

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT LEADS WESTERN HEMISPHERE IN ENCOURAGING
MODERN ARCHITECTURE. EXHIBITION OF BRAZILIAN ARCHITECTURE
OPENS AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.

The Brazilian Government leads all other national governments in the Western Hemisphere in its discriminating and active encouragement of modern architecture. This is the conclusion reached by Philip L. Goodwin, F.A.I.A., noted New York architect who spent several months in Brazil last summer making a survey of its architecture for the exhibition Brazil Builds, which opens at the Museum of Modern Art Wednesday, January 13. Commenting on the leadership which the Brazilian Government is taking in modern architecture in the Western Hemisphere (now, because of the war, this position is preeminent in the world), Mr. Goodwin said:

"Even before the advent of the Vargas government in 1930 there were Brazilian experiments in modern architecture. From modest beginnings the movement, happening to coincide with a building boom, spread like brushfire. Almost overnight it has changed the faces of the great cities, Rio and São Paulo, where it has had its most enthusiastic reception.

"The construction of impressive new buildings to house all government and public service departments is evidence of the realization of the Brazilian Government and its forty million citizens of the great importance of their country, third in area in the world. Rio de Janeiro has the most beautiful government building in the Western Hemisphere, the new Ministry of Education and Health. Snr. Gustavo Capanema, Minister of Education and Health, has given the most active and practical encouragement to progressive architecture. He has also recognized the important contribution well-related painting and sculpture can make to architecture. The Ministry of Education and Health boasts a gigantic mural in tile by Portinari, Brazil's leading modern painter.

"Other capital cities of the world lag far behind Rio de Janeiro in architectural design. While Federal classic in Washington, Royal Academy archeology in London, Nazi classic in Munich, and neo-imperial in Moscow are still triumphant, Brazil has had the courage to break away from safe and easy conservatism. Its fearless departure from the slavery of traditionalism has put a depth charge under the antiquated routine of governmental thought and has set free the spirit of creative design. The capitals of the world that will need rebuilding after the war can look to no finer models than the modern buildings of the capital city of Brazil."

Although the emphasis is on modern building in Brazil, most of it erected in the last decade, the older architecture has not been neglected, for the exhibition embraces a period of almost three centuries, from 1652 to 1942. Brazil's beautiful old buildings, its early churches with their elaborate gold-encrusted interiors and the picturesque fazendas comprise almost a third of the exhibition. It has been installed in several galleries and the main hall of the first floor of the Museum and is composed of enlarged photographs, architectural renderings, drawings, plans, maps, and continuous

screen projection of forty-eight color slides. Three models will also be shown:

1. Ministry of Education and Health, Rio de Janeiro, Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, Afonso Reidy, Carlos Leão, Jorge Moreira and Ernani Vasconcelos, architects. Le Corbusier, consultant.
2. João Arnstein House, São Paulo, Bernard Rudofsky, architect, 1941
3. Brazilian Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939, Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, architects, with Paul Lester Wiener.

When he made his survey of Brazilian architecture, Mr. Goodwin was accompanied by G. E. Kidder Smith, A.I.A., who is well known as an architectural photographer. The 300 pictures in the exhibition have been selected largely from the thousand or more black-and-white and color photographs made by Mr. Smith in Brazil. Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Smith undertook this survey of Brazilian architecture under the joint auspices of the Museum and the American Institute of Architects. The Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs assisted the project in every way possible.

The installation for the exhibition has been designed by Alice M. Carson, Acting Curator of the Museum's Department of Architecture. Mr. Goodwin wrote the introduction of the 200-page book with 300 illustrations, four in full color, which will be published by the Museum in conjunction with the exhibition. Mrs. Elizabeth Mock assisted in editing and in the design for the layout of the book. The book jacket is by E. McKnight Kauffer.

At the entrance to the exhibition a wooden map of Brazil is superimposed on an outline of South America painted on the wall. Aerial views of the Brazilian coastline border the wooden map. Cities and States in the exhibition are indicated on the map. The visitor next sees a small screen on which forty-eight color slides of new and old architecture and scenes of Brazil are continuously projected.

The first gallery of the exhibition is devoted to the colonial architecture of Brazil. This is followed by several sections of modern architecture: Government buildings; transportation buildings including seaplane base and hangars; and a section on schools. The central section of the exhibition is devoted to Brazil's great contribution to modern architecture: the control of heat and light externally through sun breaks rather than internally through expensive artificial air cooling or inadequate venetian blinds. In this section models show the principal types of Brazilian sun breaks, especially louvers which may be fixed or movable, vertical or horizontal. In

his introduction to the book Mr. Goodwin writes on this subject of sun control as follows:

"Brazil's great original contribution to modern architecture is the control of heat and glare on glass surfaces by means of external blinds. North America has blandly ignored the entire question. Faced with summer's fierce Western sun, the average office building in the United States is like a hot-house, its double-hung windows half closed and unprotected. The miserable office workers either roast or hide behind airless awnings or depend on the feeble protection of venetian blinds--feeble because they do nothing to keep the sun from heating the glass. It was our curiosity to see how the Brazilians had handled this very important problem that really instigated our expedition. As early as 1933, Le Corbusier had used movable outside sunshades in his unexecuted project for Barcelona, but it was the Brazilians who first put theory into practice.

"As developed by the modern architects of Brazil, these external blinds are sometimes horizontal, sometimes vertical, sometimes movable, sometimes fixed. They are called quebra sol in Portuguese, but the French term brise-soleil is more generally used.

"In no case has the sunshade been more successfully integrated with the architecture than in the Ministry of Education and Health. The cool south side exposes its wall of double-hung sash without protection. On the north, however, (remember that in Brazil the sun comes from the north), the floors, reduced to thin concrete slabs, are cantilevered out to about four feet in front of the window face. Similar vertical divisions, spaced four feet apart, divide the facade into a gigantic egg-crate of rectangular shapes. The upper part of each rectangle contains three horizontal louvers of asbestos in steel frames,--all three regulated by a crank inside the building. The blue-painted louvers can be turned with the movement of the sun, admitting plenty of air yet keeping out all direct sunlight and reducing the glare to the most desirable amount of reflected light. As the small blue planes are moved to various angles in different parts of the building, there is a charming variety of light and shade. A similar example of the horizontal blind is found in Corrêa Lima's Coastal Boat Passenger Station in Rio.

"At the Pampulha Yacht Club in Belo Horizonte, Niemeyer has repeated the vertical, adjustable type of sunshade first used by him at the Obra do Berço in Rio. There a bank of tall louvers some six feet high by one wide, can be worked by one of the nuns with no more trouble than it takes to turn a door handle.

"The brothers Roberto have used a very different kind of vertical blind on the A. B. I. building. The two hot sides of the building are faced with rows of diagonally fixed concrete slabs, each thirty-two inches deep and two and three-quarters inches thick, opening on a narrow continuous passage. Some of the rooms have glass on the inner side of the passage; others are left open."

Following the section devoted to Brazil's use of the sun break, the exhibition next continues with a gallery which shows a group of miscellaneous modern buildings such as the Institute for Snake Serums, a water tower and an anatomical laboratory. Succeeding galleries show hotels, apartments and private houses. A section of recreational buildings follows showing the casino near Belo Horizonte, a yacht club and a restaurant. The final section is devoted to views of a day nursery housed in the most modern of buildings.

Continued on reverse side.....

A preliminary sketch-model of proposed monumental sculpture by Jacques Lipchitz, now in this country, for the auditorium wall of the Ministry of Education terminates the Exhibition.

After the Exhibition closes at the Museum of Modern Art on March 7, it will be circulated to schools and colleges throughout the country.