

# ATERRO DO FLAMENGO

ROBERTO BURLE MARX & AFFONSO EDUARDO REIDY



**Location :** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

**Year :** 1961-1964

**Budget :** N/A

**Area :** 1.200.000 m<sup>2</sup>

**Typology:** Urban Park

**Program :** Public Park

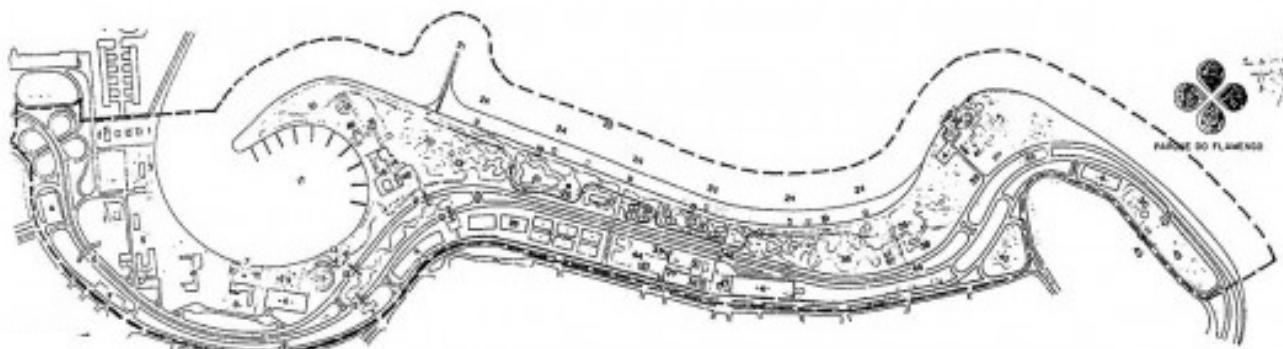
**Additionnal utilities:** Parkings, Library, Sports fields, Playgrounds, Picnic area, Luxury restaurant, Popular restaurant, Resting spaces.

The Flamengo park, also known as "Aterro do Flamengo" in Portuguese is in an artificial extension of land made possible by the vast amount of earth displaced from flattening the Morro de Santo Antonio. This operation created a new space of 1.200.000 square meters with an artificial beach, just at the entry of the bay of Rio de Janeiro (1&2). This is a very important feature, as we will see, context in extremely important in Brazil, and in this project it will play a major role; cariocas as very proud of their bay. This was

seen as an opportunity not only to solve the traffic problems between the city center and the south side, but also to create a magnificent park punctuated by impressive buildings worthy of the newly created place. Roberto Burle Marx and Affonso Eduardo Reidy were put in charge of designing the gardens and the architecture respectively. For Burle Marx, a park, or green space in the urban fabric had to be made into something useful and of more function than mere contemplation. Education and recreation

had to be integrated within the core of the place. This was fundamental for the landscape designer. Several pavilions throughout the park would house professionals who could educate young children about arts, ecology, plants, etc. To make this a versatile place the partners punctuated it with a library, sports fields, playgrounds, a picnic area, a luxury restaurant, and a popular one, but also large bird cages or resting spaces. What we find here are paths, constructions, gardens and additional projects all under the

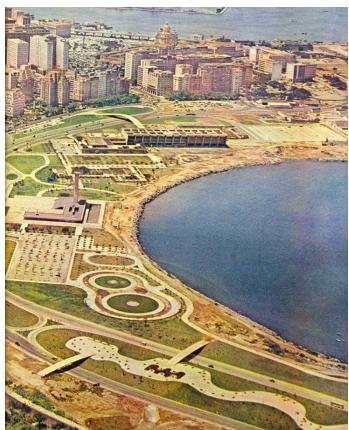
same architectural language, connected and interdependent. There is a perfect equilibrium between human scale and landscape. Every construction is simple, sophisticated and opens to the surrounding context. A lot of the work done here is biomorphic (3), and keeps reminding us of where it stands, among what it stands. Pathways describe flowers, pavilions are organic, and even the lightning posts cast a flower shaped shadow on the ground in a very picturesque fashion. Garden composition, in-



0 1km



4 - View underneath the monument to the dead of the second world war.



5 - Global view of the park, with the monument on the foreground.

tentional light or shadow creation, different vegetal shapes with different textures and colors are a work of art by Burle Marx; pathways are decorated with stones, decorations and mosaics. Large open spaces respond to the city and are vital for the spatial comprehension of the space. They welcome all activities and create collective conviviality. The landscape not only answers to the architectonic shapes, but also opens the view to the Pão de Açúcar and the bay, of vital importance to the cariocas. It's a very



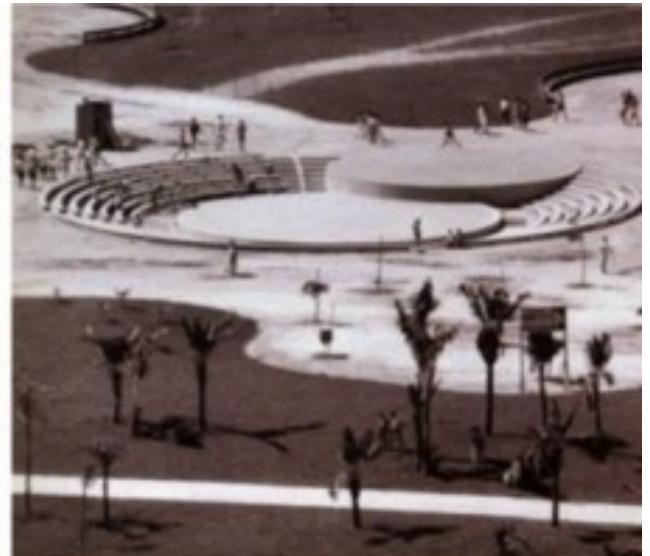
1 - The park at the bay entry in Rio de Janeiro.



2 - Close-up of its situation



3 - Different kiosks found in the park, by Affonso Reidy.



social work, and very participative. Dwellers appropriate themselves the space proactively, activities are repurposed, and the aeromodelism deck welcomes dog beauty contests.

One construction worth analyzing is the Monument to the dead of World War II by architects Marcos Konder Netto and Hélio Ribas Marinho. The contradiction between monument - representing the power of the state through architecture, and modernism - architecture without authority sym-

bol, is striking and representative of the success modernism had in Brazil. The monument manages to combine both notions, apparently incompatible, very subtly. The context, as usual in Rio de Janeiro, is given a special treatment. The architecture isn't as strong without the fabric around it, both are part of a greater whole and each one serves the other, magnifies it by contrast, which isn't without remind us of the MES (department of health and education). Civic and leisure join together in this monument, with so-

lemnity and recreation interweaving each other.

The program includes a shrine, the Unknown Soldier's grave, a museum, and underground premises for the National Guard and administration; two guards are constantly on duty to oversee the monument. Thirteen tribute themes, each with its own plasticity are placed throughout the monument. In the museum we can find the 28 propositions made during the competition.

The proud symbol of the city –

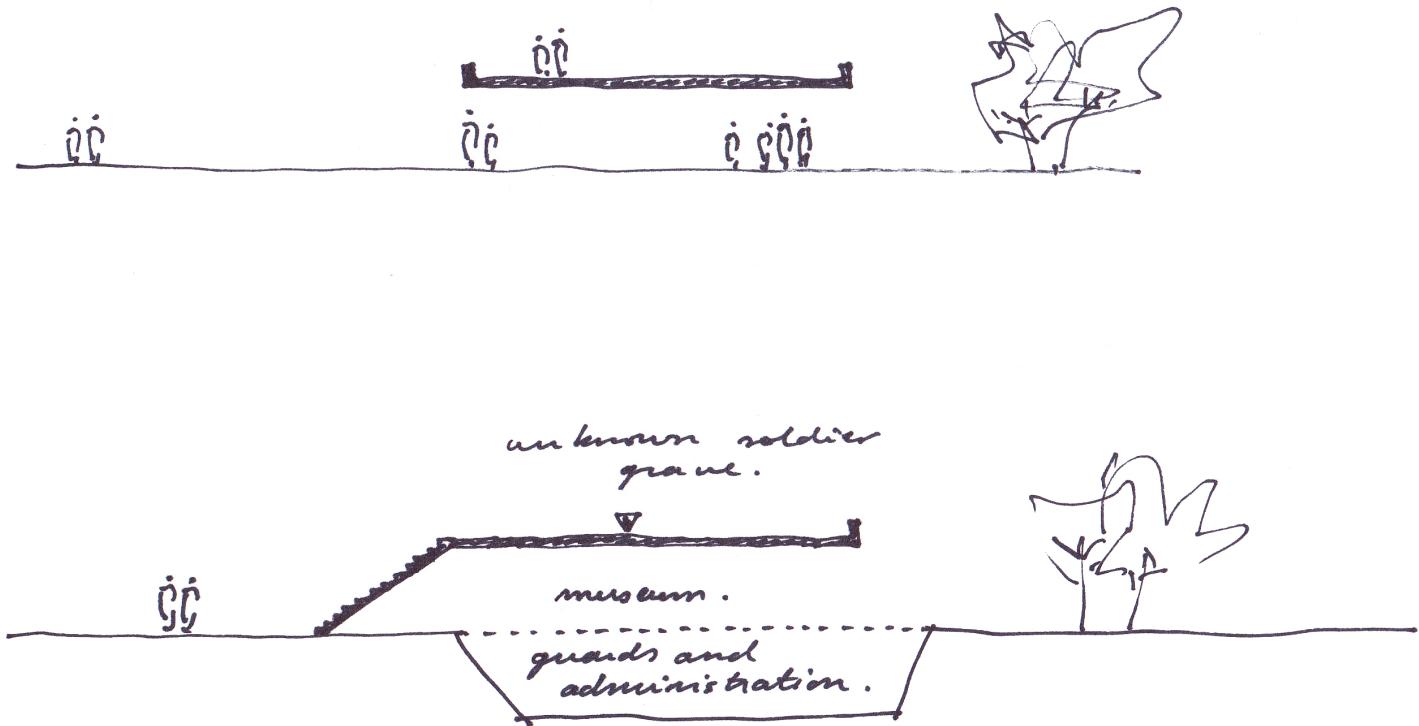
the bay, was to be left unobstructed. One competition entry buried the monument on the ground, created different height levels. Netto and Marinho believed a ground interruption wasn't appropriate for great solemnities. The architects opted for an elevated project that liberated the ground surface while maintaining the remarkable view (4). At the end of the monumental stairs –always in a continuous path, we can find the tribute to the Unknown Soldier, along with his cremated remains. A double pillar

topped by a very Corbusian slate creates a visible landmark honoring the soldier. Behind the stairs, on the ground level we can find the museum. The articulation between monument and quotidian is remarkably well done. Such an ideology has already been done in Brasilia, where the civic and residential axes interpenetrate each other. The same theoretical scheme is visible here; we have a monument remembering the dead articulated in a leisure park.

For Burle Marx, landscaping is more than simple contemplation. In one of his essays he stresses the importance of education, and how people can learn from a public space. The preservation of the vegetation's biodiversity is primordial. Young children should learn about plants, how to plant them, care for them from seed to full grown tree. Diffusion of knowledge. This is what Burle Marx tried to do all his life, and it is clear in this particular work. Several kiosks could host a myriad of activities, from dance classes to

botanic. Not only he believed an urban park should be educational, but it should also provide with all sorts of recreational activities. This is a very social intervention on a city that desperately needs it. With great success, Burle Marx and Afonso Reidy combine architecture and landscape in a great complex, where liberty is given to the user, to the public, and not to the private. Reidy's particularly well thought architecture integrates itself delicately in the context, despite the actual scale. Articulations are intricate and

each responds to the surroundings. The park opened in 1964; by 1965 it was already considered a protected work. It shows the importance given to such public spaces in a city like Rio de Janeiro. With works like these we understand the very profound relationship cariocas have with nature, and how it's almost considered an inalienable right.



6 - Marcos Konder Netto sketches, reproduction of the author.

## SOURCES

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