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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANDSCAPE  
DESIGN AND ART IN THE WORK  
OF ROBERTO BURLE MARX

SUBJECT REVIEW  
UDC 712.4:7.01

ODNOS PERIVOJNOG OBLIKOVANJA  
I LIKOVNE UMJETNOSTI U DJELU  
ROBERTA BURLEA MARXA

PREGLEDNI ZNANSTVENI ČLANAK  
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# Af



FIG. 1. FRONT PAGE PICTURE: PORTRAIT OF YOUNGER ROBERTO BURLE MARX (AT LEFT OF THE PICTURE), SURROUNDED BY PANELS GIVING A VERY GOOD IDEA OF HIS STYLE, 1954

SL. 1. NASLOVNA SLIKA: PORTRET ROBERTA BURLEA MARXA (NA LIJEVOJ STRANI SLIKE), OKRUŽEN PANELIMA KOJI ZORNO PRIKAZUJU NJEGOV STIL, 1954.

## TANJA TRKULJA, DUBRAVKO ALEKSIĆ

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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND ART IN THE WORK OF ROBERTO BURLE MARX

## ODNOS PERIVOJNOG OBLIKOVANJA I LIKOVNE UMJETNOSTI U DJELU ROBERTA BURLEA MARXA

BOTANY  
HORTICULTURE  
LANDSCAPE DESIGN  
URBAN DESIGN  
VISUAL ARTS

BOTANIKA  
HORTIKULTURA  
PERIVOJNO OBLIKOVANJE  
URBANISTIČKO PROJEKTIRANJE  
LIKOVNA UMJETNOST

Through artwork elaboration of Brazilian artist and self-taught landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx the text answers the questions drawing attention to the relationships and connections of Art and Landscape Design: how can Art be embedded into Landscape Design and when does Landscape Design become Art? Burle Marx artwork points out to the creation of interdisciplinary art and landscape projects and was characterized as *a picture with plants*.

Članak kroz elaboraciju opusa brazilskog slikara i samoukog krajobraznog arhitekta Roberta Burlea Marxa odgovora na pitanja koja ukazuju na povezanost likovne umjetnosti s perivojnim oblikovanjem: kako se likovna umjetnost može ugraditi u perivojno oblikovanje i kada perivojno oblikovanje postaje likovna umjetnost? Djelo Roberta Burlea Marxa ukazuje na interdisciplinarno stvaranje umjetničkih i perivojnih projekata pa je okarakterizirano kao *slika s biljkama*.

## INTRODUCTION

### UVOD

**R**oberto Burle Marx (1909-1994) was Latin America's most influential 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape architect and an internationally renowned figure in the modern arts.<sup>1</sup> Together with Isamu Noguchi and Luis Barragán, he is among three of the most provocative landscape architects.<sup>2</sup> Though vastly different in their expression, all of the three shaped landscapes of extraordinary freshness, power, mystery and beauty, and produced surrealist work both in its forms and spaces.<sup>3</sup>

In his youth, Burle Marx was first educated in music, but when in 1928 he traveled to Berlin, in Flechstein Gallery he visited the retrospective of Van Gogh's works that left a deep impression on him and led him to the decision to enroll painting studies. Many times he said in interviews: "of that day, I said to myself: I want to be a painter. However, it did not stop me to continue [...] identifying myself more with the plants".<sup>4</sup> In Berlin he visited the Dahlem Botanical Garden where he got his first knowledge of the flora of his native Brazil, began to appreciate it and saw the possibilities for creative design provided by it.<sup>5</sup>

After returning to Brazil (1930), at the suggestion of his friend and neighbor Lucio Costa (1902-1998), he returned to study at the National School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro. He began collecting plants in the vicinity of his home. The flora of Brazil was at that time little known and undervalued. With a group of colleagues Burle Marx made an inventory of

the plants of the virgin rainforest.<sup>6</sup> Discovering new species, out of which nearly 20 were named after him,<sup>7</sup> enabled him to significantly contribute to the development of botanical science.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore 3 spheres of activity arose in Burle Marx early life: music, visual arts, and the world of tropical plants.<sup>9</sup> He integrated elements of song, art and sculpture into his gardens and created a style of landscape design that is only essentially Brazilian and entirely of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All his creations each show a desire for synthesis, to display the plants to their full potential.<sup>10</sup>

Burle Marx collaborated with great architects of his time, and some of them are: Pier Luigi Nervi, Richard Neutra, Rino Levi, Lucio Costa, Marcel Breuer, Oscar Niemeyer, etc. During his lifetime he had about 100 solo exhibitions and undertook over 2,000 landscape projects in different regions of the world.<sup>11</sup> However, majority of his projects were done in Brazil, especially in Rio de Janeiro it is an open-air museum of works displaying his unique style, and entirely his own.<sup>12</sup> In 1985 he donated his assets to the state of Rio de Janeiro. Today, the Roberto Burle Marx Foundation continues the work through conservation and education.<sup>13</sup>

## LANDSCAPE DESIGN OF BURLE MARX

### PERIVOJNO OBLIKOVANJE BURLEA MARXA

Roberto Burle Marx returned to Brazil at a time when Brazilian architects were struggling to throw off the academicism and eclecticism and were studying the designs of the European avant-garde, the Bauhaus and above all Le Corbusier. However, they did not ignore the local legacy of 18<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese Baroque and indigenous architecture.

1 VACCARINO, 2000: 8

2 \*\*\* 2011: 36

3 WALKER, SIMO, 1996: 56-57

4 AULER, 1975: 2

5 CHILVERS, GLAVES-SMITH, 2009; WALKER, SIMO, 1996: 56

6 \*\*\* 2006

7 WIEDMAN, KAVAJIAN, 1982: 9

8 Instituto De Arquitectura Tropical, 1954

9 WIEDMAN, KAVAJIAN, 1982: 4

10 \*\*\*, 2006

11 His works can be seen in Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Chile, Cuba, Germany, Ecuador, France, Italy, Israel, Malaysia, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, South Africa, Switzerland, the United States, Uruguay and Venezuela (\*\*\*) 2011: 35).

12 SCHWARTZ, MONTERO, BURLE MARX, 2001: 29

13 Roberto Burle Marx Foundation (Sítio Roberto Burle Marx, formerly Santo Antônio da Bica) is his estate with a house, located in Barra de Guaratiba, 55 km from the centre of Rio de Janeiro. The estate is a horticultural centre, housing one of the world's most important collections of Brazilian and tropical plants, gathered for research, accli-

Burle Marx joined this modern architecture movement because he identified himself with its ideas.<sup>14</sup>

Impressed by the Burle Marx family's garden, Lucio Costa invited Burle Marx to design the garden terrace of the Alfredo Schwartz residence in Rio de Janeiro (1932), designed by Costa and Gregori Warchavchic.<sup>15</sup> In the first garden design, sadly no longer in existence today, he planted "a terrace with beds of American canna, hitherto considered to be common banana trees".<sup>16</sup> This project ushered him into the field of modernist professionals and among them he became a leading figure a few years later (Fig. 3).<sup>17</sup>

With this design Burle Marx drew attention to himself and he got the first job as Director of Parks and Gardens in Recife in 1934. He remained in Recife for three years and created several projects for private residences and the needs of the city.<sup>18</sup> In 1937 Burle Marx left his job and returned to Rio de Janeiro. Then his long career began.

In his gardens Burle Marx applied the following principles: analogy (he grouped different plants with common visual features in order to highlight their similarity), contrast (he juxtaposed surfaces with contrasting colours or textures in order to highlight their complementarity), repetition (he grouped plants with similar texture, form and colour for emphasis), isolation (he used certain plants with distinctive features for a single, solitary planting), expansion-reduction (he added or took away landscape elements in order to achieve the desired effect) and rhythm (he used different variations in the light, the noise of water, the wind in the leaves, the smell and the time of blossoming of flowers- the rhythm is changed as the visitor walk).<sup>19</sup>

matization, and reproduction exclusively for the purposes of landscaping—strikingly contrasting the aims of botanical gardens in general (\*\*\*) 2006). The estate became a nursery with greenhouses, seed beds and propagators. He bred and reproduced different types of plants. Behind his house is the area where he grouped plants according to their ecological characteristics within small ecosystems (MONTERO, 2001: 178).

14 MONTERO, 2001: 18

15 \*\*\* 2011: 33

16 MONTERO, 2001: 20

17 \*\*\* 2011: 33

18 For example: garden of Euclides da Cunha Square (1935), Derby Square (1936), Artur Oscar Square (1936) and garden of Casa Forte (1937) <http://www.sefaz.es.gov.br/painel/bmarxo1.htm> [01.10.2012.]

19 MONTERO, 2001: 52-53

20 STEVENS CURL, 2006

21 \*\*\* 2006

22 MONTERO, 2001: 147

23 \*\*\* 2011: 35

24 MONTERO, 2001: 158-160

25 \*\*\* 2006



Burle Marx was a prolific artist. In Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo he created the largest number of projects. They can be divided into: private gardens, public gardens and public green spaces.

His first landscape design is not the most celebrated private garden. His most glorious gardens are the ones made for a private residence of his friend Odette Monteiro in Rio de Janeiro (1948),<sup>20</sup> designed by Wladimir Alves de Souza, and a garden of Olivo Gomez residence in Sao Paulo (1950), designed by Rino Levi and Roberto de Cerqueira César. Motifs that are repeated in both gardens are meandering paths and large curved surfaces of the soil with rugs of different colors and textures (Fig. 2). In the first project he showed a predilection for placing herbaceous plants, shrubs, or trees in homogeneous groups,<sup>21</sup> while the peculiarity of the second project was the fact that the house and the garden were designed at the same time and formed an integral whole.<sup>22</sup> These gardens are ideal examples that demonstrate Burle Marx's ability to incorporate elements of the existing microclimate, apart from integrating the organizational logic of contemporary painting, into his compositions.<sup>23</sup>

Motif of meandering paths in the garden is not repeated throughout all his projects. Specifically, the central area of the garden Mangrove Fazenda Rio de Janeiro (1974), designed by Iván Gil de Mello e Souza, is a lawn with strong, tough grass resistant to trampling as there are no paths. This project Burle Marx created *in situ*, without any previous plans. The house is located in a shallow sloping valley surrounded by Tijuca Forest with a stream directed towards house slowly falling over a series of locks and supplying the large pool in front of the house with water.<sup>24</sup> Burle Marx believed that a well-ordered garden was the best way of reconciling the opposites of architecture and nature (Fig. 5).<sup>25</sup>

Many critics believed that Burle Marx created the garden of the Francisco Pignatari resi-

FIG. 2. GARDENS OF THE ODETTE MONTEIRO RESIDENCE (1948) IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND THE OLIVO GOMEZ RESIDENCE (1950, 1966) IN SAO PAULO

SL. 2. VRTOVI REZIDENCIJE ODETTE MONTEIRO (1948.) U RIO DE JANEIRU I REZIDENCIJE OLIVA GOMEZA (1950. I 1966.) U SAO PAULO

FIG. 3. ROOF GARDEN OF THE ALFREDO SCHWARTZ RESIDENCE (1932) IN RIO DE JANEIRO

SL. 3. KROVNI VRT REZIDENCIJE ALFREDA SCHWARTZA (1932.) U RIO DE JANEIRU



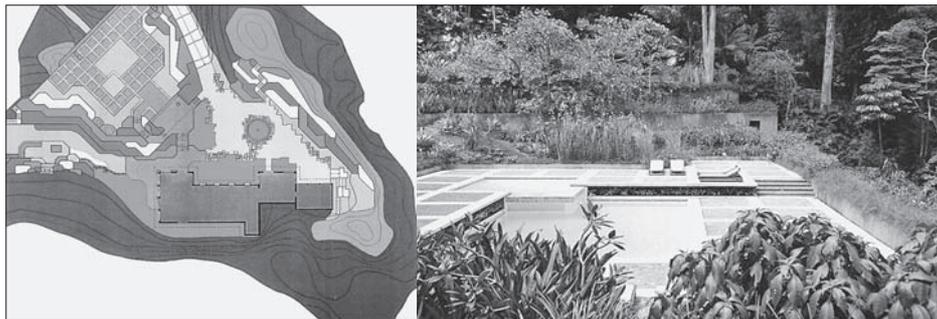


FIG. 4. GARDEN OF THE RAUL DE SOUZA MARTINS RESIDENCE (1983) IN RIO DE JANEIRO

SL. 4. VRT REZIDENCIJE RAULA DE SOUZA MARTINSA (1983.) U RIO DE JANEIRU

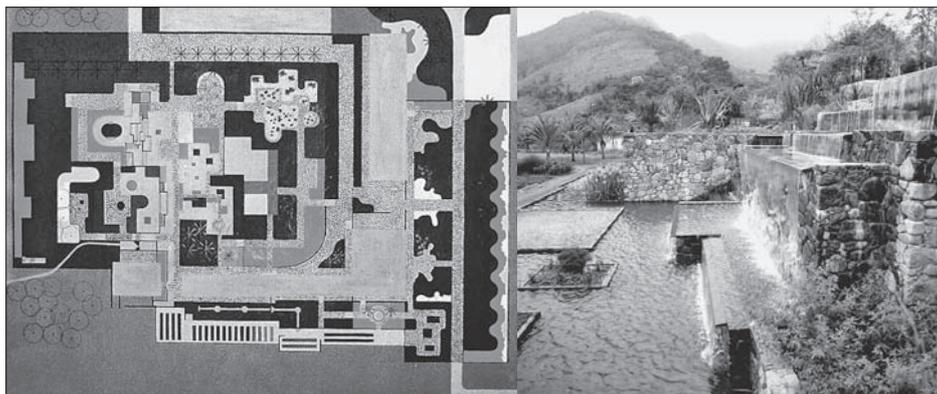


FIG. 5. GARDEN OF THE MANGROVE FAZENDA (1974, 1989) IN RIO DE JANEIRO

SL. 5. VRT HACIENDE MANGROVE (1974. I 1989.) U RIO DE JANEIRU

FIG. 6. GARDEN OF THE VARGEM GRANDE FAZENDA (1979) IN SAO PAULO

SL. 6. VRT HACIENDE VARGEM GRANDE (1979.) U SAO PAULO



race near the house has an aquatic garden, surrounded by a lawn (Fig. 4).<sup>31</sup>

In addition to private gardens Burle Marx has done a large number of public gardens, in collaboration with Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer. All three were inspired by the landscape and history of Brazil. While Costa achieved a blend of contemporary and traditional ideas, Niemeyer developed a whole aesthetic around reinforced concrete. Somewhere between the two Burle Marx developed garden design inspired by colonial and indigenous motifs, playing with form and materials and combining different native species of plants.<sup>32</sup>

In 1938 Costa and Niemeyer became a part of design team<sup>33</sup> for a radically designed building of the Ministry of Education and Health (MES) in Rio de Janeiro (Fig. 7) for which Le Corbusier came to Brazil to serve as an advisor.<sup>34</sup> Burle Marx developed drafts for both the garden terrace of the new ministry building and for the small park at the ground level. Design of the garden terrace consists of curvilinear lawn, plants controlled in form and texture and stones.<sup>35</sup> The small park at the ground level was decorated with Modernist sculptures. The walls, in the shady area under the pilotis, displayed a cubist design in blue Portuguese-style tiles (azulejos) designed by Cândido Portinari with Burle Marx assisting him.<sup>36</sup> The success of this 18-storey white block, which is supplemented by sinuous lines of Burle Marx, "spearheaded the acceptance of Corbusian modernism in Latin America".<sup>37</sup>

dence in Sao Paulo (1956) following the Cubist gardens. Geometric forms of garden accentuated his intervention in nature and reflected the style of Niemeyer architecture.<sup>26</sup> However, for the Italian architect Bruno Zevi this garden was fundamentally different from the Cubist garden because it was an extension of the architecture, and not subordinate to it (Fig. 8).<sup>27</sup>

Burle Marx frequently used element of water in the design of his gardens. He believed that "... a garden needs more than flowers and plants. It needs music and sounds..."<sup>28</sup> Thus, the *leit motif* for the garden of Vargem Grande Fazenda in Sao Paulo (1979) was water. The garden is formed by interaction of water, stone and vegetation. It is a garden in constant motion, which changes in every season without losing its charm and splendor, and is undoubtedly one of the most complete and the most expressive projects in his oeuvre (Fig. 6).<sup>29</sup>

Burle Marx created hundreds of residential gardens in cooperation with many well-known architects. For some of them he designed gardens of their residences.<sup>30</sup> He created a garden of Raul de Souza Martins residence in Rio de Janeiro (1983), located on a rather tilted slope prevailed with a series of intermediate terraces. There are two swimming pools on the lowest terrace, and the space around them is paved with red and white ceramic marble, while the highest ter-

The President of Brazil Juscelino Kubitschek in 1950 decided to move the capital of Brazil from Rio de Janeiro to the country's uninhabited place Brasilia.<sup>38</sup> Overall plan by Lucio

26 \*\*\* 2011: 35

27 MONTERO, 2001: 47

28 ADAMS, 1991: 9

29 [http://www.fazendavargemgrande.com.br/FVG\\_2012/garden.html](http://www.fazendavargemgrande.com.br/FVG_2012/garden.html) [05.10.2012.]

30 For example: garden of Icaro de Castro Mello Residence in Sao Paulo (1951), garden of Oscar Niemeyer Residence in Rio de Janeiro (1953), garden of Richard Neutra Residence in Los Angeles (1959), garden of Jorge Machado Moreira Residence in Rio de Janeiro (1960), garden of Hans Broos Residence in Sao Paulo (1975), garden of Eduardo Pires Ferreira Residence in Rio de Janeiro (1980), garden of Raul de Souza Martins Residence in Rio de Janeiro (1983).

31 MONTERO, 2001: 170-172

32 MONTERO, 2001: 21

33 MES building, Rio de Janeiro - designed in 1936 by a team consisting of Lúcio Costa, Carlos Leão, Jorge Moreira, Oscar Niemeyer, Afonso Reidy and Ernani Vasconcelos, Le Corbusier, who was invited to work on the project as consultant, a painter Cândido Portinari and a landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx (WILLIAMS, 2009: 8-10).

34 CURTIS, 1986

35 STEPAN, 2000: 82

36 \*\*\* 2011: 39

37 UNDERWOOD, 1994: 20

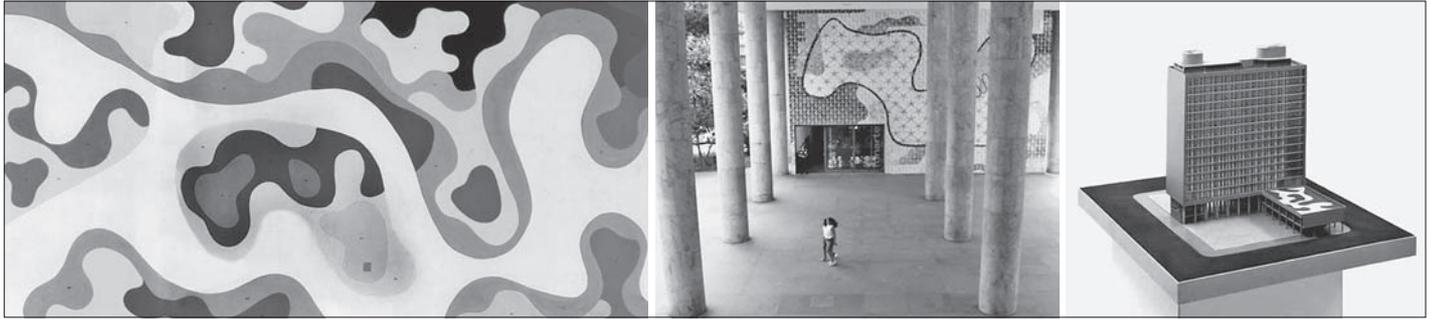


FIG. 7. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH (1938) IN RIO DE JANEIRO (GARDEN DESIGN, AZULEJOS OF CÂNDIDO PORTINARI AND MODEL)

SL. 7. MINISTARSTVO OBRAZOVANJA I ZDRAVLJA (1938.) U RIO DE JANEIRU (NACRT KROVNOG VRTA, AZULEJOS MURAL CÂNDIDA PORTINARIJA I MAKETA)

Costa, buildings of contemporary architecture designed by Oscar Niemeyer and public gardens of Burle Marx defined the unique space of the city.<sup>39</sup> Burle Marx applied different concepts in defining his gardens. Therefore, the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty Building, 1965) stands on a large rectangular lake with floating garden while for the building of the Ministry of Army (1970) he created a dynamic triangular garden with a lake in the center of the composition (Fig. 9).<sup>40</sup>

Although Burle Marx participated in designing some of the parts of Brasília he is especially known among Brazilians also for his ambitious projects in Rio de Janeiro. Lauro Cavalcanti said that "the face of this city bears his mark".<sup>41</sup> The removal of the *morro Santo Antônio* left 30 hectares of land in the most valuable area of Rio free for development. At this place the Petrobras Building (1969) was made with green texture in garden's composition.<sup>42</sup> A pedestrian walkway connects this building with the building of BNDES<sup>43</sup> (1974, 1985) for which Burle Marx built a garden on the parking lot roof mimicking the primitive form of the hill (Fig. 10).<sup>44</sup>

Following the Japanese gardens, producing balance between natural and artificial elements, Burle Marx designed a roof garden of Safra Bank in Sao Paulo (1983).<sup>45</sup> Mineral materials maintain and emphasize the color contrast throughout the year, so that the garden looks exactly as it was on paper (Fig. 12).

Some of Burle Marx's favorite projects were the projects of public green spaces. He designed the main and the biggest parks in Sao Paulo, in 1953 Ibirapuera Park, and in Rio de Janeiro, in 1961-1965 Flamengo Park. He created parks in an abstract style with a range of amenities.<sup>46</sup> Burle Marx created complex plant compositions that he called *artificial ecological associations*<sup>47</sup> where a number of different types of plants found its expression in many combinations (Fig. 11).

In the design of Flamengo Park Burle Marx applied a wave motif on the grass for the first time. This motif was later used (1970) for the pavement design of Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro. Geometric wave, consisting of black and white Portuguese mosaic tiles,<sup>48</sup> prevails over scattered native plant species that are adapted to winds of Atlantic.<sup>49</sup> These two of his projects are the two paradigms of his work. One is soft, the other one is hard, and both provide a spectacle of perpetual motion – be it slow or fast, horizontal or inclining (Fig. 13).<sup>50</sup>

On the basis of the above in this chapter it can be concluded that English, Arab, Chinese and



FIG. 8. GARDEN OF THE FRANCISCO PIGNATARI RESIDENCE (1956) IN SAO PAULO

SL. 8. VRT REZIDENCIJE FRANCISKA PIGNATARIJA (1956.) U SAO PAULO

38 MONTERO, 2001: 118

39 ELIOVSON, BURLE MARX, 1991: 14

40 MONTERO, 2001: 120, 124

41 ROHTER, 2009

42 MONTERO, 2001: 80, 82

43 The building of National Economic and Social Development Bank

44 Part of the *morro Santo Antônio* was removed to build the company's car park (MONTERO, 2001: 90).

45 ADAMS, 1991: 35

46 In Ibirapuera Park there were large areas for leisure, jogging and walking, convention center and Ibirapuera Auditorium designed by Oskar Nimajer. In Flamengo park there were restaurants, sports amenities, playgrounds, an open area for flying model aeroplanes, a theatre, an aquarium, a bicycle path, a system of paved walkways and in addition to restoration of the beaches for swimming (\*\*\*) 2006).

47 DI CAMPLI, 2012

48 An iconic design is first seen in Manaus during the late nineteenth-century rubber boom (WILLIAMS, 2009: 223). See more: J. CZAJKOWSKI, ed. 2000: 74

49 \*\*\* 2011: 35

50 \*\*\* 2011: 40

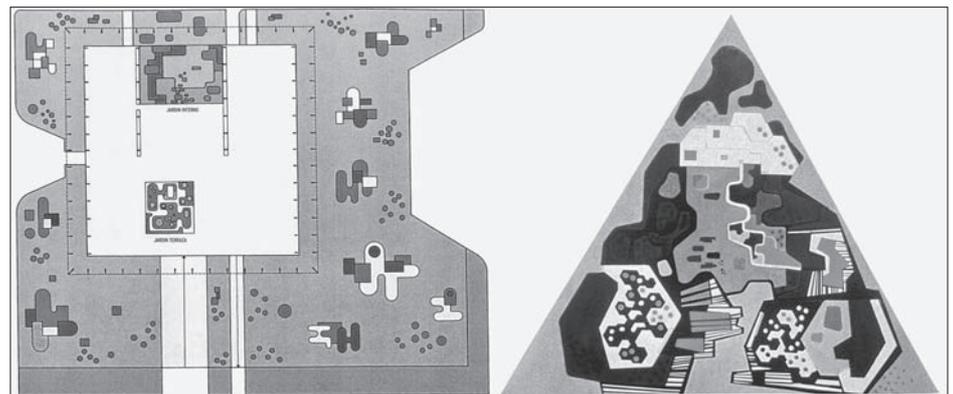


FIG. 9. GARDENS OF THE ITAMARATY BUILDING (1965) AND MINISTRY OF THE ARMY (1970) IN BRASILIA

SL. 9. VRTOVI ZGRADA MINISTARSTVA VANJSKIH POSLOVA (1965.) I MINISTARSTVA VOJSKE (1970.) U BRAZILIJU

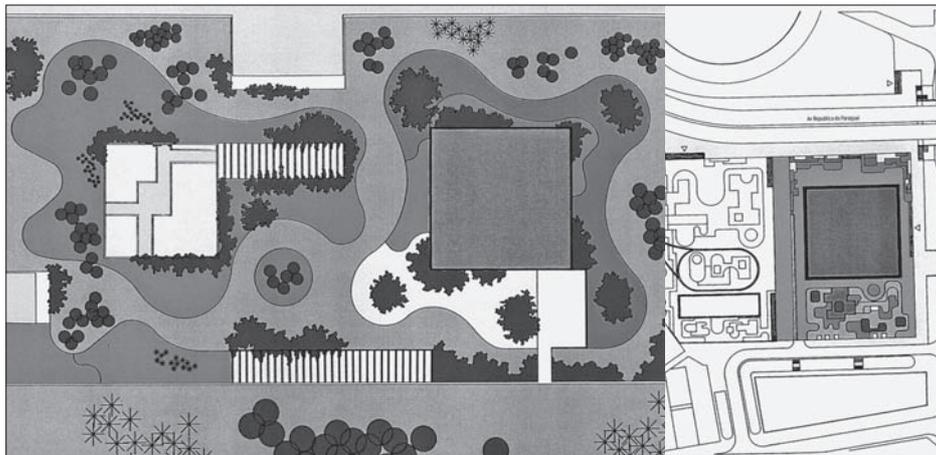


FIG. 10. GARDENS OF THE BNDES (1974, 1985) AND THE PETROBRAS BUILDING (1969) IN RIO DE JANEIRO  
SL. 10. VRTOVI BNDES-A (1974. I 1985.) I ZGRADE PETROBRAS (1969.) U RIO DE JANEIRU

Japanese gardens as well as Cubist interpretation of landscapes had a great impact on his landscape design. His first gardens, their dynamics and combination of different elements, which should provoke surprise and discovery, resemble the English gardens. As Arab gardens, his gardens have emphasized the importance of water but they also reach the visitors' senses visually, through sound and smell and create an emotional resonance in them evoking different memories. Similarity with Chinese and Japanese gardens is reflected in the use of minerals, beautifully sculpted shapes of stones and trees with special shapes of trunks and branches, as well as interminable spiral paths. Cubist gardens displayed a plastic composition of lines and surfaces, built with contemporary and inert materials, but they are subordinate to the architecture. However, Burle Marx's gardens were fundamentally different from the Cubist gardens because they did not subordinate to architecture but stood equally with it.<sup>51</sup>

### PAINTING OF ROBERTO BURLE MARX

#### SLIKARSTVO ROBERTA BURLEA MARXA

ROBERTO Burle Marx, while residing as a young man in Berlin, was introduced to contemporary art. He was fascinated by the works of Van Gogh and Pablo Picasso, but especially "unconventional" expressionist art-

ists. Inspired by European art, he wanted to be a painter and began studying painting. As an assistant to Cândido Portinari in shaping the cubist mural design on the building of the MES he earned a sort of informal graduate degree in painting.<sup>52</sup>

Burle Marx was a versatile artist.<sup>53</sup> He painted in oil and acrylic, and created line drawings in India ink. To attract a wider audience he made etchings, serigraphs, lithographs and print reproductions of his paintings on paper. He found inspiration in native Brazil, a country of diverse cultures and plentiful vegetation. Drawings from pre-Columbian era, rhythms of Black art and Iberian gardens in Brazil especially inspired him.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover he was inspired by the artwork of great painters. His interest in water and aquatic plants was taken from Claude Monet. In the paintings of Van Gogh he found that intensity and contrast of color can express emotion. In the search for form, he researched ethnographic art like Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso had. Like Joan Miró, he developed a language of pictorial signs and experimented with different scales and materials. He understood ludic approach by Paul Klee whom he identified with in that the artist should not be limited by any kind of formula. Following the idea that "the need for self-expression must precede a work of art"<sup>55</sup> his aesthetic is reminiscent of the Lyrical Abstraction by Bram Van Velde and Vieira da Silva.<sup>56</sup>

His work was influenced by movements in European art: Expressionism, Cubism and Constructivism. Furthermore, his awareness of these movements was central to his art, not merely a stimulus.<sup>57</sup> In his early paintings, from late 20s to early 40s, Burle Marx was influenced by Expressionism. This was modelled in the motifs of his images, in the setting of figures into composition, in stylised or simplified shapes and intensive colors.<sup>58</sup> A rejection of academicism led him to choose popular scenes and Brazilians as his themes which, at the time when only European themes were considered significant, was a radical method.<sup>59</sup>

During the 40s he was influenced by Cubism and applied the innovations of it in his work:

FIG. 11. PLANS OF IBIRAPUERA PARK (1953) IN SAO PAULO AND FLAMENGO PARK (1965) IN RIO DE JANEIRO  
SL. 11. PLAN PARKA IBIRAPUERA (1953.) U SAO PAULO I PARKA FLAMENGO (1965.) U RIO DE JANEIRU



51 MONTERO, 2001: 44-46

52 \*\*\* 2011: 32-33

53 He was a painter, draftsman, engraver, sculptor, ceramic artist, set designer and jeweler (\*\*\* 2011: 33).

54 MONTERO, 2001: 36-37

55 MONTERO, 2001: 34

56 MONTERO, 2001: 34

57 WALKER, SIMO, 1996: 57

58 <http://www.sefa.es.gov.br/painel/BMBio12.htm> [01.10.2012.]

59 MONTERO, 2001: 38

60 MONTERO, 2001: 34

perceptive simultaneity, volumetric interpenetration, transparency, asymmetry and the use of collage.<sup>60</sup> His attention moved from the narrative to the purely visual, subject became subordinate to composition and area of colors became separated from descriptive outline.<sup>61</sup> However, the colorful paints and Burle Marx's geometry were far from the theoretical rules of this movement and showed considerable distance from Cubism. A break with the analog representation of shape was what linked him the most with this art movement.<sup>62</sup>

At the beginning of the 50s he introduced pure geometry with emphasis on plans into his paintings.<sup>63</sup> Some of his works flirt with Constructivism, which was then taking its early steps toward becoming a mainstream movement in Brazilian art. Yet a rigid geometry was not the designer's preferred mode.<sup>64</sup> His compositions contained of more organic geometry. Although at this time he approached to abstraction, his artwork was not associated with any of the currents within the abstract art.<sup>65</sup>

During the 60s, looking for a form, he began to combine real and curved lines and to use collage. Paintings became totally non-figurative and his drawing increasingly suggestive. During the 80s he began to paint more and to do less garden design. His eyesight became increasingly poor and the colors in the paintings became ever more vibrant and violent, yet sensual and seductive. In his last days it was painting that gave him great pleasure (Fig. 15).<sup>66</sup>

Finally, we can conclude that painterly oeuvre of Burle Marx was varied. But generally it was his vigorous abstract painting that ranked him amongst the greatest artists of Brazilian art.

## INTERACTION BETWEEN LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND PAINTING OF ROBERTO BURLE MARX

### INTERAKCIJA IZMEĐU PERIVOJNOG OBLIKOVANJA I SLIKARSTVA U DJELIMA BURLEA MARXA

If we compare the painting and the landscape design in the Artwork of Burle Marx it would



FIG. 12. PLAN AND ROOF GARDEN FOR THE MINERAL GARDEN ON THE ROOF OF SAFRA BANK (1983-1988) IN SAO PAULO  
SL. 12. TLOCRT I IZVEDENO STANJE ZA MINERALNI KROVNI VRT BANKE SAFRA (1983.-1988.) U SAO PAULO

be wrong to refer to his landscape design as a simple transposition of painting. During the 1930s and the 1940s figuration was predominant in his canvases, while abstract organic forms were predominant in his garden. In 1950s he approached abstract painting, but then he introduced pure geometry in landscape design, trying to harmonize it with the Rationalist architecture. From the 1960s parallel could be drawn between his painting and his landscape design because he began to combine curves and orthogonals in both. However, his concept of painting theory would have been useless in landscape architecture without the knowledge of botanical species and their characteristics.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, painting and landscape design are intertwined in his artwork, without one taking precedence over the other, and his work was characterized as a *picture with plant*.<sup>68</sup>

Burle Marx combines the love of a modern painter and the passion of a naturalist, in a study of the role of natural forms, and achieves a more sophisticated expression of space landscapes. His artwork shows how much a skill of a modern painter, who loves plants, can create spectacular landscapes.<sup>69</sup> As a painter, he understood the logic and the shapes of the artistic avant-garde and transplanted them into his garden, thereby shaping a singular and modern aesthetic for the visual organization of space.<sup>70</sup>

FIG. 13. WAVES OF FLAMENGO PARK AND COPACABANA BEACH  
SL. 13. VALOVI PARKA FLAMENGO I PLAZE COPACABANA



61 MONTERO, 2001: 39

62 <http://www.sefa.es.gov.br/painel/BMBio12.htm> [01.10.2012.]

63 MONTERO, 2001: 39

64 \*\*\* 2011: 34

65 <http://www.sefa.es.gov.br/painel/BMBio12.htm> [01.10.2012.]

66 MONTERO, 2001: 42-43

67 \*\*\* 2011: 34; MONTERO, 2001: 48

68 \*\*\* 2009: 48

69 CARDASIS, 2006

70 \*\*\* 2011: 33



FIG. 14. EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO THE ARTWORK OF ROBERTO BURLE MARX, PACO IMPERIAL MUSEUM IN RIO DE JANEIRO, 2009 – BURLE MARX TAPESTRIES

SL. 14. IZLOŽBA POSVEĆENA RADU ROBERTA BURLEA MARXA, MUZEJ PACO IMPERIAL U RIO DE JANEIRU, 2009. – TAPISERIJE BURLEA MARXA

Visual expression of Burle Marx in the Abstract Style is inclined to the abstract lines and free forms applied when using native Brazilian plants while creating the coloured blocks of a garden. This concept was applied in Latin America for the first time in the design of a roof garden for the building of MES. Abstract landscape design is successfully integrated into the framework of modern architecture as well as verified by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin who said that "his early work with Master architects Le Corbusier and Neimeyer forged a remarkable synthesis between public buildings and their gardens."<sup>71</sup> Also, the boundary between art and landscape design, set in this paper, is so minute that it almost does not exist.

Burle Marx's compositions were built on a combination of unusual curvilinear areas with different colors and textures.<sup>72</sup> This statement was confirmed by his projects of the Ibirapuera Park and Flamengo Park. These parks indicate that he did not see the garden design only as a botanist, but as a painter. Free forms and curvilinear lines created playful horizontal rhythms in his gardens. If we look at them from the bird's-eye view, these gardens seem to be equally related to the abstract painting as well as to certain spatial reality.<sup>73</sup> He himself confirmed this thesis when he said that it seemed that the principles, on which the construction and decoration of his gardens were based, were the same in many points as the principles that were in essence of any other form of artistic expression.<sup>74</sup>

"Art needed to be reinserted into the urban process."<sup>75</sup> Remodeling of Avenida Atlantica with Copacabana Beach is a "fantastic piece of urban architecture in scale, in popularity and in critical status."<sup>76</sup> In this project "the city became landscape; landscape became architecture."<sup>77</sup> From an artistic point of view, the composition of wave seems as if Burle Marx was painting a canvas about 3 km long. Motive of waves experienced a further exploitation through tattoo-, book cover-, shoe-design, etc. In this manner the production of art based on pre-defined urban and landscape design was confirmed once again.

The best critical commentary on the Artwork of Burle Marx was, perhaps, the catalogue essay which accompanied the exhibition of Burle Marx's work held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1991. The author of this exhibition, William Howard Adams, suggested that "the thing about him that really stands out is that he regarded landscape design as an equal partner with architecture, not as a backdrop or decoration, and elevated it to that level!"<sup>78</sup>

Roberto Burle Marx died in Rio de Janeiro on June 4, 1994 at the age of 84. In 2009 an exhibition which marked the centenary of his birth was organized in the Paco Imperial Museum in Rio de Janeiro (Fig. 14).<sup>79</sup> Lauro Cavalcanti, the curator of an exhibition, in his report about Burle Marx said: "By organizing native plants in accordance with the aesthetic principles of the artistic vanguard, especially Cubism and abstractionism, he created a new and modern grammar for international landscape design."<sup>80</sup> The goal is to show how his work in one field is linked to his work in the other field. This idea is directly related to the topic and the issues that are raised in this paper. Burle Marx always thought of himself first and foremost as a painter. He once wrote that the landscape design "was merely the method he found to organize and compose his drawing and painting, using less conventional materials."<sup>81</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

### ZAVRŠNE NAPOMENE

Roberto Burle Marx epitomizes a different way of perceiving landscapes by means of his gar-

<sup>71</sup> The Landscape Architecture of Roberto Burle Marx <http://www.masterdesignseries.com/Site/tlarbm.html> [30.09.2012.]

<sup>72</sup> VUJKOVIĆ, NEČAK, VUJICIC, 2003: 45

<sup>73</sup> KRSTIC, 1964: 37

<sup>74</sup> KRSTIC, 1964: 37

<sup>75</sup> WILLIAMS, 2009: 219

<sup>76</sup> WILLIAMS, 2009: 224

<sup>77</sup> LEENHARDT, 2005: 193



den design. He introduced new concepts of public spaces design, presenting his unique and modern style in landscape architecture which is a combination of ecological principles and art. On one hand, he was inspired by nature and culture of Brazil and, on the other hand, by modern Europe. As a great connoisseur of tropical flora and a researcher he put a large number of plant species in the urban landscape, with emphasis on colors and forms of native vegetation, producing genuine small ecological communities out of his gardens.

Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx are designed for the future and for future generations. His artistic experience helped him to skillfully

combine shapes and vivid colours of rich tropical vegetation, to create fantastic tiled mosaics from Portuguese stone and to play with water and adjust it to vegetation.

On the other hand, the knowledge and experience he acquired in landscape architecture greatly influenced his artwork. It was a cause-effect relationship and his artworks showed complexity of interrelationships and mutual causality between landscape architecture and art.

The boundary of permeation of the creative principles is thus trivial that art defines landscape design and landscape design defines art.

[Translated by: ANDREA BEKIĆ-ŠUKALO,  
BA in English and Literature]

FIG. 15. PAISAGEM DE OLINDA 1935; AGUADEIRAS 1948; MÃE E FILHO 1951; UNTITLED 1967; ABSTRATO, 1985; ELEMENTOS RÍTMICOS, 1991 (FROM LEFT UPPER CORNER TO THE LOWER RIGHT CORNER)

SL. 15. PAISAGEM DE OLINDA 1935.; ÁGUADEIRAS 1948.; MÃE E FILHO 1951.; UNTITLED 1967.; ABSTRATO, 1985.; ELEMENTOS RÍTMICOS, 1991. (POREDANE GORE LIJEVO – DOLJE DESNO)

78 ROHTER, 2009

79 In addition to scale models and drawings of his most celebrated landscape design projects, the exhibition includes nearly 100 of his paintings, as well as drawings, sculptures, tapestries, jewelry, and sets and costumes he designed for theatrical productions. The goal is to show how his work in one field bled into his work in the others (ROHTER, 2009).

80 ROHTER, 2009

81 ROHTER, 2009

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## SUMMARY

## SAŽETAK

## ODNOS PERIVOJNOG OBLIKOVANJA I LIKOVNE UMJETNOSTI U DJELU ROBERTA BURLEA MARXA

Roberto Burle Marx (1909.-1994.) bio je jedan od najutjecajnijih latinoameričkih krajobraznih arhitekata 20. stoljeća i međunarodno poznata ličnost u modernoj umjetnosti. Inspiriran formama prirode, dizajnirao je tropske predjele i parkove diljem svijeta, na temelju čega je međunarodno priznat kao *tvorac modernog vrta*. Smatrao je da javni vrtovi vraćaju ljudima zeleni grad koji proces urbanizacije polagano uzima od njih.

Boravci godinu dana u Berlinu (1929.), često je odlazio u Galeriju Flechstein, gdje su ga djela modernih slikara potaknula da upiše studij slikarstva, i Botanički vrt Dahlem, gdje je stekao prva znanja o flori rodnoa Brazila i uvidio mogućnosti za kreativno oblikovanje koje ona pruža.

Po povratku u Brazil (1930.), dok studira slikarstvo na Nacionalnoj školi likovnih umjetnosti (The National School of Fine Arts) u Rio de Janeiru, Burle Marx počinje prikupljati biljke u okolici svoje kuće, u Amazoniji. U to je doba flora Brazila bila malo poznata i podcijenjena pa je on s grupom suradnika napravio popis netaknutih biljaka prašume. Otkrivanje novih biljnih vrsta, od kojih blizu 20 nosi njegovo ime, omogućilo mu je da značajno pridonese razvoju botaničkih znanosti.

Roberto Burle Marx vratio se u Brazil u doba kad su brazilski arhitekti nastojali odbaciti akademizam i eklektizam te su proučavali nacrt europske avangarde, Bauhauusa i iznad svega – Le Corbusiera. No oni nisu ignorirali lokalno naslijeđe i autohtonu arhitekturu. Burle Marx se priključio ovom modernističkom arhitektonskom pokretu i tijekom svoga života organizirao je oko 100 samostalnih izložbi te oblikovao više od 2000 pejzažnih projekata u različitim regijama svijeta. Ipak, većinu svojih projekata napravio je u Brazilu, posebice u Rio de Janeiru, koji predstavlja muzej njegovih radova na otvorenom i prikazuje njegov nepogrešivi stil.

U stvaralaštvu Roberta Burlea Marxa slikarstvo i perivojno oblikovanje ističu se kao dva područja njegova uzeg djelovanja. U ovome je radu kroz

analizu niza njegovih projekata prikazan njihov međusobni utjecaj i odnos. Ispituje se na koji se način likovna umjetnost može ugraditi u perivojno oblikovanje, a kada perivojno oblikovanje postaje likovna umjetnost.

Ako se uspoređuju slikarstvo i perivojno oblikovanje u umjetničkom radu Burle Marxa, bilo bi pogrešno odnositi se prema njegovu perivojnom oblikovanju kao jednostavnom prijenosu slikarstva. Tijekom 1930-ih i 1940-ih godina na njegovim je platnima bila dominantna figuracija, dok su apstraktne organske forme prevladavale u njegovim pejzažima. On se 1950-ih približava apstraktnom slikarstvu, ali tada uvodi čistu geometriju u perivojno oblikovanje pokušavajući ga uskladiti s racionalističkom arhitekturom. Tek se od 1960-ih može povući paralela između slikarstva i perivojnog oblikovanja jer počinje kombinirati ravne i zakrivljene linije i u jednom i u drugom. No njegov koncept slikarske teorije bio bi beskoristan u krajobraznoj arhitekturi bez poznavanja botaničkih vrsta i njihovih karakteristika. Stoga su slikarstvo i perivojno oblikovanje međusobno povezani u njegovu umjetničkom radu, ali bez akcentiranja jednog ili drugog, a njegov je rad okarakteriziran kao *slika s biljkama*.

Burle Marx kombinira ljubav modernog slikara i strast prirodnjaka u istraživanju uloge prirodne forme te postize sofisticiraniji izraz prostora pejzaža. Njegov umjetnički rad pokazuje koliko vještina modernog slikara koji voli biljke može stvoriti spektakularne krajolike. Kao slikar, on je shvatio logiku i oblike umjetničke avangarde te ih transplantirao u svoj vrt, s vremenom oblikujući jedinstvenu i modernu estetiku vizualne organizacije prostora.

Kompozicije Burle Marxa izgrađene su u kombinaciji neobično zaobljenih površina raznih boja i tekstura. Ovu tvrdnju potvrđuju mnogi njegovi projekti perivojnog oblikovanja koji, gledani iz ptičje perspektive, izgledaju podjednako vezani za apstraktno slikarstvo, kao i za određenu prostornu stvarnost.

Perivoji Roberta Burle Marxa oblikovani su za budućnost i za buduće generacije. Slikarsko iskustvo pomoglo mu je da vješto kombinira oblike i živopisne boje bujne tropske vegetacije, da stvara fantastične popločane mozaike od portugalskog kamena i da se igra s vodom i usklađuje ju s vegetacijom. S druge strane, znanje i iskustvo koje je stjecao u krajobraznoj arhitekturi utjecali su na njegov slikarski rad. To je bila uzročno-posljedična veza i njegova djela ukazuju na složenost međudnosa i međuuvjetovanost perivojnog oblikovanja i umjetnosti. Granica u domeni prožimanja stvaralackih principa toliko je mala da umjetnost određuje oblikovanje pejzaža, a perivojno oblikovanje određuje umjetnost.

Najbolji je kritički komentar o umjetničkom radu Burle Marxa, možda, katalog eseja koji je pratio izložbu posvećenu njegovu radu, održanu 1991. godine u Muzeju moderne umjetnosti u New Yorku. Autor izložbe W. H. Adams sugerirao je da je specifičnost Burle Marxa u tome što perivojno oblikovanje stavlja u istu razinu s arhitekturom i ne dozivljava ga kao njenu pozadinu ili dekoraciju. Osamnaest godina kasnije, 2009. godine, u Muzeju Paco Imperial u Rio de Janeiru organizirana je izložba koja je obilježavala stogodišnjicu njegova rođenja. Cilj je izložbe bio prezentacija utjecaja njegova rada na jednom području na njegov rad u drugom području, a to je izravno povezano s temom i pitanjima koja se postavljaju u ovome radu. Burle Marx je uvijek mislio o sebi, prvo i prije svega – kao o slikaru. On je jednom napisao da je perivojno oblikovanje bilo samo način kojim se služio kako bi organizirao i komponirao svoje crtanje i slikanje koristeći manje konvencionalne materijale.

Roberto Burle Marx umro je 4. lipnja 1994. godine u Rio de Janeiru u 84. godini života. Organiziranjem autohtonih biljnih vrsta u skladu s estetskim nacelima umjetničke avangarde, osobito kubizma i apstraktno umjetnosti, stvorio je novu i modernu gramatiku za međunarodno krajobrazno uređenje.

TANJA TRKULJA  
DUBRAVKO ALEKSIĆ

## BIOGRAPHIES

## BIOGRAFIJE

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