

Goiás Jockey Club. Endangered heritage.

The design for the headquarters of the Goiás Jockey Club was chosen through a national architecture competition held in 1962, which awarded first prize to the proposal by Gennaro and Mendes da Rocha, two young architects from São Paulo.

João Eduardo de Gennaro (1928-2013) stood out in his professional career as head of the Itauplan, the Architecture and Urbanism branch of the Banco Itaú (one of the largest banking and financial holding companies of the country). Gennaro coordinated the planning of the monumental Administrative Center of Itaú in São Paulo in the 1980s.

Paulo Mendes da Rocha (1928-2021) figures along with Oscar Niemeyer as the most awarded and renowned Brazilian architects, with both national and international recognition. Mendes da Rocha's works are part of cultural tours in several cities, such as the National Coach Museum in Lisbon, Portugal, inaugurated in 2015; the SESC 24 de Maio in São Paulo, opened in 2017 and regarded as a leisure, culture and sportive place with widely recognition; and the *Cais das Artes*, a museum and cultural centre yet to be completed in Vitória do Espírito Santo, Brazil; and furthermore, the renovation of *Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo*, one of the most important art museums in the city of São Paulo, since 2000, is an internationally awarded intervention.

Goiânia, the capital city of Goiás, Central-West Brazil, has the privilege of hosting one work by Niemeyer and, exceptionally, the largest collection of Mendes da Rocha's major works built outside of his São Paulo city based studio, namely the Goiás Jockey Club Headquarters, the Stadium Serra Dourada and the Goiânia Bus Terminal Station.

The Jockey Club, the oldest among Mendes da Rocha's achievements in Goiás, is an eloquent expression of the great originality of ideas in the architectural panorama of the time. It was built in the pioneering urban core in Goiânia on Avenida Anhanguera, one of the main axes that crosses the city in the East-West direction and outlines the road system in the foundation of the new capital, planned in 1933. The Jockey Club is close to other relevant communal buildings, such as Teatro Goiânia, movie theaters and sport venues – as the Olympic Stadium – having shared with them the stage of social life until the 1990s. Jockey Club's meanings point out highly varied amplitudes – local and national – memorizing urban affabilities and sociabilities, a dialogue between social transformations and the intrinsic values of urban space and architecture, as a record of experiences.

The exceptionality of Goiás Jockey Club's architecture results from the composition of spaces, organized in half levels that coexist under the same generous ceiling. A pool plaza (conceived as a large terrace overlooking the city), and a grove displayed as a square (originated from the outcropping of a waterhole along the Buritis brook, a stream in an important environmental reserve of the region) both conform two spaces of gregarious aspirations. The large ceiling offers a penumbra as connecting ambience, providing continuity to the distinct social stirrings that take place over there. As a common aspect of its architectural language, the raw materials

and unpolished surfaces – a prominent trend of modern Brazilian architecture – are evident through the preponderance of exposed reinforced concrete.

Goiás Jockey Club – external view



Photo: Lucas Jordano, 2014.

Goiás Jockey Club – internal view



Photo: Lucas Jordano, 2014.

Goiás Jockey Club - internal view



Photo: Lucas Jordano, 2011.

Over the years, the building was impacted by alterations that have jeopardized part of its original features, in addition to problems arising from lack of maintenance. Concerning what negatively interferes with the perception and originality of the space, we highlight the covering of an access passage that cuts through the location, the construction of metal roofs on the outdoor sports courts that are dissonant with the whole, and the misfortune of the deforestation and paving of the surrounding forest. As for the conservation of the structure, the main problems are infiltrations, efflorescence and corrosion of the concrete structure reinforcement.

The increasing stagnation of the central sector of Goiânia, due to urban transformation and the emergence of new centralities, as well as the multiplication of leisure areas within residential condominiums – a process that started in the 1990s and intensified in the following decades – also imposed a gradual abandonment of the Jockey Club, which lost its function as a get-together place, and eventually accelerated the deterioration of its materiality caused by the loss of its social vitality.

Despite the critical scenario, the main characteristics of the original architectural design are safeguarded in its virtues and spatial legibility, which would make it possible to restore its physical conditions. However, given the decreasing demand for urban social clubs, its revitalization would require a change in its original occupation and functionality, which would lead to reconceive the active destination of the Jockey Club complex by means of new uses. This is the standpoint that requires careful attention in order not to corrupt the attributes that justifies its preservation, as it is assumed the understanding and appreciation of its qualities, once the Jockey Club is considered a masterpiece, which lead to its recognition as heritage of Modern Architecture. It is imperative to ensure that an intervention project be conducted in accordance with criteria that preserve the values of the architectural object and its authenticity, combining the necessary adaptations to its reinsertion in the urban dynamic with the understanding of its cultural significance. Therefore, the preservation

of the Goiás Jockey Club must be mediated by criteria that make it possible to rehabilitate it as a token of persistence, not only of its own history, but also in its contemporaneity.

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