

Most 'landscaped' territories in Brazil are confined to private gated communities, like these in Rio's Barra da Tijuca.



The influence of Corbusian ideas on Brazilian cities proved disastrous in the long run. Brasília counts among its many problems, with vast expanses of generic open space that cannot be traversed on foot, a landscape conceived as scenery for cars rather than as spaces for people. The dominance of the automobile as the main mode of urban transportation is a fact in most Brazilian cities, whose very structure is based on a growing network of avenues, highways and overpasses necessary for their circulation. Open spaces for people are an afterthought or entirely overlooked.

Burle Marx's work helped shape Brazil's artistic and cultural identity (both at home and abroad) as a young and emergent country, mainly through prominent public projects. One of his first works was the landscaping of the Ministério da Educação e Cultura (1937–43) in Rio de Janeiro, for which he designed a dramatic organic pattern for the plaza and rooftop gardens. In this project, he collaborated with Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, starting a fruitful partnership that would span decades. Le Corbusier travelled to Brazil to participate in the early stages of this project, forging a deep connection between his thinking and the nascent Brazilian Modern Movement.

**The Military Years: São Paulo's Praça da Sé**  
This car-dominated approach to urban development remained the norm throughout the country's military dictatorship (1964–84). Lack of mobility is perhaps still the most pressing urban issue today. Landscape projects undertaken during the military years tended towards large-scale infrastructure projects that reflected the hegemonic technocratic discourse of the time.

Rosa Grena Kliass

Mangal das Garças

Belém

Pará

Brazil

2005

Mangal das Garças (Heron Mangrove) highlights the role of native plants and ecology in the design of public parks to raise awareness about the importance and beauty of Belém's mangrove ecosystem.

From 1937 onwards, a series of high-profile projects were commissioned by the federal government as part of a national modernisation programme initiated under the then president Getúlio Vargas's Estado Novo (New State) regime, and included important urban spaces such as the Pampulha complex (1943) in Belo Horizonte, designed with Oscar Niemeyer, Rio's Aterro do Flamengo (Flamengo Embankment) (1965), with Affonso Eduardo Reidy, and the famous sinuous pattern of Copacabana's beachfront mosaic pavement (*calçada*). Inaugurated in 1961, Brasília represents the apogee of this process.



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The refurbishment of São Paulo's Praça da Sé, where the city's 'zero mark' lies, is a noteworthy example from the 1970s. To accommodate the construction of the city's main metro station, the square was more than doubled in size by demolishing adjoining buildings. The landscape design was inspired by the work of the American landscape architects Lawrence Halprin and Garrett Eckbo, and is characterised by a complex system of elevated flowerbeds and pools. Despite the merits of the inventive solution, its underlying agenda – to support the oppressive political regime by discouraging public gatherings in the square – is clear.

### Resurgence of Civic Landscape: Rosa Kliass

Only after the return of democratic government in the late 1980s did landscape architecture begin to regain its civic significance, epitomised in the refurbishment of São Paulo's Vale do Anhangabaú (1991), the result of a competition won by urban planner Jorge Wilhelm and landscape architect Rosa Grena Kliass. Wilhelm and Kliass proposed reconnecting two 'halves' of São Paulo's downtown that had been separated by the construction of a large avenue in the 1950s. This was achieved by creating a new, large-scale pedestrian urban space above the avenue, which as a result became a tunnel. The new Anhangabaú Valley, characterised by Kliass's geometric landscape design, has since become one of São Paulo's foremost civic spaces, replacing the role lost by the Praça da Sé.

Isabel Duprat

BankBoston headquarters

São Paulo

2002

Duprat's creative work builds on Roberto Burle Marx's legacy in its respect for Brazil's exuberant tropical nature as well as its bold use of colour, texture and light.



Kliass is one of the most significant landscape architects working in the public sector today. Her competition-winning proposal for São Paulo's Parque da Juventude (construction of which was completed in 2007) is located on the site of the city's former Carandiru prison and evokes the tragic history of the place by retaining parts of the existing prison walls.

### Ecological Landscapes

Kliass's later works highlight the role of nature and ecosystems, for example in her 2005 project for Mangal das Garças (Heron Mangrove) in Belém, Pará. This project showcases a variety of ecosystems to promote a better understanding of the region's environmental patrimony.

The Mangal das Garças exemplifies the convergence between traditional landscape design and a growing ecological agenda, a movement that has steadily gained traction since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. An early project in this vein is Praça do Relógio (1997), designed by Silvio Soares Macedo and Paulo Renato Pellegrino for the University of São Paulo campus, which incorporates six different regional ecosystems.

Luiz Carlos Orsini

Centro de Arte Contemporânea Inhotim

Brumadinho

Brazil

2004

The Inhotim contemporary art museum is a remarkable project in which art, architecture and landscape design converge in a single continuum.





Levisky Arquitetos and  
Anna Julia Dietzsch

Praça Victor Civita

São Paulo

2008

Utilising timber decks over contaminated soil, Praça Victor Civita represents a surprisingly smart and creative landscape architecture solution for the otherwise improbable recovery of a waste incineration facility, and has become a national reference in sustainability.

In Rio, the work of Fernando Magalhães Chacel exemplifies this ecological approach, most apparent in his Parque de Educação Ambiental Professor Mello Barreto (1995) and the landscape design of the Península neighbourhood (1988), both located in Barra da Tijuca near the Olympic Park. Chacel promoted the ecological restoration of natural landscapes affected by human intervention, a process he called 'ecogenesis'. His projects in Barra sought to restore the sensitive *restinga* (sandbank) coastal ecosystem that was endangered by the area's explosive urbanisation of gated condominium communities.

### Private Spaces for the Public Good

The vast majority of contemporary landscape architecture projects in Brazil are designed and built by the private sector for residential and office developments. Landscape architects such as Benedito Abbud, Sergio Santana and Gilberto Elkis lead successful commercial practices and stand out for having designed important privately owned public spaces for office developments in the business districts of São Paulo, Rio and other large cities. Despite their corporate nature, such projects challenge the dominant culture of walled, security-centred urban developments and offer quality open spaces in crowded urban areas that often lack public alternatives.

Other landscape architects, such as Isabel Duprat, stand out for their singular and sophisticated small-scale projects. Duprat's landscaping of the former BankBoston headquarters in São Paulo (2002), now occupied by Nestlé, demonstrates how the forceful tropical character of Burle Marx's work can be reinterpreted.

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Perhaps the best example of a landscape project that builds upon Burle Marx's legacy is the Centro de Arte Contemporânea Inhotim (2004), a private park-museum and botanic garden in Brumadinho, near Belo Horizonte. Created by wealthy businessman Bernardo Paz on his own farm in order to house his extensive art collection, the open-air art gallery is set on over 96 hectares (237 acres) of botanical gardens that harbour more than 4,000 plant species. Burle Marx visited the farm and advised Paz in the 1980s, but Inhotim as we see it today was designed by Luiz Carlos Orsini following many of Burle Marx's principles.

In a completely different vein, Praça Victor Civita (2008) by Levisky Arquitetos and Anna Julia Dietzsch occupies the site of a former waste incineration plant in São Paulo. Privately funded by publishing conglomerate Editora Abril, whose offices are located in an adjacent tower, the park occupies a severely contaminated site. With a thoughtful design that cleverly retains the mature trees on the site, the park is elevated over a timber deck and the popular destination has become a symbol of environmental recovery and sustainability.

## Public Greening: From State Wetlands to Municipal Parks

The early 21st century has witnessed the advent of ambitious programmes by both state and municipal governments, as well as joint actions to promote and improve public open space in urban areas across Brazil. The Programa Social e Ambiental dos Igarapés de Manaus (PROSAMIM), and São Paulo's '100 Parks' programme, are among the first to tackle the pressing lack of open spaces in poor neighbourhoods on the urban periphery, while other recent landscape initiatives are targeting the renewal of prominent city-centre locations, such as Porto Maravilha in Rio and Salvador's historic Pelourinho quarter.

Initiated in 2003 by the Amazonas state government, the PROSAMIM social and environmental programme targets improving the quality of life for the poor population that inhabits the wetlands that surround Manaus, known as 'igarapés'. It combines the creation of housing projects in areas with better infrastructure with environmental improvements to the wetlands to create public open space. The '100 Parks' programme was launched by São Paulo's Secretaria Municipal do Verde e do Meio Ambiente (Department of Parks and Environment) in 2005, when the city had only 34 municipal parks, roughly the equivalent of one park for every half a million people. It aimed to triple that number within four years and succeeded in increasing the amount of urban green space from 1,500 hectares (3,700 acres) to 5,000 hectares (12,350 acres) in just a few years. Unfortunately, the design quality of these parks is uneven. Boldarini Arquitetos Associados's Cantinho do Céu (Little Piece of Heaven), completed in 2012, stands out for its exceptional design in a socially and environmentally sensitive context along the banks of one of the city's reservoirs.

These many modest initiatives are starting to gain a critical mass and suggest that a new paradigm may be taking shape in a city [São Paulo] long dominated by cars and walls.

## São Paulo: Rediscovery of the Public Realm

The reclaiming of São Paulo's public realm is a recent phenomenon that is gaining momentum through both governmental and civil society initiatives. In 2007, former mayor Gilberto Kassab passed the Lei Cidade Limpa (Clean City Law) regulating visual communication in the city. Publicity outdoors (which sometimes covered entire facades of buildings) was banned, and signage of private establishments was severely restricted. This legislation has dramatically improved the city's visual landscape and created opportunities for the creative use of São Paulo's numerous 'blind' facades, including vertical gardens and artistic murals. The most recent Plano Diretor (2014) introduced a regulation that limits the percentage of wall on urban plots, and incentives for active frontages to promote more vibrant street life.

Boldarini Arquitetos Associados

Cantinho do Céu

São Paulo

2012

Cantinho do Céu (Little Piece of Heaven) is noteworthy not only for its quality of design and implementation, but also for being one of the first public projects in São Paulo to provide adequate public spaces for the irregular settlements around the city's water reservoir.

