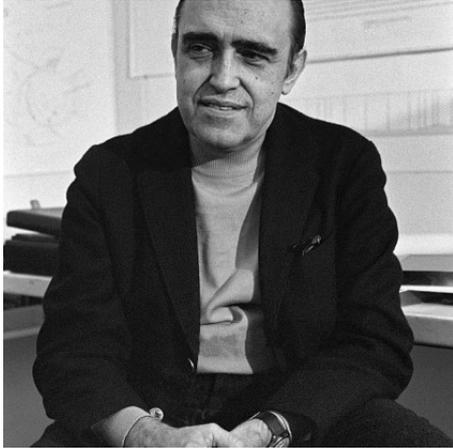# SIDE GALLERY

OSCAR NIEMEYER (1907 – 2012)

Oscar Niemeyer was born in 1907, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

After graduating from Barnabitas College in 1923, Niemeyer wed a woman named Annita Baldo, to whom he would remain married until her death in 2004.

As a young man, Niemeyer worked for his father at a typography house for a short while before entering the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes, from which he graduated in 1934. Shortly before graduation, he joined the offices of Lúcio Costa, an architect from the Modernist school. Niemeyer worked with Costa on many major buildings between 1936 and 1943, including the design for Brazil's Ministry of Education and Health building, which was part of a collaboration with Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier. Costa and Niemeyer also worked together on Brazil's iconic pavilion in the 1939 New York World's Fair; legendary Mayor Fiorello La Guardia was so impressed with Niemeyer's design that he declared him an honorary citizen of New York.

In 1941, Niemeyer launched his solo career by designing a series of buildings called the Pampulha Architectural Complex in the city of Belo Horizonte. Here, Niemeyer started developing some of his design trademarks, including the heavy use of concrete and a propensity toward curves. "I consciously ignored the highly praised right angle and the rational architecture of T-squares and triangles," he said, "in order to wholeheartedly enter the world of curves and new shapes made possible by the introduction of concrete into the building process."

Niemeyer's status as a rising star in the architectural world was confirmed when he was chosen to represent Brazil as part of the team to design the new headquarters of the United Nations in New York City; the final building was based primarily on Niemeyer's design, with significant elements also taken from his old collaborator, Corbusier. Following the completion of the United Nations building in 1953, Niemeyer won an appointment as dean of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, but he was refused an American work visa by the United States government due to his membership in Brazil's Communist Party.

In 1956, Juscelino Kubitschek, the president of Brazil and a close friend of

Niemeyer, came to the architect with a proposal, asking Niemeyer to become the new chief architect of public buildings in the country's new capital, Brasilia, a Modernist civic metropolis being built from scratch in the interior of the country. Niemeyer eagerly accepted, designing buildings that went along with his utopian vision of government.

Niemeyer designed several buildings in Brasilia, including the presidential palace, the Brasília Palace Hotel, the Ministry of Justice building, the presidential chapel and the cathedral. After the inauguration of the new capital city in 1960, Niemeyer resigned from his position as the government's chief architect and returned to private practice.

Niemeyer, a member of the Communist party, was harassed after Brazilian military overthrew the government in a coup. He left the country and did not return until democracy was restored, in 1985. Resettled in France, he began collaborating on furniture designs with his daughter, Anna Maria Niemeyer, which also included his trademark use of sinuous curves. Their best known pieces, the Alta lounge chair and ottoman and the Rio rocking chaise, have flowing bases made of sheets of lacquered wood or stainless steel, share the aesthetics of Niemeyer's architecture.

Niemeyer received the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1988, the highest award in the profession, for his Cathedral of Brasilia.

He is considered to be one of the key figures in the development of modern architecture. His exceptional architectural work has been unanimously hailed, and his influence on how the world looks like today has been reminded.

Niemeyer passed away a week before his 105th birthday and Ana Maria dies in 2012, a few months before his father.

When: June 12-17th

Where: Hall 1 SUD, MESSE BASEL, SWITZERLAND

Design Miami/ Basel

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