

# Painting-garden; garden-painting: the ambivalence of Burle Marx's gardens

**Pittura-giardino; giardino-pittura:  
l'ambivalenza dei giardini di Burle Marx**

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## Ambivalence of the pictorial garden

When mentioning Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994), the first correlation that certainly appears is the image of sinuous gardens. He is known as one of the most influential landscape architects of the 20th century, in Brazil and worldwide. The relevance of his work is shown not only in quantitative terms – the estimate is that he developed over two thousand projects during his life<sup>(1)</sup> – but is mainly due to his mastering of different scales, from small private gardens to large public works, creating significant and potent spaces of sociability.

The same multiscale and multidimensional experimentation of his landscape architecture works is equally reflected on the huge variety of media used to externalize his process of research and creation. According to architect and friend Lucio Costa (1902-1998), “the works of the botanist, gardener, landscape architect, is nurtured by the works of the plastic artist, draughtsman, painter, and vice versa, in a continuous back and forth”<sup>(2)</sup>. From this fruitful process derives an extensive range of artistic manifestations, such as engraving, painting, sculpture, serigraph, tapestry, lithograph, jewellery design, crystal vases, lighting fixtures, ceramic panels, fabric painting, theatre scenery and costumes, flower arrangements... In other words, all that would be capable of incorporating the spirit of modern plastic research.

It is undeniable that Burle Marx's landscape architecture works produced during the 1930s and 1940s are primarily identified as painting, i.e., free experimentation of colours and shapes on various types of surfaces, using various techniques and strategies. As pointed by critic Sigfried Giedion (1888-1968) about the artist, in 1952:

He is an abstract painter. A sensitive artist who understands the language of plants. [...] Flowers are planted in uniform colours and masses. These thickets of strong colours, free shapes, seem to

<sup>(1)</sup> William Howard Adams, “Preface”, in *Roberto Burle Marx. Landscapes reflected*, edited by Rossana Vaccarino (New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 4-6: 5.

<sup>(2)</sup> Lucio Costa, “Roberto Burle Marx, o Senhor de Guaratiba” in *Burle Marx: Homenagem à Natureza*, edited by Paulo Queiroz, Lucia Victoria Peltier Queiroz and Leonardo Boff (Petrópolis, Editora Vozes, 1979), 13-15: 14.

<sup>(3)</sup> Sigfried Giedion, “Burle Marx e o Jardim Contemporâneo”, in Queiroz, Peltier Queiroz, Boff, *Burle Marx*, 39-40: 39, originally published in the journal *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, special issue, 42-43, August 1952.

<sup>(4)</sup> Can be highlighted those of the gardens of the Ministry of Education and Health building (1938), Burton Tremaine residence (1948), Odette Monteiro residence (1948), Duque de Caxias square (1948), Walter Moreira Salles residence, Ibirapuera Park (1953), Olivo Gomes residence (1965), among others.

<sup>(5)</sup> Drawings, reduced-scale model and gouache drawing of the project for Burton Tremaine residence (donated by Mr. And Mrs. Burton Tremaine in 1966), a gouache drawing of the project for Duque de Caxias square (donated by Philip L. Goodwin in 1948) and three gouache drawings for Ibirapuera Park (two donated by Roblee McCarthy, Jr. Fund and Lily Auchincloss Fund in 1991 and one purchased by Inter-American Fund in 1953).

<sup>(6)</sup> The exhibition “Burle Marx: the Unnatural Art of the Garden” had as guest curator William Howard Adams, fellow of the Myrin Institute in New York City.

<sup>(7)</sup> Guilherme Mazza Dourado, “Dois dedos de prosa. A correspondência de Roberto Burle Marx”, *Arquitextos*, 2017 <https://www.vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/18.208/6716>.

**Abstract:** This paper presents reflections on the work of Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx – one of the most influential in Brazil and worldwide – and its complex relationship with the field of painting. His garden designs, usually approached as free experimentation of colours and shapes, establish notable links with aesthetic principles of modern painting – such as the use of floating, isolated, sensual curvilinear shapes of Hans Arp and Juan Miró, and Van Gogh’s vibrant, agitated colour planes – and were exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the world. This paper discusses these issues by approaching the complex relationship between art and landscape architecture, nature and artifice present in Burle Marx’s work, particularly in the gardens designed in the period from the 1930s to the 1960s.

**Keywords:** Burle Marx, Landscape Architecture, Modern Painting, Garden, Nature



6.1  
Roberto Burle Marx, Ministério de Educação e Saúde roof garden, Rio de Janeiro, 1938. Gouache on board 52x105.5 cm.  
(Rio de Janeiro, Burle Marx & Cia Ltda Collection)

6.2  
Roberto Burle Marx, Walter Moreira Salles gardens, 1951.  
Gouache on board 95x123 cm.  
(Rio de Janeiro, Burle Marx & Cia. Ltda Collection)

have been extracted from a modern pattern fabric and laid on the lawn. This affinity with contemporary art constitutes the secret of Burle Marx’s gardens.<sup>(3)</sup>

In the context of this discussion, it is important to underline that as from the 1950s on his garden plans were usually presented in publications and exhibitions on large expressive gouache canvas<sup>(4)</sup> [Fig. 6.1, 6.2]. Some of these pictorial representations presently belong to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) of New York<sup>(5)</sup>, demonstrating the institution’s interest in his work, to the point of having an individual exhibition of his work in 1991<sup>(6)</sup> that was the first show of a landscape architect.

Another important aspect in this argument is that in general these widely publicised drawings and gouaches are considered by critics and scholars as graphic pieces of the design process or resources of project presentation to clients. However, as pointed out by researcher Guilherme Mazza Dourado<sup>(7)</sup>,



many of these colour boards, with strong visual appeal representing the overall plan of some gardens, were produced by Burle Marx and his team especially for the retrospective exhibition on the work of the landscape architect at the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP) in 1952, with museography by architect Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992). This was the first in a series of other individual exhibitions of his work, first in the United States of America – in a joint action of the Pan-American Union and the Smithsonian Institution<sup>(8)</sup> – and later in a number of European cities<sup>(9)</sup>, mediated by the Cultural Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With these exhibitions, this set of gouache plans became, in a way, linked to a broader project of internationalization of the Brazilian modern production, in which the vanguardist and appealing language of Roberto Burle Marx's landscape architecture had a fundamental role. Moreover, the massive international dissemination of these coloured boards certainly contributed to that the specialized critics identified in Burle Marx the ability to "paint with nature"<sup>(10)</sup>.

Here it is necessary to take Giedion's argument. It is undeniable that Burle Marx's garden plans are reminders of abstract paintings, characterized by organic curvilinear shape and strong visual appeal. There are clear references to the works of Jean Arp (1886-1966), Joan Miró (1933-1993), Henri Matisse (1869-1954), with the dynamic, floating, sensual shapes, or still Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) with the chromatic agitation and unquietness that catches the eye. In this sense, Burle Marx's modern anti-naturalism becomes evident from the use of colours, in which are prioritized, for instance, red, orange and yellow, in detriment of the tones of green, common in realistic representations of gardens.

Some strategies used by Matisse that produce tension in the traditional opposition between contour and colour (which gain even more strength in the collages "cut directly into colour"<sup>(11)</sup>) are broadly debated by Yve-Alain Bois in his text "Matisse and 'Arche-drawing'" and can be extended here to landscape architect Burle Marx. Once again, Giedion's argument seems to highlight the structural and constructive character of colour in Burle Marx's plans (as in Matisse's paintings and collages). It is colour, with its morphological construction strength, that precisely defines plain, luminous, intense zones, that enables to renounce the third dimension, and produces total appropriation of the surface. Lines, in their turn, are not contours, but arabesques<sup>(12)</sup> functioning as lines of force to sustain the space. Whether it be the space of the painting, or the space of the garden plan, the latter with the possibility to spatialize to the soil's surface.

<sup>(8)</sup> According to Guilherme Mazza Dourado, the North-American exhibitions (1954 and 1955) are direct unfolding of a particular interest of historian Annemarie Henle Pope, then director of the Smithsonian Institute Traveling Exhibition Service, when visiting the exhibition at MASP in 1952.

<sup>(9)</sup> José Oswaldo de Meira Penna, "Exposições de Arquitetura Brasileira", Módulo: Revista Brasileira de Artes Plásticas, 13 (1959), 38-45: 38.

<sup>(10)</sup> Adams, "Preface", 5.

<sup>(11)</sup> About the book *Jazz* (Henri Matisse, *Jazz*, Paris, Tériade, 1947) Matisse says: "Drawing with Scissors. Cutting directly into colour reminds me of a sculptor's carving into stone. This book was conceived in that spirit". Jack D. Flam, *Matisse on Art* (New York, E. P. Dutton, 1978), 112.

<sup>(12)</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, "Matisse and 'Arche-drawing'", in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, MIT Press, 1998), 3-63: 17.



If, on the one hand, despite all controversies, considering the arguments presented it is impossible to separate the relationship between Burle Marx's gardens and modern painting, on the other hand one should be attentive to possible reductionisms or simplifications that may result from this idea. It is important to consider that beyond the merely pictorial values, the art of gardens, given its character, deals with three-dimensional and volumetric attributes that determine the creation of spaces. The artist himself is incisive when separating the two fields – landscape architecture and painting – because they approach different problematics:

If I make a garden I do not want to make a painting, if I make a painting I do not want to make a wood engraving, if I make a xylograph I do not want to make a lithograph; each specialty requires a technique and a means of expression. This is what I am very attentive to: I do not want to make a painting that is a garden. There is no doubt that painting and artistic issues have influenced my entire concept of art. I seek in my life not to be enclosed in a formula. I detest formulas. I love principles.<sup>(13)</sup>

The paintings on canvas that Burle Marx produces as from the 1930s on are still quite figurative, comprise still life, portraits [Fig. 6.3] and some landscapes, with recurrent references to natural elements [Fig. 6.4], which clearly points to his interest in plants, their shapes and colours.

It is only from the 1940s on that he makes pictorial experiments in the sense of simplifying figuration, which demonstrates a tentative assimilation of cubist values, clearly deriving from the French experiences of Pablo Picasso (1881-1873) and George Braque<sup>(14)</sup> (1882-1963). These experiments manifest, in a way, still representative apprehensions of profiles [Fig. 6.5], musical instru-

6.3

Roberto Burle Marx, *Mulher de Combinação Rosa*, 1933. Oil on canvas 101x71 cm. (Rio de Janeiro, Sítio Roberto Burle Marx Collection, IPHAN/Minc)

6.4

Roberto Burle Marx, *Vaso com Strelitzia e ficus*, 1939. Oil on canvas 100.5x81.5 cm. (Rio de Janeiro, Sítio Roberto Burle Marx Collection, IPHAN/Minc)

6.5

Roberto Burle Marx, *Retrato de Gene Berendt*, 1942. Oil on canvas 116.0x89.0 cm. (Rio de Janeiro, Sítio Roberto Burle Marx Collection, IPHAN/Minc)

<sup>(13)</sup> Soraia Cals, *Roberto Burle Marx. Uma Fotobiografia* (Rio de Janeiro, S. Cals, 1995), 27.

<sup>(14)</sup> For a thorough debate, see Edward F. Fry, "Convergence of traditions: The Cubism of Picasso and Braque", in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, edited by William Stanley Rubin, Kirk Varnedoe, Lynn Zelevansky (New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 92-106.

Roberto Burle Marx, Salgado Filho Square, Santos Dumont Airport, Rio de Janeiro, 1938. Automotive painting on Eucatex, 122x150 cm. (Rio de Janeiro, Burle Marx & Cia. Ltda Collection)



ments, harlequins, lozenges or even landscapes and demonstrate an attempt – still incipient – to make coexist in painting multiple targets through the multi-faceting of surfaces. Despite this effort, these representations seem not to question yet the very notions of illusionism or realism in painting and seem not to renounce the third dimension through the search of planarity in favour of the materiality of painting (themes that are cherished by modernist experiments). It is worthy of note that for the art critic Clement Greenberg it was the “inexorable planarity of the surface” that characterized modernist painting<sup>(15)</sup>. In this sense, the spatiality of Burle Marx’s painting seemed not to achieve these essential attributes: it continued to be representative, with the conventional presence of a figure over a background. His effort, therefore, is circumscribed to the geometrization<sup>(16)</sup> of natural shapes, clearly having difficulty in producing abstraction of the natural world.

However, in his landscape design experiences during this period, perhaps because of the possibilities of his art’s media – trees, bushes, ground cover plants, stones, water – this disconnection from the representation of reality happens in a more direct way. His gardens are presented as abstract plastic exercises that seek to constitute a self-referential unity, an own and autonomous experience, though linked to an infinitely broader extension and movement of nature as a whole. As mentioned before, in his biomorphic gardens there are clear references to the works of Arp, Miró, Matisse [Fig. 6.6]. It should be mentioned that the reference to the neoplastic experience of Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) is also noticed in the more rigid orthogonal combinations and grid structures [Fig. 6.7] capable of imposing a new rhythm, a new order to landscape, but that gain flexibility from the vibration of planes with the intercalation of tones, volumes, two- and three-dimensionalities<sup>(17)</sup>.

A brief explanation is made here on these possible European references. In general, historiography tends to highlight that in 1928, at the age of 19,

<sup>(15)</sup> Clement Greenberg, “A Pintura Modernista”, in *Clement Greenberg e o Debate Crítico*, organization, presentation and notes by Gloria Ferreira, Cecília Cotrim de Mello; translation by Maria Luiza X. de A. Borges (Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 1997), 101-110: 103.

<sup>(16)</sup> It is noteworthy that for Yve-Alain Bois the definition of cubism is not so much related to the geometrizing style. He approaches this issue in his article “Cubistic, Cubic and Cubist”, in *Architecture and Cubism* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1997), 187-194. In his concept, these garden paintings would then be “cubistic”.

<sup>(17)</sup> Geometric and orthogonal experiences of this period can be seen especially in the following projects: Parque do Ibirapuera near Palácio das Indústrias (1953), Museu de Arte Moderna (1954) and Edmundo Cavanelas residence (1954).



6.7

Roberto Burle Marx, Francisco Pignatari house, 1954.  
(Rio de Janeiro, Burle Marx & Cia. Ltda Collection)

Burle Marx went to Berlin to treat an eye problem. Often, critics refer to this trip as responsible for the “revelation” of his landscape design abilities after his contact with species originating from Brazil, acclimatized in a glasshouse in the Botanical Garden of Dahlen. This way of narrating historical facts corroborates the mystification of the landscape architect’s figure, who is in general approached as a “complete artist”, practically a native genius, in the words of Lucio Costa<sup>(18)</sup>. However, it is important to de-naturalize these narratives with the objective of problematizing his production. In this trip, beyond the contact with exuberant Brazilian plants, he certainly followed the cultural effervescence of that moment, visiting museums and attending shows and exhibitions:

“I visited, for the first time, in person, the masters’ great works. I saw the first large exhibition of Van Gogh’s work. I became so enthusiastic – such an intense painting – that it invaded me! My means of expression should have been painting”.<sup>(19)</sup>

Most likely, these multiple and complex conjugations were present throughout his later work, which makes his ways of comprehending the relationship between painting and landscape architecture ambiguous and intriguing. Therefore, one can say that Burle Marx made a critical apprehension and appropriation of these pictorial vocabularies to design his gardens, adding his own interpretation and transforming them through a creative intellectual process of reinvention. Like a sort of “collection of repertoires” that enables to associate the advantages and circumstances of their combination through an original and authentic method. According to art critic Lélia Coelho Frota (1938-2010), it is a way of “active-seeing”<sup>(20)</sup> and not simply seeing passively: the artist can see, capture, transform and apply.

<sup>(18)</sup> Lucio Costa, “Muita Construção, alguma arquitetura e um milagre (1951). Depoimento de um arquiteto carioca”, in Lucio Costa, *Lucio Costa. Registro de uma vivência* (São Paulo, Empresa das Artes, 1995), 157-172: 170.

<sup>(19)</sup> Conrad Hamerman, “Última entrevista de Burle Marx”, *Revista Folha Burle Marx. Sociedade dos Amigos de Roberto Burle Marx*, 21, XVIII (Sep. 2012), 40-51, translation published from the original “Burle Marx: The last interview”, *Brazil Theme Issue: The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 21 (1995), 156-179.

<sup>(20)</sup> Lélia Coelho Frota, “Roberto Burle Marx: O parceiro da natureza”, *Revista Municipal de Engenharia* (Jan. / Mar. 1949), 41-53: 47.



6.8  
Roberto Burle Marx, Odette and Julio Monteiro gardens, 1945.  
(Rio de Janeiro, Burle Marx & Cia. Ltda Collection)

### The modern autonomy of Fazenda Marambaia's gardens

The gardens of Odette and Julio Monteiro residence (also known as Fazenda Marambaia) (1948), in Petrópolis, nearby the city of Rio de Janeiro, are among the most significant representations of the pictorial complexity expressed in Burle Marx's landscaping. This project was awarded at the 1st Architecture Exhibition of the 2nd Biennial of São Paulo in 1953, being widely commented by several critics, besides being visited by German architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) during his trip to Brazil in 1954<sup>(21)</sup>.

The property lies in a valley in the municipality of Petrópolis, situated high up in the chain of mountains known as "Região Serrana", in the state of Rio de Janeiro, surrounded by remaining areas of the Mata Atlântica (Atlantic Forest), in an exuberant natural scenery. The residence, a traditional and solid neo-colonial building designed by architect Wladimir Alves de Souza (1908-1994), is located in a decentralized way in relation to the ensemble, reinforcing the fact that the guiding line of the landscaping design is the site's topography and not the position of the architectural element. Thus, it can be stated that the garden is constructed independently of the house, in a virtually autonomous manner, recognizing and incorporating the elements and characteristics of the surrounding nature, potentiating them through the intervention. In the presentation drawings of the projects [Fig. 6.8] one can observe that the demarcation of the building is dissolved in the context, not defining a central, hierarchical or even determinant position regarding the entire site.

<sup>(21)</sup> In January 1954 Walter Gropius and his wife Ise Frank visited the Odette Monteiro residence accompanied by Burle Marx, Claude Vincent and Wit-Olaf Prachnick. Cals, *Roberto Burle Marx*, 116.

The site's topography – more than the support of the work, its essential raw-material – is maintained and gently manipulated, creating elevations and depressions to re-accommodate the ensemble to a new reality proposed by the artist. The stream of water running in the property was dammed to create a lake in an organic shape; it becomes the central element in the garden and brings to its surface, through the phenomenon of reflection, the presence of the surrounding mountains' profile and the colours of the sky. Finally, the vegetation with ample chromatic variations is displayed on the terrain, following free and irregular lines echoing the surrounding mountains' silhouette.

The garden assumes a great pictorial force with its involving lines and intense chromaticism. The strong legibility is accentuated by the undulant contours and the ecstasy of the plain colour – or the architectural value of colour<sup>(22)</sup>, according to Fernand Léger (1881-1955) –, as well as by the intensity and interval of oppositions between the colouration of the flower beds, which are multiplied in the reflections on the water, and the contrast with the homogenous colouration of the surrounding natural landscape.

According to colourist master Henri Matisse (1869-1954):

The most important in colours are the relationships. Thanks to them, and only to them, the drawing can be intensely coloured without the need of colour. [...] an avalanche of colours loses strength. Colour only achieves its full expression when it is organized, when it corresponds to the artist's emotional intensity.<sup>(23)</sup>

Matisse complements: "It is necessary that the colour is not limited to 'dressing' the shape: it must build it"<sup>(24)</sup>. In other words, "It is not enough to put the colours, as much as they are beautiful, side by side; it is necessary that the colours react to one another"<sup>(25)</sup>.

In this sense, regarding the use of colours and their inter-relations in the gardens under analysis, we can find a proximity between Burle Marx's and Matisse's thinking. The landscape architect understands the special highlight that a tone can receive from the tone that is placed nearby, producing a wide richness of surface. He states that "the plant, like the colour, is enriched with meaning when there is juxtaposition of another colour or another plant"<sup>(26)</sup>.

However, it should be pointed that this garden does not assume the static characteristics of chromaticism and the possible relations of contrast it provides. New realities are created according to seasonal transformation of the species' chromaticism. Burle Marx uses plastic strategies for the distribution

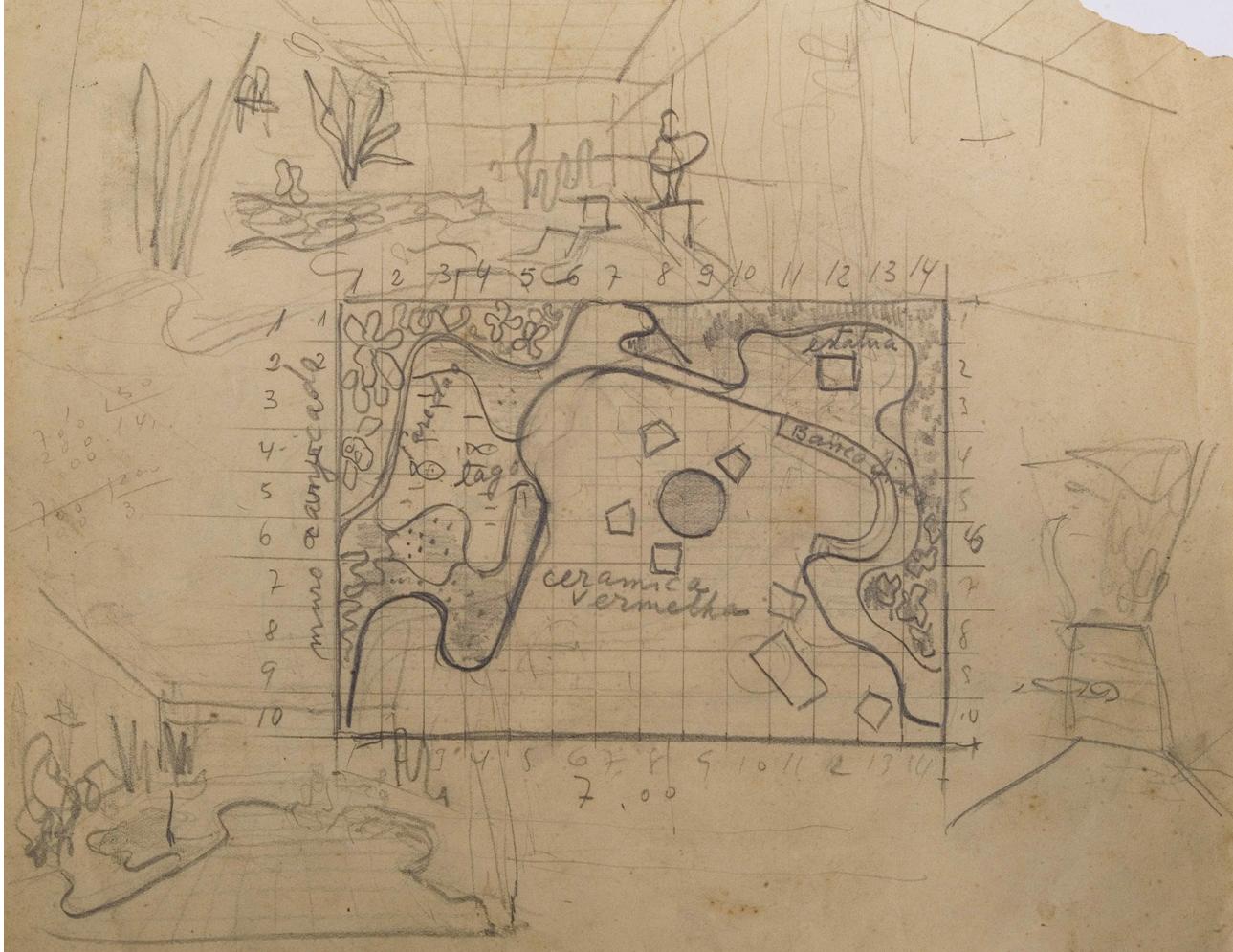
<sup>(22)</sup> Fernand Léger, *Funções da pintura* (São Paulo, Editora Nobel, 1989), 29-30.

<sup>(23)</sup> Henri Matisse, "Atributos e Modalidades da Cor, 1945", in *Escritos e Reflexões sobre arte: Henri Matisse*, Portuguese translation by Denise Bottmann (São Paulo, Cosac Naify, 2007), 223-225: 223.

<sup>(24)</sup> Henri Matisse, "Depoimento, 1952", in *Ivi*, 280-284: 282.

<sup>(25)</sup> Henri Matisse, "Comentários Anotados por André Verdet", in *Ivi*, 285-289: 285.

<sup>(26)</sup> Roberto Burle Marx, "Jardim e Ecologia, 1967", in Roberto Burle Marx, *Arte & Paisagem: Conferências Escolhidas* (São Paulo, Editora Nobel, 1987), 37-44: 38.



6.9  
 Roberto Burle Marx garden sketches. Pencil on paper  
 22.3x28.4 cm.  
 (Rio de Janeiro, Sítio Roberto Burle Marx Collection,  
 IPHAN/Minc)

of species with flowering in different seasons, so that the high chromaticism and contrasts are present throughout the year, all over the garden. Hence, in the same composition there are perennial foliage plants (which provide permanent colours) and seasonal flowering species. There is a multiple and dynamic apprehension of the work involving a living aesthetic sense besides enabling the garden to have its own life, acting as an organism, constantly generating new events.

It is also important to highlight that despite the drawing's organic fluidity – as in a Miró painting – and the coloured spots floating in the space – strategies that became Burle Marx's imprint – one observes the firmness of the line composed of geometrized, structured and constructed curves. Therefore, the design becomes distant from the untidiness and randomness of an arbitrary nature; on the contrary, it is established as sheer artifice, the result of an abstract plastic exercise typical of the modern subject's action in the world.

If, on the one hand, shape organicism reflects gestural liberation, on the other hand it demonstrates full rational control over an open structure, capable of guiding the free shape. In this sense, the apparent anti-geometry of his work actually uses geometry; each line has a starting point and an ending point that are absolutely relevant and non-arbitrary [Fig. 6.9]. There is nothing spontaneous or natural; the design activity constructs a new reality: it is the milestone of the conscious presence of thought over nature. However, this does not mean a rigid gestural imprisonment. Despite the geometric morphological principle,

the space is not static; it is always changing and is constructed in an elastic manner, presenting an internal functioning that is organic, free, life-expressive of all that sprouts, grows, evolves and invades the space.

Thus, Burle Marx's gesture seeks harmony through knowledge of nature's reality, in the cycle relationship between things and space, without abandoning, though, the precision of the design and the rigor of the construction. Therefore, the continuous and apparently intuitively free drawing is linked to the mental, rational, constructed geometric drawing.

This attitude also inaugurates an active stand toward nature, a constructive and regulatory performance that does not propose mimesis, but rather the construction of a humanized, interpreted, re-elaborated nature. It is about using the determinant means of art as an instrument to contain the perpetual movement of nature. From the constructive thinking arises the determination of the environment.

### **Aesthetic experimentation and scientific curiosity**

As to enable the applicability of projective concepts – though guided by repertoires of modern painting possibilities – it was utterly necessary that Burle Marx built his “active-seeing” also in the direction of botanic knowledge of species and their associations<sup>(27)</sup>. For this purpose, he went on excursions through the country, gathering, analysing and collecting new species<sup>(28)</sup>, carrying out a research on vegetable elements with landscaping potential, which would later be introduced in his projects.

According to botanic and researcher Luiz Emygdio de Mello Filho (1914-2002), Burle Marx managed in an integrated and dynamic manner the drawing, the project and reality: initially, the arrangements defined in the project were displayed on the plan; then, in the field, they could be freely reformulated<sup>(29)</sup>. This working process presupposes an articulated way of vision, which considers the match between constants and variants: the formal definition of space through drawing, knowledge of the species and their interactions, and time dimension. Thus, the natural matter used to compose these gardens also becomes abstract, because it does not seek the mere representation of a previous situation (that of the project), but always the creation of a new situation – a concept broadly linked to modern art principles.

In this process it is crucial to consider the growth rhythm of the vegetable elements at the various moments of the garden's concretization: conception of the idea, implementation, maturity, flowering, and maintenance. Each plant that constitutes a colour patch in Burle Marx's composition is not analysed in its

<sup>(27)</sup> It is important to mention his partnership with botanic and researcher Luiz Emygdio de Mello Filho (1914-2002).

<sup>(28)</sup> The botanic specimens were gathered at Sítio Santo Antônio da Bica, in Rio de Janeiro, where he kept a collection of Brazilian ornamental plants and rare tropical species in general.

<sup>(29)</sup> Luiz Emygdio de Mello Filho, “Burle Marx – uma relação profissional e humana”, *Revista Municipal de Engenharia*. Edição Especial Burle Marx 90 anos (Jan./Dez. 1999), 28-31: 30.

concrete physical qualities as a vegetable element, but rather as a mutable and ephemeral abstract phenomenon of colours and volumes. In this approach, the very idea of a garden evokes a totally different experience from that of a time-static work; a dynamic that is peculiar to the biological activity of plants and people.

Therefore, we conclude that his gardens, although being an extremely graphic and visual conception, is associated to a broad knowledge of species and great ability to deal with the vocabulary of plants (having a temporary character) and durable materials (having a permanent character), leading to the most varied responses. It is a way of conceiving the modern space through landscape architecture: a high pictorial sensibility loaded with intellectuality.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that the apprehension of a garden establishes a vast aesthetical register: besides enabling the visual experimentation of space, it also enables the sensorial perception of space, through the body's experience; an approach of the relational situation between the work and the spectator, which will be pictured by the Brazilian neo-concrete avant-garde in the 1950<sup>(30)</sup>. In this sense, despite the rigorous and precise spatial definition, these gardens provide a singular experience regarding the freedom to move around the space, sensitizing the body for a new spatial order based on the topological character.

This stand before the world also evokes nature that is process, a continuous and not finite creation. It is subjected to nature's instability, related to changes of light on colours and textures of the elements, to the movement of the wind, always enabling new realities, opened to the aesthetic experience, and new readings that have constant mobility, always filled with new significations and new discoveries. Through the intellectual process of landscape architecture, Burle Marx imposes an artistic sense to nature, reformulating the integration between art and science, contributing to the construction of ambiances, which become incorporated as collective heritage, establishing affective bonds between the subject and the landscape.

<sup>(30)</sup> Among the most prominent are Lygia Clark (1920-1988), Lygia Pape (1927-2004) and Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980). For this subject, see: Ronaldo Britto, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do projeto construtivo brasileiro* (São Paulo, Cosac Naify, 2002).

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