

The utopia of Cidade Matarazzo-Rosewood by Alexandre Allard projects Brazil into the future

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03/29/2022 By Marc Pottier

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Impossible? a forbidden word!



Alexandre Allard

To meet Alexandre Allard is to enter another world where everything always seems possible with a dizzying aroma of enthusiasm and overflowing energy. Your frank handshake often turns into a big, warm hug, especially if you're a breeder, a breed apart from the Olympus of those who have a predilection for those who breed. Impossible is a banned word by Alexandre Allard, "body & soul" here is highly recommended. Always open-minded and informed of everything, the patron entrepreneur, with the penetrating gaze of a greedy hawk, looks to the future one step ahead.

It's hard to keep up with someone who has one idea per second, follows all the details of his pharaonic projects, constantly juggling the notions of architecture, design, art, ecology, participatory economies... Without any arrogance, he faces investors, artists, employees and suppliers directly in their eyes, emphasizing how lucky they are to be part of such an adventure. When you taste Allard sauce, many things seem downright bland afterward.

An unshakable passion for the future of Brazil



Cidade Matarazzo, Bd Matarazzo, Mata Atlântica (a vast project that will soon open a complex where culture, cinemas, theater, business, shops, restaurants, etc. will harmonize): the entrepreneur, through the Rosewood project, is transforming an entire district of São Paulo. With a powerful leverage, it invests in the transformation of the old Matarazzo hospital, closed for more than 30 years. The ambition of the investment in the literal and symbolic sense and the size of the "playground" constitute an unwavering declaration of love for the future – and for the resources – of Brazil.

With great affection for Salvador, Bahia, Allard received the weight of the incredible diversity that can be found in this vast country with different cultures ranging from indigenous ethnicities, afro-descendants, suburbs to Funk music... a whirlwind of references that could only meet with a sensitivity that deeply loves life in all its facets. Those who discover the scale of Rosewood are immersed in an institution without equivalents or models.

Thus, through commissions or residencies, contemporary artists are invited to celebrate Brazilian diversity. Its installations designed in situ combine with the architecture of the old maternity hospital of the Matarazzo hospital and the vertical forest tower designed by the architect Jean Nouvel. They also show the audacity of this exceptional project.

Art in the DNA of the Rosewood-Matarazzo project



PHOTO: Vincent Catala

At Rosewood-Matarazzo, the boundaries between art and decor are blurred. Art has been at the heart of the project since the purchase of the walls of the former hospital, with its pavilions spread over a large three-hectare garden.

By dedicating in 2014, during “A Invasão Criativa”, an artistic 'occupation' declined in the places prior to the works, each building all aspects of Brazilian artistic diversity, Alexandre Allard shows his Brazilian friends the source of his ambition.

This was also the challenge of the book “Made By... Feito por Brasileiros”, a big baby of 1200 pages divided into three volumes that embraces the dynamic landscape of this Brazilian artistic diversity in the main cities of the country. The reader will find 230 interviews with Brazilian personalities, artists, museum and biennial directors, collectors, gallerists...

“The creative invasion” is much more than an exhibition



Regina Silveira | PHOTO: Vincent Catala

From the beginning, the new way of communicating with the artist's family and friends, more than a hundred, broke all codes. Half of the Brazilians and the other half of international artists had to talk about their relationships with Brazil and/or this old hospital that is part of the city's history (the maternity had more than 500,000 deliveries since the early 1900s when it closed in 1993). It is not a matter of lending or buying works, everything had to be created on site, thus offering an incredible range of proposals both in the corridors, in the rooms and in the gardens of the former hospital.

The carte blanche offered by Alexandre Allard – who never backed down or interfered – favored the most insane projects: a rain cloud in one of the bedrooms (Artur Lescher), a throwing of 300 plants through the windows of the first floor to recompose a garden by chance (Hector Zamora)... The Huni Kuin tribes from Brazilian Acre came to create murals for the first time, Sofia Borges moved her studio there and Tunga organized a performance that lasted six weeks of the event...

It is difficult to name everything, as the proposals were so varied that they transformed the hospital into a creative hive... future projects would also always be thought of hand in hand with the artists.



Jazz Ceiling created by the artist Cabelo

Rosewood is part of the artistic adventure story continuity

A building with multiple perspectives in the literal and figurative sense, the Rosewood Hotel in São Paulo now enshrines in stone the future of all these encounters, that desire to always want to talk about “the Brazils”. Philippe Starck, creator of the project, gave his blessing, but could he do the opposite with Alexandre Allard? The hotel breathes the works of artists who were invited to reflect on plans long before the first foundations were laid and the first walls raised. No one steps on tiptoe and everyone has their own generous space where they can express themselves freely.

Few projects were turned down.



Sandra Belt | PHOTO: Leka Mendes

The biggest challenges were adapting to architectural safety constraints, such as non-slip ceramics for Sandra Cinto's pool, painting the ceiling of the Cabeza jazz bar, which had to take into account sound and fire-fighting equipment...

If the rooms, full of references to Brazilian culture (books, guitars signed by Gilberto Gil – friend of Alexandre Allard – reproductions of drawings by Tarsila do Amaral, headdresses made of native feathers, etc.), do not have original works, on the other hand the public spaces of the hotels are largely invested by artists in dialogue with all other references, such as the indigenous art collection by artist Dan Fialdini, which was purchased for Taraz, one of the hotel's restaurants.

Of course, Alexandre Allard supervised everything, received the artists, gave some guidelines with passion and benevolence... always on the bridge. He loves it.

A museum of works in situ

After discovering the gigantic mural fresco that the street artist Speto created on the entrance wall, after going through the front door of the hotel, you walk on a phenomenal rug by the artist Regina Silveira, representing a swarm of insects. But rest assured, the dragonfly is a symbol of transformation and renewal, right in the spirit of the project. The adventure begins! Shortly afterwards you discover Vik Muniz's photographic installation and objects telling the story (is it true?) of the mythical Count Augustin Taraz (1900 (January 1st) -1999 (December 31st)).



Fresco by Speto

A aventura continua nos elevadores com um incrível herbário de Walmor Corrêa. Cada um tem um tema (afrodisíaco, alucinógeno, energia). Se você prestar atenção, perceberá rapidamente que o artista inventou plantas híbridas dignas das ficções de Lewis Carroll onde aparecem elfos de língua de flor ou dedo de planta...

Este projeto é pensado num equilíbrio de presença masculina/feminina. Encontramos alguns dos artistas da invasão criativa de 2014, mas muitas caras novas trazem sangue fresco a uma família artística que não para de crescer.

A palavra também é dada a artistas que estão em início de carreira. É o caso, por exemplo, de Virgílio Neto que desenhou um enorme afresco nas paredes da sala do último andar que dá acesso à piscina da cobertura. Este jovem artista desenhou uma espécie de livro aberto, aludindo a muitas referências dos vários estados brasileiros, fauna, flora, culturas populares...



Um concierge de arte para atender a demanda

O conjunto desta primeira parte já é tão coerente que o Rosewood criou o cargo de “porteiro de arte” especializado na organização das artes visuais do local. Dada a demanda incessante, já está sobrecarregado.

Difícil citar aqui todas as obras, pois já existem algumas: afrescos de Janaina Tschäpe e Ananda Nahu, paredes cerâmicas de Fernando de la Rocque, móveis de Laura Vinci e Artur Lescher, trabalho sobre a memória das paredes de Daniel Senise, jardim escultura de Arne Quinze, vitral da capela de Vik Muniz, tapete de Leda Catunda.



Mural de Janaina Tschäpe | FOTO: Bailey Williams

E depois ?

O projeto Rosewood não está terminado. Será um dia? Vários andares da torre da floresta serão abertos antes do inverno brasileiro com novas intervenções artísticas: Cristiano Mascaro, Oskar Metsavaht, Laura Belém, o grupo Jacaranda, Vincent Rosenblatt, Monica Nador, Caligrapixo...

Mas, como já devem ter percebido, Alexandre Allard está a jogar em vários outros tabuleiros de xadrez: abertura do Centro de Criatividade num dos outros edifícios do antigo hospital, pensado como um local “alternativo” que acolherá exposições, desfiles de moda, concertos..., estúdios de televisão para conteúdo ao vivo no Arte1, o canal cultural mais importante do Brasil (17 milhões de seguidores), criação do Instituto M com objetivos multidisciplinares, investimento em jardins públicos próximos à Cidade Matarazzo, residência de artistas em uma fazenda perto de São Paulo, filial do hotel na Bahia com espaço para homenagear artistas afrodescendentes... Só podemos dizer que a ambição não tem limites e que você será sempre bem-vindo!