

The red of Lina and Oscar

Luiza Paes de Barros Camara de Lucia Beltramini¹, Paulo César Castral¹

¹ *Institute of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo, São Carlos, Brazil.*
luiza.beltramini@usp.br, pcastral@usp.br

Corresponding author: Luiza Paes de Barros Camara de Lucia Beltramini (luiza.beltramini@usp.br)

ABSTRACT

The article gives a brief history of modernist architects Lina Bo Bardi and Oscar Niemeyer and tries, through a bibliographic review and visual analysis, to identify meanings, analyze the generated spatiality and understand the impact caused by the repetitive and striking use of the red color. To do so, a brief history of the color red and how it was mastered, perceived, and appropriated by humans over the centuries is traced, and, finally, three essential projects of each architect are analyzed. We conclude narratives for the reds of Lina and Oscar, who go through the communist history of the characters, visual indications, and the theory of functionalism.

KEYWORDS Modernism, Brazilian modernism, red, Oscar Niemeyer, Lina Bo Bardi

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1. Modern Brazilian Architecture

According to Lúcio Costa (1902 –1998), modernism in Brazil is justified by the affirmation of the identity of our culture and representing the "spirit of the time." For Oba (2014), this movement, which prioritized function, caused Brazilian architects much interest. The French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier had a significant influence on the formation of modern thought in Brazilian architects. The discussion about modern issues gained substantial prominence in Brazil after the constant migratory movements in the post-war period, whether from Brazilians who returned after studying abroad or from foreigners looking for an opportunity outside Europe in crisis.

It is important to note that not only did the European crisis repel professionals, but the condition of Brazil attracted them. Cavalcanti (2001 apud Lobato, 2009) states that good economic conditions, the government's will to establish a new face for the federal capital, and a generation of revolutionary intellectuals and architects made modern Brazilian architecture a reality. With the new republic, the change in the bases of production of national wealth and the migration of the status of Brazil from an agrarian to an emerging country creates a demand for buildings that represent this recent phase of the country. These works were mainly from the government of Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945), which had as one of its priorities the construction of buildings to house government agencies of the new administration (Cavalcanti 2001 cited Lobato, 2009).

Among the various possibilities for discussing the use of color in this historical-cultural context, two Brazilian architects were selected for a more careful look at this article due to the recognized influence in the unfolding of the issues opened by the avant-garde. The works analyzed, both three examples of Lina Bo Bardi as three of Oscar Niemeyer have a marked cultural nature. In addition to the programs themselves, such a characteristic is manifested in the condition of manifestos about what architecture is, which this type of order allows. In this sense, party issues are displayed more clearly, making it possible to investigate the meanings of design actions and how the definition of red, present in all the works to be analyzed, contributes to the creation of the architectural discourse of each architect.

1.1. Lina Bo Bardi

The architect was born on 5 Dec. 1914 in Rome, Italy. She graduated in architecture from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Rome. After graduating, she moved to Milan, where, after working for Gio Ponti, she became the editor of the magazine *Quaderni di*

Domus. During the Second World War, she founded with Bruno Zevi the publication *A-Cultura della Vita* and is a member of the Italian Communist Party. In 1946, she married the journalist and art critic Pedro M. Bardi (1909-1999), and, in that same year, they left for Brazil, where she was naturalized in 1951.

Initially, she lived in Rio de Janeiro-RJ, then the country's capital, where she had the opportunity to expand her influences and knowledge of the new country. However, when she moved to São Paulo (SP) - after Pietro was invited to found and direct the Museum of Art of São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand - MASP - Lina turns icon of modern Brazilian architecture. In 1950 Lina founded *Habitat* magazine - an important cultural vehicle that included art, architecture, design, cinema, theater, music, photography. In 1951 she built her residence - the Glass House - which is currently the headquarters of the Instituto Lina Bo e P. M. Bardi. In 1957 construction began on the new MASP headquarters - Lina's first project that will be analyzed in the article - in 1959, "she is invited by the governor of Bahia to direct the Museum of Modern Art of Bahia (MAM-BA)" (Instituto Bardi, 2020), in the same year she restores Solar do Unhão - second project analyzed in the article. In 1977, the third project analyzed in this article began to be constructed - the Centro de Lazer Sesc - Fábrica Pompéia in São Paulo (SP).

1.2 Oscar Niemeyer

Oscar Niemeyer was a Brazilian, born in Rio de Janeiro-RJ on 15 Dec. 1907. He studied at the National School of Fine Arts (now the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). In his third year, he interns with Lúcio Costa - a future urban planner responsible for the new national capital Brasília (1960). Lúcio Costa was invited, in 1936, by the then Minister of Education Gustavo Capanema to design the new headquarters of the Ministry of Education and Health. Lúcio brings together a group of young architects; Lúcio still insists that Le Corbusier be invited as a consultant. Despite not inviting Oscar from the beginning, he ends up calling him. In this way, Oscar contributes to the project that is considered one of the foremost modern Brazilian architectural landmarks, the Gustavo Capanema Palace. After that, Oscar falls in the graces of important figures - as the best example, we have the governor of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil's future president and founder of Brasília, Juscelino Kubitschek. Oscar lived 104 years and worked until the last years of his life, resulting in a vast collection of works, drawings, and sketches. In 2003, nine years before his death, he was asked to design his first building in Britain as part of a Serpentine Gallery action devising the third work analyzed in this article.

2. The Red

According to Michel Pastoureau (2017), red was the first color that humans dominated, manufactured, reproduced, and discovered different tones, first in painting and later in the dye. According to the same author, this also explains why in some languages, the same word means "red," "beautiful," and "colorful." Le Corbusier (Serra Llunch, 2013) agreed and guaranteed that red affirmed its presence. One of the primary colors is considered a warm color (Argan, 1992) and has been widely used with mastery by great artists such as Piet Mondrian, Vassili Kandinsky, Marc Chagal, Ellsworth Kelly, and Mark Rothko.

Outside the artistic field, the color red is also very representative. According to Klein (2018), red has been a symbol of power and government since antiquity permeating the Middle Ages; it was worn by Roman emperors, popes, and European sovereigns. During the French Revolution, a movement that, according to some authors, inaugurates the Contemporary Age, the Jacobins, and sans-culottes as identification dressed in a red cap. During the 20th century, the color red was adopted by communist movements, workers, and socialist movements, in the sense of fraternity. In this context, the color was also associated with the hope of a better life, as well as with blood and suffering.

2.1 Museum of Art of São Paulo – São Paulo, São Paulo – Brazil

The Museum of Art of São Paulo was founded in 1947 by Assis Chateaubriand (1892-1968), businessman and patron of São Paulo. The first modern museum in the country was directed by the Italian critic and dealer Pietro Maria Bardi, Lina's husband. Initially, it worked on one floor of a business building and moved to the current location in 1968. The location of the building itself is iconic, situated on the most famous avenue in the country's financial capital; it is still under the intersection of another avenue. The landmark of the history of 20th-century architecture is based on the use of concrete and glass. Its 74-meter span has always been a geographical reference and meeting point.

The four massive pillars that support the volume above this span and the beams that make up this structural effort are bright red. Although, since the beginning of the sketches, the red color appeared and, according to Miyoshi (2006), it was an old idea for Lina to use the color, initially, the beams had no color; they were in apparent concrete without any aesthetic treatment. In the 1990s, to solve an infiltration problem, a company donated products "for the protection of exposed concrete against deterioration" (Miyoshi, 2006, p. 143). The color

chosen by Lina is fire-fighter red (fig.1); in addition to transforming the building into a "cultural event" (Miyoshi, 2006, p. 143), the proposal aimed to encourage the use of paints that fled white or ice accounted for 70% of national consumption (Miyoshi, 2006).

On the floors below the span, there are two stair-ramps also in red (fig.2). The proposal made by Lina Bo Bardi, in this sense, reserves the use of red in two distinct functions, structure and circulation. The red elements bring common the desire to signal, point out, and distinguish the elements put in color. Architecture should be understood as a set of elements articulated throughout but with their particularities.



Fig. 1 – MASP, (KON, N.)



Fig. 2 – Stair-ramps. (KON, N.)

2.2 The Solar do Unhão – Salvador Bahia, Brazil

Upon receiving the invitation to direct the Museum of Modern Art, Lina stayed in Salvador, Bahia, between 1959 and 1964, where she found another face of Brazilian identity, the African face. The museum is

located in Solar do Unhão, an existing building that needed to be restored and adapted to receive such a program. Due to her experience in post-World War II Italy, Lina applies critical restoration to the set of buildings (Cerávolo, 2010, p. 219). The use of the color red in the external frames (fig. 3) was not agreed with heritage agencies; Cerávolo (2010) states that the colors of the facades and frames would be specified later after submission to the National Heritage agency. Finally, the choice of red color did not pass through the appreciation of Organs responsible agencies; Azevedo (1963 apud CERÁVOLO, 2010, p. 234) characterizes this and other choices as a "loss for the monument."

In the Solar do Unhão project, what can be perceived is the use of red as a signaling act with intentionality close to the use of color in the MASP project. The architect with her choice reveals her look at the historical construction processes belonging to the work involved, the difference between the brick-built in masonry, and the openings treated in wood. By observing the set, one can learn the difference between the fixed parts and the moving parts, employing colors, enabling many other inferences about the architectural qualities.



Fig. 3. Solar do Unhão's Entrance. . (Kon, N.)

2.3 Sesc Pompéia – São Paulo, São Paulo – Brazil

Lina was invited in 1977 by Renato Requeixa and Gláucia Amaral, then directors of the SESC - Social Service of Commerce, to transform the Mauser Brothers' old drums factory into a leisure center. The project develops over nine years with the help of students and recent graduates (Ferraz, 2008). The new public facility should promote social harmony, cultural production, and the social welfare of the city's population. With the addition of two large exposed concrete prisms to the original set, the project gained prominence, the blocks receiving sports equipment were inaugurated in 1986.

The apertures of the lower block have an amoeboid form, while in the more massive block, they are square but do not follow orthogonal alignment. In both buildings, the openings are closed in red wooden trellis (fig. 4). In addition to the use of red in the frames, several installations, such as air ducts, truss fittings, handrails, throughout the complex, which a priori should go unnoticed, become red and stand out in the landscape.

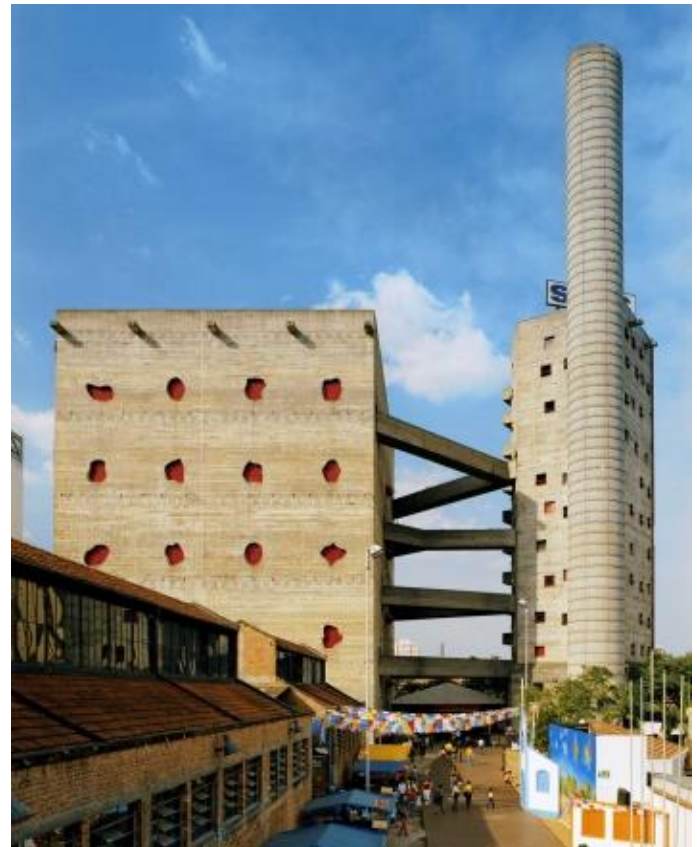


Fig. 4. Sport blocks - Sesc Pompéia. (Kon, N.)

The Sesc Pompéia project reveals the coherence of the architect's plastic research. An intention in the sports blocks is very close to that seen at Solar do Unhão. Despite different situations, the same desire is to signal and differentiate between fixed, open, and mobile openings. The amoeboid shape in one block, and the misalignment, in the other block reveals the constructive possibilities of concrete as much as the rhythm and alignment reveal the limits of masonry in the Solar.

2.4 Museum of Contemporary Art of Niterói (MAC), Niterói, Rio de Janeiro – Brazil

The museum on the banks of Guanabara Bay in Niterói was designed in collaboration with structural engineer Bruno Contarini. Completed in 1996, the cylinder blooms like a flower composing the landscape for which it is also a viewpoint. Its circular shape includes a large glass opening

that allows visitors to the museum to appreciate all the natural beauty that surrounds it. With its main body at 16 meters high, access is via a winding concrete ramp that allows visitors to appreciate the landscape and the building itself on a 98-meter long architectural promenade full of changing perspectives. The invitation and marking of the ramp take place through its red fire floor, a plastic decision to highlight the access of the large white volume (fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Museum of Contemporary Art (Leonardo Finotti In: SEGRE, 2010)



Fig.6 Main facade with access ramp – (Modern Architecture London)

2.5 Serpentine Gallery Summer Pavilion – London, United Kingdom

The Serpentine Gallery pavilion aims to give visibility to architects who do not yet have a project in the UK, so the talent of the professional can be shared and appreciated by a new audience strolling through Hyde Park. The pavilion is part of an annual event produced by the gallery that performs its assembly at the beginning of the London summer and is dismantled at the end of the

same season (Allen, 2018). For 21 years, this annual event has featured projects by great architects, and in 2003 it was Oscar Niemeyer's turn.

With clear traces of modernism, it was "built-in concrete, painted white and accessed by a ramp" (Doroteo, 2016). A synthesis of significant elements of the architect's best-known projects, a grand gesture of drawing, loose from the terrain, unfolds in a single direction and generates the spatiality of the ensemble. This gesture is presented in white, being emphasized at the entrance by a void, built away from the closings, and accessed by a ramp with a red cover (fig 6), and at the back by a red plane.

2.6 Auditorium – Ibirapuera – São Paulo, São Paulo – Brazil

Conceived by the then governor of the state of São Paulo, José Pires do Rio, the park that would be modeled after great European examples such as Hyde Park in London or Boi de Boulogne in Paris. Parque do Ibirapuera occupies a total of 157,000 m² and was only opened in 1954 due to the drainage problem that the land presented. The problem was solved by the then official Manequinho Lopes, who decided to plant hundreds of Australian eucalyptus on the ground to drain the water in the region.



Fig.7. Ibirapuera Auditorium (Kon, N.)

Oscar Niemeyer designed the buildings that make up the park's infrastructure, and Burle Marx should run landscaping, but the latter was not executed. The park's program has various equipment such as temporary exhibition spaces, museums, auditoriums, lakes, and planetariums. Despite the vast program here, we will analyze only the auditorium. Initially, the building was not completed and was only completed in 2005, almost 50 years after the park opened. The auditorium is a trapezoid with its entrance marked by a red marquee (fig.7),

nicknamed Flint (Dudeque, 2009). In addition to the punctual presence at the entrance, the back of the auditorium (which is reversible) (fig. 8), the large opening door of the stage is also a large red rectangle that strongly marks the white prism.



Fig.8. Ibirapuera Auditorium Back Door (Kon, N.)

Oscar Niemeyer adopts a very controlled color/material palette that uses only white, red, and wood. White is reserved for opaque surfaces built, while the wood is for the handrail and some acoustic coverings. Red is highlighted not for a specific function but for accompanying the user/spectator through their experience in the auditorium spaces. First, it signals the entrance unequivocally with the marquee and immediately welcomes the route along the internal ramp (fig. 9) to the audience spaces through the floor covering. It would be a matter of signaling, as in the previous cases. However, the experiential issue is highlighted when it is emphasized when inviting Tomie Otake to make a sculpture in red. The artist's occupation of the wall and ceiling radiate throughout the space through the reflection of color. Red expands its signaling and didactic function to become the poetic accent of the proposal.



Fig.9. Intern Ramp – Ibirapuera Auditorium (Kon, N.)

3. Conclusion

The secure connection of the two architects, Lina and Oscar, with the premise of modern architecture remained faithful to the attention to the functionalism typical of the avant-garde of the beginning of the 20th century. The red of Lina and Oscar may have had different origins; they are in sympathy with communism and in the certainty of marking their projects with vivid and exquisite colors. Kandinsky's theories fostered this avant-garde by attributing spiritual qualities to very few geometric elements and colors; for him, for example, "red is extremely immobile by a restless color, vivacious and active ... immense and almost inconsequential force" (Luz, 2014, p.214). The perceptual intensity of the red is adopted by the two architects, analyzed here, as a cognitive resource to signal what architecture is built on. Lina Bo Bardi's case, with a strong emphasis on the tectonic issues of the work in its plastic dimension through a didactic approach, is one of the ways she found of forming the critical conscience of modern man. In the case of Oscar Niemeyer, this social function emphasizes this social awareness due to its poetic dimension through the valorization of the experience of color. The two architects fixed themselves in the collective imagination as irreverent, bold, and brilliant; undoubtedly, they pictorially red-marked both histories.

4. Conflict of interest declaration

The authors declare that nothing affected their objectivity or independence and original work. Therefore, no conflict of interest exists.

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6. Short biography of the author(s)

Luiza Beltramini - Master's student at the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of São Paulo, a researcher at N.ELAC, Research Support Center for Language Studies in Architecture and City. Graduated in Interior Design (IFPB) and Architecture and Urbanism (UFPB), she is currently researching aspects of spatial design and perception, emphasizing the promenade architecture.

Paulo César Castral - Ph.D. Professor at the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São

Paulo, Research Group on Language Studies in Architecture and City (N.ELAC) coordinator, is responsible for the research line Perception of Architecture and the City. Holds a doctorate in Multimedia (UNICAMP), a master's degree in Architecture and Urbanism (EESC/USP), and a degree in Architecture and Urbanism (EESC/USP).

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