



## **COLORI.**

### **Fuorisalone 2021**

It is virtually impossible to talk about color, without thinking of Brazil. This multi-faceted land is quintessentially color. Although science terms provide us with scientific explanations (color: light composed of specific or different wavelength electromagnetic radiations), they fail to satisfy our thirst for romanticism associated with this phenomenon. Therefore, we can more simply say that color is capable of influencing our mood and our state of mind, but also of bringing objects to life or even of giving them a soul.

The endless chromatic contrasts from this part of South America profoundly captivates us. In Brazil, even language seems to express lively tones, convey energy, strength, emotion and ultimately joy. Even the green background of its flag makes the blue globe at the center of the yellow diamond jump out. It does not whisper, it appears to shout the positivist motto "*Ordem e Progresso*", a statement as powerful as its sun, which radiates an extraordinary vigor and reflects the potential vision of an enormous country with a compelling history of starts and finish lines, seemingly able to encompass the whole world. Perhaps it is really so. Now, in regard to the most creative side of this immense nation, home of cultural exchanges and blend of traditions, destination of pilgrimages, conquests, battles for riches, blood and love, considering the project and its most effective expressions during the last decades of its history, its' undeniable that this combination of languages, customs, experiences; this exceptional melting pot has created an unprecedented case in the field of design.

Such vitality and differentiation can only hint at a remarkable level of creativity, at times fearless, and sometimes so accurate to not only create a school, but a mood. Speaking of that whole world condensed into one single country, and specifically of design, we can observe the ways various places, from Europe to Africa, have influenced it and are here summarized to create distinctive components suitable to be classified as a direction.

From a bird's eye view, we explore the Brazilian creative approach of the most interesting characters of the modern – contemporary project. Since the mid-19th century, genius personalities from different continents have moved to Brazil: Polish Jorge Zalszupin, who recently passed away, the exceptionally talented Italian Lina Bo Bardi and the solid Joaquim Tenreiro from Portugal, to name a few. In the heterogeneity of cultural backgrounds and aesthetic-creative inclinations, all these *foreigners*, each in their own way, have contributed to the creation of distinctive trait, a precedent that today we can refer to as Brazilian design, which has become increasingly prominent since the period after World War II. And all these figures have employed local raw material (native wood from the Amazonian forests) not only associated with specific formal orientations, but also with the color (especially the discreet hue of natural wood) as one of the significant and distinctive elements of an offer that is as personal as it is shared. Featuring solid craftsmanship, simple yet effective manual workmanship applied to the widespread employment of natural materials, from the sturdiness of highly distinctive and structured elements, the ingenuity in problem solving and optimization of different scenarios, we can affirm that vaguely modernist-inspired Brazilian design expresses a remarkably beautiful and recognizable national emphasis. It is therefore interesting to consider the relation with its great proponents in a broader context.

During the Salone del Mobile 2021, ETEL presents an exhibition that winds through objects by prominent figures as Portuguese Joaquim Tenreiro and Daciano da Costa, Jorge Zalszupin, Bardi

and Niemeyer, Zanine Caldas, initiating a synergic dialogue between past and contemporary creations, the latter created by Patricia Urquiola.

Regarded as the father of Brazilian design and obsessive perfectionist, Joaquim Tenreiro (1906-1992), designer and visual artist (passion to which he dedicated the last part of his life) coming from two generations of woodworkers, emigrated from Portugal to Rio de Janeiro at just 22 years old, in the 1920s, where he established his studio. His fierce spirit has always encouraged his clients to dare more. Besides his passion for color, which is evident in the tops of his wooden tables (Triangular Dining Table), his peculiar penchant for the reinterpretation of colonial instances could be described as modernist-vernacular in its celebration of materials as wicker and cane, also used to pass an idea of lightness to the objects considering the country's climate, of which the ample seating Palhinha is a good example. Doing so, he gave life to a kind of shapes free of excessive ornaments, imbuing its creations with a genuinely *Brazilian* spirit and character. Open and intrigued by liaising with others, Tenreiro collaborated several times with the great Oscar Niemeyer, for whose architectural spaces he has designed furniture for years. The exhibition will showcase the great the Alta Lounge Chair in the black and white version from the great architect, who was born and died in Rio de Janeiro (1907-2012). Among their first collaborative projects, the one for the renowned writer Francisco Inacio Peixoto, followed by the furniture for the Cataguases Hotel in Minas Gerais (1960), where color is dominating. With his peculiar personality, Tenreiro could not accept the events following 1964, when the optimism of President Kubitschek was halted by a military coup, repression and consequent economic crisis. The cultural bitterness created such a harsh that his creativity collapsed together with his business, and he finally decided to retire. That same post-war bitterness sweeping across Europe has led also Jorge Zalszupin (1922-2020) to explore alternative routes and move from Warsaw to São Paulo to create "L'Atelier" in search of the possibility of expressing a sensual and innovative way of conceiving the world of furniture. The exhibition will include the Cubo Sofa in the apple green version, the Cubo Armchair and the Cubo Side Table in the natural version and the clearly European-inspired Kovacs Bookshelf (commissioned by the homonym São Paulo family), a true masterpiece of our time in jacaranda wood, a play of lacquered panels in Bauhaus colors and others in the original color of the material. Zalszupin collaborated assiduously with Niemeyer at the interior design of the capital city Brasilia, which was being built at the time (1956-1960), masterfully offering handcrafted combinations made of plays of leather and rosewood (his favorite wood), always seeking the perfect harmony between interior design elements and the architectural structure which houses them. This led him to create his own independent workshop-structure comprising carpenters, architects and engineers, a collective force that left a mark even outside the new capital city with grey concrete buildings on the red ground. Contrasting hues also characterize the Penta collection by Daciano Da Costa (1930-2005), Portuguese gentleman of rare elegance, who combines cheerfully juxtaposed geometric shapes, series of numbers and tones to create perspective plays on a decorative element as a rug, or better, two series of rugs: Penta Studies and Penta Fragments, designed for Lisbon's Penta Hotel, in 1971. The same elements of asymmetric combinations, typography and lively colors emerge in another large accommodation facility of the time, the famous collaboration on the colossal Funchal's Casino Park Hotel, in Portugal, designed by the architect and Niemeyer, in 1972. The modernist, early century avant-garde-inspired original building had various additions such as a restaurant, a cafeteria, a casino, a movie theater, conference room, nightclub, bingo hall (completed in 1984). Natural wood or white lacquered structure with colored seat (orange or sky blue) for the two versions of the Cadeira Tripeça on display, who accommodated the visitors at the tables of the very busy casino.

Behind the inspiration of these combination of elements, we have the passion of the designer for collages and Da Costa's attention to graphics and his preferred unusual pairing of lines and colors. Brazilian architect Zanine Caldas (1919-2001) was also the protagonist of unconventional color suggestions. Self-taught, he began designing modern objects made of recycled wood or plywood in order to offer them at accessible prices. Caldas has also worked with Costa and Niemeyer; always starting from a rigorously artisanal context, he personally experimented the art of chiseling and sculpture even at large scale. His works have always been mindful of the environment and respectful of forests, for which he staunchly advocated during his lifetime. The exhibition will showcase an elegant Blue R Chair featuring sky blue upholstery. It is worth mentioning the chromatically remarkable "promotional" choices of the architect as the 1953

advertisement for his company “Móveis Artísticos Z” on the magazine Casa & Jardim. Gardens, natural hues, craftsmanship, the study of indigenous civilizations and, in a broader sense, what we consider to be popular art have always fascinated the great Lina Bo Bardi (1914–1992) - who was honored this year with the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at Venice Architecture Biennale. ETEL presents two comfortable seats Três Pés from the late 1940s inspired by a cozy hammock, and the 1951 Bola de Latão in leather and tubular iron frame, originally designed for her private house, the Glass House residence in the Morumbi area of São Paulo, today housing the Lina Bo and P. M. Bardi Institute. Another woman who challenged tradition, the past and the present of Brazil is the designer of Spanish origins and now Milanese, Patricia Urquiola (1961), who presents a combination of Ipe Jequitibá and Pau Ferro wood, featuring two variations of the same study on recycled materials, such as resin and Marwoolus. Cascais side table (in a special resin developed for ETEL, as a natural compound obtained from sugar cane and wood waste) and the Raiz console (in Marwoolus, a patented composite material made of marble waste, wool yarns and a bicomponent binder developed by designer Marco Guazzini) have been used for last year’s ETEL International debut marking the introduction of non-Brazilian designers in its *parterre des rois*. Both collections are made out of ETEL’s FSC certified Amazonian wood, confirming the company’s commitment to planet Earth.

The direction of ETEL by Lissa Carmona - the energetic daughter of Etel Carmona, who authored several successful projects for the company - has been spearheading the brand since 2008, giving it international appeal as Brazilian design ambassador and sustainability pioneer, also earning the prestigious certification from the Forest Stewardship Council. Brazilian glorious past has led us to today’s refreshing creativity. A dichotomy between past and present that confidently points towards a brilliant future for the design originating from this wonderful country and its ambassador, ETEL. The history of the company stems from passion, research and love for quality and respect for our planet, and it’s a story of great ambition committed to consciousness; it responsibly continues to preserve traditions and the environment.

## **Maria Cristina Didero**

*Press Office:*

**GA | Guga + Anil**

Federica “Guga” Fratoni

Anil Durutan

Cristina Pazzi

[guga@GA.works](mailto:guga@GA.works)

[anil@GA.works](mailto:anil@GA.works)

[cristina@GA.works](mailto:cristina@GA.works)