



R & Company to Open Exhibition Highlighting Masterworks By Visionary Designer Sergio Rodrigues

On View November 3, 2023 - January 5, 2024

On November 3, R & Company will open *Sergio Rodrigues: the Heart of Brazil*, the gallery's fifth solo exhibition of the master designer recognized for his critical role in shaping Brazilian Modernism. R & Company has championed Rodrigues's practice for more than two decades, developing a close relationship with the designer prior to his death in 2014 and amassing an expansive collection of his original works and archival materials. The forthcoming exhibition continues the gallery's commitment to expanding awareness of his significant and enduring influence on design and to growing a committed collecting base for his one-of-a-kind pieces. *Sergio Rodrigues: the Heart of Brazil* will include a selection of both iconic and lesser-known furniture that captures the designer's visionary approach and remarkable craftsmanship. The exhibition will remain on view through January 5, 2024, at the gallery's 64 White Street location.

"While we have long understood Sergio's incredible artistry and significance to the global evolution of design, the world is just now coming to full awareness of the intricacy, complexity, and diversity of his work. He embraced creativity and experimentation while always keeping the essence of Brazil at the center of his practice, producing a style that was entirely his own and that exuded his unbound love for his home country," said Zesty Meyers, Co-founder and Principal of R & Company.



Sergio Rodrigues, *Mesa Parker* dining table and chairs, 1978, pine, cane, brass.
Photography by Joe Kramm, courtesy of R & Company.

Rodrigues's practice was grounded in the unwavering belief that design should reflect a country's culture, environment, and lifestyle. This manifested in his deep engagement with and use of woods native to Brazil, including jacaranda, peroba, and imbuia. He joined these raw materials, which both responded to and represented Brazil's climate, with leather and cane to create works that honored local furniture-making traditions but brought them into the contemporary moment. His designs also spoke to Brazil's relaxed and convivial character, with furniture that prioritized comfort and social interaction. In the 1950s, when he first began producing furniture, these were radical ideas that pushed against the prevailing focus on function

and international styles and created an expressive dialogue with the avant-garde architecture emerging across the country. Rodrigues's commitment to these ideals along with his unmatched technical mastery embodied and expanded Brazilian Modernism, securing his position as one of the most important makers in design history.

“To understand Sergio's unparalleled vision, you need to experience the details: the proportions and scales of his work, the ways in which he joined materials, the subtle suggestions of humor, and the seeming impossibility of some of his constructions. Like any exquisite work of art, the joy of Sergio's furniture is in finding something new, unexpected, and inspiring each time you look at it,” Meyers added.

Rodrigues (1927-2014) was born into a family of prominent Brazilian artists and intellectuals in Rio de Janeiro, who nurtured his passion for art, culture, and the values of his country. After graduating from the Faculdade Nacional de Arquitetura, Rodrigues founded the furniture company Oca, in 1955, which produced handmade furniture guided by Rodrigues's vision and allowed the designer to experiment, explore, and hone his approach and skills. It grew to be one of the most significant furniture companies in Brazil. In 1968, he left Oca and began working independently to create custom interior spaces, furniture, and objects for hotels, residential homes, office environments, and cultural and public spaces. Over the course of his illustrious career, he produced more than 1,000 designs, each focused on responding to the architectural environment in which they would live.

Sergio Rodrigues: the Heart of Brazil will highlight a range of furniture, from across the full arc of his career, with objects produced in the mid 1950s through to a chair made in 2004. Among the highlights is the **"Sofa Molee"** (**"Soft Sofa"**) from 1957, a commission for Rodrigues's friend, the photographer Otto Stupakoff, who requested a sofa on which he could fully relax in his studio. The sofa's soft, voluminous appearance and jacaranda frame perfectly encapsulated Rodrigues's style. The design led to the creation of the “Poltrona Molee” (1957) lounge chair, which was awarded first prize at the International Furniture Competition in Cantu, Italy in 1961 and was briefly produced in Italy. The chair's distinct aesthetic brought Rodrigues considerable acclaim and catapulted Brazilian design into international awareness and dialogues.

Another highlight in the exhibition is the **"Mesa Parker"** (**"Parker Dining Table"**) and **set of ten "Menna" chairs** (1978) The dining table was created especially for Maria and Derek Herbet Lovell-Parker in the couple's favorite wood: pinho-de-riça. The collaboration also resulted in an important variation to the legs of the “Menna” chair from a prior design version that enhanced its comfort and stability. The Parkers' son, Eric, described the dining table and chairs as “the symbol of our family life,” and Rodrigues is known to have said that the commission was among those that gave him the most joy in designing.

Also included is a **wood and leather desk (1968) commissioned by Adolpho Bloch**, who was among Brazil's most prominent television producers and publishers. Bloch, a lover of the arts, commissioned Oscar Niemeyer to design the headquarters for his publishing company and then invited Joaquim Tenreiro and Rodrigues to furnish the interiors. The collaboration between Bloch and Rodrigues was especially fruitful: the two became close friends and continued working together in the following decades. The

featured desk was designed for Bloch and other company top executives and features the cutout circles that would become the trademark of Rodrigues's aesthetic.

About R & Company

For over 20 years, R & Company has championed collectible design, advancing the contemporary marketplace and actively growing a global collector base and clientele. Its founders, Zesty Meyers and Evan Snyderman, are widely recognized for identifying rising talent, deepening scholarship about collectible design, and developing new avenues for growth in the industry. R & Company maintains two dynamic spaces in New York: its expansive, inaugural space at 82 Franklin Street features a rotating display of interior environments highlighting gallery designers, while 64 White Street offers an active roster of solo and group exhibitions and includes a Library and Archive of more than 10,000 books, photographs, drawings, and other materials. The gallery is committed to nurturing and sustaining the markets and careers of both emerging and established designers, as well as to maintaining and expanding commercial and academic interest in historic design. Its roster of international designers includes Wendell Castle, Rogan Gregory, Greta Magnusson Grossman, Serban Ionescu, Hun-Chung Lee, Joyce Lin, Roberto Lugo, Richard Marquis, Jolie Ngo, Katie Stout, Johnny Swing, Studio Job, Joaquim Tenreiro, and Jeff Zimmerman, among many others. With its vision, passion, and expertise, R & Company serves as a critical platform for experiencing 20th and 21st-century objects and discovering innovative, rare, and significant design.

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