



oscar niemeyer's monumental museum frames brazilian design exhibition by galerie philia

THEN AND NOW: BRAZILIAN LEGACY AT MAC NITERÓI

Oscar Niemeyer's iconic Museum of Contemporary Art in Niterói in Rio de Janeiro hosts **Then and Now: Brazilian Legacy**, a landmark exhibition curated by **Galerie Philia**. The show stages a dialogue between mid-century modernists and a new generation of contemporary designers, situating **Brazilian** design within the larger arc of cultural history and architectural innovation.

Galerie Philia organizes the exhibition as a continuation of its mission to create site-specific encounters in architecturally significant spaces — in the past the gallery has activated Le Corbusier's famed **Kolektiv Cité Radieuse** in Marseille (see [here](#)), along with Milan's historic **San Vittore church** (see [here](#)). In Oscar Niemeyer's circular galleries, sixty works unfold across disciplines, contrasting the legacy of modernist masters with the urgency of contemporary voices.



mid-century masters like Lina Bo Bardi are presented alongside contemporaries | images © Maison Mouton Noir

OSCAR NIEMEYER'S ARCHITECTURE BACKDROPS GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

With the Oscar Niemeyer landmark as an apt location, **Galerie Philia's** exhibition presents figures who shaped Brazil's mid-century identity through design — Joaquim Tenreiro, Lina Bo Bardi, José Zanine Caldas, Jorge Zalszupin, Sergio Rodrigues, Giuseppe Scapinelli, Ricardo Fasanello, and Oscar Niemeyer himself. Their pieces trace a history in which furniture became more than functional, serving as an embodiment of cultural imagination and national aspiration.

Tenreiro's radical lightness, Bo Bardi's social engagement, Caldas' carved protest furniture, and Rodrigues' sensual warmth mark distinct yet interconnected approaches. Each demonstrates how Brazilian modernists integrated architecture, craft, and industry to articulate a vision of modern life that was both universal and distinctly local.



Oscar Niemeyer's MAC Niterói provides a monumental setting for the exhibition

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Years after Oscar Niemeyer's legacy, Galerie Philia showcases the Brazilian designers of today, who work against a different backdrop: ecological urgency, cultural plurality, and a renewed focus on material origins. Their practices reinterpret modernist ideals through reclaimed wood, hybrid identities, and experimental forms. Designers such as Arthur Casas, Gabriela Campos, Hugo França, Zanini de Zanine, Aver, and Mauricio Arruda expand the narrative of design from utopian optimism to one of resilience and memory.

Hugo França's monumental furniture carved from salvaged trunks foregrounds environmental concerns, while Campos' cross-disciplinary practice echoes Bo Bardi's inclusive ethos. Aver's architectural lighting reimagines precision with sculptural warmth, and Zanini de Zanine continues his father's legacy of working with reclaimed materials, underscoring sustainability as a central philosophical stance.



Hugo França shows monumental reclaimed wood sculptures

Φ PHILIA

For Ygaël Attali, founder of Galerie Philia, Niemeyer's museum was an essential setting: *'MAC Niterói is one of the most emblematic works of Oscar Niemeyer, and it embodies the very spirit of Brazilian modernism,' he explains. 'Its futuristic form, suspended above the bay, already suggests a dialogue between past and future. It was crucial for me to situate this exhibition in a place that is itself a manifesto of modernism.'*

Working within Niemeyer's strong architectural language presented challenges as well as opportunities. **He continues:** *'The architecture is so strong that it risks overshadowing the works, but it also creates a rhythm that naturally lends itself to dialogue. We opted for interweaving modern and contemporary works rather than separating them, so that resonances and dissonances could be felt.'*



pieces are backdropped by sweeping coastal views across Rio de Janeiro

Φ PHILIA

Despite the distance between postwar optimism and today's global ecological urgency, Attali emphasizes continuity. *'What unites them is an ethic of material intimacy and craft,' Attali says. 'Whether it is Tenreiro working with native woods, Zanine Caldas carving salvaged trunks, or Hugo França reclaiming monumental fallen trees today, there is a deep respect for the expressive potential of material. Another shared value is the belief that design can carry cultural meaning.'*

Among the modernists, Tenreiro's lightweight wooden chairs symbolize both refinement and absence, installed in an empty circle as a tribute to the legacy of masters. Zalszupin's modular works reveal a balance between European sensibility and Brazilian innovation.

For the contemporaries, Attali singles out França's monumental reclaimed wood sculptures and Campos' narrative-rich objects, alongside Aver's luminous architectural forms. Together, these works illustrate Brazilian design's sculptural, poetic, intimate, and monumental breadth.



past optimism is in dialogue with present ecological urgency

Φ PHILIA



Oscar Niemeyer's circular galleries shape the show's rhythm



the show emphasizes the expressive potential of material across generations

Φ PHILIA



Galerie Philia curates design exhibitions that respond directly to the setting

project info:

name: Then And Now: Brazilian Legacy

gallery: Galerie Philia | @galerie.philia

location: Museu de Arte Contemporânea (MAC) de Niterói | @mac.niteroi

dates: August 29th – 31st, 2025

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