

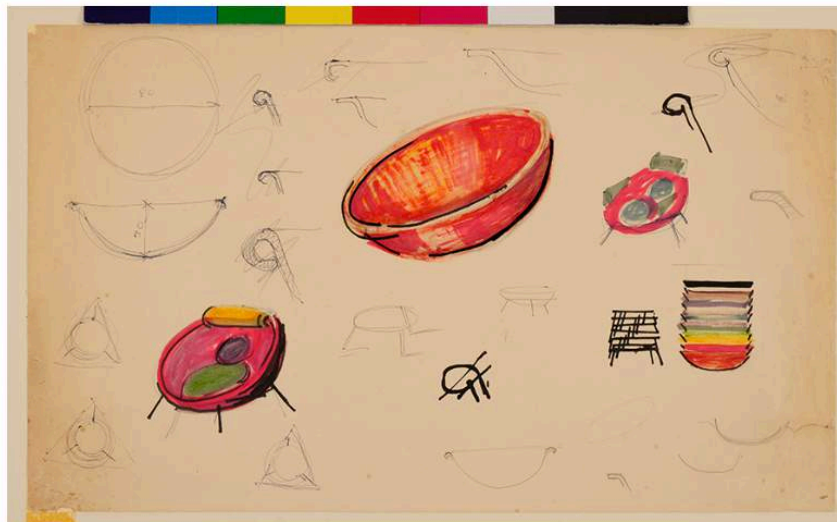
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“Drawing Bo Bardi: Barcelona Exhibition Showcases the Architectural and Artistic Designs of Lina Bo Bardi,” *Metropolis*, March 13, 2019

METROPOLIS

Drawing Bo Bardi: Barcelona Exhibition Showcases the Architectural and Artistic Designs of Lina Bo Bardi

Lina Bo Bardi *Dibuja* (Lina Bo Bardi Drawing), curated by artist and scholar Zeuler Lima for the Fundació Joan Miró, showcases around 100 of the Italian-born Brazilian architect's sketches, watercolors, and gouaches.



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In 1956, the Italian-born architect and designer Lina Bo Bardi visited Barcelona. At that point, she had lived in Brazil, her chosen country of residence, for 10 years, having migrated there with her husband Pietro Maria Bardi, a critic and curator. The purpose of her visit was to see the works of Antoni Gaudí, an architect who she so admired. They both shared a fascination with nature, a passion that would later be broadly recognized as “[organic architecture](#).”

Lina Bo Bardi’s joyful presence lands in Barcelona once again, this time through the exhibition *Lina Bo Bardi Dibuja* (Lina Bo Bardi Drawing), now open at the Fundació Joan Miró through May 26. Its exhibition space is a rationalist, light-filled structure set amidst verdant Catalan parkland designed by Miró’s close friend Josep Lluís Sert. It’s hard to imagine a more appropriate venue for the 100 or so of Bo Bardi’s sketches, watercolors, and gouaches that are on display—not only because Miró was also a prolific drawer, but also because of his sensitivity to, and love of, color.

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Bo Bardi drew her entire life. Her father, a modest Roman businessman with a passion for art, encouraged her to do so. For Bo Bardi, drawing was a means of expressing her worldview, which, over her lifetime was formed on two continents: She lived through the rise of Italian fascism and found a new home in Brazil's sunny São Paulo and Bahia. There, she became a leading figure in Brazil's exuberant midcentury artistic scene, which sought an escape from the country's colonial past through the movement known as [Tropicália](#) or Tropicalismo ("tropicalism").



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The show presents a visual biography of a woman who was independent and innately curious, but also deeply concerned about the human condition. In many ways, Bo Bardi's drawings echo her architecture. Her buildings, such as the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP), the SESC Pompeia cultural center, and her own home The Glass House, are all robustly Modernist in form but made gentler with large spaces for human interaction and evocative hand-crafted finishes and details. Her drawings similarly suggest connections between the physical and the sublime—a European formalism combined with magical realism.

Some of the pieces, most of which are no bigger than A4 format, are symbolic, such as a visual love poem Bo Bardi presented to her husband: an enchantingly naive composition of a heart-shaped flower, watched over by the (male) sun and (female) moon. Others depict lush tropical plants and flowers and plump exotic fruits, whether they're adorning the straw hat of a peasant girl or featured in a sketch for a circular staircase that opens out like a towering fern, a motif that Gaudí also used. Some drawings are sketches of Bo Bardi's architectural and design work, such as her famous Bowl chair and a side view of the SESC Pompeia, rendered with broad strokes of green.



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“Lina Bo Bardi’s early fascination with natural elements likely relates to her father’s romantic and picturesque paintings—she learned her basic artistic skills from him—and her incursions into the Italian countryside with her family,” says [Zeuler Lima](#), curator of the show and a Lina Bo Bardi scholar. His ambition for the show was not only to highlight her drawings, which are on loan from the Lina Bo Bardi Archives in São Paulo, but also to create a dialogue with her design and curatorial works. Bo Bardi’s own exhibition designs for the MASP and other cultural venues in Brazil were revolutionary in conception, but also in their content, celebrating indigenous art, crafts, and everyday artifacts. She placed these away from walls, suspended on colorful totem poles and accompanied by descriptive plaques at the rear, so as not to distract from the objects themselves.

Lima has channeled some of these ideas for *Lina Bo Bardi Dibuja*, which employs freestanding metallic posts and scaffolding, as well as large-scale screens whose quotes and plans connect to her architectural and design language. Spread over four rooms, the works are presented both chronologically and in clusters organized by the major themes that influenced her oeuvre: Living (the spaces she created); People (who make the spaces ‘alive’); Plants (as props and for well-being); and Seeing (which testifies to her powerful observation of the everyday).

Female architects are finally starting to get the recognition they deserve, but in the past, their narratives were typically ignored or overshadowed by those of their husbands. Bo Bardi, however, acted independently, in a country far removed from the shackles of European class and society. Did this sense of liberation allow her to flourish artistically? “Lina Bo Bardi was a woman of her time. And being so, she was also ahead of her time,” continues Lima. “As she liked to say, ‘foreigners have the vision of the decedents.’ Being a woman and a foreigner made her an outsider within the mainstream. Her presence, as well as distance in space and time, allowed her to remain authentic. That’s a great lesson to keep in mind.”

