

English Version

Artefatos do Sul – Legados da imigração alemã e italiana [Artifacts from the South – Legacies of German and Italian Immigration] features 1,055 objects and images selected from the vast Tina and Calito de Azevedo Moura Collection, which is devoted to mapping and preserving collections related to the history of the European presence in Brazil.

In this exhibition, the public will find objects that were part of the daily lives of German and Italian families who settled in the South region from the second half of the 19th century onwards. These are artifacts of common use, which help to recount how these people lived, and especially how they expressed their cultural identity as they sought to adapt to a new reality, on a new continent.

The portrait that emerges from pieces of furniture, work tools, household utensils, objects, old photos and postcards from back then, among other items, reveals the arduous toil of immigrants' daily work and the strength to overcome adversity through entrepreneurial action. Therefore, the curatorship of Adélia Borges shows how German and Italian immigrants became an inseparable part of the multifaceted construction of what now we call “the Brazilian people.”

For Farol Santander, it is a pleasure to present this exhibition in the year in which we celebrate 150 years of the Italian immigration in Brazil and 200 years of the German immigration in Rio Grande do Sul!

We invite all to plunge into this part of our history, which helps us understand the roots of entrepreneurship and industrial development in the Southern Region of the country.

Maitê Leite

Institutional Executive Vice-President



(Extra)Ordinary Objects That Challenge Time

Adélia Borges

“What I remember, I own.”

João Guimarães Rosa, in *Grande Sertão, Veredas*

The exhibition *Artefatos do Sul – Legados da imigração alemã e italiana* [Artifacts from the South – Legacies of German and Italian Immigration] celebrates Brazil's cultural plurality by shedding light on the still little known and analyzed design developed by European immigrants in southern Brazil. Furniture, work tools, construction elements, toys and household utensils made between the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century combine the memories, the techniques, the habits brought by the immigrants from their homeland, on the one hand, and the conditions and materials they found in their adopted land on the other. These are objects that we can call “ordinary.” They were made by and for ordinary people, for use in their daily lives—and how extraordinary they can be in that condition!

The works are part of the universe of around 6,500 items from the Tina and Calito de Azevedo Moura Collection, hand-selected over the last five decades in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul (mostly of it), Santa Catarina and Paraná. I fell in love with them in the mid-1990s, when I saw them for the first time. I was then editor of *Design & Interiores* magazine, and I got better acquainted with the work of Tina and her twin sister Lui Lo Pumo in furniture design and craft revitalization projects. The observation conditions, let me say, were not the best. Quite numerous, the objects piled up one on top of the other in the two-story houses in the Moinhos de Vento neighborhood in Porto Alegre, where Tina and Calito live and work. However, it was like an epiphany: the collectors' sensitive regard revealed lessons of inventiveness and simplicity to my eyes.

With each trip to Porto Alegre, I was delighted with new acquisitions. The collectors' choice to not vary the typologies too much—but rather to explore different features that the same type of artifact can have—was an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on the paths of design in our country. In the institutionalization of design training in Brazil, which took place from the 1960s onwards, with the establishment of the Escola Superior de Desenvolvimento Industrial (Esdi) in Rio de Janeiro, the axiom “form follows function” was uncritically adopted, which for some time acted as a straitjacket for designers. The collection allowed us to see that form does follow function, but it also follows culture, time, place, and the desire and dreams of the minds that conceive the objects and of the hands that shape them. And

this needed to be shown to a larger audience, in an exhibition that would do justice to its importance and representativeness.

The first chance came when I was the director of the Museu da Casa Brasileira (MCB), in São Paulo. In 2006, *Desenho anônimo – Legados da imigração no sul do Brasil* [Anonymous Drawing – Legacies of Immigration in Southern Brazil] occupied the museum’s main halls, curated by my colleague Alfredo Aquino, from Rio Grande do Sul. A new occasion arose from conversations with Farol Santander’s team, who were also delighted by the objects. And finally this exhibition comes about now, in 2024, when we celebrate the 200 years of German immigration in Rio Grande do Sul and the 150 years of Italian immigration in Brazil.

The date, therefore, could not be timelier—nor could there be a better place than the ground floor of Farol Santander in Porto Alegre, with its area of more than 1,100 m² and its 12-meter-high ceiling. The exhibition design, devised by Tina, Lui and by Ana Paula Gallarraga, managed to take advantage of the venue’s architectural grandeur, without hindering the audience’s fruition, in addition to creating solutions that bring the 1,055 works shown to the foreground. By occupying this privileged place in central Porto Alegre, the exhibition can “speak” to the public, who are direct heir of this legacy.

European immigration occurred under different conditions and circumstances in the different states across Brazil. In the South, both Germans and Italians received plots of land to settle with their families, and in much larger dimensions than the areas in which they lived in their places of origin. During the long crossings on ships, the immigrants carried few objects: basically some clothes, tools and religious books, packed in trunks. Most of them were literate people, who brought not only expertise in agriculture, but also of the trades practiced in the off-season on homesteads, during the long European winters. Woodworkers, carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers, potters, textile workers, tinsmiths, saddlers and shoemakers, among others, brought their know-how, their knowledge. Most of the works displayed at *Artefatos do Sul* were made in Brazilian lands, most of them made of wood, exploring the diversity and abundance of trees, including *açoita-cavalo* (*Luehea divaricata*), *cabriúva* (*Myrocarpus frondosus*), *canela-preta* (*Ocotea catharinensis*), cedar, *canjerana* (*Cabralea canjerana*), laurel and *pinho-da-araucária* (*Araucaria angustifolia*).

The artisanal workshops created by immigrants and developed by their descendants are at the genesis of the industrialization of the Southern states. If they

went barefoot on the farm in the early years, saving their shoes, when they had them, for Sunday church service, it is the work of the Germans—who transformed leather into boots, shoes and riding saddles—that earned the town of Novo Hamburgo the title of “national capital of footwear industry.”

Authors Isabel Cristina Arendt, Marcos Antônio Witt and Günter Weimar claim that it is thanks to the handicrafts of the early years of German immigration that small, medium and large-sized industries emerged in Rio Grande do Sul, underscoring the surnames that stood out on the Brazilian economic scene, such as Adams, Arnt, Dreher, Gerdau, Mentz, Oderich, Renner, Ritter, Trein, among others.¹ The Italian heritage has significant examples of companies that grew from small workshops, such as Tramontina, Dell’Anno, Marcopolo and Todeschini. In the ranking of the leading furniture hubs in the country, in descending order, are the municipalities of Bento Gonçalves (Rio Grande do Sul), São Bento do Sul (Santa Catarina) and Arapongas (Paraná).²

Due to its scope, variety, quantity, and the quality of the pieces, the Azevedo Moura collection reflects a broad memory of immigration in the Southern Region of Brazil. In my opinion, the set has a similar consistency to that gathered by Angela Gutierrez in the interior of Minas Gerais and grouped in the Museu de Artes e Ofícios de Belo Horizonte. Some other initiatives join this group. But I must emphasize before continuing that I am referring to a specific component of the formation of the Southern Region, whose history begins with the original peoples, goes through the arrival of the Portuguese and the Spanish, followed by enslaved Africans. In the early 19th century, before the other Europeans arrived, the black and indigenous population surpassed the white population in Rio Grande do Sul. Certainly, no story about the state would be complete without considering this plurality.

Now returning to the initiatives to praise the memory of immigration, on the German side we have the Museu Histórico Visconde de São Leopoldo (1959); the Museu Histórico Municipal de Dois Irmãos (1989); and the Museu Comunitário Casa Schmitt-Presser, in Novo Hamburgo (1992). On the Italian side, the Museu Municipal de Caxias do Sul (1947), the Museu do Imigrante de Bento Gonçalves (1974) and the

¹ Isabel Cristina Arendt, Marcos Antônio Witt and Günter Weimar in *A imigração alemã no Rio Grande do Sul* [German immigration in Rio Grande do Sul]. Available at: <http://brasil-alemanha.com/capitulo/19sec/A-imigracao-alema-no-Rio-Grande-do-Sul.php>. Accessed 17 April, 2024.

² Source: Instituto Moveleiro. Available at: <https://institutomoveleiro.com/os-maiores-polos-moveleiros-do-brasil/>. Accessed 17 April, 2024.

Museu do Pão, in Ilópolis (2008), among other examples. Also worth mentioning are the various antique dealers, including Normélio Brill, of São Sebastião do Cai, and Luiz Fitarelli, also responsible for the Ethnographic Museum Park in Garibaldi; and the tourist routes that articulate private developments in historic mansions in some regions, such as Caminho de Pedras and Caminho dos Moinhos.

Collections of this type have the ability to bring to light deep layers of people's emotional memories, even those that remained dormant. I am finishing writing this text a week after the opening of *Artefatos do Sul*, and I never tire of receiving heart-rending testimonials from visitors. In current museology, there is a change of focus, moving away from the exclusiveness of the object (how it is made, what its style is, what it represents, etc.) and focusing mainly on the subject (how the object resonates in those who see it). It is precisely this exchange with the public; the desire to raise awareness among people from different social classes, levels of education, ages, etc.; to establish a “conversation” with them, which mobilizes my trajectory as a curator.

In this sense, *Artefatos do Sul* is a real treat! “I had this at home too!” “My grandmother had one!” “I remembered that...” are frequent comments. I saw tears in people's eyes as they walked through the exhibition, and also smiles, elation, the manifestation of a sense of belonging, regardless of whether or not they descended from German or Italian immigrants. This reaction, in fact, had already occurred at the Museu da Casa Brasileira—and this in São Paulo, in a removed geographical context.

In my previous contacts with the collection, I had not realized the strength of the two-dimensional material, which reveals the human being “behind” the objects and the social imaginary of the period—the cultivated values, the established family, the strong religiousness. In the exhibition, period photos, graphic materials, plaques with sayings, and postcards sent or received by immigrants were placed physically on displays and walls, and are also part of a video projection measuring almost 10 meters in length, made by Estúdio Preto e Branco. In dialogue with images of some artifacts, the pieces gained a huge impact, in a visual and sound poetry that broadens the emotional connection with the visitors.

Another specially prepared audiovisual piece is “One collection, several gazes,” featuring interviews with the collectors and also with the authors of the texts in this catalogue. There (and here!) we have strived to go beyond the mere presentation of the pieces, to better understand the contexts, motivations and implications that this collection has for the Brazilian cultural heritage.

And then we come to another important inflection. Beyond such memories as the “good old days that will never return” spirit, which could result in sterile regressive nostalgia, I would like to point out the relevance of bringing together these works today, as they also spark reflections that are on the agenda. I stick to three points:

1. Sustainability—a word so worn out by use—also implies stopping obsessive consumption and the planned obsolescence of products; having fewer, more durable things. Several of the objects present in the exhibition are worth of contemporary design stores. They are strong, solid. They have crossed generations. They defy time. If some have functions that have become anachronistic in our lives today (such as those for skimming milk or making butter), most have retained their usefulness and allure. And in the wake of changes in habits, types of products that had fallen into disuse are now making a comeback, such as coffee grinders.

2. Much is said today about the symbolic dimension of objects. Designers have been making designs that are attentive not only to the performance of products, but to the layers of meaning they carry, such as singularity and human warmth. Objects that were once discarded by families for being deemed as “old” are now recognized as timeless and called vintage. Fascination can come from the superimposed layers of paint, revealing the patina of time, or from details—useful or useless—that convey the creative imagination of their authors. In Italian, *guardare* [similar to the Portuguese word *guardar*, to save, to store] means “to look.” We could say that, to save, we first need to sharpen our eyes.

3. The status of handmade in contemporary society has been expanding, challenging predictions that industrialization would kill crafts. Scientific conferences and publications point to the emergence, in the 21st century, of an aesthetic of production and consumption based on movements of small-scale artisans, both in the Southern and Northern Hemispheres, where this phenomenon was called “maker movement” and “DIY” [acronym for Do It Yourself]. The wall with a hundred carpentry tools in *Artefatos do Sul* feasts the eyes and hearts of the newest generation of carpentry designers spread across the country—those who have put aside the exclusivity of using a pencil or a computer to revel with planes, chisels, saws and gouges.

I close by thanking everyone involved in the exhibition. We curators are usually the only ones who appear in interviews and lectures, but the sum of skills to put together an exhibition like this is immense. During the long months of preparation, I consulted with team members about their favorite object, to compose a diversified and representative table of icons for the exhibition. The answers were as varied

as possible, and usually came with added personal stories related to the object. For my part, my preferences varied over time. But only now, when writing this text, comes the image of the lamp nearly identical to the first object I bought in my life, when I was about 12 years old. In a childhood where the closest I could get to artworks were the paintings and sculptures of saints in churches, I admired the essential forms of this simple object, which I have kept to this day.

As João Guimarães Rosa said through Riobaldo: “What I remember, I own.” And when we remember together, this “owning” becomes stronger and happier. The etymology of the word “*comemorar*” [to celebrate], of Latin origin, after all, is “*com-memorare*,” or “to remember with.” Thus, beyond the materiality of the pieces presented, *Artefatos do Sul – Legados da imigração alemã e italiana* seeks to contribute to the shared memory of the Brazilian people, which is shaped from multiple blends and legacies.

Adélia Borges (Cássia, Minas Gerais – MG, 1951) is a design critic and historian. For her contribution to the investigation and dissemination of Brazilian and Global South design, she was honored with the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa from the São Paulo State University (Unesp) in 2021. Her research serves as basis for various productions, such as exhibitions, books, news articles, documentaries, courses and lectures, both in Brazil and overseas. Her texts have been published in seven languages; she has also authored or co-authored 41 books, including *Design + Artesanato: o caminho brasileiro* [Design + Crafts: the Brazilian way]. She has curated more than 60 exhibitions in Brazil and abroad. She lives in São Paulo.