliminary Study for Sculptures-cum-Stage-Props on Trianon Terrace, MASP, May 6, 1965.
 (Source: *Lina Bo Bardi* by Zeuler R.M. de A. Lima, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013.)

In the period of the MASP's construction in the mid-1960s, a group of young musicians from the Northeast were articulating an artistic manifesto under the title of *Tropicália*. The name came from the installation by the artist Hélio Oiticica of the same name. The artwork lampooned visions of Brazil as backward and exotic by offering a kind of stage set of the tropics complete with sand, potted plants, a parrot, and a tiny cabin visitors could enter. The Bahian musicians—including Tom Zé, Gilberto Gil, Maria Bethania, and Caetano Veloso—admired the way that Oiticica couched protest in art that audiences found highly entertaining. Though they were now living in the south, most had grown up in Bahia. They were familiar with Bo Bardi's work there, especially her Museum of Popular Art where she had mounted exhibitions of traditional, regional art and artists, frequently comprised of eclectic collection of pieces she had been accruing on trips through the Northeast. As pop stars reaching a huge audience via a number of noted television

programs, the Tropicalists adopted a similarly playful approach to popular music, but like Oiticica and Bo Bardi their aims were decidedly serious. As mentioned in Chapter One, they resurrected Oswald de Andrade's cannibalist trope, applying it to their music-making by choosing from an international menu of influences. This was in keeping with Oiticica (~~Luso~~) Tropicalia as well as Bo Bardi's refusal to delimit what could be deemed art. The same was happening in theater and movies in Brazil during this period—with artists choosing from a wide range of Brazilian tropes to deride and protest limitations on freedom imposed by right as well as some quarters of the left. It only made sense, then, that another figure from the Week of Modern Art, should be revisited: Joaquim Pedro de Andrade released his film version of *Macunaíma* (1969), a wild, anarchic, and hilarious adaptation of Mario de Andrade's novel about a race-shifting, work-phobic hero from the Amazon who travels to São Paulo, yet another northerner compelled to head south.

Elisabetta Andreoli and Adrian Forty see Bo Bardi's ground level as a political act on par with the Tropicalists who demanded an expanded definition of art and who could create and appreciate it. They write that by opening the plaza of the MASP, the architect “in one stroke transform[s] it into pavement, museum entrance hall, public square and belvedere creating a kind of public space rarely seen in Brazil: one whose ‘public’ nature had less to do with its potential multiple uses than to its effective appropriation by the city's inhabitants.”³³¹

The central gallery itself had neither pillars to obstruct views nor conventional walls on which to hang artworks (Figure 6.13). Bo Bardi's solution was to design glass easels that would hold the collection's paintings. As Zeuler Lima tells it, Bo Bardi created the

³³¹ Elisabetta Andreoli and Adrian Forty, *Brazil's Modern Architecture*, 82.

easels to make manifest her husband's curatorial philosophy: he believed paintings should be off the walls and arranged in ways that created interesting, revealing juxtapositions regardless of era and geography. The gallery's easels may also be understood as an extension of the philosophy expressed by the plaza below: a strike for egalitarianism that let her "present the artwork as work and as a prophecy within everyone's reach," she said in an interview with *O Estado de São Paulo* in April 1970. In the same article, she declared that the museum was intended "to destroy the aura that surrounds museums."³³²



Figure 6. 14 View of main gallery, MASP, São Paulo.
(Source: *Instituto Lina Bo e Pietro Maria Bardi*.)

Of the MASP, Lina wrote, "I was looking for simple architecture, one that could communicate that which in the past was known as 'monumental,' that is, in the sense of

³³² Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi*, 134.

the ‘collective,’ of ‘civic dignity’”³³³ This remark calls to mind an observation of Despina Stratigakos in the introduction to her *A Women’s Berlin: Building the Modern City*. Noting that historians of architecture designed by women have often focused on vernacular, “interstitial” structures, as she put it, she states that she is equally interested in the ways that “women used monumentality—with its association of power and permanence—for their own purposes.”³³⁴ Besides standing as a complex feat of engineering, the power of the MASP is partly a function of Bo Bardi engaging with both the monumental and the everyday. It was the same strategy she used as a curator and an editor, carving out large space for art and ideas she deemed valuable but overlooked.

The glass gallery—the result of a sophisticated application of technology—suspended over a plaza meant to be programmed in any way the public chose is an apt image for Bo Bardi’s interpretation of *Brasilidade*. She had long articulated the problematic belief that authenticity could only be found among the poor, a proposition that had great currency among left-leaning artists and critics in an era of such stark failure of the developmentalist program. At this mid-point in her career, she had reevaluated the role of Modernism in the country’s architecture, and like Artigas, concluded it could be best used on a monumental scale to represent the nation’s vastly uneven development, its great economic divide. The intransigence of these disparities—intensified further under the military regime—left both architects far from the “order and progress” promised by the

³³³ Marcelo Ferraz, ed. *Lina Bo Bardi* (Milan: Charta and São Paulo, Instituto Lina Bo e Pietro Maria Bardi, 1994), 100.

³³⁴ Despina Stratigakos, *A Women’s Berlin: Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xv.

colonial–Modernist paradigm that built Brasilia, but in its metaphoric outskirts, deep in the makeshift, improvisational wilds of the satellite cities.

CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE

This dissertation ends at the very moment that the Brazilian federal government suspended an array of civil rights, the most repressive period of the dictatorship. By that point many architects and critics reevaluated the role of Modernism in the country's architecture, reconceptualizing it as a vehicle for serving large groups of underserved people instead of a representation of what the country hoped to be via modernization.

The Paulistas, who well before 1964 had leveled their critique of Modernist architecture as it was practiced in Brazil, based their arguments on the economic divide that the Estado Novo and later democratic governments had implicitly promised to bridge. The intransigence of the country's economic disparities fueled their search for another source of *Brasilidade*, and ironically it was the government-sponsored SPHAN that had been providing an alternative since 1937. By establishing equivalencies among various Brazilian vernaculars, modernism included, the agency proposed valuing architectural forms not based in European traditions. Their motivation, however, was not to relocate the national imaginary to the *mucambo* but to inscribe various art and architectural forms as worthy of study and preservation while promoting modernism.

Undoubtedly the inclusiveness of this strategy opened unanticipated lines of discourse that made for a creative efflorescence that was probably best seen in the country's popular music as well as its theater. The architecture that Lina Bo Bardi and her colleagues built, work expressly positioned as countering the developmentalist dreams of Brasilia,

certainly contributed to the milieu of rebellion and inquiry of the era that let subaltern groups have greater access to a public stage to articulate ideas that previously had had currency only within their communities. The trope of a multiracial Brazil was resulting in a genuine opening for multiple voices. Groups aggregated as “other” demanded a platform for articulating their separate identities, such as the assertion of black Brazilian culture as one connected to a larger African diaspora. In architectural terms, buildings were designed both to communicate the country’s economic and social disparities and to help bridge them by creating what were essentially gathering spaces for the swelling number of Paulistas, many of them economic migrants from the north.

Nonetheless, in aiming to represent the underrepresented, the Paulistas made themselves vulnerable to a criticism articulated by Keith Eggener in his 2002 essay “Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism.” Written as a retort to Kenneth Frampton’s concept of critical regionalism, he writes succinctly of the central dilemma of power imbalance inherent to architects from the metropole building for the periphery: “Identifying an architecture that purportedly reflects and serves its locality, buttressed by a framework of liberative, empowering rhetoric, critical regionalism is itself a construct most often imposed from outside, from positions of authority. The assumptions and implications it bears have undermined its own constructive message and confounded the architecture it upholds.”³³⁵

That contradiction is apparent in the written and spoken words of Lina Bo Bardi, whose professed vision of “building for the people,” as she frequently said, depended upon

³³⁵ Keith Eggener, “Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 55, no. 4 (May 2002): 228.

a generalized other, a vague idea that she represented those without voice. In conflating the poor with the rural with the indigenous, she, like some of the artists and architects of the era, unwittingly managed to erase this “client” more thoroughly than, say, the editors of the SPHAN journal who, though using the cultures of those outside the coastal elite for their own rhetorical ends, did highlight the particularities of these different groups.

Formally, however, her architecture expresses her prescient ideas about the relationship of a building to its site, its neighborhood, and its city. She created spaces that continue to promote community, creativity, political action, recreation, and contemplation—all on the user’s terms. Besides the plaza under the MASP, regularly the site for protests and demonstrations, she designed and built another structure in São Paulo that is a remarkable testament to the architect’s commitment to putting existing conditions, uses, and memories at the center of her design. In 1977, she began work on a recreation center called the SESC-Pompeia on a site in an industrial neighborhood. She studied how people used the space around a set of brick daylight factories on the site, how they repurposed a place of work into one of recreation. Her final design kept the factories in place, using their interiors for classrooms, a restaurant, a dance hall, and a reading area, though they are largely open spaces that can be reconfigured for different uses. She may have underplayed the architect’s role when she described her work there: “I just added a few things...[like] some water [and] a fireplace.”³³⁶ Still, what makes the center so vibrant,

³³⁶ Bo Bardi quoted in Zeuler R.M. de A. Lima, “Preservation as Confrontation: The Work of Lina Bo Bardi,” *Future Anterior* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2005), 29.

so amenable to the neighborhood's residents, is the architect's willingness to essentially step out of the way.³³⁷

Building on existing paths through the complex, she created two central walkways that lead to concrete towers she built for the site for playing courts, a pool, and dressing rooms (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). (She said in one interview that her goal was to make the towers “even uglier than the MASP”.)³³⁸ Emphasizing her identification with the northeast of the country, she called the back walkways, which aren't visible from the streets, *a terreiro*. A word meaning “backyard,” it is also used to describe the site of ritual in the Afro-Brazilian religion of *candomblé*, which for many years had been practiced in secret.³³⁹ With the towers, Bo Bardi distinguished the roughness of the harsh concrete with irregularly-shaped windows fitted without glass, but only wooden trellises to control light. It's a formal nod to a notion of simplicity, poverty, and, oddly, the colonial *muxarabi*—though a caretaker there once complained to me of its impracticality: on rainy days the courts become slick with water.

Leaky fenestration aside, the SESC's success, I'd argue, is rooted in Bo Bardi's building practices. She had already adopted the habit of moving her office to a building site once construction began, and with SESC she furthered that practice by communicating with the construction workers using a set of conceptual drawings she'd made, not

³³⁷ The complex recalls a description of Louis Kahn's Salk Institute made by historian Gerrilynn Dodds. The work, she said, demonstrated the architect's generosity, his ability to create space that erases itself to frame the Pacific Ocean.

³³⁸ Olivia de Oliveira, *Lina Bo Bardi: Subtle Substances of Architecture*, São Paulo: Romano Guerra Editora Ltda., 2006), 203.

³³⁹ Luis E. Carranza and Fernando Luiz Lara. *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014), 312.

architectural plans, to convey her ideas.³⁴⁰ Roberto Conduru rightfully gives much credence to this practice, saying it demonstrated “a critical and innovative attitude towards the alienation of work, and architectural deficiencies in Brazil.”³⁴¹



Figures 7.1 and 7.2 Views of the SESC towers (left) and interior street beside existing factory building (right).

(Source: “Making of SESC Pompeia” by Marcelo Ferraz. Accessed January 4, 2020. <http://linabobarditogether.com/2012/08/03/the-making-of-sesc-pompeia-by-marcelo-ferraz/>)

The mutable nature of any regional or national identity raises the question of which versions of the past an architect will incorporate in her design. By the end of her career, Bo Bardi had answered this in her building practices: by working so closely with construction

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 312–313.

³⁴¹ Roberto Conduru, “Tropical Tectonics,” in Andreoli and Forty, *Brazil’s Modern Architecture*, 94.

workers and engineers on site, she essentially shrank the idea of nationalism to the particularities of a site, putting great store in understanding a site's history and using that to create a dialogue with its current and projected users (Figure 7.3). At the SESC, she highlighted the original buildings' materials to express continuity and used concrete to underscore the new sections, again to avoid erasing the site's history. In many ways, her contention that she did little to create the center is true: she followed the lead of the buildings' intended audience—examining how they wanted to use it, what the site meant to their collective history—and in so doing let them formulate a local identity, one that would be accrued and changed over time. She was no longer building Brazilian architecture, as building spaces for Brazilians.



Figure 7.3 SESC-Pompeia, São Paulo (1977–84).
(Source: The Graham Foundation, “Lina Bo Bardi: Together,” April 24-July 25, 2015. Accessed March 10, 2020. http://www.grahamfoundation.org/public_events/5274-opening-reception-lina-bo-bardi-together)

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