

Roberto Burle Marx Exhibition Opens May 6 at the Jewish Museum

Innovative 20th Century Landscape Architect Focus of First U.S. Exhibition to Showcase Full Range of His Artistic Output

New York, NY – From Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro to Biscayne Boulevard in Miami Beach, throughout Brazil and around the world, the innovative and prolific work of Roberto Burle Marx (1909–1994) has made him one of the most prominent landscape architects of the twentieth century. From May 6 through September 18, 2016, the Jewish Museum will present the first New York City exhibition to focus on Burle Marx in more than two decades, and the first exhibition in the United States to showcase the full range of his artistic output. Through nearly 140 works, *Roberto Burle Marx: Brazilian Modernist* will explore the richness and breadth of the artist's oeuvre – his landscape architecture, painting, sculpture, theater design, textiles, and jewelry – as well as related works by contemporary artists and examples from Burle Marx's varied collections. Following its New York presentation, the exhibition will travel to Berlin, Germany and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This is a strong year for design and architecture at the Jewish Museum with the presentation of three major design exhibitions: *Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History* (on view through August 9), *Roberto Burle Marx: Brazilian Modernist*, and *Pierre Chareau: Modern Architecture and Design* (November 4–March 26).

The son of a German-Jewish father and a Brazilian mother of French, Portuguese, and Dutch descent, Burle Marx embraced modernism in the early 1930s, as the movement was taking hold in his country among artists and intellectuals. Using abstraction as his guiding principle, and grand sweeps of voluminous local foliage and colorful flora, Burle Marx devised a new form of landscape expression, revolutionizing garden design. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, gardens in Brazil had primarily followed French models, featuring a symmetrical layout and imported flora. Burle Marx did away with symmetry and advocated for the use of native plants, making numerous incursions into the Brazilian countryside and jungle throughout his lifetime in search of rare species. He was a horticulturist and a pioneering ecologist who only used plants suitable to the environment and was one of the first to speak out against the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. Throughout a more than sixty-year career, Burle Marx designed over 2,000 gardens worldwide and discovered close to fifty plant species, and made paintings and objects of exuberant, rare beauty. He was also a talented baritone, and a consummate cook – a Renaissance man of the twentieth century bursting with creativity and ingenuity.

Famous projects range from his mosaic pavement design for Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana Beach seaside avenue to the multitude of gardens that embellish Brasilia, the capital city of Brazil, founded in 1960 and featuring buildings by famed architect Oscar Niemeyer. Although Burle

Marx's landscape design work is renowned worldwide, the artist's work in other media remains little known. The exhibition will highlight his accomplishments as a landscape architect, painter, sculptor, designer of textiles, jewelry, theater sets and costumes, as well as his avid collecting of Brazilian popular and religious art and his groundbreaking efforts as an ecologist. *Roberto Burle Marx: Brazilian Modernist* will also explore the world of his beloved Sítio, his former estate which houses his collection of tropical and semitropical plants, one of the largest in the world.

A major exhibition highlight is a magnificent, nearly 90-foot-long, wool tapestry created by the artist in 1969 for the Santo André Civic Center, near São Paulo. As is characteristic of his work from that period, bold colors, geometric, and biomorphic abstraction fuse in a gigantic composition, creating a veritable woven garden. This monumental work has only once before been exhibited outside Brazil.

Many of Roberto Burle Marx's most important and innovative projects will be represented by designs, maquettes, drawings, paintings, and photographs. A number of major public projects will be featured including Burle Marx's 1938 design for the gardens of the Ministry of Education and Health in Rio de Janeiro. The building, by a team of prominent architects, is an icon of Brazilian modernism. This commission solidified Burle Marx's status as Brazil's leading landscape architect. The mosaic pavement for Avenida Atlântica (1970), Copacabana Beach's main thoroughfare, is the artist's best-known project. The gigantic composition is more than two miles long with a pattern composed of bold abstract motifs in white, black, and red-brown stone. Burle Marx's most important project in the United States was his 1988 landscape and pavement design for Miami's Biscayne Boulevard, built in 1991 and extended in 2004 by his longtime associate, Haruyoshi Ono. Typically, Burle Marx's drawings for these projects are as graphically complex and distinctive as the completed works.

Burle Marx's private commissions are among his finest works, clearly articulating his view that "a garden is nature organized by man for man." Selected designs for private gardens will be showcased in the exhibition. A standout is the artist's 1979 plan for the Clemente Gomes Residence. A tribute to Renaissance water gardens, it is a celebration of flat terraces, waterfalls, and rain pools, inhabited by giant *Victoria Amazonica* water lilies and birds. Burle Marx also designed numerous green spaces and gardens for highrise office buildings, introducing innovative vertical gardens on exterior walls and roof terraces. His notable 1983 design for the headquarters of Banco Safra in São Paulo will be showcased, consisting of a rooftop garden with potted vegetation surrounded by mosaic pavement in red, white, and black Portuguese stone in an abstract design.

Roberto Burle Marx's gardens are works of modern art, not only because they make use of flat planes, abstract shapes, and bold color, but because of the way they behave: they prompt awareness of oneself in relation to the built environment. Burle Marx was an early practitioner of a contemporary way of working: crossing genres fluidly, integrating art with political concerns such as ecology, and disregarding the traditional separation of fields of practice. It is no surprise that today's artists find him a fruitful



source of inspiration.

In this exhibition, Burle Marx's global influence and legacy will also be examined through the work of a number of international contemporary artists with ties to Latin America, all born after 1950, whom he has inspired including Venezuelan painter Juan Araujo, Brazilian sculptor Paloma Bosquê, French artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Italian photographer Luisa Lambri, American experimental musician Arto Lindsay, American artist Nick Mauss, and Brazilian artist Beatriz Milhazes.

As a child, Juan Araujo visited Burle Marx's Parque del Este in Caracas. Today he creates appropriations inspired by iconic examples of Latin American modernist architecture including sites designed by Burle Marx. In a recent series of paintings, Araujo examines Burle Marx's impact through books written about him. He paints meticulous copies of pages from these books, paying homage to his subject while subtly altering the content and obscuring details, adding new layers of meaning.

Like Burle Marx, Paloma Bosquê sees art as a full-body experience, one that encompasses all the senses, thoroughly integrated with daily life. These ideas find their way into her exquisite *Trapinhos (Rags)*, sculptures formed of handmade cloth and brass rods, exploring the ongoing negotiation between the observer and the object in space.

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster works in film, performance, and installation. *Plages (Beaches)*, shot at Burle Marx's famous patterned sidewalk at the Copacabana seaside on New Year's Eve, 2000 to 2001, is a meditation on in-betweenness: between one year and another, between day and night, between sand and ocean. The film's concept is quintessentially Burle Marxian: transitional spaces—often undervalued and overlooked—are sites of pure openness, inviting the viewer to encounter both chance and staged, the known and the unknown.

Luisa Lambri's photographs investigate the relationship between architecture and the individual, exploring the psychological impact of designed space. In her intimate, light-filled photographs of Burle Marx's gardens at the Instituto Moreira Salles in Rio, Lambri plays with the idea of interiority and exteriority, composing her images with a formal precision akin to that of her subject.

For this exhibition Arto Lindsay has composed a soundscape in response to the landscape designs of Burle Marx, exploring aspects of shaping, patterning, and movement. Three sound sources, acoustic, electronic, and recorded nature sounds, will play at intervals throughout the gallery. Nick Mauss works with faience glazes on earthenware plaques, emphasizing the directness, delicacy, and volatility of the material. Mauss is inspired by Burle Marx's murals in mosaic tiles, designed to bring painterly imagery and color into an outdoor setting, using durable materials. He painted six ceramic plaques with layers of atmospheric color and line, using a Burle Marxian mixture of abstract and figurative imagery.



Gamboa II (2016), five newly created, hanging sculptures by Brazilian artist Beatriz Milhazes will be on view in the Jewish Museum's lobby, creating a vibrant, colorful canopy overhead. Produced with the help of Rio de Janeiro's famed samba schools—whose craftspeople work year-round creating costumes, dances, and elaborate floats in preparation for Carnival—the sculptures are composed of candy-colored materials including plastic shapes, paper flowers, and other shiny trinkets. In her chandelier-like sculptures, Beatriz Milhazes intertwines visual references to Brazilian Baroque, popular, and folk traditions with modern artistic movements such as Constructivism and Tropicália. Brazilian landscape design, including Roberto Burle Marx's Op art-style pathways for Copacabana Beach and the lush botanical garden near her own studio, are also major influences. *Gamboa II* will be on view as part of the ongoing series *Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings*, which brings newly commissioned contemporary art to the Jewish Museum's Skirball Lobby.

Roberto Burle Marx: Brazilian Modernist will demonstrate the versatility of the artist's extraordinary talents, from his earliest forays into landscape architecture to never-before-exhibited designs for synagogues and other Jewish sites he created late in life. For many visitors the exhibition will be their first introduction to the artist, allowing them to discover Burle Marx's full oeuvre. For others who are familiar with his work as a landscape architect, the exhibition will provide a comprehensive view into Burle Marx's multifaceted career and the relationship between his activities as a garden designer and his other artistic practices. Above all, it will clearly convey that Burle Marx's art and legacy live on, beautifying the lives of many and continuing to engage artists today.

Roberto Burle Marx: Brazilian Modernist is curated by Jens Hoffmann, Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Public Programs, and Claudia J. Nahson, Morris and Eva Feld Curator, with Rebecca Shaykin, Leon Levy Assistant Curator, The Jewish Museum. The exhibition was designed by Galia Solomonoff and Alejandro Stein of SAS/Solomonoff Architecture Studio with graphic design by Miko McGinty and Rita Jules of Miko McGinty Inc.

This exhibition is organized by the Jewish Museum, New York, in collaboration with the Sítio Roberto Burle Marx, Rio de Janeiro. Works have been lent by the Sítio Roberto Burle Marx and by Burle Marx & Cia. Ltda. (Burle Marx Landscape Design Studio), both in Rio de Janeiro, and other generous lenders.

The Sítio Roberto Burle Marx is a cultural site on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro and the former residence of Roberto Burle Marx. A unique estate, the Sítio is the main repository of Burle Marx's artistic output, also housing his collections of Brazilian popular and sacred art, religious paintings of the Cuzco School, seashells, glass, and Precolumbian artifacts. The Sítio's extensive gardens feature the artist's living collection of tropical and semitropical plants, one of the largest in the world.

Burle Marx & Cia. Ltda. (Burle Marx Landscape Design Studio) was founded in 1955. Haruyoshi Ono, the current Director, joined the firm in 1965, working with Roberto Burle Marx for some thirty years and collaborating



with him in all landscape design projects beginning in 1968. Since Roberto Burle Marx passed away in 1994, Haruyoshi has continued his legacy. The firm oversees the Roberto Burle Marx archives, offers consultancy for the restoration of its early gardens, and develops new landscape design projects.

About the Exhibition Tour

Following its New York City showing, the exhibition will travel to: Deutsche Bank KunstHalle, Berlin, Germany (July 7 – October 8, 2017) and Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (November 14, 2017 – March 18, 2018).

About the Catalogue

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Jewish Museum and Yale University Press are publishing a 224-page catalogue by Jens Hoffmann and Claudia J. Nahson. This beautifully illustrated and groundbreaking publication covers the full range of Burle Marx's artistic output, as well as his remarkable home, an abandoned estate that he transformed into his office, workshop, gallery, and living space. The enduring influence of Burle Marx's work is also explored through interviews with seven contemporary artists exemplifying the extent to which his work continues to be a source of inspiration. Featuring 185 color and 20 black-and-white illustrations, the hardcover book will be available worldwide and at the Jewish Museum's Cooper Shop for \$50.00.

Related Public Programs

The Jewish Museum will be presenting a series of exhibition related public programs including a May 12 concert by avant-garde artist/musician Arto Lindsay (co-presented with Bang on a Can); behind-the-scenes exhibition tours with curators on May 17 and September 13; a July 10 adult studio workshop taught by artist Mark Joshua Epstein; and gallery talks led by museum educators on selected afternoons in May, June, July, and September.

Programming at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum will offer varied programming to complement the Roberto Burle Marx exhibition at the Jewish Museum. Inspired by the wavy design that Burle Marx utilized in his abstract patterned mosaic sidewalk of Copacabana Beach, American landscape designer Walter Hood has created a series of modular benches for Cooper Hewitt's Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden, which will be installed later this spring. Two nights of Brazilian-themed performances will also take place this summer as part of the Cocktails at Cooper Hewitt series, held Thursdays from 6 to 9 p.m. in the Garden. Additional details to be announced.

Support

Major support for *Roberto Burle Marx: Brazilian Modernist* is provided by Deutsche Bank, a leading financial institution with a history of supporting international modern and contemporary artists. Deutsche Bank is also honored to bring this show to the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle in Berlin, returning a life's work to the city where Burle Marx found his calling as a landscape architect.



The exhibition is also made possible by The Emanuel and Riane Gruss Charitable Foundation, an anonymous donation in memory of Curtis Hereld and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. Additional support is provided by the Leon Levy Foundation.

About the Jewish Museum

Located on Museum Mile at Fifth Avenue and 92nd Street, the Jewish Museum is one of the world's preeminent institutions devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, offering intellectually engaging, educational, and provocative exhibitions and programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Museum was established in 1904, when Judge Mayer Sulzberger donated 26 ceremonial objects to The Jewish Theological Seminary as the core of a museum collection. Today, the Museum maintains a collection of over 30,000 works of art, artifacts, and broadcast media reflecting global Jewish identity, and presents a diverse schedule of internationally acclaimed temporary exhibitions.

The Jewish Museum is located at 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City. Museum hours are Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm; Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm. Museum admission is \$15.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$7.50 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish Museum members. Admission is Pay What You Wish on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm and free on Saturdays. For information on the Jewish Museum, the public may call 212.423.3200 or visit the website at TheJewishMuseum.org.

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Press contacts:

Anne Scher, Molly Kurzius, or Alex Wittenberg
The Jewish Museum
212.423.3271 or pressoffice@thejm.org

Andrea Schwan
Andrea Schwan Inc.
917.371.5023 or andrea@andreaschwan.com

