

Transatlantic Narratives

Giancarlo Piretti and Olivetti Identity in Brazil

Thesis

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This research analyzes the expansion of the Olivetti company in Brazil, focusing on the architect Giancarlo Palanti as a key interpreter of the corporate philosophy within the South American context. Starting from the Olivettian concept of the factory as a “community” and a civil organism, the study examines the company’s approach across the American continent, with a specific emphasis on Brazil. It highlights the founding of Olivetti Industrial Sudamerica, OISA, (1952) and the subsequent shift of its operational center from Rio de Janeiro to the industrial metropolis of São Paulo.

The core of the work lies in the analysis of Palanti’s professional trajectory: from his Rationalist training in Milan, his business partnership with Franco Albini, and the relation with Pagano as mentor within the “Casabella” circle. To the design maturity he achieved in Brazil. The study explores his role in defining Olivetti’s visual identity through the design of showrooms and offices that merged Italian industrial rigor with local material culture (fine woods, straw, and leather). Supported by extensive documentary and historiographical evidence, the research culminates in a catalogue of works based on original drawings from the FAU USP archives. Ultimately, the Olivetti-Palanti case emerges as a perfect synthesis of industrial enlightened patronage and Brazilian modernism, where commercial space is transformed into a cultural manifesto and a bridge between two continents.

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Introduction

The history of the Olivetti company, founded in 1908 in Ivrea, represents a unique case in the 20th-century industrial landscape, defining itself not only through economic success but as a true “healthy industrial organism” capable of generating concrete and civil progress. Under the leadership of Adriano Olivetti, the company elevated social responsibility to a system, transforming the factory into a “Community” where the boundaries between technical and humanistic disciplines were systematically dismantled. In this context, architecture and design were never intended as mere aesthetic tools, but as inherent components of a vision aimed at elevating the territory both materially and spiritually¹.

1. Sanches 2014, 302.

After a brief introduction to the history of Olivetti this research begins with a broad analysis of the company’s expansion across the American continent, illustrating how the company’s philosophy crossed the ocean to meet diverse markets and cultures. This general overview sets the stage for a detailed study of the Brazilian case. Through the examination of this experience, the thesis explores the specific methods used to design and realize Olivetti’s stores and showrooms in the country. These commercial outlets were also strategic tools for brand positioning: their realization reveals the core of the company’s expansion philosophy during that historical period, showcasing a sophisticated blend of corporate identity and local architectural sensibilities.

The Brazilian expansion was a decisive chapter in this global strategy, the establishment of OISA in Brazil in 1952 was a crucial moment, coinciding with Olivetti’s debut at MoMA, it marked a period of peak expansion and prestige for the

brand name. OISA, which stands for Olivetti Industrial South America, was based in Brazil and was specifically responsible for directly managing the company's operations in this part of the New World; during that period, the country was experiencing significant growth and was seen as the best opportunity for expansion in Latin America, even though the company already had several stores in Argentina. After having its headquarters in Rio de Janeiro for brief period it shifted its focus toward São Paulo, a metropolis that already boasted over three million inhabitants and served as the capital of a state responsible for half of Brazil's industrial output; this logistical move transformed the Brazilian operation into a complete industrial reality². The company selected the Conde de Prates building as its prestigious headquarters, a skyscraper in the heart of São Paulo. This project, designed by Giancarlo Palanti in collaboration with Henrique E. Mindlin, served as the initial stage for a long-standing partnership. Palanti, working alongside artist Bramante Buffoni, curated also the interiors and furnishings for the floors of the company, marking the beginning of a synergy that would later define Olivetti's image across South America through the establishment of a dozen new stores and offices buildings.

As mentioned, Palanti stood at the core of this expansion and the establishment of the brand's local identity. For the purposes of this research, an analysis of his professional trajectory was fundamental. By focusing on the works that defined his approach at Olivetti, this study examined his collaborations within the "Milan Triennale", his exhibition and display installations, alongside interior and furniture designs projects during the early years of his career. Similarly, it was essential to address his ideas regarding the approach to architecture, expressed through the magazines "Casabella" and "Domus" and the ideas of the cultural circle he frequented during that period, this analysis was carried out through the study of Italian texts and research, including the work, among other, of Rita Tagliaventi, and the historical

magazines previously mentioned, sourced from the collections of the Politecnico di Milano. An important part of the research comes also from his connection with Franco Albini, with whom he opened a studio together and his relationship with Giuseppe Pagano as an intellectual guide. This trajectory was tragically interrupted by World War II and the death of his mentor, Pagano, at Mauthausen in 1945³. The loss left Palanti with a profound spiritual and professional legacy, prompting him to seek a new territory in Brazil where he could finally realize the ideals of modernism and civic engagement that had been stifled in Europe.

Palanti's arrival in São Paulo in October 1946 marked a definitive transition from his Milanese Rationalist roots to the maturity of a designer facing a vertical, rapidly expanding metropolis. Navigating the paradox of an urgent need for modern expertise against a backdrop of bureaucratic hurdles, Palanti successfully integrated into the Brazilian professional landscape. By establishing an independent studio in 1950 and formally severing his operative ties with Italy, symbolized by the end of his partnership with Franco Albini, he transformed from an "immigrant architect" into a primary interpreter of modernism in São Paulo panorama⁴. This metamorphosis made him the ideal partner for Olivetti, capable of translating the company's philosophy into a language deeply rooted in the Brazilian context.

Upon his arrival, the collaboration with Lina Bo and Pietro Maria Bardi in the Studio d'Arte Palma, allowed to make a significant contribution to the creation of the first modern furniture in Brazil, a country still deeply tied to traditional craftsmanship⁵.

Here, he fused Italian industrial precision with Brazilian material culture, utilizing local essences such as jacarandá, leather, and straw to create functional, serial furniture. While he eventually diverged from Lina Bo Bardi's more radical research into popular roots, Palanti's focus on high-scale industrial design and the ennoblement of local materials within a modern logic. This experience provided the methodological

3. Tagliaventi 2013, 37

4. Sanches 2014, 100.

5. Bardi 1958, 4.

foundation for his future work, where artisanal detail and industrial production achieved a unique equilibrium.

This construction of his Brazilian profile is instead developed through the doctoral research of Aline Coelho Sanches, currently the most comprehensive work on the architect, and the documents held in the FAU USP library, with specific reference to historical magazines such as *Habitat*.

Finally, the paper provides a detailed analysis of the various shops and offices designed by Palanti for Olivetti. This is achieved through the evidence found in magazines mentioned and specialized studies, focusing on the most iconic cases, such as the showroom in Rua Brigadeiro Tobias in São Paulo or the one in Salvador de Bahia⁶. Given that, in the vast majority of instances, historical accounts and descriptions are missing, it was decided to compile a catalogue with the original drawings held in the FAU USP (Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo Universidade de São Paulo) archives. In addition to original drawings as primary sources, this catalogue includes brief entries resulting from the historiographical study and analysis of these works.

Giancarlo Palanti's Brazilian work for Olivetti represents the perfect synthesis between the industrial humanism of Ivrea and the vitality of the South American context. Through a design that merges rationalist rigor with spatial fluidity and local material richness, Palanti transforms commercial spaces into true cultural manifestos. By integrating art, tropical vegetation, and architecture, he creates a place that elevates the industrial product to a precious object, demonstrating how a brand's identity can root itself deeply in the soul of a territory and serve as a bridge between two continents.

6. Sanches 2014, 304.

Olivetti, a brief history and philosophy of the company

The Olivetti company was founded in 1908 in Ivrea when Camillo Olivetti established “Ing. C. Olivetti & C.”. Italy was still predominantly agricultural but was starting to industrialise. The genesis of the company is inextricably linked to the figure of its founder, whose training in electrical engineering under the guidance of Galileo Ferraris and repeated study and work experiences in the United States (particularly at Stanford University) allowed him to import a cutting-edge vision of mechanical production and industrial organisation to Italy¹. The debut took place at the 1911 Turin Universal Exposition with the M1, characterised by original engineering solutions aimed at surpassing the patents of US and German competitors who dominated the market at the time; it was clear that the intention was not only to create a technical instrument, but also to express a work ethic based on the quality of materials and craftsmanship applied to the series². Camillo Olivetti’s business model stood out for its deep integration of technical rigour and social commitment. Opposed to indiscriminate financial growth, Camillo chose to root the business in the Canavese area, giving rise to the famous “red brick factory”. Here, production was not seen as an end in itself, but as the expression of a “healthy and adequate industrial organism” capable of translating invention into concrete progress³.

The war period and the early post-war years saw the company consolidate itself technically with the launch of the M20 (1920) and, at the same time, define itself on an ethical and political level. Camillo, a socialist activist and close to Filippo Turati’s positions, left his mark on the factory with a

1. Cfr. Renzi 2013, s. p.

2. Berta 2001, 40.

3. Ibidem.

1. People reading in the Olivetti company library.



sense of social responsibility ahead of its time, focusing on the technical training of workers and the creation of welfare services. This 'deep core' of attention to the material and spiritual conditions of workers would form the foundation on which his son Adriano, who joined the company in 1926 after graduating from the Polytechnic University of Turin, would build his famous model of community.

The transition between the 1920s and 1930s marked Olivetti's definitive transformation into an international player. Despite the crisis of 1929, the company managed to expand, establishing subsidiaries in Spain, Belgium and Argentina and launching the M40 model in 1931. In this context of growth, 1932 represented a crucial turning point: the company became a public limited company, and Adriano Olivetti took over as general manager. Under his leadership, the methods of industrial organisation observed in the United States were integrated into a vision that elevated corporate social responsibility to a system, leading Olivetti to cover three quarters of the national production of typewriters in those years and laying the foundations for cultural and industrial hegemony in the decades to come⁴.

The transfer of leadership to Adriano marked the evolution of the factory from a family business to a modern company, founded on a vision that sought to bridge the gap between economic development and political cohesion⁵. At the heart of Adriano's thinking was the idea of the "Community", understood as the founding cell of a federal state and a space for authentic relationships, theorised in his book

4. Renzi 2013, s. p.

5. Berta 2001, 56.



2. *Facade of the Olivetti offices in the expansion designed by Figini and Pollini.*

“L’ordine politico delle Comunità” (The Political Order of Communities, 1945). For Olivetti, a company should not limit itself to profit but has a responsibility to elevate the territory in which it operates, both materially and spiritually⁶. Under his leadership, Olivetti became a magnet for European intellectual excellence. Adriano broke down the boundaries between disciplines, bringing engineers, poets (such as Leonardo Sinisgalli and Giovanni Giudici), sociologists and designers into the company. This “culture of integration” was particularly evident in the fields of design, architecture and urban planning.

6. Olivetti 1945, 22.

The collaboration between planners like Natale Capellaro and designers such as Marcello Nizzoli generated iconic products like the Lettera 22 and the Divisumma 24, which elevated industrial aesthetics to an art form, winning the “Compasso d’Oro” award and taking the company to the top of the world market. Adriano embraced European rationalism and understood the importance of a unique architectural style and vision that would characterise the company’s image⁷. He entrusted Figini and Pollini with the expansion of the Ivrea factory (the famous glass curtain wall) and Luigi Cosenza with the Pozzuoli plant, designed in harmony with

7. Berta 1980, 240.



3. *The Pozzuoli facility designed by Luigi Cosenza in 1955.*



4. *The "Elea 9003", the first Italian supercomputer, presented in 1959.*

the coastal landscape. His commitment to urban planning culminated in his presidency of the INU and the Valle d'Aosta master plan with the BBPR studio, pioneering examples of supra-municipal land management⁸.

8. Berta 1980, 240.

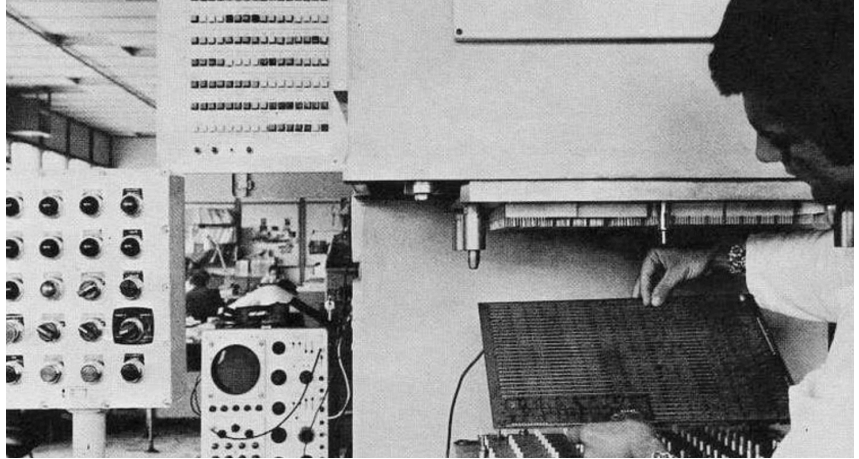
Adriano also made great strides in terms of corporate social responsibility, introducing welfare measures that were revolutionary for Italy at the time: reduced working hours with no loss of pay, the creation of social services, nurseries and libraries, and salaries consistently above the national average⁹. Despite the difficulties associated with the racial laws of 1938 and his exile in Switzerland during the war, Adriano led the company towards the frontier of electronics, culminating in 1959 with the presentation of the "Elea 9003", the first Italian commercial computer. His sudden death in 1960 interrupted his plans for a "Foundation" that would have socialised ownership of the company among workers, the local community and universities. Adriano Olivetti's story remains the finest example of entrepreneurship that combined global success with an integral humanism, leaving an indelible legacy in the history of contemporary design and architecture¹⁰.

9. Renzi 2013, s. p.

10. Ibidem.

In December 1955, Adriano Olivetti officially announced the company's entry into the field of electronics, a visionary choice that culminated in collaboration with the University of Pisa and the creation of the Electronic Research Laboratory (LRE) in Barbaricina. Under the guidance of engineer Mario Tchou and Adriano's son, Roberto Olivetti, the laboratory developed the Elea 9003 (1959), the first large Italian commercial transistor computer. This project also marked the debut of design applied to information technology thanks to Ettore Sottsass Jr., defining a new aesthetic language for computing machines. The sudden deaths of Adriano (1960) and Tchou (1961) exposed the company to a financial crisis that led, in 1964, to the intervention of a "rescue group" (Fiat, Pirelli and others) and the sale of the Electronics Division to the US company General Electric. Despite the scepticism of the Italian industrial system at the time, which considered

5. *A technician working on the Programma 101.*



11. Renzi 2013, s. p.

12. Berta 1980, 243

electronics a “blemish to be eradicated”, a small group of researchers led by Pier Giorgio Perotto managed to retain a revolutionary project: the Programma 101 (1965)¹¹. Nicknamed ‘la perottina’ and designed by Mario Bellini, the P101 was effectively the world’s first programmable desktop computer, anticipating the successes of Apple and IBM by more than a decade. This success paved the way for a season of innovation that would lead to the first electronic typewriter (ET 101, 1978) and the consolidation of an industrial model where the architecture of new factories (such as Zanuso’s in Scarmagno) and the design of iconic products (such as Sottsass’s Valentine) remain the pillars of the company’s identity¹².

In April 1978, the entry of Carlo De Benedetti as the primary shareholder marked a structural paradigm shift for Olivetti. Inheriting a company burdened by a decade of unsustainable debt and under-capitalization, De Benedetti replaced the traditional family-run capitalism with a model of global strategic management and tactical flexibility. This “slimming down” process resulted in a massive workforce reduction and the divestment of real estate assets, moving away from the social and territorial intentions of Camillo and Adriano Olivetti.

The early 1980s represented a crucial moment for Olivetti’s industrial design and technical identity. In 1982, the company launched the M20 desktop computer, a purely Italian product featuring a proprietary operating system and design by Ettore Sottsass. However, the rapid emergence of the IBM “industry standard” forced a strategic pivot.

The subsequent M24 (1983), designed for compatibility, achieved global success through a landmark agreement with AT&T, briefly positioning Olivetti as the third-largest PC manufacturer worldwide¹³.

13. Renzi 2013, s. p.

By the late 1980s, the impetuous competition in the IT market led to collapsing profit margins. De Benedetti responded by transforming the group into a holding company with diversified interests ranging from food and mechanics to publishing (Mondadori). In 1988, a radical restructuring fragmented the once-unified company into separate business units, a move that many critics argue broke the “organic unity” characteristic of the Olivetti tradition¹⁴.

14. Gallino 2003, 128.

Faced with a severe financial crisis in 1991, the group identified a new frontier in the privatization of the telecommunications sector. The founding of Omnitel Pronto Italia (1990) and Infostrada (1995) shifted the company’s core focus toward mobile and fixed-line telephony. This transition ultimately prioritized financial returns over industrial production, culminating in De Benedetti’s departure in 1996 and the appointment of Roberto Colaninno as CEO¹⁵.

15. Ibidem

The period between 1996 and 2003, often termed “Olivetticidio,” marked the definitive dismantling of the company’s industrial mission. Under the leadership of Colaninno and Tronchetti Provera, Olivetti transitioned from a technology pioneer into a financial vehicle, culminating in the 1999 hostile takeover of Telecom Italia and the subsequent delisting of the Olivetti brand in 2003¹⁶.

16. Renzi 2013, s. p.

While the manufacturing era ended, the architectural and social paradigm established by Adriano Olivetti achieved global institutional recognition. In 2012, Ivrea was nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, celebrated as an alternative industrial model where the architecture of work and living was integrated into a human-centric urban plan. This spirit of innovation persists in the territory through the Arduino project (2005), an open-source framework that continues Ivrea’s legacy of accessible and visionary technology¹⁷.

17. Ibidem.

The company's expansion strategy

Since its inception in 1908, the company has been very cautious and thoughtful on the approach to expansion, formulating an ideological framework centered on the ethics of growth. In this context, the scaling up of the company was not perceived merely as a quantitative increase in production volumes; rather, it was executed through a systematic analysis and planning of its broader territorial impact¹⁸.

This approach frequently manifested in industrial projects where the construction of manufacturing plants was inextricably linked to the design of corresponding residential quarters for the workforce, ensuring a holistic integration between industrial development and social infrastructure.

We can therefore imagine how the decision to expand into other continents was planned and reflected within the company's values. The primary reason was certainly economic, but in any case, it was based on the company's long-term growth. For example, in the United States, having a local branch allowed the company to own original patents and thus enter foreign markets without having to pay royalties to American giants (Remington or Underwood)¹⁹. This guaranteed higher profit margins and total industrial sovereignty. Olivetti identified an elective affinity in Latin countries; in Argentina, the strong presence of Italian emigrants served as a social base ready to welcome the national product this is why in Buenos Aires was chosen as the first location, for the assembly of parts, outside Italy, in 1951²⁰. In Spain (Hispano Olivetti), the company found a context similar to that of Italy in which to test the "factory-community" model.

Another reason to build establishment was the fact that after the Second World War, many countries imposed high tariffs to protect local industries. To circumvent these

18. Olivetti 1945, 25.

19. Renzi 2013, s. p.

20. Colombo, Per-
ruccio 2019, 274.



6. *The interiors of one of the factories of Glasgow.*

barriers, Olivetti switched from exporting to local production. Establishing factories in Glasgow (1947) and South America allowed the company to be considered a “domestic manufacturer” in those markets, eliminating import costs and adapting the product to local needs²¹.

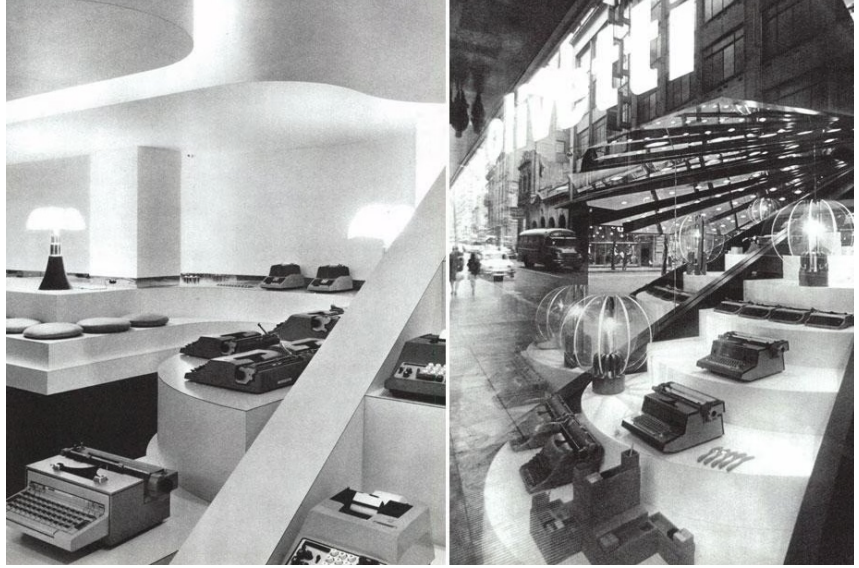
Alongside these companies and commercial enterprises expanding worldwide, a vast number of shops and showrooms were established for the display and practical sale of the machines. These projects benefited from substantial budgets, aligned with Olivetti’s vision of redistributing its wide profit margins, and as Adriano wrote, to outline the company’s “moral code”²². Some of the first examples of stores built outside Italy were those completed and opened in 1940, despite the onset of the war, by Olivetti Argentina in Buenos Aires and Olivetti do Brasil in Curitiba, both were initial experiments that were meant to serve as a model for the company’s image in the country. They retained the intention to project an image of absolute modernity, but they differed both in their configuration and in their adjectives²³. The Argentine store, located on the famous Calle Florida was distinguished by an almost theatrical visual approach: the entrance was dominated by a large window surmounted by the company logo, supported in an unusual manner by a cylindrical pillar and a sphere. After passing through a large vestibule decorated with additional display cases,

21. Berta 1980, 86.

22. Zagnoni 2017, 155.

23. Ibidem.

7. *Typewriters in exposition in the store of Buenos Aires designed by Gae Aulenti.*



24. Zagnoni 2017, 157.

25. Zagnoni 2017, 160.

the interior appeared as a space protected by glass block walls, where the central element was a sales counter with striking sculptural forms²⁴. Both stores were designed by prominent local architects whose identities could not be retrieved during the research process, however, these early examples were completely revisited in subsequent years, with the Brazilian store redesigned by Giancarlo Piretti and the Argentinian location by Gae Aulenti. The establishment of these stores was a strategic commercial move; nevertheless, the outbreak of the war restricted Olivetti's operational freedom regarding interior design and management²⁵.

Olivetti's physical expansion always went hand in hand with its quality project. Adriano knew that showrooms were a manifest for outlining the company's idea and for exporting and validating its production model. For this reason, the utmost attention was always paid to choosing the best architects for the design of the shops. One of the most famous examples is the BBPR studio's shop on Fifth Avenue in New York designed with the collaboration of the artist Costantino Nivola.

The project stems from a dynamic approach that BBPR defines as constructive realism; the installation was not imposed in a rigid manner, but evolved directly on site through continuous dialogue between architects and artists. This "guided improvisation" allowed the work to be perfectly adapted to



8. *The storefront of the New York shop designed by the BBPR studio.*

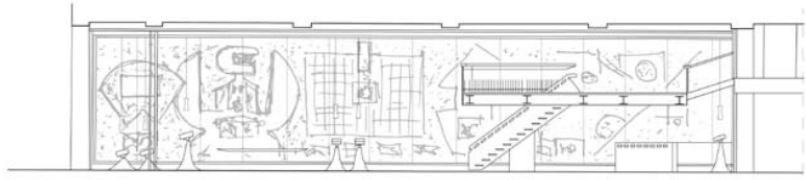
the existing space of the Empire Trust Building²⁶. The architectural configuration of the Olivetti showroom is defined by a narrow and deep spatial organization, extending 25 meters in length and articulated across two primary levels, supplemented by an underground storage area. A defining characteristic of the intervention is the strategic use of a recessed glass façade, which effectively dissolves the threshold between the interior and the public realm. By allowing the showroom to function as an extension of the sidewalk, the architects transformed the retail space into a shared urban experience²⁷. This intent is embodied by the placement of a Lettera 22 typewriter on a pedestal at the entrance, inviting passers-by to interact with the product. Above, an iron beam tensioned between the pillars announces the Olivetti brand through a language of stark industrial modernity²⁸. At the symbolic heart of the project lies a total fusion of architectural structure, sculpture, and industrial design. This dialogue is most prominently manifested in Costantino Nivola's 23-meter sculptural wall. Executed using the sand-casting technique, involving the pouring of cement onto molded sand, the bas-relief evokes ancestral Sardinian iconography, specifically the "Great Mother." The grazing light filtering

26. Hoyt 1954, 10.

27. Ibidem.

28. Cosentino 2020, 78.

9. A section of the New York store.



from the street amplifies the raw materiality of the cement, creating a poignant contrast with the sleek, mechanical precision of the typewriters.

The interior is further conceptualized as a “geological landscape” where materiality dictates the atmosphere: green marble pedestals emerge from the floor like stalagmites to support the machines, while Murano glass lamps, designed by Venini, descend from a cerulean ceiling like luminous stalactites. The vertical transition is managed by a sculptural staircase in Candoglia marble, a suspended element that leads to a mezzanine office area characterized by a compressed height of 2.20 meters. Positioned opposite to Nicola’s wall, a mysterious metal wheel serves as a functional centrepiece. Far from being a mere decorative motif, this gear acts as a mechanical lift to transport machines from the warehouse to the display floor. It stands as a sophisticated historical citation of Agostino Ramelli’s 1588 rotating bookwheel, a tribute that bridges Italian Renaissance ingenuity with Olivetti’s mid-century technological innovation²⁹.

The project’s radical departure from orthodox functionalism sparked an intense international debate, revealing deep-seated ideological divisions within the architectural community of the time. The American critic Lewis Mumford harshly condemned the showroom as an “apostasy” from the Modern Movement, labelling it excessively scenographic and “humanized,” even likening it to a Coney Island amusement park rather than a place of business³⁰. On the contrary, Gio Ponti championed the work as a masterpiece of creative freedom, for him, the showroom was devoid of sterile academicism, successfully introducing an unprecedented poetic atmosphere into the rigid urban grid of Manhattan³¹.

29. Cosentino 2020, 81.

30. Mumford 1954, 114-119.

31. Cosentino 2020, 83.



10. Panel in sand casting by Costantino Nivola, table in Candoglia marble and Arflex chairs designed by B.B.P.R., New York, 1953-54.

In the next page

11. Olivetti Showroom, interior, in the foreground the green marble stalagmites supporting the typewriters, with Venini lamps designed by BBPR hanging from above, New York, 1953-54.





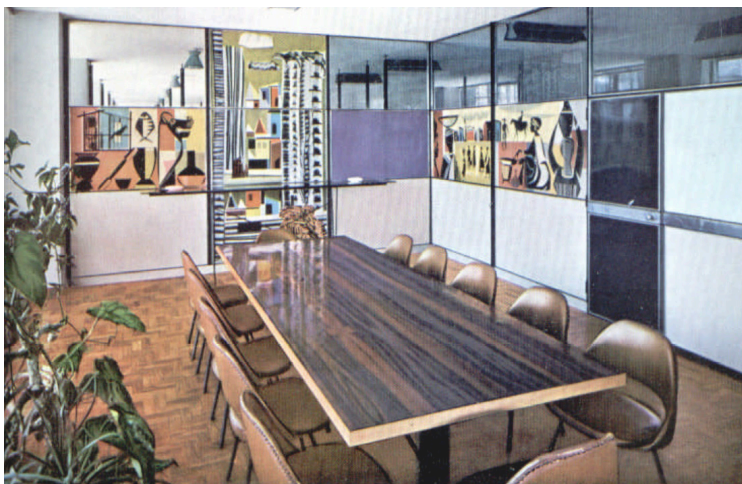
The Brazilian context

32. Scimeni 2023, 257.

On the same year the company made its New York debut with the MoMA exhibition titled Olivetti: Design in Industry, 1952, the company proceeded to open a new subsidiary in Brazil: Olivetti Industrial Sur America (OISA). It was established with its first headquarters in Rio de Janeiro and a capital of one million cruzeiros, entirely underwritten by Olivetti Ivrea³². The OISA branch carried out commercial duties, namely, the purchase of finished goods from Ivrea and their distribution across Brazil, alongside manufacturing objectives. These were initially limited to the assembly of foreign parts for the standard typewriter alone (the Lexicon 80 model), although the intent for a ‘progressive evolution toward full-scale production’ was already evident.

33. Ibidem.

Two years later, in December 1954, 330 units were being assembled monthly, and it was in Rio that the initial structure of the After-Sales Technical Support made its debut. By the following spring, OISA employed 150 people; the need for a larger headquarters arose, leading to the selection of a building at 50 Avenida Rio Branco, where the company occupied 400 square meters spread across four levels. Despite the continued absence of a full production chain, the company’s rapid growth soon rendered even these new offices insufficient³³. In this context, the possibility emerged of setting its sights on São Paulo, a metropolis that already boasted over three million inhabitants and served as the capital of a state responsible for half of Brazil’s industrial output; it was rightfully regarded by Gio Ponti as the “Eldorado of the second half of the century”. This provided the ideal logistical and structural foundation to finally evolve OISA from a simple assembly point into a fully realized industrial operation. On January 1, 1956, when the commercial management



12. Giancarlo Palanti and Henrique Mindlin, architects, and Bramante Buffoni: Olivetti Offices in the Conde de Prates Building, 1957-1966. Meeting room.



13. Giancarlo Palanti and Henrique Mindlin, architects, and Bramante Buffoni: Olivetti Offices in the Conde de Prates Building, 1957-1966. Executive Director's Room.



14. Giancarlo Palanti and Henrique Mindlin, architects, and Bramante Buffoni: Olivetti Offices in the Conde de Prates Building, 1957-1966. Boardroom of the Machine Tools Department.

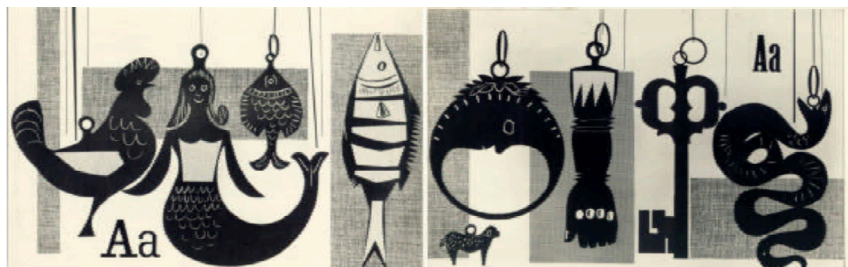
15. A historical photo of downtown São Paulo, in the center the “Edifício Conde de Prates”.



previously entrusted to the Brazilian company Tecnogeral expired, an OISA branch was established in São Paulo, located on the 7th and 8th floors of a building on Rua Brigadeiro Tobias. In April of that year, assembly operations were also transferred from Rio, and the area near the Guarulhos plant was mentioned for the first time as the site for the new industrial complex designed by Marco Zanuso³⁴. By the end of 1957, the OISA branch in São Paulo already had 170 employees, and its transfer to larger premises could no longer be postponed. This was an opportunity to give the offices a more prominent location, and the choice fell on a central plot overlooking Bouvard and in the heart of the city in the Vale de Anhangabaú, whose reconstruction was then nearing completion after five years of construction. This was the 33-stories skyscraper called Conde de Prates, built by the construction firm “Construtora Mathias” and designed by Giancarlo Palanti with Henrique E. Mindlin. Palanti, who had recently become a naturalized Brazilian, lacked the formal qualifications required to sign off on the projects independently³². The location of the complex in an area of high visibility and prestige and the fact that it was entrusted to an Italian must have been decisive factors for Olivetti³⁵. Following the selection of the company location within the building, Palanti himself was called upon to design also the

34. Scimeni 2023, 257.

35. Sanches 2014, 288.



16. Bramante Buffoni:
Panels for the Olivetti
Offices in the Edificio
Conde de Prates.

the Olivetti offices, which were inaugurated in February 1958 at 293 Rua Líbero Badaró, on the 8th floor of the skyscraper, with a surface area of approximately 1,200 square meters³⁶. He designed bright, understated environments characterized by a sophisticated atmosphere, also working on the design of some furnishings with another Italian artist, Bramante Buffoni, who arrived in São Paulo in May 1953 and created the panel decorations applied to the office partitions³⁷. This project marked the beginning of a collaboration that would lead the architect and artist to create several Olivetti showrooms throughout the country.

36. Scimeni 2023, 259.

37. Ibidem

Giancarlo Palanti, early life and studies

Giancarlo Palanti was born in Milan on 26 October 1906 into a family with strong artistic leanings, with relatives with distinguished careers. His father, Giuseppe (Milan, 1881-1946) stood out, in addition to painting, in the fields of advertising, editorial graphics, furniture, decoration. He also set design and costumes for the Teatro Alla Scala in Milan¹. He taught at the Accademia di Brera (where he had graduated) for forty years (1905-46) and held a chair at the Scuola Superiore di Decorazione. He didn't take part in the avant-garde innovations that were emerging in the rest of Europe, staying more on the conservative side of the Milanese bourgeoisie. He also created portraits for various personalities, among whom stand out Pope Pius XI and Mussolini, also producing several works to illustrate the themes of the fascist regime. The uncle of Giancarlo, Mario (Milan, 1885-1978), on the other hand, pursued a career more similar to his own. After graduating as an architect from the Accademia di Brera, like his brother, he emigrated to Argentina in the early years of the century, constructing important buildings in Buenos Aires and Montevideo².

Giancarlo grew up in this environment, receiving a broad general education and developing an interest in literature, theatre and the plastic arts³. According to Aline Coelho Sanches in fact, a major characteristic of Palanti, that was always remembered by his contemporaries or noticed in the study of his career, both in Italy and Brazil, was his interest in culture in general, from literature to theatre and the visual arts. Characteristics imparted to him in his family environment, very much part of the Milanese cultural scene³.

1. Gutiérrez 2015, 5.

2. Ibidem.

3. Sanches 2014, 36.



17. A historical photo of "Palazzo Salvo" in Montevideo, designed by Mario Palanti.

After studying at the Regio Liceo Scientifico "Entorio Veneta" he graduated as an architect in 1929 from the Regia Scuola di Ingegneria (today Polytechnic University of Milan). In the 1920s, the relationship between the Regia Scuola di Ingegneria and the Accademia di Brera reflected a deep debate on the nature of the architect. The Polytechnic's architecture course, founded in 1865 under Camillo Boito and later directed by Gaetano Moretti, sought to unite the scientific rigor of engineering with the artistic sensitivity of the fine arts. By the 1920s, however, this balance was under strain. The

Politecnico emphasized a rational and functional approach aligned with technological progress and European modernism, while Brera upheld a humanist and compositional ideal rooted in artistic tradition. These opposing visions mirrored broader cultural tensions in Fascist Italy, where architecture was caught between tradition and innovation, art and science, and the search for a distinctly Italian modernity.

Giovannoni was a central figure in the discussion, theorising the idea of the “Whole architect”.

He defined the role of this professional in 1932, also delegating to him the function of urban planner, who should be prepared both for construction problems and for the conception of art, for the study of monuments as well as for urban planning⁴.

The ‘Whole architect’ was responsible for inserting himself into the urban development process, either as a theorist of ‘rational’ models or as an attentive interpreter of the demands of economic and political power. The first graduates of the new architecture faculties would be the interpreters of the demands for renewal in architectural production, thus taking a political stance in the debates between architecture and the fascist regime. Specifically in Milan, where there was an atmosphere that oscillated between diverse and contrasting opinions, a search for a new formal discipline emerged from the civic ideals of the recent past, the romantic sensibility favored by the Milanese bourgeoisie, and the growing call to align with European culture through the first attempts to define a Fascist art⁵.

The young ‘rationalists’ who left the Polytechnic between 1926 and 1929 were formed: Carlo Enrico Rava, Piero Bottoni, Luigi Figini and Giuseppe Terragni, who graduated in 1926; Gino Pollini, in 1927; Mario Cereghini and Ignazio Gardella in 1928, Franco Albini, Renato Camus, Adolfo Dell’Acqua and Giancarlo Palanti in 1929.

Palanti initially aligned himself with the “Novecento” movement, which also included figures such as Portaluppi, Muzio, and Gio Ponti⁶.

4. Ciucci 1989, 10.

5. Ciucci, Dal Co 1990, 87.

6. De Benedetti, Salmoni 1953, 158.

18. Palanti, Albini, Camus, Clausetti, Gardella, Minoletti, Mazzoleni, Mucchi e Romano: Housing Exhibition, IV Milan Triennial, 1936.



Originating in the field of painting, the movement had a rather conservative orientation: it positioned itself as the artistic and spiritual expression of the new century, emerging as a reaction to the disillusionment caused by the war and to the avant-garde experiments that had previously developed in Europe and in Italy, such as Cubism and Futurism.

Considering the cultural environment of Palanti's family, and particularly his father's education, it is reasonable to assume that these influences played a decisive role in his initial adherence to the movement ideas⁷.

In the following years, however, Palanti would distance himself from these early positions and embrace the principles of Rationalism, which would become more closely connected to the development of his professional career.

Palanti gained his first professional experience in 1929, before he was qualified to practise his profession, with the design of a memorial stone for the fallen in the cemetery of Crenna in Gallarate and in 1930, with his participation in the IV Triennale, called the Exhibition of Decorative and Industrial Arts in Monza, where he exhibited objects designed for the Vanzetti, furniture and furnishing accessories created in collaboration with Albini⁸.

After the important springboard provided by his participation in the IV Triennale, in 1931

Palanti opened an architectural firm in Via Panizza, Milan,

7. Sanches 2004, 30.

8. Tagliaventi 2013, 25.

in collaboration with Franco Albini and Renato Camus. From the outset, their work focused on social housing, fought for in the name of modern architecture, seen as a civil organisation of life, approached in terms of personal technical experimentation⁹.

In 1932, the group participated in the competition for the construction of the Francesco Baracca neighbourhood in Milan, and in 1933, it participated in the 5th Milan Triennale in collaboration with other exponents of the period. Subsequently, Palanti-Albini-Camus designed several social housing projects, building the Fabio Filzi neighbourhood in Milan between 1936 and 1938,

analysing urban planning issues and proposing large urban projects in the suburbs of Milan, such as “Milano Verde” in 1938 and the “Quattro città satelliti” in 1940. During the same period, the firm participated in two important competitions for the E42 neighbourhood in Rome, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in 1937 and the Palazzo dell’Acqua e della Luce in 1939.

At the private client level, the firm designed residential buildings, industrial buildings and furnishings for shops and offices¹⁰.

9. Tagliaventi 2013, 27.

10. Ibidem.

Initial works in Italy and furniture design

In Italy during the late 1920s and 1930s, the landscape of production was still profoundly rooted in the craft tradition. Despite a growing industrial base, particularly focused in the northern regions, the manufacturing of household goods and furniture largely remained in the hands of small artisanal workshops, characterized by manual skill, local materials, and limited mechanization¹¹. This structure gave Italian design its distinctive duality: on one hand, a rich legacy of craftsmanship and decorative culture; on the other, an emerging field that could align with the technological and rational ideals of modern architecture¹². The ideas of Palanti, which reflected the thought of the rational movement, confronted this dual condition directly. Rather than rejecting the artisanal past, he sought to reinterpret it through industrial logic, turning craft precision into a foundation for standardization and serial production. In this environment exhibitions played a crucial role, the Triennale di Monza and later the Triennale di Milano became important platforms for this transition, spaces where the dialogue between handcraft and industry could be publicly tested, theorized, and ultimately synthesized into a new modern aesthetic¹³.

In 1930 Palanti participated in the IV International Triennial Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Monza. This exhibition, together with its previous version, marked a decisive shift towards the positions of the avant-garde and early Italian rationalism¹⁴. According to Gregotti, the Triennials were important moments in the transformation of taste and a privileged space for debate on the decorative arts, an event interested in the transfer from artisanal to industrial production.

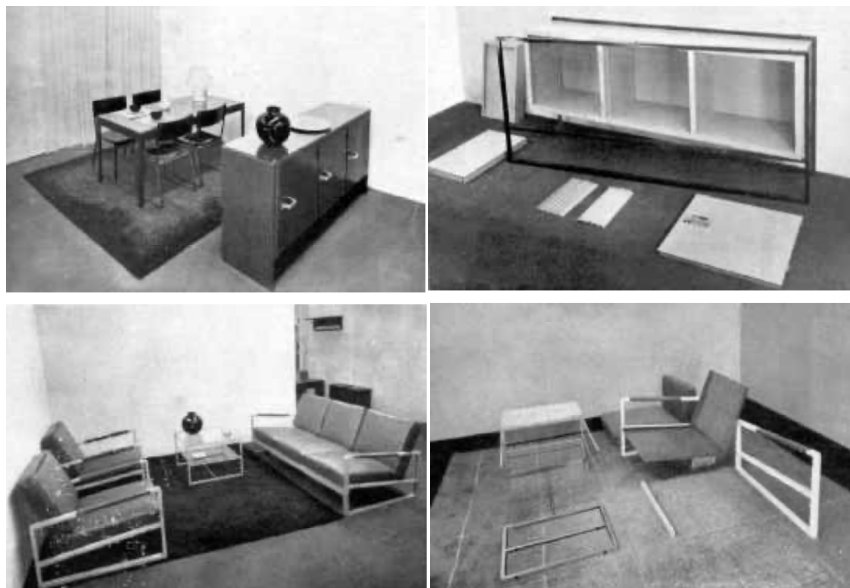
In 1933, Palanti published the book *Mobili Tipici Moderni*, which featured 168 architects from around the world and

11. Sanches 2014, 36.

12. Ibidem.

13. Sanches 2014, 38.

14. Gregotti 1986, 134.



19. Giancarlo Palanti and Franco Albini: Mass-produced furniture for Officers' quarters in East Africa, 1937.

450 photographs of the most significant modern furniture. He also participated in several competitions and projects for furniture, such as the ENAPI (Ente Nazionale per l'Artigianato e la Piccola Industria) competition for furniture in 1931, for which he received an honourable mention. Another notable piece was the bookcase with movable steel tube shelves and glass back, which he designed with Albini and Camus in 1934¹⁴. It is representative of the development of metal furniture that began to be adopted in domestic environments in the 1930s.

In the analyses of these pieces of his early work, and the ideas that they convey Sanches claims that Palanti, in the design of his furniture, explores the expressive potential of materials, the lightness and transparency offered by steel and glass, and the sense of stability conveyed by wooden pieces with broad opaque surfaces that reveal their natural colour and grain.

Furniture and interior architecture in his set of ideas were conceived as coordinated and coherent components of the environment, forming part of a hierarchical order whose first stage began with the smallest element: furniture, environment, room, house, and city. Furniture was no longer understood as mere decoration but as architecture in itself, a play of volumes, a counterpoint of geometric elements, lines, planes, and prisms, governed by spatial balance and

15. Gregotti 1986, 134.

20. Giancarlo Palanti
and team: Interior of
the Steel-Frame House,
V Milan Triennial,
1933.



16. Sanches 2014, 38.

the order of masses, an understanding of pure visuality. This hierarchical conception, capable of constructing modern spatiality from the scale of the object to that of the city, appears to be one of the driving principles behind Giancarlo Palanti's projects¹⁶.

17. Ibidem

At the same time Palanti was working for the magazine "Domus", between March 1931 and October 1933, which at the time was directed by its founder Gio Ponti. In that period it was considered a prerogative of young graduates to write articles in the most important magazines of the time. Starting in 1932, in "Domus Tecnica", a column written for publication in "Domus", numerous articles reviewed by Giancarlo Palanti were published, presenting readers with topics related to living and the application of new materials¹⁷. The editorial work carried out by Palanti offered its numerous readers a variety of articles discussing the usefulness of electric water heaters, various types of space-saving bathroom fixtures, soundproofing solutions and the latest innovations on the market in terms of locks. It also offered suggestions regarding the application of new materials, from steel to Eraclit, from Securit to chromium aluminium, from Vitrex to Vetroflex, from wood to marble, describing the characteristics of these materials and illustrating their possible applications¹⁸. An important milestone in his early career during

18. Sanches 2014, 38.



21. G. Palanti, F. Albini, R. Camus, G. Minoletti, G. Mazzoleni, and G. Pagano: *Steel-Frame House*, V Milan Triennial, 1933.

those years was his collaboration in 1933 with Pagano, Albini, Camus, Mazzoleni and Minuletti on the “House with steel-framed structure” at the fifth Milan Triennial Exhibition. Specifically, his role, together with Albini, was to design the interiors. It was a structure conceived as part of an urban complex for a refined residential area, which was to be configured by buildings aligned with a height of about seven storeys. On the occasion of the 5th Triennial, the architects chose to present only one complete dwelling in this structure, located on the top two floors of a four-storey building. They left the structural system visible to highlight the relationship between the skeleton and the complete construction.

De Seta praised the collaboration, emphasising the good fortune of bringing together different sensibilities and skills. He cited Albini and Palanti’s attention to detail and Pagano’s maturity, describing him as the only architect capable of proposing a complete system of collective housing that could be mass-produced¹⁹.

Palanti also began collaborating with “Casabella” magazine, reviewing its articles from 1929 onwards, and in 1933 he was appointed editor of the magazine under the direction of Giuseppe Pagano, who was considered a privileged interlocutor for the Milanese architect, who gave the magazine its distinctive character²⁰.

19. De Seta 1990, 71.

20. Tagliaventi 2013, 29.

22. VI Triennale -
Pavilion in Sempione
Park. Housing
Exhibition - Apartment
no. 2: four-person
apartment type -
Dining area.

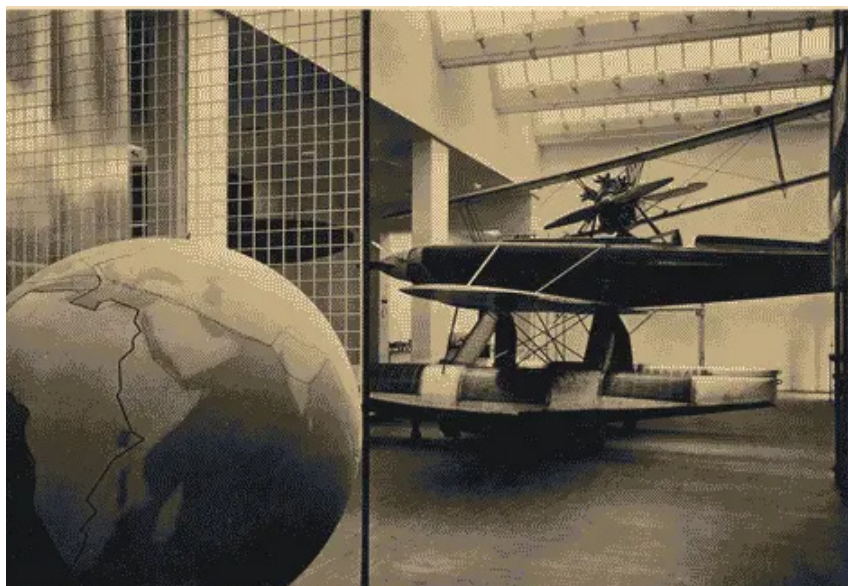


Thanks to Pagano, during those years the magazine was establishing itself as an important medium of collective communication, a new way of discussing architecture. It began to reach a wider audience, opening debate on the most advanced experiences and technologies of the time, where the term avant-garde referred to the most innovative expressions of contemporary research and culture developed between the two wars. “Casabella” became a lively meeting point and a significant space for the exchange of ideas within the rationalist architectural movement, while always maintaining an ideal of openness and inquiry²¹.

21. Tagliaventi 2013,
29.

In 1937, Palanti received second prize in a competition for the use of high strength tempered glass in construction and decoration, promoted by the magazines “Domus” and “Casabella” for the Securit industry, which was responsible for manufacturing this product. The idea behind the competition was to open new possibilities for using this material. Palanti used it as protection for the heater, as shelves for a bookcase and as a tabletop with a profiled iron frame. In this table, the transparency of the material combines precisely with the design of the metal structure, exploring the territories of lightness. The structure was designed as a system of lines in space, with the strictly necessary function of supporting the glass plate, where the meticulous construction detail made the clarity and conciseness of the design possible²².

22. Domus,
February 1937.



23. *Sala dei raids e dei record* - Gian Carlo Palanti.

In 1937 Palanti and Albin developed a coordinated set of modular furnishings for mass production, intended for the officers' quarters in Italian East Africa. As the project was aimed at Italian troops, several important issues were taken into consideration in the design of the furniture²³.

It focused on lightweight components, rapid assembly even by unskilled workers, and ease of long-distance transport. Using machine curved or stamped steel sheets, tubular structures, anticorrosive fittings and Securit glass, the designers explored the material possibilities offered by industrial techniques. The furniture, conceived for every room of the house was composed of few interlocking or screwed elements, expressing structural clarity and formal simplification. Sofas, tables, chairs and beds were reduced to essential components, with detailing that concealed joints and emphasized lightness and precision.

This experience was an important opportunity for experimentation, especially when viewed in the context of the Milan triennials. Through it, Palanti and Albin sought to take the idea of scale reproduction and low-cost production to an even higher level, ideas that were fundamental to the thinking and discussions of the period²⁴.

23. Sanches 2014, 43.

24. Ibidem

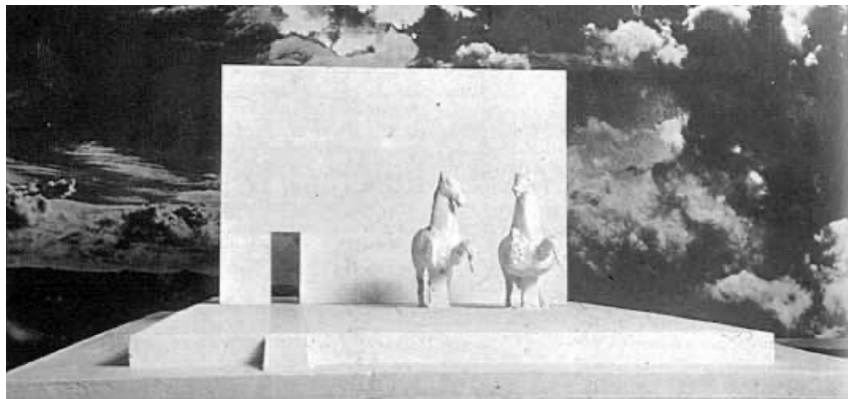
Expositions and Houses

25. Sanches 2014, 43.

26. Ciucci 1989, 141.

27. Ibidem.

It must be taken in consideration that the years in which Palanti developed his first architectural ideas were deeply influenced by the Fascist regime, which began to impose its own architectural concepts and experiments, influencing the cultural landscape and the positions taken by the architects of the time²⁵. His participation in major competitions, such as those for the IFACP (1939-1941), the Gallarate masterplan (1934), Casa del Fascio (1937), and later the E42 situates him among the young architects who used these platforms to explore modern and urban principles²⁶. In his reflections on the Novara masterplan competition, Palanti articulated a balanced stance between modernization and continuity. While acknowledging the importance of rationalist ideas zoning, new traffic axes, contemporary architectural language, he insisted on a careful reading of the existing city, rejecting both nostalgic historicism and superficial stylistic imitation. The same critical attitude appears in his response to the Via Roma competition in Turin, where he opposed the requirement to reproduce baroque forms in new buildings²⁷. Palanti's position emerges clearly within the broader debate on architecture as a Fascist state art. Although aware of the ideological pressures embedded in competitions and juries, he maintained a design approach grounded in clarity, measure, and contemporary expression. His proposal for the Monument to the Italian Victory in Africa, conceived as a modern sacrarium rather than a triumphal arch, exemplifies this stance. The Milan Triennale, especially the VI Triennale of 1936, where Palanti collaborated with figures such as Pagano, Albini, they would later become closer associates, the former as an editor at "Casabella" and the latter as a partner in the opening of a firm; also BBPR and Persico, this places



24. Palanti, Albini, Gardella and Romano: Contest for the monument to victory in Milan, 1937.

became the main forum in which these ideas converged. Here Palanti participated in a collective effort to redefine Italian rationalism by negotiating between modernist experimentation, classical and Mediterranean references, and the ideological demands of the period. He emerges as a designer who consistently sought equilibrium: integrating modern principles with the specific character of Italian cities, and navigating the tensions between innovation, tradition, and political instrumentalization. In this historical and cultural climate, Triennale and major exhibitions became fundamental tools for propaganda and symbolic construction, but also spaces for architectural and scenographic experimentation. The intertwining of political demands, technical innovation and public representation offered many designers, including Palanti, the opportunity to develop new exhibition languages consistent with modern aesthetics and the communication needs of the regime²⁸.

Palanti actively participated in this lively period, collaborating on the VI Triennale di Milano with Persico and Nizzoli and taking part in various national and international exhibitions, such as the Mostra dell'Aeronautica and the Paris and Brussels Exposition²⁹. In these contexts, he experimented with innovative uses of space, adopting solutions such as suspended panels, glass devices, controlled transparencies, enlarged photographs and dramatic lighting effects. These choices responded both to new modern languages and to Fascism's need to construct environments capable of

28. Anelli 2001, 51-52.

29. Sanches 2014, 62.

25. Giancarlo Palanti:
*Dining Room of
the Tavani House,
Livorno, 1937.*



30. Cfr. Tagliaventi
2013, 33.

31. Ibidem.

emotionally engaging the public and exalting the greatness of spaces.

Palanti's exhibition work also extended to trade fairs and commercial applications, where the regime saw an opportunity to promote Italian industrial progress³⁰. Projects such as the Helena Rubinstein store in Milan (1937), the "Rayon nella casa" pavilion in 1934 and the Fiat Pavilion in 1938, created with Albini, show how Palanti translated the principles of modernity into solutions suitable for both propaganda and the sale of industrial products. His attention to detail, calibrated use of transparency and three-dimensional spatial composition reveal a sensibility that was fully in tune with the visual culture of fascism³¹. All these exhibition activities had a positive influence and gave impetus to Palanti's career. In 1937, a particularly fruitful year, he brought the same control of light, transparency and materials that characterised his exhibitions to the design of residential and industrial buildings such as the Tavani house and the SAMR facilities. These projects demonstrate how Palanti was an active part of the network of modern architects who, while operating within the dynamics of the regime, contributed to redefining Italian exhibition and architectural language.

Between 1933 and 1937, Palanti embarked on a successful collaboration with the entrepreneur Mathon. Mathon was part of a culturally advanced business community,

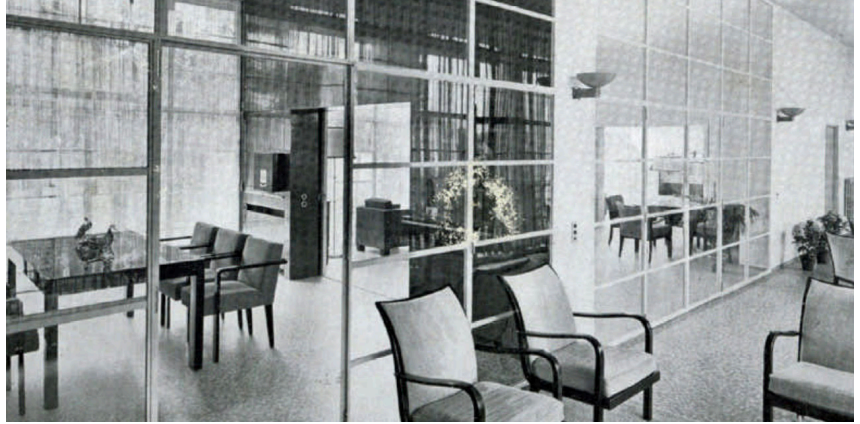


26. Giancarlo Palanti:
*Beauty Institute He-
lena Rubstein, Milan,
1937.*

sensitive to modern arts and oriented towards technological innovation. He understood the importance of modern design and rationalised industrial production, which made him the perfect partner for Palanti. Between 1933 and 1937, he designed extensions, furnishings, fittings, residences and industrial complexes for him, building a collaboration that allowed him to experiment with spatial and linguistic solutions almost without constraints. The culmination of this phase was Casa Tavani (1937), one of his most representative residential projects. The building is based on a rigorous balance between symmetry and asymmetry, on pure volumes treated as geometric planes and on a sophisticated interplay of solids and voids that reworks a “classical flavour” in a modern key³². The transparencies, created by large glass surfaces, establish a continuous dialogue with the garden, designed with the same compositional order as the architecture. The interior is organised according to a

32. Sanches 2014, 69.

27. Giancarlo Palanti:
Dining room and
other rooms seen from
the veranda of the Tavani House, Livorno,
1937.



33. Sanches 2014, 69.

34. Sanches 2014, 70.

geometric axis that runs through the house and visually links the main rooms, while the design of the furniture, from coffee tables to lamps, from wardrobes to textiles, reveals the desire to transform the home into a unified organism, constructed using a modular grid applied in three dimensions³³. The same attention to detail characterises Palanti's other residential projects in Livorno, where he alternates opaque and transparent spaces, controls natural light with filtering surfaces and defines a compositional language based on clean lines, calibrated volumes and continuous constructional precision. This collection of works in Livorno outlines the fundamental features of his research: a conception of architecture as an integrated system, in which form, structure, furnishings, and open space participate in a single rational logic; and, at the same time, a personal interpretation of modernity, more intimate and calibrated than the monumental trends of fascism at the time. Livorno thus became the place where Palanti, before his major exhibition and industrial experiences and his future migration to Brazil, tested and coherently organized his ideas on modern living³⁴. The final years of his stay in Italy are connected to the fascist movement and the second world war, especially how these events affected the people around him, in particular Pagano. The director of "Casabella" underwent a radical transformation. He left the Fascist Party in 1942 and joined the anti-fascist resistance in 1943.

Palanti later recalled on Pagano:

35. Sanches 2014, 90.

"He had already established contact with local anti-fascist organizations in order to move toward more direct political activity. He had begun efforts of inquiry and propaganda, even involving his colleagues and military subordinates, and during a leave he had connected with several anti-fascist groups in Milan"³⁵.

Pagano was arrested in November 1943, imprisoned in Brescia and later in San Vittore, before being deported to Mauthausen-Gusen, where he died on April 22, 1945³⁶.

Before his death, he sent a farewell letter to Palanti:

“Dear Palanti, a farewell from your brother and colleague; this will be a message from G.P.P. There is a very high probability that I will be struck down by this pneumonia. I think of you as the friend who, more than anyone else, can take care of my spiritual legacy.

If Giolli returns, work with him, help and involve our friends Mucchi and Diotallevi. If any publications are made of what I have written and done, ask Paola to show you all my writings.

Examine them, remove the outdated polemical references, and look after her interests. I am counting on you. To the friends of the P.S., all my faith. May they remember me well embrace Morandi, OM, Doctor G. Carlo and his companion, Basso, Paolo [some words appear faded] Dugoni.

I go proudly. [some words appear faded] they will remember well.

See that Paola receives some help for her life ahead.

I have given my life for the Party, and I am deeply proud of it.

I had so many dreams, so many plans, and so many almost certain hopes. It’s over!

To you all: continue well, and better. Farewell”³⁷.

36. Tagliaventi 2013, 37.

37. Albini, Palanti, Castelli 1947, 2.

Arriving in Brazil

Giancarlo Palanti arrived in Brazil in October 1946, disembarking at the port of Santos on his fortieth birthday. He was not the only Italian architect to arrive in the country at that time, also Lina Bo Bardi disembarks from the port of Rio de Janeiro with her husband the same year; initially planning only a temporary stay for their respective work assignments, they ended up staying permanently and collaborating extensively with Palanti. After the Second World War, Brazil welcomed a large number of European immigrants, many of whom were from a more highly educated social background than earlier waves of migration, well informed about modern trends abroad. These professionals headed to Brazil fleeing arbitrary racial laws or in search of new prospects for life and work¹.

1. Crippa 2017, 7.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, São Paulo emerged as an epicenter of urban and cultural transformation, evolving rapidly from a regional hub into a complex industrial metropolis².

2. Lores 2017, 60.

This period was characterized by an unprecedented demographic explosion, as the city's population surged from approximately 1.3 million in 1940 to over 2.2 million by 1950. By 1951, the municipality of São Paulo alone hosted nearly 20,000 industrial plants, firmly establishing itself as the nation's economic engine³.

3. Sanches 2014, 95.

This growth manifested in a dual urban process: a rapid verticalization of the central districts and a simultaneous horizontal sprawl toward new suburban frontiers. The pace of construction reached a fever pitch, averaging an incredible eight buildings per hour between 1948 and 1952. This pheno

28. *A historical photo of downtown São Paulo.*



4. Sanches 2014, 96.

menon created a stark contrast between the prestigious real estate developments in the center and the informal “Sunday houses” built by the working class in the outskirts through mutual aid⁴. Amidst this chaotic physical growth, the city’s intellectual and institutional landscape was also being formalized. The late 1940s saw the founding of the MASP and MAM museums, alongside the establishment of independent architecture schools like FAU-USP and FAU-Mackenzie, which allowed modernism to move away from engineering-dominated curricula⁴. For the immigrant architects arriving in this dynamic environment, the market presented a professional paradox; while their modern expertise was essential to defining the city’s new aesthetic, bureaucratic barriers regarding degree revalidation and the dominance of large construction firms often forced them to work anonymously. Consequently, much of the architectural legacy produced during these formative years was signed by local firms, obscuring the true authorship of the European modernists who were actively reshaping the Paulistano skyline⁵.

5. Sanches 2014, 97.

A figure that was already working in this panorama was Daniele Calabi, a Jewish architect who had been in exile in Brazil since the beginning of the Second World War. He too, initially, was unable to sign his designs, he worked for his cousin’s company, Costruttora Moderna, and only later as a

freelancer, often for Italians living there⁶. He became a point of reference for Palanti, with whom he tackled his first project, an orphanage for the Liga das Senhoras Católicas. Calabi returned to Italy in 1948 but continued to correspond with Palanti about business matters until 1954, writing to him, among other things, on the house he was building in Padua in the “Paulista” style⁷.

In addition to Daniele Calabi, Palanti immediately sought to associate himself with Italian architects present in the country, one example being Lina Bo Bardi, who arrived from Italy with her husband Pietro Maria Bardi in the same year as Palanti as mentioned before. There are also indications that Palanti sought out Rino Levi, a Brazilian architect trained in Italy and already professionally established, with whom Calabi collaborated. Once he arrived in Brazil, Palanti sent correspondence to Italy, particularly to Albini, offering a clear picture of the problems he was facing and the decisions he had to make on the new continent. In post-war São Paulo, the architectural industry suffered from economic imbalance: despite the high volume of construction, design work was poorly paid as it was often absorbed by construction costs. For foreign professionals such as Palanti, the main obstacle was the lack of recognition of their qualifications, which prevented them from signing projects. The solutions adopted were limited to collaboration with Brazilian technicians (“signature rental”) or direct employment with large construction companies, giving up freelance work in favour of economic stability⁸.

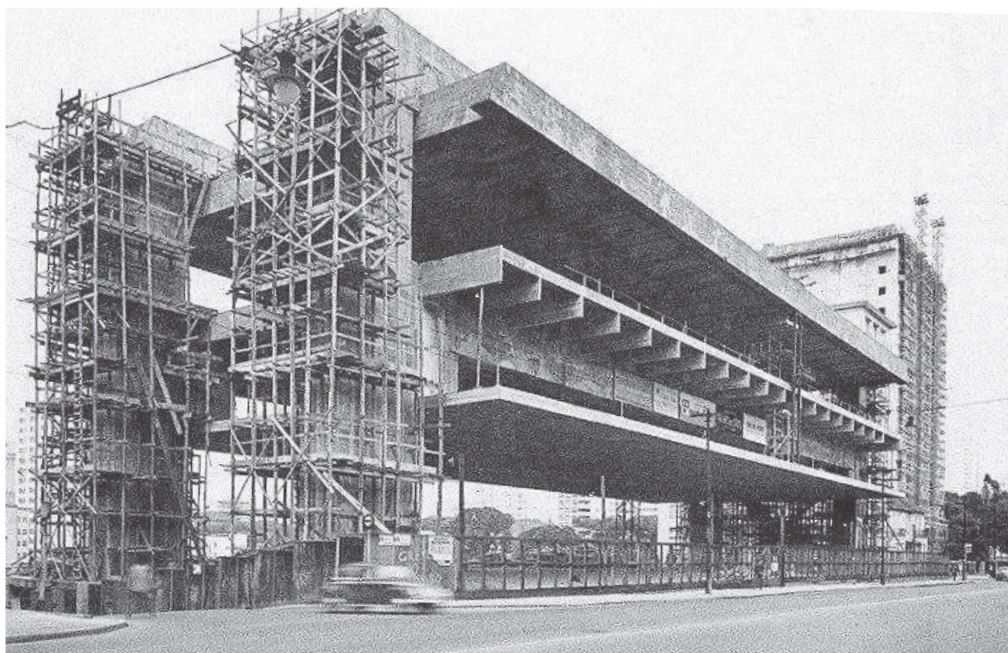
Palanti found a profound difference between European technical rigour and Brazilian constructive empiricism. The lack of skilled labour and the scarcity of finishing materials made it difficult to apply the canons of international Modernism. Unlike Italy, where the figure of the technical coordinator was central, in Brazil the system was less industrialised, making large-scale production optimisation projects impractical and forcing architects to continually mediate with the material limitations of the location⁹. Although initially critical of the local intellectual vitality, Palanti soon developed a high regard for Brazilian art, recognising the international calibre of painters such as Portinari and Volpi. However, his

6. Sanches 2014, 97.

7. Rocha 1991, 37.

8. Sanches 2014, 98.

9. Ibidem.



29. *The MASP, designed by Lina Bo Bardi, during construction in 1967.*



30. *The "Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo e de Design da USP" designed by Vilanova Artigas, in 1968.*



31. A historical photo of downtown São Paulo.

view of the country was lucid and complex: he described Brazil as a nation marked by rapid and disorderly development, burdened by post-dictatorial political immaturity and profound social inequalities, elements that directly influenced the working and creative climate¹⁰.

Despite the difficulties, Palanti maintained a prestigious role, collaborating with the Mackenzie Institute and acting as a cultural bridge with Italy through the magazine “Casabella”. In order to gain professional autonomy, between 1948 and 1950 he undertook the arduous process of having his diploma validated, which required him to study and take exams in Brazilian language, history and geography. This intellectual endeavour culminated in 1950 with the founding of his own technical studio and, subsequently, with his decision to become a naturalised citizen¹¹. 1948 marked a decisive turning point: Palanti chose to dissolve his professional partnership with Franco Albini, recognising the impossibility of working on two continents at the same time. Despite his ties to the Italian intellectual elite and the Socialist Party, the awareness of having lost his professional roots in his homeland and his belief in the potential of the metropolis of São Paulo led him to settle permanently in Brazil, becoming a point of reference for subsequent waves of European immigrants¹².

10. Sanches 2014, 100.

11. Rocha 1991, 43.

12. Sanches 2014, 100.

Arte Palma

As mentioned above, Palanti immediately approached the Italians living in the country upon his arrival. An important encounter was with the Bardi couple, who arrived in São Paulo the same year.

The partnership with Lina Bo and Pietro Maria Bardi was driven by a shared interest in developing modern, industrially produced furniture, which led to the creation of Studio de Arte e Arquitetura Palma. Here, Palanti and Lina created various pieces of furniture for mass production and numerous interior design projects between 1948 and mid-1951. Faced with the various manifestations of the conflict between cosmopolitanism and localism in the development of modern art production and criticism in Brazil, more specifically a greater confidence in mass production, advocated by Palanti, which contrasted with an interest in and respect for historical techniques and cultures, which Lina Bo Bardi was more inclined towards¹³. This was a special experience in which it is possible to speculate on attempts to resolve this conflict, as well as to understand the nuances that the appropriation of themes related to Brazilian particularities and artistic production of international origin took on in a given situation.

The “Studio de Arte Palma” was inaugurated in August 1948, on the 18th floor of the Thomas Edison building (Praça Bráulio Gomes 66, São Paulo), the result of a partnership between three Italians: Lina Bo Bardi, Pietro Maria Bardi (her husband) and Giancarlo Palanti. The company bore the same name and followed the model of Studio de Arte Palma in Rome, which Pietro Maria Bardi had owned. In Rome, the studio organised exhibitions of ancient and modern art, industrial arts, chamber concerts, avant-garde theatre,

13. Cfr. Sanches 2014, 131.



32. Armchair Tridente, designed by Lina Bo Bardi and Giancarlo Palanti.



33. Armchair Zig Zag, designed by Lina Bo Bardi and Giancarlo Palanti.



34. Chair MASP, designed by Lina Bo Bardi and Giancarlo Palanti.

35. Interior of the
"Studio de Arte Pal-
ma" in the building
Thomaz Edison.



14. Sanches 2014,
131.

ferences and publications, as well as the conservation and trade of works of art¹⁴.

These architects had already addressed the theme of modern furniture in Italy. Both had worked for Gio Ponti at "Domus" magazine (Lina in 1939 and Palanti between 1932-33), a leading figure in the promotion of Italian craftsmanship influenced by the Vienna Secession. It is essential to remember Palanti's experience with mass production, industrial design and the issues raised by the Milan Triennials. The 7th Triennale already presented objects born from the comparison with the industrial process as a methodological model; architects began to defend design for industry as an artistic activity, coming into conflict with the problems of large-scale production.

Lina Bo, who graduated in Rome in 1939, worked at "Domus" from 1943, dealing with post-war reconstruction. Throughout her editorial work, the theme of furniture was central, culminating in the article "Abolizione del mobile monumento" (Abolition of the monument furniture) written for the daily newspaper Milano Sera in 1945. After the war, many Italian architects sought the foundations for reconstruction through an approach to the popular world, contrasting the moral values and aesthetic-constructive humility of man with blind faith in machines and technology¹⁵.

15. Sanches 2014,
132.



36. Interior of the “Studio de Arte Palma” in the building Thomaz Edison.

Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos, a leading historian of modern furniture in Brazil, recounts the birth of Studio Palma through the story of the chair designed for the auditorium of the first MASP (1947). Pietro Bardi claimed that there were no suitable modern chairs in São Paulo. Lina therefore designed a simple, foldable and stackable chair considering the limited space in the auditorium, allowing for the immediate removal of the chair when it was necessary to free up the entire space for another activity. The difficulty in finding a carpenter to make it led the Bardis to turn to an Italian upholsterer who made the 150 chairs in a garage. This production gap led to the creation of Studio Palma and Fábrica de Móveis Pau Brasil Ltda¹⁶.

16. Santos 1995, 95.

Palanti, who already had experience with mass production design in Italy, joined the Bardi's. In a letter to Franco Albini dated June 1948, Palanti wrote that modern furniture was almost non-existent in São Paulo and asked for technical details to solve a problem with the leather stitching on the ‘tripolina’ chair he was producing.

The Studio's vision emerged from its publication in *Habitat*, the magazine of Bo Bardi (1950): while Brazilian architecture was growing prodigiously, furniture had lagged behind, left to “ladies in search of distraction” or upholsterers, rather than technicians (architects). Studio Palma sought to create furniture adapted to the climate and the land, eliminating excessive padding to prevent mould, typical of the rainy seasons, and favouring stretched fabrics and leather¹⁷.

17. Sanches 2014, 134.

37. Example of interiors designed with Arte Palma furniture.



Palma used plywood cut into parallel sheets, a technique that was then unheard of in Brazil for furniture. The starting point was the structural simplicity and beauty of the grain of Brazilian woods (Cabreúva, Jacarandá, Pau-marfim). The studio also used vernacular materials: chita (cheap fabric), rope, leather tanned with angico bark (atanado) and even taboa (straw). In the pages of *Habitat*, modern furniture appeared alongside photographs of bowls carved by fishermen (caíças) or references to the hammocks of northern sailors. For Palanti and Lina, folk craftsmanship was not folklore, but an example of functional and honest “good design”. The challenge was to reconcile this ancestral creativity with mass production.

Palanti’s trajectory after Studio Palma would lead him to design furniture on commission and later collaborate with Olivetti, for whom he designed several shops in Brazil in partnership with Henrique Mindlin¹⁸.

The Pau Brasil factory, responsible for producing furniture designed by Studio de Arte Palma, lasted only three or four years due to obstacles in marketing and selling furniture that was only accepted by a minority. In general, Pietro Maria Bardi lamented the company management’s very anti-modern mentality. Lina Bo Bardi also overlined the difficulty in

18. Sanches 2014, 145.



38. Example of interiors designed with Arte Palma furniture.

ensuring copyright protection: Studio Palma's designs were copied and launched on the market without authorisation¹⁹. Palanti, however, continued to design furniture for Móveis Artesanal, the same company but under a different name after it was taken over by the Hauner brothers, receiving the relevant remuneration²⁰.

19. Santos 1995, 98.

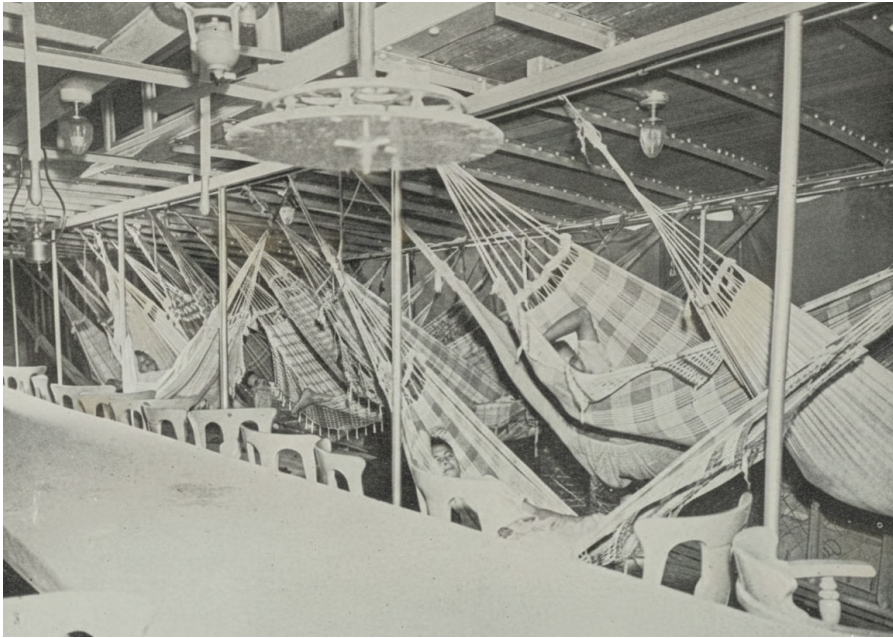
Although Lina and Palanti's production during the Studio Palma phase was very similar in terms of form, structure and materials, historians identify distinct approaches over time. While Lina Bo Bardi increasingly focused on research into popular culture, Palanti moved towards a line of industrial design also through the experience of the work for Olivetti. This divergence also became ethical. An article written by Lina under the pseudonym "Alencastro" (1953) seemed to directly criticise Palanti for his collaboration with the Alfredo Mathias company, a leading player in property speculation and the verticalisation of São Paulo. Lina stated:

20. Sanches 2014, 150.

"When an architect, whose past includes buildings that obey a sense of renewal, accepts a compromise and executes architecture that denies his previous work, he places himself outside professional ethics²¹.

21. Ibidem

Lina's criticism, Pietro Maria Bardi continued to collaborate with Palanti (for example, for the Olivetti exhibition at the



39. Hammocks illustrating *Habitat* magazine, a source of inspiration for chairs with loose, movable covers.



40. Architect João Vilanova Artigas; Dr. Mario Bittencourt's house in São Paulo. Arte Palma furniture was utilized for the realization of the interior furnishings.

MAM in Rio in 1958)²². In Palanti, the theme of ‘national peculiarities’ manifested itself not in vernacular style, but in the sublime use of Brazilian materials: jacaranda wood from Bahia for the Olivetti offices, tropical foliage in his designs and the use of decorative panels by artists such as Bramante Buffoni and Roberto Sambonet. Palanti’s widow, Dirce Torres Morelli, recalls his great love for the beauty of Brazilian woods, stones and marbles, to which he dedicated specific exhibitions. While Lina found her true “archaic” inspiration only later in Bahia, in São Paulo, accelerated industrialisation was erasing forms of popular work and consumption. At the same time, intellectuals such as Antônio Cândido and Florestan Fernandes were investigating precisely what was being lost. Against this backdrop, Palanti began to receive major commissions from the metropolis, working for the entrepreneurs who were permanently transforming the face of the city²³.

22. Sanches 2014, 151.

23. Ibidem

Exhibition Spaces, Olivetti

An important contribution to Giancarlo Palanti's work in Brazil concerns the creation of interiors, mainly for showrooms and offices that were often published in magazines of the time. The interior space was organised according to a design method similar to that used in architecture or urban planning: zoning of functions, definition of paths, lightness, interplay of lines, planes and colours, fluidity and flexibility. The aim was to create an environment characterised by total aesthetic unity, from the industrial object to the exhibition space²⁴. The roots of these experiments can be traced back to Italy, as we talked in the previous chapters, where Palanti had collaborated with figures such as Giuseppe Pagano, Edoardo Persico, Franco Albini and the BBPR group, through the experiences of the Triennale of Milan. In Brazil, however, this research encountered new challenges: the unique integration of tropical vegetation, national themes painted on large panels and the use of native woods for furnishings. Palanti was fascinated by Brazilian materials (woods and marbles), finding contrasts and creative possibilities that were absent in Europe. His first interior design projects appeared during his collaboration with Lina Bo Bardi at Studio Palma: the "Mapa Importadora" shops, the Plavinil stand, the "Domus" office and the Loja Tecnogeral (Olivetti representative). In these spaces, glass and transparency became an architectural "invitation", eliminating the clear separation between the street and the interior²⁵. Most of Palanti's commercial interiors were created during his partnership with Henrique Mindlin, focusing on his experience with the Olivetti company. While Mindlin's office oversaw projects in Rio de Janeiro, Palanti managed those in São Paulo and the rest of the country. Although the stores were developed

24. Sanches 2014, 279.

25. Sanches 2014, 281.



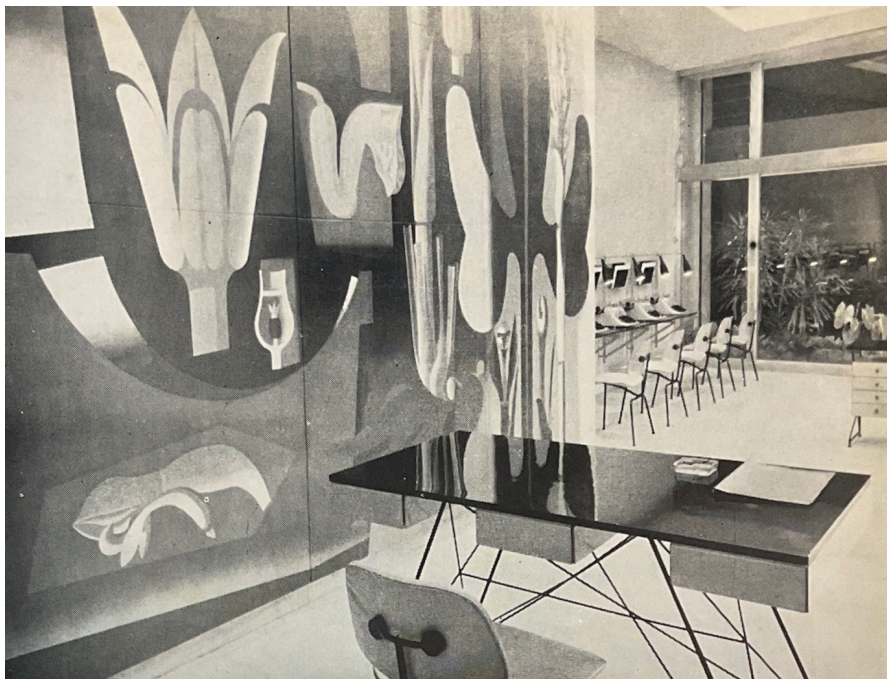
41. Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin, Panels of B. Buffoni: Loja Olivetti Tatuapé, São Paulo, 1958.

solely by Palanti in his office, the identification stamps on the drawing boards for the stores always appear as Henrique E. Mindlin and Giancarlo Palanti Architects²⁶.

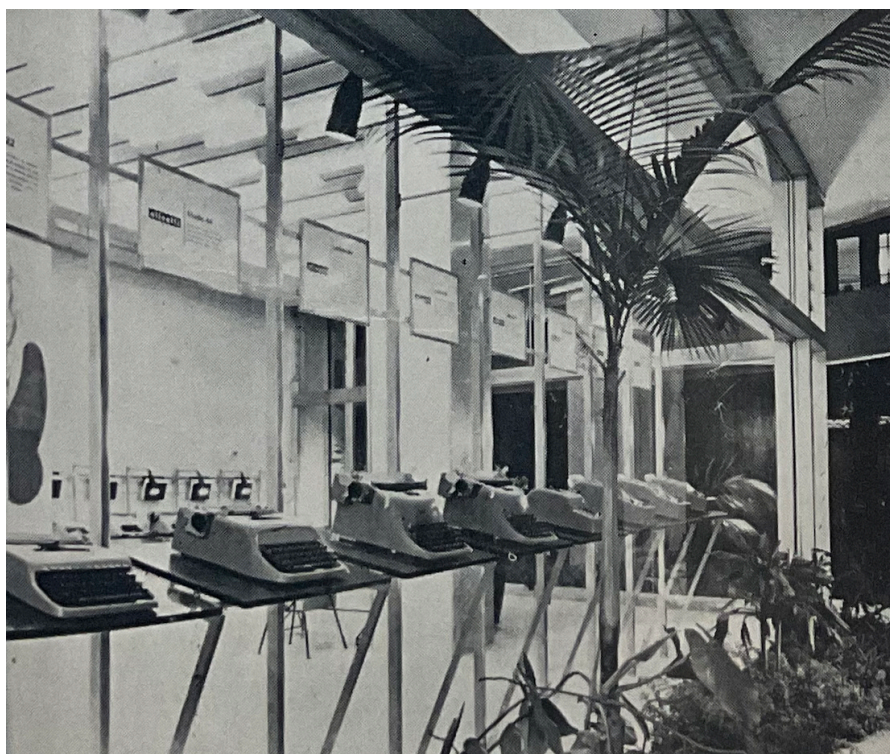
Giancarlo Palanti's work in Brazil cannot be fully understood without analysing its profound symbiosis with Adriano Olivetti's philosophy. For the engineer from Ivrea, architecture was not simply a functional shell, but a fundamental pillar of a comprehensive modernisation programme. Since 1925, Olivetti had promoted a vision in which design, urban planning and the plastic arts had to converge to communicate an image of excellence and absolute quality. In this context, Palanti's projects became the spatial translation of a specific industrial policy. The decision to entrust the design of the shops to leading names in Italian museography, from Franco Albini to Carlo Scarpa, and Palanti himself was not accidental: the aim was to elevate the industrial product. The typewriter ceased to be a mere office tool and became, in the words of Bernard Huet, a "precious object" or a true work of art²⁷. Commercial spaces were therefore not conceived as mundane places of exchange, but as boutiques and galleries where every detail was orchestrated to stimulate a new aesthetic sensibility in visitors. Palanti skilfully drew on the legacy of masters such as Edoardo Persico, with whom, not surprisingly, he had worked on museum exhibitions, to

26. Sanches 2014, 281.

27. Huet 1976, 54.



42. Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin, panels of B. Buffoni: the Olivetti Store in Rua Brigadeiro Tobias, São Paulo, 1957.



43. Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin, panels of B. Buffoni: the Olivetti Store in Rua Brigadeiro Tobias, São Paulo, 1957.



44. Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin arquitetos: Loja e escritórios Olivetti Ipiranga, São Paulo, 1958.

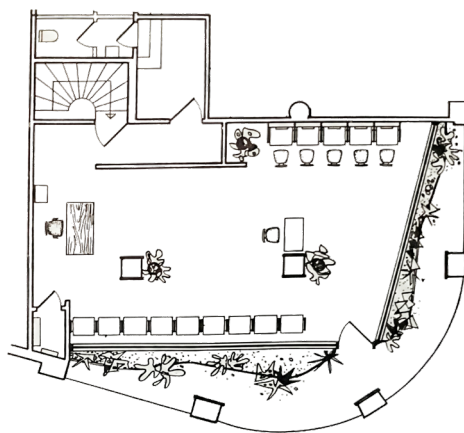
create a modern spatiality based on lightness and fluidity, orchestrating a dance of lines and planes that cancelled out the static nature of traditional furnishings. The typewriters seemed to float inside glass boxes thanks to a masterful use of lighting, which alternated the diffused light of fluorescent lamps with the point light of spotlights, treating the industrial product with the same care that a curator would reserve for a museum exhibit²⁸.

As was said in the previous chapters, the first Olivetti stores were opened in 1930 in Rome, Milan and Venice, with designs by Schawnsky and Marcello Nizzoli who, participating in the design of the machines and the company's advertising, ensured the continuity of Olivetti's image throughout all stages of production. After the Second World War, Olivetti stores spread throughout all European and American cities. Around 1954, Olivetti began operations in Brazil, initially opening a representative office in Rio de Janeiro, although some expansion maneuvers had already happened in the years before the war. However, in 1956, the company decided to move to São Paulo, seeing better opportunities for setting up a production plant. This strategic move was part of the city's industrial production boom and economic progress, to which the company contributed decisively, particularly in the field of Brazilian industrial design, culminating in the construction of the large factory in Guarulhos designed by Marco Zanuso²⁹.

28. Cfr. Sanches 2014, 283.

29. Sanches 2014, 286.

45. Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin, drawing of the store in Rua Brigadeiro Tobias, São Paulo, 1957.



30. Sanches 2014, 286.

Palanti was already experienced in Italian exhibition systems, he was commissioned to design the shops, stands and interiors of Olivetti's offices and workshops in Brazil. His appointment came at the suggestion of Giovanni Pintori, the famous artistic director of Olivetti advertising in Italy. In a letter dated 1957, Pintori reassured Palanti about the simplicity of the projects, emphasising that this collaboration would also be a way to involve the artist Bramante Buffoni³⁰.

Giancarlo Palanti's design work for Olivetti's offices in Brazil represents a moment of high architectural experimentation, in which the redefinition of interior space is combined with an innovative reflection on the modes of vision and display. This research, which found expression in a vast network of branches stretching from Belém do Pará to Porto Alegre, took the form of cutting-edge display devices and a striking decorative synthesis, thanks to the collaboration with other artists like Bramante Buffoni, whose figurative panels rooted Olivetti's modernity in the Brazilian iconographic context.

31. Sanches 2014, 287.

In general, the space layout conceived by Palanti was based on a rigorous functional zoning, aimed at separating traffic flows from testing and sales areas, yet coordinated within a fluid volume characterised by what can be defined as a "dance of lines and planes"³¹. The architect structured the environment through horizontal and vertical elements capable of performing precise architectural and communicative functions: the ceiling, treated as a technical plane designed with fluorescent light sources or metal grids, ensured the spatial unity of the whole, while a sophisticated spot lighting system acted theatrically on the products, isolating them as objects of art. In this



46. Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin, panels of B. Buffoni: the Olivetti Store in Rua Brigadeiro Tobias, São Paulo, 1957.

architectural layout, every component, from the chromatic neutrality of the floors to the subtlety of the metal structures supporting the white tabletops, contributed to a quest for dematerialisation and lightness³². Palanti's goal was not simply to display the merchandise, but to create a suspended atmosphere in which the typewriter, stripped of its industrial heaviness, became the focal point of a modern, dynamic spatiality deeply consistent with the avant-garde identity of the Olivetti brand³³.

When designing the various Olivetti shops, Palanti imagined and conceived what would become the idea in people's mind of Olivetti in Brazil. The aim was to create a consistent visual identity in existing spaces, which were often difficult to manage, using interior design to modernise the company's image. Palanti did not just furnish the shops, he 'zoned' them to clearly separate their functions (display, sales, machine testing). The key element was the use of lightweight dividing panels: slender black iron structures supporting fine wood or Formica tops. This system created a play of lines that crossed the visitor's gaze, giving a sense of fluidity and order. In exhibition stands, such as the one at MAM in Rio, this approach became modular, creating small environments isolated from the chaos outside. A fundamental aspect is the rejection of the neutrality typical of certain modern offices. Palanti strategically inserted large figurative

32. Sanches 2014, 287.

33. Ibidem.

47. Giancarlo
Palanti e Henrique
Mindlin, Bramante
Buffoni: Office Oli-
vetti in the Edifício
Conde de Prates,
1957-1966,
Sala.



34. Sanches 2014,
291.

35. Sanches 2014,
292.

panels, created by Bramante Buffoni. The murals were not abstract but referred to Brazilian themes or icons of writing. They served to structure the space and, often, to hide service elements such as doors or stairs. At the same time, the environment was filled with tropical vegetation: plants and flower beds were not a last-minute addition but an integral part of the technical design. This served to “root” the Italian company in the local context, creating a fascinating contrast between the mechanical precision of the machines and the lush nature and seeking to mitigate the division between indoor and outdoor spaces³⁴. It was very important to focus attention on the object on display, in this case the typewriter. To achieve the effect of “suspension”, he used special supports: suspended crystal discs, rotating prisms and tables with very thin legs that made the supporting structure almost disappear. In addition, great attention was paid to the lighting in order to make it appear particularly theatrical. The ceiling (often made of metal grids to hide the beams) provided uniform ambient lighting with fluorescent tubes, while incandescent spotlights designed by the architect illuminated the machines like theatre spotlights³⁵.

A fundamental project was the fitting out of the offices in the Conde de Prates Building (1958). This work was celebrated by Pietro Maria Bardi as a turning point for industrial design in Brazil, demonstrating that the company brought not only economic progress, but also a new aesthetic and design rigour. In an article on “Habitat” dated 1958, Bardi wrote: “Olivetti in Brazil, as a manufacturing entity, not only



48. Bramante Buffoni: Panels in the office Olivetti in the Edifício Conde de Prates, 1957-1966.

contributes to industrial and economic progress in an undoubtedly beneficial way but also represents a decisive step forward in updating industrial design in this country, which has been largely neglected or reproduced by anyone and everyone. The first sign of this step forward is the installation of the offices themselves, as can be seen in these pages. Architect Palanti has designed, especially for this purpose, a series of furniture for various uses, according to his own line, a line that arises as a consequence of Sullivan's old slogan, sometimes too often forgotten: 'Forms follow function' (A forma segue a função). If architects knew how to restrict their work to these words, everything would run more smoothly³⁶." The incorporation of Brazilian-themed panels, tropical foliage, and native woods represented a groundbreaking shift for Olivetti's Brazilian retail spaces, these

36. Bardi 1958, 4.

49. Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin, panels of B. Buffoni: Store Olivetti Puerto Alegre, 1958.



elements reached a definitive synthesis within the offices of the “Edificio”. In this setting, the architectural language centered on a sophisticated system of partition uprights that masterfully addressed the building’s requirement for flexibility, a structure that already bore the hallmark of Palanti’s influence on its exterior facades. These partitions were articulated through three distinct horizontal bands that alternated between transparency to foster a sense of fluid spatiality, opaque surfaces finished in vibrant “Formica,” and decorative segments featuring the artistic contributions of Buffoni. This internal logic was never arbitrary; rather, the configuration of the panels was dictated by the specific functional needs of the areas they defined, utilizing a structural framework of cross-section iron supports fixed by pressure to create a versatile, four-way modularity that redefined the modern workspace³⁷.

37. Ibidem.



50. Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin, panels of B. Buffoni: Store Olivetti Puerto Alegre, 1958.

The result was a singular cultural intersection: the Olivetti executives in São Paulo, most of them Italian, would convene around a table crafted from exquisite native timber, surrounded by lush tropical greenery and panels depicting Brazilian folklore and landscapes through the lens of modern artistic techniques³⁸. This entire atmosphere remained strictly faithful to the core principles of the Olivetti identity; yet, while the brand's global stores, factories, and advertisements were designed to project the quintessential image of Italian design to the world, Palanti's work allowed that image to merge seamlessly with Brazilian soul³⁹.

38. Habitat 1958, 9.

39. Sanches 2014, 302.

One of the most significant and well-documented shop is the one that was located on Rua Brigadeiro Tobias in the center of São Paulo; of which in 1958, Giovanni Pintori wrote that he had seen photographs and considered it to be among the company's finest⁴⁰.

40. Ibidem.

Palanti used particularly interesting solutions, he distanced the design from the structural columns of the commercial building's facade by enclosing it with two large glass panes, recessed from the existing building line to widen the sidewalk. Part of this 'breathing space' was occupied by planters filled with tropical foliage. To conceal the complex network of ceiling beams, he utilized a two-level false ceiling: the perimeter featured a cove for indirect lighting, while the central section, made of natural pine planks, was interspersed with fluorescent light tubes. Even this store featured a mural by Bramante Buffoni, positioned on a large surface that concealed the service doors. The space was constructed through



41. Cfr. Sanches 2014, 304.

42. Ibidem

43. Sanches 2014, 305.

44. Ibidem.

an interplay of planes formed by Buffoni's panel, the wall colour that highlighted the display tables arranged in a row, and the virtual plane created by the green marble supports for the typewriters in the window display. These elements intertwined with the lines of the ceiling light fixtures and the uprights of the display units⁴¹. Buffoni's mural featured stylized tropical flora motifs which, together with the native plant beds, created the curious sight from the window of typewriters appearing amidst Brazilian plants.

Another pivotal location, important for the collaboration with the artist Carybé was the Salvador store in Bahia. Between 1961 and 1962, Carybé sculpted ten cedar panels for the space, featuring low-relief carvings of Candomblé deities such as Oxossi and Yemanjá. The professional and personal synergy between the architect and the artist is vividly captured in their 1961 correspondence⁴². In May, Carybé requested precise dimensions to begin his iconographic studies; by October, he was describing the visceral, physical nature of the work, the rhythmic "beating of the wood." These ten-centimeter cedar planks, prepared by architect Lev Smarchevsky to mitigate the wood's natural warping, aged into rich tones ranging from pale rose to deep cigar brown. Upon completion, Carybé wrote to Palanti with pride, citing the calluses on his hands as evidence of his labor and expressing his anticipation of seeing the panels finally activated by the store's lighting⁴³.

In these projects, the identity of the Brazilian people, conveyed through Indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, and folk traditions, emerges as a monumental theme interpreted by the foreign artists who had made Brazil their home, (Carybé was Argentinian)⁴⁴. Although these figures stood in



52. Giancarlo Pianti e Henrique Mindlin: Store Olivetti Penha Rio, 1958.

powerful dialogue with the industrial presence of the typewriters, they did not directly dictate the formal geometry of the furniture or the spatial layout. Instead, Pianti, influenced by the intellectual theories of Ernest Rogers, viewed these interventions as “decorative.” However, within this specific modernist framework, decoration was far from a superficial addition; it was understood as a congenital component of architecture. Whether expressed as a minimalist white wall or a complex figurative mural, these elements were essential to the expressive discourse of the work, serving as a vital bridge between the international modern style and the local cultural landscape⁴⁵.

45. Sanches 2014, 305.

Letters in the original language

Giuseppe Pagano to Giancarlo Palanti, Mauthausen, 22 April 1945

“Caro Palanti, commiato di un tuo fratello e collega; questo sarà un messaggio del G.P.P.

Grandissime e moltissime sono le probabilità che io resti stroncato da questa broncopolmonite.

Penso a te come all’amico che più di ogni altro potrà curare la mia eredità spirituale.

Se Giolli ritorna, lavora con lui, aiuta e fai collaborare gli amici Mucchi e Diotallevi.

Se si faranno delle pubblicazioni di quanto ho scritto e fatto, fatti dare da Paola in visione tutti i miei scritti.

Vagliateli e togliete le citazioni polemiche superate, e curate i suoi interessi. Conto molto su di te.

Agli amici del P.S. tutta la mia fede.

Mi ricordino bene; abbraccia Morandi, OM, il Dottore G. Carlo e la sua compagna, Basso, Paolo [alcune parole appaiono sbiadite] Dugoni.

Me ne vado fiero. [alcune parole appaiono sbiadite] mi ricorderanno bene.

Occupati affinché Paola abbia un aiuto per la vita.

Ho dato la mia vita per il Partito, e ne sono profondamente orgoglioso.

Avevo tanti sogni, tanti progetti, tante speranze quasi certe.

È finita!

A tutti voi: continuate bene, e meglio. Addio.”

Giancarlo Palanti to Franco Albini, São Paulo, 30 April 1947

“Ti ringrazio di tutte le notizie che mi hai dato sui lavori tuoi e miei e delle notizie generiche della situazione italiana che purtroppo non mi sembra molto promettente per la tanto auspicata ripresa che stiamo aspettando da circa quindici anni e che mi sembra si stia invece sempre più allontanando. Mi ha fatto anche un’impressione poco allegra la notizia che mi dai di essere costretto a ricorrere a prestiti per continuare a sostenere le spese di Studio durante quest’anno. Io non so quanto tu possa avere incassato o tu possa avere ancora da incassare per i miei lavori durante questo periodo e nei mesi seguenti; comunque, a parte il fatto che una parte di questi incassi ti spettano di diritto in quanto ti stai occupando di questi lavori, tu puoi naturalmente disporre di tutta la cifra di cui hai bisogno. In ogni modo, non per darti consigli, ma io ho sempre pensato che il nostro modo di organizzare i lavori e l’andamento del nostro studio fosse eccessivamente pesante in confronto alla massa dei lavori stessi; ora però la questione è un’altra e credo proprio che dipenda dalla scarsità intrinseca del lavoro.”

Giovanni Pintori to Giancarlo Palanti, Milan, 22 October 1957

“Ed ora in via riservata, ti informo che c’era il problema di una serie di piccoli negozi in Brasile, la cosa è venuta nelle mie mani e l’ho passata pregando di incaricarti di curare queste cose direttamente in Brasile. E per semplificare la cosa, ma soprattutto per tranquillizzarli della paura di andare incontro a chissà quali avventure, paura che poteva far cadere la mia proposta, ho detto loro che la cosa è molto semplice, che di volta in volta che si presentano i problemi ne dicano l’importanza e cosa intendono spendere. Si tratta di cose relativamente piccole per le quali ci saranno dei piccoli stanziamenti. Credo che se hanno seguito il mio consiglio ci sia anche il modo di aiutare Buffoni”.

Carybé to Giancarlo Palanti, Bahia, 7 October 1961

“Comecei o trabalho da Olivetti e já estou no segundo pranchão. Fiz Oxossi e estou com Yemanjá, são em cedro e é uma gostosura dar porradas na madeira, só que a caveira chega de noite e só quer conversa de cama, a gordura vai indo e estou ficando com um físico de gladiador (para dizer a verdade é de carpinteiro) (...) Estou fazendo o trabalho em baixo relevo, o Lev [Lev Smarchevsky, arquiteto indicado por Carybé para a execução do projeto] preparou os pranchões com dez centímetros para que quando a madeira encolha, o movimento seja mais distribuído e se note menos. Fica muito bonita a madeira pois as tiras mudam de tom, do rosa à cor de charuto. É um trabalho danado e se tiver que fazer outro cobro o dobro, mas que é gostoso é!”

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Arquivo GP/ FAU-USP
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- 45 Fig. 24: Palanti, F. Albini, I. Gardella, and G. Romano, Project for the Monument to Victory, Milan, 1937.
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- 46 Fig. 25: Giancarlo Palanti, Dining room of the Tavani House, Livorno, 1937. View of the interior design and custom furniture.
Casabella, 129, 1938, p. 33.
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Casabella, 127, 1938, p. 24.
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Casabella, 129, September 1938, p. 34.

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- 57 Fig. 34: Lina Bo Bardi and Giancarlo Pianti, MASP chair. Manufactured by Studio d'Arte Palma, São Paulo, c. 1947-1950. Foldable structure in wood with leather seat. Originally designed for the auditorium of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo.
Nilufar Gallery Archive (nilufar.com)
- 58 Fig. 35: Interior of the Studio d'Arte Palma showroom and office, Edifício Thomaz Edison (designed by Lucjan Korngold), Praça Bráulio Gomes, São Paulo. The image illustrates the display of modern furniture and art curated by Giancarlo Pianti and Lina Bo Bardi.
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- 59 Fig. 36: Interior of the Studio d'Arte Palma, Edifício Thomaz Edison, São Paulo. This view highlights the integration of Giancarlo Pianti's furniture designs within a modern architectural context.
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- 61 Fig. 38: Giancarlo Pianti and Lina Bo Bardi, Interior design with Studio d'Arte Palma furniture, São Paulo, c. 1948-1950. The image features a modular wall unit and a dining set, showcasing the use of Brazilian materials.
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Reproduced from Sanches Aline Coelho, *A obra e a trajetória do arquiteto Giancarlo Palanti: Itália e Brasil*, PhD thesis, Renato Anelli, FAU USP, São Paulo 2004, p. 286.
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Reproduced from Sanches Aline Coelho, *A obra e a trajetória do arquiteto Giancarlo Palanti: Itália e Brasil*, PhD thesis, Renato Anelli, FAU USP, São Paulo 2004, p. 296.
- 66 Fig. 43: Giancarlo Palanti and Henrique Mindlin, Loja Olivetti Rua Brigadeiro Tobias, São Paulo, 1957. View of the interior space with decorative panels by Bramante Buffoni.
Arquivo FAU USP
Reproduced from Sanches Aline Coelho, *A obra e a trajetória do arquiteto Giancarlo Palanti: Itália e Brasil*, PhD thesis, Renato Anelli, FAU USP, São Paulo 2004, p. 294.

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- 68 Fig. 45: Giancarlo Palanti e Henrique Mindlin, drawing of the store in Rua Brigadeiro Tobias, São Paulo, 1957.
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- 69 Fig. 46: Giancarlo Palanti and Henrique Mindlin, Loja Olivetti Rua Brigadeiro Tobias, São Paulo, 1957. View of the interior space with decorative panels by Bramante Buffoni. Arquivo FAU USP
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- 71 Fig. 48: Bramante Buffoni, Decorative panels for the Olivetti office, Edifício Conde de Prates, São Paulo, 1957-1966. Arquivo FAU USP
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Arquivo FAU USP
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- 74 Fig. 51: Giancarlo Palanti and Henrique Mindlin, Exhibition Stand for Olivetti. This ephemeral structure was designed for trade fairs in São Paulo, demonstrating the application of modular design to corporate communication.
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Reproduced from Sanches Aline Coelho, *A obra e a trajetória do arquiteto Giancarlo Palanti: Itália e Brasil*, PhD thesis, Renato Anelli, FAU USP, São Paulo 2004, p. 288.

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