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Stages in the Formation of Brazil's Cultural Profile
Aracy Amaral

Marc Ferrez: A Master of Brazilian Photography
Pedro Vásquez

Opera Houses:
Benedíno Lima de Toledo

Illustrated Books and Periodicals in Brazil, 1875–1945
José E. Mindlin

Artistic Intentions in Iron Architecture
Geraldo Gomes

The Art of J. Carlos
Isabel Lustosa

The Legacy of Raymundo Ottoni de Castro Meyr
Carlos Martins

Rio de Janeiro, 1875–1945: The Shaping of a New Urban Order
Rachel Sisson

Roberto Burle Marx:
The Last Interview
Conrad Hamerman

John Graz and the Graz-Gomide Family
Irma Arestiçábal

Flávio de Carvalho: Modernism and the Avant-Garde in São Paulo, 1927–1935
Rui Moreira Leite

The Modernization of Brazilian Urban Space as a Political Symbol of the Republic
Celina Borges Lemos

The Jungle in Brazilian Modern Design
Paulo Herkenhoff
The Jungle in Brazilian Modern Design

By Paulo Herkenhoff

Translated by Kim Mrazek Hastings

In the heart of the Amazon region, near the strategically situated city of Manaus, lies the confluence of the Negro and Solimões Rivers. At this meeting of the waters, the black current of the Negro and the clay-colored current of the Solimões form the Amazon River. For several kilometers, up to the final moment, nature guards this visual sign. Before the two rivers mix, areas of black water are seen as separate from areas of muddy water. This extraordinary phenomenon is the perfect metaphor of transformation in modern Brazil, of nature in art, and of the way the Amazon region molds the entire country.¹

The meeting of the waters is the subject of the pavement in the plaza facing the Amazon Theater (1896) in Manaus (fig. 1). The pattern integrates the sinuous movement of black and white stripes, symbol of the birth of the Amazon River. It is a design of graphic synthesis; discourse is created by the reduction of its allegorical elements. The simple form evokes the elegant sensuality of the movement. Its construction recalls the Portuguese tradition of mosaic sidewalks in black and white stone, a tradition transported to coastal cities including Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Salvador. The charming design of the Manaus sidewalk was adopted in the walkways along Copacabana Beach in Rio (fig. 2); there they symbolize the waves of the sea and have earned international fame. The Amazon Theater’s sidewalks may well have been the first great modern Brazilian public monument. They reveal to us how Brazilian modernity has been constructed with bases in the jungle, considered as nature and native cultural territory.

The Amazon Theater also indicates how, at the turn of the century, the Amazon region thrived on the splendor of her fortune from the rubber monopoly. In Belém, Manaus, and other smaller cities, the rubber boom (1850–1910) shaped a culture in which nostalgia and desire for a Europe in the jungle were evident. French was heard in the cities’ salons; the rich of Belém and Manaus sent their clothes to Europe to be cleaned. In a waiting room of the stately home built in Belém by Victor Maria da Silva during this

¹ Allegorical representation of the Amazon began with the classical myth of the Amazons, who gave a name to the region and whose existence was reiterated throughout the centuries by travelers and scientists of all stripes. As recently as the end of the nineteenth century, Dom Pedro II, emperor of Brazil, commissioned a study by Gonçalves Dias to clear up doubts about the existence of tribes of warrior women. The study was published in Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Brasil 18 (1885).
golden age, there are two art-nouveau panels in tile (A. Arnoux's design, executed by Boulanger). In the panels the flora of Europe represent spring and autumn. Nothing indicates better the artificiality of importing art nouveau to the Amazon. In Belém, located just south of the equator, only two seasons occur, "summer" and "winter"; and these periods are determined exclusively by the amount of daily rainfall.

In Belém the name of a small architectural folly—Paris na América (1906–1909)—conveys a certain dubious plan to construct a "tropical Paris," as Célu Bassalo stingingly summarized it. Nearly all the materials with which this fabric shop was built were imported from Europe; the architecture features inlays of art-nouveau details. There are no constructions in Belém with the structurally art-nouveau character of a Maison du Peuple (1896–1899) by Victor Horta, or that appear to sprout organically like Antoni Gaudi's projects. In the eclectic architecture of the Francisco Bolonha residence, a bathroom's European tiles

3. Paris na América was built by engineer Rainundo Viana and foremen Salvador and Mesquita. Viana was the owner. The steel structure of the building was imported from Scotland; the tiles and stones from Portugal; the ceramic floor and the clock from Germany; windowpanes, chandeliers, mirrors, and the stairway from France.
were decorated with European water-lilies and dragonflies, basic natural themes of art-nouveau vocabulary. Amazonian flora is left out of the decoration. As for public works, among the constructions for which Francisco Bolonha was responsible are the São Braz Market, the Ver-o-Peso (See-the-weight) Markets, and the now defunct water reservoir, whose iron structure was imported from Walter MacFarlane and Company of Glasgow. The widespread use of iron architecture, exported to Belém and Manaus from Europe, is worth mentioning. In Belém Antonio Faciola’s residence was decorated with ornamental details, including chandeliers and platformers, vases, china, and bronze sculptures, some signed by Emile Galle, August and Antonin Daum, A. Larroux, and Felix Charpentier, acquired in Paris at the beginning of the century. With the Daum brothers and especially with Gallé, Faciola’s preference was centered on the production of Nancy. As social history of the culture, art nouveau’s presence in Belém and Manaus is the result of the Amazon’s integration into the international economy and signifies a capacity greater than that of many other Brazilian cities to assimilate a new international style.

One cannot speak of a singular and typically Amazonian art nouveau. Imported models were superimposed as status symbols, with no basis in the region’s socio-economic situation. Amazonian urbanism and architecture of the turn of the century had little to do with the ecological needs of the tropics and its constructive knowledge, solidified over three centuries. In Belém Frenchified taste came face to face with a city of colonial Portuguese tradition coexisting with the caboclo (mestizo) universe. Furthermore, a nativist movement was beginning to take shape. Archaeological studies and findings by the Paraense Museum (the future Goeldi Museum) were establishing standards and measures of historicity with the ceramics of Marajó and the Tapajós River — and it is well-known that art nouveau intended to overcome historicism and academicism. This conflict between reference to national and foreign hegemonic centers and the strong character of native culture underlay the identity crisis suffered by the provincial lower middle class of the entire Amazon. The reorganization of the Philomatric Society into the Paraense Museum in Belém in 1894 propitiated the introduction of new scientific and museological bases, offering a stimulus that valued the material culture of Amazonian peoples, namely the Marajóras. For his role in this process, Swiss scientist Emilio Goeldi, among others, deserves special attention. In his studies of the Amazon, Goeldi brought Darwinism to Belém; he also sought to develop a nativist consciousness. In 1895 Goeldi wrote: “We covet neither the elephant of India nor the giraffe of Africa. We want what is ours, what is Amazonian, of Para, and it isn’t necessary for me (who wasn’t born in this land and who today sees himself here for no reason other than love of science and the desire to create a solid stronghold in the Amazon) to show the people of Pará that the nature surrounding us has more than enough material to warrant filling a zoo as well as a botanical garden.”

4. The archaeology of Marajóra culture began in 1870 and has since attracted researchers from New York’s American Museum of Natural History, the University of Pennsylvania, the British Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, and Berlin’s Völkerkunde Museum, among many others. This ethnic group (i.e., the Marajóras) lived on points of the large island of Marajó, at the mouth of the Amazon River, from a.d. 400 to 1550. They built artificial mounds for their homes and cemeteries, where objects from their material culture have been found. Prior to the arrival of Europeans in America, the group had disappeared. Its members were incapable of sustaining a large, permanent population because they failed to develop an intensive agricultural system to withstand the constant flooding of the island.

5. Boletim do Museu Goeldi, 2 January 1895.
The cultural moment being lived by Belém — the need for scientific knowledge coexisting with a global view of the region as one of natural splendor — is reflected in Emilio Goeldi's own ex libris, designed in Belém in the *art nouveau* style by E. Torro (fig. 3). The *art nouveau* occurs in the typography and the sinuous adornment of the central image. Where the lines meander, two fleurs-de-lis confer a heraldic dimension on the bookplate. The scene is divided horizontally into two parts, a tribute to romanticism: in the background lies the "natural" space of the jungle; in the foreground the space of "civilization" is protected by a wall that separates and at the same time permits the unveiling of nature's wonders. The Amazonian landscape shows a lone navigator in a *piragua* (dugout canoe). Above, a looming Indian crowned with a cockade of feathers is a clear model of otherness defined by science.

6. Two shields are engraved on the wall (Wendenberg and Hohensax) along with the scientist's name (Emil August Göldi v. T.) and academic title (Dr. phil.). Goeldi's coat of arms is at the center; that of his native Switzerland lies in the lower right corner. The wall is further decorated with flowers taken from the scientist's shield.
In modernist Brazil, nature was symbolized by the jungle. The writer José Graça Aranha observed in his Estética da vida (Aesthetics of life) (1921) that, in Brazil, culture had been separated from nature by all three major ethnic groups—the Portuguese through "artificiality and melancholy," African slaves through a "cosmic fear," and the Indian through a "metaphysics of terror" that filled "the space between the human spirit and nature with apparitions and images." Whatever prejudice we may find here, it is worth noting Graça Aranha’s most important position for a culture that incorporates the "esthetic rhythm" of the cosmos. He encouraged the transformation of sensations into landscape—color, lines, planes, masses—the reunification in art of human nature with universal nature. In 1922 writer Mário de Andrade urged painter Tarsila do Amaral to return to national roots: "Tarsila, Tarsila, go back within yourself... Leave Paris! Tarsila! Come to the virgin forest..." Tarsila came—and invented a Brazil in modern painting. Brazilian modernism brought with it the attempt to recapture happiness by overcoming the "dread" that clouded the Brazilian gaze before nature. "Before the Portuguese discovered Brazil, Brazil had discovered happiness," poet Oswald de Andrade would later write in his Manifesto antropófago (Cannibal manifesto) (1928).

When he arrived in Rio in 1914, Portuguese Fernando Correia Dias (1893–1935) met the caricaturist Vieira da Cunha, with whom he founded a graphic arts studio. Cunha published the short essay "O nacionalismo na arte" (Nationalism in art), one of the first modern nationalist manifestos, illustrated with animals and tropical foliage by Correia Dias. Cunha advocated nationalism in art: "Brazilian society for the most part still suffers from a sophisticated and absurd artificiality, constantly revealed in all manifestations of life. It makes no sense to live in an environment that is not, nor could be, one's own. The excitement of civilization grasps, captivates, dominates, and [we] lose all sense of self."

During the modernist period, two artists native to the Amazon region, Theodoro Braga (1872–1953) and Manoel Pastana, developed the idea of decorative arts with nativist elements, along with Correia Dias. The traditions of rubber-boom Belém, with its belle époque social dimension, had consolided an appreciation of decorative arts. Braga and Pastana were trained in this atmosphere and, by the 1920s, developed their nativist design plan. But there was a decline of the Amazon region following the 1906 entrance on the international market of rubber produced by the English in Asia. The Amazon could no longer support artists, thus Braga and Pastana produced in São Paulo and Rio, respectively.

Beginning in the 1920s, Correia Dias developed a graphic stylization of decorative Marajóara themes. This particular artist did extensive ceramic work with

7. Eduardo Jardim de Moraes's work A brasileidade modernista: aus dimensão filosófica (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Graal, 1978) should also be mentioned in this regard.
10. Pastana was born in 1898; we can find no record of the year of his death.
11. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the National Museum in Rio and the Paranense Museum in Belém were the two primary sources of visual information on Marajóara ceramics for modernist artists and writers.
aboriginal motifs, in addition to tiles, rugs, bronze plaques, wrought-iron objects, and leather chests. He also designed a series of Marajoara motifs taken from the decoration of authentic vessels, destined for rug decoration and ceramics for architectural use. Upon visiting Correia Dias’s studio in 1928, Paul Rivet, founder of the Musée de l’Homme in Paris, commented on the artist’s nativist work that frequently centered on Marajoara stylization: “Among South America’s indigenous arts, the art of the ancient inhabitants of the Island of Marajo and the lower Amazon remains one of the most mysterious. This art compares in beauty to the most perfect productions of the great Andean civilizations. To make this art be born again, to make it known
in modern Brazil, [would] rejoin the past to the present in a beautiful esthetic tradition. Correia Dias's ceramics are faithful to the shapes and materials of Marajoara vases and maintain the original symbols. This contrasts with Theodoro Braga's experimentation, his reduction of elements to compose a synthesis of design more appropriate to the tenets of art deco than to the static fidelity of early Marajoara ceramics.

Braga's production brought an intensity to the modernist universe of decorative arts where John Grau, Regina Gomide, and António Gomide predominated in São Paulo with a more internationalist tendency. The jungle is more generic in their work, as is true of the entrance to the Italy Building in Rio (fig. 4). A number of terra cotta vases attributed to Theodoro Braga's early phase (fig. 5) are encrusted with series of animals, including beetles and alligators, emblematic of the fauna of the Amazon and the thematic object of Braga's studies as mentioned above. The animals' symbolic character is not well developed in these pieces; their employment does, however, serve as evidence of a naïve interest. The vase decorated with beetles is far from having the symbolic implications of insects present on Émile Gallé's glass. It fails to reach the level of "virgin symbol" potentially offered by science and nature. What is the decorative quality of a symbol? inquired Gallé. On Braga's small vase a rigid order is created through the spacing of the beetles, again quite removed from the sensual flow of Gallé's decoration. On this particular vase, Braga does not explore the ornamental possibilities of the insect's anatomy in depth as would occur with an art-nouveau work, he treats the hind legs vaguely.

13. António Gomide and John Grau each completed decorative projects (mural and stained-glass windows) with gestural jungle themes that warrant separate treatment; J. Carlos, Etkin, and Quintino Campoforto, Kand Honzik, August Herzthorn, António Patin Vieira, and Louis Roche (who cast the monument to Emperor Pedro I [1862] in Rio) might also have been discussed if space had allowed.
14. In his lecture "Le décor symbolique," given at the Stanislas Academy on 17 May 1900, Émile Gallé developed ideas about symbolism in the decorative arts; see Philippe Garner's transcription in Émile Gallé (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 157-162.
Fig. 6. Theodor Braga. (1) Arapeá, rug inspired by the Victoria regia (Amazonian water lily), executed by the Santa Helena Rug Manufacturer, São Paulo; (2) flowering mango tree, original plan for woven wall hangings; (3) Carana, column with Amazonian palm theme, executed by Vicente Laroca; (4) and (5) covered jar and vase, guatambo wood, executed by Domenico Businelli; (6) plan for rug with Marajoara motifs. Maria Braga, (7) cushion, low relief, leather, decorated with Marajoara motifs.

Photograph by Carlos Peruta, Rio de Janeiro, 1927.
In any case Braga’s meticulously realistic treatment, albeit with a discreet art-nouveau accent, signals a premodernist moment. Were authorship confirmed, one might say that from here Braga went on to workshops of a more elaborated nationalism, modeled on native cultural heritage and not merely on nature. Esthetically this would mean passage from verism to simplified geometry. Braga would head off in search of history and historicism. In 1936 he must have heard the opening lecture on mythology delivered by Francisco Inacio Homem de Mello at the National School of Fine Arts in Rio. Since the publication lists his name in the roster of students, Homem de Mello stressed the importance of mythology in ancient and modern production—understood as Western production since the Renaissance—but did not refer to Brazil’s indigenous mythology. “In the realm of art, Mythology appears to us as perpetual renewal,” Homem de Mello asserted. “We will study Mythology in the light of science, not as a mere page of the past, but as a precious document of the human spirit, full of light and movement. This is History’s power. Past civilizations…resurface, restored to life.” As the program at the former Imperial Academy of Fine Arts was entirely focused on Greco-Roman mythology, there was certainly exposure to mythology in Braga’s formation.

The applied art section of the 1927 National Salon of Fine Arts in Rio presented a core of decorative and practical objects of Amazonian character designed by Theodoro and Maria Braga (fig. 6). A more mature Theodoro Braga completed a series of vases in wrought metal (fig. 7) with details in enamel or distinctive metals, transforming the geometric motifs of Marajoara ceramics with their simple breaks and irregularities into a rigorous art-deco language. These vases, at least five of which are known to exist, form one of the key moments in Brazil’s modernist decorative arts. The small vase corresponds to a Marajoara ware (National Museum of the Quinta da Boa Vista, Rio de Janeiro) that served Braga in the formal design and decoration of his work; he also closely followed its proportions. The basic design is a detailed copy of the Marajoara original, even in the differences of color that Braga achieved through use of enamel paint. Vermilion is the predominant hue, as in the tabatinga (soft sedimentary clay) applied by the natives of the Amazon. In this case, in the general shape and decoration, Braga gives greater geometrical precision to the design but retains its motive force—the modular rhythm, the symmetries, the localization, and the way it dominates the entire rounded volume of the vase. This piece was reproduced in full detail by Manoel Pastana in gouache on paper. The large vase marks one of the most stylized moments in Braga’s work, distanced from any Marajoara archaeological model, be it in terms of general shape or decoration. The geometric motifs are of yellow metal, a stripe, contrasting with the red body of copper. With this piece Braga sought to reproduce the chromatic differences on the surface of Marajoara ceramics using metals varying in color.

16. Information from the photograph album Salão 1927 by Carlos Peres, with handwritten notes.
17. Rediscovered by Pedro Maria Bardi, the vases were reproduced in “Theodoro Braga, um art-deco brasileiro,” in Arte Viva 1, no. 1 (May 1977): 80–83. Five vases may be seen in the article on Theodoro Braga’s home published in the June 1937 issue of Ilustração Brasileira. At least four may be attributed to the artist; only one was among those published by Bardi, namely the large bronze piece (61 cm) belonging to the Museum of Modern Art in Rio.
and sheen. Its structure is cylindrical, without seams or joints [peça inteiriça]. From the extremely pure stylization, one might take this to be a more mature work, from the 1930s.

Manoel Pastana, also born in Pará, left behind a vast corpus of decorative art projects and objects that remain to be studied. There are hundreds of watercolor and gouache paintings with plans for furniture and objects such as lamps, trays, a parasol, a coffee and tea set, and so on (Figs. 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12), in which the artist alternately adopts decorative elements from the archaeological ceramics of Amazon tribes or from the material culture of contemporary Amazon tribes, then refers to the flora and fauna of the jungle, but without loss of the work’s mythical dimension. Animals, plants, woven straw — symbolic details of the archaeological ceramics — are articulated in intricate spatial relation formulating the decorative object’s body. There are many designs copied from pieces collected in Brazil’s anthropological museums, the Goeldi Museum in Belém and the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro among them. In addition Pastana left countless decorative objects in bronze and yellow metal, many with zoomorphic motifs. Some are recreations, as occurred with Theodoro Braga, of pieces of Marajoara ceramics—vases and triangular plaques, in the style of indigenous tangas (loincloths). Others reconstruct symbols and legends — for example, the icamiba vases he made in yellow metal when he worked at the mint. The previous year, in Quirino Campolotto’s journal Belas Artes, Pastana developed several ideas in his article “O despertar da arte” (Art’s awakening) regarding his nativism founded on the original cultures of the Amazon.

“The indigenous peoples,” he wrote, “decorated their instruments of war

18. Ilustração Brasileira 15, no. 26 (June 1957): 29 mentions the employment of this technique by Theodoro Braga. The pieces were probably executed at São Paulo’s Liceum of Arts and Crafts.
19. Icamiba refers to a tribe of women corresponding to a native version of the Amazonians.
Fig. 10. Manoel Pastana, plan for tray with crab and wicker basket motif, in bronze and porcelain, gouache on paper, n.d. Pará State Museum, Belém. Photograph by Luiz Braga.

Fig. 11. Manoel Pastana, plan for a parasol with breadfruit (leaf and fruit), Bombax munguba, and Marajoara ceramic motifs, gouache on paper, n.d. Pará State Museum, Belém. Photograph by Luiz Braga.

Fig. 12. Manoel Pastana, plan for coffee and tea set with toucan and palm tree (acar) motifs, gouache on paper, n.d. Pará State Museum, Belém. Photograph by Luiz Braga.
and domestic use, irrefutable proof of their elevated degree of artistic sensibility. There were tribes, such as those of Marajó and Santarém in Pará, who left their permanent mark on the art of sculpture, given the progressiveness of their decorative compositions."

By the end of the 1920s, the jungle had invaded Brazilian literature. "In a far corner of Northern Brazil, at an hour when so deep a hush had fallen on the virgin forest that the brawling of the Uraricoera River could be heard, an Indian woman of the Tapanhuma tribe gave birth to an unlovely son, sired by the Terror of the Night. This child was an oddity; his skin black as calcined ivory. They named him Macunaima..." This is the opening to *Macunaima, o herói sem nenhum coração* (Macunaima, the hero with no character), Mário de Andrade's great rhapsodic novel about the Brazilian "race." From literature, the theme of the jungle would give impetus to some of the most important moments in twentieth-century Brazilian graphic arts. Generally speaking, there were graphic experimentations in editions of works by Ronald de Carvalho, Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Guilherme de Almeida, Raúl Bopp, Cassiano Ricardo, Murilo Mendes, and others. With the publication of Emíliano Di Cavalcanti's *Farnocbes da meia noite* (Marionettes of midnight) (1921), plastic artists became sporadically involved in the design of book covers and book illustration (Tarsila do Amaral, Vicente do Rego Montenegro, Anita Malfatti, Victor Brecheret, Flávio de Carvalho, J. Carlos) and in book production, the richest example being the work of Oswaldo Goeldi (1895–1961). No artist of the period surpassed Goeldi in his fervent production of illustrations — engravings and especially drawings — for books, magazines, and journals.

One of the defining traits of Brazilian modernism was the creation of the graphic design profession. Correia Dias was among the first to make a name for himself in this field. His production was extensive, diverse, and constant; furthermore, he developed his own graphic language. He was unquestionably the graphic artist most devoted to Amazonian themes. The greatest historian of Brazilian caricature, Herman Lima, considered Correia Dias's work at the end of the second decade of this century the touchstone of true renewal of his art among us and felt his book covers represent a beautiful effort in terms of plastic utilization of the fauna and flora of our land, with results only occasionally—inas vignettes, with fish, butterflies, palms, and fern leaves—achieved in J. Carlos's comparably high art (fig. 15). After 1920, with a Brazilian-American cover, Correia Dias went on to employ Marajóara elements in graphic arts. Following an initial fascination with tropical nature, when his decorative motifs embraced the image of nature as paradise in the service of forming a Brazilian cultural identity, Correia Dias moved on with Marajóara ceramics to signs that bore witness to native history (figs. 14 and 15).

In 1923 the book *Légendes, croyances, et talismans des indiens de l'Amazonie* (Legends, beliefs, and talismans of the Amazonian Indians), adapted by P. L. Duchartre and illustrated by Vicente do Rego Monteiro (1899–1970), was published in Paris (fig. 16). Printed in black and dark red, the graphic feel of the work is telluric, as if it were a piece of archaeological ceramic work from the Amazon. The book’s cover, in black with two tones of brown and the white of the paper, foreshadowed the palette that would define Monteiro’s painting in the 1920s, his primary period of production. Despite all the problems of modernist appropriation of the esthetic patterns of tribal societies, frequently called “primitivism,” Monteiro’s work has another connotation. It represents an early corpus within Brazilian modernism, marked by nationalist intent, in an era of effort to overcome the culture’s colonized status by incorporating native dimensions. Monteiro made a series of drawings with Indianist themes in Rio and São Paulo, where the works were exhibited in 1920.

As *Légendes, croyances, et talismans des indiens de l'Amazonie* is profusely illustrated, including a cover, title page, friezes, and vignettes, it is possible to establish connections between Monteiro’s drawing and some of the decorative and symbolic patterns of native ceramics. In one example, the crack that emerges from the waters in the illustration of the legend of the Matanda River (fig. 17) corresponds to anthropomorphic urns of the civilization of the Maracá River in
Amapá, discovered in 1896. The reference is in the oval shape of the rock, the angular definition of its facial features, and the lateral line of its stylized top-knot.

If Vicente do Rego Monteiro initiated "archaism" in modern Brazilian art, Anita Malfitti’s work, with the illustrative drawing *India or Moema* (1917), still falls within the rhetorical tradition of the nineteenth century, with no real relation to the native cultural universe. However, her work may be compared to the jungle invented by Henri Rousseau. Malfitti places a *Victoria regia*, an Amazonian plant, in the same landscape with several species of cactus, a plant traditionally associated with dry climates. The nature surrounding her *Moema* is more like that of a botanical garden — where plants of different ecosystems coexist — than a reference to the jungle. These facts and interpretations support the contention that it is Monteiro who inaugurates discovery of the culture of the jungle among the artists of the Week of Modern Art (11–18 February 1922). His painting is linked to the archaeology of Marajó by an ample visual vocabulary. Besides their hieratic, totemic presence, the figures in some paintings seem to surface as anthropomorphic ceramics. In Monteiro’s pictorial work, figures acquire the “volume” of sculptures; lateral shadows create illusory mass in relief style. The earthy palette, his earth tones, are not merely a telluric message but also relate to the use of red clay in the ceramic work of Marajó. His jungle takes on added significance. It is the land of living legends, its soil the guardian of the history of past cultures, revealed by archaeology.

Ships travel through the text of Guilherme de Almeida’s poem *raça* (race), symbolizing its ethnic dimension and social context. The Amazon River imposes its metaphorical force, conveying Brazilian history itself:

amazonian rhythms of torrential waters with—
caravels
canoes
slave-ships

Using the symbolic dimension of the process of ethnic encounter between Portuguese (caravels), Indians (canoes), and Africans (slave-ships), Almeida’s text turns to the image of three ships correlated in history’s flow. The book’s cover (fig. 18) has a discreet drawing by Yún de Almeida Prado (1898–1987). Its high point is its graphic structure, with three allegorical colors — the white paper, the black print, and the green in the drawing — referring to Brazil’s ethnic groups.5

Oswaldo Goeldi, that great ethical paradigm of Brazilian art, was marked by the Amazon. He was born in Rio in 1895; the following year his family moved to Belém. His father, the scientist Emílio Goeldi (referred to above), was in charge of reorganizing the Paraense Museum, formerly the Philatelic Society (1866). The museum’s gardens made an impression on the young Goeldi and were his most essential memory of the Amazon.

Goeldi’s graphic work — his engravings, drawings, and illustrations — have an intense expressionist quality that fuses pathos and ethos. His light takes the anguished path of nocturnal light. This characteristic light led poet

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5 A precedent for the graphic use of green to convey native Brazilianness appears in Guto Cráil, *O embalo da rede* (The swaying hammock) (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Castilho, 1925). The cover is by an unidentified author.
Carlos Drummond de Andrade to proclaim Goeldi Brazil's surveillance of the moral night that lies beneath the physical night. When remembering childhood, or while alone during somber evenings spent in an old Rio townhouse, Goeldi captured light that represents not only plastic elements but moral meaning (as in his masterpiece, the woodcut O guarda-chuva vermehdo [The red umbrella]). His singularity, in the Brazilian modernist atmosphere and in his personal solitude, is linked to a rejection of the exotic and the literary, of caricature nationalism and pamphletary social realism.

In 1937 Goeldi illustrated Cobra Norato (The snake Norato), Raul Bopp's book of forest legends. It came out in successive editions with covers by Brazilian expressionist Flavio de Carvalho (1931), Zoltan Kemeny (1947), and Jean Miró (1954). Here Goeldi's thematic agenda allowed for exploration into the possibilities of water: the dense waters of the forest and light weighted with humidity. The relation of the woodcuts to the structure of Bopp's book and the course of the text make Cobra Norato a unique work. Art images migrate between the lines of the text as though constructing and deconstructing the language. Goeldi also engraved the end papers, the title page, the chapter initials, vignettes, and large illustrations. Personally, I consider this work to be the finest moment in twentieth-century Brazilian graphics. In modernist architecture of the first half of this century, in various parts of Brazil—not only large cities like Rio and São Paulo but also smaller centers like Juiz de Fora—there was a tendency to adopt Marajoara decorative motifs in certain constructions. There might be a theater with that architectural look. But, as with art nouveau, Marajoara architecture was merely decoration applied to a structure—a formalist attitude added as modernist taste to any kind of architecture. On the one hand, one might recall that there were no brick constructions by the Brazilian Indians—including the Marajo civilization. On the other hand, imported eclectic standards since the middle of the nineteenth century dispersed the knowledge developed by colonial Portuguese architecture, adapted to the tropical climate. A restored relationship with the environment was initiated along with intellectual events, including conferences. In 1924 the Brazilian Cultural Center announced a conference on art and thought, scheduling a 7 August session by José Mariano Filho on "O Jardim Tropical" (The tropical garden). In 1933 the first International Exposition of Tropical Architecture, featuring a lecture by Frank Lloyd Wright, took place. Brazil's retropicalization was under way.

In 1930 in Rio, Correia Dias presented plans for a pool at Guilherme Guinle's residence (fig. 19). It was a garden with a tank for Victorias regias. Intended for an area of sloping ground, the plan included tiled benches and walls, fountains, stones in their natural form, vegetation, and steps. The tiles were

24. These art images were almost certainly inspired by the edition of Blaise Cendrars's Petits contes raillées pour les enfants des blancs (Paris: Au sans paroi, 1929), illustrated with woodcuts of animals by Pierre Picaud. Since in 1927 (the year of the edition of Cobra Norato) the Swiss author gave a copy to Beatriz Reynal with whom Goeldi was living at the time. (This copy is at the National Library in Rio.) However, the animals in the European book occupy reserved space, a vignette for example; Goeldi's ants invade and wander through the text.

25. An illustration from Cobra Norato may be found on page 80 of this journal. Ed.

26. According to information from Piedade Epstein Grisberg.

27. Terra do Sol (Rio de Janeiro), no. 6 (June 1924): 424.
decorated with a modular graphic design in the Marajoara style. With this work Correia Dias continued the Portuguese tradition, widely transported to Brazil's coastal cities, of using tiles in the decoration of buildings; and he anticipated the incorporation of large painted tile panels by Cláudio Portinari into the exterior walls of the Ministry of Education and Public Health in Rio. Vases in the Marajoara style, containing living plants, were strategically placed along walls and on benches. Atop the fountain, a large hieratic sculpture in the form of a muiçanguai, approximately fifty centimeters in height, seemed to preside over the water's flow. By integrating natural elements such as stone, Correia Dias's plan simultaneously created an intimate space within a more ample and theatrical garden.

In São Paulo in the 1930s, Theodoro Braga built his Retiro Marajoara (Marajoara retreat) (fig. 21), a house based on an architectural plan by Eduardo Kneese de Mello. The construction of this mansion house was in keeping with the colonial style permeating a certain type of twentieth-century

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28. Muiçanguai are stone pendants in the shape of frogs and toads, belonging to the Tupi's-Tamoios culture, and today popularly considered amulets.

29. "At the villa he built in São Paulo—the Retiro Marajoara—the artist contemplates with simplicity and justified pride his magnificent body of work, spread to the four corners of the land he so loves." Sociedade Brasileira de Belas Artes, Boletim de Belas Artes (Rio de Janeiro) 7 (July 1945): 58.

Brazilian architecture, but quite distant from the Portuguese-style constructions of Belém and more especially from the Amazonian vernacular. What characterizes Braga’s house is the plan for Marajóra decoration in the adornment of exterior walls, floors, and wrought-iron works — in sum, the details. All the ornamental motifs were fully executed by Braga, who realized a translation of the Marajóra style (with art-deco references) to the elements of colonial architecture: windows, tiles, balconies. The top floor is defined by two iron balconies, a further reminder of Belém. Four suspended arms, all iron, support globe lights over the balconies, a concept from the days of gas lanterns. Each balcony is held on the underside in simulated support by two wrought-iron brackets. In the colonial baroque style, the balcony doors are topped by a cornice in relief simulating an elevated lintel or “yoke.” The contour of these doors and of the windows follows the same general decorative style. The exterior window treatments are shutters with their characteristic trelises. Ties along the edge of the roof, in the style of colonial glazed ceramic tiles, are decorated on the lower part with the same Marajóra motifs. As with the ceramics of Marajó, in which some designs were carved into clay, the Marajóra motifs in white high relief, with their precise geometry, are applied to exterior walls that are also white. The ornament’s design reveals itself in the play of shadows beneath the sun’s light, perhaps best at the zenith. This effect is reminiscent of the white facade of the eighteenth-century St. Alexander’s Church in Belém with its geometric decorations and rosaries, probably the work of indigenous peoples.

Inside Braga’s Marajóra home (figs. 20 and 22), the parquet floor of two different color woods follows a simple pattern of straight lines. The resulting contrast is visually appealing and very much to the Amazonian taste. In the main room, a tempora mural reproduces the decorative background of an
“içajaba” (funeral urn) from Brazil’s prehistoric age,” in two tones. Furniture carved with Marajoara motifs, and vases—possibly of metal and made by Braga himself—are distributed throughout the house. Other elements decorated in the Marajoara style are the wrought-iron railing along the indoor stairway, stairway risers with mosaic images of human faces, and the consoles of the exterior balconies. Between the three spaces of the plinth there are other ornamental motifs; the central space is filled by a stylized decoration of a jaboti (land turtle)—symbol of the vanished indigenous nation. Another distinguishing feature is two large arched iron doors opening from the living room onto the adjoining terrace. The space between the two areas is decorated with a complex of lines, forming a human figure in the Marajoara style, as though taken from a ceramic vase. An open arch, closed by an iron grate with Marajoara motifs, joins the living room and the dining room, giving a certain open feel to the social area. The grate is crowned by an anthropomorphic element, a stylized human face topping motifs of Marajoara women’s tangas, all taken directly from decorations on Marajoara ceramics. The lights were designed by Braga, their copper structure made to stand out by filigreed design elements. This space is perhaps the most internationalist, as minimal Marajoara details give way to the volume and art-deco design of the objects.

From the 1920s to the 1940s the Marajoara style was widely adopted, refashioning the Brazilians’ world as it moved from ceramic vases to rugs, lights, cushions, furniture, leather bags, shawls—even to carnival costumes (fig. 23). But the incorporation of elements of indigenous culture did not mean arbitrary appropriation of the Other’s values. On the contrary, there was research into the self, an effort to establish a profile of this social being, the Brazilian, who had been given a name: Macunaima. The basic patterns belonged to the pre-Columbian civilizations of the Amazon, which produced the most complex ceramic artifacts of the entire Brazilian territory. Thus the jungle, a space outside of history according to Hegel’s philosophy, became the only native historical reference possible for symbolic modernist Brazilian production.

31. Ibid.

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Fig. 1. Amazon Theater, Manaus, walkway, Portuguese-style stone mosaic. Photograph by Jean Manzoea.