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**GALLERY
GUIDE**



Roberto Burle Marx
Brazilian Modernist
May 6 – September 18, 2016

Exposed to a wide range of cultural influences from an early age, Roberto Burle Marx was a multifaceted artist who drew extensively from established principles of landscape architecture while also working to reinvent the discipline.

A companion to the exhibition, this guide provides a closer look at the diverse ideas Burle Marx explored as he revolutionized garden design and artistic expression in Brazil.



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IRREGULAR FORMS

Brazil's gardens in the late 19th and early 20th centuries largely followed French landscape design, which is distinctively symmetrical and formal. The layout of Quinta da Boa Vista (1), a public park in Rio de Janeiro planned by Auguste François Marie Glaziou in the 1870s, evokes the gardens of Versailles in France. While Roberto Burle Marx's designs sometimes embraced French tenets, many diverged from such uniformity. In 1938, his design for the gardens of the Ministry of Education and Health (2) in Rio de Janeiro broke away

from European tradition, introducing free-form plantings and incorporating texture as a key element. His 1979 plan for the private garden of Fazenda Vargem Grande (Clemente Gomes residence) (3) in Areias is a thoroughly modern tribute to Renaissance water gardens – a celebration of flat terraces, waterfalls, and rain pools arranged in an asymmetrical composition. Burle Marx's irregular designs transformed the practice of landscape architecture in Brazil and worldwide.

“When I see something like [*Victoria amazonica* water lilies] I start to believe that life has meaning. I believe that my life was not wasted, I prevented the destruction of many plants . . . And when I look at these plants, this water, and this hill, I can say: I am a rich man.”
 — Roberto Burle Marx



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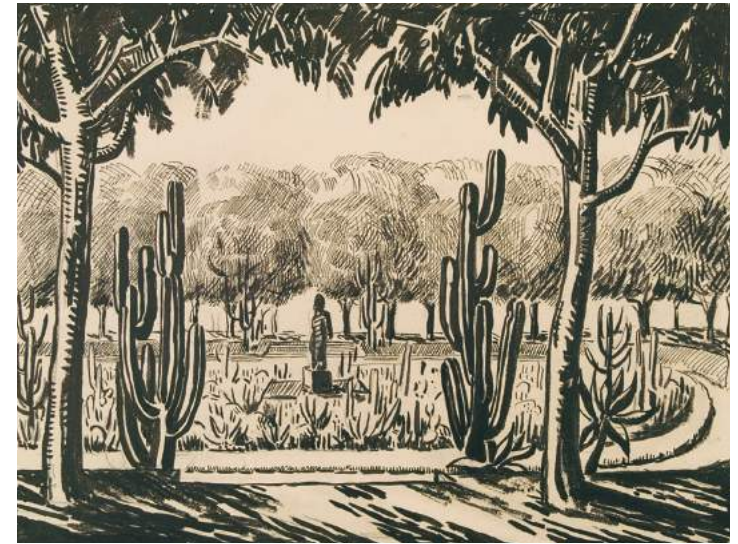
NATIVE PLANTS

Traditional Brazilian landscape design relied on imported plant life, including European roses and gladioli, as illustrated by Claude Monet in his c. 1876 painting *Gladioli* (4). Roberto Burle Marx’s use of flora original to his homeland, such as the billowing foliage of the Amazon and Atlantic rainforests, was innovative. His 1979 plan for the private garden of Fazenda Vargem Grande

(Clemente Gomes residence) (5) in Areias highlighted the remarkable and expansive *Victoria amazonica* water lilies. Throughout his life, Burle Marx advocated passionately for the environment. To this day, Sítio Roberto Burle Marx (6), the artist’s former home, preserves his collection of tropical and semitropical plants — one of the largest in the world.



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BRAZILIAN MODERNISM

Roberto Burle Marx’s use of local vegetation not only related to his horticulturist ideals, but also aligned with his contemporaries who in the early 1930s were reconciling modernist art with *Brasilidade* or Brazilian identity. Such artists explored Brazilian modernism by depicting native cacti, such as Tarsila do Amaral in her paintings and Lasar Segall in his 1928 *Two Mangue Women with Cactus* (7).

Burle Marx’s inclusion of regional plants — such as thorny vegetation from the semiarid Caatinga of northeastern Brazil in his 1935 *Madalena Cactus Garden*, Euclides da Cunha *Square* (8) — identifies him as a quintessential Brazilian modernist.



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ABSTRACTION

Although his paintings and drawings from the 1930s and early 1940s are primarily figurative, Roberto Burle Marx – who began his career as a painter – soon started flirting with abstraction. His design for the gardens of the Ministry of Education and Health (2) reveals the extent to which Burle Marx channeled Joan Miró and Jean Arp, such as the latter’s 1917 *Enak’s Tears (Terrestrial Forms)* (9). In the 1950s,

Burle Marx often utilized strict geometry, as in his 1956 design for the gardens of the former Francisco Pignatari residence (now Parque Burle Marx) (10) in São Paulo. His 1983 mineral roof garden of the Banco Safra headquarters (11) in São Paulo, with its bold, nonrepresentational pavement, acts as a foil for the surrounding Brutalist high-rise buildings.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS EXPLORING THE EXHIBITION

GALLERY TALKS

Discussions related to the exhibition, led by Jewish Museum educators.

Spiritual Modernism

Fridays, May 13, June 24,
and September 9, 2 pm

From 2D to 3D and Back Again

Friday, June 10, and
Tuesday, July 5, 2 pm

The Abstract Landscape

Fridays, May 20 and September 16,
and Tuesday, July 19, 2 pm

Free with Museum Admission;
RSVP Recommended

BANG ON A CAN: PERFORMANCE BY ARTO LINDSAY

Thursday, May 12, 7:30 pm

Inspired by the exhibition, this performance echoes themes of cultural experimentation and cross-pollination between American and Brazilian rock and pop music.

Tickets: \$18 General;
\$15 Students and Seniors;
\$12 Jewish Museum and
Bang on a Can Members

ADULT STUDIO WORKSHOP: THE PLAYFUL LANDSCAPE

Sunday, July 10, noon–5 pm

Using the environment as inspiration, investigate composition and abstraction in a class taught by artist Mark Joshua Epstein.

Course Fee: \$65 General; \$50 Members
All materials included

THIS IS HOW WE DO IT

Tuesday, May 17, 2 pm

Rebecca Shaykin, Leon Levy Assistant Curator, speaks about the contemporary art included in the exhibition. This program features ASL interpretation.

Tuesday, September 13, 2 pm

Claudia Nahson, Morris & Eva Feld Curator, discusses the process of organizing the exhibition.

Free with Museum Admission;
RSVP Recommended

COCKTAILS AT COOPER HEWITT

Select Thursdays, 6–9 pm

Visit our neighbor for an evening of Brazilian music, cocktails, and dancing. Presented by Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, in collaboration with the Jewish Museum.

For more information, visit
CooperHewitt.org/Events.

MAS QUE NADA: BRAZILIAN ART SINCE THE 1960S

Thursday, September 8, 6:30 pm

This program considers the state of contemporary art in Brazil since the 1960s with a focus on the history of the São Paulo Biennial.

Free with Pay-What-You-Wish Admission;
RSVP Recommended

Reservations at TheJewishMuseum.org/Calendar, 212.423.3337, or the admission desk.

For information on Access Services, including assistive listening devices and wheelchairs, visit TheJewishMuseum.org/Access.



5th Ave at 92nd St, NYC
TheJewishMuseum.org

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Deutsche Bank

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The Jewish Museum is under the auspices of The Jewish Theological Seminary.

Cover: Roberto Burle Marx, early 1980s. © Hedgecoe / TopFoto / The Image Works. | **Image 1:** Auguste François Marie Glaziou, Quinta da Boa Vista, Rio de Janeiro, 1869 – 1878. Quapa Project. | **Image 2:** Rooftop Garden of the Ministry of Education and Health, designed by Roberto Burle Marx, Rio de Janeiro, 1938. Photograph © Cesar Barreto. | **Image 3:** Garden of the Clemente Gomes residence, Fazenda Vargem Grande, Areias, designed by Roberto Burle Marx, 1979. © Burle Marx Landscape Design Studio, Rio de Janeiro. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved. | **Image 4:** Claude Monet, *Gladioli*, c. 1876, oil on canvas. | **Image 5:** *Victoria amazonica* water lilies, garden of the Fazenda Vargem Grande, Clemente Gomes residence, Areias, designed by Roberto Burle Marx, 1979. © Burle Marx Landscape Design Studio, Rio de Janeiro. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved. | **Image 6:** Gardens of the Sítio Roberto Burle Marx, Rio de Janeiro. © Malcolm Raggett. | **Image 7:** Lasar Segall, *Two Mangue Women with Cactus*, 1928, drypoint. Museu Lasar Segall – Iphan / Ministério da Cultura. | **Image 8:** *Madalena Cactus Garden, Euclides da Cunha Square*, Recife, 1935, ink on paper. Image provided by Sítio Roberto Burle Marx, Rio de Janeiro. | **Image 9:** Jean (Hans) Arp, *Enak's Tears (Terrestrial Forms)*, 1917, painted wood. MoMA. Benjamin Scharps and David Scharps Fund and purchase MoMA, 1197.1979. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. | **Image 10:** Gardens of the former Francisco Pignatari residence, now Parque Burle Marx, São Paulo, 1956. Photograph © Cesar Barreto. | **Image 11:** Mineral roof garden, Banco Safra headquarters, São Paulo, designed by Roberto Burle Marx, 1983. Photograph © Leonardo Finotti.

