

# Harper's BAZAAR BRASIL

CULTURE

## DOMO DAMO: PAULO MENDES DA ROCHA'S HOUSE BECOMES AN ARTISTIC RESIDENCE

By André Aloï  
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David Laloum never lived nor slept in the house that turned the brutalist oasis of Paulo Mendes da Rocha, in Granja Julieta, São Paulo, into an artistic residence. A passion for decades, the art that was once a hobby has finally found its place. "Now it's a part of my life, my daily routine. It's every day," he emphasizes. At the beginning of this year, he materialized the home named Domo Domo – "house of love" in Esperanto. "When the rooms were ready, the first artists were already arriving," says the collector.

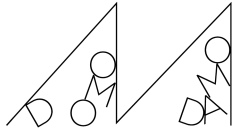
The residence in question welcomes people from different parts to dedicate themselves exclusively to artistic creation in a partnership with Benjamin Trigano, founder of the M+B gallery in Los Angeles, USA. "The idea is to catalyze a new generation of artists, mainly from Brazil to the world. In 20 or 30 years, we'll see a historical movement and, perhaps, we'll have made a humble contribution to this movement.



Laloum was looking for a suitable place for artists to create, but he never intended to find the signature of a great architect. But it appeared. "As if, in some way, unknowingly, it was waiting for a project like Domo Domo." Designed by Mendes da Rocha, the house was commissioned by the artist and gallery owner Gaetano Miano in the 1960s. He and his family lived there until 1968 when they returned to Rome to escape the military dictatorship. "I don't feel any brutality in it. I feel truth, perfect proportions, a powerful place almost mystical or religious in aspects related to light and calm," he summarizes.

The plot of a thousand square meters with 400 of built area has two floors, three bedrooms, common areas where residents and the support team coexist, as well as a pool surrounded by vegetation. "I like to sit on the sofa in the main room and look out at the garden. This integration, as one body, always moves me." Upon entering for the first time, the sensation was one of disbelief and enchantment. "How could such a house exist in São Paulo, and almost no one (except architects) knew of its existence?", Laloum recalls.

But the project predates the search for the space. "For many years, I have collected and followed artists before they entered galleries." In this relationship, he understood the importance of investing in potential and materialized a place where they could produce with fewer space, material, or time limitations, where



experiences mingle and flow, in addition to the interaction between artists and the public, even though it is not open for visits.



Although reserved, the name of the French businessman is pristine in the São Paulo nightlife scene since the nostalgic 2000s. In a now distant past, Laloum was a partner of the now-defunct Bar Secreto, responsible for hosting artists of the caliber of Madonna, Bono (from U2), Michel Gondry, and Marc Jacobs. Today, he runs a company focused on emerging technologies, Distrito, and a communication company, United Creators. And he emphasizes that Domo Damo is not personified in him. "It's a platform for artists, a place for incubation, development, and exchange. A parenthesis that can bring about evolution and transformation," he adds.

A nomad for almost three years, the 28-year-old artist Luana Vitra, from Contagem (MG), has been at Domo Damo for about three months – having previously been in Lisbon. She had stayed longer in São Paulo earlier this year. She has seen all the artist cycles that have passed through the house. She praises the path of light during the day. "It starts in the bedrooms (facing away from the street) and sets in the kitchen. Beautiful transition." Her work, focused on sculpture, installation, dance, drawing, and performance, is at the 35th São Paulo Biennial until December.

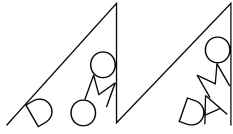
The artist from Minas studies air as a conduit for information, using metals as platforms. Most of her time in the space is spent working, either on works or online – organizing production or giving interviews. The project and the staff (especially Roberta and Jane) pamper her in a special way: "I don't feel like leaving; I only see those who come to visit me. Everything I need is here." The space arouses feelings that make her feel good. Cohabitation is an essential point, of fruitful relationships, friendship creation, and acceptance.

The visual artist from Rio, Matheus Ribeiro, 29, moved to São Paulo after receiving an invitation from Laloum upon returning from an exhibition in Paris and another at the Museum of Art in Rio de Janeiro (MAR). He had been following his work in illustration, even before painting on large canvases.

With the move to the São Paulo capital, he continues his research "Fechar os Corpos," dedicated to the indigenous people and African-rooted religions with environmental issues in the background, recovering Afro-Brazilian elements. He was afraid to give up his studio in Jardim Botânico in Rio to live in a "rigid" construction. But he was mistaken. "It is full of greenery, has an incredible garden with bird visits, like thrushes and kiskadees," he describes.

He stays in the upstairs room, topped by a pyramidal skylight. "The light comes in all day, projecting in different ways throughout the hours. Always very clear, good for those who paint a space with so much light." Recently arrived, he is still getting to know the city. But he knows that there the frequency vibrates differently from the always awake Pauliceia. "Autonomy brings maturity, without distraction, and being only with my work makes me meticulous."





A hundred days passed between the arrival and departure of Poli Pieratti from Brasília, from April to August of this year. Trained as an actress, the boundary between the figurative and the abstract governs the 36-year-old multi-artist. She felt at home with the exposed concrete modernist construction, so present in her native Brasília. Occupying the space is like entering a sculpture.

“What strikes me are the sounds, the acoustics, the reverberation as a portal. Listening to this, along with the high lights from the skylights, creates a heavenly atmosphere,” she details. “The scale and materiality of the house generate a mixture of pleasure and astonishment. Brutalism summons me to show, too, my brutality, the marks of my process. The scars, stains, and reliefs of the concrete end up revealing my own imperfections.”

At the residence, she produced intensely: 27 paintings in small and large formats – some nearly three meters high. The house made her scale grow, but it also called for more delicate gestures; radically soft brushstrokes create a contrast with the architecture. Her favorite detail is the kitchen hood, which has no machinery or suction, but a design that causes the hot air to rise. “This and the angles of light that cut through the house all day. My reference from Paulo Mendes da Rocha was houses closer to bunkers, almost cavernous environments. I was fortunate to live in one of the sunniest he made,” she summarizes.

Despite the home being temporary, she believes that the connection with people is already timeless. “An immersion intensifies the work but also expands affections. The architecture became home when I understood that. That the connection with the people I met there would remain alive on a large scale.”

The initial residencies came by invitation, but there might be open calls in the near future. However, in just eight months, Domo Damo has already hosted various artists on a temporary basis, such as the Congolese Merveille Kelekele Kelekele. It's not impossible to expand the project outside of Brazil soon. After all, Benjamin, the project's partner, has art activities in Los Angeles and Milan. “We want to create a love story between the house, the artists, and the people who frequent it. A generous place, open, without pretense, with ambition, and with the energy of creation and sharing.” And this has been the environment of power, light, and amplification of these journeys.

