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DESIGN

The streets of Brazil are full of startling design solutions by ordinary people driven by pure human need. **Adélia Borges** writes about a new exhibition space that celebrates a design culture of diversity.

BY

THE

OTHER



The energy and inventiveness with which Brazilian design has been surprising the world in recent years has an important precedent: The artefacts produced by ordinary people to meet their own needs. In the streets of great or small cities, especially in the poor and fringe areas, we can see vending carts, barbecue grills, toys, furniture, utensils, and other simple and intelligent solutions that show perfect functionality and the sustainable use of materials.

Their form goes further than function, to follow the heart and emotion. There is no fear of ornamentation or strong colours. These everyday objects are made by the very same people who use them. We can call it popular design or anonymous, spontaneous design.

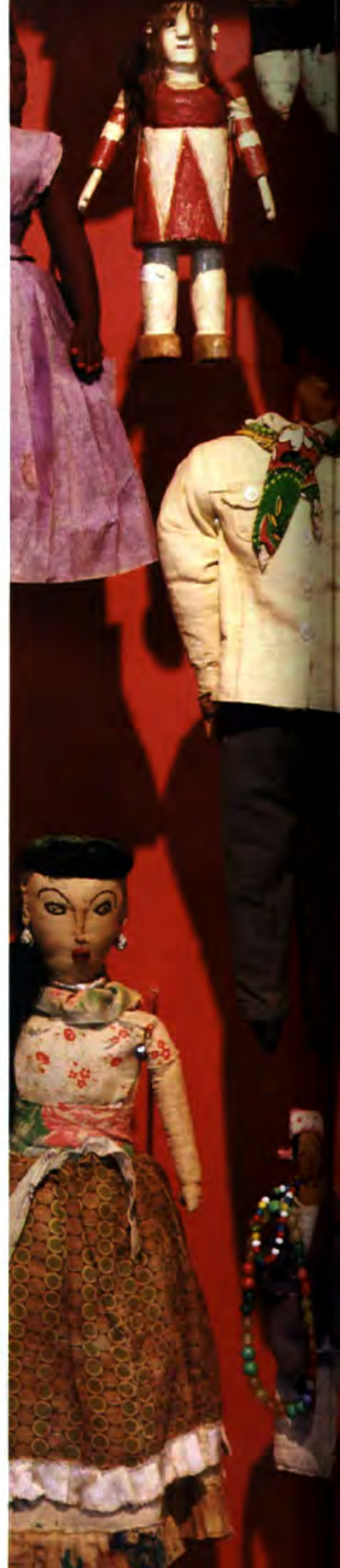
Finally there is now a place where these works can be displayed and admired. The São Paulo city government decided this year to turn a building designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer in the 1950s, which was being used as a public office, into a new museum.

Pavilhão das Culturas Brasileiras or "Pavilion of Brazilian Cultures" will be an

exhibition space and a centre for research and reference to protect and disseminate Brazilian cultural diversity. The emphasis is on both material and non-material cultural heritage of minority and less privileged groups that have not been given much institutional visibility so far. The goal is to legitimise, strengthen and draw attention to the traditional and contemporary cultural practices of the Brazilian people, in all its strength and plurality.

To announce the new museum, the São Paulo government put together the exhibition *Puras Misturas*, meaning "Pure Blends" or "Pure Mixtures", which ran from April to November 2010. The paradoxical and contradictory expression "puras misturas" was coined by Brazilian writer João Guimarães Rosa and reveals, in a poetic form difficult to translate, what we believe is the synthesis of Brazilian culture: its mixture, its diversity.

In the entrance to the exhibition, which occupies approximately 2 500 square metres, three vending carts reveal beauty and dreams. One is used by a coffee vendor who circulates in the streets of Salvador, the blackest city outside of Africa, in the state of Bahia. Paulo Cesar de Jesus mixed together an industrialised





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Previous spread: The Multidão (meaning "crowd") chair by Fernando and Humberto Campana comprises dolls handmade by women in the small village of Esperança (meaning "hope"), in the far north-east of Brazil. This spread: Dolls from the collection of the São Paulo Ancient Folklore Museum. Photos: Mariana Chaves.