

Flamengo Park and *Teatro para Brincar*

Isabelle Arthuis

Flamengo Park, called 'Aterro do Flamengo' or 'Aterro' by the Cariocas, was inaugurated in 1965 and stretches between Santos Dumont airport and Botafogo beach over an area of 120 hectares. The Aterro is a strip of land reclaimed from the sea thanks to the rubble resulting from the destruction of the neighbouring hills, particularly of the Morro de Santo Antônio.

The park was created by Lota de Macedo Soares to become the Central Tropical Park. Affonso Eduardo Reidy, architect of the MAM Rio, was chosen to carry out and direct the architectural and urban planning project. Together with his team he built all the concrete constructions, as well as the buildings related to leisure activities that were designed by Ethel Bauzer Medeiros. The landscaping project was entrusted to Roberto Burle Marx, who planted over 17 thousand trees there.

From 1965 on, Flamengo Park was listed as Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Heritage under the heading *Historic Gardens*. It was considered to be the largest built urban park in the world. Nowadays it is classified as a *Modern Garden* due to its proximity to the movement of Modern Brazilian Architecture and since 2012 it has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the category *Urban Cultural Landscape*.

Flamengo Park, which is about fifty years old today, is a territory rich in art, culture and history. It opens up different points of view, it projects diverse ways of thinking, living and inhabiting, by questioning, all at once, the past, the present and the future. Reidy's original project reveals multiple forms of collaboration that are visible and identifiable and speak to us across time. It calls upon our relationship with the space and the territory of what is alive.

The park is an ecological project, in accordance with the desire of Roberto Burle Marx to transmit the knowledge of native species, in order to conserve them, creating an arboretum in the centre of the city. The landscape is revealed in layers and according to the classification of trees in groups of species. The walk is didactic. The alleys designed and lined with trees naturally lead us into spaces dedicated to human activities.

The park is a social project, open to all, where different classes of society can meet through multiple activities and according to the tastes and interests of each: sports, music, theatre, leisure, monuments, museums, bars, restaurants, picnic areas, playgrounds, walks, marina, beach...

The park is an artistic project that is part of the modernity of its time. Built on the ruins of its past, between the sea and the mountain, it undulates and unfolds like a sculpture *in situ*, a large geometric drawing and a tropical painting in bright colours. The verticality of the palm

trees and their repetition throughout the territory gives the rhythm and punctuates the general reading as a long cinematographic travelling shot.

The park is a humanist project, which echoes the positivist philosophy. At the foot of the Gloria walkways, the following words are inscribed in the interior walls of the Temple of Humanity; and they resonate with Affonso Reidy's multidisciplinary project and the concerns of artists and thinkers of the 1960s in Brazil: / Espaço, Industria, Arquitetura, Escultura, Pintura, Terra, Muzica, Poezia, Politica, Patriciado, Logica, Astronomia, Fizica, Quimica, Biologia, Sociologia, Mulher, Politeismo, Fetichismo, Patria, Astrolatrismo, Monoteismo, Sacerdocio, Proletariado, Moral, Humanidade /

Flamengo Park is a Total Work of Art in the open-air.

Teatro para Brincar is emblematic of this project.

Located at the end of the park, on the side that is opposite to the one of MAM Rio, *Teatro para brincar* is the artwork of Mário Ferreira Sophia, who was still studying architecture when he joined Reidy's team in 1965. The work is a painted concrete platform surrounded by lawns and trees, which set up an opera stage. The stage is circular. It is divided into two open spaces by a small section of wall. The point of view is modified by our movements around the object and constantly recomposes it. The work is dynamic and lively, it is a modern sculpture that fits in with its time and summons its contemporaries. It questions a past, a present and a future time, it awakens the creative imagination and encourages rêverie. Only its title sums up its function.

To play? What? With whom? And how?

So many questions that suggest future actions...

A future to build, a theatre to play.

Isabelle Arthuis,

Teatro para brincar

Black and white photograph, print on paper, spotlights, blue filter

ACT 1 – *ReActive*, MAM Rio – December 2020

ACT 2 – *ReActive*, Parque do Flamengo

Keep the light on, a photographic performance by Isabelle Arthuis

One day event – a playlist for *Teatro para brincar*