

“We pay him a boundless admiration”

Niemeyer’s aura in Paris has been so strong that it generated a cohort of admirers, his City of Light’s followers, so to say.

Thus, Gerard Fournier, who is the administrator of the French Communist Party’s headquarters, becomes quite emotional whenever his old communist comrade’s name is mentioned. They met in 2005, when Fournier who was in Rio de Janeiro at that time visited Oscar in his Copacabana loft. «At the party, we used to meet every year to wish a happy birthday to Oscar. Our admiration for him knows no bounds, especially in the context that is ours: working daily in a masterpiece, this building that is our headquarters », says Gerard. «When I went to Rio in 2005, I was extremely excited. The apartment’s door opened, he saw me from a distance and yelled : «Hello, comrade! «My legs were shaking, it was a very powerful moment. According to Gerard, the exile in France took a leading role in Niemeyer’s post-Brasilia life and work. «Of course, when Oscar came to Paris, Brasilia and Pampulha -as being his greatest achievements-, had already sprung out of the paperboard. But the contacts and friendships that he made here in Paris have obviously changed his view of world », says Fournier, referring to Bobigny’s building of the Labour Exchange, north of Paris, as one of Oscar’s finest French œuvres. However, the administrator of the French Communist Party’s headquarters considers, that the building where he daily works is the Parisian architect’s real. «Oscar was allowed a total creative freedom, and because of its commitment as a communist, his convictions have totally married his work here. This is why the building is interesting and so great,» says Gerard. «More than 40 years after bursting out of dirt, this building has not aged. On the contrary, it becomes more and more beautiful and contemporary as years go by », concludes the Headquarters’ administrator.

Oscar has another admirer in Paris in the person of the French artist Jacques Benoit. As a child, he happened to fall on photographs showing Brasilia, in a magazine published by the Unesco that his parents received. «Everything that I discovered there enchanted me. I’ve always been fascinated by the Future, the conquest of the Moon, and this city, these buildings designed by Niemeyer seemed to match so perfectly these futuristic icons », he explains. Niemeyer’s buildings have been a central theme in his work until today. Thus, his paintings in the exhibition show Brasilia’s site under construction, or represent Oscar’s Copacabana loft in Rio de Janeiro. This is precisely where Jacques was in 2004. In this loft overlooking the beach, he had the opportunity to get to know his idol, riding an extensive four hour filmed interview of the architect, the purpose of which was to support a documentary that has remained uncompleted to this day. «Thanks to a friend who had contacts in Brazil, I had managed to pass a letter about the project to Oscar, who agreed to meet me.» The French artist gave one of his paintings to the architect and, in return, Jacques received the architect’s sketches that were executed during the interview.

Today, these are framed on his home’s walls in Paris. The artist reckons that Niemeyer’s French period was decisive in the life of the architect. «It was such a hot moment for him, when he could meet all the Existentialists and all the Parisian world’s personalities. But those happy days were overshadowed by the pain caused by distance, that of his family and Brazilian friends whom he was separated from, and who endured the Military’s repression at the time » (Helena Mader)



Passion and photography

Her passion for Brasilia, combined with the nostalgia of her home country, led the UNB filmmaker and photographer Indira Dominici to unveil her vision of the Federal Capital to the French. Living in Paris since eight years, she opened this month her exhibition of polaroids showing the city in commemoration of its 53 years of existence. The exhibition is opened to the Parisian public until June 15th, in a new cultural space, Space Impossible. The pictures were taken in March, when Indira was in Brasilia. «This is a very emotional show, a personal work on Brasilia, with its concrete sort of flowing in my veins», says the artist. Architect Oscar Niemeyer’s death in December has influenced Indira’s work. «My worst nightmare was that, after the death of Niemeyer, the city would sink, slowly». «I chose the polaroid support because of its immediacy, in order to evoke a city that has grown where nothing grew before. I installed the pictures on the walls with hidden fasteners, to give the impression that the pictures were floating in the air, on the horizon –this ubiquitous horizon of Brasilia”, she concludes.



VOLCANO
Le Havre’s cultural center, nicknamed «The Volcano» was designed in 1972 by Niemeyer and inaugurated ten years later.



RECOGNITION
The Labour Exchange in Bobigny, north of Paris, is now considered to be one of the finest achievements by Oscar Niemeyer in France.

Hangouts, and little habits of the Master



BEGINNINGS
The headquarters of the French Communist Party in Paris is the first project engineered away from Brazil.



CITY LIFE
Brasserie La Rotonde, One of Niemeyer’s favorite place: a dialogue with the intellectuals



HOME
Rue François 1er, first address in Paris for the Brazilian. He will soon move to an area less for tourists.



FURNITURE
One of the creations by the artist, which is exposed at the Centre Pompidou -one of the greatest museums of Paris.

PRESTIGE
Niemeyer receives the Légion d’Honneur. Recognition.

