

INSIDE ARCHITECTURE

Project by ESTÚDIO CAMPANA

In **São Paulo**, the studio of the **Campana Brothers** today, where **Humberto**, without **Fernando**, dreams in unison with him in a spirit of **vital and therapeutic continuity**, celebrating **40 years of activity**

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We met with Humberto Campana in the new studio in São Paulo, which was selected together with Fernando eight months after the latter's premature death in November 2022, at the age of 61. A very delicate passage: Humberto is still coping with the loss of "a partner, a friend, a brother." We have always interpreted the works of Fernando, the more artistic and extroverted side of the duo, and Humberto, the more introverted of the two, with a law degree, as coming from a single entity, since the Brazilian studio that has blazed new trails in international design was opened in 1984. Their projects for Edra (iconic) and Paola Lenti, but also for Louis Vuitton, Baccarat, Alessi, Artemide, Nodus, and with the Parisian Café Campana created at the Musée d'Orsay, the historic rail station from the 19th century redesigned by Gae Aulenti, are just a few of the studio's exceptional creations.

How are you feeling, Humberto?

I can tell you that I am working a lot, because working heals me, the energy inside this place is vital. But I miss Fernando, his cheerful, jovial presence. Now I have to play his role a bit as well, to send a positive signal to everyone, especially our staff of about twenty collaborators. But this has been a very difficult period, which has coincided with an introspective gaze, of reflection and transformation of myself, as a person: you truly realize that life is very short. I am trying to be less anxious, to lighten up, to seek the slow pace that at age 70 can make me happy.

How has the work changed without Fernando, and what are you working on now?

Fernando is always with me. I believe in spirituality. I dream with him and I continue what he has left incomplete: many collages, watercolors, sculptures – I am putting the pieces together, which on a symbolic level remained separated with his death. To take what remains and to reassemble it in new collages is also a form of hope, which moves me. In São Paulo I have made a large mural (12x8 meters) in tile for the façade of a building – inspired by one of his graphic designers that interpreted motifs of





Overall views of the architectural space, made very luminous by the large windows in dialogue with the garden outside. Nature also enters the space through the configuration of small vertical gardens. Sofa from the *Metamorfosi* collection of **Paola Lenti**, armchairs (*Vermelha*, *Corallo*, *Blue Velvet*) and *Jenette* chairs by **Edra**, the *Collana* carpet-tapestry by **Nodus**, the *Cocoon* suspended chair from the *Objets Nomades* collection of **Louis Vuitton**: all designed by the Campana Brothers. On the facing page, a table in terracotta and metal, specially designed, reflects the creative connection between craftsmanship and manufacture.



Portuguese azulejos. And I am working on the creation of the Rosewood São Paulo hotel at Cidade Matarazzo: there are drawings by Fernando and by me in the promenade of colored concrete, which redeems the black and white image of the city swallowed up by traffic, adding to the project by Jean Nouvel and Philippe Starck: it will be opened in the spring. I operate on multiple scales, with the urgency to do things, but I also plant trees in the countryside that can grow rapidly. It is a cathartic, regenerative action. When you lose someone important, another gate opens up, and I feel like this channel has been opened.

So where is the research of the new Humberto headed?

In this moment, it is moving towards an authentic quality of life, also looking at banal things in a new light. The direction is still that of spirituality, the sacred and emotional relationship with objects. With more awareness, values that can bring happiness to those who will use the works. I am very interested in material, from which everything begins. And in a line of continuity with my past, I am interested in crafts and handwork, organic forms – also fragmented – inspired by nature, the telling of amazing stories, outside the box. I move forward with the experimentation on terracotta mixed with other materials like cowhide, which I began with Fernando, and which led to an exhibition of objects here in São Paulo, "Polifonia Campana," in the month of November, in which he left us. I have developed and am preparing a collection in packed earth, natural straw and aluminium scrap, which will be shown at the Friedman Benda gallery in New York in March. Playing with the silence of adobe and the chaos of urban aluminium refuse allows me to think about their potential, also in terms of recycling and creative reuse. I was recently in Mumbai for an exhibition featuring a new cabinet in raffia and gilded metal, made with Indian artisans. I am also editing a book on the Campana method, a story of our particular, unique format of design. The background, the schooling, the experiences of internship and the Foundation are the themes I truly cherish. The idea is that this studio can be an legacy for new generations in the future, so that our voyage will not be wasted. Already, since 2009, we have the Instituto Campana, where design is used as a vehicle of transformation and social inclusion, with the participation of the community.



Will you be in Milan for the Saloni in April?

What will you bring with you?

Things are still in progress with the companies. I can only reveal that Francesca Molteni and Maria Cristina Didero are making a documentary to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Studio Campana, 40 years of activity in 2024, which will be presented at the Salone del Mobile.

Getting back to the studio, why did you change it?

We needed a larger, luminous, transparent space, with a lighter atmosphere. We found it in an area near the SESC Pompéia of Lina Bo Bardi, the architect who designed the Casa de Vidro. There are many Italians here, and the Matarazzo company began its activity precisely in this small city. Originally the studio was a garage for the repair of cars, a very dark place. We opened everything up and created vertical gardens to bring in light and nature. The place I feel is really mine has become the one next to the window, in dialogue with the external cactus garden, near the sofa designed for Paola Lenti. The facility has 600 square meters, organized on three levels; all the pathways are fluid, and there is a large workshop for the construction of models and prototypes, and a big kitchen. This studio represents my family, the place I feel at home. At the right moment the manager Waldick Jatobá also arrived, with his great passion for art and design, president/director of the Casa de Vidro and founder/curator of the annual event MADE - Market, Art, Design. He has taken Fernando's place, to some extent, and this leaves me more space and time for concentration. ■

