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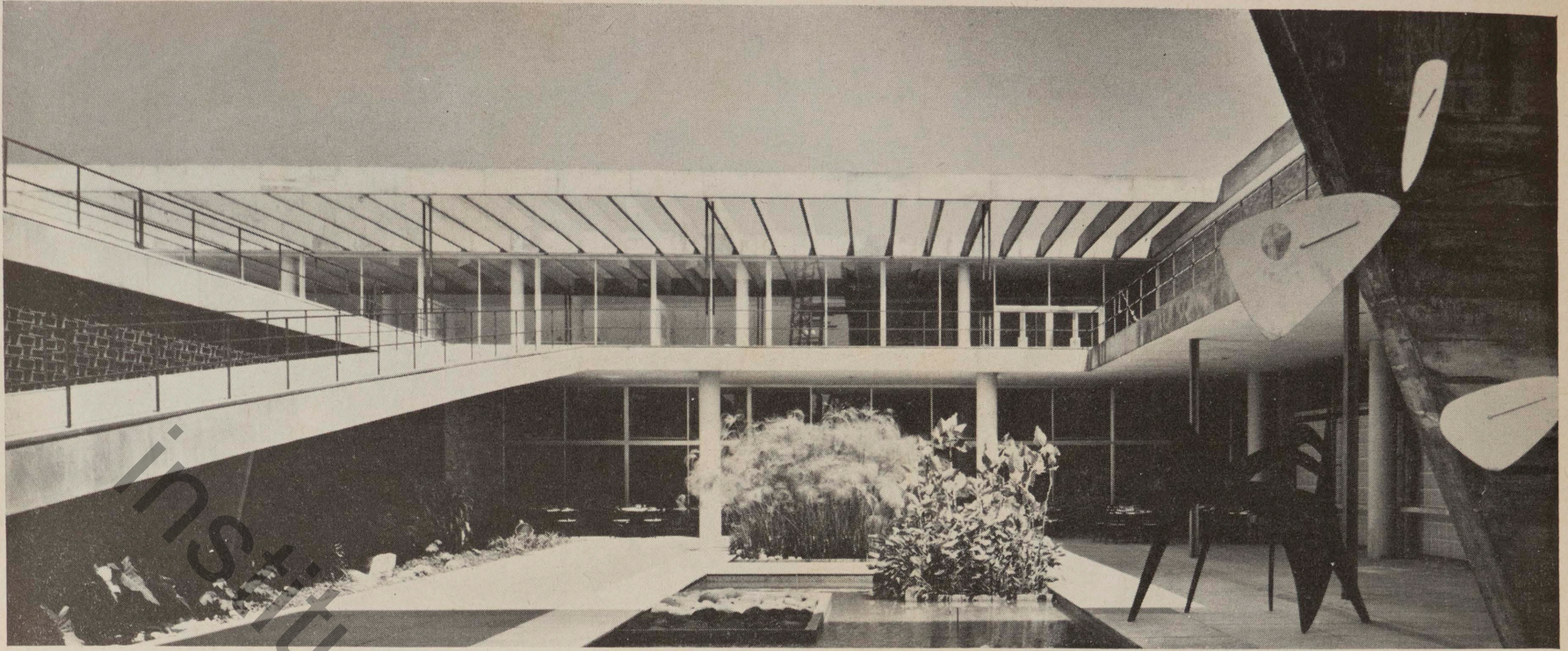
MOHALY

V oil 1964

59 x 51 inches

from the *Brazilian Art Today* Exhibition at the RCA Galleries reviewed on page 2

BRAZILIAN ART TODAY



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART AT RIO

by Marc Berkowitz

The museum of today is no longer just an exhibition hall. Particularly not in a country like Brazil, where everything is still undergoing the formative process. A National Gallery of London, a Louvre of Paris or a Prado of Madrid are supposed to show collections of masterpieces accumulated over the centuries. No such collections exist in Brazil. The purpose of a museum is not only to show, but above all to teach, to incite creative thought, to reflect the latest trends, to encourage young artists. While in Europe the museums preserve and safeguard traditions, in the young American countries like Brazil they have to help create them.

All this has been well understood by Affonso Eduardo Reidy, the great Brazilian architect who died in August of 1964. He understood the purposes and the needs of a Museum of Modern Art, the same way as he understood the problem of integrating the building in the overwhelming beauty of Rio de Janeiro's landscape. Thus the architect left behind what is perhaps his greatest work. But even though his understanding was shared by the board of the Museum, by all those who did their best to make it become a reality, it was not shared by the authorities of the State of Guanabara. So that in 1965, when Rio de Janeiro is celebrating the 400th anniversary of its foundation, the Museum of Modern Art is still unfinished. Instead of being the centre of all cultural and artistic activities of the celebration, it is struggling for survival, against tremendous odds. But in spite of all this, the Museum of Modern Art is the centre of many of the artistic activities of Rio de Janeiro. Its various courses, its important exhibitions, the excellence of its restaurant, make it into a meeting place for artists and art lovers, and also for snobs and epicures. In other words, though unfinished and short of money, the Museum of Modern Art is very much alive. The people who manage it, and those who work and teach there, are all idealists, who have the will to do something in which they believe. And the results, though far from perfect, are highly satisfactory.

This was even recognised by the Venice Biennial, because at the exhibition called 'The Art of Today in the Museums, at the last Biennial, the

Museum of Rio de Janeiro was the only Latin American Museum which was invited. Each Museum showed ten paintings of its collection. The Museum of Rio showed the Brazilians Ivan Serpa, Antoni Bandeira and Manabu Mabe, as well as Morandi, Soulages, Sugai, Santomaso, Hartung, Mannessier and Nay.

When presenting the plans for the Museum of Modern Art, Affonso Eduardo Reidy wrote: 'The relationship between a work of architecture and its environment is obviously a problem of utmost importance. In the case of the building of the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro the question acquired a special significance because of the privileged location of the site on which it is being built, right in the heart of the city, in the centre of an extensive area to be developed into a park overlooking the entrance to the bay, and moreover surrounded by one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. Our constant concern has been, therefore, to avoid as much as possible that the building might become a disturbing element in the landscape, in conflict with the natural setting'.

There is no doubt that Reidy has succeeded. The simple horizontal lines of the relatively low structure form the necessary contrast with the surrounding mountains, the transparent structure permits the landscape to 'participate'. For the time being, and for purely financial reasons, only one-third of the building is functioning properly. It contains the secretariat, the classrooms, the cafeteria, the restaurant, and a small temporary auditorium where films are shown, lectures given, and where theatre and dance classes take place. Most of the exhibitions are held in rooms originally destined for classrooms, and even though from the exhibition viewpoint they may be considered precarious, in 1964 alone 27 exhibitions were held there, of such artists as Alan Davie, Paolozzi, 'Contemporary Art of Italy', 'Contemporary Art of Japan', 'Polish Artists', etc.

The 1965 season was opened with a Henry Moore, exhibition, showing more than 30 of his sculptures and his drawings; and an exhibition of the well-known Spanish painter Manolo Millares,

and of the French painter Martin Barré. The plans for the whole of 1965 have already been prepared. There will be retrospective shows of such Brazilian artists as Ivan Serpa, Yolanda Mohalyi, Maria Leontina, Grassmann, Darel, etc. Also there will be a huge Belgian exhibition, a Japanese exhibition, a French exhibition, and many others.

The courses given at the Museum show its awareness of contemporary problems and needs. Besides courses in painting (beginners, technique, free atelier) by artists like Lazzarini, Serpa and Carvão, courses in printmaking by internationally known engravers such as Edith Behring and Roberto De Lamonica, there are also courses in cinema criticism and cinema direction and history, courses in printing, painting for children, Analysis of Modern Art, etc., all of them given by outstanding specialists in their respective fields.

Affonso Eduardo Reidy has prepared the perfect setting for what some day should become one of the most beautiful and functional museums of the American continent. The exhibition galleries cover an area which is 130 metres long and 26 metres wide, without any columns, and offering absolute freedom for the layout of the exhibitions. There are also different ceiling heights, and an exceedingly clever mixture of natural and artificial lighting. Plenty of air-conditioned storage space has been planned, and the foundations for the theatre block have already been laid. The theatre will seat 1,000 people, and it can be adapted for theatrical performances and symphony concerts.

It has always been my opinion that the main problem is not the building proper of the museum, difficult as it may be, but its maintenance after it will be finished. It will require a large staff of competent professionals, a large permanent collection, and continuous temporary exhibitions of the highest level - not to mention all the other activities. An enterprise of such magnitude, in a country like Brazil, can only function with Government support. There is no doubt that the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro fills an urgent need, and it is to be hoped that the Government will be farsighted enough to understand the existence of such a need.