

## The Hidden Beginnings of a Breakthrough: Lina Bo Bardi's First Steps in Brazil

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### Abstract

Italian-born architect Lina Bo Bardi always claimed that she had moved to Brazil in the aftermath of World War II because the freedom ideals of the Italian Resistance had been betrayed. Recent studies argue she was merely accompanying her husband, Pietro Maria Bardi, who was organizing art exhibitions in Rio de Janeiro. However, as documented by the correspondence published here for the first time, Bo Bardi did not embark on the journey to the New World because of the failures of the Italian

Resistance or simply as a companion to her husband: she had been charged with the task of ensuring Brazil's participation in the eighth edition of the *Triennale di Milano* (1947). On the basis of the correspondence documenting this assignment, this essay fills a historiographic gap and, more importantly, aims to radically revise the narrative around the initial phase of Bo Bardi's stay in Brazil, the country she increasingly felt as her own and where she eventually spent her entire life.

## Introduction

[1] Lina Bo was born in Rome, Italy, in 1914, when most of Europe was already fighting in World War I and Italy was about to intervene in the conflict. Then, in 1922, in the wake of the "March on Rome", Italy became a dictatorship under the fascist regime. She therefore spent most of her early childhood at war and most of her life as a teenager and young woman under fascism. In 1939, shortly after her graduation in architecture with Marcello Piacentini – the main figure in Italian architecture under the regime – she moved to Milan, where she began a career as a journalist for architectural magazines such as *Domus* and *Lo Stile* (and for various periodicals, including women's magazines) and became part of the local architectural scene. Because of the outbreak of World War II, she and her professional partner Carlo Pagani (1913–1999) received only a few, small commissions while living in Milan. Things were about to change after the end of the war, which was welcomed in Bo Bardi's milieu as an epochal challenge and a chance to 'build' a country that was different from the fascist one. However, it was a change she herself would not contribute to: on August 24, 1946 she married the journalist, art dealer, and cultural agitator Pietro Maria Bardi (1900–1999), with whom she left Italy for Brazil in September of that year. For reasons we are going to clarify, they never came back. From that moment on they spent their entire lives in Brazil, where she became one of the most original architects and intellectuals of her 'new' country, designing seminal works such as the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MASP) and the SESC Pompéia in São Paulo, and where she eventually died in 1992.

[2] Despite growing numbers of studies on Lina Bo Bardi in recent years,<sup>1</sup> numerous historiographic issues remain unresolved. This essay highlights some of them. Contrary to the long-standing belief, the Bardis did not travel to Brazil with the intention of spending the rest of their lives there. When they crossed the Atlantic Ocean aboard the *Almirante Jaceguay* between September and October 1946, their intention was to return to Italy within a few months. Pietro Maria Bardi travelled to Latin America in 1946 for the same reason as in 1933, namely to accompany the exhibitions he had organized.<sup>2</sup> That he brought the woman he had just married with him in a sort of anomalous honeymoon is not surprising.

[3] However, the fact that Pietro Maria Bardi had very good reasons for making the trip – and that it was obvious that his wife would accompany him – does not mean that she did not have something to do in Brazil as well. A number of unpublished documents reveal that she had been entrusted with a specific task to carry out in Brazil shortly before her departure. The discovery of this task is important for seeing the first decade she spent in her new country with new eyes (Fig. 1).

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Zeuler R. Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi*, New Haven and London 2013; Andres Lepik and Vera Simone Bader, eds., *Lina Bo Bardi 100: Brazil's Alternative Path to Modernism*, Ostfildern 2014; Alessandra Criconia, ed., *Lina Bo Bardi: Un'architettura tra Italia e Brasile*, Milan 2017; Mara Sánchez Llorens, Manuel Fontán del Junco and María Toledo Gutiérrez, eds., *Lina Bo Bardi. Tupí or not tupí: Brasil 1946–92*, Madrid 2018; Adriano Pedrosa et al., eds., *Lina Bo Bardi: Habitat*, São Paulo 2019; Francesco Perrotta-Bosch, *Lina. Uma biografia*, São Paulo 2021; Zeuler R. Lima, *La dea stanca. Vita di Lina Bo Bardi*, Milan 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The catalog of the 1933 exhibition is *Belvedere dell'architettura italiana d'oggi. 36 tavole composte e commentate da P. M. Bardi*, Milan 1933.



1 Lina Bo Bardi, *Recife lado nord* (Northern part of Recife), arguably 12 October 1946, drawing and watercolor, 21 x 29.6 cm. Instituto Bardi / Casa de Vidro, São Paulo (© Instituto Bardi / Casa de Vidro, São Paulo)

## Lina Bo Bardi, agent on a mission in Brazil

[4] For many years it was assumed that Pietro Maria Bardi – a prominent intellectual figure during Italy's fascist period<sup>3</sup> – had left Italy either to remain true to his political ideas,<sup>4</sup> to protect himself from possible legal action against his new marriage,<sup>5</sup> to expand his profitable art dealing business or to publicly distance himself from his openly fascist positions.<sup>6</sup> Recently, it has been shown that the reason for Bardi's trip to Latin America was, first of all, commercial. The Studio d'Arte Palma, which was founded and directed by Bardi, had already begun organizing exhibitions in Latin America in 1945 as part of the activities of the Comitato per le Relazioni Economiche Italia America Latina (COREITAL, or Committee for the Economic Relations between Italy and Latin America) and with the institutional support of the Direzione Generale delle Belle Arti e Antichità (General Directorate of Fine Arts and

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<sup>3</sup> See David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism: Quadrante and the Politicization of Architectural Discourse in Fascist Italy*, Venice 2012. Bardi played a very important role in the cultural debate during the fascist regime. More specifically, as a committed modernist he provided a reference point for most of the young artists and architects who would eventually prove themselves anti-fascist.

<sup>4</sup> See Francesco Tentori, *P.M. Bardi: Con le cronache de "L'Ambrosiano" 1930–33*, Milan 1990, 172-174.

<sup>5</sup> See Francesco Tentori, *Pietro Maria Bardi: Primo attore del razionalismo*, Turin 2002, 71. Tentori argues that, as Bardi had just gotten divorced from his first wife when he married Lina Bo, he felt he was susceptible to a lawsuit.

<sup>6</sup> See Lima (2013), 34; Lima (2021), 93, 102. It should be noted that between the late thirties and the collapse of the regime in 1943, Bardi had become increasingly marginalized in the fascist debate and, for a certain period, even forbidden to sign his articles: see Tentori (1990), 136-170. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. What is certain is that Bardi and many other contemporary intellectuals were controlled by the fascist secret police throughout the period: see Paolo Rusconi, "Invenção de um personagem: iconografia e sina de Pietro Maria Bardi nos primeiros anos 1930", in: Nelson Aguilar, ed., *Pietro Maria Bardi. Construtor de um novo paradigma cultural*, Campinas 2019, 25-46: 26-27, 33-35.

Antiquities) and the Istituto Nazionale per le Relazioni Culturali con l'Estero (IRCE, or National Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries).<sup>7</sup> Part of the aim of initiatives such as Bardi's was to restore, through culture, Italy's reputation abroad after twenty years of Fascism. Moreover, when Bardi embarked in Genova for his trip to Brazil, he did not have the slightest intention of settling there permanently and was convinced that he would shortly return to Italy. He owes his decision to stay in Brazil to his meeting with Francisco de Assis Chateaubriand, the magnate who commissioned him to found and direct the future Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MASP).<sup>8</sup>

[5] The possibility that his wife Lina Bo Bardi also had work to do in the New World has so far escaped scholarly consideration. There is almost no information regarding the reasons why Bo Bardi went to Brazil, and her own explanations were either vague or misleading. Over the decades, scholars have therefore assumed that her activities after arriving in Rio de Janeiro at the end of 1946 were mainly due to her role as companion to the man she had just married.<sup>9</sup> However, the following unpublished documents show that she was just as busy as her husband.

[6] Although her career as a practicing architect was in its early stages, Bo Bardi was already an important figure in the Milanese milieu at the time of her departure. She and her associate Carlo Pagani were among the few involved in drafting the policy statement of April 20, 1945 of the Movimento di Studi per l'Architettura (MSA, or Movement of Studies for Architecture), along with prominent figures such as Franco Albini, Piero Bottoni, Ignazio Gardella, and Marzò Zanuso, among others.<sup>10</sup> At about the same time, the first volume of the series *Quaderni di Domus* was published under her and Pagani's direction. On October 15, they signed the publishing contract for the magazine *A* and thus began their collaboration with the architectural critic and historian Bruno Zevi. A few months later, as a member of the organizing committee of the Primo Convegno Nazionale per la Ricostruzione Edilizia (First National Congress for Building Reconstruction), held at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, Bo gave a speech together with Gustavo Colonnetti, Piero Bottoni, Ignazio Gardella, and Ernesto Nathan Rogers, to name but a few.<sup>11</sup> Even this brief account, which represents only a fraction of her activity in 1945, demonstrates

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<sup>7</sup> See Viviana Pozzoli, "1946! Perché Pietro Maria Bardi decide di lasciare l'Italia e partire per il Brasile?", in: Ana Gonçalves Magalhães, ed., *Modernidade latina: Os italianos e os centros do modernismo latino-americano*, São Paulo 2014 (n. pag.).

<sup>8</sup> See Fernando Morais, *Chatô, o rei do Brasil*, São Paulo 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Renato Anelli, "Ponderações sobre os relatos da trajetória de Lina Bo Bardi na Itália", in: *Pós 27* (2010), 86-101: 86, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2317-2762.v0i27p86-101>. Bo Bardi herself helped to credit this version of events: see Olivia de Oliveira, "Entrevista con Lina Bo Bardi", in: *2G: Revista Internacional de Arquitectura* 23-24 (2002), 230-255: 242.

<sup>10</sup> See Matilde Baffa et al., eds., *Il Movimento di Studi per l'Architettura: 1945-1961*, Rome and Bari 1995, 209. A fellow student at the Regia Scuola Superiore di Architettura in Rome, Pagani had invited Bo to move to Milan. After her arrival in Lombardy in 1940, the two collaborated in the editorial offices of *Domus* and *Lo Stile* magazines – both initially directed by Gio Ponti – and opened an architectural firm together. For a more exhaustive analysis of this phase of Bo's career, see at least Lima (2013), 19-26; Giorgio Ciucci, "Lina Bo 1939-1946", in: *Criconia* (2017), 183-199; Sarah Catalano, "Lina Bo (Bardi) e l'aura di Gio Ponti", in: *Engramma* 175 (Sept. 2020), [http://www.gramma.it/eOS/index.php?id\\_articolo=3976](http://www.gramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=3976) (accessed April 18, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> See Lina Bo, "La propaganda per la costruzione", in: *Rassegna del primo convegno nazionale per la Ricostruzione edilizia*, Milan 1945, 35-38.

that Bo was in a promising phase of her career at the time of her departure for Brazil. It should also be noted that she operated in an environment of proven anti-fascist affiliation, as this was a necessary condition for her involvement in one of the great collective undertakings of Milanese architecture at the time: the eighth edition of the *Triennale* (T8) that was to take place from 31 May to 14 November 1947.

[7] In an attempt to "address and resolve the issues of the less-wealthy and poorer classes", Piero Bottoni (1903–1973), the newly appointed special commissioner for the *Triennale*, decided to dedicate T8 to the issue of housing. To this end, he planned a series of events for 1947 to be held in the Palazzo dell'Arte, built by Giovanni Muzio and seat of the *Triennale* since 1933. Given that the city had been badly damaged by Allied bombing and was therefore in desperate need of new housing, he also designed and built an experimental quarter, QT8, "a permanent, experimental, living exhibition",<sup>12</sup> that would continue and grow with each new edition of the *Triennale*. His hope was that extensive international participation would be a common thread running through these initiatives: "Foreign nations and architects will be able to collaborate".<sup>13</sup> Broad foreign participation would have made it possible to compare different ways of developing and solving the issue of housing, and at the same time strengthen cooperation even between countries that until a short time before had been at war with each other. However, it was not easy to achieve this at the time. There were much more pressing problems to solve, money was scarce, and the diplomatic network had weak points. To obtain the desired level of foreign participation, Bottoni had to rely on the help of friends and acquaintances who were abroad for various reasons.

[8] Some foreign collaborations were more coveted than others, and judging from the available documentation, Brazil's was one of them. It is not clear whether this was due to the fame that Brazilian architecture enjoyed on the world stage,<sup>14</sup> to the many Italian architects from Milan (with more or less close contact with Bottoni) who had moved to Brazil or were about to settle there, or to expectations based on a false report (uncovered by the Associated Press) in which the participation of the Latin American giant was declared certain,<sup>15</sup> and which led to a misunderstanding from the start. Not yet

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<sup>12</sup> Piero Bottoni, "Il nuovo programma della Triennale di Milano", in: *Metron* 1 (1945), no. 3, 39-41. Monte Stella (Mount Star), the main green area of QT8, was an upland made from the rubble of Milan's ruined buildings. Bo Bardi and Pagani's firm at Via Gesù 12 was among the thousands of buildings damaged or destroyed by the bombing. See Perrotta-Bosch (2021), 42-43. On Milan's reconstruction after World War II, see Gianfranco Pertot and Roberta Ramella, eds., *Milano 1946. Alle origini della ricostruzione*, Milan 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Bottoni (1945), 41; author's translation; italics in the original. As Bottoni explained to the undersecretary of the Ministero delle Poste e delle Telecomunicazioni (Ministry of Post and Telecommunications), the inclusion of foreign participants in the *Triennale* was supposed to help "Italy maintain a field of action and a primacy in peace and progress, rather than war and destruction". Piero Bottoni to Luigi De Filpo, 10 May 1948, Archivio Piero Bottoni, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani (DAStU), Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Fondo Piero Bottoni.

<sup>14</sup> The event that had placed Brazilian architecture in the spotlight was an important MoMA exhibition. See exh. cat.: Philip L. Goodwin, *Brazil Builds. Architecture New and Old 1652–1942*, New York 1943. On the political aspect of the exhibition see Jorge Francisco Liernur, "'The South American Way': El Milagro Brasileño, los Estados Unidos y la Segunda Guerra Mundial (1939–1943)", in: *Block* 4 (December 1999), 23-41.

<sup>15</sup> See in particular the draft letter of Piero Bottoni to the Brazilian Embassy in Rome, 29 May 1946, Archivio Storico, Triennale di Milano, Milan, box 044, folders 154.1, 154.2 and 154.3. Unless otherwise indicated, all the letters quoted or referred to in the following pages can be found in this box.

knowing that the report was a hoax, Bottoni took steps to legally and operationally support collaboration with Brazil as soon as he received the seemingly auspicious message. With growing impatience, on 27 June 1946, Bottoni asked a friend travelling to Brazil to pass on the T8 program and information about the practicalities of participating to the architect Daniele Calabi (1906–1964), whom he had known for twenty years. In Calabi, who had settled in São Paulo in 1939 to escape the racial laws of the fascist regime,<sup>16</sup> Bottoni had an 'agent' who lived in the country of interest and could guarantee a degree of commitment that the special commissioner for the *Triennale* could not expect through institutional means.

[9] Bottoni's initial expectations were quite high. He asked Calabi not only to seek the appointment of a commissioner for Brazilian participation in T8, but also to ensure that the Brazilian authorities "would offer" a "public housing project for those affected by homelessness in Milan" to be built in QT8, as well as a project for a café in this future district.<sup>17</sup> In July 1946, while waiting for response but not wanting to abandon institutional channels,<sup>18</sup> Bottoni also tried to involve Oscar Niemeyer (1907–2012), thinking he could help formalize Brazil's participation.<sup>19</sup> On 27 July 1946, however, as time passed and nothing happened, Bottoni appointed Luigi Claudio Olivieri as representative of the *Triennale*, and a few days later he presented him to Calabi with a letter that was personally delivered by the same Olivieri.<sup>20</sup>

[10] Bottoni found it hard to come to terms with the idea of Brazil not participating in T8. To keep his hopes high – while remaining at the institutional level – all he could do was organize further reinforcements for his agents in Brazil. So it was that, on 20 September 1946, Bottoni informed Calabi about the imminent arrival of Bo Bardi in Brazil.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Calabi insisted that Bottoni take the path that would in fact bear fruit: inviting Brazilian architects from the Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil (IAB), the main professional association of architects in Brazil, to "take part in the photographic exhibition of architecture" and make "a trip to Italy".<sup>22</sup> Bottoni must have been disappointed by these words as they implied that he ought to give up any hope of Brazilian government involvement and, in particular, of its contribution to QT8. As events were to show, Calabi was the more realistic of the two.

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<sup>16</sup> On Calabi, see Guido Zucconi, ed., *Daniele Calabi. Architetture e progetti 1932–1964*, Venice 1992.

<sup>17</sup> See the draft letter of Piero Bottoni to Daniele Calabi, 27 June 1946 (see note 15). This is the beginning of the correspondence between Bottoni and a few compatriots settled in Brazil regarding its participation in T8. The author thanks Marica Forni for the information about the existence of such letters.

<sup>18</sup> See the draft letter of Piero Bottoni to Xavier Rocha (Brazilian Embassy in Rome), 17 July 1946 (see note 15).

<sup>19</sup> From the letters it appears that Bottoni knew Niemeyer as they were both members of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM).

<sup>20</sup> See the draft letter of Piero Bottoni to Daniele Calabi, 27 July 1946, and the draft letter of Piero Bottoni to Daniele Calabi, 2 August 1946 (see note 15). There is no in-depth research on Olivieri. After graduating in architecture in Milan, he opened an architectural firm together with Renato Angeli and Carlo De Carli. The three quickly made themselves known and their projects began to appear in *Domus* and *Lo Stile*, where Bo worked. Later, he would publish important articles on Brazilian architecture: see in particular Luigi Claudio Olivieri, "Una nazione balza in testa all'architettura moderna", in: *Domus* 229 (1948), 2-3.

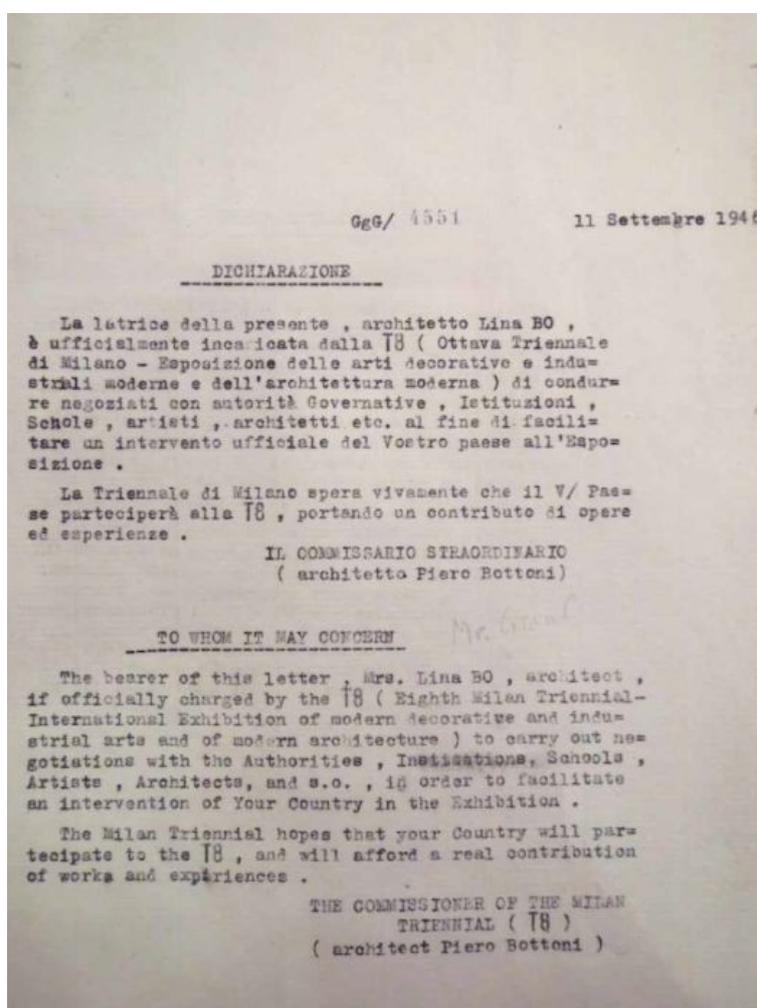
<sup>21</sup> See the draft letter of Piero Bottoni to Daniele Calabi, 20 September 1946 (see note 15).

<sup>22</sup> Daniele Calabi to Piero Bottoni, 27 September 1946 (see note 15).

[11] It was into this situation that Bo Bardi entered in early September 1946. From a letter of the secretary of the *Triennale* Gian Giacomo Galligo to Bo Bardi of 3 September 1946, we can gather that they had met and that she had received the mandate to seek the Brazilian participation together with Calabi and Olivieri.<sup>23</sup> Her imminent departure for Brazil was evidently well known in the Milanese milieu. She was then sent a short text explaining the T8 program to the foreign participants and an even shorter "Dichiarazione" (declaration) confirming her official role. Like that written for Olivieri, it was in both Italian and English:

*TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN*

*The bearer of this letter, Mrs. Lina BO, architect, is officially charged by the T8 [...] to carry out negotiations with the Authorities, Institutions, Schools, Artists, and s. o., in order to facilitate an intervention of Your Country in the Exhibition.*<sup>24</sup> (Fig. 2)



2 Piero Bottoni, draft of the "Dichiarazione" (declaration) to be attached to his letter to Lina Bo Bardi, September 11, 1946. Archivio Storico, Triennale di Milano, Milan

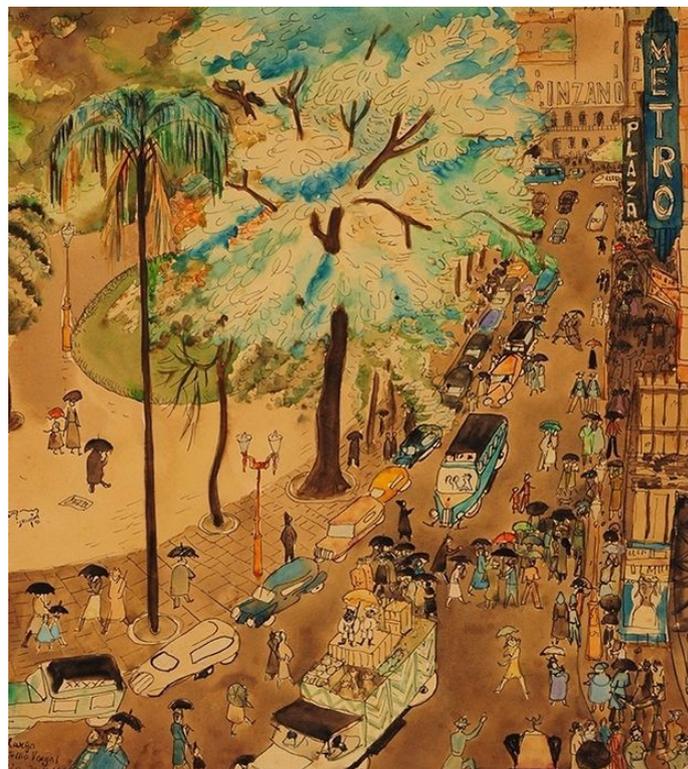
<sup>23</sup> See the draft letter of Gian Giacomo Galligo to Lina Bo Bardi, 3 September 1946 (see note 15).

<sup>24</sup> This "Dichiarazione" was attached to Piero Bottoni's letter to Lina Bo Bardi, 11 September 1946 (see note 15).

After the departure of Bo Bardi, Galligo sent a registered letter to Rio de Janeiro informing her of the name of the fourth and final agent involved in this story: "I hope that you will quickly get in touch with the other *Triennale* collaborators, including arch. Giancarlo Palanti, who will arrive in America towards the end of October."<sup>25</sup>

## First steps in Brazil

[12] Upon her arrival on the new continent, Bo Bardi had a specific task to perform in Brazil. This fact runs counter to the previous narrative of that time. Zeuler Lima has argued that in Rio de Janeiro, "while Bo Bardi took her time to observe the new city, her husband was busy".<sup>26</sup> This image of Bo Bardi as a bystander, leisurely exploring the city while her husband works, is no longer appropriate: she too had urgent work to do. Indeed, because of her official role as a T8 agent, many doors were opened to her, and within the first few weeks she had met with some of the most prominent figures of Brazilian modernity – despite the fact that she was an unknown woman in a context that was more sexist than today's.



3 Lina Bo Bardi, *Largo Getulio Vargas, Rio*, 20 October 1946, watercolors and ink on paper, 24.2 x 22.3 cm. Instituto Bardi / Casa de Vidro, São Paulo (© Instituto Bardi / Casa de Vidro, São Paulo). The image actually depicts Rua do Passeio, not Largo Getúlio Vargas.

<sup>25</sup> Gian Giacomo Galligo to Bo Bardi, 26 September 1946. Former partner of Franco Albini and close friend of Giuseppe Pagano, Palanti was quite an established professional on the Italian architectural scene. See Aline Coelho Sanches, *A obra e a trajetória do arquiteto Giancarlo Palanti: Itália e Brasil*, PhD diss., São Paulo 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Lima (2013), 34; Lima (2021), 110.

[13] Bo Bardi arrived in Rio de Janeiro in late October 1946 (Fig. 3). In what may be her first letter from the new continent, dated 29 October, she presents her plans and intentions to Bottoni and explains that she has already begun to work for T8. While Calabi had concluded that Brazil's official participation could not be relied upon, Bo Bardi saw the situation differently. Not only had she already made contact with the Italian Embassy, she had even begun to establish high-profile 'local' connections, although she had just arrived on an unknown continent. In this letter, she reports her plan to meet the next day with Adolfo Morales de los Ríos Filho, founder of the Conselho Federal de Engenharia, Arquitetura e Agronomia (CONFEA, or Federal Council of Engineering, Architecture and Agronomy), claiming to have "good connections with the Ministry of Labor" and to be "anchored in the environment of Brazilian artists". Although some of Bo Bardi's alleged contacts were probably facilitated by her husband, her belief that Brazilian involvement in T8 was possible is undeniable. Her commitment was so strong that she could not suppress her indignation at the way she felt the French authorities were stealing "this virgin and rich market"<sup>27</sup> from the hands of the Italians. It should be noted that these words also betray a Eurocentric and economic mindset, informed by a logic of competition between nations.

[14] In many ways, this first letter to Bottoni from Brazil is remarkable in that Bo Bardi – in her early thirties and writing from a country of which she had no previous experience – appears not only remarkably at ease among the Brazilian cultural elite, but also confident (perhaps too confident) in her judgment of what she saw or was confronted with. She was already allowing herself to have a say in issues related to the local architectural scene ("Architecture is making huge steps forward, a group of young architects is building things of great interest") and, without knowing to what extent she was oversimplifying, left no doubt about the political position of the main Brazilian architects: "The political line of modern architects and urban planners is absolutely left-wing."<sup>28</sup> She also made assertions in a manner that would be considered 'inappropriate' in today's context: in her notes on the shortcomings of Brazilians, for example, she refers to their alleged tendency to procrastinate (often attributed to her own compatriots as well).<sup>29</sup>

[15] Bottoni prompted the four Italian abroad to work collaboratively – something that had proved difficult prior to Bo Bardi's arrival in São Paulo.<sup>30</sup> However, there were – or soon would be – rather close relationships between the four agents,<sup>31</sup> who would only later part ways. Calabi and Olivieri eventually returned to Italy, while Palanti and Bo Bardi stayed. But Bo Bardi's move to Brazil was not planned at the time of her arrival; however, over the years, she was to follow a path that increasingly marked her departure from her native country and its cultural coordinates.

[16] At this stage of the T8 'mission', Bo Bardi seems to have been more ambitious than her colleagues. She asked the organisers of the Triennial to send explanatory material to interested parties in Brazil; the

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<sup>27</sup> Lina Bo Bardi to Piero Bottoni, 28 September 1946 (see note 15).

<sup>28</sup> Lina Bo Bardi, letter to Piero Bottoni, 28 September 1946 (see note 15). In fact, if anything had characterized modern Brazilian architecture until then, it was the problematic proximity of figures like Niemeyer, a communist sympathizer, to an authoritarian right-wing government. See Aracy A. Amaral, *Arte para que? A preocupação social na arte brasileira 1930–1970. Subsídio para uma história social da arte no Brasil*, São Paulo 1984.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Carlo Levi, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, Rome 1945, 169, 190-191.

<sup>30</sup> See Piero Bottoni's letter to Lina Bo Bardi, Daniele Calabi, Luigi Claudio Olivieri and Giancarlo Palanti, 18 November 1946 (see note 15).

list of the recipients testifies to her skill and speed. They included not only celebrities such as Oscar Niemeyer and Affonso Eduardo Reidy, but also other important yet lesser-known figures such as the architects Alcides da Rocha Miranda, Hélio Uchôa Cavalcanti, Marcelo Roberto, Fernando Saturnino de Brito, and Firmino Fernandes Saldanha, the sculptor Lúlio Landucci and the diplomat Roberto Luiz Assumpção de Araujo. Perhaps because of this, she expressed doubts about her Italian colleagues' work, marked with an air of condescension: "I expect to travel to São Paulo very soon and speak there in person; what is done in São Paulo is fine but for official participation you have to travel to Rio." Elsewhere, while criticizing the tactlessness of an unofficial contemporary Italian "initiative" in Rio de Janeiro whose members she felt "made political arguments on Brazil and complained of the negroes", she commented: "a dangerous thing to do in a country where every man has a little bit of black blood".<sup>32</sup> She was right: despite its openly eugenic policies – adopted especially at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century – aimed at performing a *branqueamento* (whitening) of the skin color of the "people",<sup>33</sup> Brazil must have appeared a true melting pot in her eyes. And yet her words cause discomfort: instead of being indignant about the implicit sense of superiority of the other Italians, she complains only about their lack of tact. She did not distance herself from their Eurocentrism, but only from its open ostentation, which contrasted with the politeness of "English and French urbanity". In this respect, the years spent in Brazil would change her profoundly.

[17] The letter that Calabi, Palanti and Olivieri sent to Bottoni one week later confirms the disconnection between their efforts and those of Bo Bardi, which were more ambitious but also more unrealistic. Despite Bottoni's insistence, the three architects based in São Paulo now sought only the possible

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<sup>31</sup> Although Bottoni and Calabi had known each other since the 1920s, it is not clear if they remained in contact after the latter emigrated to Brazil. Palanti had played an important role in T8 (see *T8: Ottava Triennale di Milano. Relazione del Commissario: Gestione 1945–1949*, Milan 1949, 30; see also Giancarlo Palanti's letter to Piero Bottoni, undated, Archivio Storico, Triennale di Milano, box 024, folder 067.9). Bo Bardi was not involved in organizing T8, but a "toy cabinet" and some "children's desks" designed by her and Pagani were exhibited there and awarded a prize (see *Catalogo Guida T8*, Milan 1947, 138-139; see also Milan Triennale Silver Medal Diploma, Instituto Bardi / Casa de Vidro, São Paulo, 02.0017.06, and Lina Bo Bardi's letter to Piero Bottoni, 10 May 1948, Archivio Piero Bottoni, DASTU, Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Fondo Piero Bottoni). Olivieri was on good terms with Bo Bardi, with whom he had shared a workspace in Milan; he was chosen as the author of one volume of the *Quaderni di Domus* series, edited by Bo Bardi and Pagani; in São Paulo, they were guests of Calabi. Palanti designed the Casa da Infância Liga das Senhoras Católicas (1947–1953) together with Calabi. As he explained in a letter to Franco Albini, Maurizio Mazzocchi, and Carlo Pagani, dated 1 February 1947, at one point he was even considering opening an architectural firm together with Olivieri and Calabi in São Paulo, see Coelho Sanches (2004), 100. However, it was with Bo Bardi that Palanti established the most fruitful collaboration: between 1948 and 1951, they were associates at Studio de Arte Palma (see Aline Coelho Sanches Corato, "O Studio de Arte Palma e a fábrica de móveis Pau Brasil: povo, clima, materiais nacionais e o desenho de mobiliário moderno no Brasil", in: *Risco* 1 (2003), no. 2, 22-43), organized an exhibition at MASP, considered founding a magazine (see Fabiana Terenzi Stuchi, *Revista Habitat: Um olhar moderno sobre os anos 50 em São Paulo*, Master diss., São Paulo 2007, 57, 181, 186), and elaborated projects, such as those for the new headquarters of Rádio Tupi or of Diários Associados.

<sup>32</sup> Lina Bo Bardi's letter to Piero Bottoni, 2 December 1946 (see note 15).

<sup>33</sup> On these practices, see Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White. Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*, Durham 1998; on the interconnection between these practices and architecture, see Fabiola López-Durán, *Eugenics in the Garden. Transatlantic Architecture and the Crafting of Modernity*, Austin 2018.

participation of some IAB architects in one of the events planned at the Palazzo dell'Arte, the Mostra Internazionale Fotografica dell'Architettura (International Photographic Exhibition of Architecture). They no longer tried to fulfill the demands of the general commissioner, knowing that they would not be able to meet his intent of obtaining an official participation. Moreover, Bottoni insisted that "a Brazilian section should be created [...] at least for the standard and non-standard home furnishings"<sup>34</sup> or for "a typical middle-class apartment, naturally interspersed with unique objects".<sup>35</sup> However, he was mistaken in his expectations: whereas in Italy it would have been possible to find exceptional furniture design without much effort, even under the catastrophic conditions of the post-war period, in Brazil this would be very difficult, if not impossible. Though the great Latin American country was developing an original production in the field of architecture, it was not able – at least according to the T8 agents – to offer something equally compelling in the field of furniture design. A few years later, Bo Bardi and Palanti would be forced to bring in artisans from Italy to make the furniture designed by Studio de Arte Palma,<sup>36</sup> in a nod to the view endorsed by Calabi, Olivieri, and Palanti, who had tried to convince Bottoni that, far from being leaders in the field of furniture design, Brazilians could actually learn from a trip to Italy and a visit to T8.<sup>37</sup>

[18] As soon as Bo Bardi arrived in São Paulo, she aligned herself with the position of her colleagues. Writing to Bottoni on 19 January 1947, she explained that "unfortunately things are progressing slowly for the Triennale", so much so that "official participation is now impossible". Expressing her sense of disappointment she wrote: "I really believed in it, but Brazil, Brazil."<sup>38</sup> The only real hope for Brazilian participation was to abandon the initial plan. Not surprisingly, the only path that led to some success was the one elaborated by Daniele Calabi, who was well established in São Paulo and had developed the less ambitious proposal.<sup>39</sup> In February, Calabi was finally able to tell Bottoni that, thanks to his persuasion, the IAB of São Paulo "decided [...] to participate in the T[riennale]" with two initiatives: to send, on the one hand, "a series of photographs of recently constructed buildings" for the *Mostra Fotografica* and, on the other hand, a "group of architects from São Paulo [...] to visit the Triennale".<sup>40</sup> Calabi even mentioned the names of two important figures in the contemporary Paulista scene, Ícaro de Castro Mello and Rino Levi, who would help him organize the participation. The latter, a Brazilian of Italian descent, was a classmate of Bottoni at the Scuola di Applicazione per Architetti Civili in Milan (Fig.

<sup>34</sup> Draft letter of Piero Bottoni to Daniele Calabi, 15 October 1946 (see note 15).

<sup>35</sup> Draft letter of Piero Bottoni to Lina Bo Bardi, Daniele Calabi, Luigi Claudio Olivieri and Giancarlo Palanti, 18 November 1946 (see note 15).

<sup>36</sup> See Coelho Sanches, *A obra e a trajetória*, 132–140. On 12 June 1948, Palanti would write to Albini: "Modern furniture does not exist here". A similar opinion is expressed in an anonymous article – yet certainly written by Bo Bardi – published in the first issue of *Habitat*, a magazine of which she was the editor. See "Móveis novos", in: *Habitat* 1 (1950), 53–54.

<sup>37</sup> See Daniele Calabi, Luigi Claudio Olivieri and Giancarlo Palanti to Piero Bottoni, 9 December 1946 (see note 15).

<sup>38</sup> Lina Bo Bardi's letter to Piero Bottoni, 19 January 1947 (see note 15).

<sup>39</sup> T8 was a fiasco as far as foreign participation was concerned: only Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Belgium took part. See *Catalogo Guida T8* (1947), 191-204. As for "unofficial participations", the catalog mentions Uruguay: see *T8: Ottava Triennale* (1949), 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> Daniele Calabi's letter to Piero Bottoni, 12 February 1947 (see note 15).

4), as well as one of the founders of the IAB in São Paulo and one of the designers of the institute's building there.



4 A group of students at the Scuola di Applicazione per Architetti Civili di Milano, ca. 1922–1923. In the group are Carlo Enrico Rava, Rino Levi and Giuseppe Terragni (second, third, and fourth from the left, respectively). Archivio Piero Bottoni, DASTU, Politecnico di Milano, Milan (photograph © Piero Bottoni)

[19] From that point on, the game was played exclusively in São Paulo. Discussions focused mainly on organizational details of the Paulista architects' trip to Italy, as the visit to the *Triennale* was seen as a valuable opportunity to establish fruitful relationships.<sup>41</sup> In the end, a group of Brazilian architects did indeed go on a European tour with a stopover in Milan in early June,<sup>42</sup> and Brazil eventually participated in the *Mostra Fotografica* (Fig. 5).<sup>43</sup> Having achieved these goals, however, the assignment of Bo Bardi, Calabi, Olivieri, and Palanti was over.

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<sup>41</sup> See Lina Bo Bardi, Daniele Calabi and Giancarlo Palanti to Piero Bottoni, 5 May 1947, and Daniele Calabi and Giancarlo Palanti to Piero Bottoni, 5 May 1947 (see note 15). In this last letter, Rino Levi and Álvaro Vital Brazil are indicated as the two architects with whom it would be most worthwhile to establish a relationship. The fact that the visit to T8 strengthened the relationship between Bottoni and Levi is attested by the publications that the latter would send to his Italian friend in the following years.

<sup>42</sup> According to the official catalog, about fifty Brazilian architects visited the exhibition. See *T8: Ottava Triennale* (1949), 15. A group photo of them appears in "Excursão Cultural de Arquitetos à Europa, sob o Patrocínio do Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil", in: *Acrópole* 10 (1947), no. 109, 5.

<sup>43</sup> See *Catalogo Guida T8* (1947), 39. Despite some surprising absences, like that of Affonso Eduardo Reidy's Pedregulho housing complex, Brazil was well represented, with 17 works – albeit not all in the field of housing and residence – out of the total 162 that were exhibited.



5 Staging of the Mostra Internazionale Fotografica dell'Architettura (International Photographic Exhibition of Architecture), by Franco Albini, Lanfranco Bombelli Tiravanti, Eugenio Gentili, and Max Huber, 8th *Triennale di Milano*, Milan, 1947. Archivio Fotografico, Triennale di Milano, Milan (photograph by Foto Casali S.E.M. – Milano)

## Lina Bo Bardi and Brazil: a difficult breakthrough

[20] The importance of the T8 task given to Bo Bardi should not be overestimated, not least because Brazil's unofficial participation was made possible thanks to Calabi. As far as is known, the main reason for the Bardis' trip to Brazil was related to the Studio d'Arte Palma exhibitions in Rio de Janeiro. Bo Bardi did not go to Brazil in order to carry out the task assigned to her by the *Triennale* commissioner; rather the task was assigned to her only because she was travelling to Brazil. Be that as it may, it is not true that "his [Pietro Maria Bardi's] and Lina Bo Bardi's professional adventures in Brazil began"<sup>44</sup> only when Chateaubriand entrusted Bardi with the direction of the MASP: both were active independently from the very beginning.

[21] This makes it necessary to look at Bo Bardi's position in the New World in a different light. There is also the obvious question of why Bo Bardi's T8 assignment has never been heard of. Answering this question is not easy, since the uncertainty and misunderstanding in this matter and in many others concerning Bo Bardi's past are fed by her silence, her reticence, and sometimes by her fabrications and fabrications. She never spoke about her T8 assignment and generally provided only vague and misleading information about the reasons for her trip to Brazil and her first months there. The rare hints she gave were largely from the last years of her life, when she was busy rewriting her past for future memory. In such interviews, lectures and writings she was keen to emphasize that her arrival in the New World was a clear break, an authentic rebirth. It is not by chance that she always spoke of transferring to Brazil and thus of a deliberate decision, never suggesting that she and her husband had embarked in a

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<sup>44</sup> Lima (2013), 40.

short trip and that the reason for not returning to Italy was accidental. It is also no coincidence that her statements about such events are full of contradictions. More than once, for example, she justified her departure for Brazil by citing the alleged victory of the moderate Catholic Democrazia Cristiana party in the Italian elections of 1946, suggesting that this victory represented such a betrayal of the ideals for which she had fought that it caused her to leave her native country forever: "In 1946 we realized that our dream of a modern, free country was over. Free elections were held and the Democrazia Cristiana won. It was awful, and I said: 'I'm gone'."<sup>45</sup> But that is not how things went.

[22] The reconstruction of Italy after the war must have disappointed Bo Bardi, as well as a large part of the progressive forces.<sup>46</sup> However, that was certainly not the reason she left Italy in 1946. For one thing, her trip was not initially intended as a planned relocation to Brazil, and secondly, the elections she mentions did not take place until after her departure: the national elections that led to the first Democrazia Cristiana government in Italy were held on April 18 and 19, 1948, a year and a half after the Bardis arrived in Brazil. The major votes that took place in Italy before her departure, both held on June 2 and 3, 1946, were the referendum that elected the republic to replace the monarchy and the election to the Constituent Assembly, from which the progressive forces emerged well positioned: the Communist and Socialist Parties together received almost forty percent of the vote. As such, the government that remained in power between the two elections was a coalition that had some communists among its ministers; one should therefore conclude that Bo Bardi did not leave Italy out of disappointment with the outcome of the 1946 elections.

[23] The key to understanding how Bo Bardi twists the story of this period of her life lies in the image she wanted to leave of herself: that of a determined woman, a *pasionaria* who had left her native country to embark on her own adventure. Not without referring to her upright political 'record' during her Italian years – which was fundamental to her account<sup>47</sup> – Bo Bardi felt the need to cut ties with Italy.

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<sup>45</sup> Oliveira (2002), 237 (the translation has been slightly changed). Almost identical words can be found in Lina Bo Bardi, "Curriculum literário", in: Marcelo Carvalho Ferraz, ed., *Lina Bo Bardi*, São Paulo 1993, 12; see also Lina Bo Bardi, "An Architectural Lesson", in: Lina Bo Bardi, *Stones against Diamonds*, London 2013, 109-122: 114.

<sup>46</sup> See Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile: Saggio storico sulla moralità della Resistenza*, Turin 1991, 560-592; Vittorio Foa, *Questo Novecento*, Turin 1996, 165-172, 194-196. Giancarlo De Carlo, another architect who was active in the Milanese *Resistenza*, would declare: "Italy was all abuzz. We discussed and made plans for the future [...]. When we then saw that the world had become just as it had been before, the disappointment was bitter [...]. For many of us, the Liberation was a great joy but also, at the same time, a burning disappointment. The Nazis and the fascists had been defeated but the world had not changed; it seemed like it wanted to go back to what it had been, as soon as possible". Franco Bunčuga, *Conversazioni con Giancarlo De Carlo: Architettura e libertà*, Milan 2000, 57, 60. On the actual elements of continuity between the fascist regime and the republic that arose from its ashes, see Claudio Pavone, *Alle origini della Repubblica: Scritti su fascismo, antifascismo e continuità dello Stato*, Turin 1995.

<sup>47</sup> Bo Bardi went so far as to claim that she had fought the Nazi-Fascist occupiers: she said she had entered "the *Resistenza* and the armed struggle" in the ranks of the "underground Communist Party" and that she had narrowly escaped a raid by the Gestapo in response to one of her articles. See, for example, Bo Bardi (2013), "An Architectural Lesson", 114; Bo Bardi (1993), 10-11; Oliveira (2002), 230, 239. However, none of this is attested by any documents or testimonies of friends or acquaintances. Pagani, who was very close to her, even suggested that Bo became politicized only toward the end of the war. Her stance, tardive but probably honest, could explain why she was welcome within leftist circles such as the MSA following the Liberation (even without having actively

The encounter with Brazil was to be fateful. She would eventually write: "In Italy, the houses were in ruins [...]. Arrival in Rio de Janeiro [...]. I had the feeling of being in an unimaginable country where everything was possible. I felt happy, and Rio had no ruins [...]. Amazed by the intelligent simplicity and ability of the people. Confused by an unimaginable country."<sup>48</sup> Not surprisingly, she recounts in the later narratives that, while she was still in Italy, modern Brazilian architecture appeared in her mind's eye as "a beacon of light amidst all the death and destruction";<sup>49</sup> similarly, when the Almirante Jaceguay was about to dock in her future home country, she tells of how the famous masterpiece of Brazilian architectural modernism caught her eye: "For those who arrived by sea, the Ministério da Educação e Saúde Pública appeared against the sky like a big white and blue ship."<sup>50</sup> In other words, Bo Bardi has always insisted that Brazil is a "beacon of light", a shining alternative to a ruined Europe – regardless of the challenges she faced in her first years there.

[24] Such difficulties are attested to by letters to family members and close acquaintances, all written at the time, not *ex post*. To begin with, her letter to Bottoni of May 10, 1948 should be taken into consideration. Preserved in the Archivio Piero Bottoni and still unpublished, the letter suggests that at that time Lina Bo Bardi preferred Italy to Brazil: "All in all, I miss Europe."<sup>51</sup> A series of letters to her husband dating back to 1956 and held at the Instituto Bardi / Casa de Vidro in São Paulo is similarly informative. On April 16, 1956, she wrote: "I will not hide the fact that I underwent a profound crisis in the last two years, and I have resolved the conflict in favor of Brazil."<sup>52</sup> On April 18, she continued: "I feel I am beginning to identify with this country-continent and perhaps my 'shock', my crisis of some time ago, was due to this: I have now decided – I am staying here – and I will begin to work again."<sup>53</sup> Finally on April 30, in another letter to her husband, she came to the conclusion that she was an "epiphytic plant" and therefore could stop being "afraid of having no roots" in the ground.<sup>54</sup> If one questions her

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fought with them). Evidently, her love affair with Marcello Piacentini – an important figure of the regime – and some political propaganda stagings she had developed during the war were not considered 'serious' faults (or perhaps Bo Bardi managed to keep everyone in the dark on these matters). See Lima (2013), 22-24; Sarah Catalano, "Lina Bo [Bardi] in Italy", in: *Risco 2* (2014), no. 20, 65-73; Paolo Nicoloso, *Marcello Piacentini. Architettura e potere: una biografia*, Udine 2018, 269.

<sup>48</sup> Bo Bardi (1993), 10, 12. See also Oliveira (2002), 230. Using almost identical words, the theme of the ruins was also emphasized in Bo's milieu in Italy; there, however, it was interpreted not as an invitation to give up but as a commitment to rebuild. See Ernesto N. Rogers, "Programma: *Domus*, la casa dell'uomo", in: *Domus* 205 (Jan. 1946), 2-3; "Costruzioni Casabella riprende le sue pubblicazioni", in: *Costruzioni* 193 (Mar. 1946), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Bo Bardi (2013), "An Architectural Lesson", 121. Almost identical words can be found in Bo Bardi (1993), 12. Although not mentioned, the book is certainly *Brazil Builds* (1943).

<sup>50</sup> Bo Bardi (1993), 12. The building Bo Bardi refers to is the Ministry of Education and Public Health built in 1937–1943 based on a design by Lucio Costa, Jorge Leão, Jorge Machado Moreira, Oscar Niemeyer, Afonso Eduardo Reidy, and Ernâni Vasconcelos, and with the collaboration of Le Corbusier.

<sup>51</sup> Lina Bo Bardi to Piero Bottoni, 10 May 1948 (see note 31).

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Anna Carboncini, "Lina Bo e Pietro Maria Bardi. Un'alleanza fortunata", in: *Criconia* (2017), 105-109: 107.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Anelli (2010), 129.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Carboncini (2017), 108. These letters are also quoted in Perrotta-Bosch (2021), 143-145, and Lima (2021), 170-171.

later account, in which she describes her arrival in Brazil as an encounter with destiny, one is confronted with documents that express the exact opposite. In fact, these letters are precious precisely because they do not match the version of events she used to tell.

## Conclusions: a new perspective on Lina Bo Bardi's first decade in Brazil

[25] Bo Bardi's rewriting of her own past is worth considering just as much as her work and her writings.<sup>55</sup> In fact, it can provide valuable insights into her more general aspirations. What she chose to omit is very telling too. Among the experiences she always tended to keep quiet about was the work she carried out in her first months on the western side of the Atlantic, trying to attain the participation of Brazil at T8. There was of course nothing wrong with helping create a successful and important cultural event for the city in which she had lived; but her commitment in Brazil to an Italian cause risked tarnishing the perception of her arrival in Rio de Janeiro as a clear and deliberate cut with the past. And this may be the reason why Bo Bardi did everything possible to make the trip to Brazil seem like a relocation from a Europe in ruins, and from a country that was betraying the spirit of freedom and renovation of the *Resistenza* (the Italian resistance movement), to a young nation with brilliant architecture – though sometimes naive and clumsy, in her opinion<sup>56</sup> – and with popular culture resources that were still unexplored.

[26] As we have seen – even though Bo Bardi later did everything in her power to have the public believe the opposite, and with her interpreters always placing faith in her words – she and her husband had initially intended to stay in Brazil just for a few months. The job offer that Bardi received made them more inclined to stay, probably without knowing for how long. Contrary to her self-portrayal and what is still assumed about the course of events, it was difficult for her to adapt to the new country. She was a woman;<sup>57</sup> she had left a promising work environment behind and had no contacts or clients in the new one; if she was able to immediately come into contact with Niemeyer, Costa, Portinari, and so on at the very start of her Brazilian adventure, it was because she was an official agent for T8. She may have been charmed by Rio de Janeiro upon her arrival, but Brazil turned out to be more of a long, hard conquest than a sudden revelation.

[27] The hardest part of this long journey probably came after her involvement with T8 was over. It was unclear how long her stay in Brazil would last. Her husband was busy creating MASP from scratch and she was forced to move in his wake for a time. In fact, for many years, her work came almost exclusively through him (the MASP installations and exhibits) and his employer (as in the cases of the headquarter projects for the Tabacaria Guaianases and Rádio Tupi, both developed for Chateaubriand), or was developed

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<sup>55</sup> In the case of MASP in particular, see Daniele Pisani, *O Triângulo do MAM ao MASP: Arquitetura e política em São Paulo (1946–1968)*, São Paulo 2019.

<sup>56</sup> This was how she defended Brazilian architecture from foreign criticism in 1951: "Brazilian architecture was born a beautiful child: we may not know why, but we must nevertheless go on raising it, caring for it, nurturing it, following its development." Lina Bo Bardi, "Beautiful Child", in: Bo Bardi (2013), 37-38: 38.

<sup>57</sup> On Bo Bardi's activity as a designer, from a gender perspective, see Silvana Rubino, "Corpos, cadeiras, colares: Charlotte Perriand e Lina Bo Bardi", in: *Cadernos Pagu* 34 (2016), 331-362.

directly for her husband and herself: the masterpiece of her first decade in Brazil was the Casa de Vidro, or Glass House (1951–1952), the couple's residence in São Paulo (Fig. 6).<sup>58</sup>



6 Lina Bo Bardi, *Casa de Vidro* (Glass House), São Paulo, 1951–1952 (photograph © Nelson Kon)

[28] The notion that Bo Bardi felt 'Brazilian' immediately upon docking ("from that moment on"<sup>59</sup>) is therefore far from the truth. It took her at least ten years to decide that Brazil was the place in which she had something important to contribute. It is no coincidence that it was only after the 'decision' mentioned in the 1956 letters to her husband that her crucial work experiences took off in Salvador de Bahia. There, open to new experiences, she was finally able to work in a context that was not as Westernized as in São Paulo: an environment amid the descendants of the slaves who had been deported to the New World and still bore the traces of their ancestral African past. In a way, Bo Bardi's true Brazilian adventure began only when she started distancing herself from her homeland<sup>60</sup> and engaging in reflections that would lead her to conclude that "Brazil does not belong to the West. It is

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<sup>58</sup> Even at Studio de Arte Palma and at *Habitat*, she was associated with her husband, among others.

<sup>59</sup> Gabriella Cianciolo Cosentino, "Early Years and Wartime. Lina Bo Bardi's Illustrations and Journalism in Italy (1940–1946)", in: Lepik and Bader (2014), 51-64: 61.

<sup>60</sup> It is worth remembering that she would go so far as to claim: "When one is born, one does not choose anything, one is born by chance. I was not born here [in Brazil], I chose this place to live here. For this reason, Brazil is twice my country, it is my 'country of choice'." Bo Bardi (1993), 12. Almost identical words can be found in Bo Bardi (2013), 117.

Africa!".<sup>61</sup> Coming to this realisation was the fruit of a long process, though; and at the end, she tended to deny her past and past uncertainties.



7 Lina Bo Bardi, *Cadeira de beira de estrada* (Roadside Chair), ca. 1967. Instituto Bardi / Casa de Vidro, São Paulo (photograph by unknown author)

Bo Bardi certainly was not aware that her initial challenges in Brazil only represented the beginning of a fruitful breakthrough, both in her life and in our understanding of Brazilian culture (Fig. 7). The person who landed in Brazil in October 1946 on the *Almirante Jaceguay* had grown up under a chauvinist dictatorship in Italy and the opinions she held upon her arrival veered towards the Eurocentric clichés. In 1948, perhaps without realizing the implications of her words, she defined Brazil as "a wild country". One could say that all her subsequent efforts in the decades that followed consisted in trying to revoke the sense of superiority implied by such a statement.

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Carvalho Ferraz (1993), 203; author's translation. These words, of course, are far from hyperbolic: see at least Linda M. Heywood, *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, New York 2001. On the overall "anthropologization of architectural discourses", current at that time, see Georges Teysot, *A Topology of Everyday Constellations*, Cambridge and London 2013, 154; on Bo Bardi in particular, see at least Elisabetta Andreoli, "Lina Bo Bardi: The Anthropological Gaze", in: *Third Text* 8 (1994), no. 28-29, 87-100.

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