Nation Making and the Landscape in Oscar Niemeyer’s Interiors

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Acclaimed as the “International Style,” modernist architecture was globally synonymous with modernization and as such was disseminated throughout peripheral countries such as Ghana, India, Singapore, Mexico, and Brazil during the mid-twentieth century in an attempt for these countries to visually equate themselves with the developed world.1 However, modernist style was not simply imported by these states. It was implemented as a tool by which each sought to define its cultural uniqueness, resulting in Architectural projects that were both global and local. Within Brazil this unique modernism culminated in Oscar Niemeyer’s designs for Brasília, the new federal capital founded in 1960, specifically in Niemeyer’s collaboration with local artists for the building’s interiors. Focusing on the role of the landscape in modern nation building, this essay discusses the tapestry and landscape architecture by Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994) as well as Marianne Peretti’s (b. 1927) stained glass found throughout the city. In doing so this essay will demonstrate how the artists relied on the landscape and altered traditionally religious media—stained glass and tapestry—to fit a modern society drawing on localism that emerged in the 1920s, thereby placing Brazil at the forefront of international modernism. This essay will also expand on the role of the landscape as a tool to localize modernist architecture, arguing that Burle Marx’s gardens and their blurring of interior/exterior boundaries address a shift from European to Brazilian social, political, and cultural views of nature.

I. Colonizing the Landscape: European Influences

Prior to local interest in the land, Europe viewed the Brazilian landscape as synonymous with an idea of the savage that had to be tamed by the civilized European in order to create a habitable environment. This concept had been present since the arrival of the first Europeans to the region in 1500, whose modification of the natural landscape can be defined by the destructive cycles of sugar and coffee production and later by the introduction of foreign species to tame the tropical jungle.2 The alteration of the landscape was expedited through the transfer of the Portuguese court from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 and the role of French scientists, engineers, and artists who were given the task of introducing European ideas into the tropical landscape in order to “impart an imperial tone.”3 The history of the city’s design, the juxtaposition of the civilized and savage is best exemplified through a comparison of the Campo de Sant’Aná (1873-80) with the Botanical Garden established in 1809 by Dom João IV.4 Whereas the first depicts perfectly pruned shrubs all parallel in height each destined to grow within a certain designated spot, an artificial body of water, and a large meandering pathway, the second lacks a sense of organization and design. This is evident through the undomesticated growth of the plants, often growing in opposing directions impeding onto each other’s space, as well as through the natural growth of plants within the water, instead of the non-natural island created for Campo de Sant’ Ana. The omission of buildings within the botanical garden further creates an environment of nature as untouched by man.

At the turn of the 20th century Rio de Janeiro continued to be greatly influenced by European trends, while in Europe, private and public botanical gardens were created to house tropical plants from their distant colonial conquests. The savage-civilized binary persisted within this exchange—the tropical colonial possessions nourished European curiosity and voyeurism while the colonies aspired to be more European. This imitation is best exemplified by French urban designer Alfred Agache’s Praça Paris (Paris Plaza) (1926) located on the Baía da Guanabara in the Glória neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro. Agache was hired by mayor Prado Junior to give the city a new, neoclassical style that would provide the city with “ar europeu” (European air). The plaza was heavily influenced by French design—sculpted geometric hedges, topiary design, and imported plants. This is just one example of how up until the 1930’s European trends and the desire to tame the land defined landscape architecture.

II. Nation Making and the Local Landscape

According to critic Máximo Pedrosa, Brazil’s lush local landscape was not embraced until the arrival of modernist architecture in the 1930’s, which often extended into the natural environment and, as will be discussed, blurred the boundaries between interior and exterior. Pedrosa claims that neither the indigenous Brazilian nor the Portuguese celebrated the local landscape, writing: “The Indian treated it with utter casualness and fire and, when he craved fruit, he simply felled the tree. Along with fire, the Portuguese used the axe and not infrequently preferred the naked, ungreened, walled grounds around his house, to nip any exaggerated intimacy with the forest right in the bud.”5 Modernism engendered a new appreciation for Brazil’s beautiful natural landscape and ultimately gave rise to a local modern national identity.

In the late 1920’s and early 1930’s landscape designer Mina Koblin reimagined architectural design with the cacti gardens she produced for her husband Gregory Warchavchik’s modernist projects.6 For example, one garden created for Warchavchik’s Vila Mariana (São Paulo, 1928) enveloped the exterior white façade of the building and consisted of various columnar and prickly pear plants native to Brazil. The use of cacti, a plant associated with primitivism rather than the avant-garde, resulted in a local landscape that was perceived as modern. This was evident not only in landscape design but also in painting, especially in the Pau-Brasil Movement, promulgated largely by artist Tarsila do Amaral and poet Oswaldo de
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Andrade. Tarsila do Amaral’s works created during 1928-29 placed great emphasis on the landscape and depicted local plants, an interest that was first expressed in her distinguished piece Abaporu (1928). Composed of two figures, a man and a cactus, each occupying the same amount of space, and the use of a native untamed plant demonstrates the contemporaneous desire to raise awareness and interest in the natural environment. Whereas in Abaporu Tarsila do Amaral divides her focus between man and nature, the works that followed, such as O Lago (The Lake) (1928) and Cartão-Postal (Postcard) (1929), mark a shift in subject matter, focusing solely on the landscape. Artistic emphasis on natural, local landscapes signaled a significant departure from Eurocentric influences, and continued to flourish well into the mid-twentieth century. By the 1960s, Brazilian landscapes were a source of pride and inspiration for artistic practices, which dramatically improved national appreciation of the land. Engaging growing national rising interest in the natural landscape as a cultural motif, the following sections makes the case that Marianne Peretti relied on the landscape to aid national desire for religious plurality that defined Brazil and more specifically Brasília.

III. Religious Plurality and the Local Landscape in Brasília

The idea to transfer the capital from Rio de Janeiro to the Central Plateau dates back to eighteenth century when religious and political visionaries considered establishing a new central capital. However, it was not until the 1950s, when Jucelino Kubitschek rooted his presidential campaign on building the new capital, that Brasília came into fruition. The iconic cross-axial plan designed by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer is defined by a residential and a monumental axis and admired for its embodiment of the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d’architecture Moderne) manifesto in its design which resulted in it being seen as CIAM’s model city. It was not until the rise of modernism and Brazilian nationalism that the transformation of the capital from an object of literary imagination to a physical site for modernizing Brazil occurred. In addition to modernizing the country, Brasília played a crucial role in the rise of religious plurality.

During the 1950s and 60s the Catholic Left coupled with religious sociology, which sought to reorganize religious institutions to be more inclusive, gained momentum. This resulted in the rise of Liberation Theology, a movement centered in Latin America which emphasized liberation from oppression and a pursuit of social justice, in Brazil. As a result of the 1964 military coup, the Catholic Church assumed the responsibility of providing support and services to the poor, expanding their social aims that begun in the 1950s. Previously aligned with the upper class, this shift from the elite to the poor was grounded in the belief that the bible should be experienced from the perspective of the poor, as well as the belief that to become an agent for social change the church needed to remove the elite from power. In addition to their benevolent socio-economic shift in the Catholic Church to becoming a more tolerant institution, the 1960s saw a rise of other religions such as Protestantism and Buddhism. Brasília embodied this change through the inauguration of the Templo Budista Honpa Hongwanji de Brasília (Buddhist Temple Honpa Hongwanji in Brasília) in 1973 as well as the founding of the Vale do Amanhecer (Valley of Dawn), a millenarian and ecstatic religious group based 25 miles outside of Brasília in 1969.

The rise of religious plurality is best captured in Ernesto Silva’s Historia de Brasília published in 1970. As Director of NOVACAP (A Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital do Brasil), the company created by President Kubitschek to ensure the construction of Brasília, his book provides first-hand accounts on how the city was created. In a short section titled “Religião em Brasília” (Religion in Brasilia) Silva discusses the role of Catholicism within the city and the rising interest in other religions. He states how through the construction of churches, schools, hospitals, and social clubs Brasília began to be habitable and populated. Yet this resulted in tension and disagreement over the fact that only the Catholic Church had acquired the land for the construction of a Cathedral. As a solution Silva proposed that the Cathedral serve all religions stating:

If Brasília represents National Unity, why doesn’t Brasília’s Cathedral promote religious unity? Why should our Cathedral be limited only to those who profess their faith through the Roman Catholic religion? Why not open it up to other religions as well?

The Cathedral would thus become a temple of meditation, uniting Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, Orthodox, Jews, Buddhists, Maomans, Spiritists, in a formidable demonstration of human solidarity.

This goal for the Catedral Nossa Senhora Aparecida (Cathedral of Our Lady Aparecida, 1970) to become a “temple of meditation” that was not restricted to one faith resulted in a secular design of the Cathedral, including Marianne Peretti’s stained glass. Similarly, the distancing of church and state and the rise of religious plurality are evident in Lúcio Costa’s city plan, specifically the placement of the Cathedral off the monumental axis, creating a break with the straight line of government buildings leading from the Cathedral to the Congresso Nacional. In addressing this aesthetic decision, Costa states that the Cathedral had to be unaligned so that “it does not impinge on the view down to Congress and the Three Powers Plaza from the crossing point of the two axes, and to ensure that the function of Church and state are visibly distinct.” Expanding on this religious shift, Marianne Peretti’s stained glass distanced itself from the traditional use of glass in religious buildings and instead relied on the local landscape to create a secular design.

In Marianne Peretti: A Ousadia da Invenção (2015), the first book published on her work, art critic Jacob Klintowitz opens his essay titled “O Rastro do Pássaro: Gênes
do Método Marianne Peretti” (The Bird’s Trail: Genesis of the Marianne Peretti Method) by describing the mountains, the sky and the flight of a bird to argue that Peretti’s work is able to unite in an affirmative, lyric, and organic manner the land and the sky.\textsuperscript{14} He further describes the casewh tree outside Peretti’s house/studio narrating the complexity of the branches, how the tree enters and leaves the ground, with intertwined roots that mimic the intricacy of the branches. After providing a poetic description of the tree, Klintowitz draws a parallel between the tree and Peretti’s work stating, “the continuous drawing, a ribbon that unfolds in curves within space, can be three things: a simple design, linear, abstract, lyrical, winding, empirical gesture and a sensitive examination; the arabesque originated from the conservation of nature, from a plant that develops spatially, outside of the Cartesian logic, obeying only its tropism for more light and moisture; and it can also be the abstract trail of a bird flying.”\textsuperscript{15} The relationship between nature, the landscape, and Peretti’s stained glass is established by the linear similarities in both. In other words, her work is based on the abstraction of nature, as such begins to combine the artificial with the natural. Klintowitz accentuates the comparison between the whimsical branches of the trees and Peretti’s design visually by placing an image of the tree below a detailed view of one of the artist’s works.

Returning to the Cathedral, with the exception of the egg placed above the Altar, Peretti’s design consists of blue and green ribbon-like shapes as well as larger blue, green and white whimsical shapes (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Marianne Peretti, \textit{Sem Titulo (Untitled)}, 1988-89, Catedral Nossa Senhora Aparecida, Brasília, Brazil. Image Credit:Aurora Photos/ Alamy Stock Photo

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Following Klintowitz’s claim that nature was a prevalent theme in Peretti’s work, a parallel must be drawn between the undulating blue shape and Lago Paranoá (Lake Paranoá), the manmade lake that borders Brasília. The blue ribbon of the Cathedral, like the lake, extends towards both sides from a central point and like the manmade lake, which eventually ends and becomes land, so too does the blue river stop when its borders meet the larger shapes. The visual effect of rippling water created when the light shines through the double glass layer affirms this reading of the blue ribbon as water. If the blue represents the water and the sky is already present through the clear glass, then the green must be the abstracted Brazilian land. Within this visual analysis of the cathedral as the abstraction of the Brazilian landscape it is argued herein that the inclusion of the egg marks Brasilia as the birth of this new modern nation. This representation is highlighted by two architectural elements. The first element is the exterior lights placed around the Cathedral, which, along with the transparency of the glass, allow for Peretti’s work to penetrate the exterior and be seen during the night. Even when the building is closed, the image of this new modern Brazil grounded on the local landscape is projected and becomes part of the built environment. The second element is a Niemeyer-designed ramp, which visitors go down to enter the building. Descending into the building places visitors into an immersive environment described as a “zero gravity situation, between heaven and earth.”\textsuperscript{16} Reliance on the local landscape for the motifs of the stained glass aided the Cathedral’s aims to be religiously inclusive through its exclusion of identifiable religious symbols and demonstrated the modernization and localization of a religious craft.

Peretti’s design for the chapel at the \textit{Palácio do Jaburu} (Jabarú’s Palace, the official residence of the Vice President, 1979), located past the monumental axis along Lago Paranoá, also relied on the local landscape for inspiration. Peretti’s design, composed of solid concrete shapes that all lead to the centrally placed dove as well as the varying opaqueness of the glass, replaced an exterior wall. The variation in blues and the use of clear concrete shapes that all lead to the centrally placed dove as well as the varying opaqueness of the glass, replaced an exterior wall. The variation in blues and the use of clear concrete shapes that all lead to the centrally placed dove as well as the varying opaqueness of the glass, replaced an exterior wall. The variation in blues and the use of clear concrete shapes that all lead to the centrally placed dove as well as the varying opaqueness of the glass, replaced an exterior wall. The variation in blues and the use of clear concrete shapes that all lead to the centrally placed dove as well as the varying opaqueness of the glass, replaced an exterior wall. The variation in blues and the use of clear concrete shapes that all lead to the centrally placed dove as well as the varying opaqueness of the glass, replaced an exterior wall.

In addition to allowing the landscape to interact with the work, the variation in clarity places an emphasis on how light enters a building and the impact it has on an interior. Prior to the inclusion of Peretti’s glass works, architects sought to find solutions to reduce the amount of natural light entering a building. This taming of the tropical climate is evident through the use of cobogó (ceramic tiles) in Lúcio Costa’s design for Parque Guinle (Rio de Janeiro, 1948) as well as the introduction of \textit{brise-soleil} at the Ministério da Educação e Saúde (Rio de Janeiro, 1943) where both projects experimented with materials to provide a cool shaded environment.\textsuperscript{17} While previously the emphasis was placed on shade, Peretti’s designs shifted the attention from shade to light, further enhancing the relationship between interior and exterior.
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The unity of land and sky as well as the importance of light accomplished in Peretti's work for the chapel at the Palácio do Jabarú resulted in her work blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior.

Peretti's artistic practice expanded beyond religious buildings and modernized the medium through its use in secular buildings. Modernism's reinterpretation of walls and of its artistic and architectural role as exemplified in Peretti's practice is also seen in Roberto Burle Marx's tapestry.

IV. Modern Tapestry: The Plane as Decorative Site

Much like the use of stained glass, the modernization of tapestry demonstrated the secularization of Christian craft. Inside the Palácio Itamaraty (1970), also known as the ministry of external affairs, located on the monumental axis, Burle Marx's tapestry Vegetação do Planalto Central (Vegetation of the Central Plain) (1967) —on the wall facing the garden in the banquet hall shifts the horizontality of his landscape design to the verticality of the wall—designates the wall as a plane of landscape decoration (Figure 2). Known mostly for his landscape architecture, Burle Marx's involvement in and experiments with other media are often overlooked. Although a project of such magnitude needs further academic exploration, this section will focus on Burle Marx's tapestry design by introducing him, and more generally Brazil, into discussions regarding the modernist tapestry revival movement occurring largely in the United States and Europe during the twentieth century.

The modernist revival of tapestry is intrinsically linked to contemporaneous interest in the synthesis of the arts, in which these objects were seen as being able to establish a stronger relationship with architecture through their functionality in the everyday world. Occurring on a global scale, numerous modern artists created objects such as tapestries and rugs during the mid-twentieth century. This led to various exhibitions such as *New Rugs by American Artists* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1942; *French Tapestries* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in 1947; and *Douze tapisseries inédites* at the Galerie Denise René, Paris in 1952. Within Brazil, artist Regina Graz initiated a revival in weaving as a medium in 1922 during the iconic "Semana de Arte Moderna" (Week of Modern Art) in São Paulo. However, according to historian Simone Trindade Vicente da Silva, although Graz reintroduced the medium to Brazil, it was Genaro de Carvalho who, thirty years later, elevated tapestry to a high art. Living in Paris during the rise of modern tapestry, Genaro de Carvalho began to experiment with the medium in the early 1950s and established himself and Brazil within the field through his participation in the Second International Tapestry Biennial in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1967. This trend demonstrated both Brazil's presence in a global tapestry exhibitions and tapestry as a reputable medium within the country by the late 1960s.

Alongside the various exhibitions created to elevate tapestry as an art form was the theorization of the medium, especially in France. Artists such as Fernand Léger, Georges Boudaille, and Jean Lurçat addressed the relationship between tapestry, mural, and painting. While Léger believed that tapestry might be the mural of the future, Boudaille and Lurçat sought to differentiate tapestry from painting. For Boudaille tapestry situated itself between painting and decoration. Expanding on this, Lurçat argued that to maintain a difference between painting and tapestry, the latter must eliminate both frames and "three-dimensional trompe-loeil effects." In the mid-twentieth century the success of the revival of weaving as a medium depended not only on locating tapestries within discussions of a synthesis of the arts, but also in distinguishing it from painting. Within these discussions it was Le Corbusier who best labeled the modernist revival of the tapestry. Coining the term muralnomad, Le Corbusier defined tapestry as becoming "the 'Mural' of modern times. We have become 'nomads,' living in apartments equipped with common services; we move. We cannot have murals painted on the walls of our apartments. This 'woolen wall' can be detached, rolled, carried under one's arm, travel to be hung elsewhere." Through this definition Le Corbusier expands on the theorization of Léger, Boudaille, and Lurçat by contextualizing the tapestry in the socio-cultural moment of nomadism that had taken hold of modern life. Consequently, both the owner and the tapestry are seen as nomadic and tapestry is distinguished from easel painting by placing emphasis on the medium's portability as well as its independence from the wall.

Traditionally, Western easel painting represented a window, whereas tapestry, through the exclusion of a frame as well as the claim that it should touch the ground, became a textile that “dressed” and displaced the wall rather than embellishing it. This displacement was also occurring architecturally through interior walls becoming non-load-bearing structures due to twentieth century reliance on steel and reinforced concrete. Similarly, these innovative materials allowed for the creation of the horizontal window, which evolved into the glass curtain wall. As argued by K.L.H. Wells, "Tapestry's independence from the wall on which it hangs likens it to the curtain wall of modern architecture. Such an exterior curtain wall, a term that itself trades on flexible autonomy of textiles, was so named because it is independent

Figure 2: Roberto Burle Marx. Vegetação do Planalto Central, 1967. Image Credit: Ana de Oliveira/Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Brazil
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from the building’s load-bearing structure.” This demonstrates the similarities in function between tapestries and glass walls, where traditional architectural elements and a building’s volume are altered. The curtain glass wall not only obliterates the solidity of the wall but also abolishes the window, resulting in a transparent plane that “facilitates the visual consumption of the outdoors.”

In Niemeyer’s Palácio Itamaraty, the alignment of the garden, the glass curtain wall, and the tapestry created a space that heightened the viewer’s appreciation for nature through the excision of architectural elements. Through a visual analysis of the studies created for the tapestry, the abstraction of nature becomes evident. While in the first study plants and trees are easily perceived, Burle Marx slowly begins to abstract the shape of each by singling out elements that are crucial and eliminating unnecessary visual information. This is most present in the central cactus-like plant in the foreground, which slowly begins to lose its outline, and the focus is placed on the movement of its limbs. Although the final product is an abstract work of art the viewer can still make out the silhouette of various trees, resulting in a work informed by the local natural environment. Therefore, the work fulfills the contemporaneous artistic trends of two-dimensionality and abstraction as well as tapestry’s requirements of being displayed unframed and extending over the length of the wall.

The natural landscape presented on a grand and enveloping scale had occurred previously in Claude Monet’s mural-size Water Lilies (1914-26). In fact, in her influential book Muralnomad: The Paradox of Wall Painting, Europe 1927-1957, Romy Golan opens her narrative of the mural in the twentieth century with Monet’s work, stating that, “Since the 1950s, critics and the general public have celebrated Monet’s decorative Water Lilies murals as one of the high points in the history of modern art.” She goes on to introduce Rosalind Krauss’ 1982 article in which Monet’s work was singled out “as the culmination of the transformation of landscape painting into a compressed, horizonless space, expanded to correspond to the absolute size of the wall.” Published years prior to both Rosalind Krauss’ article and Romy Golan’s book, Leo Steinberg, in his 1956 essay titled “Monet’s Water Lilies,” alludes to the flatness of the painting and its horizontality, stating that, “it is wonderful to look at for an hour or so at a time, for you can do things to it with your eyes—tip it into a horizontal plane, then it let snap back up to an upright sheet; gaze along placid surfaces, then look through them five fathoms deep... you can invert the picture or yourself at will, lie cheek to cheek with the horizon, rise on a falling cloud, or drift with lily leaves over a sunken sky.”

Vegetação do Planalto Central is inserted into this discussion, making the claim that Burle Marx’s tapestry as well as his garden result in the creation of a room that has evolved from Monet’s Orangerie. Here, Niemeyer and Burle Marx create a space that allows the viewer to study nature both as a natural horizontal landscape and as an abstracted vertical work of art. Through these shifts, a modernist site for the contemplation of the local landscape is created resulting in a national subject that admires the local untamed land.

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V: Partition Walls and Works of Art

Like Burle Marx, Peretti’s stained glass panels created between 1977 and 1978 bring the landscape into the interior. Separating the room in order to create multi-use spaces, the glass panels stand as both partition walls and works of art, emphasized by the fact that these partitions are titled. In Pasiphae (1977) (Figure 3), located in Oscar Niemeyer’s Congresso Nacional (National Congress) at the end of the Monumental axis, Peretti’s glass divides the Chamber of Deputies into a sitting room and a small presentation room. Aesthetically this panel is similar to the previously discussed works through its use of clear and artisanal glass. Composed of an undulating ribbon-like motif, the work allows for various interpretations such as the roots or branches of a tree. This representation of the land is further informed through an understanding of the myth of Pasiphae, after whom the piece is titled. In Greek mythology, Pasiphae is the daughter of the sun god Helios and the Oceanid nymph Perse as well as the mother of the Minotaur. She is the central figure that ties together the sky, sea, and land—all themes often found within Peretti’s work. In this work Peretti brings nature into the interior of the building through her abstracted representation of the exterior local elements and in doing so creating a modern Brazilian identity.

Figure 3: (Left) Marianne Peretti, Pasiphae, 1977, Salão Nobre, Câmara dos Deputados, Congresso Nacional. Brasília, Brazil. Image Credit: Gloria Grajales.

While Pasiphae allows for various interpretations and can be seen as simply an abstract design or as the abstraction of nature, another partition wall, also found within the Congresso Nacional in the Noble hall, makes a clear relationship to the
land through its title *Paisagem* (Landscape) (Figure 3) (1978). Composed of clear glass with thin white lines running across and various circular shapes attached to the surface the work resembles a pond with lily pads. This piece draws a visual parallel to Roberto Burle Marx’s water landscape design for the Palácio Itamaraty through their use of water lilies and aquatic gardens. Furthermore, the vertical representation of a horizontal landscape accomplishes a similar goal to Burle Marx’s tapestry in creating an environment for the aesthetic contemplation of the land. Leo Steinberg’s comments about Monet’s *Water Lilies* and the viewer’s ability to “tip it into a horizontal plane, then it let snap back up to an upright sheet” also apply to Peretti’s design. Yet, this work can be seen as a further abstraction of the landscape as well as a destruction of the wall that goes beyond the tapestry. Since these panels serve no structural function, they can be seen as the reinterpretation of the modern interior wall whose purpose is more artistic than functional. Whereas the stained glass at the Chapel of the Palácio do Jaburu replaced the exterior wall and Burle Marx’s tapestry “dressed” the wall, Peretti’s panels replace interior walls entirely with works of art.

**VI. Destruction of the Wall: Interior Gardens**

The desire to create a national identity that relied on the land is evident in the gardens found throughout Brasilia that result in framing the wild landscape by modern architecture. These gardens create an environment where the Brazilian landscape is re-examined as a national object, not one of colonial rule. One of the first examples where this occurs is Oscar Niemeyer and Roberto Burle Marx’s collaboration on the design for the Teatro Nacional Cláudio Santoro (Cláudio Santoro National Theater) (1966; Gardens, 1976) located across from the Cathedral. Through the creation of two gardens, one exterior and one interior, Burle Marx celebrates both the dry central plateau region as well the lush Amazonian one. For his exterior design, he framed two sides of the building with a dry landscape design composed of vellozia, yucca, and agave plants. This arid landscape is a clear deviation from previous landscape design influences in the country, especially since agaves were often considered primitive and "rarely esteemed for their indigenous or novel landscape potential." Here Burle Marx placed “primitive” elements within a modern urban setting and in doing so addressed the need to appreciate the land.

While the exterior was an homage to the central plateau, the interior celebrated the lush regional landscape and architecturally reinterpreted the colonizing botanical garden. Shaped like a pyramid, Niemeyer’s design consists of two concrete sides decorated with a relief design by Athos Bulcão and juxtaposed by the lightness of the alternating glass facades. In the interior, Roberto Burle Marx’s gardens are placed alongside the glass, creating an environment reminiscent of the botanical gardens and greenhouses prevalent in the nineteenth century. While the gardens and greenhouses of the nineteenth century were an extension of colonialism, where foreign plants were brought back to Europe and exhibited as accolades of the most recent colony, here the interior garden creates an environment where the public can appreciate the local environments by first interacting with the arid exterior garden and then moving inside to the lush landscape. In the Teatro Nacional the vertical growth of the plants, which often expands onto architectural elements such as the stairs, or extends beyond one floor as seen in the plants growing out of the second floor, result in the coexistence of architecture and nature which dismantled the wild/civilized binary (Figure 4).

The Teatro Nacional sought to foster an environment for both nature and culture. In the design of the building visitors encounter the garden prior to entering one of three theaters, demonstrating how Niemeyer, with the help of Burle Marx, cultivated an atmosphere where national and international landscape and culture coexisted. In fact, the III Salão de Arte Moderna (Third Salon of Modern Art) (1966) was held within the Teatro Nacional demonstrating the success of the building in accommodating local exotic plants alongside local modern art—resulting in an environment where modern art, architecture, and the landscape educated and formed a new national subject.

Palácio Itamaraty is another exemplary design of the collaboration between Niemeyer and Burle Marx. Beginning with the exterior, the squared building composed of identical facades appears to be floating or growing out of a reflective pool enriched with floating gardens. Crossing a walkway over the reflective pool and moving beyond the reception area, visitors enter a large room with a grand modern staircase flanked by a curtain wall on one end and an interior/exterior garden on the other. Designed by Roberto Burle Marx, the interior garden is less restricted than the exterior one. While the plants in the exterior garden are placed within confined spaces and the height of the plants is maintained, the interior garden is characterized by the verticality of its design and the freedom with which the plants grow (Figure 4). By bringing the
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Brazilian landscape into the center of the city, Niemeyer took full advantage of the local climate and allowed the garden to extend into the exterior by excluding a glass façade. This blurring of interior and exterior boundaries further enhanced the organic growth of the garden, an effect that continued in the design for the courtyard garden located on the second floor. Through the freedom granted to the gardens, Niemeyer's architecture works to frame the landscape while at the same time breaking interior/exterior boundaries, creating opportunities where “the building may root itself in Nature by outward reaching tentacles” and “the site may be tied into the building by pleasant infiltrations.”31 These gardens permeate into the building through the use of glass curtain walls allowing the natural elements to visually penetrate the building.

Stained glass, tapestry and landscape design approached and dismantled the wall, creating works of art that glorified the local landscape and in doing so molded a modern Brazilian identity. This was largely accomplished by approaching the land through a modern lens, either through the abstraction of the land seen in Peretti’s stained glass works and Burle Marx’s tapestry or through the dialogue created between the untamed jungle and the modernist architecture in the interior and exterior gardens. Through an analysis of these mediums it is evident that in Brasilia modernist architecture became a national symbol, one that relied on internalizing international trends.


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NOTES


3. Ibid, 19.

4. Ibid. The Botanical Garden housed imported tropical plants, such as royal palms from the West Indies, as well as indigenous Brazilian plants.

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7. Marianne Peretti was born in 1927 in Paris. She began working on book and magazine illustration in France and studied at École des Arts Decoratifs and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière (Montparnasse). Peretti, whose father was Brazilian, moved to São Paulo in 1956. She is the only woman to join the team of artists who worked on Brasilia.


10. Ibid.

11. It is important to note that although the temple was not constructed until 1973 the land had been paid for in 1958 with the intentions of building a Buddhist temple. For more information on the rise of Buddhism in Brazil see Christina Rocha’s Zen in Brazil: the Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006). For more information on the Vale do Amanhecer see James Holston’s “Alternative Modernities: Statecraft and Religious Imagination in the Valley of the Dawn,” American Ethnologist, 26, no. 3 (August 1999) 605-631 and Deis Siqueira’s “Unconventional Religiosities and the New Age in Vale do Amanhecer (the Valley of the Dawn), Brasilia,” New Age in Latin America: Popular Variation and Ethnic Appropriations, ed. Renée La Torre, Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga, and Nahayelli Juárez Huet (Boston, MA: Brill, 2016), 243-264.


Original text: Se Brasilia representa una Unidad Nacional, por que a Catedral de Brasilia não promove a unidade religiosa? Por que destinar-se a nossa Catedral sômente aos que professam a fé através da religião católica romana? Por que não franqueá-la também ás outras religiões? A Catedral trandormar-se-ia, assim, num templo de meditação, unindo católicos, protestantes, anglicanos, ortodoxos, judeus, budistas, maomêntanos, espíritas, numa formidável demonstração de solidariedade humana.


15. Ibid, 25.

Original text: "O desenho contínuo, uma fita que se desdobra em curvas no espaço—independente do material utilizado—... pode ser três coisas: um simples desenho linear, abstrato, lírico, sinuoso, gesto emocional e uma percuração sensível; o arbusco originado da observação da natureza, de uma planta que se desenvolve espacalmente, for a de lógica cartesiana, obedecendo apenas ao seu tropismo por mais liz e umidade; e pode ser também o rastro abstrato do voo do pássaro.”


18 Roberto Burle Marx was born on August 4, 1909 in São Paulo. He studied painting in Germany and upon returning to Brazil in 1930 began collecting plants in and around his home. In 1932, he designed his first landscape for a private residence by architects Lúcio Costa and Gregori Warchavchik. His first recognized public garden was for the Ministério da Educação e Saúde four years later. Burle Marx worked alongside Oscar Niemeyer in various projects and joined the team of artists working on the creation of Brasilia in 1961, at the end of Kubitschek’s term due to a previous misunderstanding between Kubitschek and Burle Marx during the creation of Belo Horizonte in the 1930s. Burle Marx died at the age of 85 on June 4, 1994 in Rio de Janeiro.


24 Ibid, 236.

Le Corbusier first used the term muralnomad in his essay for the 1952 exhibition Douze tapisseries inédites.


26 Ibid, 179.

27 Duncan P.R. Patterson, “There’s Glass between Us: A critical examination of ‘the window’ in art and architecture from Ancient Greece to the present day,” FORUM Ejournal 10 (June 2011), 14.


