

PORTRAITS  
OF A  
SOCIAL  
HISTORY

THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY  
OF RIO DE JANEIRO

Firjan SENAI





## EXPEDIENT

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1	<b>THE SPEECH OF DIRECTORS</b>	7	4	<b>MASSIVE SCALE PRODUCTION</b>	109
	<b>PREFACE</b>	8		1970, 1980, 1990 AND THE NEW CENTURY	
	<b>HISTORICAL ROOTS</b>	11		MANY MARKET OPTIONS: AUTHOR'S FURNITURE, MASS FURNITURE	110
	18 <sup>TH</sup> AND 19 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES			INTERNATIONAL FAIRS AT BUSINESSMEN'S AGENDA	118
	INTRODUCTION			TRADES THAT MADE HISTORY	120
	HOUSES AND FURNITURE IN COLONIAL RIO DE JANEIRO	14		TALKING ABOUT DESIGN: FREDDY VAN CAMP'S EXPERIENCE	134
	THE FIRST WOODWORKERS AT THE NEW TIMES OF THE SEAT OF THE COURT	18			
	THE FRENCH MISSION AND OTHER CULTURAL INFLUENCES	22			
	"SHOP FLOOR" AND STYLE DIVERSITY	24			
	LIFE IN THE 19 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AND WHAT IT WAS TO LIVE IN THE CAPITAL	28			
THE FIRST INDUSTRIES IN THE CAPITAL OF THE REPUBLIC	34				
2	<b>THE PATHS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION</b>	39	5	<b>CASES</b>	
	THE FIRST DECADES OF THE 20 <sup>TH</sup>			BUSINESSMEN'S WORDS	139
	AMBIANCE OF THE CARIOCA HOME AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY	40			
	DECORATION STORES AND ART DÉCO GLAMOUR	50			
	SIM'S FOUNDATION, BRAZIL'S FIRST FURNITURE				
	BUSINESSMEN'S ASSOCIATION	62			
	TENREIRO, MASTER OF THE GREAT CARIOCA WOOD WORKSHOPS	66			
3	<b>THE GOLDEN YEARS OF CARIOCA FURNITURE</b>	71	6	<b>INDUSTRY'S PROSPECT IN RIO</b>	161
	FROM THE 1950S TO THE 1970S			THE SITUATION OF THE SEGMENT	
	FOCUS ON DESIGN AND MATERIALS: ON WAY TO BRAZILIAN FURNITURE	72		DIAGNOSIS AND STRATEGICAL PLANNING	162
	GELLI AT THE TURN OF THE DECADE	78		A REFLECTION ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE FURNITURE	
	THE ARRIVAL OF ML MAGALHÃES ON MARKET	82		INDUSTRY OF THE STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO	164
	OCA: A NEW FURNITURE IDEA IN RIO DE JANEIRO	84		ASSOCIATIONS' ACTIVITY	168
	THE SPIRIT OF MODERNITY AND ARCHITECT FURNITURE	90			
	DESIGN INVADES COPACABANA AND IPANEMA	96			
	ESDI: THE FIRST SCHOOL OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN DESIGN	102			
					7
			AIMING QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION	172	
			PARTNERSHIP WITH SENAI IN FURNITURE LABOR FORCE FORMATION	174	
			DESIGN VALUATION INITIATIVES IN CITY AND STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO	176	
				<b>NOTES AND REFERENCES</b>	184
				<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	188

# THE SPEECH OF DIRECTORS

**Eduardo Eugênio  
Gouvêa Vieira**

PRESIDENT  
OF FIRJAN

The State of Rio de Janeiro is nationally known for the huge experience of its furniture makers in working with exclusive products with value services, and notoriously respected for its potential in launching trends and inspiring new products. The furniture industry of Rio feeds on old resources brought by our colonizers, built important knowledge in furniture production, and has been perfecting its processes over time.

The recording of this little-known story is fundamental for its actors to know each other better and to increase the planning of future actions. The knowledge is the essential vehicle to provide qualified and accurate information, contributing to the formation of the industrial workforce and other sector actors.

For this reason, the FIRJAN, through Firjan SENAI, has produced this unpublished publication which, built through extensive historiographical research, documents the history of the furniture industry in our state, its roots, paths and choices over time, collaborating with the memory and improvement of this important sector.

Good reading!



In front of the showcase of tools in one of the SIM-RIO rooms, from left to right, Gil Grosman, Joaquim Gomes da Silva, Eduardo Eugenio Gouvêa Vieira and Ricardo Maia.  
Photo: Antonio Batalha.

The aim of this publication is to preserve the memory of certain carpentry enterprises – some still in operation, others no longer – of which the founders are yet among us.

I consider it essential to keep the memory of all that truly matters in life alive. This book arose from my interest in tools that have contributed to the history of the carpentry trade. The collection started with tools donated by my father-in-law, and then by the former president of SIM RIO (the Carpentry Union of Rio de Janeiro). A few were my own. And so, I continued gathering tools, some purchased, others donated by individuals aware of my interest in mounting a significant collection of carpentry tools, almost in the spirit of a museum...

It was from this collection, and from the desire to preserve a memory – as well as from inspiration from St. Joseph the Carpenter – that the idea to write a book on this marvelous trade arose.

Then, during a dinner in Milan, Italy, with Eduardo Eugenio, president of FIRJAN (the Industry Federation of the State of Rio de Janeiro) and representative from various carpenters' unions, I mentioned my goal and it was enthusiastically received: "Let's think about it. It's a great idea".

When our union premises were inaugurated, sponsored by FIRJAN, Eduardo Eugenio viewed and admired the tool exhibit in a case in one of the rooms. I therefore referred to the book again and he immediately asked the director, Ricardo Maia, to initiate the project at once.

Coincidentally, at the inauguration, we were also commemorating the 80th anniversary of the union.

The idea having taken concrete form, it is my hope that the publication of this book will be important

not only for us, as a translation of our memories (so often undervalued in this country), but also to the future of the trade and as a stimulus to new undertakings.

The contributions to the book on the part of business leaders exemplify, above all, their dedication to the profession and to their firms. There are clearly other, even superb, entrepreneurial examples, but it would be impossible to register them all. What is important to emphasize is that all has been done to benefit our trade and to commend the firms that have contributed, and those that continue to contribute, to the history of the sector.

Due to the ups and downs of the Brazilian economy, it is often hard to sustain enterprises, especially in a sector in which the majority are family firms. It must also be recognized that not always do the new generations choose to maintain the family tradition, given that the furniture industry involves highly technical, demanding, and not always compensating work.

I hope, nonetheless, that this book achieves its objectives and encourages future generations to reflect on and continue in this splendid trade, as did their parents, their grandparents, their great grandparents...

For their efforts to make this publication a success, we wish to thank Eduardo Eugênio and the entire team of FIRJAN.

And to preview the next step of SIM RIO, we take this opportunity to announce the creation of the Museum of Design, which in addition to being the first in the State of Rio de Janeiro, will be assigned the mission of contributing to the history of Brazilian furniture, as well as to making public the works of design hitherto scattered in private collections.



This narrative had its first spark with the remarkable showcase of traditional woodworking tools, displayed at the headquarters of the Furniture Industry Union of Rio de Janeiro (Sindicato das Indústrias de Móveis do Rio de Janeiro – SIM). By itself, it proves any account of the furniture industry in both the city and state of Rio de Janeiro requires identification and documentation of the historical roots of traditional woodworking. (Author's note)  
Photo: Crochet Produções.

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**“The past must be looked upon carefully, through its vestiges.”**  
**Laura de Mello e Souza, historian**

# HISTORICAL ROOTS

18<sup>TH</sup> AND 19<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURIES

# INTRODUCTION

The history of the furniture industry in Rio de Janeiro has great social, economic, cultural and emotional dimensions and began when Brazil was still a Portuguese colony, even before the city became the seat of the Court. Its roots are mainly in the artistry and in the refined technique of traditional woodworking – a legacy from Portuguese artisans, who were not only the first to create the furniture of Brazilian homes, but also the first masters of wood crafting, an activity that spanned decades and generations and thrived with the urban development of the city, at the onset of industrialization.

It's a story of skilled master craftsmen, often anonymous, uniquely fit for managing crude wood with ease, among planes, chisels, gouges, braces and other typical tools on their workbench. A story actually born on the workbenches and sawhorses of the many so-called "backyard workshops" of Rio de Janeiro's capital and country towns, and so many dusty hangars, perfumed by jacaranda, mahogany and many other Brazilian hardwoods, such as *vinhático*, *imbuia* and *peroba*. Those are the scents of wood that woodworkers say

are remembered forever by those who have worked with saws, milling cutter and drills, with sawdust, squares and sandpaper all around, loudly hammering nails of all sizes...

It's a story full of ingenuity in the acts of sawing, carving, and lathing. Its rhythm is defined by the up-and-down, measure-and-cut, adjust-and-mark-it-again. Its protagonists are the woodworker and the apprentice, often with a pencil behind the ear, which would measure and rough-hew until the imagined piece of furniture is done, emerging from the wood as a bed, a table, a chair or a wardrobe...

Although the early history of the furniture industry is poorly documented, our account could not start at any other point in time. Taking into consideration the historical processes of manual production, it is possible to see the urban development of the province of Rio de Janeiro in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century through what was manufactured not only in the city but in the whole state.

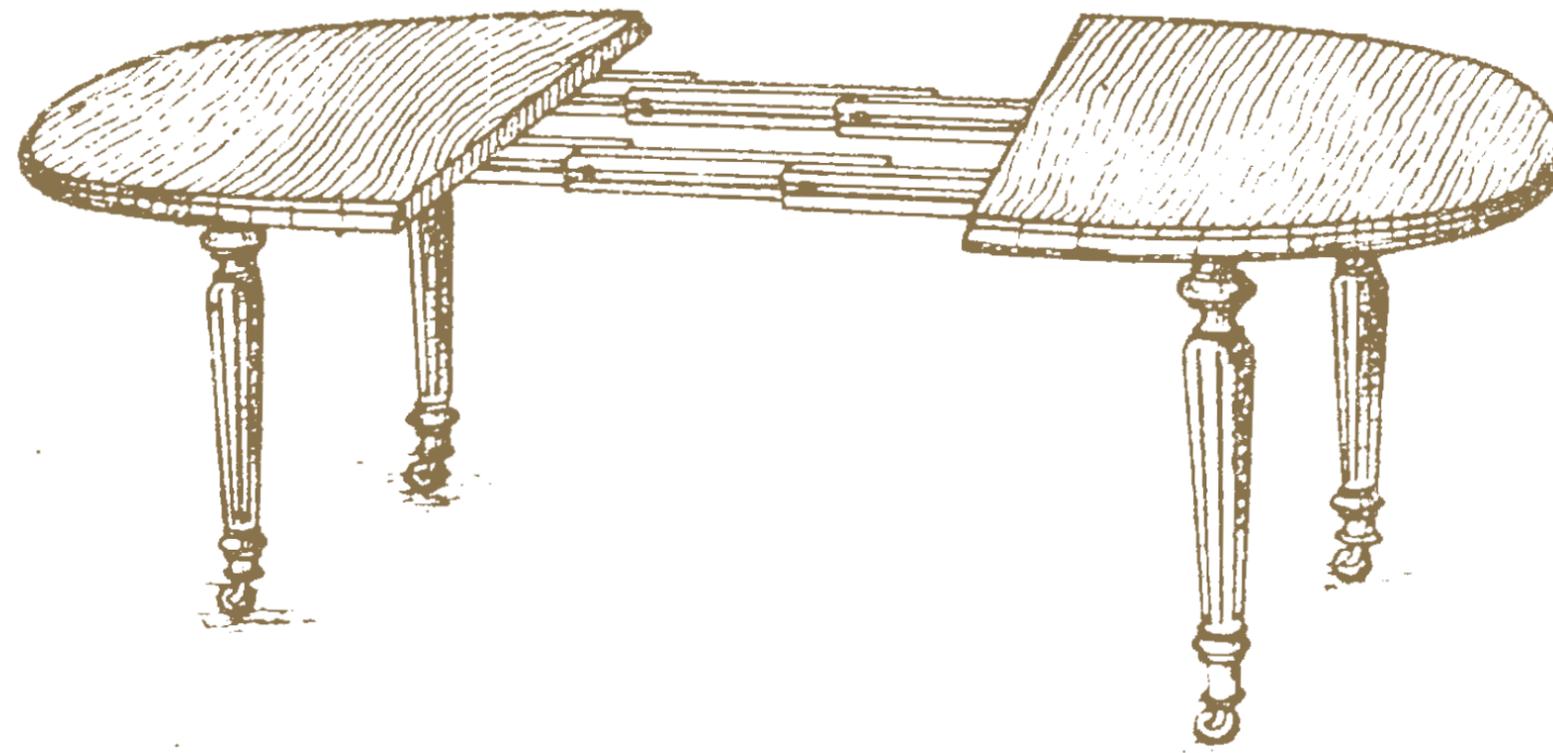


# HOUSES AND FURNITURE IN COLONIAL RIO DE JANEIRO

When in 1763 it became the capital of colonial Brazil, the city of Rio de Janeiro had a population of about 50 thousand people and, though modest, wasn't exactly small. "Of moderate proportions, it occupied the land between the sea and the hills; and the central regions didn't go beyond Campo de Santana. Rio was a city of simple one-story houses, mostly unpaved narrow streets, populated by slaves, freedmen, white men, merchants, artisans and few white ladies."<sup>1</sup>

Records of the time allow us to interpret that the Brazilian house of those days reflected the customs of colonial submission. The smaller ones, in which the poorest population lived, most of whom were mulattos, caboclos and mestizos, had just basic needs, with simple and rustic furniture. "The pieces had straight and austere lines, determined by its utility and possibilities of execution rather than by the stylistic precepts of the time. However, when it comes to more elaborate furniture, the culture of the colonizers prevails up until the early nineteenth century. Since Portugal was vulnerable to all sorts of external influence, the Luso-Brazilian furniture assimilated by extension, even if belatedly, not only the eastern influences of India and China, incorporated by Portuguese furniture, but also the evolved European tendencies of the Renaissance and Baroque styles."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, many of the bigger houses, owned by colonizers and run by slaves, mostly had European furniture brought from their Portuguese homes, such as pieces in the Manueline style, or with Eastern and Renaissance influences.



Elastic table:  
tops in two  
halves joined  
by longitudinal  
crossbars.  
Photo:  
Reproduction,  
Handyman's  
Handbook.

However, in the houses of colonial Brazil, one of the first prevailing pieces of furniture seems to have been the *caixa* (the word means box and is the Brazilian name of Portuguese chests). "Shaped as a parallelepiped, with a flat top, this piece of furniture was wider than it was deep and varied in size, from close to two feet up to over seven feet. Originally it had no feet and was usually supported by small stools. It was used to store most things; from food to money, from clothes to objects."<sup>3</sup>

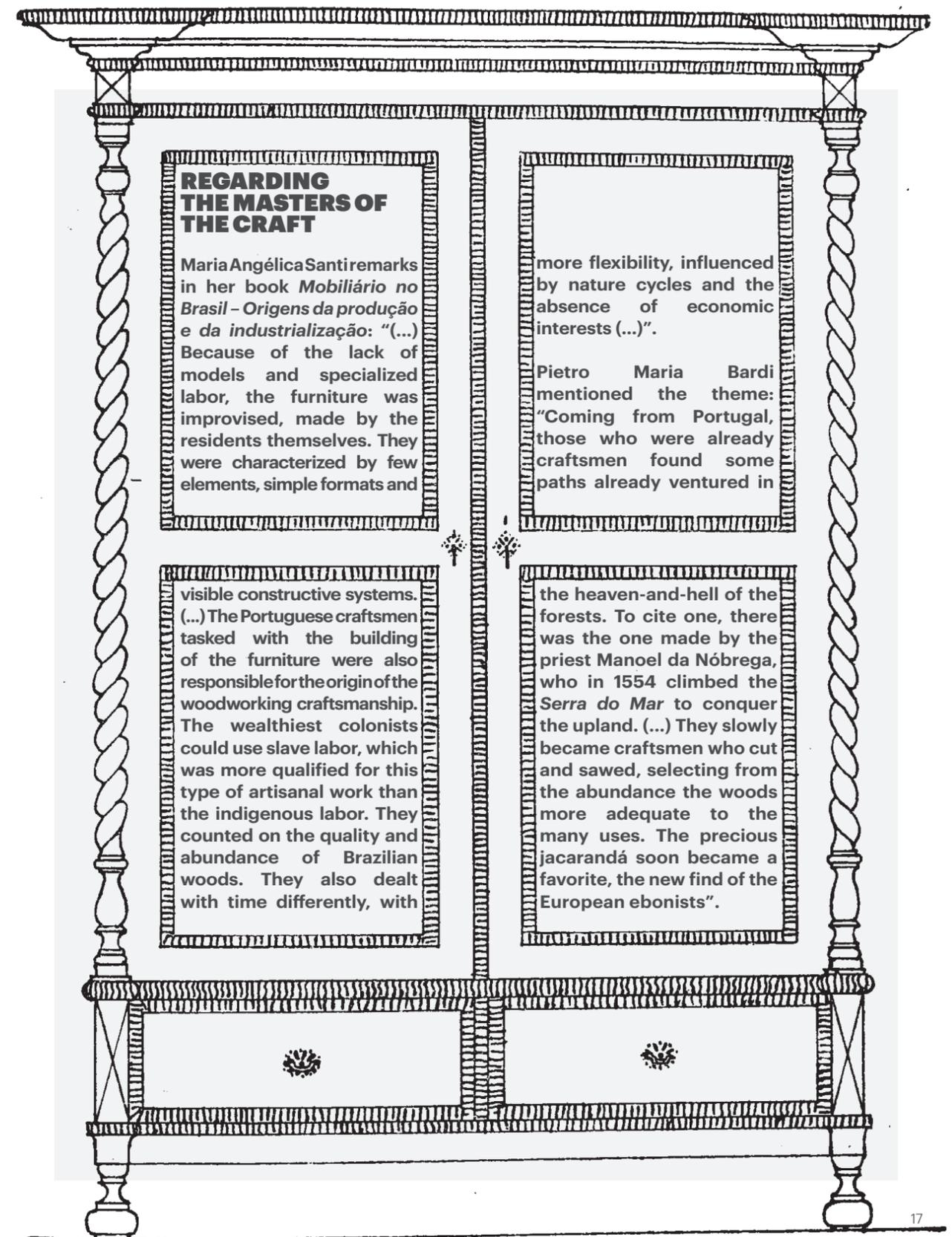
To quote the authors of *500 anos da casa no Brasil*, the professor and researcher Angela Brandão refers to the prevailing open spaces and to the large rooms lacking furniture in the colonial houses with seigniorial aspect, "be they the manors in farms or two-story houses in urban clusters". In her paper *Anotações para uma história do mobiliário brasileiro do século XVIII*, Brandão highlights the most common types of furniture in the time period and their uses in the home life: "The solution for sitting, sleeping, storing, eating, among others, was the use of rough wooden benches, pallets, mats and hammocks, chests, trunks and trestle tables. Even though they were notable by their smart practical solutions, they lacked any aesthetic purposes".

The research conducted by the publication *Releitura das Ambientações Brasileiras, Cinco Séculos de História* refers to the furniture from the early colonial period on the whole as being restricted to hammock frames, beds, canopies, *chaises longues*, desks, and oratories, not mentioning yet chairs as a common piece of furniture in the home. The few chairs that did exist were called *cadeiras rasas*, with a single seat, with or without arms, without back rest and with a rectilinear structure. The historian and architect Carlos Lemos confirms it: up until the 18th century, chairs were rare in colonial homes. "When they did exist, they were almost an ornament. Occasionally there was only one chair for a family of ten to fifteen people. It was mere decoration, perhaps meant for an important visitor. More useful as an aggregating object in outdoor conversations and social encounters and much less associated to the use during everyday meals, the chair was not usually included in the inventory of private homes of the time. There were even *mochos* (stools), but chairs were rarely present. Tables were also rare. (...) There is mention of tables with hinges or *mesas de misagras*, which could be opened and closed."

But, after all, how do we seek the roots of the Brazilian colonial furniture? In her historiography on the subject, Angela Brandão believes the classification of all the Brazilian furniture of the time period is still precarious: "It is difficult to differentiate, and are often considered colonial Brazilian furniture Portuguese furniture brought to the colony, furniture made in Portugal using Brazilian wood, furniture made in

Brazil by Portuguese craftsmen, furniture made in Brazil by local craftsmen who apprenticed with a Portuguese master or using Portuguese models, furniture made in Brazil by local craftsmen with a rustic method (though still with medieval models of popular Portuguese tradition – trestle tables, wicker baskets used as storage and adaptable as transport on the back of animals); and lastly, furniture made in Brazil by craftsmen who could be local or not, but with decorative themes inspired by the native flora and fauna".

In any case, though records on furniture artisans of the time are scarce and often vague, Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos, in her book *Móvel Moderno no Brasil*, considers significant the presence of Portuguese labor in the production of furniture in colonial times, and quotes Lúcio Costa: "(...) if the material used was very much Brazilian, those who worked them were always either Portuguese, actually born in Portugal – often lay brothers of religious orders – or, when born in Brazil, of exclusive Portuguese descent. Even if they had mixed African or indigenous descent, there was always a Portuguese lineage as well, more or less predominant. People of pure African or indigenous descent were mostly limited to reproducing Portuguese furniture, and even so, they could only become master craftsmen under the supervision of the Portuguese."<sup>11</sup>



# THE FIRST WOODWORKERS AT THE NEW TIMES OF THE SEAT OF THE COURT

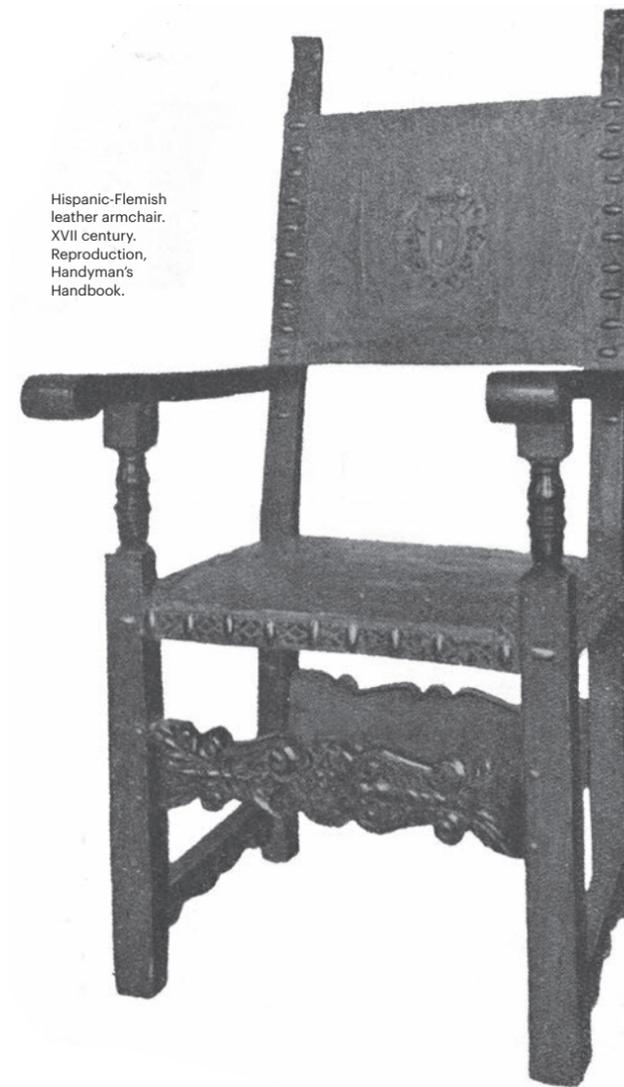
It is known, however, that by the turning of the 19th century there was some specialized labor in the production of furniture in Rio de Janeiro. In her book *O móvel do século XIX no Brasil*, Tilde Canti points out that a register of trades in the city registered as a woodworker, in 1800, Manoel Pereira Landin, a Portuguese who was promoted to evaluator of woodworking, a post he held until 1816. Another register, from 1801, mentions Francisco Simão, a Portuguese who built music stands and made repairs to the church Nossa Senhora do Carmo, located at the historical Rua Direita, now called 1º de Março. The same register of trades states that, in 1802, another Portuguese woodworker, Antonio Francisco Coelho, received \$2,320 réis (currency money) for fixing chairs from the consistory of the same church; and that Francisco Antonio Gonçalves' workshop was located in a hangar on *Travessa da Alfândega*. Also, there are indications that as early as 1808 this address had a cluster of small workshops, such as the ones of Thomaz José de Aquino and Antonio José da Costa, who appear on those years' register of Rio de Janeiro under "Woodworkers of Rua da Alfândega".

Although she doesn't specify the productions of the time, Tilde Canti mentions pieces that "by

themselves were well crafted and handsome, not only because it was part of the tradition of the trade to make them so, but also because the craftsmen and their assistants were often from the house. They were slaves whose natural gift for the craft was noticed by their master, who took advantage of it. They were not rushed and didn't have the possibility of profit. The 'satisfaction of a job well done' was the only thing that mattered, and at least that was theirs, something their masters couldn't take away".

It all fell to these craftsmen: building bridges, houses, chapels, altars, home furniture, utensils, ornaments, musical instruments; the work of fulfilling the needs of both urban and private life, that was artisanal as well as comprehensive. Since wood was easily available, it was the most used feedstock in colonial times. Between so many species, the *jacarandá*, the cedar, the cinnamon tree, the *vinhático* and the *suaçucanga* were the most used woods by carpenters and cabinet-makers.

But what is the difference between each one's jobs? Pietro Maria Bardi commented on the know-how of the wood craftsmen of the time.



Hispanic-Flemish  
leather armchair.  
XVII century.  
Reproduction,  
Handyman's  
Handbook.

In the peaceful and innocent Rio de Janeiro of early-19th century, the monotony of colonial architecture prevailed, distinctive by the low houses, with glassless windows, shuttered with latticework, mostly simple constructions built with unpolished stone and mortar. There were few two-story houses, and even fewer mansions or manors – in small isolated farms spread across the rural area of those times, where today are the neighborhoods of Flamengo and Botafogo.

History, however, had new times and a new atmosphere in store for the city that, until then, had a population of around 60 thousand people and was traced with only 75 public ways – 46 streets, four lanes, six alleys, and nineteen fields and squares. "The main street was Rua Direita, where were the governor's home, the custom house and later the Convento do Carmo, the Mint and the Royal Palace itself. When the Portuguese Court came, it all changed drastically. In the course of only thirteen years, between the arrival and the departure of D. João VI, Brazil ceased to be a backward, forbidden and ignorant colony anymore and became an independent nation. In no other time period did Brazilian history witness such profound and decisive changes in so little time."<sup>15</sup>

## WOOD CRAFTSMEN: SPECIALTIES

"(...) The difference between the work of a carpenter and a cabinet-maker wasn't so easy. A carpenter that made an oxcart often provided services more fitting for a cabinet-maker, who was a more refined woodworker, an artisan and an artist, maker of home and street furniture, because members of the nobility ordered many types of litters from them. (...) The cabinet-maker distinguished themselves from carpenters when the context of colonial life evolved, the economy slackened restrictions and the entrepreneurial class became more refined. In the city, the cabinet-makers devoted themselves exclusively to the art of making furniture, with works of damascening, plating, lathing, varnishing and other finishes done by wood experts – ebonists, carvers, inlayers, joiners (who also used turtle shells), among others. It was the master woodworker that was referred as *faber lignaminis* in the Renaissance, who served the wealthy."

"Carpenters needed fewer instruments, while the cabinet-maker needed many; from measuring objects, squares, to tools like saws, jigsaws, planes, adzes, gouges, scrapers, augers, chisels, hammers, mallets... it's a long list. (...) Of the production in the 'colonial style' that deserves more notice we highlight the rustic and simple furniture, with elegant and plain adornment and solidly built (it was the presence of the popular aesthetics, in the hands of the local cabinet-makers that worked for the lower classes, who didn't expect much extravagance in their homes). For the wealthy, it was the reverse: refined furniture, derived from what was in vogue in Lisboa, in the hands of the tradesmen foreign the kingdom (Bardi refers to the 'aesthetics of magnates', giving as an example of refined furniture the jacaranda buffets with inlaid *suaçucanga*, as an ivory imitation)."<sup>14</sup>



"It is said that God at a particular point in time looked at Brazil. When the Napoleonic movement reached the Iberian Peninsula, João VI was forced to flee to faraway Rio de Janeiro", irreverently put Pietro Maria Bardi referring to the strong winds of change that blew in 1808 Rio de Janeiro. That was the year in which "nothing less than 855 ships ported in Rio de Janeiro, averaging almost three per day".<sup>17</sup>

With the unexpected arrival of the Royal Family, the timid city became suddenly the political and economic center of the Portuguese empire, and it caused major inconveniences to the modest everyday life of the population. An urban chaos took hold of the city, which was completely unprepared for housing over 10 thousand Portuguese, who were used to European comforts and came with the Court to live in the city. Many families that lived in the best houses were moved to house the new residents. On every door of a dispossessed real state was painted the initials "P.R." for *Príncipe Regente* (Prince Regent) and the acronym was soon being humorously read as "*ponha-se na rua*" (translated loosely as "Get out").

The demographic boom was also intensified by the opening of Brazilian ports. Countless foreign people began to frequent the new capital, which soon would become the most cosmopolitan city on the entire continent. There were so many English people moving here that a cemetery and a church were designated only for them. The Italians influenced the gastronomy. Even the Chinese came from around the world to introduce the planting of tea leaves at the newly

created Real Horto – which later became the *Jardim Botânico* (Botanical Garden). Many English settled on estates built in the areas close to Glória, Catete, Flamengo, Laranjeiras and Cosme Velho. At the same time, the Portuguese nobles preferred São Cristóvão, Andaraí, Catumbi, Rio Comprido and Estácio, while the French settled more in Tijuca and Engenho Velho.

"The transfer of the Royal Family and the Portuguese Court with all their bureaucratic apparatus and European customs, was a major event, without precedents in Brazilian history. It certainly left deep marks on the appearance and customs of the city and its residents. A true 'outbreak' of urbanization, with big repairs and improvements transformed the city into a new Court, suitable for its new role as the capital of the Portuguese Empire", comments Renata William Santos do Vale.<sup>19</sup>

# THE FRENCH MISSION AND OTHER CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Alongside the fast urbanization that was transforming Rio de Janeiro, the industry, which up to that point had been incipient, also began to develop, as well as the cultural life, which began to stir in a way previously unknown. "(...) Beyond the physical and geographical changes at the seat of the Court, a new urban order was created, one in which the city, its residents and their customs were changed in European fashion, emanating a necessary civilized air. But this reform also taught newcomers some of the customs and aspects of colonial life."<sup>20</sup>

The synthesis made by Manoel de Oliveira Lima is even more incisive: "Dom João VI tried and really did create an Empire in America, for it absolutely deserves such classification (...). He gave the privilege of nationality to an immense shapeless colony, so that his son could enjoy it. He went back less of a king than he was when he came, since his authority was opposed without shame. However, he left behind him a bigger Brazil than the one he had found."

These transformations really did impose the social life in Rio de Janeiro. And the atmosphere of renovation became more evident in 1816, with the arrival of the French Artistic Mission (*Missão Artística Francesa*), that brought famous artists,

such as Rugendas, Nicolas-Antoine Taunay and Jean-Baptiste Debret, to create the Royal School of Sciences, Arts and Crafts (*Escola Real de Ciências, Artes e Ofícios*) and establish the teaching of art in Brazil.

This action, however controversial and motivated by political and administrative interests, had a strong influence on the local society. "In the minds of the residents of Rio de Janeiro, a city that still had colonial characteristics and a predominance of Portuguese roots, to participate or acknowledge this new moment of worldwide euphoria, optimism and progress meant to become more 'European'; therefore, for us, more civilized. It was, therefore, to leave behind the marks of the old metropolis and, with them, the stigma of underdevelopment it bore. This way, it wasn't difficult for France to plant in Brazilian culture their own customs, since in Brazil political exiles and artists, and other professionals of the Court already lived together, since the beginning of the 19th century. With the arrival of the French Artistic Mission, that changed the Brazilian taste, like D. João VI wanted, it introduced a new architectural style, the Neoclassic, driving us away from the colonial Baroque", says Maria de Fátima da Silva Costa Garcia de Mattos.<sup>22</sup>

These new cultural influences were strong on the furnishing of Brazilian homes in the first half of the 19th century, linked to the economic boost resulting from the opening of the ports and the signing of several commercial treaties.

One of the consequences was the growing indifference of the wealthier colonists towards the import of Portuguese furniture, since

it was so easy to acquire the latest pieces coming from abroad. Brazil started receiving English, French and Austrian furniture, and it influenced the local production, bringing more complex and richer styles.

Besides that, there was an early atmosphere of economic transformation and industrialization that, even if very shyly, paved the way for the creation of industrialized furniture. "(...) It was within this context that the activities of the Schools of Arts and Crafts (*Liceus de Artes e Ofícios*) stood out, and from their 'wood art workshops' came orders in bulk to furnish rich homes and public buildings. Besides the production of furniture, the schools had a major role as a center for the training of qualified artisans", stresses Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos.<sup>23</sup>

**For the record, it's worth mentioning that the first School of Arts and Crafts in Brazil was created in Rio de Janeiro, in 1856. It was created by the Society for the Promotion of Fine Arts (*Sociedade Propagadora das Belas Artes*), at the initiative of the architect Francisco Joaquim Bethencourt da Silva, but, differently from the one in São Paulo, founded in 1873, it didn't promote the woodworking practice in its workshops. "The courses, offered free of charge for artisans and craftsmen, were especially focused on the notions of geometric, industrial, artistic and architectural design and on the principles of sciences applied to the liberal arts", according to Álvaro Paes Barros.<sup>24</sup>**

Furniture of a residence of the Imperial Family. Record of Henrique Revert Klumb. National Library Foundation.



# “SHOP FLOOR” AND STYLE DIVERSITY

It wasn't therefore through formal studies that the craft of woodworking spread in Rio de Janeiro in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the demand for luxury furniture began to increase. Some data and reference texts on the origins of the furniture production of the time indicate that the workforce really developed on what was called “shop floor”, with Portuguese master craftsmen, mostly come with the Court, and their apprentices, almost always slaves. This was really the workforce that established the base of the big changes happening in Rio de Janeiro – the seat of the Portuguese government until 1821 and later the capital of the Empire, until 1889.

“In the slave society of that time, when manual labor was disdained, slaves with a better chance of getting emancipated could dedicate themselves to specialized crafts, and become woodworkers, cobblers, barbers, tailors and even customs loaders.” And this was the workforce that the small workshops that started to multiply, many of them literally in backyards, to supply the consumer desires of local society, among the wealthier families. The challenge was to create perfect copies of models of many styles that arrived directly by ship – pieces of furniture of many origins, that became the new

references for local production.

The architect Gloria Bayeux<sup>26</sup> mentions the pervasion of French furniture in the styles Directoire and Empire, of English furniture in the styles Adam, Sheraton, Hepplewhite, Regency, and later in the German style Biedemeier. She highlights the Sheraton as the most well-accepted of the English styles in the Brazilian home: straight edges, usually of jacarandá with light wood inlay, with tapered feet, like in the Neoclassic period.

In Tilde Canti's analysis, the origin of the ‘Brazilian Sheraton’ happened “thanks to the low cost, the simplicity of execution and the subtlety of the decorative elements. A style that adapted well to Brazilian conditions, allowing more than only the copying of the originals, but interpretations with regional characteristics”. Marina Kosovski Maluf also refers to it as one of the most used for chairs in that time period: “(...) Pieces notably lighter, with a straight and thin wooden structure, straw seat and hollowed out backrest, with few horizontal beams. They are chairs of what is called Brazilian Sheraton style, whose lightness clearly reminds of modern pieces built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century”.

Brazilian rosewood bank, 18th century, private collection of Pedro and Paulo Scherer. Photo: Crochet Productions.

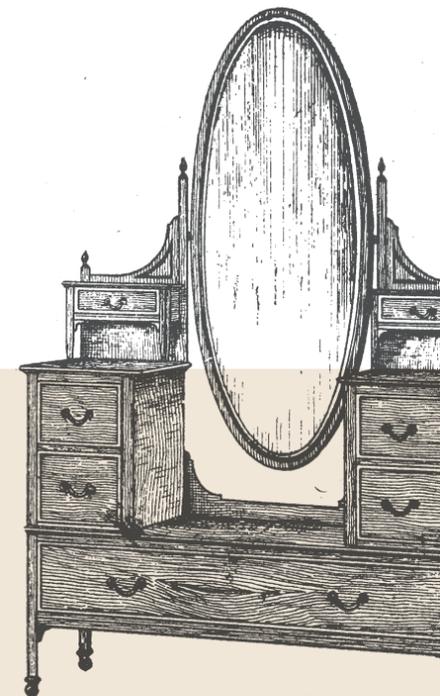


In the list of copies of European models that most interested the *cariocas* of the time, there is also Brazilian style largely copied on workbenches around the city referred to as D. João VI furniture. Developed in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it mixed together neoclassic outlines, with English and French inspiration, and the same structure of the D. Maria I period.

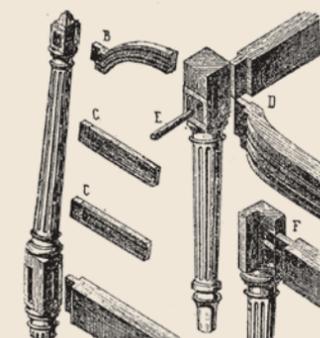
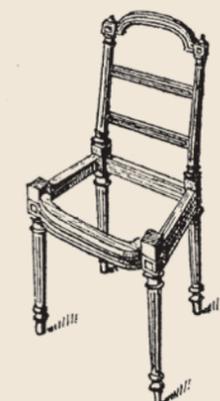
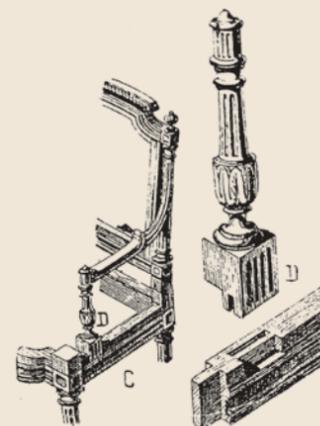
The ambiance of the Brazilian home was accentuating the lines of aristocracy and incorporating new pieces to satisfy the new notions of luxury. That is when the credenza, the stool, the rocking chair, the corner cupboard, the chaise longue, the bureau, the *conversadeira*, the nightstand, the divan, the bookcase, the *étagère*, the *marquesa*, the armchair, the sofa, the low stool, the wardrobe, the *psiché*, the dressing table appeared. (...) Besides jacaranda, the workshops in Rio de Janeiro became familiar with mahogany, making furniture that was stylistically more refined and less graceful than that of the style of D. Maria I.<sup>28</sup>

“It was said that on that time Brazil exchanged

Psiché. Reproduction, Handyman's Handbook.



Details of the assembly of a Louis XVI chair, with backrests. Reproduction: Handyman's Handbook.



the 'useful for the frivolous'... The interior became more refined... Now we had mirrors on the walls, French paintings, curtains, even figurines and a great novelty: the flower vase, made of crystal, of opaline, of Venetian glass, of porcelain... And the chair appears inside the homes as furniture for resting, not only around the table in the dining room – which no longer used the long benches – but also as a 'chair set' in the living room. People, families who bought furniture, bought a dozen, two dozen of chairs", says Carlos Lemos.<sup>29</sup>

If on the hand the style analysis and historical records of mid-19th century furniture are plentiful, on the other hand the historiography on the woodworkers of the city and their work conditions on the beginning of the Industrial

Revolution in the country are not very enlightening. "New techniques and new tools allowed new types of joints and new processes of wood preservation. Pegs, dowels, deeply embedded dowels enabled the assimilation of other efforts", describes Carlos Lemos, referring to the revolution of tools and techniques that transformed, even if slowly, the everyday life on the shop floor of the workshops of the city.

The following analysis of the architect Gloria Bayeux seems to justify, from an aesthetic point of view, the moment of transition of the incipient furniture industry in the Capital, during the Second Reign: "Regarding production, the switch from artisanal work to mechanical production led to a profound and critical change in the resulting product. (...) It was difficult for

Seventeenth-century walnut chairs with different seats: upholstered, leather and straw. Reproduction, Handyman's Handbook.



## THE FIRST ADVERTISEMENTS: UTILITY SERVICES

A few advertisements from the time in the *Almanaque Laemmert* show us, for example, that Francisco Julio Leger, in 1850, was at Rua do Ourives, on three doors – numbers 40, 42 and 43; in 1870, his workshop was still registered on the publication, but only at number 43 of the same street. In 1875, Francisco Julio Leger advertises his workshop again, but at number 33 of Rua do Ourives, in a publication illustrated by the company stamp, that had the imperial crown and the words "J. Lever, Jeanselme Père & Fils", to inform the clientele of the new partner, Janvregentberry, and announce the return of Leger to Paris, to open a branch at Rue Amelot, 64.

The *Almanaque Laemmert* also registered the workshop Leibach Martins, that in 1860 offered their services of "wardrobes and other fine pieces for the home", and the furniture and basketry factory of Reynaldo João Gerth, at Rua de São José, 9, registered in 1875.

The research on newspapers of the time found rare appearances of workshops in news and classified ads. In the newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias*, a few woodworkers offered their services, publishing only their addresses. In 1880, the newspaper registered an invitation for an assembly at S. B. dos Marceneiros, Carpinteiros e Artes Co-relativas, at Rua da Prainha, 172, whose secretaries were the craftsmen Francisco de Souza Sucazans and Duarte Porto.

The section of the *Gazeta de Notícias* that published the new commercial contracts in the city reported, in April 1886, the opening of the wood manufactory *Ribeiro & Araújo e da Marcenaria Fluminense*, at Rua de Santa Luzia, 51.

artists to keep up with the speed of the transformations (...) and art became ever more distant of the industry. In this context, the artisan competing with the machines started to adopt and manipulate several references, in a true revival of the past. (...) This moment was characterized by a great confusion in the field of arts and exacerbated taste for recovering the past. The best expression of this is the Eclecticism. (...) Even though the models and ornamental motifs were normally fully copied, in furniture the lines became heavier, the proportions less elegant and the adornments more sullen, prevailing a total lack of originality and harmony, an excess of curved lines, carvings and adornments".

It was the decade of 1840, when a new era of economic expansion began, with the replacement of the first rudimentary machines with steam engines.

"In this time period, skilled craftsmen brought from Europe oversaw the first factories, including the training of local labor. Of all the industries, the one that developed the most at the time was perhaps of men's hats (in the mid-19th century there were around 50 hat factories in Rio de Janeiro). The industries of spinning and weaving also grew a lot, in addition to metal casting, that achieved considerable importance with investments and large orders that some factories already received from the government. But it was only after the economic advances of 1880, due to accumulated profits of the coffee harvest in Baixada Fluminense, that the furniture industry began to flourish in Rio de Janeiro, under official protection."<sup>31</sup>

They were times of crisis in the Empire. Several demonstrations took place and opposition to the monarchy was increasing. Society longed for political and economic advances. And the industry, in turn, was wanted and needed due to the increasing consumption. The new social customs encouraged significant changes on the eve of the 20th century, including in the way of living and furnishing a home.

# LIFE IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AND WHAT IT WAS TO LIVE IN THE CAPITAL

Ouvidor St. with  
Uruguiana Street.  
National Library  
Foundation.

It is not an overstatement that some authors consider Rio de Janeiro of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “Brazil’s urban laboratory”. The city, that lived the peak, the decline and the end of slave labor, was the stage for decisive social contradictions, especially on the second half of the century, when the population, which grew fast with the influx of immigrants, witnessed the death of thousands of victims of fevers, epidemics and omissions caused by the social policies of the Empire.<sup>33</sup>

In 1872, when 50.4% of the population of the seat of the Court was literate (a much higher number than the 15% national average at the time), the General Census – the first census in Brazilian history – counted 266,831 residents in Rio de Janeiro. On the following count, in 1890, the Census of the Republic registered 522,651 individuals. Immigration data of the time indicate a significant influx of foreigners to the country, Rio de Janeiro in particular – an expanding city, which meant a promise of jobs and opportunity for wealth to the great number of Europeans who continuously arrived. They were mostly Portuguese, followed by Italian and Spanish. In the year of the Proclamation of the Republic alone 65 thousand foreigners arrived at the Capital, adding to the over 150 thousand

immigrants already living in the city.<sup>35</sup>

Rio was the stage for important political events and decisions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and witnessed the growth of the importance of the mercantile capital of the great commerce – initially the slave trade, then the textile, arms and metalworking industries, and the luxury goods industry, while the profit of the coffee harvest expanded, initiating the impulse for exportation.

And may our historical memory remind us: Rio de Janeiro was pioneer in the growing and selling of coffee in Brazil. In late-18<sup>th</sup>, early-19<sup>th</sup> century, the crops dominated the regions of Tijuca, Gávea and Corcovado. The large concentration of farms from the Vale do Paraíba – at the time coffee production center of the Empire – created from the Brazilian nobility the agrarian elite, which translated in their way of living a Rio de Janeiro that unified the new remarkable cultural and social trends in the urban scene of the great European centers, especially France.

This way, as the country established itself as an independent nation and the “coffee elite” took hold of land in the state of Rio de Janeiro,



accompanied by the rising tradesmen, new customs were imposed on the city's society, which adopted a more modern and attractive everyday life, after the implementation and improvement of public services, like rail transportation (and later the bus), gas lighting (and later electrical), water supply and recurring tries at successful sanitation.

Simultaneously, cultural spirits grew, urged by the glamour of modernity that ended up defining configurations very much *cariocas* in the everyday life of the city. To frequent Rua do Ouvidor, for example, became a symbol of involvement. It was the high point of downtown, and the financial and cultural elite frequented its pastry shops, French dressmakers, hatters, goldsmiths and watchmakers, among other boutiques. European customs, the increasing circulation of money, the bustle of commerce that became more sophisticated, the mansions of Coffee Barons... It all happened and everyone met there, at Rua do Ouvidor.<sup>36</sup>

However, for the Brazilian home the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which started with the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Family in 1808, would only end with World War I, in 1914, the time of the first actions towards a national identity when it comes to furniture. Until then, the elegant style of living in Rio de Janeiro obeyed the aesthetics of European luxury: what prevailed in the furnishing of wealthy family homes was the presence of furniture and decorations acquired with the label of foreign goods.

With a new premise of comfort, well-being and social distinction, the idea of the neoclassic mansion took hold: "(...) With the arrival of the flat glass panes and the new circular wick oil lamps, everything became lighter and habits and hours changed. The light opened the dining rooms and porches for visitors; after a meal was finish, people listened to music, played games, read or sewed. (...) Bedrooms now had a lavatory with a washbasin and a jug. The floors were of polished wood, tiles or marble and the walls were covered with decorated wallpaper, painted with new colors, curtains and drapes. The service areas changed the least, since slaves still did all the work. While the poor still used clay pots and bowls, wooden troughs, the rich imported

English china, teapots and pots, cake and pudding pans, cutlery and tableware. (...) The mansions were a mix of several architectural styles. The money made from coffee paid for the import of architects, master builders, masons and all kinds of building material. Absolutely everything came from Europe and the United States".

At the peak of the coffee expansion, homes started to display an abundance of decorative objects: music boxes, snuffboxes, table and wall clocks, crystal mirrors, and figurines of several origins... Also, from this period are cribs, folding screens, consoles, mosquito nets, writing desks and wooden candlesticks. Besides the candlesticks from the beginning of the century, the lighting began to incorporate the refinement of the bronze chandeliers with crystal pendants. The fabrics were still damasks, brocades, satins, silks and velvets. And on the eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rich families, especially from the rural elite, fell in love with Scots pine, Italian marble, beveled glass and straw, materials that were becoming the most modern ones for decorating not only the city home, but also the farm and the house in Petrópolis, – the three residences the elite usually had (and the house on the mountains, a luxury inherited from the times of the Empire, was a very opportune refuge in times of epidemics in the city).<sup>39</sup>

Under the European rules, mostly French, the *carioca* commerce gained luxury proportions, with a growing search for furniture, decorations and finishing materials. Some of the consequences of this demand in late-19th century are among the records of the architect and professor Adolfo Morales de Los Rios Filho: "All residential houses had internal walls



Picture by Louis Julien Jacottet: Fazenda do Secretário, Vassouras, RJ. National Library Foundation.

covered with paper. The plaster was covered with wrapping paper, which served as makeshift wallpaper. At the time, there were several print shops of wallpaper, showing the imports did not satisfy the market needs. The most famous one was the *Cia. Brasileira de Papéis Pintados*, opened in 1895, in São Cristóvão, as an initiative of Inácio Raimundo da Fonseca". But it is reported that in 1865 she was already at Rua do Ouvidor, 64A, the *Loja de Papéis Pintados*, which belonged to Albino José da Costa Fontes, who distinguished himself for working with "solely French" products, according to an advertisement in the *Almanak Laemmert*.<sup>41</sup>

There were also several tiles and mosaic factories. One of the most important ones was *Ao Ladrilho de Ouro*, at Praia Formosa. The most important sawmills belonged to the firms *Domingos Joaquim da Silva*, *Paulo Passos*, *Machado Bastos e Donato*. And the trading of building materials already had competition between shops, almost all located in downtown. Among them there was the one belonging to the noble Portuguese tradesman Domingos Joaquim da Silva, Viscount of Salreu, a patron of the time, owner of *Companhia Fornecedora de Materiais*, located at Rua de São Pedro, 54. There was also the shop of an Italian engineer,

a building contractor in important construction works in Niterói, Valença, Petrópolis and at the Capital, that he opened in 1875 with his brother, that was called *Antonio Jannuzzi & C.* Finally, there was *Eugênio Fiorêncio & Cia.*, a traditional shop at Rua da Assembleia, 58 to 60, according to the advertisement at the magazine *Ilustração Brasileira*.

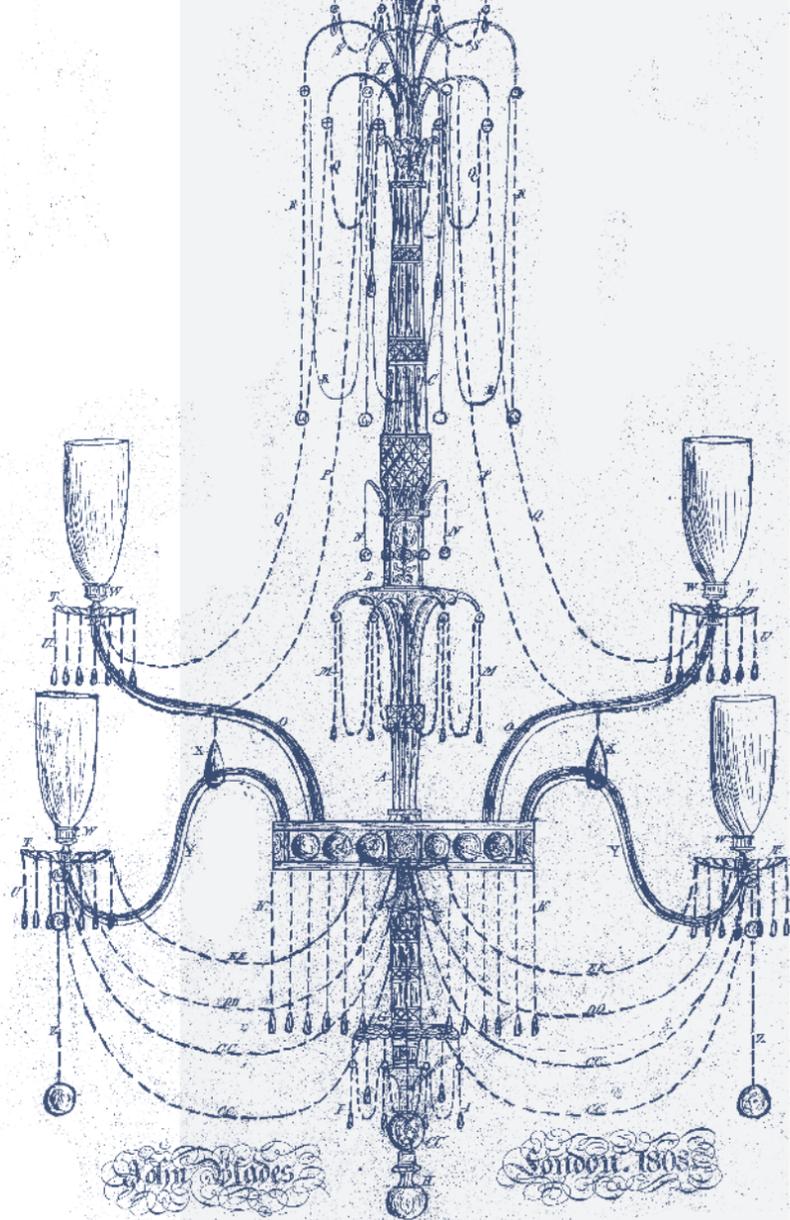
“At that time, Scots pine flooded the market, and later was replaced by Paraná pine. And of the Brazilian woods, the most sold were *perobado-campo*, *vinhático*, cedar and jacaranda, the last one being the most valued. The number of factories of wooden frames grew rapidly, and there were already many small furniture factories. Normally with poor facilities and a very simple way of manual production, the master woodworkers and their artisans created valuable custom pieces, true wonder in satinwood and jacaranda.”<sup>42</sup>

More and more the customs of the *carioca* were imbued with the glamour of the urban life of streets downtown that, with the advent of the streetcar, started being casually frequented by the ladies of the time. Not used to leaving the house besides

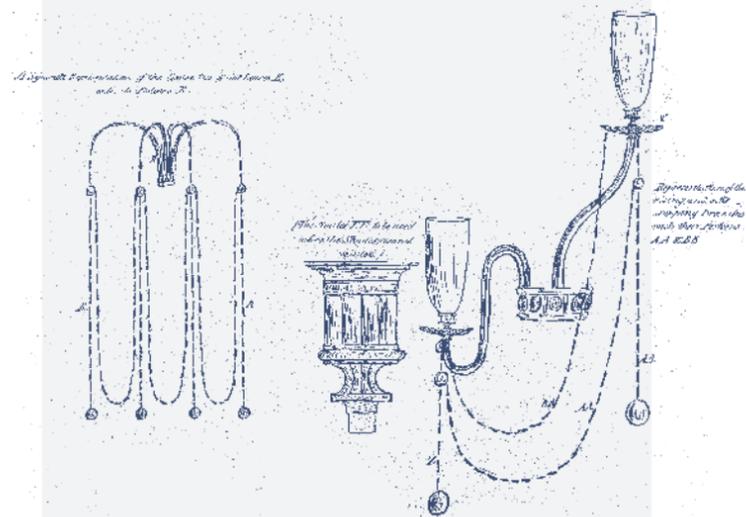
### MACHADO DE ASSIS LIKED WHAT HE SAW

“Our great woodworking shops are full of rich furniture. There are not only chairs, tables, and beds, but all sorts of decorative furniture, meticulously copied from French furniture... When one enters the great storerooms, one is dazzled by the perfection of the work, the richness of the material, the beauty of the form.”

*Excerpt from the chronicle by Machado de Assis, published in August 11th, 1895.*



Drawings for a crystal chandelier, by John Blades. National Library Foundation.



going to church or religious festivals, now they shopped and walked around well dressed through the luxury commerce that thrived between the streets of Alfândega, Gonçalves Dias, Direita and Ouvidor...

This atmosphere of “elegant life” however did not stand for every clientele in Rio de Janeiro. We know it would be impossible to understand today’s Rio if we ignored the social disparities that prevailed on those last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Most of the poorer population, which already lived since the turn of the century in the neighborhood of Mata-Porcos (today the region of Rua Estácio de Sá and Avenida Salvador de Sá), between the neighborhoods of Santo Antonio (Largo da Carioca, Lapa and Fátima) and Espírito Santo (parts of Estácio and Catumbi), had even less space on the narrow and crooked streets of old downtown when, with the Proclamation of the Republic, one year after the abolition of slavery, there were at least 600 *cortiços* (a type of collective housing) in the city.

Besides the large number of black, white and mestizo people unemployed, the arrival in large scale of more or less poor immigrants swelled the number of disadvantaged people living in unsanitary collective housing in the Capital. (...) By accumulating public servers and employees of the port sector, urban area of Rio de Janeiro started the new century with a major housing crisis, since no houses were built for the low-income population, causing the rental housings to become increasingly overcrowded and precarious during that time.”<sup>45</sup>

Despite strong political and social difficulties, the city grew and showed its face of

### CARIOCA FURNITURE: REALITY AND NOVEL

#### “THE SLUM”: SOCIAL ILLS

“It was five in the morning, and São Romão awoke, opening its long rows of doors and windows. It was a joyous awakening after seven hours of heavy sleep.”

An excerpt of Aluísio Azevedo’s novel: published in 1890, it narrates the life of the residents of a miserable collective housing and draws a vast panel of the society of Rio de Janeiro in late-19<sup>th</sup> century and its social relations.

#### “SENHORA”: DETAILS OF A LIVING ROOM

“The living room consisted of a sofa, six chairs, and two console tables of jacarandá wood, with no visible signs of its former polish. The wallpaper had gone from white to yellow, and here and there one could notice skilled patching.”

In his novel of 1875, José de Alencar describes a living room of a poor house that belonged to a good family.

cosmopolitan progress. The big influence of the French reached its peak and determined the models of the social life of wealthy families, which occupied new neighborhoods in the city. “Besides Catete and Glória, the newly rich went to live in Botafogo – former fishing district, completely urbanized and planned in the decade of 1880, with French-style mansions at the center of the lands, (...) square, well-defined blocks, paved streets, and wide and landscaped sidewalks. In 1889, since the great nobility was already in decline, the biggest tradesmen, jewelers, doctors and manufacturers were establishing themselves as the new elite of Rio de Janeiro.”<sup>46</sup>

# THE FIRST INDUSTRIES IN THE CAPITAL OF THE REPUBLIC

The expansion of commerce in Rio de Janeiro was clear at the end of the century. And the industrial development was gaining ground with mechanization, the ease of European machinery import, and the hiring of foreign technicians. Besides the small steam factories for the production of fabric, paper and furniture, the number of woodworking shops that perfected artisanal production of furniture of all styles.

At the time, life in Rio de Janeiro was used to appear in the newspapers. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the daily press gained momentum, competing with *Jornal do Commercio*, published since 1827. With seven daily papers at the time (*Gazeta de Notícias*, 1875; *Gazeta da Tarde*, 1880; *O Paiz*, 1884; *A Notícia*, 1884; *Diário de Notícias*, 1885 and *Cidade do Rio*, 1888), Rio became known as “the journalistic capital”. Nevertheless, the *Almanak Laemmert* was still a mandatory reference, since its creation in 1844. It was sold in bookstores and read especially by independent professionals, small traders, employees of government offices, barons and doctors. It was a bulletin with great credibility among the society of the time and was used as a reliable guide to services offered in the city.

In 1891, for example, one of its editions devoted three whole pages to the woodworking trade, listing from A to Z the names and addresses of over 100 professionals. The first one on the list was A. M. Moutinho, at Rua do Hospício, 264A. One of the few listed as “steam woodworking shop” was Manoel José Martins & Filho, at Rua do Regente, 38.

It was also common for shopkeepers to publish advertisements in *Almanak Laemmert*. Marize Malta points out that in the 1889 edition there were two ads for companies that made furniture in the city. The name “manufatura” didn’t leave any doubts about their artisanal processes of production. One of them was *Manufatura Nacional de Móveis a Vapor Moreira Santos, Moreira, Carvalho & C.*, at Rua Senador Pompeu, 38 to 48, phone number 185, whose ad said: “At this great accredited factory there is the most comprehensive collection of solid and elegantly built furniture, of the most beautiful and precious woods in the country”. The other ad, which said “complete sets of furniture, single pieces or any other custom-made works of our specialty, with the most elegance and durability. 130 workers, with direct inspection of the owner”, was of *Grande Manufatura Nacional de Móveis a Vapor*, de Manoel José Martins, a factory awarded at the exhibitions of 1881 and 1882, at Rua do Regente, 33, 35, 40 and 42.

However, it was thanks to the success of the Thonet Vienna bentwood chair, a piece with wide acceptance in Brazil since the decade of 1860, that one year after the Proclamation of the Republic the first factory with large-scale

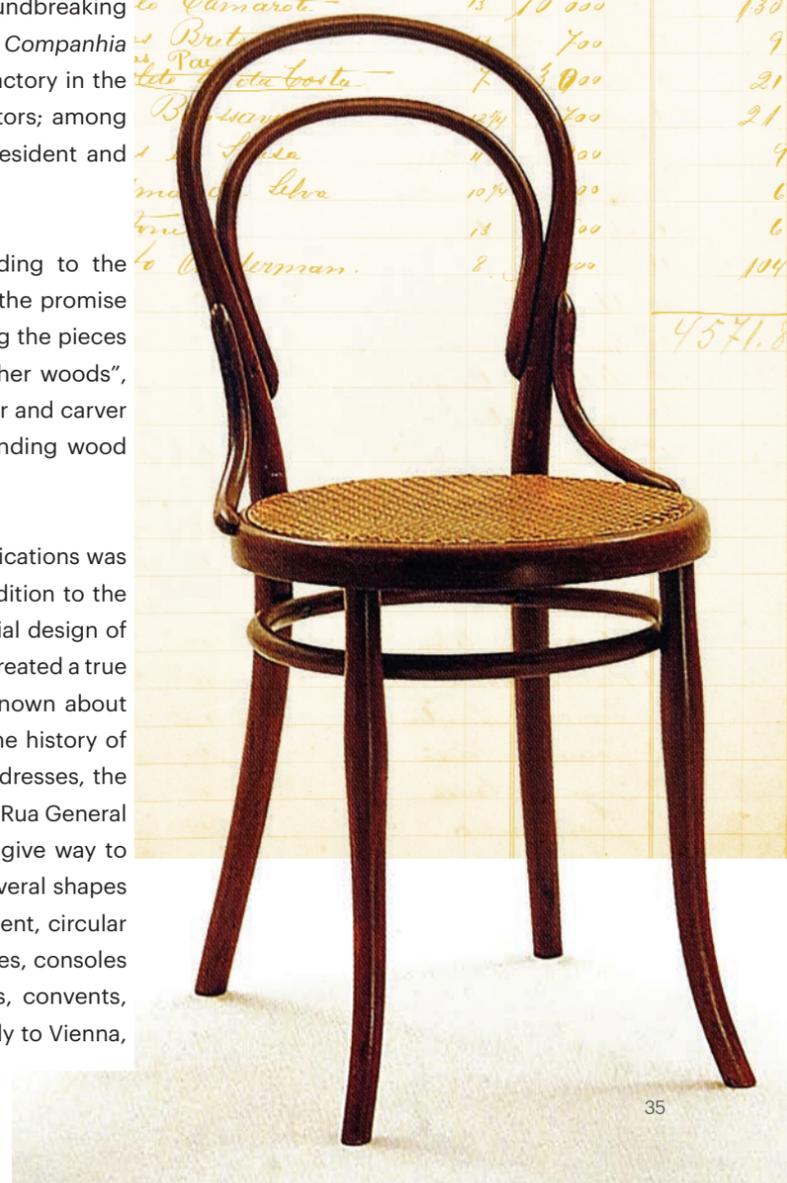
Austrian chair  
Thonet, 19th century.

Lista de pagamento de Daixa			20 de Agosto 1924			Haver	
João Geli	15	375.000	Transporte				
Mão Geli	15	100.000	26 José da Silva	12%	3.600		1/0
Otávio Geli	15	150.000	27 João Grossenberg	12	3.700		44
Ternando Caldeira	15	150.000	28 Mário de Sousa	13	3.500		45
Viola	15	90.000	29 Fiote Maria	13	2.600		33
Domingos	15	80.000	30 Euclides Feira	13	2.500		32
Holano	15	90.000	31 Napoleão Bernard.	12%	1.200		14
Francisco Fernandes	15	90.000	32 Alexandre Jardim	12	1.200		14
Pedro Schuler	30	100.000	33 José Bond.	12	1.800		9
1 Bento Aguiar	14	46.500	34 Orlando Machado	13	1.000		13
2 João Rodrigues			lo Camarote	13	10.000		130
3 João Bonifácio			lo Brito		700		9
4 Paulo Menchem			lo Paes		3.000		21
5 Domingos Galvão			lo Costa		700		21
6 Maldaquias			lo Bragança		700		21
7 Paulo Camarote			lo Silva		700		21
8 Manoel de Carvalho			lo de Silva		700		21
9 Roberto Luto			lo de Silva		700		21
10 Peixoto			lo de Silva		700		21
11 Amadeu			lo de Silva		700		21
12 Luis d'Almeida			lo de Silva		700		21
13 Antonio Externiel			lo de Silva		700		21
14 Paulo Melato			lo de Silva		700		21
15 Moura			lo de Silva		700		21
16 José Antonio			lo de Silva		700		21
17 Amadeu de Sousa			lo de Silva		700		21
18 Domingos Ricci			lo de Silva		700		21
19 Julio Pavan			lo de Silva		700		21
20 André da Silva			lo de Silva		700		21
21 Henrique Vargas			lo de Silva		700		21
22 Domingos Coutinho			lo de Silva		700		21
23 José de Souza			lo de Silva		700		21
24 Faço de Souza			lo de Silva		700		21

production opened in Rio de Janeiro. This groundbreaking event happened in October 28th, 1890, when *Companhia de Móveis Curvados* opened. It was a furniture factory in the “Thonet style”, founded as a S.A. with six directors; among them, Ernesto Eugênio da Graça Bastos was president and Leandro Augusto Martins was secretary.

The contract was signed for 30 years, according to the *Diário Oficial da União* of the day and provided the promise to “manufacture furniture on a large scale copying the pieces of Austrian origin, using male *hunarém* and other woods”, following the principles of the master woodworker and carver Michel Thonet and his original technique of bending wood using heat.

The Brazilian factory of Thonet furniture by all indications was created in the midst of a lot of innovation: in addition to the bentwood, the result of the genius of the industrial design of its creator, in Austria, the manufacturing process created a true assembly line. Unfortunately, however, little is known about the path of *Companhia de Móveis Curvados* in the history of the Brazilian furniture. Tilde Canti registers its addresses, the factory at Rua Oliveira Fausto, 18, and the office at Rua General Câmara, 68, one of streets that disappeared to give way to Avenida Presidente Vargas. She also mentions several shapes of the Austrian-style furniture, characterized by bent, circular cut wood: chairs, rocking chairs, armchairs, settees, consoles and small tables, found all over Brazil, in farms, convents, churches, small towns and big cities (and “similarly to Vienna,



characteristic habit in the interior of bars and restaurants”, according to Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos, referring to the famous Thonet chair, with a straw seat).

In parallel to the wide acceptance of light bentwood furniture in the *carioca* commerce, were eclectic-style furniture – elaborate and robust pieces, a result of a mixture of copied shapes of antique furniture – that dominated the ambience of the Brazilian home. It was with the specialty of what was called “fine woodworking” that in 1898 opened in Petrópolis Nova *Marcenaria Felippo Gelli*. Born with an industrial calling, the *Gelli* brand would change the course of the history of furniture in Rio de Janeiro.

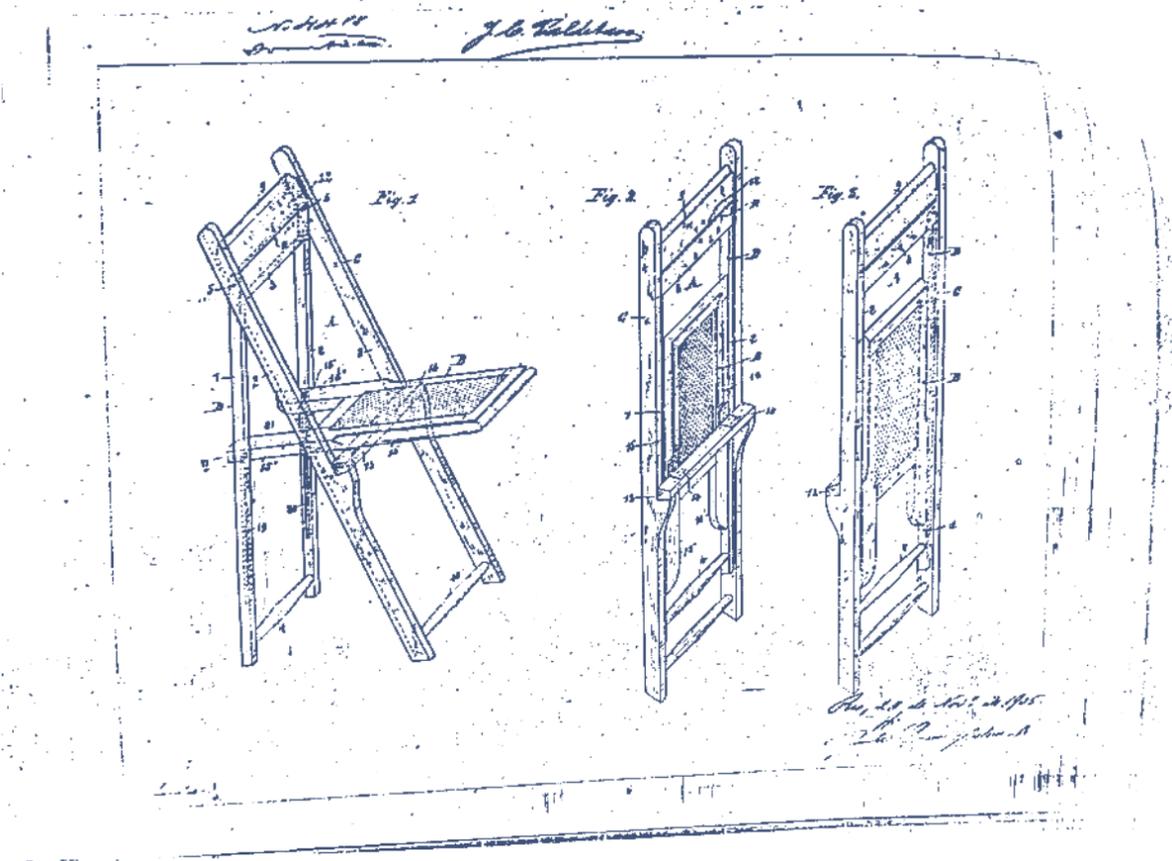
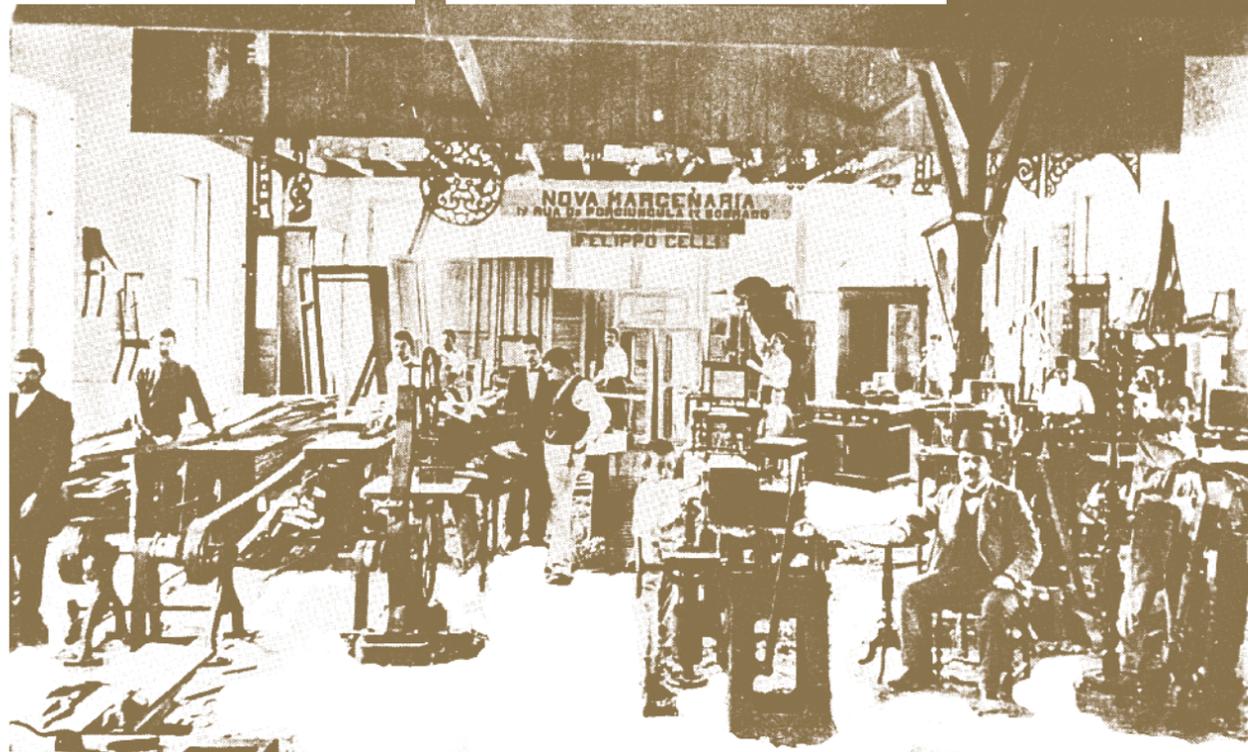
Its founder, the Italian ebonist Filippo Gelli, born in Comacchio in 1869, gained experience with woodworking when he was still in Italy, in a factory of oaken barrels used to store eels. With good masters, he specialized in the art of

working ebony, an activity he developed after arriving in Brazil.

The one who tells this story is his grandson, Mario Filippo de Carvalho Gelli, 86 years old, who received the author in his home for an interview, in August 2015:

“My grandfather came to Brazil as a young man, searching for adventure and fleeing from a difficult situation in Europe. When he arrived, he lived in Juiz de Fora, where he worked with wood for five years. From there, with four children, he came to Petrópolis. He had eight more children here. Four were sons, who followed him in the furniture factory *Gelli*: they were my uncles João, Octávio and Aldo, and my father, Mário Gelli. The first address of the factory, opened as an individual company, was a two-story house at Rua Dr. Porciúncula. It was the first factory to use electricity at a time in which every machine was steam-powered.

Nova Marcenaria Felippo Gelli. Collection: Mario Gelli.



Filippo Gelli's open and closed chair in riga pine wood. Created in 1905, was the first furniture patent in Brazil. It has become a symbol of Gelli's centenary in 1998.

And the third Industrial Register at *Fazenda Nacional* was the first one as a furniture factory. Up until 1898, there were only two registered factories, one of tobacco and one of shoes”

“In those early days, all furniture was made of solid wood. The most used ones were *imbuia* and *jacaranda*, that came from Bahia and from the south of Minas Gerais. But the factory wasn't limited to cabinetmaking; it also worked with carpentry, specifically making frames for construction. The clients were all from Rio de Janeiro, ambassadors, senators, deputies, and all the families that spent their summers in Petrópolis.”

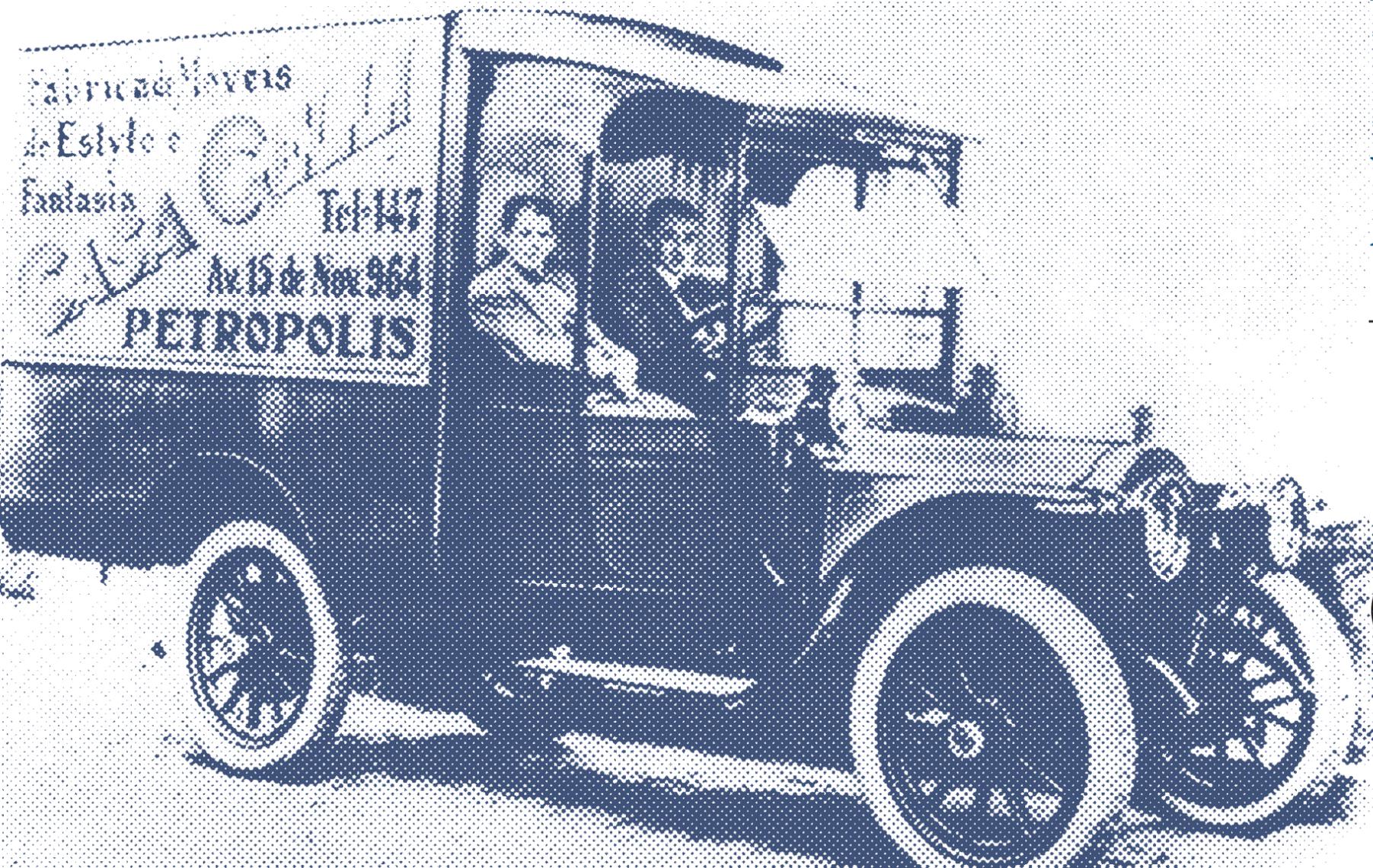
Mário Filippo de Carvalho Gelli, of the third generation in charge of *Gelli*, remembers that he started working at the factory at age 15. “In

my employment record book, I was registered as a furniture designer. I learned with my uncle João, who was in charge of design, when my grandfather was still in charge of the company.”

A few years after it opened, two events in the history of *Gelli* seemed to foretell a time of great achievements and new challenges for the factory in Petrópolis, in the new century. In 1905, the first furniture patent was filed in Brazil, of the new folding chair, invented by Filippo Gelli (a piece that would become a symbol of the company's centenary, in 1998, when they were produced in a limited and numbered series: 100 chairs of Scots pine, following the original design). And in 1908, *Gelli* received its first award: the gold medal at the *Exposição Nacional de Indústrias Variadas*, with eclectic-style pieces of furniture, worked to perfection.

# 2

In Petrópolis, the pioneer furniture delivery truck of Casa Gelli, at the beginning of the 20th century.  
Collection: Mário Gelli.



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**"Tell me how you live, and I'll tell you who you are."  
Machado de Assis**

# THE PATHS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

THE FIRST  
DECADES  
OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup>

# AMBIANCE OF THE CARIOCA HOME AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY

Vase Galeé previous  
to 1904, style and time  
art nouveau: Cicero  
Amaral Antiquarian.  
Photo: Eduardo Naddar.

“There was a custom of putting a lot of mirrors in furniture; and if they were the more expensive *biseautés*, even better. That was why the *psychés* and *toilettes*, or the *étagères* and *buffets* had such fancy mirrors. Not to mention the china cabinets, new in the living room, for displaying Baccarat crystal and Limoges porcelain. The imports couldn't supply the market, and a mirror factory was opened at Rua Visconde do Rio Branco, owned by Manoel Ribeiro de Souza. In turn, *Casa Claudino*, at Rua da Assembleia, and the Biseauté mirrors factory of *Casa Garibaldi*, at the corner of Rua de São Pedro and Avenida Passos, were among the best.” This account by Adolfo Morales de Los Rios Filho gives us an idea not only of how homes were furnished and decorated during the First Republic, but also of how the trade in Rio de Janeiro expanded because of the notions of elegance and social climbing represented by the living style.

Having many chairs in the living room, a custom developed since the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, was definitely one of these indications. Even though they were rarely used in everyday life, they seemed ready for festive evenings or soirées. That is the reason it became common at the homes of wealthier families from the early-1900s to have *rodameios* (that strip of wood



Interior of  
the Lynch  
Family home,  
beginning of  
the century.  
Photo: Huberti.  
National Library  
Foundation.  
s



fixed to the wall at about 90 cm from the floor, all around a room) on the living room walls. It was a decorative feature meant to protect the walls from potential damage to the paint or wallpaper made by the chairs' backrests. "When there was no *rodameio* in the living room, the floor had a small step to prevent the chairs from damaging the walls. At that time, when the floors were always waxed, wheels were attached to the feet of bigger and heavier furniture, such as tables, armchairs or pianos, making it easier to clean the floor and remove carpets."<sup>2</sup>

But nothing attracted more attention in the first two decades of the new century like the *art nouveau* aesthetics. The best example of a window-shop that embodied the *Belle Époque* splendor had arrived at the city a few years before, when *Confeitaria Colombo* was opened, in 1894, at Rua Gonçalves Dias. Their magnificent stained glass windows and Belgian crystal mirrors, their imposing Italian marble counters and the fine woodworking of their beautiful jacarandá furniture, carved mostly by the furniture designer and master craftsman Antonio Borsoi, were already part of the *carioca* imagery and became the dream of the new industrial society that was blooming in Brazil, especially at the capital of the Republic.

Although in the beginning it was restricted to architecture, the artistic movement *art nouveau*, which arrived from Europe and the United States, eventually strongly influenced the furniture design: sinuous shapes, details of fauna and flora, with arabesques and colors, besides the refined, artisanal and decorative Eastern art. Therefore, if they didn't come from abroad (bought at *Casas Mercier*, in Paris, or at *Maple*, in London), the furniture of the time was

made impeccably and numerous at *carioca* woodworking shops that did their best to accurately copy the style in vogue.

An analysis by the museologist Claudia Porto recalls that the appearance of the "new art" released the iron, steel and glass from their secondary roles and explored their decorative possibilities. "To the *art nouveau* designers, all art was important. They sought a cohesive design and many of them worked with various techniques searching for this cohesion, drawing from the building project to the door hinges." She points out that, even though it was inspired by the British movement of *arts & crafts*, the new style didn't propose a return to the past. Instead, it encouraged the break with historical styles, extensively explored in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and aimed at achieving an increasing simplification of the decorative language (even if, in some cases, the profusion of ornamentation led many to consider the style a "decorative disease").

In any case, the most important is that the *art nouveau*, facing the challenge of the economic development of the time, prized artisanal production. Based on a perfect finishing, it used new materials and building possibilities and was an aesthetic reaction to the beginning of mass production, which was already established in the North-American and European industries. The architect Gloria Bayeux interprets that *art nouveau* "marked the transition to the Modern Movement and made the necessary integration between art and technique increasingly evident".

The furniture of Antonio Borsoi in the Colombo Confectionery. Photo: Disclosure.



### ANTONIO BORSOI, A BELLE ÉPOQUE DESIGNER<sup>3</sup>

Following the same renovating spirit that transformed and beautified Rio de Janeiro in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the work of Borsoi (1880-1952) was very expressive and representative of the aesthetic ideals of the time. He was a student at the Liceu de Artes e Ofícios de São Paulo and moved to Rio in 1906. Inspired by his interest on the most modern in decoration and furniture and basing his knowledge on his remarkable collection of German, Italian, French and American magazines, he soon began printing his characteristic mark on the real estate that became symbols of the *Belle Époque* in the federal capital.

Up until 1913, he worked as a furniture designer for *Companhia Marcenaria Auler*, where he developed some of his most remarkable creations, appreciated until this day, like the furniture and mirror frames of *Confeitaria Colombo*, at Rua Gonçalves Dias, and the chairs and furniture of the director of *Cinema Iris*, at Rua da Carioca. Some of his decorating and woodworking projects

for important commercial establishments of the time no longer exist, including the chairs and cupboards of *Joalheria Bernacchi*, a shop at Rua Gonçalves Dias, closed in 1975, and details on stairs, counters and partitions of the old headquarters of *Jornal do Brasil*, at Avenida Central.

Antonio Borsoi used to work without work hours. He made his drawings, with details, in a 1:1 scale, like was customary among the master-craftsmen of the time. In the 1930s and 1940s, he drew and built furniture for famous companies, such as *Le Mobilier*, *Leandro Martins*, *Laubish & Hirth* and *Costa Pereira*. He had his own furniture factory for a while but lost it due to excessive debt.

## THE URBAN REFORM AND MODERNITY OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

In Brazil, paralleled to the aesthetic provocations of the new art, the urban renovation in Rio de Janeiro would also make some people very happy and others displeased. The year was 1902. With a population of close to 700 thousand people, Rio was going through a process of uneven growth, both in urban occupations and in the differences between social classes. However, the economic and political interests of the republican government were based, at the time, the ideals of civilization and beauty, that followed the challenge of transforming the capital in a modern city, along the lines of a great European metropolis. "The Republic went from the theoretical to the constructive phase, or from the legal structuring to the economic structuring. The remodeling and the sanitation of the capital were basic points (if not the main ones) of the government program of Rodrigues Alves", points out Benchimol, on the urban renovation of Rio de Janeiro in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, with tremendous political enthusiasm and severe social consequences, the ambitious and historic urban and sanitary reform proposed by the mayor Pereira Passos began, similar to the one carried out in Paris, by George-Eugène Haussmann. To the general population, it was the time of the "bota-abaixo" ("knock it down"): for four years, until 1906, massive constructions eventually modernized the city, not without changing in a fundamental way the lives of the poorest population. New avenues and public squares were redesigning the city, broad streets, and buildings under construction... To make the new urban order possible, many eviction orders had to be issued, followed by the demolition of dozens of tenement-houses downtown.

Central Avenue.  
Reginald Lloyd.  
National Library  
Foundation.



## PALÁCIO LARANJEIRAS – AN EXEMPLARY RESIDENCE OF THE URBAN REFORM IN 1902

Built between 1909 e 1914 to serve as the home of Eduardo Guinle's family, an entrepreneur of the First Republic wished to enter *carioca* society and socially assert himself among his peers, the *Palácio Laranjeiras*, with an eclectic architecture, fits into the urban renovation works of Pereira Passos' reform, from 1902 to 1906, and incorporates localization and construction characteristics very representative of the living style of families of greater economic and cultural projection in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

"The house, surrounded by large gardens close to Largo do Machado, is from the same generation as the buildings at Avenida Central, now called Avenida Rio Branco. (...) Eduardo Guinle's selection of a land on the hillside of Nova Cintra, in Laranjeiras, with a house turned to the splendid panoramic view of Baía de Guanabara, shows what the trend for the houses of the wealthier families was: mansions, designed as a symbol of economic and social climbing of the 'new men' of the Republic, and that represented a merging between two building traditions: urban house and the country house."

"It was from the country houses that came the idea of having a big service area in the back, with outhouses, oratories, chicken coops, vegetable-gardens and orchards, formerly run by slave labor, and now run by a large number of servers."

"(...) The building was Y-shaped, and followed the tripartite division, which had wings with independent entries, but that were connected by a porch or by the dining room. It was considered the ideal model by architects of the *Belle Époque*, that tried to minimize in their designs the risk of damage to furniture and rugs, which was caused occasionally in everyday life by a poor circulation of the arrangement of furniture in the rooms."<sup>9</sup>

Palace of Laranjeiras.  
Photo: Henrique Revert Klumb, collection  
Thereza Christina Maria.



This aggravated the housing crisis in the city, ongoing since the first attempts of building *vilas* (closed house clusters) and renting and selling houses destined for manual workers and the poor, became impracticable, in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

Among the many effects of the reform carried out by Pereira Passos, there are records that in 1905, during the construction of *Theatro Municipal*, which opened in 1909, began the paving of the busiest streets in the city. The first one was Rua Gonçalves Dias, between the streets Sete de Setembro and Ouvidor, and at the same time many public streets downtown were made wider, including Rua do Catete and Rua Uruguaiana. The opening of Avenida Central and Avenida Beira-Mar, and the land fill of the beaches in Flamengo and Botafogo, with the construction of French gardens, in 1906, were more than enough reason for, two years later, in 1908, for Rio to earn the title of Wonderful City. That same year, from January 28<sup>th</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>, in the neighborhood of Urca, the National Exhibition of 1908 took place, which Benchimol considers an event of great political repercussion in the administration of the time, not only because it celebrated the centennial of the Opening of the Ports, but also because it flaunted to the authorities and foreigners the new capital of the Republic.

Modernized and already known overseas as the Wonderful City, the city was establishing itself as the cultural capital of the country, a status that also gave the *carioca* society new values, customs and behaviors. The advent of electricity, for example, changed routines and brought to the streets new possibilities of entertainment: cinemas, pastry shops and



Table Dragonfly, c.1900. Émile Gallé. Photo: Reproduction.

coffee shops stayed open at night. With the architectural sophistication in the European way, mainly French, and the appeal to a cosmopolitan lifestyle, added to the landscape of sea and mountains, the sociability with a great number of intellectuals, many of them foreign, that came to live in the city became natural. “You could watch the technological evolution and the appearance and propagation of journalism and cinema. The literature of that time gained urban features, and was mostly set in the elegance of Rio de Janeiro, where the literary elite, technology, money and politics gathered.”<sup>10</sup>

#### A TASTE FOR DECORATION

The circulation of ideas and information also followed the rhythm of the cultural life in the new urban scenery, promoting the creating of illustrated magazines and almanacs. The *Revista da Semana*, created in 1900 by Álvaro de Tefé, was one of the most representative magazines of the time: a weekly publication of *Jornal do Brasil* until 1915, it already had decoration tips for the home in its section *Jornal das Famílias*, according to the research carried out by Marize Malta about “the decorative eye” in Rio de Janeiro. It was the time of the advertisements to have a prominent place in periodicals, becoming familiar to the readers of newspapers and magazines as strong indications of the latest news in the shops, especially in fashion and decoration. “At the time, illustrations, editorial cartoons, photos and advertisements were important visual sources, helping qualify the eye for domestic environments”, analyses Malta, who refers to decoration as a “fundamental item of visual culture indoors”.

Alongside the subliminal factors of advertisements that was gathering momentum, those times of glamour and economic expansion

gave many reasons for the bourgeoisie and the new elites beginning to make a fortune to acquire the habit of consumerism, guided by the principle “the more, the better”.<sup>12</sup>

According to different authors that tried to record Rio in the *Belle Époque*, the bustling commerce in downtown streets competed for the elegant clientele between jewelries, perfume shops, fabric stores, hat and fine clothing stores. But the appeal of the luxury window-shops was also strong, aimed at home furnishing and full of European supplies of decorative art. Under the influence of the *art nouveau* spirit, the *carioca* taste was being influenced by the amount of imported objects, of many origins: “(...)Hindu and Moroccan accessories, *chinoiseries*, Oriental rugs, Aubusson tapestry, Gobelins tapestry, cachepot, lace curtains, bronze statuettes and inkpots, decorative plates, photography, oil paintings... Porcelain was either French or Japanese (*casca de ovo*); the metals used were bronze, silver and copper...”<sup>13</sup>

The most important port in the country, and a first-rate consumer market, including because of the concentration of the high ranks of the government and the considerable extension of the administrative sectors of the State, the Federal District held 33% of the industrial production in Brazil (according to the census in 1907). Added to the production of the entire state of Rio de Janeiro, it added to 40%. São Paulo came way behind, with 16%, and then Rio Grande do Sul, with 15%. “At the time, the leading sector of the *carioca* industry was spinning and weaving, followed by the production of food, shoes and drinks. Another important section was the manufacture of furniture, which in 1907 had 59 establishments, employed 926 workers and



Wooden box with marquetry, from the Rio de Janeiro series, 50's. From Bob & Paulo, Portal do Tempo Antiques. Photo: Crochet Productions.

ran at 174 hp (horsepower, the unit of power of the machines of the time)", records Benchimol in her thorough study on the period.

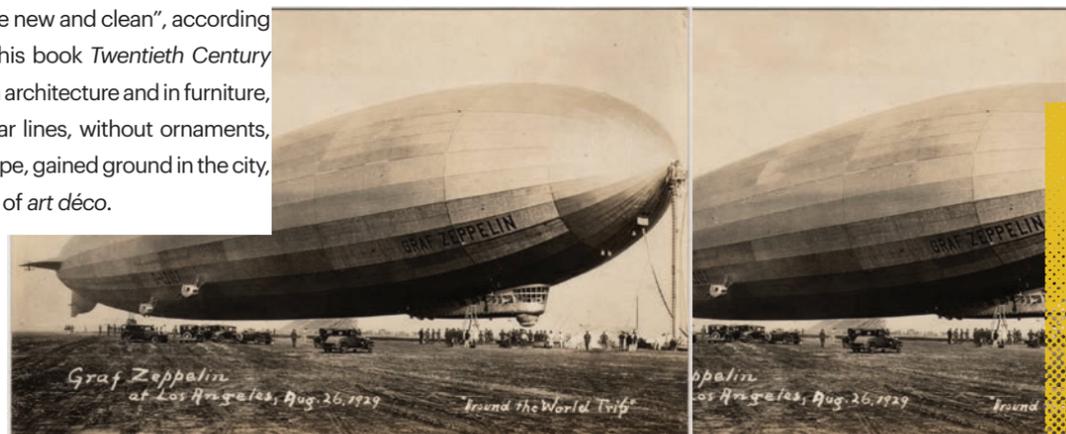
At the same time, Europe was living dark times during World War I. For the general Brazilian economy, especially in Rio de Janeiro, one of the main consequences of this period of time (1914 – 1918) interruption of imports, "when the elites stopped counting on European products for a long time", according to Maria Angélica Santi.<sup>15</sup>

The lack of communication with Europe eventually promoted industrial development in Brazil, and national companies conquered not only this luxury market, but the one of new consumer goods, to fulfill the needs of the domestic market, which expanded, mainly in the major cities, with the growth of the middle class and the working class. "In the furniture sector, however, the production scale would only reach a significant development in Brazil after 1936", analyses Santi, in her work on the origins of furniture production and industrialization in Brazil.

The author goes on to make a very pertinent point about the reality of life in Rio de Janeiro in the beginning of the 1920s, regarding the

manufacturing of furniture: "The companies that stood out at the turn of the century were mostly family business, founded by immigrants and born from small artisanal workshops. Even when they acquired new technologies and used new materials, the nature of the process, the methods and techniques of manufacture were still artisanal, as well as the adopted model, imported from Europe". These characteristics strongly match the profile of the two companies with the most prestige in the manufacturing of luxury furniture at the time in the capital: the pioneer *Leandro Martins & Cia.* and *Laubisch-Hirth* – the first one founded by a Portuguese, the second of German origins. Famous for the excellence of their workshops, both of them went through the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century supplying the *carioca* elite, which still favored the European style of furniture.

It was the elegant mentality of the reurbanized capital, which slowly evolved to "remove the old and dirty, replacing it by the new and clean", according to Reginald Lloyd, in his book *Twentieth Century Impressions of Brazil*. In architecture and in furniture, the modernism of clear lines, without ornaments, already present in Europe, gained ground in the city, heralding the patterns of *art déco*.



Graf Zeppelin, 1929. Copacabana Palace, 1930. Unknown author

## THE 1920S AND CARIOCA PRIDE

"With over a million inhabitants, in 1920 the capital already had 4,415 cars and 417 kilometers of streetcar rails. It had 50 cinemas, 9 theaters, 20 traveling circuses and 24 daily newspapers (14 morning and 10 evening papers), besides 20 weekly and 17 monthly magazines. In April 1923 was also born the first Brazilian broadcaster, the *Rádio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro*, at the initiative of a group of scientists and intellectuals. In downtown streets, the intense commercial and financial movement passed through 44 banks and 46 shipping companies."

During that time, "the Brazilian home defined the pantry as a family area by right and converted the old porch and the living room to mere annexes, meant as resting areas. The main apparatus of the time was the radio, at first in the *capelinha* model, set over the cupboard to entertain the family around the table with radio drama". In the urban landscape the verticalization of the city started with the construction of four skyscrapers at Praça Floriano, in 1921. Copacabana, which would only have its first building around ten years later, already was the most coveted neighborhood for its beautiful beaches: in 1923, when the hotel that would become the most famous one of carioca history, its populations reached 17,823 residents. "Designed to be the synthesis of reformed Rio, Copacabana was a modern and a new neighborhood. Pereira Passos dedicated special care to Copacabana, such as the Leme tunnel, in 1906, and the start of construction of Avenida Atlântica, which ended in 1919, at the end of the mandate of Paulo de Frontin."

"The pride of being *carioca* was never greater", says Márcio Roiter in his book *Rio de Janeiro Art Déco*, whose pages thoroughly document the cultural and aesthetic vigor that reigned in Rio in the new century. "The city was reachable by anyone. In the elegant halls of the northern hemisphere it was inexcusable – even a blunder – not to know Rio de Janeiro. With the technological progress of ships and the arrival of airplanes, and with the invention of the Zeppelin and Hindenburg dirigibles, travelling to Rio no longer was exclusive to the elite, of venturesome snobs and men of science. (...) The postcard industry at the time is the greatest proof. Few cities in the world deserved such production. Not to mention the veritable fever of *souvenirs*, bought in large scale."

The civilized world seemed to be in a rush: the evolution of means of transportation shortened distances; the fast communications seemed to work "miracles". In 1929, then with 15 thousand vehicles on the streets, Rio de Janeiro was a stop for Pan Am flights, in the newly created route of New York - Buenos Aires. From the following year, the *cariocas* became accustomed to gazing at the sky and seeing the Graf Zeppelin dirigible, which flew over Baía de Guanabara for the first time coming from Germany, after a stop in Recife, at a cruising speed of 125 km/h, with a crew of 42 on board. And the telephones at the neighborhoods of Leme, Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon already worked automatically, without the assistance of operators.

# DECORATION STORES AND ART DÉCO GLAMOUR

How should it be the modern Brazil? By the decade of 1920, discussions about Brazilian nation's identity were moving not only intellectuals and artists, but also politicians, businessmen, doctors and educators. Although with very distinctive characters, two events ended up influencing the pathway of modernity in country's history by the year of 1922.

In São Paulo, *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Week), run in February, had decisive repercussions over Brazilian culture along the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century. In turn, by the same year in September, Rio de Janeiro, capital of the Republic, hosted the International Exposition of Brazil's Centennial Independence, whose opening was chosen to start officially the radio transmissions era in the country.

Held at *Esplanada do Castelo*, based on universal exhibitions that aimed to symbolize the new times in Europe by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was an exhibition of large proportions for Brazilian standards. The site area led the visitor to walk over 2,500 meters between pavilions described as astonishing architectonic monuments. There were fifteen foreign nations' pavilions. The number of exhibitors has reached ten thousand. Visitors came by hundreds. And

until April 1923, as long as the exhibition lasted, uncountable parties have been thrown in the national pavilions...

"But the greatest attraction took place at night, with light shows never seen in the world, created by the well-known Walter d'Arcy Ryan, a Canadian pioneer on lightning engineering", says Márcio Roiter,<sup>22</sup> stressing that, by that time, the value of those exhibitions, in particular that one by 1922 in Rio, wasn't just spreading business interests: "Of course they served as a display for the business world, moving political and economic interests, but they were also important updating sources for the huge amount of visitors. Everybody wanted to go there to take a glance, check the news, spot the trends. It was an opportunity to a certain 'sight education', from the aesthetics point of view", concludes Roiter.

It's highly probable that such experiences have contributed to the *carioca*, especially the uprising new middle-class ones, may develop a special fascination for decorative arts. With winds of modernity blowing towards contemplation and consumption, the home furniture and accessories market was getting stronger. The great furniture stores were



Details of furniture, characteristic of the first phase of Leandro Martins. Photos: Crochet Productions

concentrated downtown, where also were located the luxurious jewelry stores, with its rooms (usually on second floor) dedicated to fine objects to gift and decorate. Along the years 1930-1940, a remarkable number of Jewish merchants started to establish their decoration stores in mansions near *Rua do Catete*, close to the presidential palace.

A tour-guide through the most famous stores of the moment would certainly include the following addresses.

## LEANDRO MARTINS

A pioneer store and mostly prestigious by carioca elite people, *Casa Leandro Martins S. A.* (also presented as brands *Casa Leandro Martins & Cia.* and *Móveis, Tapeçarias Leandro Martins & Cia.*) has started its activities in 1885, initially at *Rua dos Ourives*, moving during the 1920s to two houses at *Rua do Ouvidor*. Its founder, the Portuguese businessman Leandro Augusto Martins, considered a visionary man, had great influence over several groups on society, including soccer. In 1900 he became president of *Vasco da Gama Rowing Club*.<sup>23</sup>

Although mostly nothing has been documented about its production process nor the structure of

its plant, *Leandro Martins*, as press registers at the time, produced furniture to attend refined customers, which didn't bother on paying more for high quality items. Beyond furnishing luxury residences, the workshop was also famous for ambience of public buildings and commercial establishments.

"*Casa Leandro Martins & Cia.*, of National Furniture and Fine Tapestry, for long time has been gaining fame and settling its prestige. Considered not just a workshop, but also a school, it's one of those institutions which value is unquestionable, so there may not be about it two opinions nor two understandings. All that is known and can be told about it steps over two stones: artistic perfection and commercial honesty."

Advertisings like that<sup>24</sup> were widely published by press on several journals circulating in Rio by the first decades of last century. Countless articles and compliments on social columns highlighted the refinement of furniture and *boiseries* on decoration of famous homes, attended by *carioca* elite. In 1920, for example, a social column at *Gazeta de Notícias* and a similar one at *Revista da Semana* informed that *Confeitaria Lallet's* reopening night, a traditional meeting point of high society, at Largo da Carioca, "now with brand new furniture, elegantly inspired on 18th century, with items of the well-known *Casa Leandro Martins*."

Their publicity also used to be on cult events of *Theatro Municipal* – a luxury of graphic arts at the dawning of the century, destined to the select audience of opera and concerts. Among well-shaped furniture designs, the brand

*Leandro Martins* stated in few words its rich repertoire on reproduction of style furniture: "Creation – Modern – Style Renaissance – Chippendale – Normand..."<sup>25</sup>

On *Leandro Martins'* history, the year of 1935 has marked 50 years of company's operation and started a changing period. A great renovation turned its address at *Rua do Ouvidor* "into the most luxurious establishment of South America", as reported *Revista da Semana*, edition 32, on July 1935. Newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, had already announced the "new constitution of the establishment into a private limited company". The greatest change, however, was completed on its plant's drawing boards and workbenches, when two remarkable masters of artisanal woodwork joined the workteam: French designer Maurice Edmond Armand Nozières (? – 1946), graduated by *École Boulle*, in Paris, who assumed the company's arts office in 1935; and the Portuguese Joaquim Tenreiro (1906 – 1992), who returned an year after to be once again Nozières' creative assistant by his invitation, a previously experienced partnership when both worked at rival firm *Laubisch-Hirth*.

Tenreiro worked at *Leandro Martins* until 1941. Nozières stood until 1946, when he passed away. Several grieving statements published on his burial day (September 21<sup>st</sup>) by newspapers' notes, among them four funeral announcements at the newspaper *A Noite*, "in the name of *Casa Leandro Martins'* board of directors, friends, workers and technicians", give us a hint about the recognition of his talent among his peers.



French Art Deco chandelier, 1930. Photo: Crochet Productions.

*Grand Prix* at 1937 Paris Exhibition, *Leandro Martins* keeps until our days making the history of *carioca* furniture. Items of undeniable quality and preciseness of details can be still found at antique shops, private collections and even in public and commercial buildings – desks, expandable tables, cabinets, chests, items of various styles, with *Leandro Martins'* brand. One of the most emblematic samples is the old plenary that served to the Federal Supreme Court, when Rio was the capital of the Republic. Built in enameled jacaranda wood, by German furniture designer Fritz Appel's sketches, the solemn furniture set, with Victorian chairs in jacaranda wood and leather, is part of the permanent collection of the *Centro Cultural da Justiça Federal* (Cultural Center of Federal Justice).<sup>27</sup>

#### **LAUBISCH-HIRTH**

Dunkirk cabinets in Louis XIV French style, built in jacaranda wood, with rich inlaying work and bronze trims. Radica dressing tables with crystal mirrors. *Imbuia* wood china cabinets... Furniture sets signed by legendary *carioca* workshop *Carlos Laubisch & Hirth* (or *Georg Hirth, Laubisch & C.*, among other brands found in ads and references of the time) are also still very disputed in auctions and antique shops in Rio de Janeiro.

"My grandfather Georg Hirth had woodworking know-how. When he arrived to Rio de Janeiro, coming from Germany, he started a partnership with Carlos Laubisch. In the beginning their production, which started at the wooden logs and ended up at the bronze handles,



MOVEIS • TAPEÇARIAS • ARTE • DECORAÇÃO  
**CARLOS LAUBISCH & HIRTH**  
 FUNDAÇÃO EM 1934  
**OUVIDOR, 86**  
 TEL 23-3670 - TAPEÇARIAS 23-4048  
 FABRICA:  
 RUA RIACHUELO, 81/87 - TEL 22-2130  
 TELÉGRAMAS: "RIOMOVEIS"  
 QUARANTAVELAS: R. RIACHUELO, 93  
 RIO DE JANEIRO



**ATTESTADO**

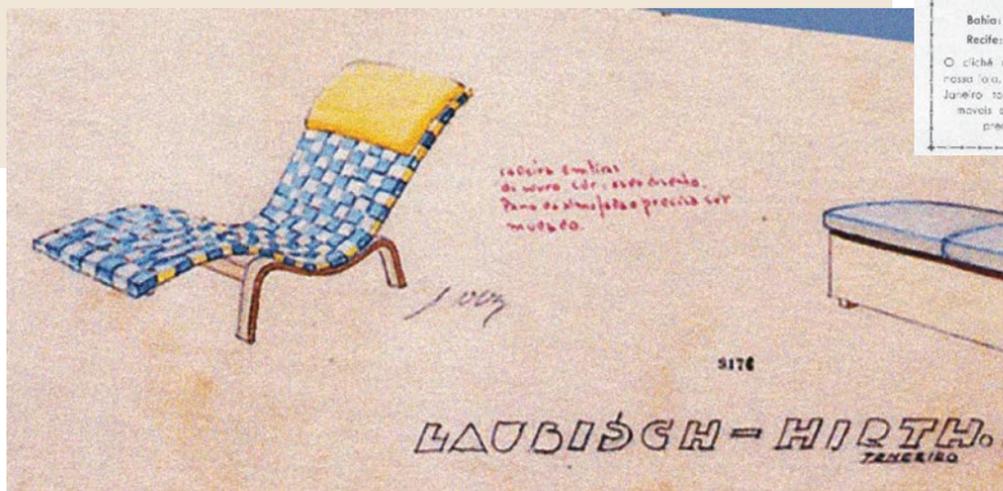
Pelo presente atestamos que o Sr.  
**Joaquim Albuquerque Tenreiro**, nascido á  
 26 de Abril de 1906 em Portugal, esteve a ser-  
 viço do nosso estabelecimento como desenhista  
 decorador, desde 15 de Janeiro de 1942 até 2  
 de Fevereiro de 1943.  
 Os trabalhos do Sr. Joaquim, qualifica-  
 ram-no como artista de perfeita competencia, e  
 sendo elle cumpridor dos seus deveres, deixa  
 o nosso estabelecimento por sua livre vontade,  
 e desejamos-lho um brilhante futuro.

Rio de Janeiro, 3 de Fevereiro 1943

*Carlos Laubisch & Hirth*

One of the certificates that document the provision of services of Joaquim Tenreiro in the factory Laubisch Hirth, in 1943. Drawing of Tenreiro for a lounge, to order for the residence of Francisco Inácio Peixoto, in 1942. Collection, Roberto Hirth.

Announcement in The House, highlighting the new Laubisch Hirth building, inaugurated in 1935, at Rua do Ouvidor, 86.



was focused in classic furniture in several European styles. Afterwards, with Europe's rising modern furniture aesthetics and by inspiration of designers as Alvar Aalto's, for example, the company started to develop its own design. Joaquim Tenreiro's contribution to that was fundamental, not only for his woodworking skills, but also as a designer", reports Roberto Hirth, revealing certificates signed by his grandfather and his partner, documenting the two periods when Tenreiro worked for Laubisch-Hirth: the first one, "as a sketch drawer and projects executor, from November 29<sup>th</sup> 1933 until May 30<sup>th</sup> 1936"; and the second one, "as designer and decorator, from January 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 until February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1943".<sup>28</sup>

In her book *Móvel Moderno no Brasil (Modern Furniture in Brazil)*, Maria Cecilia Loschiavo dos Santos makes possible having an idea of the size of the plant, referring to Joaquim Tenreiro as furniture designer: "(...) Tenreiro started to work, by then, with around 350 professionals, among woodcrafters, carpenters, upholsters, polishers, designing only French style items, according to the patterns of dominant taste, but with huge professional spirit and artisanal based production patterns".<sup>29</sup>

Márcio Roiter says, still about Tenreiro's relevance at the company: <sup>30</sup> "Undoubtedly his work at Laubisch-Hirth has left marks that reflect until today at the quality of furniture pieces found in collections and antique shops' lists. They're examples of furniture that aged remarkably well, they don't bend, keeping their sophistication in design and finishing. As the woodwork master he was, Tenreiro was critical, perfectionist, a wood technique teacher who has certainly taught a lot of people at the company. No wonder Laubisch-Hirth furniture has been very much copied. Rival companies that were able to recognize a top-class item acted unfairly, selling their copies at very lower prices. This was already a common practice in the field, as well the lawsuits against plagiarists".

In their prosper business field, Laubisch-Hirth's boundaries surpassed window-shops and sales from head office and branches in Salvador and Recife. In the very country's capital they were commissioned, in 1930, to deliver all interiors decoration for Palácio do Itamaraty (Itamaraty Palace), designed by architects Robert Prentice e Anton Floderer. <sup>31</sup> In São Paulo, by the same year, their prestigious artisanal production was attested at the furniture designed by Warchavchik for the Modernist House at Rua

Itápolis. Even before, in 1929, their fine woodworking had stood out in the furniture commission for Automóvel Club de Belo Horizonte. Among other works done on interior design for relevant architectural landmarks, Laubisch-Hirth is renowned for the marajoara déco style for Exhibition Hall at Instituto do Cacau, in Salvador.<sup>32</sup>

With its plant at Rua Riachuelo, the company had its first shop at 43, Rua da Quitanda. It has reached its summit by the 1930s, especially when moved its head offices to a bolder five stored building at 86, Rua do Ouvidor, “entirely suited for tapestry and furniture sales”.

Keeping intact the artisanal excellence, the company even flirted with the 1950s, adopting the motto “Laubisch-Hirth, producing from palace to stick legged furniture”.<sup>33</sup> But, according to Georg Hirth’s grandson, “the effects of post-war times (1945) over economy and furniture modernization, with the arrival of modular systems, ended up affecting the business”.

Joaquim Tenreiro's  
lounger for the  
Laubisch-Hirth of  
1943. From the  
private collection of  
Roberto Hirth.  
Photo: Crochet  
Productions



Theodor  
Heuberger in  
front of the Casa  
& Jardim Store in  
Teresópolis, RJ.  
Photo: Pró-  
Memória,  
Teresópolis  
(courtesy of  
Wanderley Peres).

### RED STAR

69-71 at Rua Gonçalves Dias: in the 1920s, that was another relevant address in furniture business commerce history in Rio de Janeiro. Neighbouring *Confeitaria Colombo* and the renowned *Casa das Sedas*, Red Star was proud of its windowshops displaying luxurious ambiences decorated with furniture, curtains and carpets. In 1919, it has been always mentioned as a modern spot by *Paratodos* magazine. And it ended up as a reference for spreading art déco in Rio de Janeiro. In his book about the subject, Márcio Roiter registers that, in 1922, the workshop hired as artistic director the French architect and decorator Michel Dufet, “a professional already renowned in Paris, with

enough talent to join the most luxurious branches of art déco to the functional furniture’s architectural inspirations”.<sup>34</sup>

Dufet’s influence and his *avant-garde* woodworking style led Red Star to achieve compliments as “the most important South American decoration workshop”, according to Gaston Derys’ article, published in January 1935 at French magazine *Mobilier et Décoration*.

Although very few information is actually known about the company, its prestige through the refined carioca high society has allowed it to be in highlight on several covers of Municipal Theater’s concert folders, “being some of them typically on Duffet’s taste, composed by gouaches and watercolors signed by Baron Puttkamer, with images reproduced by Fabian-Rio”.<sup>35</sup>

## CASA & JARDIM

Established in 1926 in Rio de Janeiro, by Theodor Heuberger (1898 – 1987), an avant-garde German man connected to arts and culture, *Casa e Jardim Artes & Ofícios S. A.* was located downtown, at 79, Rua Buenos Aires. It was opened with the intent of spreading modern furniture and adopted as its principle the integration between outside and inside spaces of the house, between landscaping, architecture and interiors.

Without any distinction between architects, painters, sculptors and woodworkers, equally considered as artisans, the concept of the store joined everything needed in a house: "... from dinner service to glass, ceramics, and metal objects, furniture and art works", as Heuberger's words, in an interview given to Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos.<sup>36</sup>

From the same book by Loschiavo comes the following extract, about *Casa & Jardim* furniture: "(...) as the current zeitgeist wasn't ready yet to absorb completely the production of modern furniture, *Casa & Jardim* had to make a commercial concession keeping two basic sessions: one dedicated to modern furniture and another of classic furniture. Classic style, most of the clients' main choice, was presented by eclectic style, built in hardwood and upholstered with special fabrics, mainly traditional bedroom, dining room and living room sets. Modern furniture branch consisted of rustic pieces, built in pine burl wood. The company was a pioneer in this aspect, using waxed pinewood, a material only widely used nowadays (...)"

With a qualified artisanal staff producing in its own plant and assemblage workshop, *Casa*

& *Jardim* crossed the decades of 1930 and 1940 as a renowned *avant-garde* company and could have the collaboration of several professionals and architects on establishing its designing section and decorative accessories.

In Rio, the workshop used to be in the news and among *Jornal do Brasil* and *Intercâmbio*<sup>37</sup> magazine advertisers. In the 1960s, one of those ads mentioned the brand praising its "40 years of contribution on making more beautiful life both in *House and Garden*. With the same features of the *carioca* store, a branch was opened in São Paulo, at 3493 Avenida Santo Amaro". "And Teresópolis store was the third one, in the middle 50's, at 147 Rua Duque de Caxias, occupying the ground floor of Sociedade de Artes, Letras e Ciências Pró-Arte's building, which mentor was the same Theodor Heuberger", reports journalist Wanderley Peres, from *O Diário de Teresópolis*.

## IRMÃOS LIBERAL

*Decorações Henrique Liberal S.A.* was actually known by this name, *Irmãos Liberal*, in its traditional address at 284 Praia do Flamengo. Considered a pioneer company in Brazil, performed highly qualified interiors decoration services. Brothers Henrique and Antônio became famous for decorating Copacabana Palace Hotel, Guanabara Palace and several residences of refined *carioca* high-society as the Guinles, the Scarpas and the Matarazzos.

"(...) Established in the 1920s by Henrique Liberal, the company was later run by his younger brother Antônio. Henrique had worked in Paris, at renowned Maison Jansen, the first design company with worldwide range. (...)



Renascença, emblematic furniture store of Catete street in the period. Here in anonymous photo of the 1970s.



*Irmãos Liberal* had very qualified suppliers as, among others, Laubisch-Hirth, Leandro Martins and Red Star. The company's high level of requirement helped to join a first-class team of artisans and officers with diverse decoration expertises – woodworkers, electricians, upholsters, tapestry-workers, curtain tailors, many of them, from second or third generation, still active.<sup>38</sup>

In 1980, after the death of Antônio, one of the brothers who owned the company, it has ceased its activities.

## RUA DO CATETE

By the years 1930–40, Catete was one of the most attractive districts in town. Besides being nation's center of decisions, due to location of the presidential palace, it was residence of barons and baronesses, and distinguished figures as the writer Machado de Assis, who lived at 206 Rua do Catete. Right ahead, at

number 222, Di Cavalcanti had his atelier, above the famous Asteca movie theater.

Among the decoration stores that had given even more prestige to the street there was *Renascença*, certainly the biggest and most visited by the recently wealthier customers. The store was located at Hotel Carson's antique elegant building from late 19<sup>th</sup> century and had window-shops richly decorated with assorted furniture. Specialized magazines from the period used to publish several pages with its style furniture and complete ambiance, showing woodcarvings, trellises and lathe works for dining rooms, living rooms, bedrooms and unique pieces. The store was still in the same address until 1999, when interrupted its activities.

Nearby, the *Casa Bella Aurora*, "the biggest and the best south American workshop", as usually described by newspaper ads at that time, exhibited its upholstered living room furniture

sets, run by businessman Marcus Voloch. Among others, there was *A Esthetica* and *Nova Era*, by Jorge Schnaider. And J.J. Roiter's store *A Mercida*, with its classical furniture.

#### OTHER STORES

From *Almanak Laemmert's* pages or in several daily newspapers and magazines as *Revista da Semana* and praised *Paratodos*, which in the 1930s was great among graphic good taste publications, there was a lot of sources where to go buying furniture and accessories.

*Casa Martins*, from Martins & Maia, at 67 Rua da Carioca, was already famous in 1917. Specialized in "modern furniture", used to advertise its items with their respective prices. For example, the full living room set shown in an ad at *Revista da Semana*, from April 21<sup>st</sup> of the same year: 16 pieces set, with buffet, étagère, china cabinet, table and mesa e 12 chairs, by \$ 650,000 (currency money).

At Rua Sete de Setembro we could find *Au Comfortable* and *Mobiliário Chic*. One of the most visited, *Casa Dixie Club Mobiliário* was a tradition since 1902, at Rua do Rosário. And at Rua da Quitanda, *Tapeçarias e Móveis Arthur Leitão & Cia.*, specialized in curtains and shades, "with proper workshop with carpenters and upholsters" was located at Rua da Quitanda.

Another one among the preferred ones was *Casa Nunes*, established at Avenida Presidente Wilson. A constant presence on newspapers and magazines advertising "furniture, tapestry and decorations", usually adopted in its ads an almost professorial language about decoration, according to Marize Malta's view, based in 1919 ads from *Revista da Semana*: "*Casa (Nunes)* warned



customers about the relevance of arrangement, as well the concept of collection in order to reach decorative beauty, and how to achieve better results buying every item by orientation of a single salesman, *Casa Nunes'* <sup>39</sup> salesman." For perfect harmony of the arrangement when furnishing your residence, willing to provide comfort, distinction and elegance through the furniture, it's a must to attend some delicate details that only our experience, aided by a perfect organization of all services, is able to easily manage by minimal wage.

At São Cristóvão district, *Móveis Lamas* was a reference for *art déco* in *carioca* market. In two different addresses, at Rua Melo e Souza, and at Rua Gotemburgo, this store aimed joining *avant-garde* design to economic prices and offered one of the best style collections in town.

Announcement published in the magazine *Careta*, 1922.



Tray with butterfly wings and marquetry. 1950. From Bob & Paulo, Portal do Tempo Antiques. Photo: Eduardo Naddar.

#### RIO, AN ART DÉCO CAPITAL

"Rio is, by excellence, the southern hemisphere art déco capital. Besides its countless buildings and architectural details and the style monuments, Rio is blessed by Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer statue), the biggest art déco sculpture in the world", as defines Márcio Roiter, a tireless researcher of the subject.

"The style has begun in 1914, but in Rio de Janeiro the golden era was between 1935 and 1945. With the advent of 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, its end was announced in Europe, although here in Brazil as well in some other places where no bombing and destruction were set, it kept alive until the 50's.

Between 1930 and 1945, during Getulio Vargas' government, several public buildings, most of them art déco style, gave some fresh air to the capital. In 1938, at exhibition *O Brazil Novo*, new ministries' buildings models promoted the official style of the period. The population of the city, of course, has joined the tendency, for it symbolized the aesthetics of the power.

The habit of visiting luxurious ships, that started to arrive to the city harbor very frequently in the 30's, has contributed to art déco recognition by *carioca* imagery. Waiting in huge lines, a lot of people, most of them with no money or time enough to travel and update, avid by the enchantment of spending the day on board, walking the salons among the ship crew, watching shows, shopping and contemplating the palatial decoration of the vessels, which were like floating embassies.

Normandie was the unrivalled one, according to luxury and sophistication, being in Rio twice for cruising, in 1938 and 1939. Biggest transatlantic ship ever built, its interiors were decorated with opulence, but showing a remarkable harmony, being a master class of art-déco. People contemplated and talked about it.

In my opinion, those visits have profoundly contributed to *carioca* taste formation.

Another important aesthetic influence was the presence of two great masters of the style, which came to Rio as a consequence of the two Great Wars. Among them was French furniture designer Michel Dufet, who lived in Rio from 1922 to 1924; Maurice Nozières, which by decades 1930 and 1940 has run *Laubisch-Hirth* and *Leandro Martins*, the most important decoration companies of the town; and great architects, among them two French ones very important for the history of architecture in the city: Donat-Alfred Agache, who between the decades of 1940 and 1950 has developed a urban plan for the city and Joseph Gire, author of iconic projects, as Hotel Gloria in 1922, Copacabana Palace in 1923 and, among others, the impressive 22 stores buildings, headquarters of newspaper *A Noite*, not mentioning French sculptor Paul Landowski, author of Christ the Redeemer's hands at Corcovado, opened in 1931 by president Vargas.

Post-war times also provided to Rio de Janeiro market a profusion of European art-déco items, arriving at low cost by ship. Especially during 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, large quantities of furniture, porcelain and artworks were unloaded at the harbor so the ships could go back to Europe loaded with precious commodities for the conflict years, as coffee, cocoa, iron and latex.

That was an important aspect when has raised the consumption fever, that ended up influencing the richest *carioca* families' homes. Interior designing could not accept anymore the colonial atmosphere, as art-déco modernity had arrived, with geometric precision furniture, the elegance of its pure, without ornaments, vertical lines. And also, a new 'being part of the world' aesthetics, inspiring a new trend in arts, design, architecture and cinema. I like saying that art-déco has arrived with the DNA of modernity." <sup>42</sup>

# SIM'S FOUNDATION, BRAZIL'S FIRST FURNITURE BUSINESSMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The origin of Rio de Janeiro's Furniture Industries Association has its roots on the very history of wood workshops that were created in town still during 1<sup>st</sup> Empire. The following text<sup>43</sup> it's not related only to ancient facts. Considering a need to update the reader about the pathway of this entity along its 83 years, it aims to connect its history with the present, unveiling the diverse management periods towards the organization of furniture producers until our days.

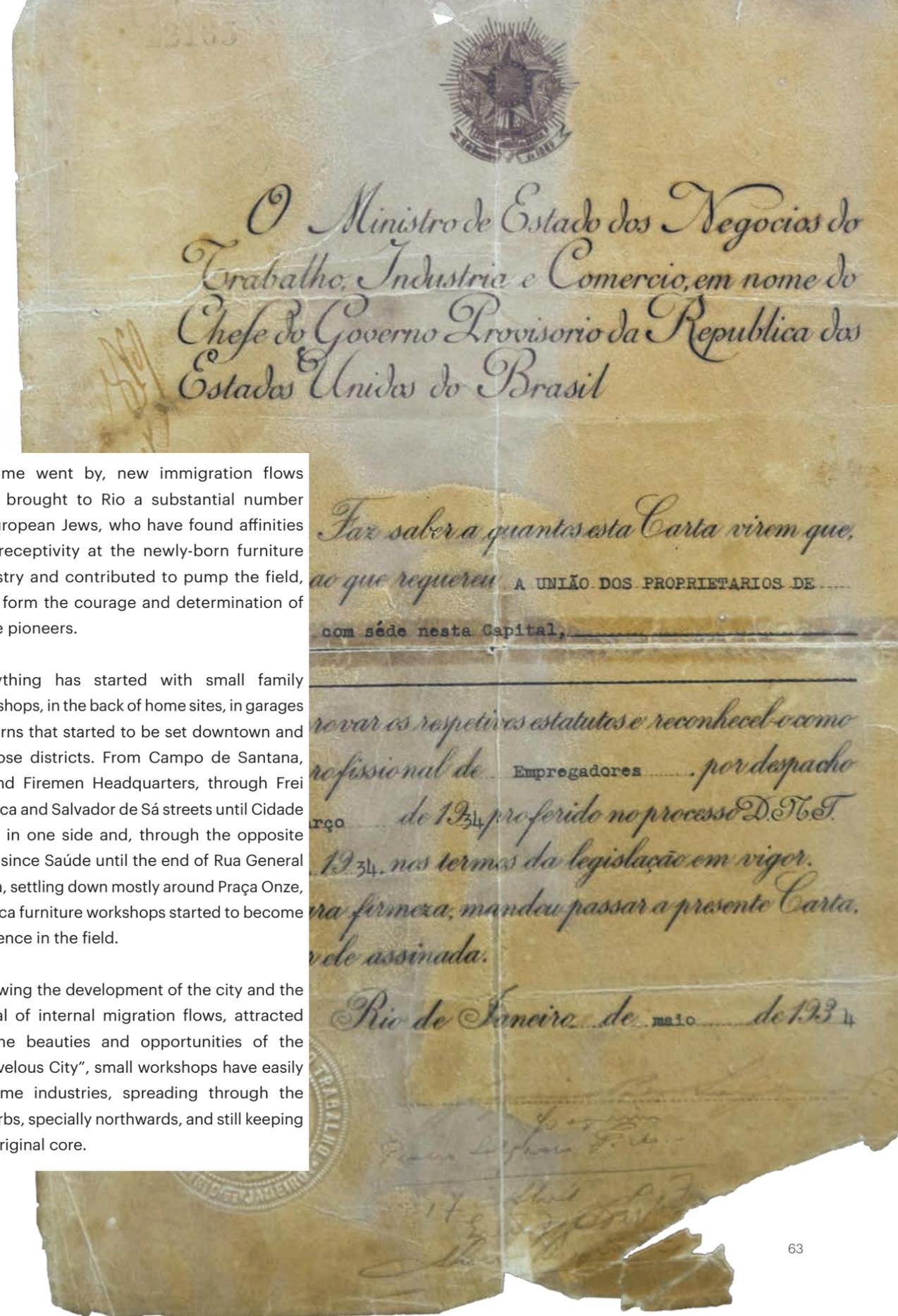
Young Republic's capital was living, during decades of 1920 and 1930, the social and political ebullition that created all conditions for the victory of 30's Revolution. Italian, Spanish and Portuguese immigrants had brought not only new ideas and social demands, but also and mostly an entrepreneur flow in every area – from arts to the world of work, education and also public administration.

In 1922, some *avant-garde* artists in Rio have joined the group from São Paulo and performed Modern Art Week, that has abandoned academic arts' rules and tried to strength the idea of "brazility". A year after, with the approval of Eloy Chaves Law, the Social Security service was created. The greatest rupture would happen in 1930, when Getulio Vargas, leading

the resistance to the domination of political systems by leaders from Minas Gerais and São Paulo, marches from South towards Rio de Janeiro, occupying Palácio do Catete (Catete Palace), where a new Constitution is promulgated, ending with this the First Republic, created in 1889.

A new period of republican history starts then, with a modernizing agenda according to work and education. Two years after Vargas' arrival to Catete, a group of intellectuals and educators publishes in Rio de Janeiro, led by Anísio Teixeira, The Pioneers of Education Manifest, that would result into a teaching reformation able to provide the country, for the first time, an organized educational system. This reformation has effectively given access to public school to those European immigrants' children that had already become capital and country's main productive force.

In such a way, each group of immigrants – that had chosen Rio as homeland – was dedicating itself to a certain kind of productive activity. Italians went to fishing market and magazines; the Spanish ones have opened shoe workshops, restaurants and small farms that supplied city markets; the Portuguese, just like the Spanish ones, also became groceries' suppliers and have opened restaurants later famous, mostly in harbor area. But a significant amount of Portugal's sons arrived has founded an important branch of furniture market, having developed until the middle 30's artisanal and mechanical woodworking, predecessor of nowadays furniture industry, and the country owes them the first work organization entities, which heritage is present until our days.



As time went by, new immigration flows have brought to Rio a substantial number of European Jews, who have found affinities and receptivity at the newly-born furniture industry and contributed to pump the field, born from the courage and determination of those pioneers.

Everything has started with small family workshops, in the back of home sites, in garages or barns that started to be set downtown and in close districts. From Campo de Santana, around Firemen Headquarters, through Frei Caneca and Salvador de Sá streets until Cidade Nova in one side and, through the opposite side, since Saúde until the end of Rua General Pedra, settling down mostly around Praça Onze, carioca furniture workshops started to become reference in the field.

Following the development of the city and the arrival of internal migration flows, attracted by the beauties and opportunities of the "Marvelous City", small workshops have easily become industries, spreading through the suburbs, specially northwards, and still keeping the original core.

The convergence of interests and the consciousness that something in that was more than merely a group of woodworkers led those businessmen to found, 83 years ago, Wood Workshops Owners Association, in order to develop business. But these businessmen weren't just thinking about business. In no time they realized the need to create some workers' protection program, so then was created Insurance Cooperative against Work Accidents.

In May 1934 Work, Industry and Commerce Affairs State Minister in the name of the Republic of the United States of Brazil's Transitional Government, answering the claim of the Wood Workshops Owners Association, decided to approve the Statement and recognize it as Professional Employers Association.

This way was founded Rio de Janeiro's Woodworking Industry Association (DRT – 4721/34 – 08/05/1934 – as Employers Professional Association and TDR 69388/34 – already with its final denomination). The association started with an amount of capital of 200 *contos de réis* and was located in one of the original city's downtown area – at 149 Rua Henrique Valladares. Thanks to initiative and vision of those entrepreneurs, it's the oldest Brazilian furniture businessmen association and one of the oldest Brazilian unions.

Among the pioneers were Manoel Maria Alves, first associate-founder of it; followed by those established downtown, still from Wood Workshop Owners Association: Albino de Barros, its first president; Manoel de Almeida Mattos, benefactor of the Cooperative and the Association; Eduardo Freire, Antônio Monteiro, Antônio Palermo and Leopoldo Ferreira. Also those producing in the

suburbs, as Adelino Ferreira (founder of *Fábrica de Móveis Rio D'Ouro* – the first one to perform furniture serial production in Rio de Janeiro), *Irmãos Lamas, Móveis Soeiro*, brothers Macieira and, later on, Jewish industrials like the Brunchports, the Udermans, the Lockiecs and Richard Klein, among others that–by decades, and some of them until today – keep supporting the field and empowering the association that represents them.

#### **CHANGE OF THE CAPITAL AND THE REAL ESTATE BOOM**

At last century's 60's, the association left Rua Henrique Valladares to its own head office. The Insurance Cooperative against Work Accidents and Rio de Janeiro's Woodworking Industry Association went to Rua Irineu Marinho, close to the boundaries between downtown and Lapa. When INPS was created in 1967, Cooperative ceased its activities, handing to the new entity its insurance associates, now stronger after Luiz Mellone Jr's administration.

Along its history, *carioca* furniture industry has followed city growth and was able to overcome the transference of the Federal Capital to Goiás, and this was certainly due to the effort of new associates and their companies, including businessmen coming from other cities, like Luiz Mellone Jr. and Braford company from São Paulo, Cooperative's president when Orlando de Almeida Mattos assumed the Association's presidency.

Many names came since then – some of them still present at association activities – and can't be forgotten for its supportive efforts to furniture industry. Octávio Lopes de Cruz is one of them. Although not being an industry owner, has worked in both entities, being Association Manager (1932–1964), when already minor-partner in one of the associate industries. When he left his position, he became a representative of the Association in Rio de Janeiro's 13<sup>th</sup> Judgement Chamber and remained Cooperative's Manager until its extinction.

Real Estate boom that has expanded city in all directions benefited the furniture industry, which was updated in order to adopt international production standards, answering to the claims of modern life. These transformations brought new industries and new names to the Association. In 1982, after 40 years on duty, Orlando

de Almeida Mattos was succeeded by Gil Grossman, from *Celina Indústria e Comércio Mobiliário*, by his time succeeded in 1995 by Josef Herszenhaut, from *Favo*, by his time succeeded in 1998 by Joaquim Gomes da Silva, from *Modern Closet*.

During his administration, Gil Grossman has led the needed reformations that ended up, in 1985, with the fusion with the association that represented carpentry, wine barrel and sawmill city industries. Fusion was approved in February 1985, and the association assumed the name to Woodworkers, Sawmills, Carpentries, Wine Barrel, Plywood, Laminated Woods, Chipboards and Wood Fiber Boards of City of Rio de Janeiro. Soon after, with the fusion with Rush and Wicker Furniture, Upholstery, Brushes, Paintbrushes and Curtains Association, the new entity was named after Wood, Rush and Wicker Furniture, Sawmills, Carpentries, Wine Barrel, Brushes and Paintbrushes, Plywood and Laminated Woods, Curtains and Upholstery Association.

SIM-RIO – official abbreviated name – it's a reference until today, now located at 194 Avenida Franklin Roosevelt, downtown Rio, close to Santos Dumont Airport, providing to its associates a 45 seats auditorium, destined to reunions, speeches, classes and conferences.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Succeeding Grossman, Josef Herszenhaut worked to reinforce previous advances and prepared new guidelines for next period, under Joaquim Gomes da Silva's presidency – SIM-RIO's president until today, by then in his sixth administration.

Silva took charge having on mind the great changes our society would go through at the summit of the new century, updating the industry for the demands of an increasingly exigent public, to new housing design and to the endless possibilities made possible through new technologies, affecting materials, production and sales in a daily basis.

He has also realized how many efforts would be needed so SIM-RIO would start entering a network of entities with similar interests, a tendency that got stronger into the new century –

partnership relations. For that, he has moved the association towards, still in his first administration, to another production fields' entrepreneurs, being very active on FIRJAN – Rio de Janeiro Industries Federation.

At the present administration, SIM-RIO was connected to another institutions, as SEDEIS – Economic, Energy, Industry and Services Development Secretariat of Rio de Janeiro State Government, and SEBRAE – Small Companies Support Brazilian Service, among other. Always in order to promote the development of the furniture industry and the companies associated with SIM Rio.

During 1998 and 1999, SIM-RIO, sponsored by FIRJAN and CNI – Confederação Nacional da indústria (National Industry Confederation), led by Joaquim Gomes da Silva, promoted the trip of 25 businessmen group to Italy in order to visit Milan International Furniture Fair, the world's most important furniture and decoration exhibition, joining the best of design and technology. The well-succeeded experience was repeated during the four next years, always sponsored by FIRJAN and CNI. Those travels and international exchanges are still part of SIM-RIO's agenda, which considers extremely important this knowledge and network sharing.

# TENREIRO, MASTER OF THE GREAT CARIOCA WOOD WORKSHOPS

It's impossible to follow through the history of Rio de Janeiro furniture during the 1930s and the 1940s without mentioning Joaquim Tenreiro, remarkable woodmaster that, besides being a visual artist, created interior design projects with great talent but in a very critic way. Among many authors that mention its pathway in furniture design, I believe Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos has reached the best synthesis, as written on page 82 at her book *Móvel Moderno no Brasil*: "Among all designers of his time, Tenreiro (1906–1992) is, for sure, the most significant one, by the power of his work, the high artisanal quality of his production, by the way he connects us more deeply to our Portuguese traditions with the non-pretentious and elegant use of jacaranda wood and straw work".

Son and grandson of woodworkers, by the age of 9 he already used to handle tools at his father's workshop, still in Portugal, where he was born and studied geometrical drawing and painting. He had already lived in Brazil in two occasions, in his childhood and youth, but decided to settle down in Rio definitely in 1928, when he lived for a while as a carpenter and worked on improving his drawing skills, attending classes at Liceu Literário Português,

by that time located at Rua Senador Dantas, at Largo da Carioca, but only starting to paint in 1935 or 1936.

After 1933, for ten years, Tenreiro achieved nice reputation as an artisan, refining his sensibility on hardwood work in two large workshops in town, *Laubisch & Hirth* and *Leandro Martins*, where he started to develop an intense production of furniture, which lines should follow to perfection the old European styles.

Tenreiro would soon refuse this pattern, as he was trying, since 1934, his own language, designing buffets and other non-traditional furniture lines, for which, however, couldn't find any buyers.

In 1941, when still working at *Laubisch & Hirth*, he had then the opportunity of producing his first personal design furniture pieces ("of starting my history of modern furniture", as he personally defined on interview to the author of *Móvel Moderno no Brasil*, in 1979).<sup>44</sup> The plans of Francisco Inácio Peixoto's house in Cataguases, MG, designed and built by Oscar Niemeyer were given to him with the demand that its interiors should be equipped with modern furniture.

"Except for the pantry, all the furniture of the house was under Joaquim Tenreiro's responsibility, which drawings prove the artistic, formal and chromatic quality", as says professor and museologist Anaildo Bernardo Baraçal<sup>45</sup>, also referring to other details: "At social areas and master bedroom, soft colored wood gives lightness to the organization and filling out of the

Drawing of Joaquim Tenreiro for the residence of Francisco Inácio Peixoto. 1942. Collection: Roberto Hirth.

Of jacaranda, 50's bookshelf of Joaquim Tenreiro. Collection of the twins Pedro and Paulo Scherer. Photo: Eduardo Naddar / Crochet Produções.



spaces. Darker woods, as jacaranda, would be destined to the other bedrooms and the office. Tenreiro as we can see then, in 1943, goes deeply through ondulation of wood strips, providing visual continuity between armchairs' feet and arm, between front and back frames. (...) On dining room and bedrooms chairs only the light legs resemble the classical well-known productions of the artist. Backrests and seats fully surrounded by natural or synthetic coverings over comfortable upholstery suggest resting: pleasure and simplicity describe the set".

Cataguases' experience seems to have been fundamental to raise in Tenreiro a desire to create his own furniture. His celebrated Poltrona Leve, from 1942, was born during this moment: in two versions, light, using ivory wood, and dark, using *imbuia*, the item is a landmark of furniture modernity in Brazil, as mentioned at Roberto Pontual's *Dicionário das Artes Plásticas*.<sup>46</sup>

At February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1943, a certificate signed by Carlos Laubisch and Georg Hirth qualified him as "fully skilled artist Mr. Joaquim, which leaves

LAUBISCH = HIRTH, RIO  
TENREIRO

our company by his own will, and we wish him a bright future". Times were changing. Tenreiro became partner of an old German salesman from Laubisch-Hirth and opened downtown at *Rua da Conceição, Langenbach & Tenreiro*, specialized in modern furniture, but also producing classic style, by demand of the partner.

The workshop gets too small just after a year and they move to a large plant in Bonsucesso. "Counting with about 100 highly qualified artisans working under his direct orientation, Tenreiro always kept himself away from industry", points Loschiavo, also explaining: "If, in a way, his furniture acted almost as a manifest in defense of modern style, in other way, according to the production, we need to remind it was still completely artisanal, with prototype at minimal edition, many times unique pieces, due to clients' request".

In 1947, he finally opens *Tenreiro Móveis e Decorações* in Copacabana – first design store Brazil would know. Located at the elegant *Rua Barata Ribeiro*, it was the site where the master has produced his best furniture pieces, as renowned rocking chair and three-footed chair, this one in jacaranda and peanut wood, exhibited in 1961 at Rio de Janeiro Modern Art Salon.

Having a company branch in São Paulo since 1953, the *carioca* store has moved in 1962 to *Praça General Osório*, when Ipanema started to become trendy and where, in no time, it

would be concentrated the furniture stores of great *carioca* designers.

His last authorial furniture work was the decoration of Itamaraty Palace's banquet room in Brasília, finished in 1967. After that, Tenreiro would dedicate entirely to visual arts, restarting a path he had interrupted, but never ceased creating in wood, producing reliefs, trellises and columns in polychrome wood for city sites as the panel for Temple Sidon Synagogue at Tijuca, in 1969; the doorway for Rio de Janeiro University Ecumenical Chapel in 1974; and two fiberglass panels for SENAI auditorium at Tijuca, from 1975.

In 1991, a year before his death, Tenreiro was the subject of the exhibition *Modern yesterday, today and forever*, at Rio Design Center. The exhibition folder showed a statement from the designer: "(...) I wouldn't say that I created the modern furniture in Brazil, I just tried to give modern characters to what was produced in the country. I was a predecessor of that. I created simple, clean furniture, considering Brazilian artisanal tradition. A piece of furniture has to offer comfort through several hours, if it doesn't provide long-lasting comfort is useless".



Armchair of Tenreiro: private collection of Yeda Veiga Ferraz Pereira. Photo: Crochet Productions.

## TENREIRO: ETHICS AND AESTHETIC

It wasn't unusual finding Joaquim Tenreiro's ideas at important cultural magazines' pages from that time. In 1955, an article at *Revista Módulo*,<sup>48</sup> pointed out his concept about interior designing:

"There may be no luxury, but sobriety. There may be no richness, but distinction. There may be no ostentation, but welcoming".

At the same article, another Tenreiro statement about furniture copy:

"Nobody would accept that the painter A would do an exhibition made of artworks he had copied from painter B, Painter C, D or F. Nobody would accept that a respected

architect would present projects he had copied from his categorized colleagues.

Noguchi's triangular table\*, one of the masterpieces of modern furniture, has been copied and slaughtered in Brazil in every way.

It was disproportioned, it had its lines altered by exclusively commercial reasons, its dimensions changed, it was vertically stretched, it has been shrunk, it has suffered all kinds of miseries...".

\*Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), American designer, created the aforementioned table in 1944.

# 3

Photographic essay of the sofa Mole, realized by Otto Stupakoff, in 1958, with the objective to divulge the work of Sergio Rodrigues. However, during the photo session, the tide went up and soaked the piece, which was still a prototype. Collection Sergio Rodrigues Institute.



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**“A city is made not only of its natural landscape, but also of its buildings and objects that carry the mark of their creators, such as Sergio the furniture of Sergio Rodrigues and the boardwalk of Copacabana.”**  
**Adélia Borges, journalist**

# THE GOLDEN YEARS OF CARIOCA FURNITURE

FROM THE  
1950s TO THE  
1970s

# FOCUS ON DESIGN AND MATERIALS: ON WAY TO BRAZILIAN FURNITURE

The middle 40's Brazilian home started to follow a more functional lifestyle, guided by a less handcraft production, dictated by new comfort concepts that would make housekeepers' daily life easier. A new aesthetic ideal was in the air, still timid, less *flamboyant*, that would make possible rationalization and simplification of form, especially on interiors and furniture design.

So "modern domestic life", as prophesized by north-american publicist ads that spread technological innovations, became true, especially for wealthier families – the first ones being provided the foreign electric appliances that reached the country. "The first of all, still in the 30's, was the electric iron, followed by refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, floor polishers and blenders. Radio devices were updated and soon assembled to 78 rpm record players. That was electronic sound starting to rule domestic leisure, replacing the piano."<sup>1</sup>

It's good to remember that only after 2<sup>nd</sup> World War that electric appliances settled down Brazilian homes. "By then, exporter countries, especially USA, focused their productivity on weapon industry, which has

opened space to Brazilian production, as long electric energy consumption grew up in our country."<sup>2</sup>

The second post-war time, by the way, is a significant landmark on scale production and popularization of consumption in Brazil: along the need of replacing articles usually imported until then and due to remarkable technological advances who supported the following decades' industrial expansion, it prevailed by then the nationalist politics context promoted by Getulio Vargas administration.

In bigger cities, residential architecture translated these new times with the uprising of apartment buildings and modern homes, whose plans prized gardens, hidden rooftops and garages, sharing the neighborhood with neocolonial mansions and houses still in *art déco* spirit.<sup>3</sup>

In turn, Brazilian furniture produced in this period still hasn't reached its own language. It was submitted to european furniture evolution, with the spreading of imitations, especially "pé-palito" furniture – "an american style with european influence, whose organic forms might have the escapist post-war inspiration, through a current sci-fi vision, as in United States the capitalist aesthetics' lead was producing and consuming, right the opposite to functionalism ideals coming from Europe".<sup>4</sup>

In the meantime, there was a rising production in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo which, although restrict and essentially by author, waved to a new furniture style, closer to our cultural reality, both

according to design and choice of national materials. As a result of creative ebullition of a small group of professionals, by the way all foreigners, this moment was named by Maria Cecilia Loschiavo dos Santos in the chronology of modern furniture in Brazil as "the dawn of a new style".<sup>5</sup>

In Rio de Janeiro, Portuguese Joaquim Tenreiro's handcraft production prescribed the evolution of Brazilian furniture design and started to make the aesthetics of lightness more familiar to the *cariocas*. Especially among those clients with nice cultural and economic standards that used to attend his workshop, *Langenbach & Tenreiro Decoration*, which was already in 1948 one of the most interesting addresses in Copacabana. "With his religious respect for wood, Tenreiro produced *chaises-longues* inspired in Brazilian northeastern hammocks and replaced the heavy Chippendale, Louis XVI and gothic furniture for the currently despised *palhinha*, filling living rooms across the country with light, elegant and functional furniture. "His crush were native woods, as jacaranda, *cabiúna* and ivory-wood", remembers Ruy Castro, at *Encyclopedia of Ipanema*.<sup>6</sup>

By then Italian Lina Bo Bardi (1914–1992) arrived in São Paulo in 1946, when John Graz's (1891–1980) contribution was already relevant, with his furniture that stated simplification and purification of forms. Designer and architect, she previewed wide work perspectives in the country, mostly by having soon met great architects, Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer among others. Two years after her arrival, Lina created her *Studio de Arte Palma*, a partnership with Pietro Maria Bardi and Giancarlo Palanti – an experience aiming industrial design that

lasted two years, comprehending planning processes, production line, woodworking section with contemporary machinery and mechanics workstation, specially for creation of chairs and armchairs.

"At *Studio de Arte Palma* it was attempted a manufacturing production of plywood furniture, vertically cut, not folded, according to Alvar Aalto principles. No upholstery was used. For seating and backrest were used canvas, leather and even *chita*, from *Casas Pernambucanas*, something revolutionary considering the usual taste and standards in that period. Among the resistance in the market according to acceptance of modern furniture, Lina's work has defined new taste patterns and it can be considered a benchmark in terms of introduction of new materials, especially plywood, cut in parallel sheets, something new in a country where until then hard wood had been a must", quotes Maria Cecilia Loschiavo dos Santos.<sup>7</sup>

Another significant name by then in São Paulo was Austrian architect Bernard Rudofsky (1905–1988), main associate designer at *Casa & Jardim* who, according to Loschiavo, has strongly emphasized usage of Brazilian natural fibers as jute, *caroá*, hemp, sisal etc. "In his furniture work, Bernard has preceded tendencies of use of native materials. With national fibers' fabrics, he mixed galvanized and painted metallic parts, resulting light items, aligned to the new artistic furniture tendency, and also holder of a Brazilian character by the use of materials."<sup>8</sup>

It was when these first designers' works were already announcing that Brazilian furniture expression should have to take into concern lightness of forms and use of native materials,

especially considering tropical climate, that São Paulo industries, already provided of new technologies and in consonance with economic development started to embrace furniture production more significantly. That was the time when companies already solidly established in market changed from handcraft to serial production.

Among them highlighted *Riccó Móveis para Escritório*, *Móveis Paschoal Bianco*, *Móveis Teperman* and *Móveis Bérghamo*, not to mention famous *Indústria Cama Patente L. Lísicio*, founded in 1915 in Araraquara, (widely known as *Patente*) that in 1930 had already reached an industrial profile and wide market share with its popular bed and furniture collections.

Responding to economic boost which in that moment would benefit industries' plants renovation allowing machinery and technology importing, that advance in São Paulo's industrial activities didn't take longer to put the state into first position in productivity along the 1940s, consolidating the relevance of its furniture industry for the following decades. <sup>9</sup>

### **THE 1950S AND FURNITURE IN RIO DE JANEIRO**

The background of carioca scene of furniture history was great luxurious wood workshops, and the greatest and most important ones were, as seen, *Laubisch-Hirth* and *Leandro Martins*, mainly devoted to reproduction of items of European furniture. In Petrópolis, Gelli still produced mainly on request when, in the 1950s, reached its industrial moment, started producing short collections of modern design furniture. And the great news of the sector at the Republic capital, when a new Brazil presented

itself, was the uprising of countless factories to provide the prosper furniture market not only in town, but also at the countryside.

Settled mostly at Rio de Janeiro's suburbs there were large and medium sized factories, still equipped with conventional machinery, but that ended up pumping serial production of home furniture aligned to the taste of middle-class customers of the city and the state.

They could count on a generally considered "remarkable" workforce for those who witnessed the powerful productivity of those times. Among the aspects that qualified that workforce were the expertise of a good number of foreign woodworkers, mostly Portuguese, and also Spanish; the still living tradition of sharing the craft from father to son; and the institution of professional education, especially with the creation of SENAI – Nacional Industrial Learning Service, in 1942.

### **FURNITURE MEMORIES ON CARIOCA SUBURBS**

There are little or practically no records about this early – and strong – phase of the furniture industry in Rio de Janeiro. The informations' gathered here were only possible by the good memory of two relevant industry entrepreneurs – Gil Grosman, <sup>10</sup> legendary *Celina Decorações'* ex-partner and SIM RIO's president for 13 years; and Sávio Visconti, reputable carioca enterprise consultant, *Fátima Arquitetura e Interiores'* ex-partner and AFAM, Brazil Furniture Makers Association's executive-secretary for 17 years.

Both of them have intensively lived the apex of furniture industrialization in Rio de Janeiro, and have known many of these companies, their

owners, their craftsmen, and now share their memories here.

"There were some tens of good companies, all of them producing home furniture for the magazines that proliferated through the districts. At each train station, as between Engenho Novo and Santa Cruz, for example, we could see lots of these furniture stores, one located aside to another to supply local population. That has widened up Rio's industry, which has since the beginning assumed its state range, never national range character. All that production was destined to the magazines. That was a team that used to "fight together", tells Grosman, referring to the competition that was starting to become stronger on market.

But he also remembers the time when this productive phase of *carioca* suburbs' factories started to decline. "It was in the middle of the 1960s, when the existent great magazines in the city, as *Sears*, on Botafogo Beach, and *Mesbla*, on Rua do Passeio, started to sell furniture produced in Brazil. Who supplied them with great production and good price were southern factories, where the furniture association was already very well developed. This change affected not only factories' productivity, but also the furniture market in the districts. The stores' economic power was great, investing a lot in advertising material in magazines, newspapers and television.", analyses Gil Grosman.

Visconti confirms the scene mentioned by Grosman and enhances the talk reporting how easy buying wood was back in the 1950s.

"It was from those *carioca* suburb factories that

came out to the stores all mid-class homes' furniture sets: living room, bedroom, kitchen, hall, porch... Nice quality, resistant furniture, there was a concern about style, although no one would talk about design by then. They produced quite austere furniture, straight lines, mostly in dark wood, as the trend asked. There was a lot of jacaranda, general hard woods, and veneer panels. Wood, by the way, was abundant. And for good price. It usually came by ship from south, especially Paraná; and from Bahia and Espírito Santo, by truck, with freight almost always costing more than the material."

Some factories from those times are still fresh in the memory of these businessmen:

**MÓVEIS FEDERAL** – bedroom furniture factory belonging to Arlindo Manuel de Pinho, first installed in North Area, in Pilares, later growing larger and taking a bigger area in Vila Valqueire, Jacarepaguá region. A strong supplier for capital and countryside magazines.

**MEGASON** – amous bedroom furniture factory on Avenida Suburbana.

**BOTIJA** – ust aside to Megason, it produced bedroom sets known as "ranch" style.

**BRUNCHPORT** – very longstanding, it has been located in several addresses, among them on Avenida Suburbana. Supplying bedroom sets for stores and magazines, among them Ponto Frio, which had its first store on Rua Uruguaiana by 1952. This company, also strong on TV tables and school furniture, doing supply for public educational departments, has merged in 1960, when its founder's son, Tulio Brunchport, associated to businessmen Hélio Alencar and

his brother, resulting *Roma Mobili*, producing modular furniture until today.

**J. S. FLORINDO** – another bedroom sets' factory in Pilares. His owner was once Brunchport's partner, which original denomination was *Florindo & Brunchport*.

**MÓVEIS RIO D'OURO** – it belonged to Adelino Ferreira. Located on old Avenida Automóvel Clube, in Tomás Coelho, it was an important bedroom sets' factory, being known by its finishing on "green Carrara" pattern laminate.

**SOEIRO** – huge factory, located at the site nowadays occupied by Norte Shopping; it produced bedroom sets and living room furniture.

**MÓVEIS VALÉRIA** – previously in Olaria, where it was destroyed by a fire, moving then to Guadalupe. This company introduced duplex cabinets in the market (cabinets only reached 2.20 high so far), in veneer plywood, and created a successful rack line using the exceeding plywood from cabinet's production.

**IRMÃOS LOKIEC** – another good bedroom sets' factory in Cascadura.

**MÓVEIS CIRCULAR** – owned by Armênio Bernardo, it was an important factory in Penha, on Rua Lobo Jr., doing full bedroom sets. It has opened several retail stores and it was the first company in the sector in Rio de Janeiro to advertise on TV.

**CACIQUE** – huge factory located at 560 Rua Dona Romana, in Lins de Vasconcelos, producing chairs and tables in solid *jequitibá*.

**ESTOFADOS PARAÍSO** – owned by brothers José and Jacob Hersznhaut, it produced upholsteries and mattresses, a huge factory in Vila Cosmos, supplied capital and countryside stores, having even furnished to *Mesbla*.

**DIAMANTE AZUL** – on Rua Goiás, in Piedade, it was a strong sofa producer, especially sofa-beds.

**POLTRONA IBAS** – in Tomás Coelho, it produced several kinds of furniture.

**MÓVEIS TARZAN** – specialised in kitchen sets (tables, chairs and laminate buffets) in Engenho Novo, owned by businessman Samuel Roitman.

**HÉRCULES** – in Vila Valqueire, a kitchen sets' factory that started producing metallic furniture then later changing to wood. It supplied Sears and *Mesbla*.

**METALON** – a producer of tubular foldable chairs and tables, with tabletops and seats in coloured plastic, located on Avenida Pedro II, in São Cristóvão.

**MÓVEIS MARACANÃ** – on Avenida Maracanã, where there is nowadays a steakhouse, it was a company known by its Chippendale style bedroom sets.

**LUXOR MÓVEIS** – it produced modern, straight lines' bedroom and living room furniture. In Madureira, on Rua Carolina Machado.

**MÓVEIS VICE-REI** – standing out by its excellent quality producing classic living room and bedroom furniture. It produced items for magazines and its own collection

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Photo: Reproduction  
of an advertisement  
in the magazine  
*Seleções*, year 1956.

available at retail store on Rua Barata Ribeiro, in Copacabana.

**MÓVEIS PALERMO** – it produced high-quality furniture, mostly copies from European styles. Famous on *Rua do Riachuelo*, it was located in front of *Laubisch-Hirth* woodshop.

**MÓVEIS CAVALCANTI** – in Cavalcanti, North Area, it produced full bedroom and living room sets.

**SONATA** – abbreviation for Sociedade Nacional de Tacos, located in Bonsucesso, produced parquets, frames and wooden doors.

**ESTOFADOS COMPLETO** – first on Arcos da Lapa, and after in Jacarepaguá, it produced upholsteries and mattresses.

**DENIS GRUNFELD** – it produced radio boxes, on Avenida Suburbana, in front of Soeiro company.

**AGULHAS NEGRAS** – factory in Bonsucesso, specialized in boxes for television and record players.

# GELLI AT THE TURN OF THE DECADE

Mário Gelli, in 2015, in the garden of his house in Petrópolis, in one of his centenary chairs. Photo: Crochet Productions

More memories that help to make history: Mário Gelli, a third generation of pioneer industry businessman in Petrópolis, tells us that in the 1950s he had already opened his first store in town, on former Avenida XV de Novembro, now Rua do Imperador.

“It was when Gelli started to sell to Rio stores. All those addresses on Rua do Catete were our clients, *Renascença*, *Irmãos Vainer*, *José Benefeld’s* store, *Nova Era*, *Jorge Schneider’s*... The end of the decade was a moment of change for the market, there was already a strong competition, which forced us to innovate. There was also a change on our clients’ profile, when the capital was transferred to Brasília. Until then, all that high staff government people were our clients – something we called ‘booklet clients’ –, which would come to Petrópolis during summer season and appreciated the classic style furniture we produced. *Gelli* provided furniture even to Rio Negro Palace, during Getulio Vargas time. After Brasília, sales flopped and Petrópolis was no longer the summer season city for the presidency of the Republic.”

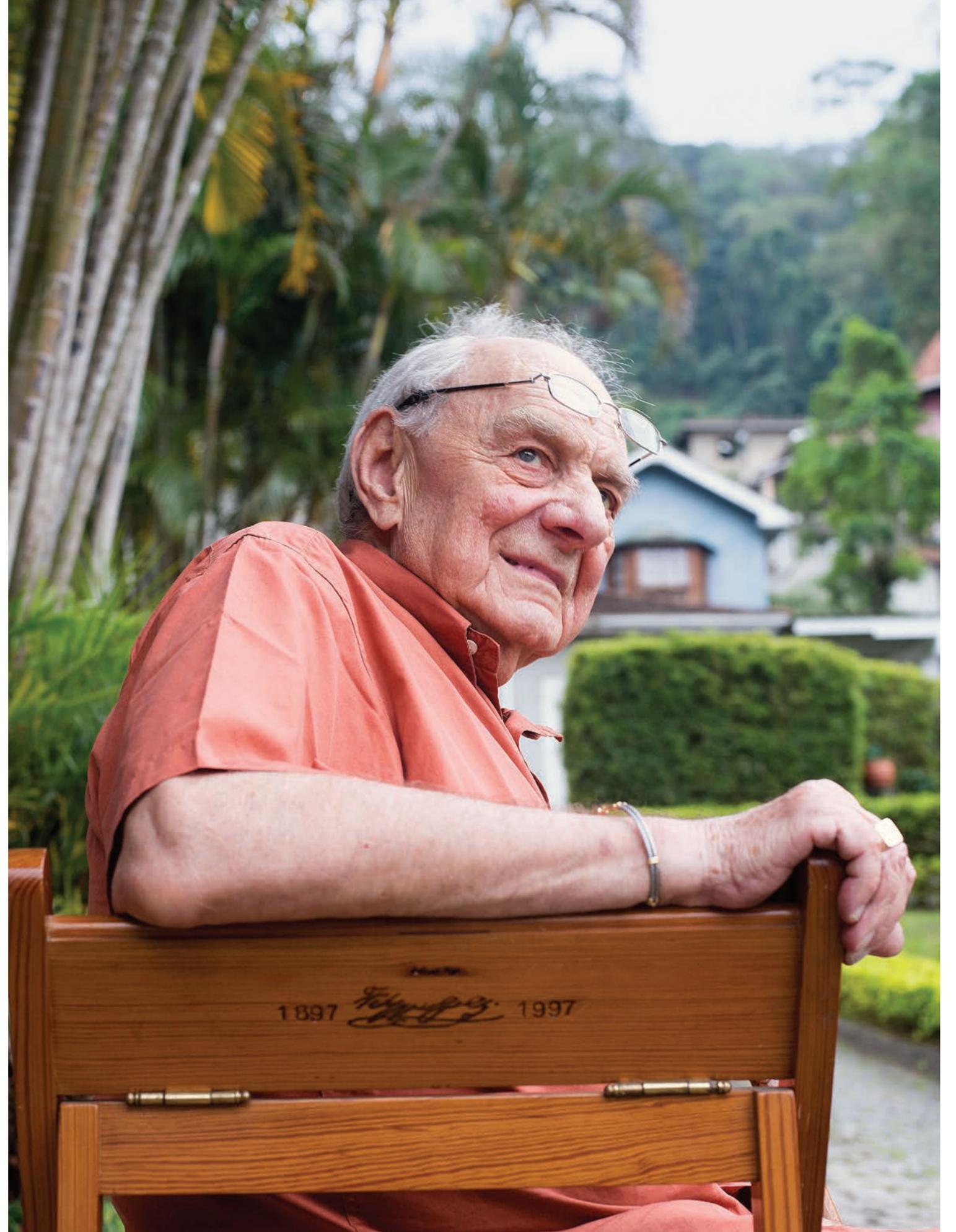
Back in time, Mário Gelli enjoys remembering that before the arrival of the first machinery

form Belgium, Italy and Germany, in the mid 1940s, his factory’s production was still traditional, using lathe, drill, band saw, circular saw, fret saw...

“Those were our tools, until the first serial productions started to achieve industrial scale. We never left a demand unattended. Business has never stopped, not even the two fires that destroyed the factory affected *Gelli’s* power. Supported by friends and the city administration, the company could recover and keep growing. By then, already with the brand *Gelli & Filhos*, receiving the clients in person wasn’t my grandfather’s duty anymore. That artistic duty was now in charge of my uncle João. I still remember: he received the clients almost always on Sundays, at Professional Building, on *Rua do Imperador*. He used to sit with them on table showing those wonderful foreign magazines, French, American, specialized in decoration. They would then, together, getting inspired, choosing up... My uncle would draw, take notes about their preferences and based on those notes he would build up all that the client wanted with exclusiveness. There were cabinets, beds, buffets, full dining sets, a kind of furniture very much appreciated by the medium-high class of those times.”

During the 1960s, designing furniture was a duty completely assumed by Mário.

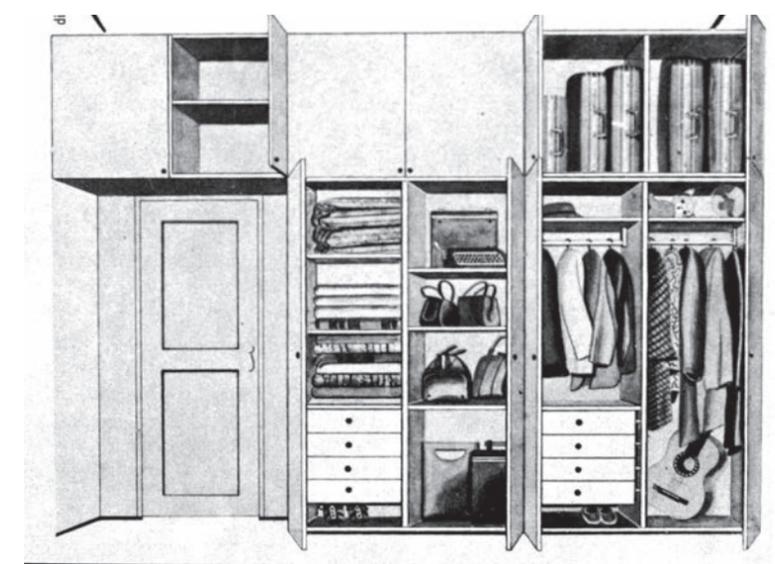
“In 1965 or maybe 1966, we opened the first address of *Gelli* in Rio, in Copacabana, on Rua Barata Ribeiro. Some new items made huge success at the store, a new modern line I was designing,



thinking about those younger clients now living in apartments in Rio de Janeiro. It was the time of the sofa bed, known as “Gelli’s little sofa”, that one with little side tables supporting the backrests; another very popular item was *Gelli* armchair, later nationwide copied as “Daddy’s *Armchair*”. *Gelli* Júnior was our flagship by then: we reached the production of 800 pieces of that armchair in a month.”

Armchair Gelli, upholstered with foam, a brand success in the 1950s. Photo: Crochet Productions.

Well-thought-out, Gelli’s sales champion in the 1980s, a must-have for magazines and newspapers ads at the time: “A large closet built right into small spaces.”



## TWO CASES OF SUCCESS: FOAM UPHOLSTERY AND BEM BOLADO

Mário Gelli is also proud of *Gelli*’s pioneering production of foam upholstery.

“By that time, I remember well, there were only upholstery with springs. But I had designed a shell-shaped armchair and was having some trouble to resolve the seat. I was racking my brain to solve that concave seat, when I saw a salesman at Rua Barão do Rio Branco with a piece of foam in hand. He worked for Vulcan and was presenting a new material. Done, that foam resolved my armchair trouble – the *Gelli* Armchair, one of our brand ’s best-sellers. That happened almost in the middle of the 1950s, when I even gave an interview to the old *Rádio Tupi* talking about the releasing of foamy furniture. Soon we started to produce polyurethane foam for our own upholstery line. And for a long time, we even produced mattresses.”

A pioneer also on introducing modular furniture into *carioca* market, *Gelli* entered the 1960s following the emerging consumption patterns of the middle-class that was growing and filling more and more the city’s buildings, especially in South Area. Aiming productivity, the company invested in new technologies and diversity of feedstocks: beyond

traditional hardwoods, chipboards started to break-out.

“It hasn’t took much time for *Gelli* to update. Responding to the newness of chipwood that was breaking out in the market, we created the modular cabinet, inspired in European creations. It was in 1969 that we released what was known as *Bem Bolado*. It was a new concept of cabinet, assembled with prefab pieces that would make possible to create a customized design, based on the partitions needed by the client and the available area. This item became soon a best-seller and the name was given by the customers, that would usually say, looking the cabinet on display at the store: “*que bem bolado!*”. This expression was so common that ended up being assumed by the company’s communication area, remembers Renato Gelli, Mário’s youngest brother.

They both can remember very well: at the summit of *Bem Bolado* in the 1980s, *Gelli* used to sell 800 cabinets per month.



# THE ARRIVAL OF ML MAGALHÃES ON MARKET

Another representative trajectory on Rio de Janeiro's furniture industry history is Manuel Leite Magalhães<sup>14</sup> path, creator of *ML Magalhães* – company founded in 1956 that, in 1973, would become office furniture market leader in Rio de Janeiro.

Meg for his friends and known by many people from inside the furniture business as Magalhães, this Portuguese man born in Póvoa de Varzim, now aged 87, tells us that he arrived in Brazil in December 1946. "At the age of 11, I started to work in a furniture factory, warming up in water bath 'fish bone' glue for the craftsmen. There was no white glue then", reports Magalhães, proud of his youth's diligent life, when he had to accommodate his time at Escola Comercial, where he studied Accountancy, and the Army Quarters, as part of *Mocidade Salazarista*, during 2nd World War.

Before his arrival in Brazil, however, woodworking would surprise him again in his native land, as if predicting nice winds to him. As he considers: "I had no ability with wood nor with musical instruments, but at 16 years old, encouraged by a friend, I made a violin using sycamore and african ebony, arches in Brazilian barabu, which I'm very proud of. It's a piece that I keep as a relic".

Telling his history, Magalhães remembers that at the age of 18, already in Brazil, started working in a furniture company on Rua Siqueira Campos.

"It was a woodshop with half a dozen employees, where, I remember well, I made a lot of white *peroba* cabinets for the

priests' cassocks in Igreja Nossa Senhora de Copacabana. About a year after I went to a small furniture woodshop on Rua Figueiredo de Magalhães – a backyard factory that would make bars, bedroom sets etc., by order. All that was giving me know-how. Until I met Flávio Ramos in 1950, Flavinho, which soon would become famous at carioca nightlife with Jirau nightclub and after that, already in the 1960s, with the restaurant Au Bon Gourmet. We became partners, him as commercial director, me as technical director, and we founded *Decorações Flama*."

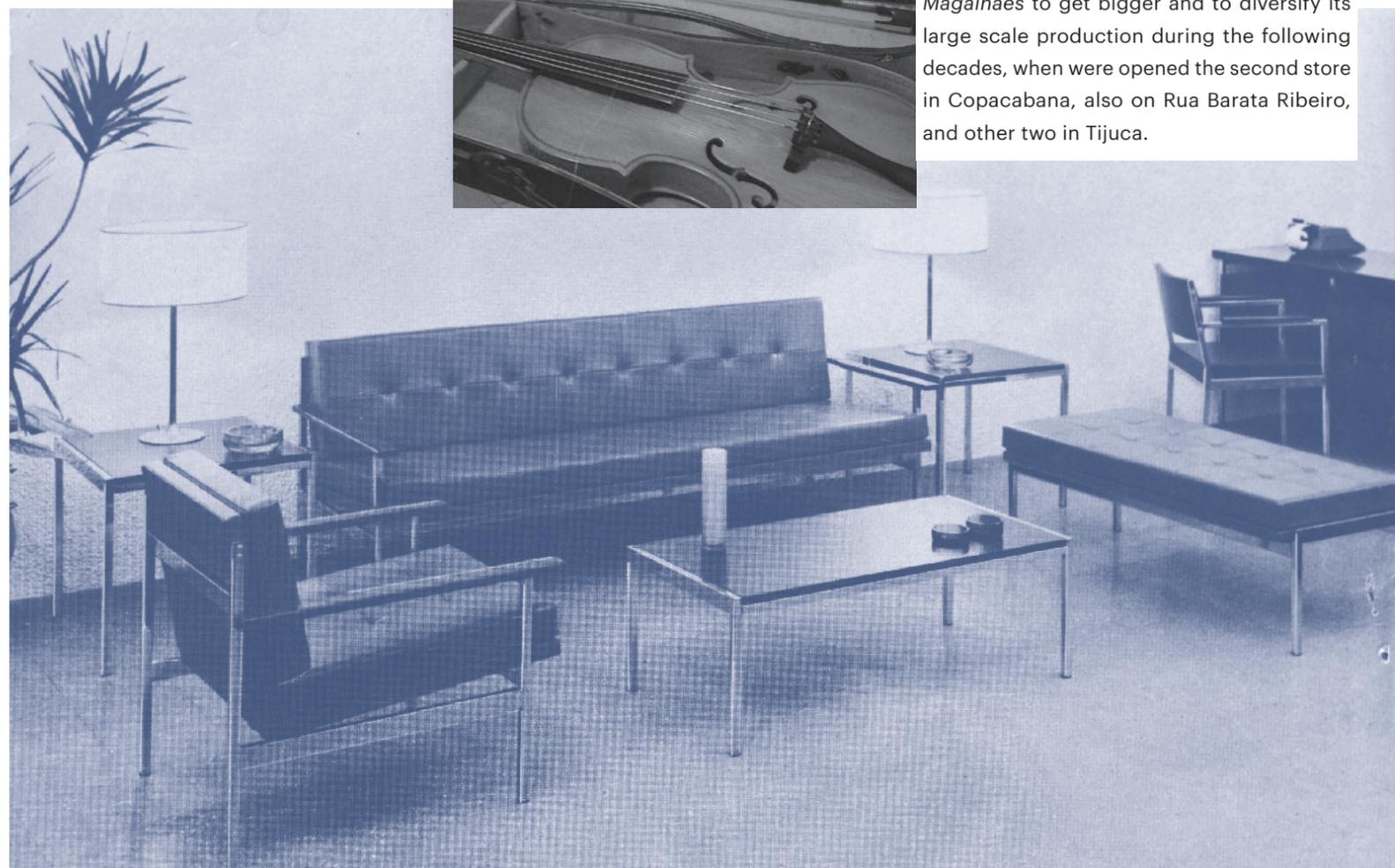
Flama, as people shall still remember, has started in Gávea, in a trolley station on Rua Marquês de São Vicente, in front of PUC.

"It was a modern furniture factory dining room, bedroom sets, upholstery, made in pikia, guatambu and barabu wood –, designed by Marcelo da Silva Ramos. We used Osvaldo Crispin's fabrics, by then the biggest supplier of decoration fabrics. *Flama* collection only competed with Joaquim Tenreiro furniture. The store was also very modern, designed by Sérgio Bernardes, on Rua Barata Ribeiro, and the clients were carioca high-society. It started with 13 employees and finished with

Manuel Leite Magalhães at his home in 2015, alongside his first work with wood - the violin that he performed at age 16.



Armchair, sofa, stool, side tables and center: one of the furniture lines of residence of ML Magalhães. Reproduction of catalog of 1971.



116. We had new machinery, a nice image, we sold a lot, reaching 2 millions of *cruzeiros* in a month!"

By that same year of 1956, Manuel Leite Magalhães opened in Benfica, on Avenida Suburbana, first *ML Magalhães'* factory. "I started with woodworking and home furniture upholstery. Everything designed by me: dining room, living room sets, tea carts... The first store was in Copacabana, at 450 C Barata Ribeiro", as his founder likes to remember.

In 1960, a contract signed with a German group for planning and installation of modern machinery gave the company the updating of its factory plant – which guaranteed to *ML Magalhães* to get bigger and to diversify its large scale production during the following decades, when were opened the second store in Copacabana, also on Rua Barata Ribeiro, and other two in Tijuca.

# OCA: A NEW FURNITURE IDEA IN RIO DE JANEIRO

"I'll create a store and it'll be named... Then I scratched some names, but it had to be a Brazilian name, related to architecture and interiors. It had to be short. I thought, and thought and it came out Oca, with three letters, it was a perfect name." This 1979 Sergio Rodrigues' statement (1927- 2014) given to Maria Cecília Loschiavo, published at the book *Móvel Moderno no Brasil*,<sup>15</sup> gives a good idea about the creative, light and humorous personality of the designer designated by Delta Larousse Encyclopedia as "the creator of Brazilian furniture."

Graduated architect in 1952, since college Sergio showed up the urge of developing a work connected to national roots. While other professionals by then designed furniture items alongside dedicating themselves to architecture or visual arts, as Tenreiro, Lina Bo Bardi and Zanine Caldas, he kept his path as a furniture designer. And through his Oca, that was born devoted to national materials and forms, Sergio could, finally, "create a Brazilian ambiance with Brazilian furniture" – a concept that he tried to make possible since his two first years of professional experience with Hauner brothers in Curitiba, at *Móveis Artesanal*, and in São Paulo, at the newly created *Forma* store.

On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1955, opening "by all means" his memorable Ipanema store, Sergio Rodrigues also opened a new important era in Brazilian furniture production. The address went famous on Praça General Osório, at 14C on Rua Jangadeiros, since opening night.

"The opening was a true happening. Jaime Maurício was the most hype arts critics then, close to Carmem Portinho, to Burle Marx, to Guiomar Muniz Sodré, to Modern Art Museum. (...) *Correio da Manhã* has given two pages to it. (...) Opening party was sponsored by MAM, Modern Art Museum. (...) At the opening Sergio entered Oca carrying in his hands the Mocho stool, which he had created less than a year before, in 1954, and it would become an icon of his work. Hauner sofa, designed by him in São Paulo, was also in the opening and it would be the second piece by Sergio to enter the store. (...) At first, Oca would sell other pieces produced in São Paulo, but in no time Sergio's creations would fill almost the whole area. It also would sell the innovative Dominici lamps and beautiful fabrics by visual artist Fayga Ostrower. With the support of architects that could find there a new option for their interiors' ambiance, Oca had good commercial performance and quick market development."

Showcase of Oca store, in Ipanema, created by Millôr Fernandes, in 1965. Collection Sergio Rodrigues Institute.



Banco Mocho, made of massive hardwood. Creation of Sergio Rodrigues. 1954. Photo: Instituto Sergio Rodrigues Collection.



## 61 YEARS OF MOCHO STOOL

“The first piece industrialized and sold at Oca and structured in solid hard wood, Mocho was designed by Sergio Rodrigues in 1954. To create this piece, Sergio, who’s been constantly absorbing Brazilian popular culture, took its inspiration from countryside women milking cows using those typical farm stools, many of them with a single foot. The first version had a more concave seat and would receive a perfectly fit little cushion. After some market changes and new standard gauges, the depth of the seat has decreased and Sergio took off the cushion, probably to give a cleaner shape to the stool, since it already had the comfort of the curve. He slightly altered feet shape, raised a bit the little crossbars and the seat became lighter, less deep. Handle design has also changed.

With its remarkable currentness, Mocho, aged 61 years old in 2015, was the omen of a brilliant career. When he entered Oca, the store that has changed the concept of furniture in Rio de Janeiro, carrying the little stool, Sergio would hardly know that was already carrying the imprint of his work.”

Source: <http://instituto-sergirodrigues.com.br/Biografia/22/Sessenta-anos-com-o-Mocho>

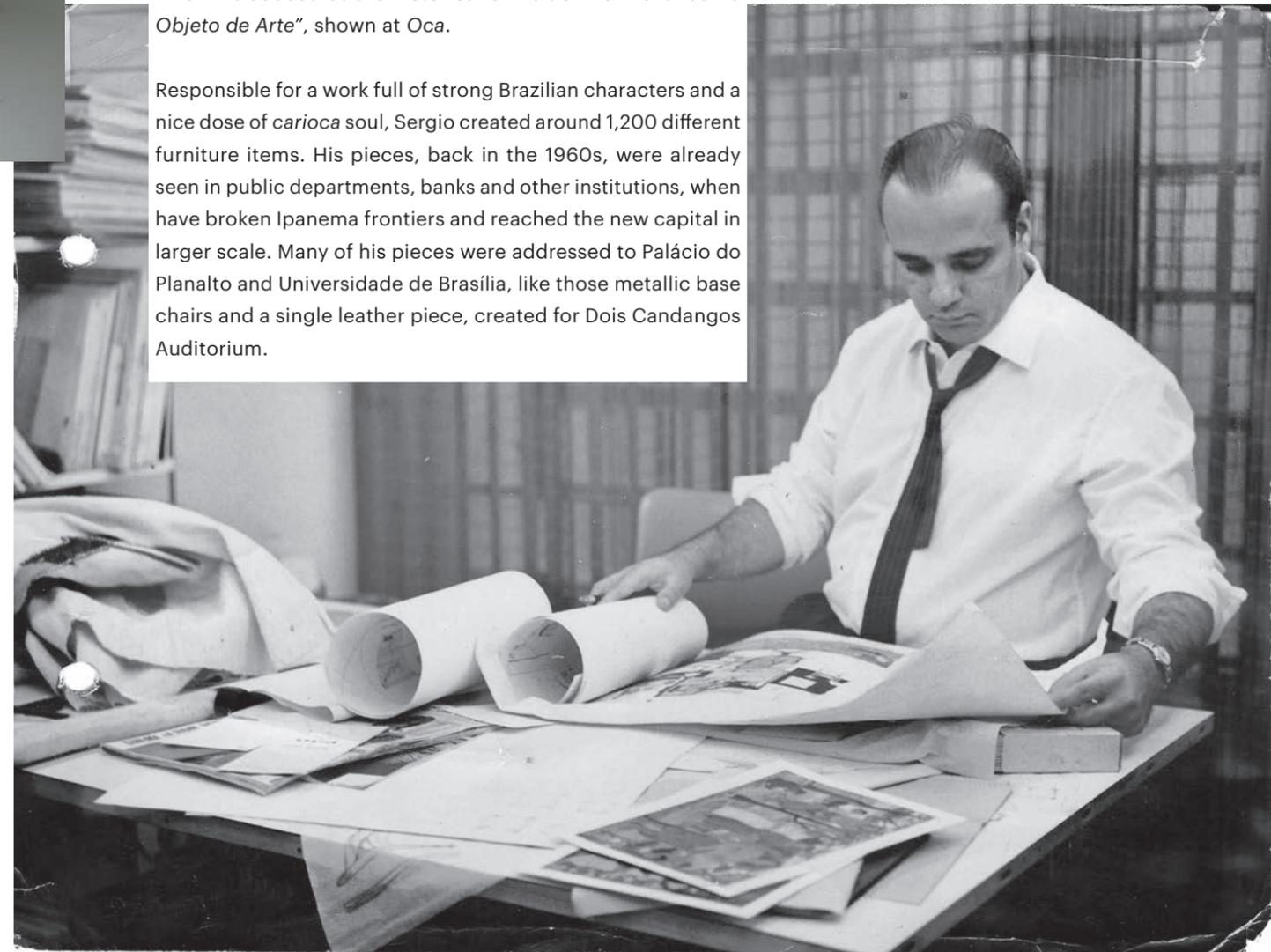


Event in the Oca Store, Jangadeiros street, 14 - store C, Ipanema. Rio de Janeiro, 1960s. Collection Sergio Rodrigues Institute.

A brief retrospective of the most symbolic pieces of Sergio Rodrigues’ career, designed during thirteen years of Oca (closed in 1968), demands to evoke 1956 Lucio Costa armchair, with jacaranda structure, milling cutter fittings and *palhinha* seat; Oscar armchair, a tribute to Niemeyer, created in 1956, in wood with *palhinha* backrest and seat (for Brazilian Jockey Club, refused for being “too modern”); 1957 Mole armchair, in lathe-shaped jacaranda, with cushion seat over leather straps (famous winner at International Furniture Contest, in Cantu, Italy, in 1961); 1958 Gio armchair, in hardwood, covered in fabric; Burton table, in solid hardwood, also in 1958; 1962 Vronka armchair, with feet and arms in solid hardwood, and Chifruda chair, born *Aspas*, with its curvy backrest – “a scandal” when introduced at the historical exhibition “*O Móvel como Objeto de Arte*”, shown at Oca.

Sergio Rodrigues, 39, at his office in the Oca store in Ipanema. Year 1966. Collection Sergio Rodrigues Institute.

Responsible for a work full of strong Brazilian characters and a nice dose of *carioca* soul, Sergio created around 1,200 different furniture items. His pieces, back in the 1960s, were already seen in public departments, banks and other institutions, when have broken Ipanema frontiers and reached the new capital in larger scale. Many of his pieces were addressed to Palácio do Planalto and Universidade de Brasília, like those metallic base chairs and a single leather piece, created for Dois Candangos Auditorium.



1968 Catalog of the Meia Pataca line. Collection Sergio Rodrigues Institute.

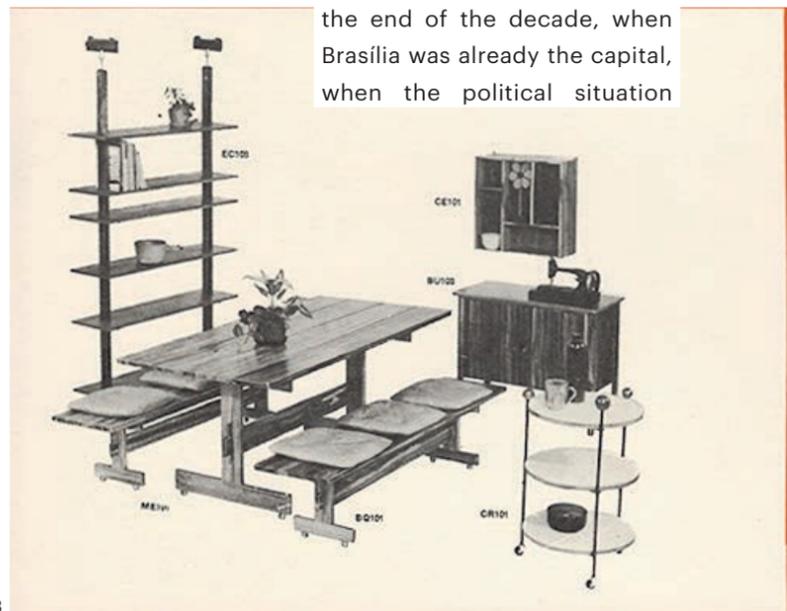


“During that time, every Sergio’s piece was built-up at *Taba*, a small factory, first one, located in Bonsucesso, conceived to produce in industrial scale. But *Taba* really produced by handcraft, piece by piece or small scale, due to the details of each item. The factory started working in 1956. The man in charge of everything was the craftsman Viana, a fantastic professional, amazing human being. He worked with Sergio a long time, since Mole armchair creation. *Taba* closed its doors around 1975, 76, when Sérgio realized he wasn’t very much talented for business affairs. And he could count no longer on Viana, who was very sick then”, tells Vera Beatriz, Sergio Rodrigues’ widow, on an interview given at Instituto Sergio Rodrigues, during research for this book, on July 2015.



BQ-101 - Banqueta - 180x40x40  
desmontável, madeira maciça.  
BU-103 Buffet - 92x45x75 - 2 porta  
e prateleira.  
CE-101 - Conjunto estante - 60x60x25  
5 divisões internas  
CR-101 - Carrinho de chá - 50 Øx72  
estrutura de ferro, tampo de fórmica.  
EC-103 - Estante - 120x300x30  
2 montantes, 6 prateleiras.  
ME-101 - Mesa 180x90x75 - desmontável,  
madeira maciça.

She also mentioned Sergio’s satisfaction when opened *Meia Pataca*, in 1963, a neighbor store to *Oca*, with furniture items with more accessible prices. “Although the great success reached by his pieces at *Oca*, he always wanted to make furniture for a wider group of people.” Not in jacaranda, but Gonçalo Alves wood (also known as *maracatiara*), *Meia Pataca* items used to delight younger customers, due to his trendy design, combining colours and shapes in a contemporary way. One good



example is Tónico armchair, designed in 1963.

Two years later, in 1965, when the market was very receptive, they had to expand. Sergio opened another *Oca*, not another branch of Ipanema’s store, but a large factory in Jacareí, SP. In 1968, however, creative and festive Ipanema era would end. “I never thought about leaving *Oca*. When administration problems came up it was very unpleasant for me and I quit without even taking my drawings with me or having registered them”, told Sergio Rodrigues on interview to Fernando Serapião, originally published at *Projeto Design* magazine, ed. 284, Arco editors, on October 2003.

Even away from the company, Sergio kept creating a lot at the end of the decade, when Brasília was already the capital, when the political situation



Furniture of Oca, in the catalog photo of the brand. Courtesy, Freddy Van Camp.



got harder, but also when, in Copacabana, *Bossa Nova* sizzled at *Beco das Garrafas* and on record players of *carioca* nightlife, producing wonders through partnerships between Tom Jobim, Baden Powel, Carlos Lyra and Edu Lobo.

By the 1970s, when façades ruled residential architecture, Sergio was thinking about life “inside” home. Furniture, he used to say, “it’s a fundamental complement of architecture, it’s a set of pieces that define it, items that shape the architectonic space on its interiors”. In 1973, having already created Sergio Rodrigues Architecture office, he designed one of his masterpieces, according to experts: Kilin armchair, a tribute to his wife Vera Beatriz.



Sergio Rodrigues style ambiance. Collection: Sergio Rodrigues Institute.

# THE SPIRIT OF MODERNITY AND ARCHITECT FURNITURE

Armchair, 1960, of rosewood with leather upholstery. From Lucio Costa. Photo: reproduction of the Maria Elisa Costa collection.



Among these decisive initiatives for the process to modernize furniture in the country, it is worth breaking the chronological rhythm of this story a little and going back in time, observing how the contribution of architects was important, both in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, to boost the industry, from the drawing as much as from the industrial point of view.

The author of *Móvel Moderno no Brasil* leaves no doubt in this regard:

“(…) the contribution of architects towards modernizing furniture was expressive, even if most of the times their production has been in small scale, unsystematic and not traded in regular sales channels, being more focused on meeting the needs of their own projects. (...) Many architects ended up making furniture as an extension of their own architecture, as an integral part of their projects.”<sup>17</sup>

Maria Cecília Loschiavo emphasizes that this contribution, in São Paulo, had already been started by the pioneering architects in the modernization of the architecture of São Paulo themselves - for example, Gregori Warchavchik, in the 20's, and Oswaldo Arthur Bratke and João Batista Vilanova Artigas, Rino Levi and Henrique Ephim Mindlin, as from the 30's.

In the then capital of the Republic, on its turn, the presence of architects in the history of furniture started being significant a little later, in the late 50s, early 60s. And it was characterized by having been an initiative of a group of professionals. “This group of

architects, led by Lúcio Costa, was comprised, among others, by Affonso Reidy, Alcides da Rocha Miranda, Carlos Leão, Ernani Vasconcellos, Jorge Moreira and Oscar Niemeyer. These architects joined the main designers, artisans and producers of furniture at the time, ordering from them furniture to equip the projects of public buildings and residences under their authorship. This way, important and original examples of modern drawing appeared. (...) But it was Lucio Costa (1902-1998) and Oscar Niemeyer (1907-2012) who greatly promoted the appearance of a new style of furniture, which was completely consolidated in the 60's, being then gradually absorbed by the industry. (...) Both developed a kind of production that does not stand out quantitatively, being, however, very significant for the consolidation process of the new furniture.”<sup>18</sup>

## THE POLTRONINHA OF LÚCIO COSTA

It was a period of intense experiments and studies on constructive processes and feasibility of materials. A vigorous time for Lucio Costa, who exercised an important role as “stimulator for the development of industrial drawing”.

An architect graduated on the National School of Fine Arts, Lucio Costa also drew pieces

of furniture that made history. Although its production has been restricted, his *Poltroninha* is emblematic (and mandatory in any retrospective of the Brazilian modern furniture), a piece drawn in 1960, in rosewood and leather, with seat and backboard in rubber foam, produced at the time by Oca, the legendary company of Sergio Rodrigues, which already existed in 1955.

Before, however, Costa had already drawn with some colleagues, all young and desiring new architectural experiences (among which are the then-trainee Oscar Niemeyer), the furniture of some of the most representative buildings of the modernity of the capital of the Republic at the time: Palácio Capanema, the building of MEC, the Ministério da Educação e Cultura, a project from 1936, finished on 1947, which had consultancy by the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier. In the meantime, in 1944, Lucio Costa was the author of the furniture of another important project of his, the Park Hotel of Nova Friburgo. “Besides the care with the drawing and use of materials, he himself projected the hotel's furniture. Chairs, tables, beds - which seem to be hanging from the floor - were especially thought by him”, records architect Maria Elisa Costa, his daughter.<sup>19</sup>



### THE LINE ON, FROM OSCAR NIEMEYER

On its turn, the participation of Niemeyer in furniture production occurred later. And not in Brazil, but in France, where the architect had been exiled since 1967. Inspired by the Swedish chairs, the architect dedicated himself to a close research looking for the balance to maintain, also in furniture, the curve lines of his architecture.

The result, in 1971, was his line *On*, with six pieces drawn in partnership with his daughter, Anna Maria Niemeyer: the armchair and stool *Alta* (the first pieces of the series), the chaise *Rio*, the curvaceous *Marquesa*, and two tables, one for dining and another for work.<sup>20</sup>

“The process that allowed him to create the fluid effect in furniture was the pressed wood system, which ensured the possibility of execution with higher economy and ease of construction. But, for the first prototype of the armchair *Alta* with stool, Niemeyer did not use wood. He worked the structure with steel blades and right angles.<sup>21</sup>

The architect himself registered the experience in an article in the magazine *Módulo*,<sup>22</sup> founded by him in 1955: “It is interesting to emphasize how the pressed wood technique brings us closer to architecture: the same possibility of new shapes, the same effort in reducing sections and simplifying the constructive system”.

For his initial production still made in France, still because, in Brazil, the technology that allowed curving steel was not accessible, Niemeyer used the technique sometimes combined to metal blades, and straw for sitting furniture. With an unquestionable value for the trajectory of the modernization of Brazilian furniture, these pieces were the basis for Niemeyer to equip several of his architectural projects, among which the headquarters of the Communist Party, in Paris. “But, until today, the most wanted piece among all furniture by Oscar and Anna Maria is the rocking chair, from 1977, ebonized, with leather and straw fabric”, points out Carlos Ricardo Niemeyer, superintendent of Oscar Niemeyer Foundation.

### ZANINE, THE WOOD WIZARD

Another professional of the time, with great influence in the trajectory of Brazilian modern furniture, was José Zanine Caldas (1919-2001). “Born in Belmonte, Bahia, in an area surrounded with forest, he became familiar with trees since he was very young. From there came his connection with wood, a fundamental matter he used both in the furniture and in the houses he projected. In his own words: “I learned wood has two lives: the first one as a tree; the second, as a table and chair, a bed and wardrobe, flooring and broom, wooden trough and wooden spoon, house and corral, crib and coffin. (...) The second life of wood is generated by human hand and spirit. These are wood objects that come from our imagination and assume real forms, coming to live with us, and so they continue for generations, transforming themselves, being saturated with living, serving as witnesses and keeping their utility”.

Still in the 40's, Zanine created an atelier of mockups in Rio de Janeiro, where he worked between 1941 and 1948. In this year, he founded, in São José dos Campos, São Paulo, the factory *Móveis Z*, in a society with Sebastião Pontes and Paulo Mello. He transferred the mockups atelier to São Paulo, and then he continued active from 1949 to 1955. The atelier served the main modern architects of both cities.

The series production of the factory *Móveis Z* made broad use of plywood and resulted in detachable furniture with different linings, such as tarpaulin or foam coated with fabric, directed to the middle class for their accessible prices. Among other pieces, bars, sinuous tables and chairs with screwed, indented plywood, with seat and backboard made of fabric or tressed



Cadeira Namoradeira (love seat), 1980, of solid wood of juerana. Zanine Caldas. Photo: Reproduction.

with sole leather, were produced.”<sup>24</sup>

In 1961, after *Móveis Z*, Zanine started dedicating himself to his several architecture projects, many of which in Joatinga, Rio de Janeiro. Self-taught, but an unquestionably talented architect, Zanine Caldas used to say that his school had been the work and the mockup, which he produced so many times to so many other architects. It was also the period in which he developed furniture in rough wood, in its natural dimensions, which also served him as a denouncement against the devastation of raw material in the country, which was already announced in those years of 1970-1980. “One of the most known models of this plowing is the Cadeira Namoradeira (love seat), for two people, which weighs more than 60 kg, made in mahogany or *juerana*”.<sup>25</sup>

# DESIGN INVADES COPACABANA AND IPANEMA

In the chronology that guides us through Rio de Janeiro's history of furniture industry, we're now at the frenetic summit of Golden Years, on the "50 years in 5" mood, based on an euphoric belief in future. "The same Juscelino that in the 1940s had invited Oscar Niemeyer to make the architectonic plan for Pampulha, now called both, Lucio Costa and Niemeyer, to achieve the summary object of his administration: the construction of Brasília, the new capital of the country.<sup>26</sup>

In that new Brazil that predicted the "capital of hope" everything was connected: music, non-fiction, concrete poetry, urbanism, architecture and even a new furniture. In Rio de Janeiro, started to appear at Copacabana shop windows – the most modern of carioca neighborhoods by then, that concentrated everything considered "trendy" on elegant Rua Barata Ribeiro.

Since 1947 there was located the already mentioned *Langenbach & Tenreiro Decorações*, considered the first design store in Brazil. There was where master Tenreiro produced one of his most celebrated pieces, as famous Rocking Chair and Three-Footed Chair, this one in jacaranda and peanut, exhibited in 1961 at Rio de Janeiro Modern Art Exhibition.

Many businessmen of the sector still remember the "time of Copacabana stores", among them Fredy Dodeles, famous glass craftsman who also has made history in furniture: "Bach in the 1950s, around 200 on Rua Barata Ribeiro, there were at least twenty stores, among them Soleil, aside to *Bel Papéis*, with

decoration fabrics, *Jardin Du Sud*, *Projeto*, *Museum* and *Síntese* factory, who set the trend for luxury furniture by then".

Architect, ex-businessman and consultant Sávio Visconti also reports about the furniture commerce in the district: "In the 1940s, Rua do Catete was "classy", with those classic French furniture... A delight for Praça Onze craftsmen, who reproduced all that European style. But with the growth of middle-class and concentration of *nouveau-riches* in Copacabana in the 1950s, that commercial spot was being moved to the neighborhood, more and more occupied by the new residential buildings. It was the arrival of joint apartments, the great newness by then. Many buildings on *Rua Barata Ribeiro*, for example, had commercial facilities on ground level, where some furniture stores started to settle down", remembers Visconti, who took part at the history of *Fátima Arquitetura e Interiores* (former *Decorações Fátima*, on Rua do Catete, owned by Portuguese Vitor Soares Nunes).

"From college mate of the owner's son, Guilherme Nunes, I became his partner at *Fátima*, when the store started his own production. With the new brand

A project of  
Guilherme Nunes  
and Sávio Visconti,  
with furniture from  
Fátima Arquitetura  
e Interiores.



*Fátima Arquitetura e Interiores*, settled in Copacabana, on Rua Domingos Ferreira. It was a company that worked by order. To supply the demand, me and Guilherme created *Habitat*, where we designed and produced every item to be sold at *Fátima* in Copacabana and also for other stores around. It was the apex of furniture stores in the district.”

Following the Golden Years style, Copacabana has also inspired visual artist Abraham Palatinik, pioneer on kinetic arts in Brazil, from Grupo Frente, founded in 1954 in Rio de Janeiro to debate abstract arts. The artists of the group, according their own words, intended “to make art a practical activity, aiming its full integration to contemporary life and society. (...) Art isn’t a matter disconnected to people education. It has to influence modern industrial production, so the objects coming from this industry may be artworks, in perfect synchronicity between form and function”.

“The definition the group would give about themselves matched the urge to join art and functionality, a present plan for Brazilian furniture’s modernization. And Palatinik, besides well-known for his kinetic objects, has also created modern furniture and acrylic objects. In 1954 opened, in partnership with his brother, *Arte Viva* factory, producing until the middle of the 1960s, with store on Rua Barata Ribeiro. He designed chairs, armchairs, tables, shelves and buffets. The wooden and metallic furniture pieces stood out mostly for the presence of glass parts, where Palatinik applied geometric drawings.”<sup>29</sup>

### **THE “IPANEMA AGE” OF CARIOCA FURNITURE**

Everything was about to surprise in Rio de Janeiro in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scenery for the official arrival of *Bossa Nova*: on August 1958 came to music stores the 78 rpm record, number 14.360 by Odeon Records, by singer João Gilberto, with the songs *Chega de Saudade*, by Tom Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes, and *Bim Bom*, by João himself.<sup>30</sup>

The times invited to the new, to change and boldness. Surrounded by the exuberance of *carioca* landscape, rocked by those first dissonant chords, Copacabana, “the little sea princess”, was giving place to Ipanema on furniture commerce, when Sergio Rodrigues opened on *Praça General Osório*, in 1955, his revolutionary store.

Who tells us that is again Ruy Castro, in his *Ipanema Encyclopedia*:<sup>31</sup> “In short time, *Oca* has attracted to that Ipanema quarter an unbelievable concentration of designers. There have coexisted during several years Michel Arnoult, Abel de Barros and Norman Westwater’s *Móveis Contemporânea*, (straight line furniture, sold in pieces for being assembled); Joaquim Tenreiro’s store moved from Copacabana to the square (in 1962) by Sergio’s invitation; Franco Terranova’s *Petite Galerie*; Emmerich Marcier’s store; Christian Roule’s store; and *Meia Pataca*, also by Sergio, kind of a pop *Oca*. But although *Oca*’s items were artwork, they were not untouchable or made to be contemplated distantly. At one of the collection parties, Sergio would put chairs and armchairs by the sidewalk and put General Osório back to the old times when families used to seat in front their houses and chit-chat.

And the store usually was the foyer for its neighbor, Silveira Sampaio’s *Teatro de Bolso*. (...) Born at *Oca*, Mole armchair was created by Sergio Rodrigues in 1957. In 1961, Mole won the International Furniture Contest, in Cantu, Italy, beating 437 pieces from 27 countries. From that moment on, called Sheriff Chair, it was added to modern classic furniture list. But it has never ceased being a deeply Brazilian creation. Mole armchair entered Brazilian furniture history at the same time and with the same power as *Bossa Nova*”, celebrates Ruy Castro, mentioning the legendary note from journalist Sérgio Augusto, published at *O Estado de S. Paulo*.

Another address that has made history on that 1960s’ Ipanema was Loja do *Bom Desenho*, opened in 1964, at 210A Rua Visconde de Pirajá, “right during troubled days of military strike”, recalls Tereza Pontual Colasanti,<sup>32</sup> sister of architect Artur Lício Pontual (1935-1972), born in Prenambuco, the mentor of the store. By then, young Pontual has already started his designing career at M+N+P, a pioneer *carioca* design office, with Aloisio Magalhães (1927-1982) and Luiz Fernando Noronha (nowadays called PVDI).

Tereza and his husband Henrique Colasanti (both, by the way, graduated in ESDI), running the office that until today keeps “the soul of design” in his address on Rua Maria Angélica in Jardim Botânico, tell that the concept of the store was born during a trip that both Brazilian architects have done to Europe to convince some Old World’s governors that Brasília (the promise of a new Brazil translated by the architectural boldness of building a city in the distant Central Plateau) would really be built. “In that trip, talking to Dr. Lucio Costa,

the idea of the store came as a way to show ‘the nice design’ that was then being made in the country by then. So Artur, Tereza’s oldest brother, designed the store for his mother, Maria Cristina Lício Marques Pontual. That was the pioneer address of what was then called industrial design, because back then no one would call it just *design* yet”, tells Henrique.

Loja do Bom Desenho’s concept was very clear since the start: “It was conceived to sell Brazilian industrial products, according to the principle of form and function. In the first years that principle was strictly followed, there was not even a single piece not Brazilian in the store. Only after, at the end of the 1970s, that the first objects imported from Scandinavia started showing up. And when Rio Design Center was opened, we had a branch store over there”, tells Tereza.

### **PIONEERS OF SERIAL MODERN FURNITURE**

Brazilian homes’ interiors, especially those from wealthier and more cultured families, was gradually being affected by the euphoric spirit of quick industrialization and urbanization process. In bigger cities, although a huge share of the market would still get connected to classic patterns of living and decorating, modern Brazilian furniture was already teasing the senses of those who were opened to the vivid atmosphere of that moment, in search of contemporary characters on aesthetics as a whole.

In São Paulo, there were quite significant, in that moment, 1950 creations of José Zanine Caldas and Sebastião Pontes’ *Móveis Z*, in São José

dos Campos; and, in the capital, 1952 *Móveis Branco & Preto*, born from the society among architects Carlos Millan, Chen Hwa, Jacob Ruchti, Miguel Forte, Plínio Croce and Roberto Aflalo; 1954 *Unilabor*, a cooperative organization with professionals of several fields and creation in charge of designer Geraldo de Barros; and 1955 *L'Atelier*, created by polish architect Jorge Zalszupin, associated with three craftsmen. "Each one of these companies, in different ways, animated by different design concepts, was responsible for the start of serial production of modern furniture in our country. Leaving the craftwork of unique furniture piece and exclusive drawing behind and starting commerce through more popular sales ways – as huge magazines – was also a significant aspect for legitimizing and spreading modern design", writes Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos.<sup>33</sup>

In parallel with the arrival of the machines for joinery, occurred a silent revolution.



The stored wood in joinery of Anacleto Ferreira da Costa. Family Collection.

During the years 1960/1970, many wood workers had to adapt, and not without effort, to demands of technology. In the city of Rio de Janeiro, one of those professionals was Anacleto Ferreira da Costa (in memorium). The experienced cabinetmaker, with 78 years old, said in his statement<sup>34</sup> how got by the market changes in order to stay active, without losing customers or fail to be creative and passionate about working with wood. Anacleto revised standards, learned new practices, tried to forget old habits, and even struggled to not miss the contact with solid wood.

The memories to which he refers in this report bellow are certainly common to many woodworkers who, like him, felt strongly the change of times for late industrial era in the furniture history in Rio de Janeiro.

## WHEN THE MACHINES CAME: A TESTIMONY.

"It was a Sunday. And my father's friend asked me if I wanted to go to Brazil. It was this way that - on January 1st, 1953 - I left Passos de Ferreira, a city 20 kilometers away from Porto, Portugal, where everyone used to work (and still works) with furniture. I had only studied from seven to the nine years of age, but I already knew how to make any piece of furniture alone and so I went to work at *Irmãos Lamas*, a kind of factory-school, which used to be located in Leopoldina area. I was a minor and they set me as an apprentice, but a piece that an apprentice usually took a week on the making I could make in two hours. I stood there, idle, without being able to join the grown-up professionals and I could barely eat with that salary. That was not for me, so I only stayed for two months. Soon I got a job at *Barão de São Félix*, at Central area, but from there on, within one year, I must have passed by eight or nine companies, searching a better salary.

When I was already 19 years old, I decided to work on my own, so I rented a *praça* - an area with some machines inside a factory, where each lessee produced their own product. I sold my first piece of furniture to a store in Estácio and, in one year, I could buy two machines - the sanding machine and the mortising machine. Two years later I founded the *Anacleto Ferreira & Irmãos*, along with Fernando and Antonio, my brothers, who also came from Portugal. I rented a warehouse, on Benfica area, which we ended up buying afterwards and is where I am until this day.

At that time, I made all bedroom furniture with solid *Perobado-campo* wood, in Chippendale style. And also living room furniture with all those frames, everything very detailed, handmade. But, in the 60's, things changed. The machines started doing most of the work and the factory grew. In 1998, I had 53 employees. Two of them ended up buying a factory and followed their own paths. That time was easy to furniture shopping in Rio, who lived on that period remembers how Estácio, Catete and Copacabana established themselves as furniture sales points. The factories didn't have their own stores, so we sold to these stores everything we created, and on demand as well. I great remember, the most wanted piece of furniture was the buffet, which was all made in *peroba* wood, with those beveled mirrors above

it, outlined by frames. No kitchens were made, today's fitted kitchens didn't exist yet. Later on, I specialized in making living room furniture of *pau-marfim* wood and quit the Chippendale style.

From that to the manufacture of duplex, dismantled, bedroom cabinets I provided to *Móveis Circular* for several years, many changes happened. I opened stores, enlarged my factory several times. From *pau-marfim* wood I moved to work with plywood. Then, to cherry wood. Hardwood was left behind, in 1975. But, after Plano Real, I closed everything. It became very hard to proceed. All raw materials came from outside, trucks did not accept freights on their return trip, and that made everything costlier.

We adapt ourselves to the new technologies, making custom-made pieces from computerized drawings, since they are for very special purposes. And there is no more wood on our factory floor, only reforestation raw material, the MDF. Wood disappeared, tools disappeared. Now, those MDF panels and machines make everything. The woodworker became a fitter. Except for some here and there, that work with special clients.

Plane, bucksaw, chisel, hammer, none of that is used anymore... Scraper, lathe, chisels, bucksaw, adze, bench-screw, brace, everything is now on the display case. They became museum pieces. To cut and square sawn wood, straighten the surface, flatten, make the cuts, pierce, prepare the models for the router to cut the labored frames, fit, sand, correct imperfections, varnish, none of that is done anymore."<sup>37</sup>

# ESDI: THE FIRST SCHOOL OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN DESIGN

And, so, the path towards a Brazilian design became more expressive in the 1950s. Born from the innovative experiences of what was called “architect furniture”, the furniture of certain “national style” became increasingly attractive among the highbrow elite of Rio de Janeiro and was distinguished not only by the shapes, but also by the use of local materials, such as leather and straw.

In the city, the modern architecture of the best minds, such as Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, Eduardo Reidy and Olavo Redig de Campos began to change permanently the urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro, with emblematic buildings such as, among others, the Ministry of Education and Culture, currently the Gustavo Capanema building (1947); the seat of the Museum of Modern Art, MAM (1948); the house of the ambassador Walther Moreira Salles, in Gávea (1951); the Hospital da Lagoa (1952); and Casa das Canoas (1953). Burle Marx’s landscaping for Aterro do Flamengo would soon come true. In the visual arts names such as Helio Oiticica, Lygia Pape, Franz Weissmann, Lygia Clark and Milton Dacosta provoked the imagination and tread new paths to Brazilian culture, which was already open to the neo-concrete poetry of Ferreira Gullar.

The historic circumstances of the time, marked by the optimism of Juscelino Kubitschek’s term of office, certainly determined the background for the excitement of the cultural scene of the decade, when a nearly absolute incentive policy to economic and urban progress ruled, encouraged by industrialization, by the enthusiasm of building Brasília, by the euphoria created by winning a World Cup for the first time, all to the sound of the brand new *Bossa* that sang about the sun and the sea with an acoustic guitar. This made Rio de Janeiro the most modern, poetic and musical capital in Brazilian history.

When the 1960s came, the enthusiastic atmosphere in the Wonderful City was not so contagious anymore. In April, with the transfer of the federal capital to Brasília, Rio would undergo a process of economic and political drain with the move of thousands of public servers, state and private companies to the new seat of power. The city lost the status of national importance and became the state of Guanabara, even though it was still an active cultural force in the country. This was the Rio de Janeiro that gathered trends and fads and made a point of being the forefront of intellectual thought, with strong production, especially in the areas of architecture, music, theater and *Cinema Novo*.

In a broad sense, it was this climate of creative explosion, focused on Brazilian aesthetics that ruled in Rio de Janeiro in the 1960s, when a group of houses in Lapa became the Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial. ESDI was the first school of higher education in design of Latin America, opened in July 10<sup>th</sup> 1963, and was

Aerial view of ESDI in 1965.  
Photo: Goebel Weyne.  
Collection of Freddy Van Camp.



created with the support of the governor at the time, Carlos Lacerda, and by the secretary of education Carlos Flexa Ribeiro, former director of the Museu de Arte Moderna, MAM.

Created as a school of design for the carioca museum, it was based on ideals of formal clarity and rationality of Max Bill (former student of the German school Bauhaus), and proposals from the Argentine artist Tomás Maldonado, who were both connected to the Ulm School of Design (Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm), whose principles defined the technical-productive orientation of ESDI. At first the school, whose first director was the architect Maurício Roberto, who at the time was also the president of the Brazilian Institute of Architects (IAB), had a basic course of two years, plus two more years of specialization in Industrial Design and in Visual Communication. Since 1975 the School of Industrial Design is no longer autonomous and became part of the Universidade do Rio de Janeiro - UERJ.

In her book *“Design Brasileiro – Quem fez, quem faz”*, the researcher and professor Ethel Leon mentions, among the school’s professors, the designers Alexandre Wollner and Karl Heinz Bergmiller, both graduated from Ulm, Aloisio Magalhães, Flavio de Aquino, Artur Lício Pontual, Renina Katz, Goebel Weyne, Zuenir Ventura, Décio Pignatari, Daisy Igel, plus Gui Bonsiepe. Among the directors records the critic of art Flavio de Aquino, the engineer Carmen Portinho and the designers Pedro Luiz Pereira de Souza, Frank Barral, Freddy van Camp and Gabriel Patrocínio, all of them formed at the school.

The designer Marcos Oliva, ESDI graduated 1991 class, worked at *ML Magalhães* for fifteen

years between 1995 and 2009, reaching design complete lines of furniture. In an interview with the author,<sup>36</sup> he relates the importance of their experience during the period and shows the relationship between design and industry as a decisive factor for the industry forward.

“It was a very rich phase; *ML* offered a lot of possibilities of action for the industrial designer. There, I made products, graphics, shipping... But my connection with the industry started at *Bambooning*, a furniture factory at Praça da Bandeira that used fiber of bamboo, wicker and liana. After that, for two years, I was at *Van Camp Design*, at Rua das Marrecas. In fact, I was the only one from my class at ESDI to follow this industry segment. The history of the furniture industry reveals that there has always been a gap in the relationship between design and factory. The Brazilian furniture, for example, incredibly, showed at first time a much stronger connection with architecture than with industrial design. This happened in São Paulo and more sharply in Rio, where industrialization was delayed. And in this industry that has emerged, there was not much opportunities to work. It also can be said that was small the contribution of the industrial design. Few professionals have volunteered themselves to work in the segment: besides me, I name Freddy Van Camp and think I cannot go beyond... Among the new generation Rio, I name Bernardo Senna and Eduardo Baroni. I often say that the elite who studied design in general in the South Zone, does not like the industry. Perhaps because it is a place full of machines and dust, and it is always far away. I also fear that many are attending by fad. And fad does not help any profession to take hold”, says Oliva.

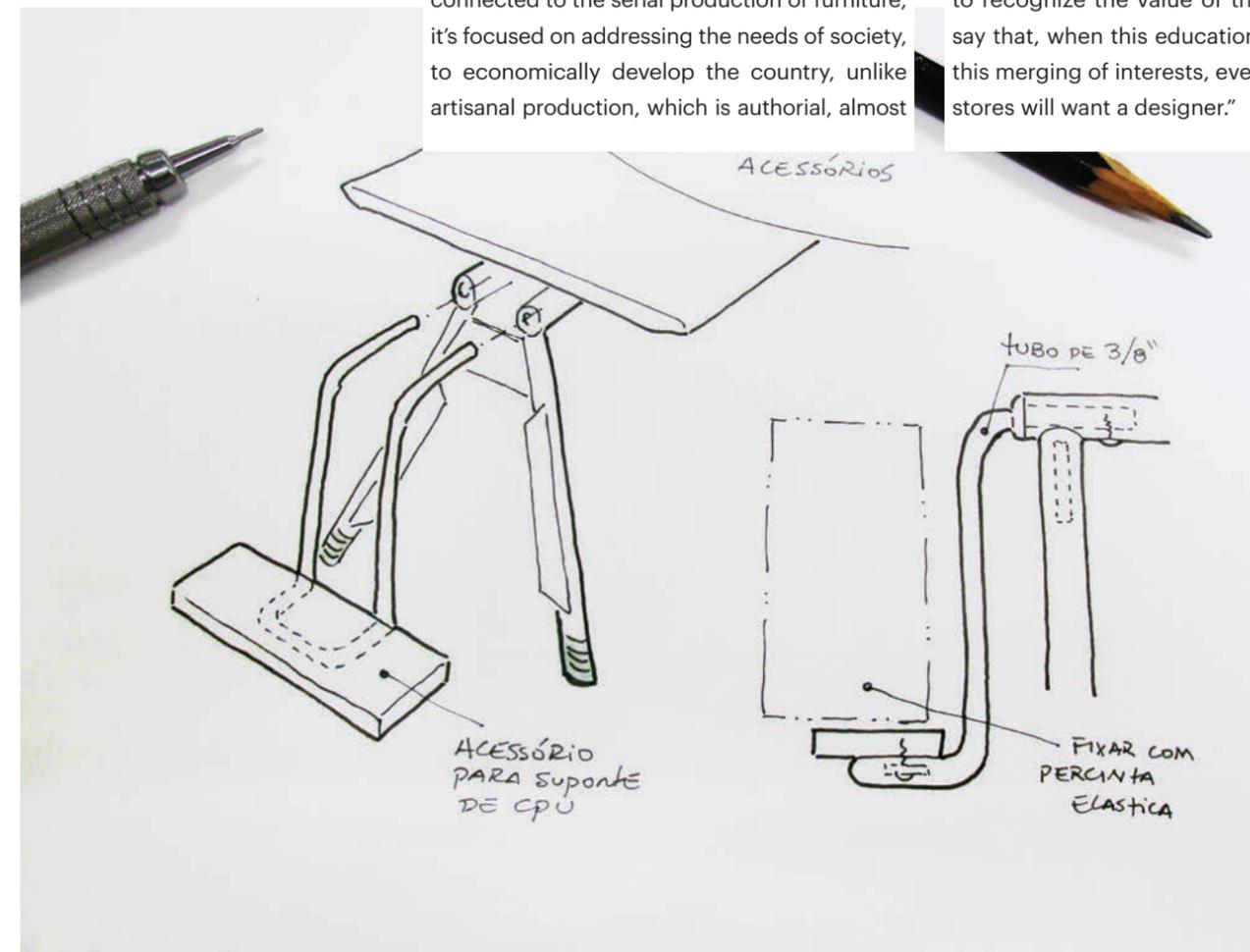
Enthusiastic confess the professional approach

to the industry (“and vice versa, one has to go toward the other”), he points out that today the industrial design is considered superfluous. “Nobody talks that will hire an industrial designer to produce a cheaper product, but, more beautiful. But design, as we know, not only serves to make the product more beautiful.”

Oliva stresses that the companies that most invested in design were from the corporate segment, such as *ML Magalhães*, in Rio, and *Voko* and *Escriba* in São Paulo, among others, all of large-scale production, which demands ore investment in quality. “That’s the example from *Escriba*, which brought Bergmiller from Rio de Janeiro to work with their team in São Paulo. Because that’s what industrial design is: it’s connected to the serial production of furniture, it’s focused on addressing the needs of society, to economically develop the country, unlike artisanal production, which is authorial, almost

artistic, that is meant for a specific clientele”, emphasizes Oliva.

For him, the output to the gap between industry and design is educational: “I love the ideas of Vilém Flusser, a Czech philosopher that lived in Brazil for a long time, which referred to the concept of future factories as temples of knowledge, where technological and theoretical knowledge complement each other. The coming together of the school and the industry will result in a great revolution: besides improving the training of students, the products will gain quality, there will be jobs for industrial designers, the businessman will have the best product in the market and the consumer will become more demanding, critical and able to recognize the value of the design. I often say that, when this educational leap happens, this merging of interests, even the big popular stores will want a designer.”



Sketch for a mobile project by Marcos Oliva. Courtesy of the author.

## IDI – INSTITUTO DE DESENHO INDUSTRIAL

Since its creation, in 1963, ESDI developed important initiatives regarding design thinking and practice in the country. One of them was to enable the creation of a department focused on the industry at the Museu de Arte Moderna (MAM).

The IDI, Instituto de Desenho Industrial (Institute of Industrial Design), was established in 1968, built and coordinated by two of the most representative professors at the school: Gustavo Goebel Weyne Rodrigues (1933-2012), from Ceará, self-taught and a pioneer in the creation of the design field in the country, and Karl Heinz Bergmiller (1928), from Germany, one of the people responsible for the establishment of the profession of designer in Brazil.

Foreseeing the importance of the creation of its own model of Brazilian design in the different fields of activity of industrial design, the IDI had as one of its main goals in the information area “to introduce didactic and promotional exhibitions, in order to update all the layers of the public on the results of the professional activity in Brazil and in more industrialized countries.”<sup>37</sup> During the 1970s, the Institute’s activities were important for the researches in the area of packaging and holding exhibitions, notably the three *Bienais Internacionais de Desenho Industrial*, held at MAM/RJ, in 1968, 1970 and 1972.

Specifically, in the furniture sector, in the end of the 1970s, the IDI developed projects of technical recommendations for furniture of schools of all levels (including preschool, and also with a model for schools in the rural area of the Northeast region), aimed at industries that were interested in the production, with studies and surveys conducted in stages, until the mid-1980s. The *Mobiliário Escolar* project had the support of the Ministério da Educação e Cultura (MEC), the Centro Brasileiro de Construções e Equipamentos Escolares (Cebrace) and the Companhia de Construções Escolares do Estado de São Paulo (Conesp).

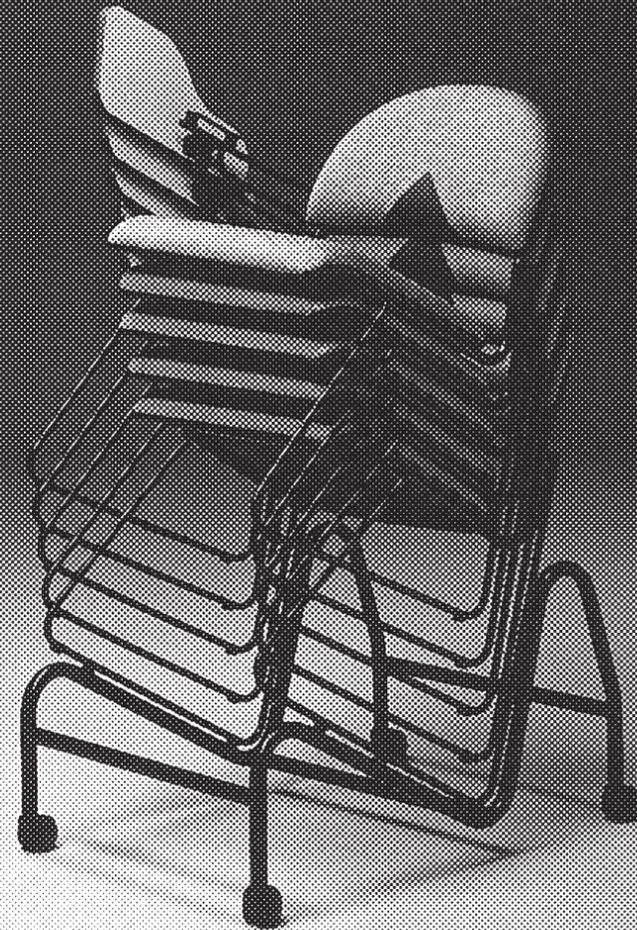
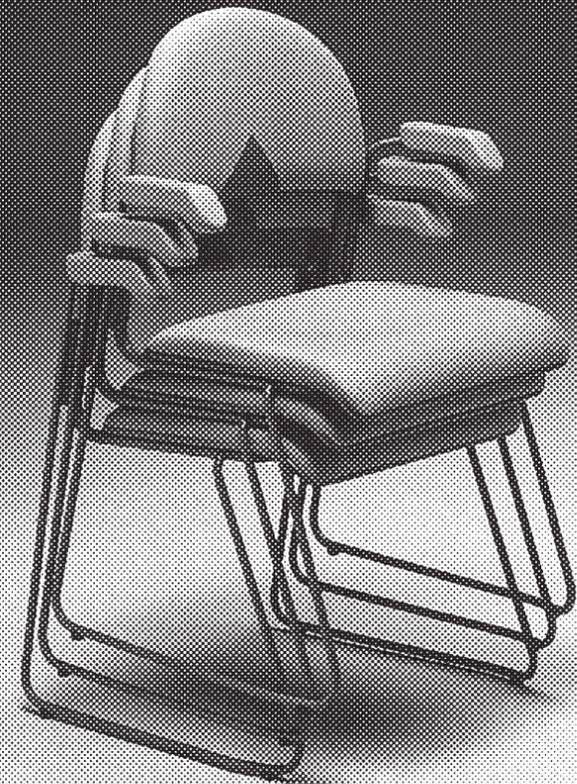
Until it was shut down, in the 1990s, a multidisciplinary team of designers, photographers, journalists, economists, marketing specialists and interns was usually required by the coordination team to contribute their expertise to the chronogram of projects of the IDI. Some of the participants were the designers Freddy Van Camp, Gláucio Campelo, João Luiz Condé, Klaus Dieter Nagel, Lincoln Nogueira, Luiz Alberto Zuniga, Maria Beatriz Afflalo Brandão, Mário Ewerton Fernandes, Roberto Lanari, Sonia Ramalhet de Aguiar and Washington Lessa; the photographers Sidney Weissman and Walter Carvalho, among others; and the journalists Décio Pignatari, Luis Sérgio Ventura and Zuenir Ventura

Karl Heinz Bergmiller and Goebel Weyne at IDI-MAM.  
Photo: FVC.





Delta Chair, 1990-1991 design by Van Camp Design for ML Magalhães. Created for institutional interiors, a tube structure with ecologic flexible injected poliurethane foam over plywood shell. In several different versions, both with arms or without them, with side desk, stackable etc., it was produced for 22 years, reaching more than 250 thousand units produced. Designer Freddy Van Camp, collaborator Claudio Rodrigues. Picture: Eider Kosloski



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**“Furniture has also got its morals and its reason to exist, by its own time.”**

**Lina Bo Bardi, architect and designer**

# MASSIVE SCALE PRODUCTION

1970, 1980, 1990  
AND THE NEW  
CENTURY

# MANY MARKET OPTIONS: AUTHOR'S FURNITURE, MASS FURNITURE

The Mole armchair, in a decoration project from the 1970s, published in the magazine Casa e Jardim.

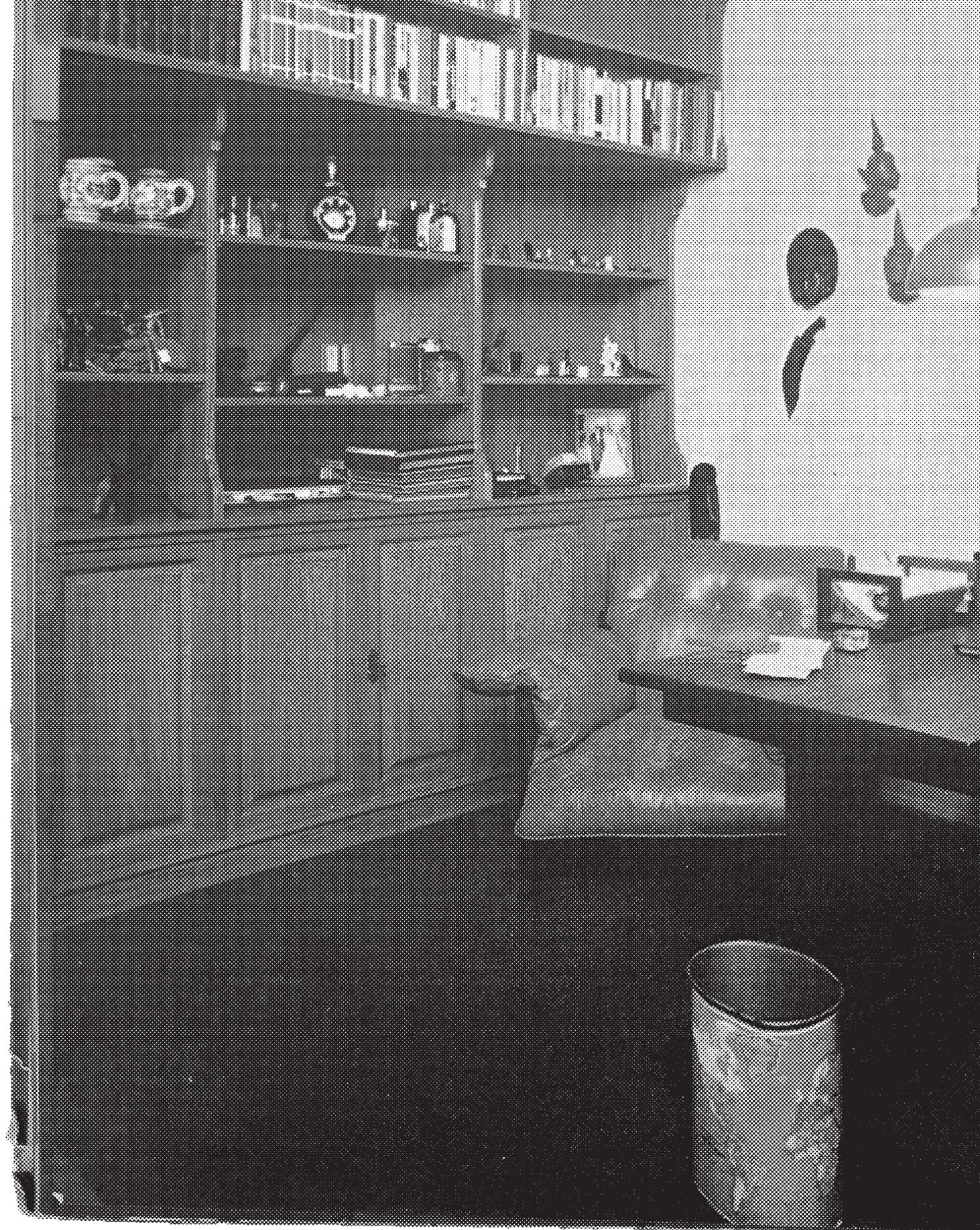
Back in the 1960s, while the world lived the summit of Cold War, Brazil entered a long and dark political period. Those 21 years of military dictatorship (1964-1985), commanded by a hard repressive regime, were also years of great economy growth and also expansion of state organs, with the increase of country's infrastructure and acceleration of industry and urbanization.

Even if quickly, it's worth to remember the time of what was then called economic miracle, times of huge investments made in the country and heavy loans taken abroad, which resulted in millions of jobs. Automotive and metallurgic industries were still growing up. Building industry was experiencing a habitation units' boom, while in large cities the population was growing. Major projects' construction companies were placing Rodovia Transamazônica and Ponte Rio-Niterói into the map, and Rodovia Rio-Santos was starting to conquer Costa Verde in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro seashore...

"By the first years of the 1970s decade the rules of the economical tripod for next decade were already been defined: State, multinational companies and huge national money. (...) Industrial production was growing in full swing and exportation was breaking records. Unlike the 60s, signed by political debate, the 70s' agenda was questioning society standards. In Rio, despite the censorship, "República de Ipanema" was proclaimed, marked by public figures as Leila Diniz, Jaguar, Ziraldo, Millôr Fernandes and Norma Bengell, a group that has the newspaper *O Pasquim* as its 'official' advocate."<sup>1</sup>

Considering that this period was poorly studied from a design-based point of view, professor and researcher Ethel Leon makes relevant comments remembering that those were times when some actions have pointed out questions as industrial design autonomy and updating by a technical and cultural approach.

"During the 1970s, 2<sup>nd</sup> National Development Plan (1974-1979) implemented huge infrastructural plans, mostly into energy (electric and nuclear), transportation and metallurgy. For the first-time industrial design was mentioned as part of a government program. The Ministério da Indústria e Comércio included Industrial design, based on Carl Aubock's report, an Austrian architect who visited several Brazilian states. A network of technological centers was created, as Instituto de Pesquisas Tecnológicas de São Paulo (IPT) and Instituto Nacional de Tecnologia (INT), in Rio de Janeiro. (...) The military administration implemented what many authors call 'authoritarian modernization' of the country. To do so, it has invested in science-technology fields aiming the generation of nuclear energy and preparing the country in terms of industrial infrastructure. (...) Due to that development policy design was part of the strategical plans."

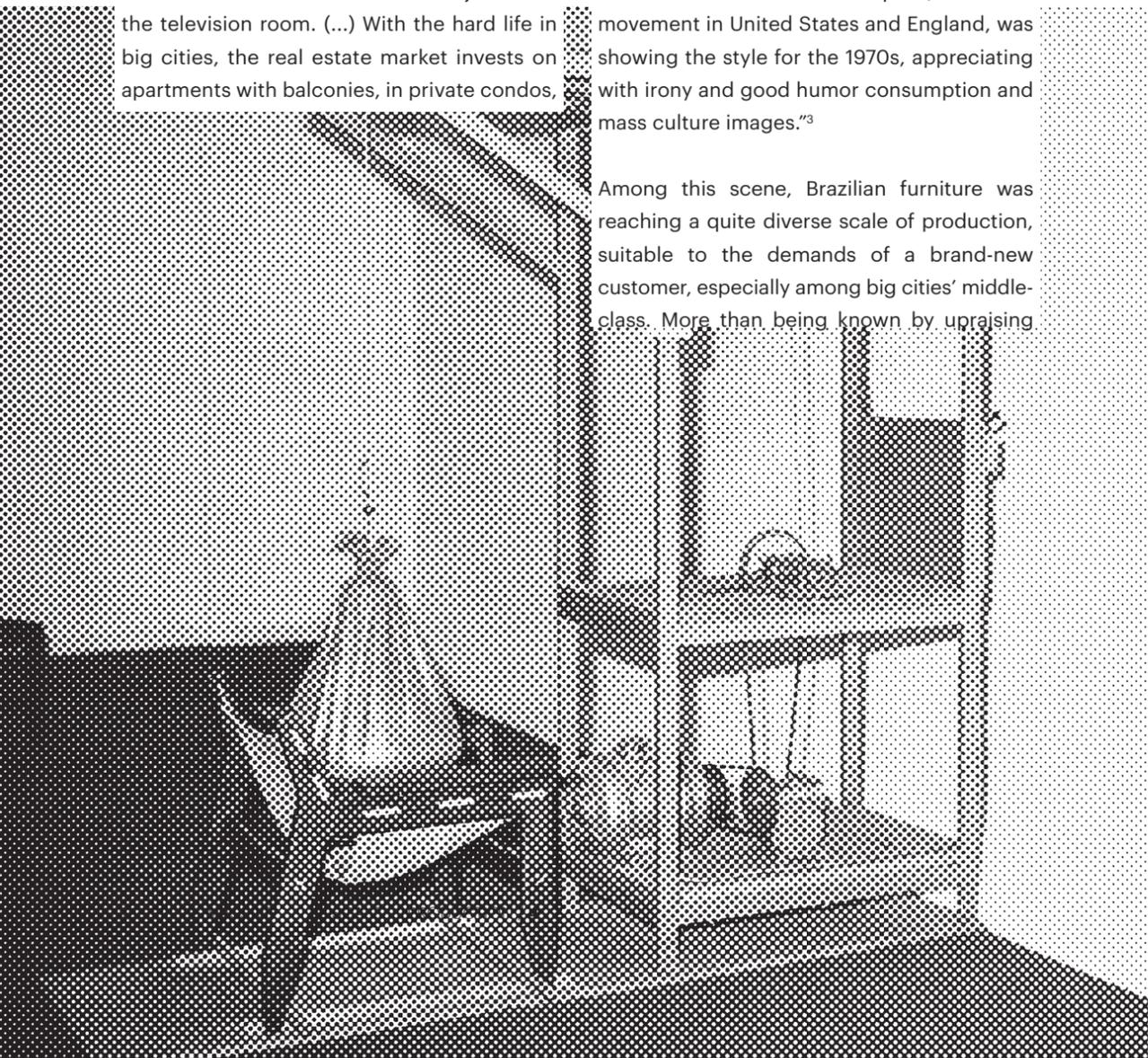


At the same time, a new world consciousness was being generated with the first views towards counter culture, environment and 3<sup>rd</sup> World countries' political autonomy. Ecology, social responsibility and sustainable development were becoming concepts in the 'global village', leaving the theory field and reaching the intimacy of the families. It was television entering domestic life, demanding a new spatial organization of the house, with clear changes on furniture. "A great variety of specific couches and armchairs for the comfort in front of the TV set takes place, until the creation of an entire room just for it: the television room. (...) With the hard life in big cities, the real estate market invests on apartments with balconies, in private condos,

with lots of green and total security, lots of parking spots, complicated layouts and a profusion of bathrooms. (...) There were also the times of flat services and plastic-made domestic devices. The materials also start to change: acrylic, chrome, foams, fiberglass, laminated plastic... Among the woods, peanut, angico, mastic, jacaranda, cedar, cherry, ipe, mahogany, ivorywood, pikia, reseda and earpod tree. Into lightning, lamps and luminaires were produced in industrial scale. On the walls, paintings made with wide palettes. And on the floor, carpet, rubber, tiles and laminated wood. Pop art, the 1960s movement in United States and England, was showing the style for the 1970s, appreciating with irony and good humor consumption and mass culture images."<sup>3</sup>

Among this scene, Brazilian furniture was reaching a quite diverse scale of production, suitable to the demands of a brand-new customer, especially among big cities' middle-class. More than being known by upraising

Test machine, on the Oca. Photo: FVC courtesy.



Poltrona Beg, by Sergio Rodrigues.

According to Sávio Visconti, a carioca consultant, author of "Parts and components", a relevant study for his production and design classes, that was an outstanding period in terms of creation versus production: "São Paulo had more serial production industries than Rio de Janeiro, where the furniture production focus was more oriented to industrial design. In Rio the architects' great creativity has prevailed".

In fact, author furniture market in Rio de Janeiro was quite representative by then, and in general being developed by designers, following handcraft production initiatives, as in São Paulo.

Like Sergio Rodrigues, who has already ended up his experience at Oca, but started making a huge production at his own atelier, mostly interior designing jobs for homes, offices and hotels. "He has also designed furniture series, but it was hard to find somebody willing to produce them by then, the end of the 1970s, start of the 80s. Compliments were easy to receive, but the hard job was getting production, which was expensive and practically handcrafted. For many entrepreneurs, the fact of being design furniture wasn't appealing, because design wasn't a recognized value by then", remembers Vera Beatriz, telling that Sergio's furniture production was guaranteed then by woodworkers Joaquim Milhazes and Romualdo Falcão. "The best in Rio", according to her.

In 1978, Sergio has designed series *Tajá*, incoumarou wood, for outdoor areas, with armchair, chairs, center and side tables; armchair *Julia*, in solid wood, fully detachable, in 1980; in 1983, *Daav* chair in steel, wood and leather; another success was 1985 *Leve Cuiabá* armchair, structured in solid hardwood,

production of so called 'author furniture', 1970 and 80 decades were strongly defined by, both in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, by production of popular furniture, so called 'mass furniture'. It's worth remembering that relevant centers of the activity started up then, as commercial center on Rua Teodoro Sampaio, in São Paulo, and hundreds of short and medium sized industries that settled down in Baixada Fluminense, particularly in Duque de Caxias.

About that period, Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos<sup>4</sup> resumes: "In the 70s and 80s, modern furniture has achieved a massive scale production. Furniture market has shown a great range of options, both quality and quantitatively specialized. The production was diversified, showing several branches: author furniture, signed, with its own clients and market points; mass furniture, that has packed the popular consumption market, with no design concerns; retro furniture, a certain revival of furniture from the past, when both originals and copies coexist in antique shops and waste furniture stores in general".

**“A FEW DESIGNERS HAD SUCH AN EXTENDED CREATIVE LIFE”<sup>7</sup>**

There were a lot of national and international awards, countless exhibitions, among them the first individual abroad, in New York, at 25<sup>th</sup> Century, an art gallery in Tribeca. It was 2004 and Sergio was 78 years old by then. In 2015, a year after his death, fifteen of his classic pieces were shown at the exhibition *Sergio Rodrigues Tribute*, running during Milan Furniture Fair, in April and May, thanks to Lin Brasil, Gisèle Pereira Schwarts burd’s company,

from Curitiba, licensed to make and distribute his most classic pieces. The reedition rights of the others, from the many of his furniture legacy, are in charge of Atelier Fernando Mendes. A contemporary designer who values and practices traditional woodwork techniques in his own author’s work, Mendes has worked seven years at Sergio Rodrigues’ atelier and nowadays he produces the master’s furniture with high precision. With deep admiration, he states with no doubt: “A few designers had such an extended creative life as Sergio Rodrigues.”<sup>7</sup>

designed for hotels and casual interiors; in the 1990s *Chico* chair, in jennywood and squared Brazilian walnut, and *Bianca* chest, rebounded in 2005; among other creations, Sergio designed in 2001 *Diz* armchair, in Colombian mahogany, winning 1<sup>st</sup> prize in furniture category in 2006, at 20<sup>th</sup> edition of Museu da Casa Brasileira’s Design Award, in São Paulo.

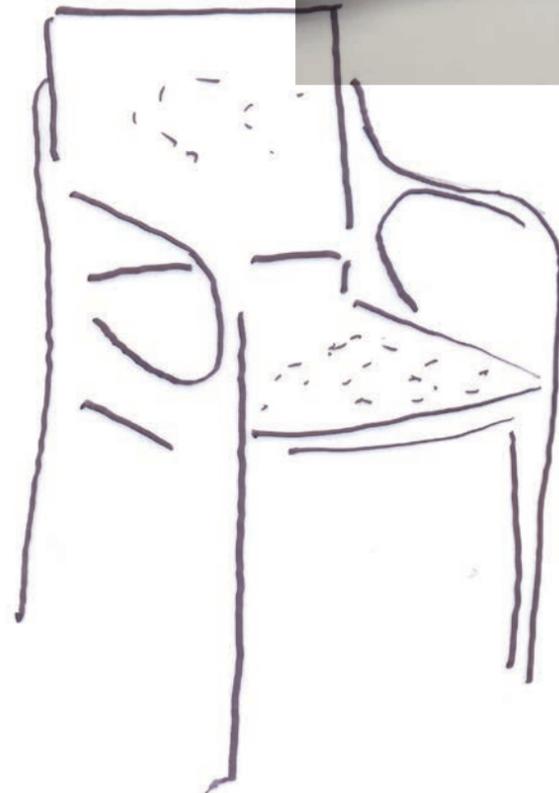
And this brief work review<sup>6</sup> of the carioca architect and designer couldn’t miss the fact that since 1974 *Mole* armchair is part of the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) collection.

Among so many gentlemen brave and talented in woodworking – main characters of this real story of furniture in Rio de Janeiro –, comes, at last, a female figure: carioca architect Aida Boal (1930-2016), whom since the 1960s performs his author’s work in furniture with passion and extreme sophistication. Her first design work, however, is not registered in furniture history, but at Maracanã Stadium’s side ward iron gates, for which she created symbolic *discobolus* silhouettes. “It was my first job, when still a graduate student at

Faculdade Nacional de Arquitetura, in 1948”, told Aida.

She spoke about her wood skills, since the beginning of the 1960s, when her father gave her an electric saw. “Thrilled by the gift, I decided to design and produce myself all Itaipava’s house furniture, being built by then. I set a small workshop with three workers, taught them how to read the plans and was there, handcraft way, where I produced my first pieces in jacaranda, mahogany and yellow peroba. We soon started to produce their furniture for family and friends. And I keep doing that since then. But always in a small scale, even during good times, at least fifteen years, when I started supplying Sérgio Serzedelo’s *Loja UM*, at São Conrado Fashion Mall. My inspirations? Well, no doubt simple forms, which I learned to admire at Tenreiro and Sergio Rodrigues’ work! Lightness and comfort has always interested me when designing a piece”, considered the architect and designer.

Aida used to name their creations, almost all of them, with names of friends and family, such



João Carlos Cavalcanti Chair (1989), by Aida Boal: jacaranda and fabric upholstery. Picture: Kitty Paranaguá

Sketch of an unfinished chair. By Aida Boal.

as the pieces *Luciana*, from 1971, and *Angela*, from 2001, both created as a tribute to her daughters.

Another mandatory name among relevant furniture designers in Rio de Janeiro is Ricardo Fasanello (1930 – 1993). Although he wasn’t an architect, and also not from Rio, his creations during the golden years of furniture modernity were certainly important for Brazilian design.

Fasanello was known for designing furniture “with large dimensions, clearly influenced by pop culture and formally and constructively very close to French designer’s Pierre Paulin. From São Paulo and an autodidact designer, by

the end of the 1950s he used to do car design (having constructed some sport cars, by then called *baratinhas*). At the early 1960s he moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he started furniture production, using materials until then unusual, as polyester resin and fiberglass, mixing them up with traditional materials as leather, steel and iron. *Fardos* armchair, in 1968, was the first one, built up by himself at his atelier in Santa Teresa. Consisting of three huge foam rolls with distinct densities each, upholstered in suede and put together by canvas strips, this piece was present on exhibitions in Paris - France, and Berlin - Germany, in 1971.”<sup>9</sup>

In the 1960s has been produced the first units of his most famous works – *Esfera* armchair, in 1968, and *Anel*, in 1969, center table *Arcos* in 1970 and in 1971 the *Gaivota* armchair. Very representative by its sculptural forms, Ricardo Fasanello’s items are still currently being produced in his atelier, nowadays run by his sons.

**THE WARMING UP OF A PROMISING MARKET**

Starting during the period of economic miracle, 1970s decade run sideways to those so called “lead years”. Among so many contradictions and through new behavior patterns that thrilled those years, it was when furniture has definitely become “trendy”. There were enough impulses in consumer society towards significant changes into furniture business: Brazilian major cities kept growing, habitation was getting more and more vertical (as shown at the box about real estate boom), middle class was expanding while wealthier families were improving his sophisticated life and home style.

Among other reasons, worshipping a furniture item or cultivating the aesthetical sense to decorate the house it was no longer a privilege for few, reaching the pages of specialized magazines and also the TV ads, showing the new values promised by mass culture and stressing competition.

Not by chance that *Casa Claudia* magazine was born in 1970. First decoration title by Editora Abril, the title has entered the market disputing readers with *Casa e Jardim* magazine, by

Editora Monumento, edited since 1953 and, until then, the only specialized title available.

“*Casa e Jardim* has laid down into publishing market by perfectly covering the representation of all aspects essentially related to Brazilian living spaces, stablishing, at the same time, the standards for similar magazines. *Casa Claudia* would use that experience and would also achieve a consistent position. Like *Casa e Jardim*, *Casa Claudia* was born as well articulated contemporaneity.”<sup>10</sup>

One of the most famous piece of Ricardo Fasanello: the armchair Anel, 1969. Photo: Archive of the atelier Ricardo Fasanello.



## THE REAL ESTATE BOOM IN RIO DE JANEIRO

As we know, from the mid 1960s until its extinction in 1986, BNH - Banco Nacional da Habitação was the financing organization for most of the popular and non-popular house units in the country. In general, due to financial reforms after the 1964 coup and the institution of credit policies, a major warming-up of high-level shares of real estate market took place, mostly in great capitals. And for about ten years the building sector has benefited all its collateral market (which highly included furniture business), with bank credit endorsement, customers direct credit and subvention to companies.

In Rio de Janeiro, 1970s boom was a fundamental index for furniture industry warm-up, expanding its market: besides supplying stores, new companies created their own stores in order to reach wealthy final customers and also there were opportunities for supplying furniture directly to the building companies.

It's worth to remember this period using a more geographic cropping for the analysis.

“Specially between 1972 and 1976 a remarkable real estate boom took place in South Area, when housing financing protocols suggested by Sistema Financeiro de Habitação (SFH) caused a period of intense habitation production, based in land merge, for higher social layers at the richest sectors of the town.

By then the opening of new spaces and new expansion fronts to land merging money has started, besides credit changes, aiming the real estate expansion. In 1978 there were four new frontiers to land merging money: Suburban Area, North Area, Barra da Tijuca and Jacarepaguá.

In turn, first real estate boom in Barra da Tijuca took place during the late 70s, when land regulations were established for the area, with major land merging and building companies taking control of almost two thirds of local real estate production.”

But the 1980s would bring economic crisis. And Rio de Janeiro was hit in a peculiar way. “To the building sector decline corresponded the real devaluation of the properties, caused by the conflict between wages and installments demanded by financing conditions, specially those SFH ones for middle-class families.

The options for building sector were mostly two: migration of real estate money for another area of the town, north area, historically occupied by lower middle-class and low-class people. And, from 1982 on, construction of apart-hotels or flat-services in knightly areas.”<sup>12</sup>

Those were good times for furniture and decoration business. Even when the 1980s' economic crisis came, which led real estate market to sophistication of house units and the rising of new products as apart-hotels. It was when the shopping malls have boosted up, turning their surrounding areas into true expensive houses' ghettos. All those aspects contributed to stimulate furniture production. And in Rio de Janeiro some remarkable facts have happened in furniture business, including production and trading.

# INTERNATIONAL FAIRS AT BUSINESSMEN'S AGENDA

According to consultant Sávio Visconti, the decades of 1960 and 70 were remarkable to the Rio de Janeiro furniture industry.

“Design was exquisite. The only gap our furniture industry could not achieve was high scale. By then, São Paulo companies were already producing serially, popular items in high scale. But in Rio the focus was mostly industrial design. That’s why Rio de Janeiro was quoted as the city with the best furniture designers in Brazil”.

For 17 years chairman at AFAM, *Brazil Furniture Factories Association*, Visconti was always updated on that subject and, besides working in benefit of the sector at Cacex for taxes relief on machinery purchase, one of its main goals with this sector’s businessmen was to provide opportunities of being in touch with the state of the art into design and industrial technology.

“In order to that, I spent years travelling with groups of businessmen to visit international fairs. Tours started in 1970, at start by my personal effort, after that AFAM went on. But the idea has always been supported, gaining the enthusiasm of the group, directly



Caravan of cariocas entrepreneurs to the Salone del Mobile, in Milan. Photo: SIM-Rio Collection.

benefited by those observation experiences.

A very representative case of that carioca industry’s lack of power has happened in 1977, when SEBRAE-RJ leased an area at Köln Fair, in Germany. At the occasion, Gil Grosman, from *Celina Móveis*, brought there an office chair of its collection. He was contacted by an *Ikea* agent, a powerful Swedish furniture company, who wanted to order 5.000 chairs a month. Just for start.”

“I had to refuse, it wasn’t possible to produce in such scale”, has confirmed Grosman, one of the most constant businessmen into those visits to international fairs, as well as Manuel Leite Magalhães, from *ML*, who reports being specially interested in machinery fairs, as

Hannover in Germany. To him, “those tours have highly benefited the modernization of the companies and have inspired new ideas”.

SEDEIS - Secretaria para o Desenvolvimento Econômico do Governo do Estado do Rio de Janeiro promotes for several years now the exhibition Rio+Design Milan, fully destined to show the production of designers from Rio de Janeiro. The Sistema FIRJAN supports the initiative, because several items, besides those developed by designers from Rio de Janeiro, are also produced by Rio industry, as, for example, *Vimoso*, *ELON - Grupo Show Móveis* and *Pereira Lopes*, among others. “That becomes a showcase for carioca furniture”, tells businessman *Custódio Ribeiro*, from *Vimoso*.

# TRADES THAT MADE HISTORY

Now there are some reports of producers successful after 1970 but there are no longer in business. Their companies, however, make the memory of a kind of furniture activity that, in Rio de Janeiro, had profiles connected to proper brands, with local sales by demand or through their own stores. Those stories express, in general, peculiar advances on the factory floor, already equipped with machinery and beginning to be influenced by the need for innovation in design and manpower training. They tell us about a time that introduced a pattern of customers' personal service, with tailor made solutions according to each customer's special needs, which, in a way, anticipated the work of decorators that established their position into the market by the 1990s.

## CELINA DECORAÇÕES

*Bacana*. That slang would fit like a glove for this brand furniture, "a fever" among Rio de Janeiro's A class, in search of luxuriousness and beauty, but also aware of the value of quality. "Celina's furniture", as they were known, were first produced in the early 1960s and kept bringing innovations that had the attention of editorials and huge ads into the best titles of the sector, until the middle 2000s.

Many of its refined pieces, in jacaranda, were part of the list of suppliers for the modern elegant interiors of the country's new capital. But its pathway started way before reaching Brasília – an uncommon example of family business among the sector, once that was a woman, Celina, who took the great decisions,

whose real name was Zisel Zilberberg (1918–2003). Romanian, she arrived in Brazil still a child and lived in Porto Alegre. Later the family has moved to Rio de Janeiro where, in the 1930s, she met her husband, Israel, son of Polish Jews.

The story is told by Gil Grosman,<sup>15</sup> her son-in-law, who became partner of the company, after having worked for a while for the family in accountancy, invited by one of Celina's sons, his colleague in Law School.

"It was in 1966 that I became partner to my two brothers-in-law, Munis and Alexandre. But the company existed then for a long time, since 1937, when two upholsterers joined to open a workshop of upholstery production and renovation called *Tapeçaria São Jorge*. They were Israel Zilberberg and Sejano dos Santos. In 1940, the company name became *Boa Vista*. When Israel died, in 1950, things changed. His widow Celina took over the business, transformed the firm in *Celina Decorações Ltda.* and expanded production of *estofaria* in the neighborhood of Tijuca, starting to manufacture auxiliary tables to compose with sofas and armchairs manufactured. This expansion was born the

The brand Celina Decorações dictating fashion in the 1970s in the specialized magazines. Photo: reproduction of the September edition of Casa & Jardim.



first company store, which shared space with the workshop at Rua Haddock Lobo.”

The market was propitious and there was a straight request for refined jacaranda furniture (wood coming from Espírito Santo and Bahia), produced for wealthy customers. That was the motto for Celina starting to produce furniture in small series, already installed at a bigger shed in Pilares, with Grosman in charge of the production.

“We had two sewers and six upholsterers, besides woodwork crew, working even with structure-making machines. We verticalized production a lot, everything was produced inside the factory. In 1971 we hired an Italian manager, Vincenzo Molinaro. Woodworker, he was a good drawer and has contributed for several years for Celina’s production. There was also an Amazonian woodworker working with him, Benedito Régis, who started as an assembler. Bené came to us already a professional. When Vincenzo left, he took charge of the production. He had a good eye, sensibility, and he could explore everything an equipment could achieve, had an outstanding skill on economy and better use of materials, which was important then, when there was no software to cut the boards. He used to sketch and cut it all without any waste...”

Among so many memories of the 1970s, comes the first international hotel fully decorated by the company, and some building companies that became customers when, inside the real estate city boom, ‘visit the decorated apartment’ has become a trend. Under the company name *Celina Indústria e Comércio do Mobiliário Ltda.*, the sale points expanded.

The brand reached the South Area, first in Copacabana then in Ipanema, at the address where once was located Joaquim Tenreiro’s store. There was also one store in São Paulo and trade stores in some other capitals.

It was also in those days when, on a July 24<sup>th</sup>, Celina’s birthday, that the company was moved to a proper building – a 10,000 sqm covered shed in Inhaúma where the machines imported from Belgium, Germany and Italy were set up.

“Our range of furniture was great, I remember, we had 28 models of sofas and did in any size; and dozens of other models of tables... In addition, the line of our designers was evolving. Instead of designing a mobile coldly, the plants and sketches began to accumulate decorative details: one buffet, but with a candlestick on it, a carpet composing room furniture etc. This was a success, customers now want not only furniture but everything else they saw in the drawings.”

And for 10 years, until the middle 1980s, the company mixed its production creating a new brand, *Casaredo*, destined to supply *Celina*’s customers’ sons and daughters. Younger, less expensive, light wood furniture, using labor, materials and components from Paraná. And assembled at Celina’s workshop.

“Jacaranda started to become rare, it was very expensive, and we were already using white laurum, which also became rare, so we started using jennywood. But *Casaredo* brand used ivory wood. Many of our clients started buying *Casaredo* for their second or third house, by the beach or the hills.”

Zisel Zilberberg (1918–2003): Mrs. Celina. Picture: Family Archive.

Living room set with furniture and accessories from Celina Decorações. Announcement of the 1980s, Casa Cláudia magazine.



Between market’s ups and downs, this was one of the first brands to enter huge Casashopping mall, opened in 1984, where the store remained until 2012. It crossed the 1990s still on top, when from 1982 to 1995, Grosman has chaired SIM Rio. But in 2013, searching a solution for financial issues from family society, *Celina Indústria e Comércio do Mobiliário Ltda.* has ceased its activities. Despite all troubles, Gil Grosman, now a 76 years old senior, realizes that it was all worthwhile: “I lived all these prolific years of my life in a very intense and dedicated way”.

Casaredo logo, brand created to reach the young audience. Photo: Reproduction.

Casaredo children’s bedroom furniture: featured on the cover of magazine by Jornal do Brasil, issue 369, dated May 1983.



## IMI

lhéus Furniture Industry. Although known by few, that's what *IMI*, a brand related to luxurious furniture in Rio de Janeiro, stands for. A story connected to the expertise of a carioca entrepreneur, Oromar Woods, which has purchased on a public auction in 1984 Georgette Group's company, founded by Italians in Bahia.

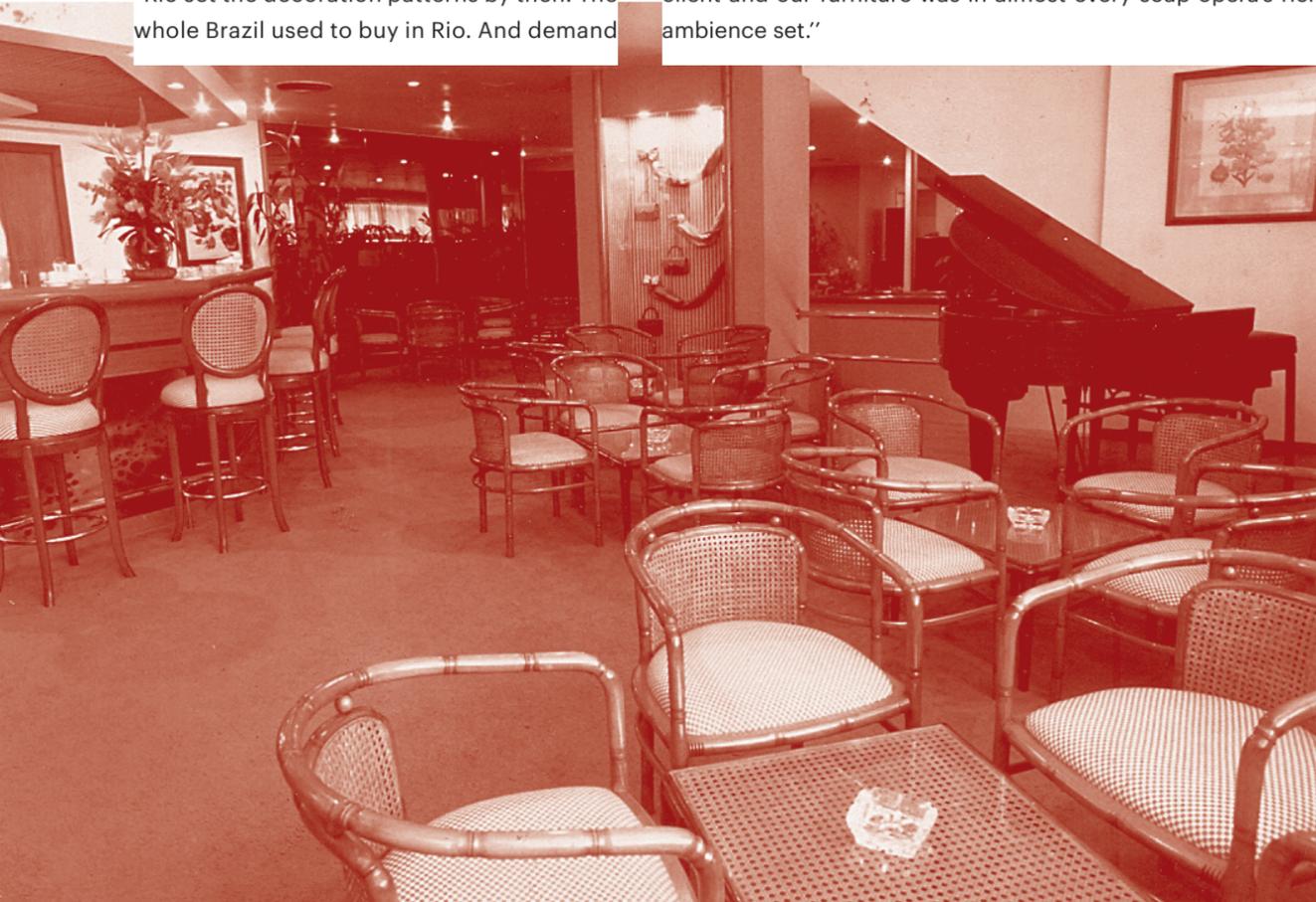
Due to the time required by wood processing and the long distance between Ilhéus and Rio de Janeiro, Oromar preferred, at start, declining sales by order because of the delivery times which would be too large. He kept in Bahia all solid wood production and used long trucks for transporting the pre-assembled structures to Rio. The company's finishing unit was moved to Rio, where the paint and foam suppliers were settled. The strategy was successful.

"Rio set the decoration patterns by then. The whole Brazil used to buy in Rio. And demand

for refined furniture was huge. Every item produced was sold. *IMI* collections brought back classic wood carved furniture trend. But as the company had started producing for the US market, there was also a young, informal collection, with bamboo-like wood. That was a huge success. We used to sell 400 chairs a month".

In no time Oromar had his own store chain: two of them in Rio, in Ipanema and Barra da Tijuca, one in São Paulo and another one in Belo Horizonte, and trade stores in some other capitals. The items were designed by himself, inspired by his regular visits to international fairs. He tells he would ever return plenty of ideas, but always would make adjustments, letting the design appear spontaneously.

"When I'd realize I'd be creating ten, twelve different backrests for a chair. At the early 90s, *IMI* supplied also the hotel sector. At the summit *IMI* had 480 employees. The brand was constantly on major decoration magazines' ads. It was the first company from luxury furniture sector to advertise prices in the ad. First of those ads was published inside *Jornal do Brasil's Revista de Domingo*. We had plenty of image show, Globo TV was our client and our furniture was in almost every soap opera's rich ambience set."



The components of one of the chair models of Imi: imitation bamboo. Photo courtesy.

Oromar, now 65 years old, likes to remember *IMI*'s achievements, company from which he's no longer related since 2010, and is very proud of knowing that in many pleasant places in Rio de Janeiro, among restaurants and hotels, *IMI*'s furniture still shines. As at the Copacabana Palace's pergola.

## SÍNTESE

Oromar Woods' enterprise history, however, was not restricted to *IMI* into carioca set. In the 1970s, when acrylic was a decoration trend, he was already using the material in a small industry, Sintesi, on Brazil's central region.

"I made a transparent bathroom sink top, ordered by Titá Burlamaqui, a top decorator then. But I left acrylic and started producing luxury items, with distinguished finishings.

Around the 1980s it was trendy materials like glass, mirrored furniture, and then aged mirror. Demand has increased, production has increased, so I started making exclusive furniture, with no competition by then, with some construction secrets. Glass finishing, for example, was done by numbered pieces, fitting each one in its specific place over the structure of the piece. This job demanded a little equipment, but a lot of handwork, and everything was done inside the plant, putting together woodwork, metallurgy, glazing, painting, upholstery. The biggest hit was a piece finished in 'turtled bisoté crystal'.<sup>13</sup>

This technique called the attention of Fredy Dodeles,<sup>17</sup> a craftsman that used to work with mirrors at the hippie fair in Ipanema. He went to *Spazio*, Oromar's store in Copacabana, in order to offer his products and got inspired

by their luxury furniture, specially that glass finishing, which he started to research. "I developed a color technique on reacted crystal, brown, blue... It was a huge success, even Roberto Carlos bought a lapis-lazuli table", told Dodeles, who run a plant in Bonsucesso and a store called *Studio Design*. But the 'coming and going' of business led him to work at *Sintesi*.

In 1983, due to personal affairs, Oromar put the same name of the industry – *Sintesi* – on a store supplied by the production of his industry. But not a store located in a jet-set address in Rio de Janeiro, but on Rodovia Rio-Petrópolis,

where the woodwork companies were. Dodeles reports: "He was the first businessman to believe in that region in Duque de Caxias. After *Sintesi*, Rio-Petrópolis started to change, as it got there as a pioneer at luxury furniture sector. It used to sell only living room and dining room furniture sets".

"Those who stopped by to buy were the clients going uphill through Serra Fluminense to take a rest or to make a trip. So, I soon started opening the store also on weekends. It has worked. We had 300 employees at *Sintesi*, a commerce landmark at Rio-Petrópolis", proudly says Oromar Woods.

Tables by Sintesi.  
Photo: reproduction of catalog.



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Modern Closet advertisement.  
Photo: Alex Cruz.

### MODERN CLOSET

In the 1980s, tailor made furniture began to grow in Rio de Janeiro, when *Modern Closet* went into business, a planned kitchens' pioneer brand in town, which soon expanded its activities including bedrooms and bathrooms cabinets. Entering kitchens sector, however, was an unplanned way at Joaquim Gomes' professional path, a woodwork autodidact who had never made a single cabinet before. A commission ordered by *Sears Roebuck*, an American group opening the major department store era in town, would change his story.

Gomes,<sup>18</sup> a Portuguese man from Póvoa de Varzim, is in Brazil since he was 14 years old. At first working in a fabric store, then building construction, then learned installing doors, windows and plinths. He tells how was the sudden change that has made him to get an expert in modular furniture.

"Until then my experience with wood was in

carpentry. My cousin and I started *Colocadora de Esquadrias Novo Rio*, which was the biggest company into assembling window frames, with 100 employees! We did the woodwork in many buildings in Parque Guinle constructed those years. With that skill, I opened a frames and plinths industry, in Bonsucesso. We assembled our own production, then started doing commercial assembling too. Among major clients we had Sears that was building its store at the first mall in town, Méier Shopping, on Rua Dias da Cruz. I remember very well, we had a tight schedule, we were young and would work day and night to deliver on schedule. As Sears staff liked our job they asked me to assume a high-quality kitchen assembling. I had no experience in cabinetry nor kitchen furniture, spent a week in São Paulo, studying dimensions, drawings, and that was the start of *Lady Sears Kitchen Collection*, a success. Even Renato Aragão, which was already a famous artist, has bought a kitchen then. After that,

Sears would have two kitchen collections, a more economic one, coming from São Paulo and *Lady Sears*, made here. A letter from Sears in Chicago recommended to Rio branch that I should assume all plans I could handle. So, I worked a lot for them, always drawing what they ordered, and then for *Mesbla*. When Sears shut down, I started *Modern Closet*, with the first store on Rua Uruguai.”

Early 1990s *carioca* customer was seeking as never before optimize space into apartments that were no longer as wide as they used to be. Customized cabinets were becoming tendency, with colors and materials according to the places. All these aspects have contributed to increase the production of chipboard kitchen sets and cabinets, all finished in plastic laminate with hardware components coming from Paraná, into a 1500 sqm shed in Inhaúma. “Our furniture was made to last 20 years”, remarks Joaquim Gomes, telling the assembling crew was trained by him in person.

“Besides the qualified equipment, we had architects designing plans and a great production staff. Coming from practice, I knew how to teach them. And those were times when you could find better workforce, workers used to have a better instruction then.”

His second showroom was soon opened in Barra da Tijuca, but *Modern Closet* was closed in 2005. Many of its former employees are still in business, with their own workshops and even making doors and windows, based on what they’ve learned with Joaquim Gomes, who is proud of having dedicated 64 years of his life to woodwork practice and skill.

Chairman of SIM Rio, Sindicato das Indústrias de Móveis do Rio de Janeiro, since 1998, this 78 years old senior is an enthusiast on design over industry. “On top of our production to Sears nobody would talk about design. We’d draw the cabinets ourselves, straight from our minds and sketching by hand, in a piece of paper, to satisfy the client’s needs. He’d usually agree with that, and it was done. Nowadays it couldn’t be that way. Design makes the difference in business, it’s a recognized value into contemporary furniture”, assures him.

#### **BEGMU**

*Begmu* was a typical mid-sized family company, very important in Duque de Caxias area, which in the 1970s was a local hub of furniture industries that supplied the commercial center on Rua Honório in Cachambi. Born in 1987 with only three employees on a 140 sqm humble plan and closed its doors in 2012, having reached 35 employees in the shed once expanded in order to follow the production demand.

“It became a company because of inspection obligation, because I already produced furniture in our backyard, associated to my brother. But the customers increased a lot and I had to agree. I repeat until now: I was happy and no aware of that”, says owner of *Begmu*, Edson Grippa,<sup>19</sup> 65 years old, whom, with his wife Glória, a interior designer, has faced his time as a furniture businessman with many difficulties and lots of courage.

“I always regret having left my backyard workshop. With the company my life became a life of struggle, employees’ rights, banks

refusing lending little money, demand of equipment, which many I’d bought in scrap yards and renovate...With family, three kids, I lost my peace. My pleasure was making furniture, I’ve got woodwork in my blood.”

Son of Acarapina (“country people that collected wood in the forest and would be able to build up an entire house, walls, doors, windows, floors, roofs, everything...”), Edson came from the countryside with 13 years old. He has worked as a mechanic, electrician, construction worker, shoemaker and woodworker. After serving the army, started over working with wood and opened *Marcenaria Gel*, which went bankrupt. It was when he came back to backyard production in Caxias: qualified furniture, in solid wood, country style, very appreciated. By order, he would make living room, bedroom and recreation area sets, bed headboards, bathroom cabinets, even window frames and floors. He’d design everything by himself, usually in wood board or paper.

By then, Edson remembers very well, “the best furniture was *Gelli’s*, that was produced in chipboard. And customers liked that, because it was economic and modern. That was a point to convince the client over quality”, tells him, who previously used hardwood, before restrictions over jacaranda, cherrywood and mahogany.

“In 1988, I started slowly joining the administration of the company. Edson would work daytime and by night he’d meet clients to get new orders. I started following him in the meetings and started learning a bit. I didn’t like seeing my husband getting to the client’s

house by service entry, as he used to do. As I insisted, he started to use main door”

Glória, who was also a teacher, can remember quite well those busy days: besides teaching, she ‘d mind the company, the growing kids, home affairs, but she kept making changes at *Begmu*. Now she attended clients’ meetings alone, she’d take the measuring, make layouts and perspectives. “Profile had changed and Edson kept just producing furniture”, she tells, remembering that, in the middle of the 1990s, already set into an enlarged plant, the teenage kids started to help out, each one according to his skills. “But every one of them started as office-boys and swept the plant’s floor.”

By the turn of the century, however, company was losing its punch. Grippa says that, besides the lack of state subsidies, the market started demanding MDF boards, which would ask another effort over equipment and technology. “It wasn’t easy to convince the client that you’d not make that solid wood or plywood furniture, and that it would perform well. Many wanted solid wood items, because they were used to them. And we started to fade, we haven’t kept the pace of the market which was asking not just new materials, but automation”, confesses Edson Grippa, “a dreamer”, according to his wife.

Nowadays, Edson keeps a workshop at his house’s basement, equipped with all the old machinery coming from the factory. He now produces furniture as a hobby or by order, for eventual freelance commissions performed by Glória.

## INTERCASA

A pioneer in baby and kids furniture in Rio de Janeiro, *Intercasa*, of which the original name was *Camawe Marcenaria e Carpintaria Ltda.*, was founded in 1958 by carpentry immigrants Carvalho, Marques and Wendorff. Located in São Cristóvão, up to 1980, *Camawe* produced handcrafted made-to-order furniture, built-in cabinets and closets, windows, doors and frames.

In that year, however, as second-generation family members and architects entered the firm, it was extensively restructured. The factory was expanded and equipped with automatic machinery, while the business was repositioned in order to keep pace with a new industrial concept focused on the mass production of furniture exclusively designed, created and manufactured to grow with the child.

The initiative arose from a personal necessity, for when architects Marino and Manuela Côrte-Real were furnishing their children's bedrooms, they noted that this market niche was nearly vacant in Rio de Janeiro. With experience in furniture, having worked at *Fatima Arquitetura e Interiores*, a traditional Rio firm during the 1960s and 1970s, and with the support of *Camawe*, the family woodworking company, they launched *Transformoveis* - the first line of baby and kids furniture, commercialized with tremendous success - initially under the trade name *Quarto de Criança* and, until recently, *Intercasa*.

The modules and the structural parts, both the solid pieces and the plywood panels, were made of *araucária*, or Paraná pine, and the color was determined by laminate finishing. This first line was considerably revised in 1990 to adapt it to

a new raw material, namely wood panels coated with BP melamine, agglomerate and MDF. At the same time, the two concepts on which the line was based - composability and evolution, in accordance with the growth of the child - were followed strictly.

"In 2014, however, we stopped manufacturing due to barriers to industry such as high freight costs for raw materials and labor problems, among other factors. Unable to compete with factories in the South of Brazil, we therefore decided to commercialize baby and kids furniture made in Santa Catarina according to the same concepts", finalizes Marino Corte-Real, of the *Intercasa*.

## GELLI'S MAGNITUDE AND OFFICE FURNITURE BY ML MAGALHÃES

Run by family's third generation, 1990s Gelli had already started the informatization of its modern industrial plant, in Bingen, having its sales distributed in three fronts: *Gelli Magazine* in Petrópolis, with home appliances; *Gelli Indústria de Móveis S.A.*, retailer of the whole collection, specially renowned modular line; and *Casa Gelli Móveis S.A.*, with 2,500 furniture items on sale, located at 12,025 at Avenida Brasil, the busiest address of the brand in Rio de Janeiro. Known as *Super Gelli*, it was located in a huge 10,000 sqm shed, a 84 m long façade and a generous 1,800 sqm exhibition area.

In 1989, businessman Renato Gelli<sup>20</sup> introduced another bravery into the company's marketing history: group purchase furniture. "With a 3 month fixed credit and unbound charges freeze, customers could afford to furnish the whole house, with lots running twice a month. And pay their debts in fifteen months", told Renato, which



Transformoveis furniture by Quarto de Criança/Intercasa.



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considers a good attempt, despite the results under what was expected from customers. "People weren't used to the concept."

Even before that, in 1983, Renato innovated buying *Habitat/Tubeline* stores. To him, that purchase was a fact that has established for *Gelli* an image of young modern furniture with innovative design.

Lots of market circumstances forced *Gelli's* production line and all its chain stores to shut down activities in 2003.

In turn, the 1970s were also years of innovation for *ML Magalhães*, that has started factory automatization and production office

Office furniture: advertisement in the newspaper O Globo, October 1972. Photo: reproduction.

## Meu avô já dizia

Só entra lá em casa quem eu conheço. Minha família conhece a Gelli a mais de 100 anos. Quando eu penso em armário modular, eu penso Gelli. O projeto é simples e bem bolado. Tem equipes experientes para lhe orientar durante o projeto, e montagem especializada..



Com toda esta vantagem, ela ainda tem sempre uma maneira de ajustar o preço ao seu bolso.

**Gelli**  
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Gelli's cabinet in the company's advertising language in the 1990s. Photo: Reproduction.

furniture. Their first office line, Design 80, was a landmark, making the company the sales leader in Rio de Janeiro. Aside to Edifício Central store (a famous site in town), ML had trade stores in São Paulo and Brasília. But the customers were all around the country.

By then, in addition to MAM and the Soldiers Monument furniture, among others, ML has designed exclusive collections for more than 50 agencies of Guanabara State Bank.

In 1986, when competition with office furniture made in São Paulo was intense, Manuel Leite Magalhães hired Freddy Van Camps chief designer of the company. "I needed somebody renowned to pump ML up. First office line of chairs and sofas was a total success, *Futura*, developed by *Van Camp Design*. Freddy worked at ML for 14 years. He redesigned some items and the company's identity and has won, among others, in 1997, CNI Gestão do Design Prize", tells Magalhães.<sup>21</sup>

In 1990, the factory in Olaria had more than 200 workers, where the main materials were chipboard and lapachin and jennywood veneers. Metal parts were produced at *ML Magalhães'* own metal workshop. "But when economic crisis has hit furniture business in 2002, added to huge growing of São Paulo and South Region companies, and family troubles over the company's administration, we decided to close *ML Magalhães*. What I can tell is that I suffered a lot doing that", registers Manuel Leite Magalhães in a memorable talk at his apartment in Barra da Tijuca.

# TALKING ABOUT DESIGN: FREDDY VAN CAMP'S EXPERIENCE

In the 1970s, in Rio de Janeiro, Freddy Van Camp has joined the Industrial Design Institute design crew of the Museu de Arte Moderna (IDI-MAM) and was design manager at Oca, where he developed office mobile sets, redesigned the visual identity of the company and designed display systems and shops. *Van Camp Design* launched his own design office in 1980, by which already provided services to several companies, including in Rio, *M.L. Magalhães*, office furniture, where he worked for 14 years.

Belgian, born in Antwerp in 1946, Van Camp came to Brazil with one year old. He graduated in Industrial Design at ESDI in 1968 and completed his studies in the United States and Germany. His professional career includes periods in Brazilian companies of great significance for the establishment of a design internal culture.

Professor of ESDI/UERJ since 1974, school of which he was director for two periods, 1992-1996 and 2000-2004, he also was professor at UNICAMP – Universidade de Campinas in São Paulo State, from 1984 to 1992. Until the year of 2013 returned to live in Rio de Janeiro. Always dedicated to product design, interior, packaging, displays, signage and systems, and currently coordinates the Regional UERJ

campus in Petrópolis, where he lives nowadays. It was the curator of the Brazilian Design Biennial 2015, held in Florianópolis - SC, between May 15 and July 12 of 2015.

The following interview is the result of several conversations between Freddy Van Camp and the author, between meetings at the headquarters of Sistema FIRJAN and designer office in Petrópolis.

#### **How do you see Brazilian design market now?**

It's a growing market, but I always believe that it could grow even more, especially because we have a strong inner market. With the new middle-class, purchase power creates new demands and puts economy to run. Brazil always has innovative products. Brazilian designers, however, are still slightly used by industry.

#### **What's in the context of industry, the role of the designer?**

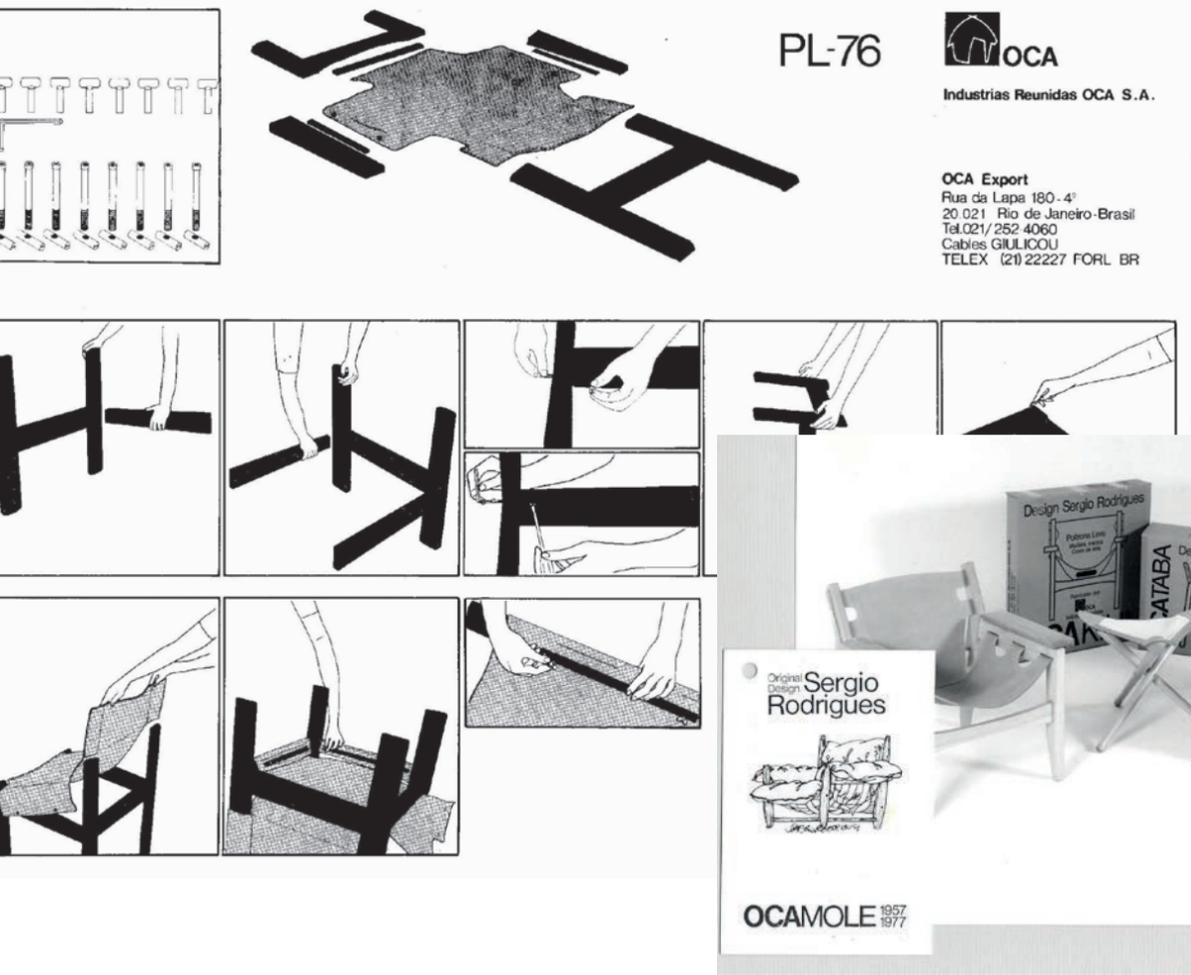
It's the professional who's in charge of minding the company, choosing what's better for it, but the one that will set a new opportunity in the market. This way, little by little, businessmen keep learning what design has to offer to everyday company subjects.

Designer Freddy  
Van Camp.  
Foto: divulgação.



Blue chairs, Delta line by ML.  
Photo: Eider Kosloski.





Design actions at Oca in the work of Freddy Van Camp: assembly instructions for products, labels and packaging for the internal and external market. Photos: collection of Freddy Van Camp.

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**And what about carioca industry in this scenery?**  
 Well, Rio de Janeiro industry's history is very peculiar. It's an industry that was once the third power in Brazil, and now it's so much lower now, maybe in 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> position. And it was a pioneer according to design. By the time of Oca, for example, all refined furniture came from Rio de Janeiro. When Brasília was built, it was furnished by Rio de Janeiro. Sergio Rodrigues, by the way, expanded his business due to that demand. And Oca also had showrooms in São Paulo, Belo Horizonte and Brasília. It's all about seeing the value of design over the whole process, including sales, not only related to design the object

itself. I had a rich experience at Oca, 4 years as an employee and 4 years as a consultant. The nice part it was to be able to do everything. I've designed exporting labels, artists' exhibition posters. There was a great responsiveness to creative possibilities. But in general, I think the Rio industry has been losing strength since the 1960s.

**What do you relate this decline for?**  
 See, it's an industry born being also a sales company of its own products. Each company has its own stores and would sell only through them. That for a long time. Nowadays the scenery has changed and industry hasn't joined that. That's because industry has grown in large scale in Rio de Janeiro has always produced for regional market. And it seems that still keeps that way.

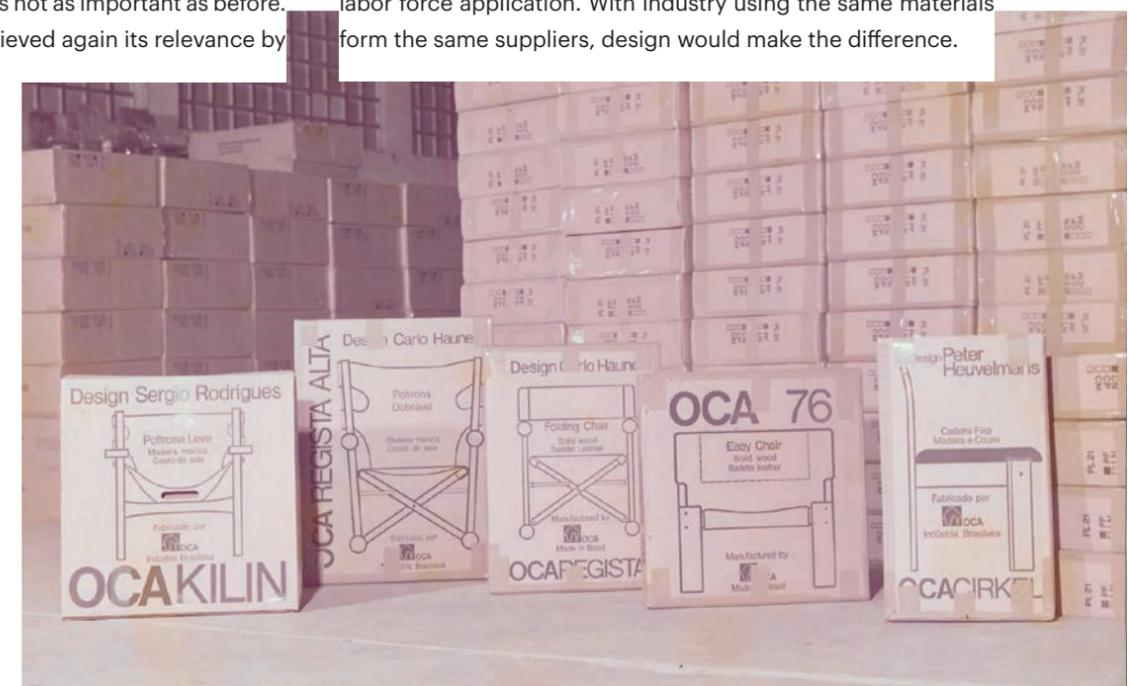


**Is labor force, nowadays considered a troubled issue, a barrier to industry development?**

The labor problem is messing furniture industry and woodworking. That's not possible anymore. Industry needs large scale. You can't work with just one material, wood and its sub products. Nowadays you deal with metal, plastic, alternative materials, upholstery, cardboard etc. So, woodworking is not as important as before. Although it has achieved again its relevance by

young designers, producing with certified reforestation wood. After the 1980s, with the decline of hardwood utilization due to environmental issues, much has changed in company's procedures, by the way many companies, mostly medium-sized ones, haven't followed these changes. In turn, some companies are also using reforestation wood. In this context, labor force formation hasn't properly followed the tendency of innovative materials and new technologies. Electronics, digital production etc. these aspects are still to be explored, integrated to professional formation, which at the end affects production and product quality.

**How did ESDI contributed (or didn't) to change this situation?**  
 As the first graduation course of industrial design in the country, ESDI has influenced all the other ones. But it had a very limited influence over furniture industry. And in Rio few companies have hired professional designers, due to the down size of the activity, which I call deindustrialization. Rio de Janeiro still is, however, a great opinion leader and source of great names in design. Bernardo Senna, Guto Índio da Costa, Sérgio Rodrigues, Zanine and his son Zanini de Zanine, among others. The fact is that recent industry still hasn't seen the lure of design. They could innovate. But they still see design as cost not as investment. Maybe the economic crisis could change this situation: design being used to increase productivity, better use of resources, labor force application. With industry using the same materials form the same suppliers, design would make the difference.



# 5

Manual plane made by hand.  
Photo: Crochet Productions.



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**“Making furniture is not simply making furniture. It’s a universe of diverse talents – administration, design, relationship with the client, definition of best sales channel...”**

**Edson Elias, woodworker**

Special thanks to the businessmen that were ready to give, in person, their testimonies about their companies’ background, all of them reputed to be very relevant into contemporary furniture business in Rio de Janeiro city and state. Very friendly conversations based in sensitive memories and precious to the narrative of this history.

# CASES

## BUSINESSMEN’S WORDS

## “When I managed setting up the full workshop of my dreams, that was when 1990s turning point announced at Eco 92 arrived. Then we began a new era on furniture industry.”

“*Deplan* comes from *Teixeira Móveis*, my father Emilio’s workshop, that started as a small services and repairs store on Visconde de Pirajá Street, which served clients in South Area, Ipanema, Leblon and Copacabana. That was in 1954 or 55. It was a small sized shop, only for tailor made home furniture. It had only two workers.

In 1962, my father sold the workshop for a nephew, bought a truck and became a truck driver. When 1964 coup started, he was in the North East Region. It took him two months to come from Natal to Rio de Janeiro. Saying that he would never drive again, he came back to the workshop. But in 1979, due to an illness, he ended up retiring himself. My brother and I then took charge of the company and had hard times, many debts to pay and at the same time there was demand, the company needed to grow. But the workshop was too small, and the address inside a condo would make things more difficult, because noise and dust bothered the neighbors. We then moved from Ipanema to a shed in São João de Meriti. It was 1980 and I and my brother decided to start from scratch. That was when founded Marcenaria Herlo’s.

Five years later, when my father passed away, my brother decided to end up our

society. I founded, then *Deplan*, in 1988, with the purpose of, from the start, aiming commercial clients. We started with eight employees, working in a 10 x 10 m space, doing mostly woodwork for supermarkets – shelves, exhibitors, management offices... Only later, introducing steel into production, woodwork has decreased.

My instruction is in Mechanics. I used to be a toolmaker. Things like measurement and precision have always been very familiar to me. And dealing with labors at *Deplan*, we have always tried to train the employees, shape them to our work method. It wasn’t easy most of the time. In general, they’d come to us with certain bad habits. And if they couldn’t fit, then they’d leave. As I see, woodwork is finishing quality. It was based in this concept that we decided to train woodworkers right there in the neighborhood of Agostinho Porto in São João de Meriti. Some of them, when leaving the company, would even become our competition. And nowadays there are half a dozen of little businessmen that have worked as woodworkers at *Deplan*, now running their own businesses.

During the top times, we had 180 employees.

That was when, aside to supermarket woodwork, we have done, for two years, all the window frame restoration at Arquivo Nacional on Praça da República. There were 720 frames with 2.20 by more than 4.00 meters high, very difficult. And they had to be restored with all their original features, because it was a historic building, listed and protected by IPHAN.

Neuza, my wife, who is a psychologist, had already left her clinic and started help in the administrative area. She says: ‘I started in the company in 1994, times of shopping malls’ boom in Rio de Janeiro. Carlos needed to be free to care about production and commerce. You know, in short and medium-sized companies, the owner usually does a lot, and he needed more time to give to assembling, supplies, contact with clients. By then, although the high demand, with so many shops being opened in malls and the arise of supermarkets, woodworking wasn’t properly explored, which’d make *Deplan* to concentrate lots of clients. It was all an amazing learning. Administration, accountancy, everything was new, but a stimulating challenge at the same time. I redesigned the company through many aspects, in its core administration, stock supply, anyway, I increased my view of all this furniture scenery. And it was very nice feeling our clients’ trust. Often a large supermarket spent the demand directly to us without going through architects or engineers. Disruptions were also many, various economic plans, changes in the sector of large shops and supermarkets... We went through all this. But the Collor Plan moment, it may look strange to say, was one of the bests for *Deplan*. At the time, our supply was mainly for supermarkets, one of the few sectors where the Brazilian money spinning.

We did not get into trouble, instead, the customers used to pay in cash.”

“In no time, a wood board would become a relic. After 2005 the rule was MDF boards, pressed wood. And when you talk about hard wood nowadays it’s just that resulting from forest management, bot always, because that’s a recent concept and with no assurance of buying safely.

That woodworker from the start of *Deplan*, working standing up in front of a workbench, no longer exists. Now he works in front of a computer, running production by apps and digital creative tools. This reality, however, it’s still waiting to be incorporated to the workforce regular training and it’s one of the biggest difficulties faced by short and medium-sized companies in the country.

Although having updated to many innovations, I realize that the woodwork glamour was lost after digital and mechanical industrialization. Maybe that’s the reason for me still keeping in factory those traditional woodworking machines... Now our factory has a built area of 2.000 sqm. We have been having to low costs and, as we’re not focused in growing, our crew in 2015 counts still 21 employees. I keep, however, feeling rewarded when I go check the good result of a job done.”



TESTIMONY OF ENTREPRENEUR MAURICIO HERSZENHAUT

**“In the last ten years, the equipment of the industry in general – and the furniture industry followed that – has moved to the digital world, to automation, and that had demand professionals trained over those technologies. Nowadays, at Favo, any client’s request is solved by the crew thanks to a modern Canadian software.”**

“Favo is in business for more than 30 years. It’s a history of family expertise that has started with my grandfather by father, Jaime, a tailor in Poland, who arrived in Brazil in the last century’s 30s, started working in a mattress and upholstery factory owned by a relative. He ended up with his own factory in Méier, where also started working my father Josef and my uncle Jacob. They started up their own business in the early 1950s, when bought proper machinery in São Paulo’s countryside. They founded *Móveis Paraíso*, specialized in upholstery, company that lasted twenty years.

Then my father decided to move to Israel, where my brother and I were raised in a Kibutz. Back to Brazil, he became agent of some southern company, until that in 1979 he became associated to Milinho, from the traditional *Móveis Abolição*, founded in 1943 by a Portuguese family. From this society that was born *Favo*.

And it was born already producing bedroom sets, shelves, bathrooms and kitchens, mostly the same we do today. Only that back then it was all solid wood, even the handles. We used a lot of wood veneers, mahogany, cherry, jennywood, and also chipboard and plywood. It was a huge plant, 3.500 sqm, with regular machinery that could be useful for decades, just updating one or another component.

But now, even the production line might be the same, *Favo* has changed a lot. We perform under a diverse concept, with electronic machinery, controlled by computers, programmed by software even by distance from another country, all Wi-Fi. You

need a specialized mechanic, who could be in Italy or Germany fixing your equipment. Totally different from times ago, when you’d just have to call some mechanic in the neighborhood, change some piece. Nowadays kids of eighteen, twenty years old can deal with any software and electronic device and, in one or two months, they learn to operate a machine that older people sadly wouldn’t be able to.

Our stores came when *Móveis Abolição* became *Favo*, in 1977. And the first ones were in Copacabana, Tijuca and Barra. But then we closed street stores, except in São Paulo, that was kept, and migrated to malls. We had a store at Barra’s Rio Design. Now we have Leblon’s Rio Design and another at Casashopping, but they’re showrooms, working as places for catalogue, consulting and ordering our collections of wardrobes, kitchens, bathrooms, home theaters, shelves. We produce customized furniture for any space, in any dimension.

But what *Favo* is now has something about decisions taken along the time. Still in the 1970s, for example, we started working with architects. We realized since that the relevance they have in a company like ours, where clients are demanding, sophisticated and

don’t have enough time to make the dream of a well-done house become true. It’s the architect who makes this bridge, developing products according to the client’s taste, in agreement with our factory’s specifications. We’ve been pioneers in this kind of sales in Rio de Janeiro and, nowadays we may say that 70 to 80% of the companies’ business is related to an architecture office. Our network of supporters is pretty extensive. Taking part in market events and movements, as Casa Cor, for example, gives strength to our policies.

*Favo* has also invested very early in its own design, although we know that eventually there’s a lot of copies into design. It has been fundamental attending fairs here in Brazil, but also in USA and Europe, especially in Germany and Italy’s fairs. We also go abroad in order to update the equipment and buying the inner parts of the products, as Sweden’s plastic laminates and metalwork we use to import from Austria, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Spain. We have two associate designers working with us for several years, constantly updating themselves into those fairs, including responsibility and sustainability into production. That’s a main concern to *Favo* since the 1990s.

In 1998, we left *Abolição* and came to Itaúna. From that moment on we took the decision of not working with solid wood anymore, nor cedar, cherry or any veneer. We sold the equipment, form presses, veneer machines, and started our production just using reforestation wood panels, MDFs and MDPs. Since then, there’s no *Favo*’s product with a single piece of native trees from the Amazon Forest, legally or not.

Now reforestation wood is already accepted, but at start, by prejudice, we were misunderstood. Our client was used to solid wood and we lost jobs, once the competition kept using it. However, it was a decision based on consciousness and we understood that, sooner or later, the market would follow that.

Times changed, but the aim is the same: giving the clients a product that may be durable, aesthetic, trustable, the best offer in the market. Despite automation advances, we haven’t joined e-commerce because, according to our business model, there’s no ready-made furniture, there’s no piece like another. Everything is tailor made, developed by our sales person, who’s also an architect or designer, with assemblage exclusively done by our crew. Due to all this attention with quality and sustainability *Favo*, now with 260 employees and 5.000 sqm plant, has gained the trust that makes it stand out not only in Rio de Janeiro market, but around all country.”



**“Here’s a fact: quality has to be the difference. Long time before someone would talk about customers’ rights, 25 years ago, Lacca already had a six years guarantee seal in its products.”**

“Everything started with my father Luigi Cacciola. But we were not from furniture business. He was an automotive painter. I graduated in Chemistry at UFRJ and have never imagined working with him. My father came to Brazil as an immigrant in 1953. He had been through two wars, and having three sons, had fear of facing another one. He got a job in a bus company and, even without speaking Portuguese, in a week he was already coordinator. After six months he brought my mother and sons. Soon he started working by himself. He invented a painting technique that copied marble and started doing that in furniture at his garage, and later, in a proper workshop. The client would bring the furniture piece and he’d marble in several styles. Then he set up *Marmolac*, on *Rodovia Timbó*, in Bonsucesso, in a plant that reached 1,500 sqm.

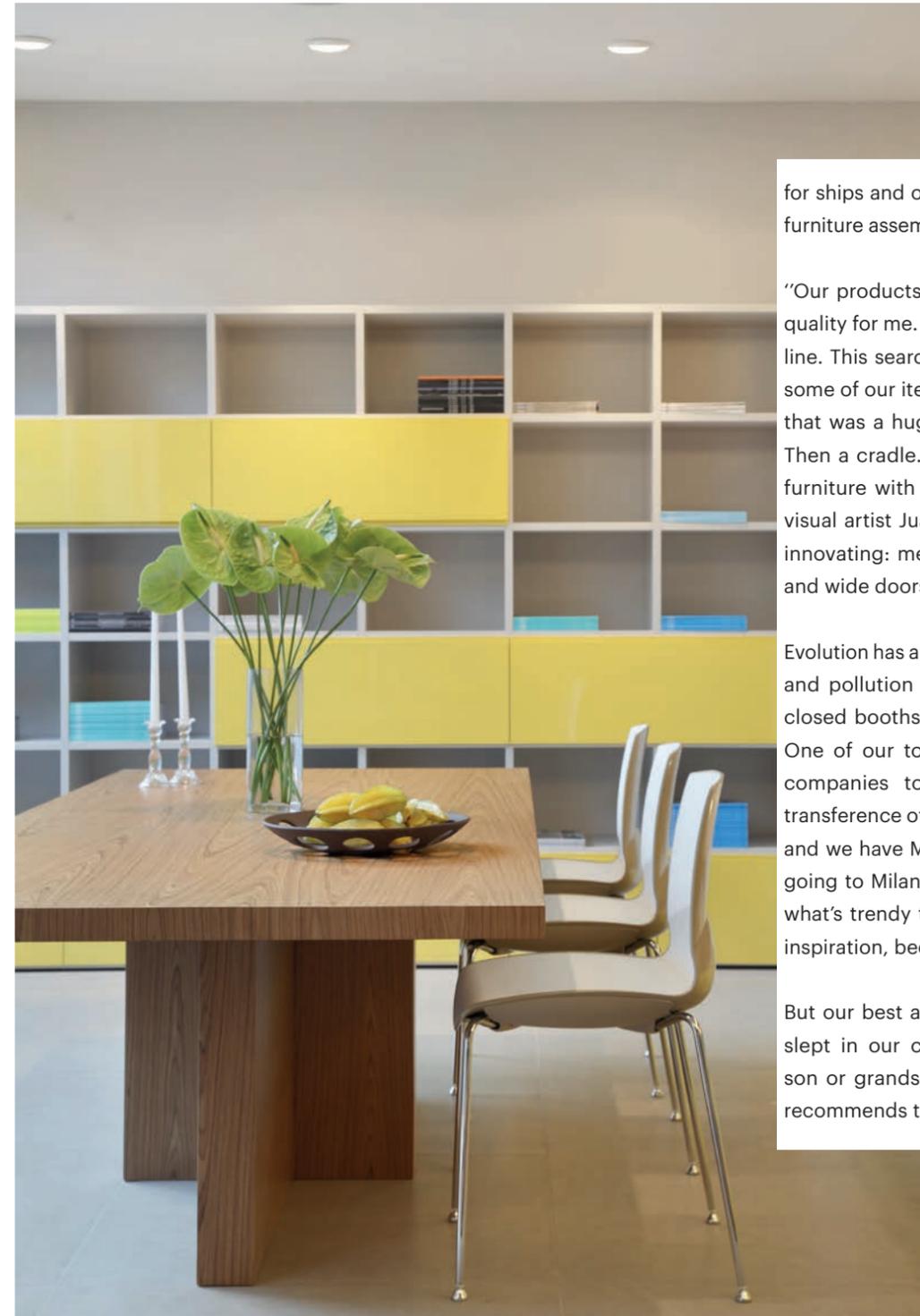
When I graduated, I got an Italian government scholarship for Milan Polytechnic Institute. But before returning I sent my father a cassette tape telling him I’d come back to work with him again. We looked for a shop and set up on Ataulfo de Paiva with Almirante Guilhem, in Leblon. So Lacca was born, in 1972. In the first years we had around 15, 20 employees. Sometimes I miss those times...

My older brother, Alberto, helped out my father a lot at the start, but soon after he followed his way in finance market. Gian Piero, my other brother, has never worked in the company. That’s why Lacca is now entirely under my duty. I work with my sons, Giordano and Giácomo. We already had the second store in Copacabana, when won the commission for making all Michelin’s

furniture when the company got in Brazil. That was a turning point. Our production grew so much that my father couldn’t handle. I assumed both duties as commercial and industrial director. Then we decided to stop supplying other stores and open more sales points with our brand – in Ipanema, Tijuca and Niterói.

Bonsucesso plant started becoming small to our production, which was pumped by apartment-hotel demands. They were on top so we and *Celina* made practically all of them. We afforded to build a new plant somewhere else in 1982. We bought a 20,000 sqm area in a very calm neighborhood then, in Paciência, in Codin industrial district. We are there ever since – 5,000 sqm, on a plant designed by architect Carlos Roberto Pingarilho, who created some of our stores and also our brand.

We had six stores in Rio de Janeiro, plus 10 outside and 15 retail stores. At some point we decided to shrink down instead of growing up and invest more in quality. Now we have only three sale points in Rio. Besides the stores, the company has 325 employees and embraces *Lacca* itself, a woodwork factory – and we are the only furniture factory that still has real workbench workers; *Lacca Marine*, that produces furniture



for ships and offshore platforms; and a fourth branch, a nautical furniture assembling division.”

“Our products are made with this focus. Being perfect. That’s quality for me. Our factory is the only in Rio with its own lacquer line. This search for perfection has given us great joy, because some of our items made history in business. We had a bunk bed that was a huge success for thirty years and it’s still modern. Then a cradle. We licensed a whole line of child and teenage furniture with an innovative assembling system, designed by visual artist Juarez Machado’s atelier. And the cabinets, always innovating: melamine sets, the white trend for kitchens, large and wide doors...

Evolution has also got to the machinery. We joined informatization and pollution control over painting, sanding, polishing, with closed booths, water curtains, exhaustion and pressurization. One of our tools is design. We associated to several Italian companies to produce furniture under license and with transference of technology. Now my youngest son runs this area and we have Marco Zanini as a consultant. And we know: even going to Milan Fair every year, the strategy is not simply mime what’s trendy there. We have to adapt, to use we see there as inspiration, because cultures are different.

But our best ad is the client himself, the one who has already slept in our cradle and it’s going to buy the cradle for his son or grandson. That’s very significant to us, the client that recommends the client.”

**“We realized that in our business it wouldn’t be enough to focus on sales. We needed to assure a short delivery time. Thanks to informatization, we have an exclusive prize of 12 business days.”**

“In 2015, for third year in a row, *Madeirol* was awarded ‘Best Modular Furniture Company’ given by Ademi-RJ, Associação de Dirigentes de Empresas do Mercado Imobiliário do Rio de Janeiro.

Our history comes from a lot of dedication, which goes on nowadays with my sons’ enthusiasm and efforts. I was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1925, after five years from my parents’ arrival, coming from Portugal. My graduation was in Business Management and Accountancy. It was in 1951, being already married, that I founded *Madeirol*, a building materials’ store, on a rented building in Ilha do Governador, selling mainly parquets and tiles. I remember that, in order to keep clients’ attention, I’ve designed some displays that had make possible seeing how the product would look like after installation. And since the start of *Madeirol* I considered relevant investing in advertising. By then became famous Rádio Relógio insertions, every five minutes announcing: ‘Parquets and tiles, only at *Madeirol*’. When modular kitchens and bathroom cabinets’ trend arrived, I started retailing *Modern Closet* wardrobes, a very popular company then. Demands increased and I decided to produce my own wardrobes. I hired a sales designer and moved on, because Ilha do Governador’s plant, backside to the store, got too small for the rising production.

We moved then to Olaria, occupying two close spots with the factory. One of them, on Rua Engenho de Pedra, produced hard wood doors, drawers’ boxes, which we produced in plywood finished with a cedar veneer, and the benches and tables’ feet; and the other plant on Rua Maria Rodrigues, the place where

the wardrobes, structural boxes, post-forming doors and straight doors.

It was a quite well equipped factory, because I had been in Europe searching for innovation and bought imported machines. One of them would cut the wood, glue it and fold the laminate. That made possible *Madeirol* be innovative in its production, finishing benches, tables and kitchen cabinets’ doors with rounded laminate. Over the ads they became recognized as ‘classy closets’ and were a success since the 1970s. They had a very unique finishing and housewives liked it very much, for being practical, easy to clean and also safe in kitchen, due to their rounded edges.

Through *Madeirol* history we’ve passed through some hard times and others of great learning, which has improved our production line. At start, before MDF, it was difficult, for example, buying and receiving materials from our suppliers. We used to work with cedar, coming from sawmills from South and North of the country. That would make us having a delivery time usually too long. Another challenge was adapting ‘Kitchen Cad’ software, bought in 1988 in the United States to develop our kitchen cabinets plans.

We had to adapt it to our measures, because it was originally designed for 20 mm boards, while in Brazil we had use 15 mm boards.

Investments in advertising and marketing was another important tool. Our company has been always in radio, newspapers and specialized magazines’ ads, even distribution of cards in traffic lights, cards that had shown a calendar on their back, and people would enjoy, take home and look to *Madeirol* brand the whole year. We’ve always been into fairs and exhibitions, we had for example boxes at UD, that huge home device fair in Riocentro back in the 1980s. Our cabinets have always been on kitchens and bedrooms at Casa Cor.”

With the modular business heating up, we saw that it was useless to sell a lot and not to deliver. The prizes were too long for the clients – usually 60 business days. But when production decreased a lot, during 1990s economic crisis, *Madeirol* found a solution that has redesigned its situation in the market. During full crisis, when there was almost nothing to sell, we had a general meeting with our employees – their participation has always been a sign of our management. But in that occasion, one of the employees had the idea of using that moment of low production to speed up production and reach an extremely short delivery time, that could stand out. It was defined then a 12 business days delivery time.

It was an effective strategy and businesses started to happen. But we had to simplify production, it wasn’t possible anymore leaving

lines of plans waiting to enter production. With that, our production dynamics have changed. At the start, our capacity would only allow selling a wardrobe plan a day to deliver into that 12 days record prize. Now we have a production line that affords 16 plans a day.

With this new concept, our furniture sets are made for not needing to be fixed or repaired. They’re strong, have quality and use durable finishing materials, like handles in solid aluminum, and accessories and hardware made in stainless steel.

Nowadays nothing at *Madeirol* plant resembles a woodwork line. Installed at a 5,000 sqm area in Taquara, Jacarepaguá region, there’s no more paperwork, our production line is fully digital. Our workforce is specialized. As a family company, nowadays my sons run the business. They take care of production, creation of new lines and our sales policy. Our feedback polls are relevant proofs that we are on a good track, helping to make history in Rio de Janeiro’s furniture industry.”

**“Now the factory has last generation equipments: computer-driven automated cutter, grinding center (CNC), membrane press, automated edge gluer, aside to all the other traditional equipments.”**

“Our 5,000 sqm shed, where is now Pereira Lopes, here in Duque de Caxias, keeps the memory of a solid family structure, that makes bigger an industry based in lots of determination and dedication. The beginning of the history is the workshop of our father, Mr. Pereira, as he liked to be called. He started making fences, gates, screws and nuts for flour mills in Bahia’s countryside. He did a rough work, but he had an artistic vein.

In 1969 he came to Rio de Janeiro to improve life. He arrived with nothing, living by favor of others, and started working with wood, being a carpenter in building construction. Willing to improve, he studied to be a contractor at Senai, then he brought my mother with Clóvis, my elder brother, to live in a wooden shack with dirt floor, no tiles, in Vilar dos Teles, aside to a river. My mother did sewing and my father furniture, and he started to gain some clients, a little here, a little there. In three years he set up a workshop at home. In 1975, he had afford to buy a Kombi. For someone who had arrived town with nothing, only a toolbox, having a car - wow - it was quite an evolution.

Being a craftsman, my father valued quality. So, he kept growing, getting more and more furniture

commissions to make. He used plywood or solid wood, gaining clients by trust. He was one of those woodworkers without a contract form. He used to deal by word and attracted clients by his honor. At his workshop there was no client unattended. And Mr. Pereira, always with a pencil over his ear, had the habit of writing down clients and suppliers’ phone numbers in the walls. We still fresh in the late 1970s, we were growing with the carpentry and extension of family life. Only after some time that we became to live in a separate space.

When the economy had troubles during the 1980s, my father left the workshop for about seven years and went back to building industry. With no economic success, he came back, but then with more cooperation from his sons. World had changed, *Gelli* was on top doing modular furniture, for example, and some sort of ‘intergenerational conflicts’ made us to change some things, investing in modernity. Cutting machine, facsimile... We used to buy new equipment and handle him the bills to be paid. Although resistant, he could see how easy was receiving clients’ plans there on paper, as magic, without having to go down South to take measurements.

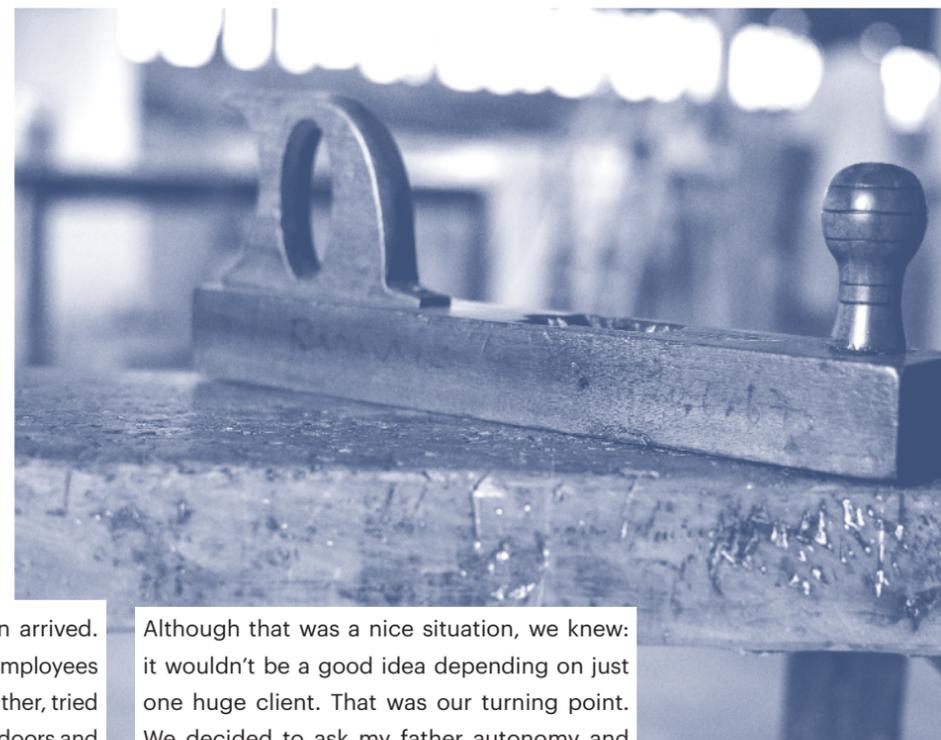
Going on the hard times, Collor Plan arrived. Clóvis and I left the workshop to be employees outside and Flávio, still there with my father, tried another sales strategy: started making doors and windows, and putting ads at *O Dia* newspaper. Business started to grow again. It was just the two of them struggling at the workshop. A young guy, 18 years old and full of ideas, Flávio went even bolder. He picked up the phone and called Globo TV offering their services. The call stroke right in the purchases coordinator’s desk. In no time Globo became our main client.

Projac’s works would soon be started. The first workbenches for the scenography factory were all produced by us - that little single-door workshop, in a space with less than 100 sqm who couldn’t afford ten percent of the contract signed with them. Globo’s purchaser, however, said he trusted my father and knew we were skilled enough. Production was nuts! Materials arriving filled up the workshop, wood would spread along the neighbor’s sidewalks and machines wouldn’t stop night and day, to keep the schedule. The whole family lent body and soul to that commission. The end of story is we made the whole Projac complex, dressing rooms, workbenches, everything. Our workshop became a trustful supplier for Globo TV, including Marinho family.

Although that was a nice situation, we knew: it wouldn’t be a good idea depending on just one huge client. That was our turning point. We decided to ask my father autonomy and independence to manage the company. He accepted to step away and went back to building houses. Settled down in a bigger plant, a 1,400 sqm area in São João de Meriti, we’re getting stronger to reach large scale production and taking the hard decision of quitting home furniture production.

What we really want to, were to be specialized on office furniture. Besides Globo TV, we started to service Shell, Ipiranga, Vale do Rio Doce and other huge clients, among banks, oil and communication companies. Some of them had a supplier in common, which has suddenly stopped to service them. That was Steelcase, American company that had purchased Sergio Rodrigues’ brand *Oca*. Their line was very specific, especially according to materials. But I took the challenge, learned a lot, found suppliers and followed up the projects interrupted by them, under the brand *For Office*.

All that made us to buy modern equipment and has given us production speed and visibility. In 2007, having about 50 employees, we were

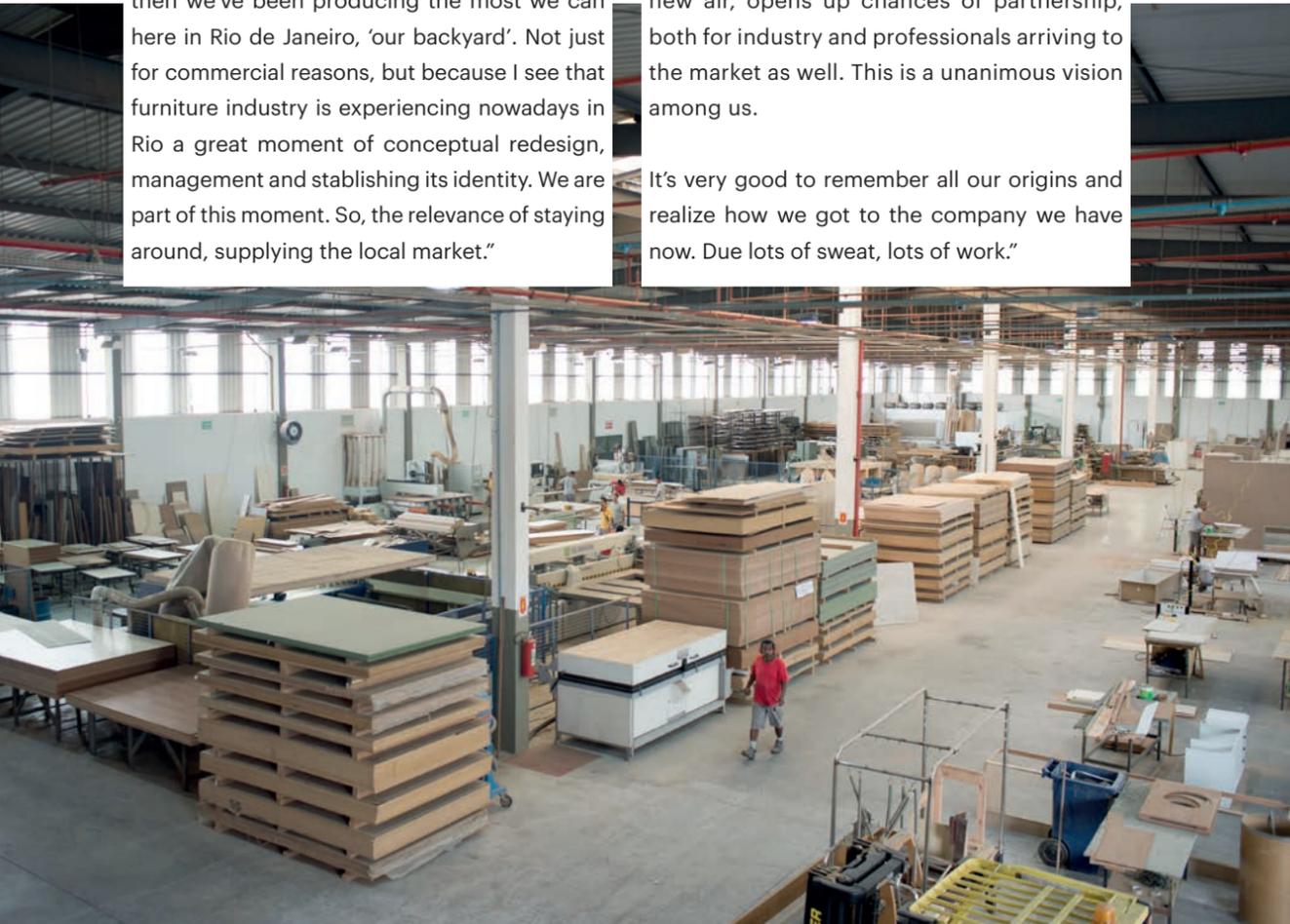


already seen as a large company. We went abroad to experience international markets, got closer to the union, and, in 2008, opening our minds in search of tendencies, we went to Milan Fair with Amob – Furniture Association of Baixada Fluminense, which was a force for Baixada Fluminense's companies. During our stay in Italy, however, I received the news about my father's death.

After the grief, Pereira Lopes recovered the pace. With another expansion plan, we bought in 2009 this land here in Caxias, and we built up this 5,000 sqm shed in four years. Since then we've been producing the most we can here in Rio de Janeiro, 'our backyard'. Not just for commercial reasons, but because I see that furniture industry is experiencing nowadays in Rio a great moment of conceptual redesign, management and stablishing its identity. We are part of this moment. So, the relevance of staying around, supplying the local market."

"We see other possibilities to better using our space and equipment, like items for Pilates' equipment production, for example. Or something like, 'design lab' for developing items in industrial scale. We already have a team working on a brand and developing a website. We believe that we need to bring design inside company, because it's necessary to know about management culture to create and exchange ideas. In a way we've already started that. We have a classroom at the factory, which on Wednesdays we receive industrial design graduates. It's a partnership with ESDI / UERJ – an exchange that gives us new air, opens up chances of partnership, both for industry and professionals arriving to the market as well. This is a unanimous vision among us.

It's very good to remember all our origins and realize how we got to the company we have now. Due lots of sweat, lots of work."



**"After the 1980s' economic crisis, we changed the concept and turned the factory's façade into a store. We keep old machinery and traditional upholstery techniques."**

"*Mimo Indústria de Móveis Ltda.* Was born in 1972. It's a company that followed *Imo*, owned by German businessman Carlos Langenback, renowned in the 1950s for supplying furniture and upholstery to many locations in Brazil, standing out not only for his quality, but also for being settled in charming Petrópolis, the Imperial City. A respected brand, its factory had then 50 employees.

In 1956 I was very young, just 15 years old, and was one those *Imo* workers. From Petrópolis, my function was upholstery assistant. And I kept working there until 1972, when our boss, a 77 years old senior, called every employee to communicate the closure of the company. I was an upholstery officer then and was 32 years old.

That news made me spend two nights without sleeping, until I had the idea of proposing him to sell us the company. And he accepted. He sold machinery, tools, fabrics and wood. I invited as partners Antonio Carlos Castro, for management, Paulo Scherer for machinery supervision and Antonio de Pádua Mayworm for woodwork supervision. We were the four ones that have founded *Mimo*, on April of the same year, in Mosela.

The new company went on into upholstery. I designed since the start. In December, as I recall, I created a straight lined detachable sofa which was quite a success. Three years later, in 1975, we managed to buy the area where now it's *Mimo*, in Bingen, installed in a 1,600 sqm shed. At start, besides serving Petrópolis and supplying to Rio de Janeiro, *Mimo* would deliver all around the country, especially in São Paulo."

Since then, we've been producing to supply our own store, whose clients mostly live in Rio de Janeiro and have a second house by the hills."

## TESTIMONY OF ENTREPRENEUR HELIO ALENCAR

**“There was a time in the 1980s when we had to follow our Southern fellows. They have been the first ones to industrialize production. It wasn’t possible stay short. We had to jump to more modern and efficient machinery. Now I deal with machines able to produce two times my sales amount.”**

“Why this name Roma? Simply because we found a good word, easy to say, to keep in mind...For those who want, it can be a-m-o-r in reverse...”

Because Roma is a love affair indeed, passion for a job that appeared by chance in my family history. I was young, a 20-years-old guy, was finishing law school and accepted the challenge of taking care of a furniture factory for my father. Along with my brother Walbert, I learned everything in practice there on a daily basis. The company had another name, produced TV tables, a very demanded item those days. We also have built, for a few years, school desks, also having competition with factories from São Paulo and Paraná. Those desks, I remember, had standard designs, each education secretary had its own. It was great producing desks, the scale of production was huge. The hard part would be receiving for the job, and there were also changes of administration, each one had his own suppliers... Anyway, troubles got bigger.

We changed production to make home furniture. And we started heavily serving construction industry, they had a lot of projects in Barra da Tijuca, around Avenida

Sernambetiba, in the 1980s. We served buildings from huge companies, producing and installing wardrobes into apartments. When Collor Plan came by, bringing all that recession, they stopped selling apartments with wardrobes, the companies started to deliver naked apartments... That made us to change route again. And we launched our own stores. Those were times when we advertised a lot in magazines, that would make the difference on spreading our products and brand.

From then on, the factory only supplied our stores, just product development, with the help of my son, that used to visit The Furniture Fair in Milan, to get inspired on designing new items. Finishing details, better use of space, all that he brought from what he saw there about design and Italian kitchens. And he also developed our relationship with architects, one of the best qualities of *Roma Mobili* in business.

We design. We have our own collections. We are now using the 12<sup>th</sup> update of a Canadian software that makes the plan and blows out the product through the factory. The whole production uses MDF and we have partners

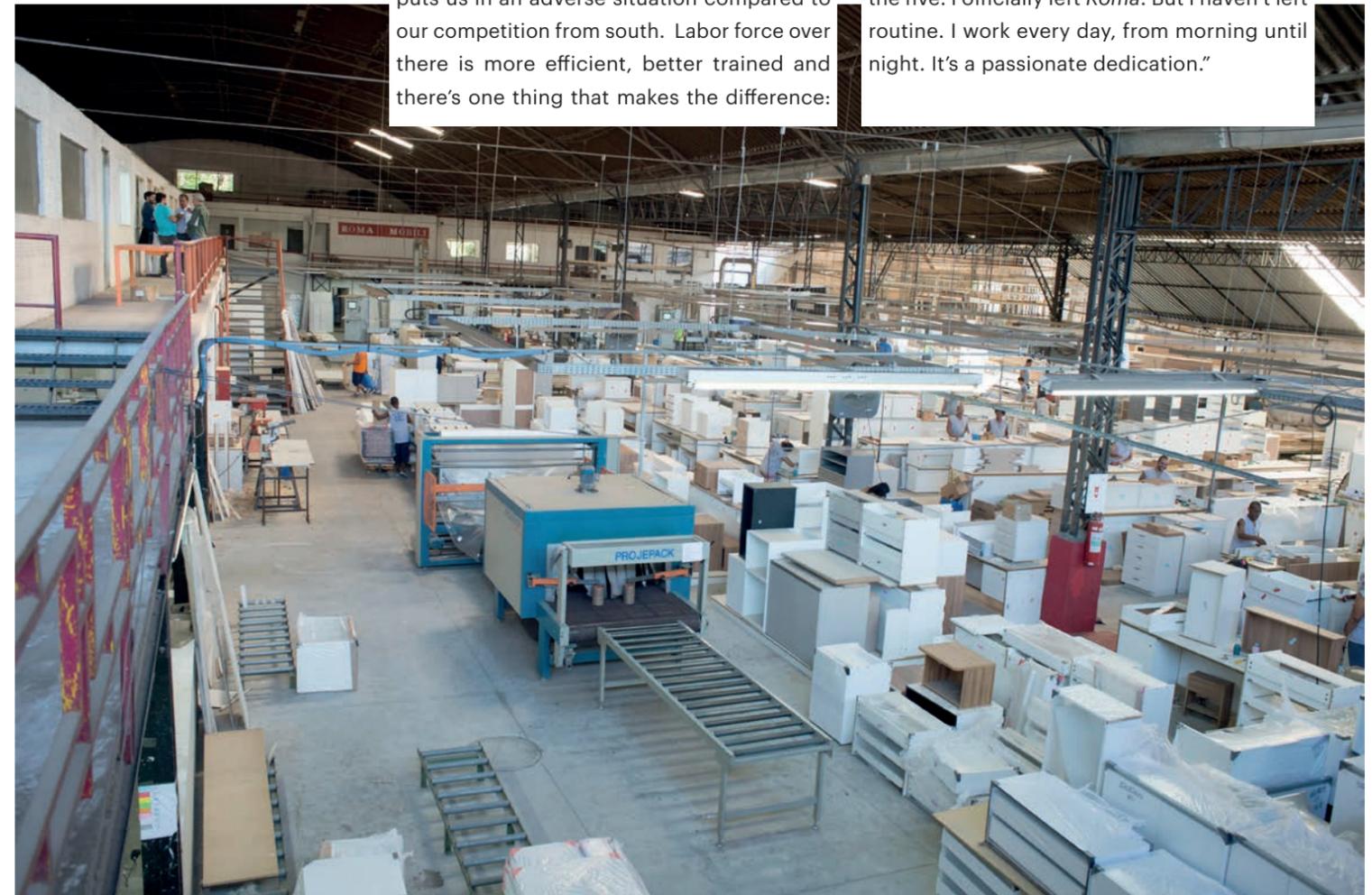
for finishing, all of them hi-tech.”

Roma’s sales strategy, now, has quit stores. We keep CasaShopping showroom, our window shop to clients. I believe that’s the trend now, those who had many stores are selling them.

At our 8,000 sqm in Anil we have 230 workers. Labor force? That’s a troubling subject. There are people, but in Rio de Janeiro the gap is quality. I’d say that aspect puts us in an adverse situation compared to our competition from south. Labor force over there is more efficient, better trained and there’s one thing that makes the difference:

they’re passionate about what they do. Even because there are less job opportunities than here.

I’d have been a good lawyer. But I’ve always been, in fact, a salesman. Now André is in charge of everything, I give some support if he needs so... When my brother died, my three sons became five. I kept his two kids. And all five are now very connected to the company. I had a fifty-fifty society with my brother. Now everything belongs to them, I shared among the five. I officially left *Roma*. But I haven’t left routine. I work every day, from morning until night. It’s a passionate dedication.”



**“At ‘flex’ way of production, the harmony between old and new associates refined woodworking to contemporary industrialization concepts, which includes environmental control, logistic and automation centers and smart management.”**

“I have two good memories connected to wood during childhood. One of them is with my grandfather, who lived next my house here in Petrópolis. He was a very handy craftsman, had all those woodwork tools and used to make some little furniture pieces, objects, spinning tops, imagine... I keep in memory also those huge logs over the trucks, that I used to watch coming along the streets, to supply the workshops. Wood would arrive rough, put along the sidewalk, and we’d play hide-and-seek behind those huge logs...”

But my personal relationship with wood, with industry, has happened due to unexpected circumstances. I was looking for a more solid professional bonding during the 1980s, when I decided to start a furniture store in one of my mother’s properties for rent on Bingen Street. Furniture commerce in Petrópolis has always been strong, especially for *Gelli*, one of the best factories in Brazil, which was experiencing a remarkable productivity.

So, I ended up opening *Show Móveis* company. Until then, my only experience with furniture had been designing all my kitchen furniture, when I got married in 1976. Later in 1985, when I was around my thirties, I was searching

for furniture around Petrópolis for retail and found this guy with nice work, named Carlos Alberto. With more two or three partners, he had run a woodwork business after his name, *C.A. Kochen*. Beto used to make tailor made pieces of general furniture, very beautiful lines, specially wardrobes which were easy to sell. But he had no money to produce. As I was interested in buying, managed him some loan. My wife and I became his sponsors. I ordered 8 or 10 of those beautiful wardrobes to my store. But he has never delivered even one. A year later I was cited to pay for a huge liability. After some difficult negotiations, the guy and his wife signed some term assuming they would work for me, under my management. That’s how we started to get in touch with production.

Until paying all that liability debt, the company was still named *C.A. Kochen*. After that the name has changed, being named *Movelaria Nova Petrópolis Ltda*. That was around 1988, 89, until I moved in 1997 to this building where nowadays we have our factory.

I still helped out Beto to start his own workshop before dismiss him, but he bankrupted two years later. However, I recognize: if not due to



him and all troubles he caused me, I wouldn’t have started into industry. Life pathways... I went on by myself those times. At start I had design myself all furniture, some tailor made items – wardrobes, beds, home lines to supply our Bingen store, whose clients were mainly from Rio and Petrópolis, sometimes a client from Cabo Frio.

But things were not going well. Besides production I had also run finances, accountancy, taking care of everything, month by month, sometimes not having any *pro labore* for paying all workers on prize. With no spare time, I’d never update.

I was able to think better about it when I started to get some technical support offered by Firjan through Senai – support that a group of me and half a dozen local businessmen asked for. And we got total support. At one of the talks with Firjan one of the guys has shown me that the percentual gain by employee I had was so, so low that I had no possible profitability. I decided that would be urgent to start some management program. And after the 2,000s, from 2001 until now, I started to get thrilled by technological innovation. When I was presented to Sistema 32, for example, I asked myself ‘But Paulo, how come you haven’t seen that before? You needed someone outside the

company to show you that...’ Well, that’s how it happened, I started to produce by need and neglected some important management and expansion aspects.

The experts came, I hired a cad designer during a year, I started designing all items with Sistema 32 and she learned a lot about woodwork. That was when I produced the first collection under that method, which, allowing standardization on production and assembling has signified a huge advance for the factory. That was a huge turning point.

I’d say that the support I had from Firjan and the arrival of my kids in business were the main aspects to the position that *Show Móveis* has at Petrópolis’ market now. As producers, we are pioneers in innovation.

If you visit *Show Móveis*’ factory, with our 2,400 sqm built area, you get to understand a little more about this technological evolution. Inside our shed there is in one side the traditional way of production, with old semi-automated machines, among them a late 19<sup>th</sup> century press still productive, and at the other the most modern available equipment as a numerical command control cutter, CNC, and an automated grinding center. I usually say that we have a ‘flex’ language. At the same production line we make, simultaneously, serial and tailor made furniture.

Getting here, however, wasn’t easy. One of the most difficult moments was when MDF boards got into production lines. At first there was no suitable machinery for such material. Besides

hard to find in Brazil, those machines were expensive, the German ones a real fortune... There was just one solution: cutting boards by hand and sealing the borders with improvise and extreme care, using hair dryer and welding iron. The arrival of new equipment for finishing, cutting tops, manually gluing borders were real improvements...

Everything pointed out for a change of patterns, it was furniture industry culture in transition. Nowadays we’re starting a production phase that we call *zero prototyping*, a glimpse of 4.0 concepts, the fourth industrial revolution over project, before production. Huge advances!”

“Around two years ago, after some courses about *Lean* management methods, we initiated those cost reduction concepts that have already started to change productivity and profits according to labor force and losses reduction. But we never lost our production quality. In the middle of 2013 when demand was too high, we reached a peak of 103 employees, some of them outsourced. In 2014 *Lean* concept started to give results and nowadays we have a staff of around 60 employees.”

**“That’s very Vimoso. This sentence once was very usual in Rio de Janeiro. It wasn’t just and adjective, but also was a symbol of quality and identity, because our brand has never made anything simple. We always have included handcrafted details, made with art, as essential components for our furniture production.”**

“*Vimoso* history has its roots in traditional woodworking. The founder of the company in 1950 was my father Custódio Moreira Ribeiro, a Portuguese immigrant who was already a woodworker, associated to a Spanish immigrant here in Brazil. After some time, my father became the only owner of the company, in fact a small workshop, during 57 years in Botafogo, where he also began producing basketry to traditional store Lidador.

The beautiful natural fiber products made there have soon started to attract attention. Samburá baskets, for example, with handles made with bamboo roots, have become a trend for girls at the beach. They couldn’t even wait the varnish drying off to take them home. By word of mouth, that basketry work was growing and decoration professionals, the early ones in the 1970s, have discovered *Vimoso*. They had asked to have the beautiful items shown at the international magazines – very stylish chairs, sofas, armchairs with high backrests – and the factory then started to attend this public. There was no market competition in Rio, in times of intense production, lots of sales, so we crossed every financial crisis in the country harmlessly.

By this time, *Vimoso* was self-sufficient. We

had 60 handcrafters, only working with fibers, besides ironworkers, woodworkers and upholsterers. From outsourcing we only used glasses. The famous cradles come from this time, all woven in our shed and, due to lack of space, put at the sidewalk to receive finishing. Lots of people would stop by to watch the cradles right there in the street in Botafogo. Soon our kid’s bedroom line has grown with chests and nanny beds. It was a success. It was the top for *Vimoso*.

Sales were growing, and more space was needed for production. Around 1978 the company has moved to a bigger spot. And in the same street, at number 83, it has become a little factory, with 1,500 sqm dedicated to production of beds, single and couple beds, by that moment already very significant at the segment. That’s when we began to announce on specialized magazines and used the company name *Vimoso Indústria de Móveis* to reinforce the idea of less expensive furniture for being sold straight “from factory”

In 1997, after my father’s death, we hired Sávio Visconti’s consulting and decided to insert *Vimoso* at decoration market. It was a time of opening stores; we opened one at Rio Design

Barra. Then, others at CasaShopping and Casa & Gourmet, besides Botafogo point. But when the company went bigger, it got hard to stay there. We had to move to a bigger shed with 2,000 sqm in Caxias, aside to Rodovia Washington Luiz, where we have been for eight years with a huge crew of 50 employees.

By then it was fundamental to open up our minds to new things, to what industry was doing abroad. Since 1998, when I got closer to SIM Rio, I've visited at least eight international furniture fairs. These visits have contributed a lot to give some fresh air to our collections, our creativity, even the production process. It was a priceless time when I met other companies, exchanged a lot of experiences and information, created friendship connections. I became accounting director during Joaquim (Gomes) administration. But I left when moved the company to Caxias where, at the local union, I was director of rush and wicker's division. Now I'm vice-president at AMOB, Associação Moveleira da Baixada.

We produce mostly by order, but something I consider fundamental at *Vimoso*, along last years, it's that we have several designers creating for us, a very active carioca team, like Fernanda and Leo Mangiavacchi, from *Fantástico Studio di Design*; *Lattoog Design's* team (Leonardo Lattavo e Pedro Moog); Eduardo Baroni; *Caburé Studio*; Carlos Alcantarino and sisters Tina and Lui, for example. Since 1999 we keep an industrial design graduate trainee in the team. With this injection of design, *Vimoso* has a catalogue with more than 50 items. We have at least 20 kinds of sofas.

During all these years, taking part at major exhibitions like Casa Cor and doing that partnership with *carioca* architects, all that has been very positive to the image of the company, that has always been a trend among classy clients."

Recently, about two years ago, the factory moved to Catumbi, a large two-stored building, among staff, there are some people working at *Vimoso* for 37 years. I believe in this relationship, this dedication and affection values into work. And I guess these details, these values, are reflected into our products.

But golden age for *Vimoso* was really 18 years ago, when my father was still alive and the company had a single sales point in Botafogo. The scenery is now quite different. My sisters left, my kids haven't followed up the factory history, and the customers, that used to be glamorous, sophisticated, has lost their charm through the years. Everything turned simple, lost culture. That lure for handcrafted works, that seems to have gone.

Now people want a straight table, with straight feet, as furniture didn't need history. With the arrival of 'contemporary', handcrafted furniture, which demands specialized labor force, was losing value, that's a fact. Napoleon style armchair, for example, took us a month to be done at *Vimoso*. That was art. Nowadays a furniture handcrafter is something hard to find. I use to say: there are no artisans because there are no clients..."





Photo: Crochet Produções.



**“The furniture industry in Rio de Janeiro considers that there’s a great opportunity of market retaking.”**  
**Sistema Firjan, Furniture Industry Report, June 2015.**

# INDUSTRY’S PROSPECT IN RIO

THE SITUATION  
OF THE  
SEGMENT



# DIAGNOSIS AND STRATEGICAL PLANNING

When the 1990s began, Sistema Firjan has firmly started, through SENAI – RJ, the defense of adoption of design as a strategic competitiveness aspect among the companies and qualification of their products as well. Along this stimulation effort towards adoption of this significant tool along production lines, FIRJAN has settled its commitment of supporting and benefiting furniture industry both in city and state of Rio de Janeiro, aiming to take it to higher positions even outside the country.

A 1997 interview with Eduardo Eugenio Gouvêa Vieira, FIRJAN's chairman, describes the procedure. Published at *DESIGN Urgente* bulletin, from Rio de Janeiro Design Program's Executive Secretary, chairman's speech gives the right idea about how much design aspects has shown its relevance over the segment's acting policies at the gates of the new century.

"We have design schools, skilled professionals and companies keen to update. And design is part of this challenge. (...) We're starting an important initiative with Senai-RJ stimulating and spreading design as an aspect capable of granting value to regional industry products. Besides, we've been doing a wide effort of conscientiousness among companies, including seminars and meetings, to show the benefits of joining Design Program, which gives an alternative choice to businesspersons through a contemporary perspective. (...) We're facing new times, open times, with demanding customers looking for services and products that could satisfy their needs. Design fits perfectly this modernity concept. And those businessmen who weren't aware of that will soon be left behind, unable to compete, if they don't

get sensitive to that, if they don't search more suitable processes", tells the chairman.

However, time never stops. A little time ago, design was furniture segment's great challenge. Moreover, even before that could be fully overcome, reaching even short and medium-sized companies, it's already started the updating call for the automated industrial systems. The most challenging aspect nowadays is factory industrialization, innovation that results, on day-by-day business practice, into labor force training skills. Great companies are already following this new path; short and medium ones, as described in those businessperson's testimonies from last chapter, lead to modern times, not without lots of troubles still to be overcome. The jump, however, is done.

In such way it's great the effort of furniture segment in Rio, associated to Sistema FIRJAN, to recover the lost relevance into national furniture production – lost during the last twenty years due to competition with foreign products and the growth of other states' companies.

Aware of the troubles to be surpassed as well the urgent professional qualification needs that could excel Rio de Janeiro's furniture industry

production of nowadays, FIRJAN's chairman, Eduardo Eugenio, keeps in tune with the businessperson's speech and trusts in carioca furniture's historical tradition, previewing an optimistic close future able to surprise.

Aiming to fully map the furniture segment in order to provide information for planning activities, Sistema FIRJAN presented in 2015 in a 34 pages brochure the most recent results of its Diagnosis Research. Showing detailed data consisting of graphics and reports related to the business structure of furniture industry both in capital and countryside Rio de Janeiro, also available online to all Brazilian businessmen, at Firjan's website: [www.firjan.com.br/publicacoes/publicacoes-de-economia/diagnostico-da-industria-moveleira.htm#pubAlign](http://www.firjan.com.br/publicacoes/publicacoes-de-economia/diagnostico-da-industria-moveleira.htm#pubAlign)

Important aspects of the segment have been described on this research report, which premises have overcome borders to recognize the strong presence of small enterprises, mostly workshops that make tailor made woodwork along the whole national territory. Considering the relevance of the segment into Brazilian economy, Sistema FIRJAN clearly recognizes its capability of creating jobs and the great amount of connections established, direct or indirectly, along its production chain. Some of the conclusions of the report are:

"According to technology, there's huge diversity along the segment. Some kinds of products allow high automation production processes, like straight-shaped made with wood-composed boards, while others demand high amount of handwork, like solid wood furniture.

As technological innovations are accessible and well-spread, narrow cooperation between furniture and machinery industries allows constant updating of technical assets. As the productive process it's not continuous, modernization can take place only in certain production phases. In some companies, therefore, it's possible that modern machines coexist with traditional machines. Besides technology, other competitiveness aspects of furniture industry are related to new materials, design, specialization of

production, sales and distribution strategies, among others. Innovation dynamics underlies mostly on aspects related to products, through design improvement and use of new materials.

A difficult market scenario raises competition among companies, making competitiveness more and more important. The capability of making and selling products with higher cost-benefit ratio for customers becomes a key aspect for sustenance or decline of companies. Although there are exceptions, in average Rio de Janeiro furniture industry has failed in this aspect.

FIRJAN's Exported Production Index (IFPE) evaluates the amount of industrial production destined to foreign sales. Furniture segment in Brazil has seen this index fall from 17.2% in 2003 to just 8.2% in 2013. IFPE percent under 10% are considered to be low; between 10% and 30% medium; and over 30% is considered high."

## THE MARKET AT RIO DE JANEIRO STATE

The same name capital, Rio de Janeiro, also has the highest average salary in the furniture sector, employs 1,222 workers (33.43%). The eastern region of the state is the second largest employer, with 583 jobs, followed by the southern region with 471. In the state, the segment has 459 establishments in the furniture area.

Source: 2015 document, prepared by the FIRJAN from data from the Ministry of Labor, for the year 2010. [www.cursosenairio.com.br/segmento-madeira-e-mobiliario](http://www.cursosenairio.com.br/segmento-madeira-e-mobiliario).

# A REFLECTION ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY OF THE STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO

On October 2015, FIRJAN's Economical Studies Department has published the following statement about furniture segment in all Brazilian territory:

The furniture industry has more than 20 thousand stores all over Brazil. From 2009 to 2014, there was a 33% growth in the number of stores. The Brazilian furniture industry is responsible for over 280,000 direct jobs, which represent 3.6% of formal jobs in the processing industry.

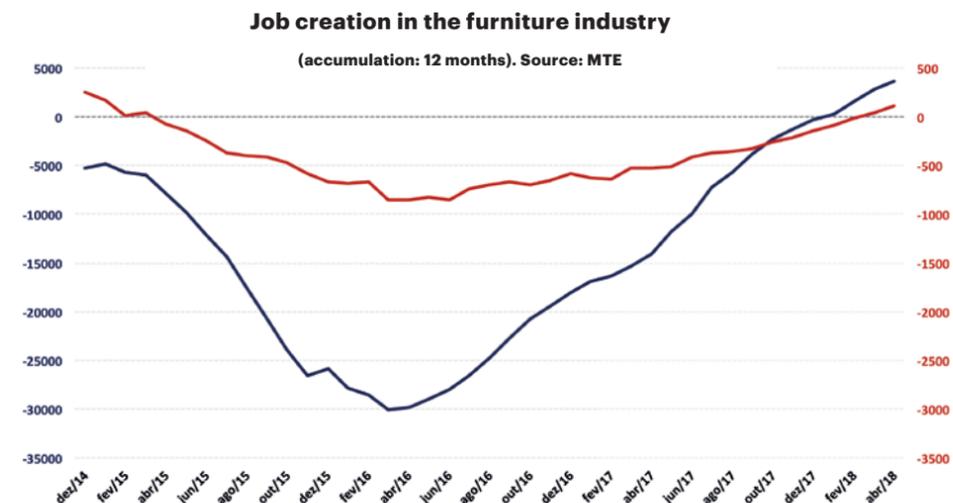
Among the Brazilian states, Rio de Janeiro is one of the six with the most employed labor in the industry (after São Paulo, Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais and Santa Catarina). Although it is below the national growth (+20.9%), the number of workers in the furniture market of the state of Rio de Janeiro grew 15.7% in the last five years.

However, since 2014, the country has been presenting a worrying economic picture, that is a combination of recession, inflationary pressure, erosion of the fiscal framework, increase in the unemployment rate and faltering investment. In fact, the negative effects of the global financial crisis of 2008/2009 were fought by the authorities with a broad anti-cyclical pro-consumption policy (monetary, credit and fiscal). Even if it was successful in mitigating post-crisis effects, the model based on consumption propelling the GDP is exhausted nowadays. The most indebted families, with the drop of income and the fear of unemployment, don't have any space for the continuous growth of consumption.

Since the start of the crisis in 2008, little has been done to improve the Brazilian production structure, which had to deal with ever growing production costs. The confidence levels of businessmen in every sector of the economy – including the consumer – have worsened and reached the lowest levels in all the historic series, even lower than the one recorded in the 2008/2009 crisis.

In 2015, the situation became even worse, because of both external and internal factors. Externally, there are three questions that deserve attention: the crisis in Argentina and the smaller Chinese growth – risk factor for the recovering of Brazilian exports – and the rise in US interest rates, which should reduce the capital flow to Brazil.

In the internal market, the turbulence is even more worrying. In 2015, the government has been tried to change the direction of fiscal policies, with adjustments to public accounts, through cuts in investments and an increase in the tax burden. However, there are difficulties in the approval of these measures in Congress, which has added to the growth of uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the fiscal adjustment. This context made Brazil lose the Investment Grade granted by



the international credit rating agency Standard & Poor's.

In this scenario, the economic activity continues to worsen: the Brazilian industrial production accumulated a 6.6% decline between January and July 2015, compared to the same period in the previous year, and the furniture industry, important because of its capacity to create jobs and its spread throughout the country, has also felt the effects of the economic recession.

In 2014, the manufacture of furniture dropped 7.3% compared to the previous year, approaching the historic low recorded in 2009. In the accumulation of the first seven months of 2015, the furniture production has already receded 8.9% compared to the same period of last year. In commerce, there is a decline in sales in the industry. In 2014, the furniture industry grew only +0.5% compared to 2013. In the accumulation of the year, until July 2015, the situation worsened and the furniture sales reached its biggest retraction of the historic series: -13.2%.

The difficulties the industry is facing have also affected significantly formal hiring in the country's furniture industry. Since 2014, there has been an increase in lay-offs. The industry has registered over 14 thousand lay-offs in 12 months, until July

2015, an even worse result than the one in the 2008 crisis (Chart).

The state of Rio de Janeiro is also in a delicate moment: retraction in industrial activity and consumption and increase in unemployment. In the accumulation until July 2015, industrial production dropped 5.3% compared to 2014; and 23 thousand jobs were shut down in the same period. The outlook is that this scenario will continue in 2016. The furniture sales in the state dropped 25.7% in the accumulation until July 2015. With that, the furniture industry has increased its lay-offs, and over 300 jobs were eliminated in this period.

The furniture industry of the state of Rio de Janeiro also faces the consequences of both the deteriorating economic situation and the structural problems, and the high cost of labor, tributary complexity and infrastructure bottlenecks – factors that affect the competition in all economic sectors.

There is no optimism for the next six months. According to the industrial survey carried out by CNI and industry federations, the businessmen of the furniture industry expect a drop in demand, a decrease in the number of employees and a smaller acquisition of raw materials. With this, investment intentions will also drop.

The industry puts its hope in the foreign market. The expectation for the number of pieces imported by the furniture industry in the next six months is of growth, though limited. In this context, the exchange rate is evolving towards the more attractive direction to the industry. The exchange rate devaluation cheapens Brazilian products in the international market. Since there is no expectation of excessive valorization of Real ahead, it is believed that the new exchange rate level will in fact be able to produce the adjustment of relative prices, which may generate competitive gains for the industry.

#### **PLANNING WITH DIALOGUE**

In constant dialogue with furniture market, Sistema FIRJAN has been following up and adjusting its strategical planning stablished for years 2013-2018.

Since 2012, a permanent meeting of furniture segment leaders from all regions around the state has been going on monthly work meetings with businessperson´s and association leaders from several segments and categories, with the common purpose of understanding market´s needs and sponsoring actions that improve structure and support to all companies in Rio de Janeiro.

Among the results of this support stand out SENAI, SESI, CIRJ and IEL's institutional projects and sectorial actions in partnerships with others institutions as SEBRAE, State Government, universities and research institutes.

Others strategic projects in force stand out - with full support from FIRJAN - with focus in executive education, professional education, incentive to design as innovation tool, development of new products, qualified skills transference, environmental management and access to market and new businesses. One specific action was the 2014 update of the portfolio professional education courses in wood and furniture of SENAI, with Duque de Caxias and Petrópolis trade unions.

The balance of the target plan has been positive: since 2013, the target plan has shown benefits offering technical information to the segment's businesspersons about design management, new technologies and associativity culture (already in force, in some cases, in the area) and make possible the growth of association bases stimulating the connection between all different state regions' associations.

#### **EYES TO THE NEW, IN BRAZIL AND ABROAD**

Since they were launched, the trade union and business caravans had good fruits, with the main goal to seek new trends and meet best practice in other markets, as well as new models and new machines. "These research trips end, no doubt to reflect the quality of products", says Joaquim Gomes, president of SIM Rio trade union.

He points out the value of the initiative, noting that in 1998 and 1999, SIM Rio with support from the FIRJAN Group, promoted the visit of several entrepreneurs to the International Furniture Fair of Milan, in Italy, considered the most important exhibition of furniture, decoration, kitchens and cabinets of the world. "In these fairs are the best designers and the best technology in the furniture area", said Joaquim Gomes, noting that in addition the Furniture Salon visit, the program includes technical training activities, visits to museums and leading international institutions of Italian furniture Sector.

### **LATEST SPECIFIC ACTIONS**

**It was in August 2012 that was set again the meeting with furniture manufacturers associations and trade unions in the state, in order to align actions, exchange strategic information, and encourage speech alignment, as well as defense industry interests. At the time, they met six representatives - SIM RIO, SINCOCIMO, SINDMARCENARIA, SINDICEM, CAMPOS SINDMOB and SINDUSCONS SF.**

**The agenda for the FIRJAN support highlights the Monitoring of the Rio de Janeiro Furniture Industry Strategic Planning (2013-2018), which develops a set of integrated actions to strengthen trade unions and industry sector. As part of these actions, is the coordination of programs of graduate UFRJ Engineering, in partnership with IEL, aimed at business leaders and designed to improve the knowledge in strategic areas within the modern enterprise management concepts. It was part of that action a training 84 hour, directed to 20 furniture makers entrepreneurs from different regions of the state, between August 2014 and February 2015.**

**In the last five years, several strategic sectoral initiatives have been promoted by the Sistema FIRJAN and other partners, always with the long-term focus and guided by structural issues, chosen together with the industry leaders of the furniture industry. In this case, all the tools and professional education products of SENAI Rio have been updated to better serve the industry market in units with expertise in wood and furniture. Adding efforts, several customized executive trainings for the sector were promoted to entrepreneurs and managers of Rio de Janeiro, as well as design workshops for new product development, and market access actions to launch these products. Conducting technical seminars for knowledge transfer, tours and research trips to exchange good practices and trends of knowledgement are also among the strategic actions promoted, aiming to enhance the RJ Furniture sector.**

Source: 2014 Documents of Design Projects, FIRJAN Group.

This visitation program continued in the 2000s, it is important to emphasize that the International Missions supported by FIRJAN include in its agenda the visits to reference fairs of product or industrial equipment, and visits to local factories and outlets. The missions also propose to provide technical training in educational institutions as references in the visited destinations, always with the objective of promoting the learning of best practices in new markets, and exchange of business experiences, production trends and technology, product and consumption.

### **RECENT MISSIONS**

**From 2011 to 2016, it was intense the route of caravans Business and Missions in Brazil and abroad. Always with intense participation of furniture manufacturers industry leaders and entrepreneurs in the sector, and in order to exchange experiences, best practices and learn new technologies and management and product design systems, such trips promote, besides the visit to a fair reference in the sector, visits techniques to factories and local sales points and approach to sectoral institutions.**

**There were many destinations and fairs over the past few years, with several visits to product and technology fairs such as in cities as Milan in Italy, and Cologne and Hannover in Germany, as well as national destinations such as São Paulo and Bento Gonçalves.**

# ASSOCIATIONS' ACTIVITY

Nowadays, the participation of the associations that take part at Sistema FIRJAN has been increasing by target plan's activities which really promote incentive to furniture segment, especially during times of political uncertainty and economic crisis.

To Joaquim Gomes da Silva, SIM Rio's\* chairman, present days, although hard, are about optimism: "We are, at last, starting a new era. This connection is going to transform Rio's furniture segment", he says, praising the initiative of partnership among state associations, inside target plan established by Sistema FIRJAN.

Here follows the general information about the seven associations that are part of Sistema FIRJAN:

**SIM-RIO** – Wood, Rush and Wicker Furniture, Sawmills, Carpentries, Wine barrel, Brushes and Paintbrushes, Plywood and Laminated Woods, Curtains and Upholstery Association. It has nowadays 200 assigned companies and 50 associated companies. It has Joaquim Gomes da Silva as its chairman since 1998.

**SINCOCIMO** – Baixada Fluminense, Angra dos Reis and Paraty Construction, Furniture, Marbles and Granites Association. Chaired by Jorge Rodrigues do Nascimento for 2016-2018 triennium, its board of directors has, among others, vice-president Claudio Lopes Alves and furniture segment vice-president Neuza Fátima da Silva Teixeira.

**SINDICEM** – Niterói to Cabo Frio Construction, Consultive Engineering and Furniture Association. Created in 1950, it's chaired for 10 years now by Sérgio Kunio Yamagata, having as secretary Ricardo Guadagnin, who informs: "We're restructuring the association, now with 21 associated companies, among them *Desk Móveis Escolares*, in Araruama, which stands out for his commercial position around the whole country."

**SINDMARCENARIA** – Petrópolis Woodwork, Wood furniture, Sawmills, Carpentries and Wood Barrels. It holds 70 regular companies. His chairman, Paulo Noel, tells that about ten years

ago, there was a major profile change into furniture segment in Petrópolis, when furniture businesspersons dedicated to traditional line started to get more concerned about their items' design. "Nowadays most of them pays attention to tendencies. Pieces by local companies as Mamulengo, an armchair designed by Eduardo Baroni for Elon, for example, have stood out in contests and exhibitions on international fairs" he says.

**SINDIMOB CAMPOS** – Campos dos Goytacazes Furniture Industries Association. Chaired by Thieres Rodrigues, it holds 58 associates, although supports more than 270 workshops and micro, small and medium-sized furniture industries. On behalf of industry's interests, it has been proposing projects like Rio de Janeiro reforestation in partnership with Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense; stand for inclusion of micro and small-sized companies into INMETROS's 105 Ordinance and partnership with SEBRAE on business management courses' improvement.

**SINDUSCON SF** – South Rio de Janeiro Construction and Furniture Association. Founded in Volta Redonda in 1957, it's chaired by Mauro Campos Pereira, having Paulo Anderson Garani as vice-president. Until August 2015, it has 28 associated companies.

**SINDUSCON CN** – Nova Friburgo - Rio de Janeiro's North Center Building Construction Association came from former Nova Friburgo Building Construction Association, which has come form former Nova Friburgo Building Construction Professional Association.

The first statute was written at 09/05/1986,

and altered in 12/01/2001, being the most relevant changes turning official the connection of furniture segment to building construction segment and the territorial coverage to the Rio de Janeiro State North Center region.

**SINDICON TR** – Três Rios, Paraíba do Sul, Areal, Comendador Levy Gasparian, Sapucaia e São José do Vale do Rio Preto Construction and Furniture Association.

## AMOB, A PIONEER EXAMPLE OF ASSOCIATIVISM

With the main purpose of raising representation and strengthen up furniture segment in Rio de Janeiro, it was created in 2003 AMOB, Baixada Furniture Association. In 2015, after relevant achievements and workgroup, it become Rio de Janeiro Furniture Association.

Based on associative benefits and opportunities, a concept developed by Sistema FIRJAN to increase its furniture segment target plan, AMOB is pioneer in adopting the idea, being the first furniture LPA (Local Productive Arrangement) in Rio de Janeiro State.

Nowadays composed by seven companies settled down in Baixada Fluminense (home, commercial, technical, corporative, hotel and natural fibers furniture producers), this association has among its goals to induce labor force qualification, to improve the relationship between designers, architects and store-owners and, in global perspective, to contribute to furniture market recovering in Rio de Janeiro.

AMOB concept was born in a business persons meeting of three companies from Duque de Caxias, who used to get together to discuss the segment's troubles and create solutions to avoid crisis and overcome challenges. *Begmu*, *Deplan Móveis* and *Pereira Lopes* had in common the same difficulties: suppliers, labor force, plant layout etc. With that association, they have broken the competition concept and became partners.

Yet in its first year, 2003, the association earned important achievements to regional segment in Duque de Caxias. Besides credit conveniences and financing lines, they stablished partnerships with institutions and designers; the technology and innovation issues into the companies have been improved by executive and technical training

programs; it was stimulated the renovation of SENAI Duque de Caxias' Furniture School; and it was granted the participation of the companies into technical missions to fairs and events abroad.

In 2009, this participation also included technical visits to international fairs as Furniture Fair in Milan. Already showing positive results in terms of executive training and design experiences into companies' routines, AMOB has joined, since 2009, Rio de Janeiro Furniture Segment's Strategical Plan.

And in 2013, lining-up with the state furniture associations' best concerns in activities to provide strength to furniture production chain and joining the segment's collective effort towards the recovering of furniture market in Rio de Janeiro. Among the achievements until 2015 stand out the creation of thematic committees, inclusion of the association into Sistema FIRJAN's unified institutional agenda and participation in 2013 at Oficina SENAI Design with Procompil Móveliário project and at Casa Brasil Fair in Bento Gonçalves, RS, in the same year.

By the last five years, AMOB has been working as an extension to SINCOCIMO. To their fellow associates, the merge was an effective way of strengthen-up and be more part of the movement as an association leadership.

# 7

Photos: Crochet Produções.



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**“The factories of the future are going to be like schools, they’re going to be places where human beings will learn how robots work.”**

**Vilém Flusser (1920 –1991), Czech philosopher naturalized Brazilian.**

# EMPOWERMENT ACTIONS FOR THE INDUSTRY

# AIMING QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

When SENAI – Serviço Nacional da Indústria (National Service of Industrial Formation) was created in 1942 by president Getulio Vargas’ decree, Brazilian society started to recognize, from generation to generation, a sentence that shows quite well what is the mission of this institution on Brazilian economic development: “Where there is industry, there is SENAI educating local communities to enjoy the opportunities of the region”.

Assuming the mission of preparing professionals to serve the incipient national industry, a institution was born 70 years ago that already settled its principles believing that without quality professional education Brazil would neither have a strong industry nor would reach sustainable development. By the end of the 1950s, when the president Juscelino Kubitschek accelerated the industrialization process, SENAI was already present in almost entire national territory. In no time, it has become a reference of innovation and quality into professional formation, even being a model for creation of similar institutions in Latin American countries. The 1960s were very important years for the institution, which were invested in regular professional formation courses. It was a time when training inside companies has grown. Into 1980s economic crisis, SENAI stayed vigilant facing the troubles that transformed economy and started to invest in technology and into development of technical staff. Besides expanding assistance to the companies, its internal policy has put many efforts in education, opening teaching centers for research and technological development.

Now the institution improves the quality of professional education and graduation courses according to industry’s needs, using SENAI method of professional education, which gets

stronger thanks to the work of its units along national territory – which are 518 stationary units and 504 mobile units over 2,700 Brazilian municipalities.

One of the world’s biggest five education complexes, its courses prepares professionals for 28 modalities of industry, since professional initiation until graduation and technological post-graduation. Since its creation, in 1942, 64.7 million workers have been formed by the institution. And nowadays, in partnership with Brazilian Ministério das Relações Exteriores (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), SENAI runs an environmental technology center in Peru and eight professional formation centers – in Angola, Cape Verde, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Paraguay, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor.

“Combining the classroom theory with intensive practice in workshops and modern laboratories, the mission of SENAI, the FIRJAN Institution that provides professional education and promotes innovation to Rio de Janeiro State Industry, is to complete train the industry professional and to drive Industry to the Future”, as such heralds the document “Present at the Industry Future”, available on the official website: [www.firjan.com.br/senai](http://www.firjan.com.br/senai).



# PARTNERSHIP WITH SENAI IN FURNITURE LABOR FORCE FORMATION

As seen: according to FIRJAN diagnosis, even though furniture segment is one of the biggest in the country according to job and income generation, Rio de Janeiro's scenario asks permanent attention. There are a lot of critical points into business management, equipment modernization and workers qualification, which puts in risk competitiveness and threatens segment's business health as a whole, not only in the city of Rio de Janeiro, but also in the state.

In this matter, SENAI RJ, associated to Sistema FIRJAN, has been following its commitment of searching effective solutions for education. The creation of Furniture School into Duque de Caxias and Petrópolis units was a pioneer initiative of serving all the furniture chain through production, project and management formation's courses.

Working with innovative exquisite education procedures, SENAI education system receives technical support from leader companies into development of technologies for furniture segment, in addition to operate in partnership with technical committees composed by companies and associations' representatives, and Wood and Furniture segment experts. The institution also counts modern laboratory infrastructure and possibilities of fomenting the development of innovative projects.

**"In the wood and furniture industry, the professional works in the application of techniques for making furniture and wooden products, operating specific equipment, uses manual and automated resources and develops furniture projects. In addition to carpentry work, courses enable for activities such as operating machines and machining, among others, in addition to promoting the domain aspects relating to quality furniture and artifacts and use of computerized instruments."**

Source: Wood and Furniture Courses Document, SENAI Rio.

Recently remodeled, Duque de Caxias and Petrópolis are updated in order to respond more efficiently to industrial production demands. They're facing a transition from 'wood workshop' to 'furniture workshop'. For that, infrastructure remodeling in both units has received brand new technology equipment and a portfolio of courses that's already responding to the needs of the market, based in modelling softwares and production programming, with all the updates needed to operate automatized and CNC equipment.



## SENAI CAXIAS AND PETRÓPOLIS: MAKING PROFESSIONALS

SENAI's Furniture Schools in Duque de Caxias and Petrópolis have been created with the purpose of serving the needs of qualified professionals, prepared to the quick transformations of productive processes.

Both schools are prepared to offer - besides regular courses - specific skills such as

**Programming Furniture Production, 3D Furniture Modeling, Furniture Painting, and Basic Techniques of Woodwork. And still into abilities and competences pedagogy, they offer the following regular qualification courses: Woodworker; Furniture assembler and installer; Furniture builder; Woodwork equipment operator; Wood and compounds CNC machines operator; Furniture painter and Furniture designer.**

**"SENAI trains in the technical part, but it is in the industry that the student will gain experience. Therefore, this exchange school - industry is essential", Rogério Santana, educational in chief at Petrópolis unit, known as SENAI Bingen.**



# DESIGN VALUATION INITIATIVES IN CITY AND STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO

Had already become reality in Rio de Janeiro and Rio de Janeiro industry advances in knowledge and technique promoted by encourage actions to new businesses and new integration tools on the market. With a view to industrial development and as a starting point for the development of more competitive and innovative products, FIRJAN appears constantly updated in its efforts to enhance the furniture industry, making high-profile events, others directed specifically to professionals and also ensuring extensive documentation, through specific publications.

Even before the turn of the century, in 1997, efforts had already begun to create the Rio de Janeiro Design Program - PDRJ, which resulted in continuous improvements in the following years. In 2003, the Rio Design Center was created in the premises of INT – Instituto Nacional de Tecnologia (National Institute of Technology), in partnership with the Sistema FIRJAN, among other institutions. In 2005, the dialogue with the business sector gained momentum: started the Furniture Forum discussion group officially created by the Group to align actions and discuss the difficulties of production and market. With operations until 2009, resulted in an effective participation of furniture makers entrepreneurs and trade union leaders.

That same year 2009, the design was the focus on strategies to support the furniture sector. Its recognition as a market strategic tool triggered actions to open new prospects for the industry, with the active approach of the creative sector in the production process.

In 2010, the first fruits of the new mentality were already present among industry entrepreneurs were reflected, in practice, with the first Rio Design Industry Event. Focusing on success stories in Product Design, the event, open to design professionals, became part of the Sistema FIRJAN agenda, establishing itself as a relevant strategy of approach between industry and designers. That same year was held the first Caravan Rio Design Industry to encourage design students and professionals through visits to the factories' floor of the Rio de Janeiro industries. Permanent action, the Caravan is directed to industrial design graduate students, and professionals in design and architecture area.

Two important releases also happened that year, reinforcing the support efforts and visibility to the sector, with a focus on design: the Visual Rio Industry Guide, which recorded the productive potential of 16 furniture industries in the Baixada Fluminense, and the FIRJAN / SEBRAE / FAPERJ Design Financial Credit, which enabled the amount of R\$ 2.7 million, to the industries invest in design.





In 2011, SENAI National Department released the *Desires and Ruptures Book*, produced by a group of designers from different parts of the country belonging to SENAI National Department Design Crew. The book shows studies of Brazilian consumption profiles related to furniture, it won Honorable Mention at the 25th Design Award of Casa Brasileira. Later, in 2012, SENAI National Department launched *Biomes Consumption Book*, whose contents, valued by extensive iconographic research, focuses on the furniture consumption habits in the then new Brazilian C class of consumption. The publication won Gold in Brazil Award IDEA in the category Research.

An extremely strategic action of FIRJAN was to set back the monthly meetings with leaders of the furniture industry of RJ State for alignment of ideas and strategic projects, up to date to market interests, within the program called Furniture Sector Group.

In the year of 2012 were launched at the Casa Brazil Furniture fair, in Bento Gonçalves - RS, the furniture manufacturers products developed in the first edition of the Oficina SENAI Design Program: the Sistema FIRJAN's program started in 2011 with the main goal to bring the experience of the design as a tool of innovation for small companies in the State of Rio de Janeiro, through the development of new products together with Rio professional designers, training for innovation and market access action, called 100% Rio Industry Event.

**OFICINA SENAI DESIGN PROGRAM + 100% RIO INDUSTRY EVENT**

One of the recent actions of greater impact

in strengthening the furniture industry of Rio de Janeiro has been the realization of Oficina SENAI Design Program, which aims to promote the culture of innovation, through the creative use, intelligent and productive design as an agent. Born to be dynamic and unifying interests and area managers, including training on management and trends about the sector, hiring professional designers from Rio to develop new products together with the entrepreneurs, and an action of access to new markets: 100% Rio Industry Event; which officially launches the new products developed in the presence of buyers and specifiers of the sector.

The successfully and impact project on the sector, in 2014, Oficina SENAI Design Program was awarded the Gold Award IDEA/ Brazil, in the Design Strategy category, and also received the special award Outstanding Innovation of the year.

An initiative of the General Sectorial Development Department of FIRJAN, the 2nd edition of Oficina SENAI Design held in 2015, proved not only the involvement of industry entrepreneurs in the project, but also recorded the practicability of partnership between industry and design. In other words: creative productivity.

During eight months, nine furniture industries open to the challenge of discovering new production possibilities and five design studios with experience in developing projects for micro and small industries worked in concert, pursuing new ideas for the theme "functional products to make lighter life" proposed by the organization.

The approximation program between classical industry and the creative industry, through design, Oficina SENAI Design consolidated, in 2015, the action as a remarkable action into FIRJAN agenda. Besides having gathered Rio de Janeiro industries and Rio design offices, had the merit of revealing 19 new products, all of them developed based on experiences in the innovation process through design. The several proposals, such as residential, corporate and hotel areas were developed for small spaces, that stood out by presenting, among other issues, high-level finish, reducing the cost of production and sustainable appeal.

SENAI, through General Sectorial Development Department, conceptualized and built, together with entrepreneurs and participating designers, all stages of the Oficina SENAI Design. It ensures support and advice throughout the development process of the new products. It is worth noting that three of the 19 products, fruit of the second edition of the program, were exposed in the show Rio+Design in Milan during the 2014 Furniture Fair, the largest fair in the world of furniture design.

#### **GIRO MÓVEIS**

Another action that since 2011 has been involving the business community and professionals in the capital and at small cities of the state is Giro Móveis lecture series. In its two annual editions, brings together an agenda of qualified technical content of lectures to all state furniture sector, including designers, architects and students of the area. The program was set to take place twice a year in eight cities of the state, leading also to the public industry news consumption

behavior, product, industry innovations and technologies, all content is generated from research with its own methodology and sectoral relationship between different industry actors in several points of contact, among national fairs, trade fairs, theme events, shows, exhibitions, field trips, among others.

#### **EXHIBITION RIO+DESIGN**

Innovation is essential to build a more competitive industry and investing in design is a way for new businesses. If adopted in a systematic and comprehensive way, design can positively change the results of a company. In order to encourage the use of design as a tool to innovation and add value to the Rio products, since 2009, the Economic Development Department of Rio de Janeiro State Government has been promoting Rio + Design Expo, exhibition of Rio products developed by Rio professional designers.

In two annual cycles, the first annual Rio+Design happens in Milan in Italy, in a parallel event of I Saloni, the largest furniture design fair in the world. And the second edition takes place in the city of Rio de Janeiro during Rio Design Week, an event promoted by the newspaper *O Globo*, which brings together a number of strategic actions in the design theme.

SENAI RJ supports the action in strengthening together the several other actions with the same goal: enter the design culture to Rio state industries, as competitiveness in their products and services. Today, we have identified a maturity of companies in relation to the theme and the strengthening



of relations between the productive and creative segments, after a great job of raising awareness, disseminating information on innovation in design into some productive sectors, which has getting together entrepreneurs and designers to exchange knowledge and new partnerships.

For the sixth consecutive year, FIRJAN Group through SENAI RJ, supports Rio+Design, promoted by SEDEIS, because the support of such initiatives is realized as encouraging and strengthening of the relationships established with the creative sector, in addition of understanding the importance of the issue to improve of the Rio state industry products and processes.

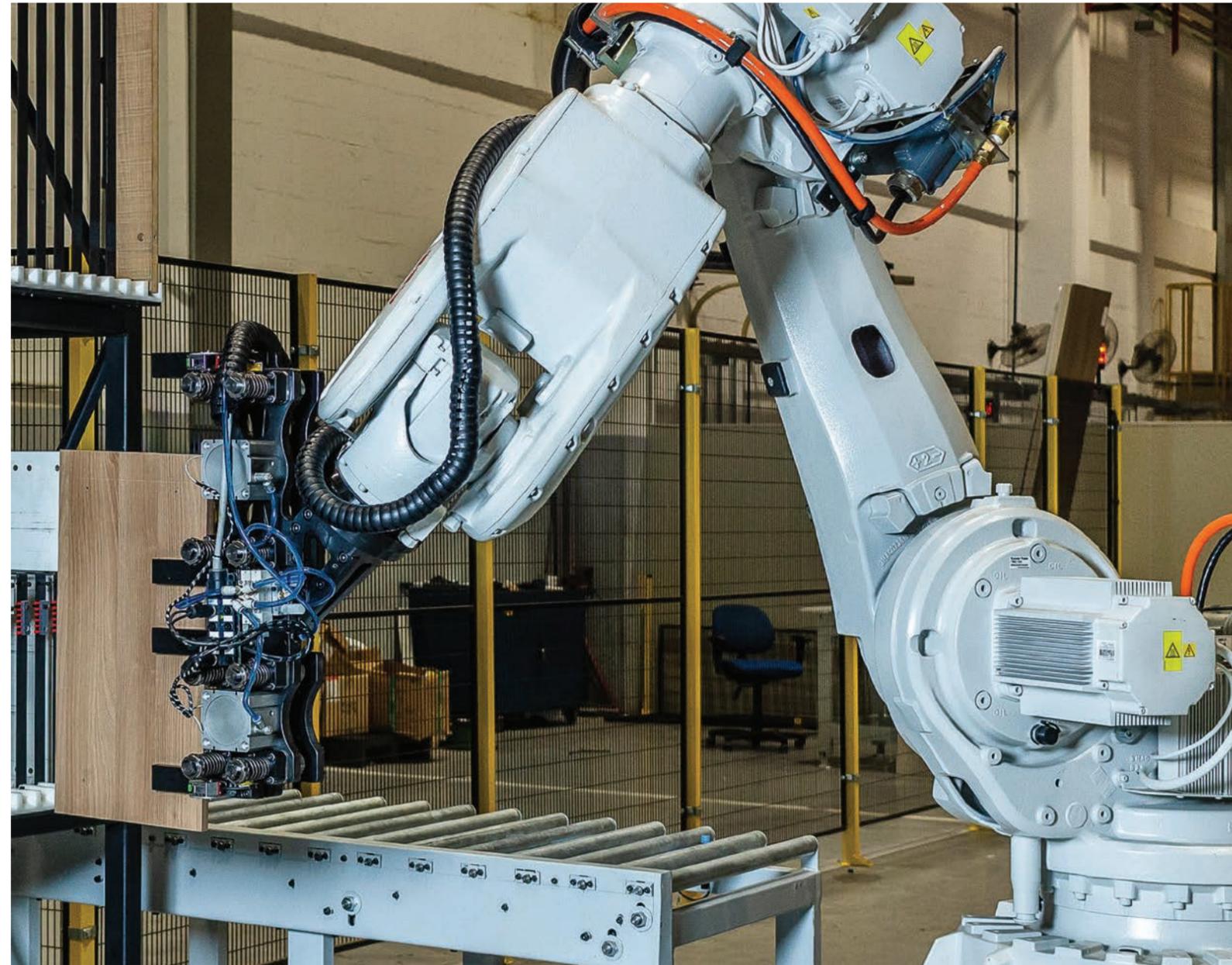
## **BUILDING THE CARIOCA AND FLUMINENSE FURNITURE INDUSTRY OF THE FUTURE**

Firjan has been working to bring the furniture industries of Rio de Janeiro to the forefront of management and technology through the Consumer Sector Development Division (DSCON) of the General Management of Marketing (GGM). In this sense, actions involving participation in congresses and fairs are held annually as well as workshops, which are promoted with the seal of Firjan IEL and initiatives, in partnership with other institutions such as Sebrae, happen to bring industries closer to topics such as industry 4.0, lean management, digital marketing, social media, omnichannel, marketplace, among others.

In 2018, some companies from the furniture sector of Rio de Janeiro started participating in a Lean Management program, promoted by Firjan IEL, which seeks to guide companies to adopt management practices that will go beyond the elimination of waste, reducing costs and maximizing quality. In particular, the adoption of a more manageable management culture and lean it at all levels in order to ensure improvement practices focused on increasing productivity that make the company business more competitive.

Also, it was started a project in 2018 aimed at insertion into the digital environment through which the participating companies will have the opportunity to identify their own maturities regarding digital aspects and will be able to draw up an individualized development plan. The topics covered in the project involve strategies in social network development and/or update their own websites, email marketing, SEO (search engine optimization), inbound marketing, among others.

Firjan is always looking to the future in order to focus on the client; therefore, it seeks to write new pages of its history brilliantly constructed by great icons of the Rio furniture industry so far.



*“Madeirol today has a factory that is on the way to industry 4.0. Here, we invest heavily in technology and in the training of our employees. Our industrial park counts today with the most modern machines of the furniture branch. In our production line our employees are in charge of the technologies so as to obtain high standards of quality and productivity.”*

Madeirol Board of Directors

*We can determine constantly whether our production is advanced or regular due to the integration of our system. This allows us to make decisions in real time. Thus, we have been able to do more in less time and with greater flexibility to meet the demands of our customers.*

Madeirol Board of Directors

*“Will our factory produce without employees?”. This is a very common question in the robotic scenario, with all technology with all technology the company possesses. On the contrary, Madeirol will still need the employees, but the level of qualification required will be greater.”*

Madeirol Board of Directors

# NOTES AND REFERENCES



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14. 7 ibidem, trechos do capítulo “*A madeira, carpinteiros e marceneiros*”, p. 58-60.

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28. 3 ibidem, em Primeira Metade do Século XIX, p. 39.

29. 8 ibidem, p. 11-2.

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16. Idem.

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18. 4 ibdem, p. 58.

19. “Além das obras, o poder municipal preocupou-se em garantir, através da legislação urbana, o espaço do novo bairro para a nova classe em ascensão, revogando o decreto que liberava a construção em Copacabana e obrigando que as novas construções obedecessem às disposições estabelecidas na regulamentação para edificações”. CARDOSO, Elizabeth D. et al, in *História dos Bairros: Copacabana*, p. 45, João Fortes Engenharia/Index, Rio de Janeiro, 1986, citado por ANDRADE, Ana Maria Mauad de Souza, **Sob o signo da imagem**, tese de mestrado em História na Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 1990.

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21. Fonte: http://cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/AEraVargas/anos20/CentenarioIndependencia/ExposicaoUniversalRJ

22. Depoimento de Márcio Roiter à autora, em junho de 2015, Rio de Janeiro.

23. Nascido na cidade de Arrancada de Vouga, em Portugal, Leandro Augusto Martins chegou ainda menino ao Brasil. Além de reconhecido comerciante do ramo de móveis e colchoaria, exerceu a advocacia e presidiu a Associação dos Empregados do Comércio no Rio de Janeiro, entre outras atividades. Em http://agloriadosvasco.blogspot.com.br/2014/10/leandro-augusto-martins-o-presidente.html

24. Fonte: consulta à **Revista da Semana** de 13 de março de 1926, Biblioteca Nacional.

25. 20 ibdem, p. 162.

26. **Jornal A Noite**, de 21 de novembro de 1941, p. 6, ed. 12422 do acervo digital da Biblioteca Nacional, http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/Hotpage/HotpageBN.aspx?bib=348970\_04&pag-fis=43351&pesq=&url=http://memoria.bn.br/docreader#

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33. Depoimento de Roberto Hirth, designer e empresário carioca, em junho de 2015, Rio de Janeiro.

34. 20 ibidem, p. 152-3.

35. Idem, p. 154.

36. 29 ibidem, p. 49.

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38. 20 ibidem, p. 169-70.

39. 11 ibidem.

40. Anúncio da Casa Nunes, in *Revista da Semana*, ano XIX, n. 52, 1/2/1919, arquivo da Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa.

41. 20 ibidem, p. 165-70.

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43. Fonte: História do SIM, em www.sim-rio.org.br

44. 29 ibidem, p. 85.

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3. 1 idem, p. 61.

4. Fonte: Sueli Garcia, coordenadora do curso de design de interiores e professora de história dos interiores do Centro Universitário Belas Artes de São Paulo, em www.carrodemola.com.br/blog/volta-passado-pes-palito-retorno

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7. Idem, p. 96.

8. Idem, p. 92.

9. SANTI, Maria Angélica. **Mobiliário no Brasil: origens da produção e da industrialização**, p. 134-5, São Paulo: Editora Senac, 2013.

10. Depoimento à autora, em junho de 2015, nas dependências do Sindicato das Indústrias de Móveis do Rio de Janeiro (SIM Rio). Gil Grosman é bacharel em direito, mas dedicou sua vida profissional aos negócios do setor moveleiro. Em 1963 começou a atuar na área contábil da Celina Decorações Ltda., da qual veio a se tornar sócio em 1966. A partir dessa data, desenvolveu uma vitoriosa carreira de empresário, impulsionando a produção em série de sua ampla linha de móveis e fazendo da marca uma das mais significativas na história da indústria moveleira não só carioca, mas também do Brasil. Por 13 anos, de 1982 a 1995, foi presidente do SIM Rio.

11. Depoimento à autora, em junho de 2015, nas dependências do Sindicato das Indústrias de Móveis do Rio de Janeiro (SIM Rio). Sávio Sarmento Visconti, arquiteto com pós-graduação em engenharia de produção, desde a década de 1960, esteve ligado ao universo do móvel, tanto pelo conhecimento da madeira como matéria-prima e da tecnologia do chão de fábrica como por sua visão de mercado. Prestou consultoria a empresas significativas da indústria carioca, entre elas a Formiplac, e transitou na área da política empresarial do setor. Atuou também na área de capacitação de estudantes, com a criação de um curso de desenho industrial na área do mobiliário. Realizou palestras pelo Brasil para falar das vantagens da madeira aglomerada. Nos anos 1980 - 1990, realizou, na Firjan ciclos de palestras para fabricantes de móveis e desenhistas industriais, com amplo apoio do empresariado local.

12. Depoimento de Mário Filipo de Carvalho Gelli à autora, em Petrópolis, em agosto de 2015.

13. Conversa telefônica de Renato Gelli com a autora, em outubro de 2015.

14. Depoimento de Manuel Leite Magalhães à autora, no Rio de Janeiro, em maio de 2015.

15. 5 ibidem, p. 124.

16. Fonte: conteúdo de Regina Zappa em institutosergiorodrigues.com.br/Biografia

17. 5 ibidem, p. 51.

18. 5 ibidem, p. 52-6.

19. Em *À deriva do tempo*, 2008, reportagem de Mariana Lacerda, em www.itaucultural.org.br/materiacontinuum/novembro-2008-a-deriva-do-tempo

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21. **Revista AU – Arquitetura e Urbanismo**, edição 165, dez. 2007, matéria de Joana Carvalho, Editora Pini, São Paulo.

22. Criada por Oscar Niemeyer e um grupo de amigos (Joaquim Cardozo, Rodrigo M. F. de Andrade, Ruben Braga e Zenon Lotufo), a revista Módulo começou a circular em março de 1955. De periodicidade irregular, com um mínimo de dois números por ano, foi uma das mais importantes revistas de arquitetura do país, ao lado de publicações como Acró-

pole e Habitat. Tinha circulação nacional e contava com correspondentes em capitais como Recife, Salvador, Belo Horizonte, São Paulo e Porto Alegre, além de ter sido comercializada na Alemanha, Itália e França. Em concordância com seu caráter internacional, a edição nº 8, de julho de 1957, foi bilingue (português - alemão), o que levou a Módulo, a partir de então, a traduzir seus principais artigos. Duramente perseguida pelo regime militar por conta de seu editor, teve sua circulação proibida em 1965, após sua sede ter sido invadida, saqueada e quebrada. A Módulo só voltou a circular em 1975, nos primeiros anos da abertura política, mas saiu de circulação definitivamente em 1989. Fonte: pesquisa de Gustavo Schindwein Botelho e Patricia Amorim, do curso de graduação em design, da ESPM-SP.

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29. 20 ibidem, p. 37-8.

30. Fonte: Tárík de Souza em cliquemusic.uol.com.br/generos/ver/bossa-nova

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33. 5 idem, p. 103.

34. 25 ibidem, p. 62.

35. Depoimento de Marcos Oliva à autora, em maio de 2015, na ESDI.

36. Catálogo do IDI, publicado em 1978, com textos de Pedro Luiz Pereira de Souza e Sílvia Steinberg. Acervo Tulio Mariante.

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5. Depoimento de Vera Beatriz Rodrigues à autora, no Rio de Janeiro, em julho de 2015.

6. Fonte: conteúdo de Regina Zappa, em institutosergiorodrigues.com.br

7. Fonte: conteúdo de Regina Zappa, em institutosergiorodrigues.com.br/Biografia/1/O-Brasil-na-ponta-do-lapis

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10. Fonte: **Casa, substantivo feminino: representações da cultura de morar em Casa e Jardim e Casa Cláudia (1953-1979)**, tese de doutorado de Rafael Alves Pinto Júnior, Universidade Federal de Goiás, em https://pos.historia.ufg.br/up/113/o/Rafael\_Alves\_Pinto\_Junior.pdf

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13. Depoimento de Gil Grosman à autora, em junho de 2015, no Rio de Janeiro.

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15. Depoimentos de Oromar Woods e Fredy Dodeles à autora, em julho de 2015, no Rio de Janeiro.

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19. Conversa telefônica de Renato Gelli com a autora, em outubro de 2015.

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21. A Associação dos Fabricantes de Móveis do Brasil (AFAM), foi fundada em 7 de outubro de 1976, em São Paulo. Seu primeiro presidente, Elino Periolo, foi eleito em 1977, no Rio de Janeiro, cidade que passou a sediar a entidade. O empresário Manuel Leite Magalhães foi seu segundo presidente, eleito em abril de 1979. Fonte: www.sindimov-mg.net.br/retrospectiva/

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