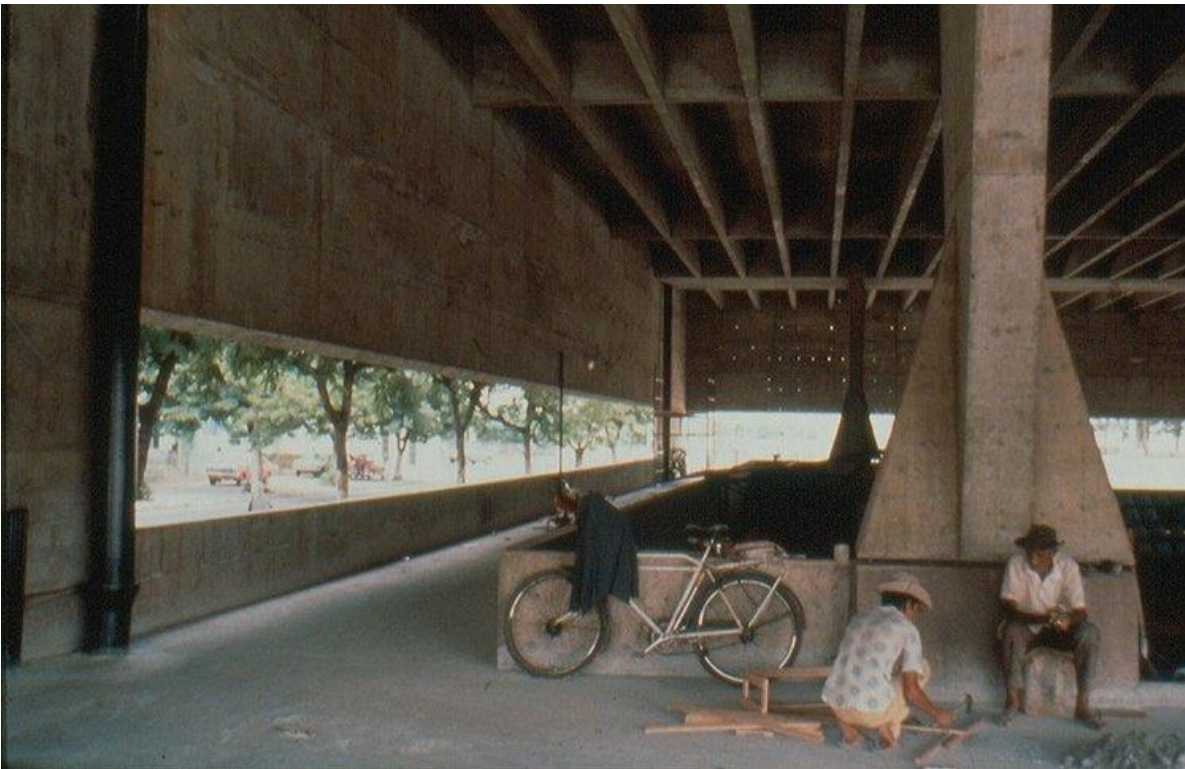


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# 7 things to *unlearn* with

*Paulo Mendes da Rocha*



## 1. Art is no longer to be made mysterious

Concrete technique is always malleable to creation. It is the most appropriate material to solve the problem of modern space. Moreover, the builders who work with me on these constructions simply conclude that

they could do it too. This awareness that art is no longer to be made mysterious (a world apart and misunderstood by all) is part of a certain philosophy. Concrete constructions, simple and essential, show that architecture can and should also relate to the people.

*Concrete House in Designed Future or Selected Writings by Paulo Mendes da Rocha / Image: Goiás Jockey Club Head Office, Goiânia, 1963 ©PMR, monade*



## **2. We only imagine what we are able to do**

It's impossible to imagine formations and formal transformations if you don't know how to do them. Even if you can't carry them out to the end, not being fully competent in the structural calculations and specific knowledge, you know that this is possible because you think with the ingenuity you have. You don't think of forms as being autonomous or independent of a factory vision of those forms themselves. You think as one who is making the thing, not sketching it.

*Architecture as a particular way of mobilizing knowledge, in Designed Future or Selected Writings by Paulo Mendes da Rocha / Image: The Gerber House, Angra dos Reis, Rio de Janeiro, 1973-1974 ©PMR, monade*



### **3. Architecture is aimed at doing**

It is necessary to remember that, like someone trying to choose just the right words for an epigraph, Architecture is aimed at doing rather than seeing, realizing rather than simply surprising, with the concreteness of the relationship between reasoning and freedom.

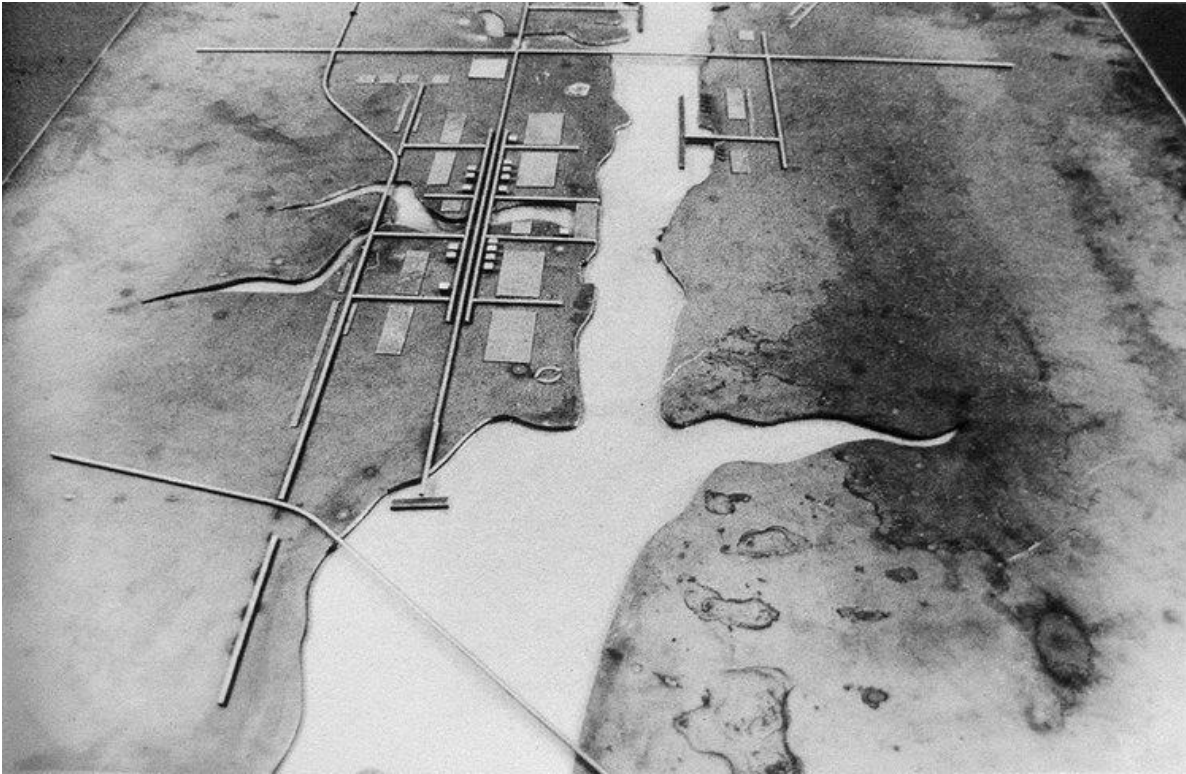
*Concrete House in Designed Future or Selected Writings by Paulo Mendes da Rocha / Image: Brazilian Pavilion at Expo'70, Osaka, 1969 ©PMR, monade*



## 4. Nature is not a mother

As in Tom Jobim's song, "From the window you can see the Corcovado, the Redeemer, how beautiful!", you already pre-suppose an apartment in Copacabana, for example. What window is he talking about? Landscape is only beautiful because behind us there's a breeze, voices and pans cooking beans, a water tank and washing on the line. This is the place that shelters the abyss from the window through which one can see a landscape and consider it beautiful. Because for someone lost on the beach like a castaway, no bay is beautiful. Or maybe it could be beautiful through the hope that some ship would come and save us from this magnificent landscape that has forsaken and could kill us. [...] Therefore, nature is not a mother, but a set of phenomena that must be faced by the human race.

*Architecture as a Particular Way of Mobilizing Knowledge and Desires, Today in Designed Future or Selected Writings by Paulo Mendes da Rocha / Image: Casa Butantã 1964-1966 ©João Carmo Simões, monade*



## 5. Each of us begins everything

I have hope, I have optimism. It's the dimension within the force that history has already shown us, the force that exists in popular culture. We are not ready, and we do not wish to be ready. We count on this eternal incompleteness. We're born and know we're going to die. And why don't we get discouraged? What is this enthusiasm? It's the certainty that we are not born to die; we are born to begin. Each of us begins everything. We are the sum of knowledge, all experience and history only exists in those who are alive at the same time.

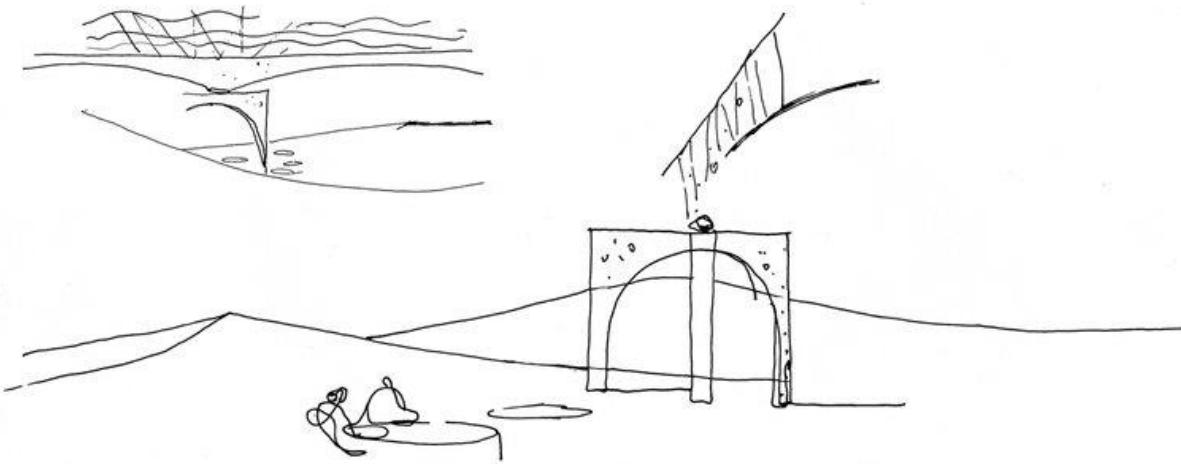
*Engendering the Human in Designed Future or Selected Writings by Paulo Mendes da Rocha / Image: Model for the Tietê River City-Port, 1980 ©PMR, monade*



## 6. Horror lies in the destruction of technique

Well, look, *Guernica*, as well as showing indignation about war and destruction – the woman with the blown up child, the donkey with her belly ripped open, and so on, also has a side no one talks about. There's a lamp there. As if saying: among other malignities, they also destroyed this small village's electric light. This is, in essence, the great crime of fascism. The great horror in the painting that Picasso painted and called *Guernica* is to see the destruction of the light, because in a dark shack, when a child cries at night, the mother doesn't know if it's hungry or being eaten by a snake, a bear or worse. And yet, today you can turn on the light, open the refrigerator, take out the baby's bottle, warm it up on the stove, etc. Life changes, and those bastards were bombarding the electric light.

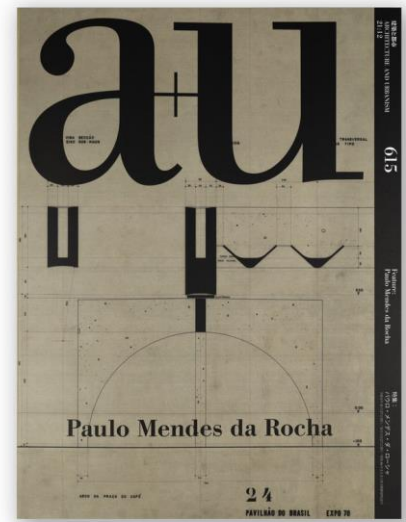
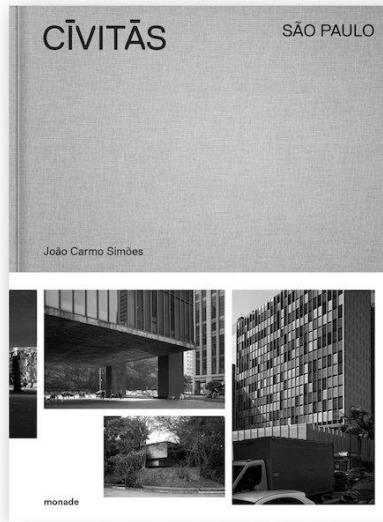
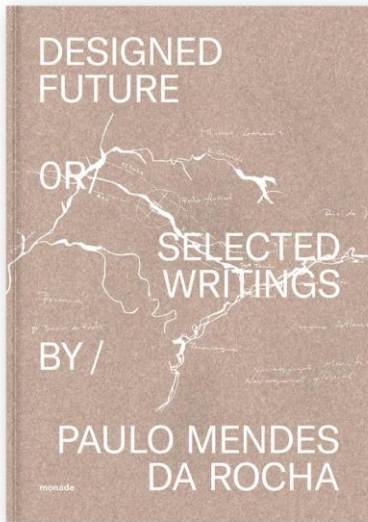
*The Ever Unsatisfied Desire in Designed Future or Selected Writings by Paulo Mendes da Rocha / Image: Casa Millan 1970-1974 ©João Carmo Simões, monade*



## 7. You have to make yourself say: “I know!” And if you don’t, who does?

You are either born a revolutionary or will never be one. By revolutionary I don’t mean the guy who straps a bomb to himself and goes into a school and kills all the children; that’s an idiot. You have to make yourself say: “*I know!*” And if you don’t know, who does? It is easy to say “*No, that some other guy knows.*” Only he who asks knows. Those who don’t know don’t even ask; don’t even know what to ask. So, what we are talking about here is the possibility of trying to show something whilst working within that confused and erratic context. It is about a building, on the small scale, endeavouring as much as possible to be a city.

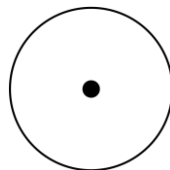
*Civitas São Paulo* in *Designed Future or Selected Writings* by Paulo Mendes da Rocha / Drawing: *Brazilian Pavilion at Expo’70, Osaka, 1969* ©PMR, monade



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