

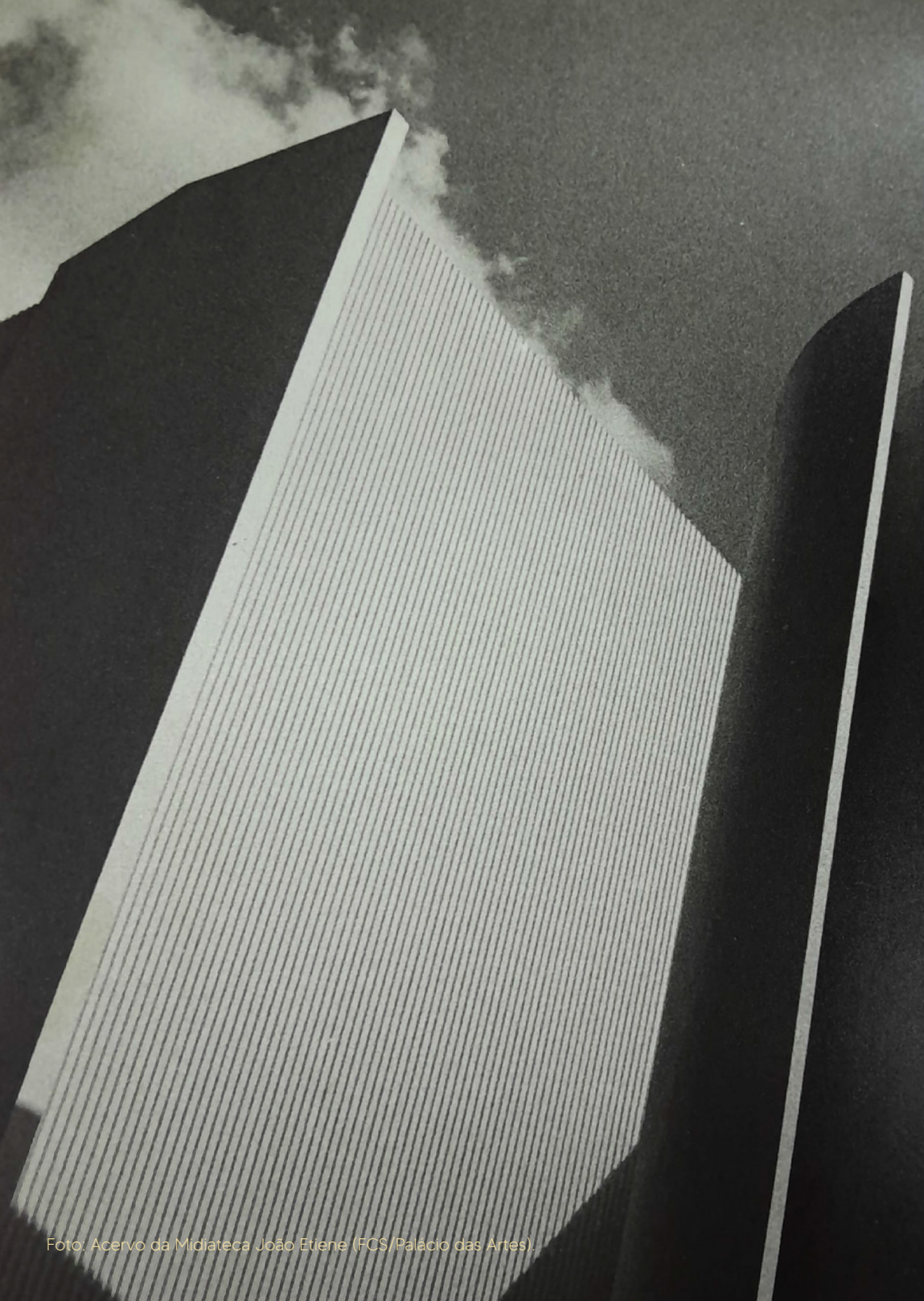


MINISTÉRIO DA CULTURA apresenta:

# PALÁCIO DAS ARTES,

espaço  
**vivo**

english version



# PALÁCIO DAS ARTES, espaço **vivo**

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Palácio das Artes Heritage Education Booklet

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**Heritage is not only what we keep, but also what we live and that is why it changes.**

At first glance, this may seem contradictory. After all, we tend to think of heritage as something that bears witness to the past and keeps its memories alive. But are we not, even now, building the memories of tomorrow? In this sense, heritage is not only found in the stone and concrete of a building, but also in the sounds of rehearsals drifting from its rooms, in the murmur before an opening night, and in the attentive silence of the audience. More than memory, it is presence. Certain places carry time not only in their walls, but also in everything that unfolds within them.

Palácio das Artes is a perfect example of living heritage. It exists because there are people who inhabit its spaces and make it a place of encounter. Its history is told not only by the years that have passed, but also by what still pulses through its corridors. This booklet seeks to celebrate the living aspect of the Palace.

Therefore, remember: the space belongs to you and to everyone who wishes to be present. Palácio das Artes was built by a thousand hands so that a thousand more may grasp its handrails and leave a little of themselves there. If you are reading this booklet inside the building, touch a handrail or even a wall! History is there, and you are part of it.

1

May this booklet be not only a guide,  
but also an invitation to  
belong.

Built in the heart of the capital of Minas Gerais, within the area of the Parque Municipal, Palácio das Artes reflects, above all, the modernist desire to integrate art into everyday life.

Let us dwell on this for a moment. To understand the true impact of this transformation, we need to look back. For centuries, culture and knowledge were privileges of the elite: libraries and galleries belonged exclusively to private owners, kept away from the public. Art existed in seclusion, circulating only among a few, a luxury reserved for those who could afford it.

It was only in the 18th century, with the Enlightenment and the rise of republican ideals, that this logic began to change. The notion that culture is a right, not a privilege, gained strength. Public museums were established, books were published on a wider scale, and art gradually came to occupy more space.

2

In this context, an institution dedicated to cultural democratization represents a significant step forward, especially for a young city like Belo Horizonte. Yes, young and trendy! Inaugurated in 1897 as Brazil's first planned city, BH was born

modern: at that time, it already had electricity, lifts, and, above all, the promise that art and knowledge should not be privileges.



Inauguration of the City of Minas, future Belo Horizonte, 1897.

Photo: MHAB.



In the photo above, we see **Cândido Portinari** (1903–1962), one of the greatest painters of Brazilian Modernism. His work is renowned for bringing the social reality and everyday life of the Brazilian people to the canvas, breaking away from Europeanised themes.

In Belo Horizonte there are important works by this painter on public display. Are you familiar with any of them?

Photo: Arquivo Nacional.

Modernism? Think about it as an aesthetic and cultural revolution that broke with tradition to reinvent the relationship between art and life. These two concepts had little in common until then, as the prevailing idea was that art should be sublime and depict elements far removed from people's everyday reality.

At the beginning of the 20th century, modernists rejected academicism and sought new forms of expression that captured the dynamism of modern life. artworks featuring Brazilians as protagonists began to appear more frequently. In Brazil, the Week of Modern Art in 1922 consolidated this pursuit of an art closer to national reality, accessible and integrated into everyday life, reflecting social, urban, and cultural transformations of the period.

3



When was the last time you noticed the changes on Rua da Bahia, in the city centre of Belo Horizonte? On the corner of Rua Goiás, where the Bradesco Bank once stood, lies a place steeped in history. In 1909, it was home to the Municipal Theatre, the first grand stage in Belo Horizonte, with neoclassical architecture. In the 1940s, it made way for the Cine Metr pole, a symbol of the golden age of cinemas.

Decades later, the building was demolished and replaced by a commercial one. This photo shows how a space can be reshaped by the needs of its residents. Think about it: how can your own wishes, as a citizen, help shape the place where you live? Photo: ArqBH

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Considering this history, it's fair to say that Belo Horizonte has always regarded culture as a fundamental part of its identity. The inauguration of the Theatro Municipal (yes, written with a TH, according to the orthographic conventions of the time!) in 1909 marked this commitment, establishing the arts as an integral element of the urban landscape of Minas Gerais's new capital.

The Theatro Municipal remained in operation until 1940, when it was closed to make way for the Cine Metr pole. By then, the city was already expanding beyond its original plan, and the need for a new theatre had become evident. The mayor at the time, Juscelino Kubitschek, allocated a site within the Parque Municipal Am rico Renn  Giannetti for the construction of a new municipal theatre. Since the construction could take years, it was decided to construct a temporary theatre in the park itself to ensure the continuity of the cultural scene. What was meant to be temporary became the Teatro Francisco Nunes, which remains in operation to this day, but that's another story!

The **Festa da Cumeeira** (a celebration marking the completion of a building's structure) of the Pal cio das Artes took place in February 1970, marking the inauguration of the Grande Teatro. Construction, however, continued. The photo shows the opening of the Pal cio das Artes' walkways in November 1970, today, the exterior area next to the caf .

Photo: Jo o Etienne Midiateca collection (FCS/Pal cio das Artes).

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On the other hand, the planned Theatro Municipal took decades to materialise. Construction was interrupted for more than 20 years and only resumed in the 1960s, finally giving shape to what we know today as the Pal cio das Artes, the largest cultural complex in Latin America.



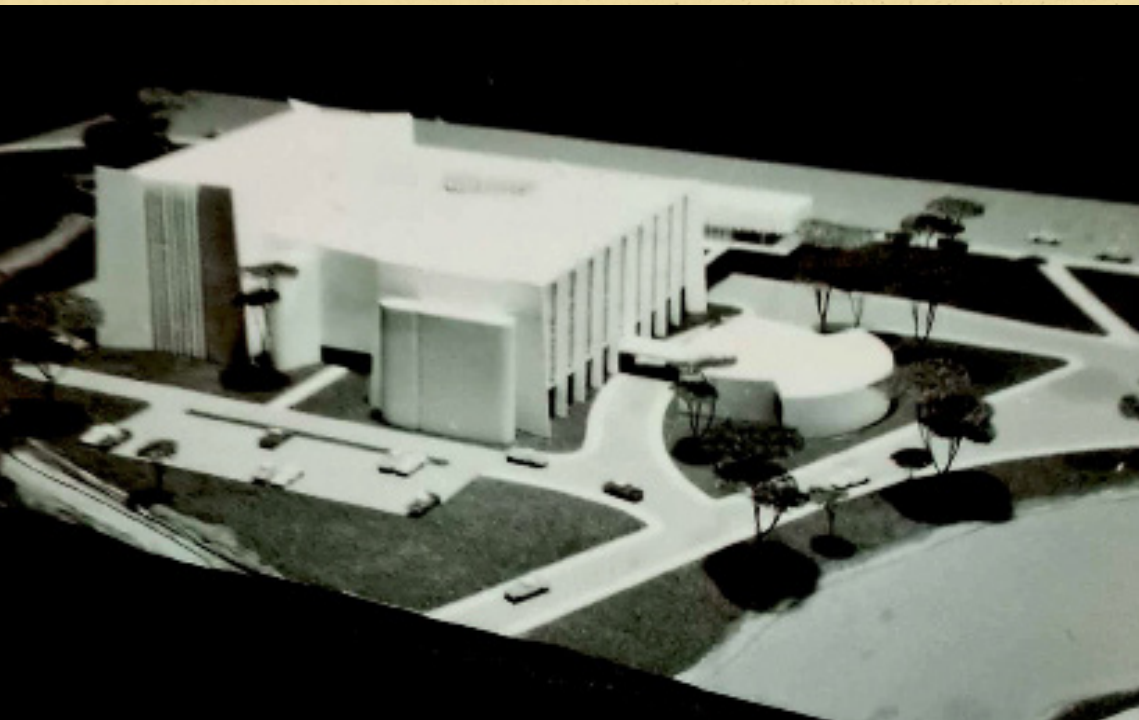
The Palácio das Artes was not built all at once. Its history of pauses and resumptions reflects the fluidity that Oscar Niemeyer envisioned in his 1940 project, which included a floating walkway connecting the Palace to the Parque Municipal.

Construction only resumed in 1966, following a long hiatus. The architect Hélio Ferreira Pinto was invited to continue and adapt Niemeyer's project to the needs of the time.

He maintained the original ideas that make the Palácio das Artes unique: sinuous curves guiding circulation, contrasted with heavy concrete walls and floor-to-ceiling glass windows, integrating the interior with the external landscape. This architecture is a perfect metaphor for the dialogue between the diverse artistic languages that coexist there.

6

The floating walkway, unfortunately, was never built.



This photograph dates from 1977. The Palácio das Artes was already welcoming visitors and was vibrant with culture, but its architecture was not yet exactly as we know it today.

Since then, the space has continued to evolve and transform. How many changes can you identify? Photo: João Etienne Midiateca collection (FCS/Palácio das Artes).



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Finally, in 1970, the Palácio das Artes opened its doors with the inauguration of the Great Gallery, a cultural landmark for the visual arts. The following year brought the highlight: the opening of the Grande Teatro.

Since then, the spaces have continued to expand. The Cine Humberto Mauro was built in 1978, followed by the Teatro João Ceschiatti and Galeria Arlinda Corrêa Lima in 1984. In the 1990s, the Sala Juvenal Dias (1993) and the Galeria Genesco Murta (1994) were added. More recently, the Galeria Mari' Stella Tristão (2016) strengthened the space for contemporary art, followed by the Pequena Galeria Pedro Moraleida, the Acervo FCS, and the Galeria Aberta Amilcar de Castro (2017-2018).

In Oscar Niemeyer's original design, access to the Teatro Municipal (today, the Palácio das Artes) was intended to be through the Parque Municipal. A floating walkway would carry visitors to the building, integrating architecture and landscape. Photo: João Etienne Midiateca collection (FCS/Palácio das Artes).



## How does a cultural centre differ from a performance auditorium?

The answer may lie precisely in the ability not only to exhibit and democratize access to culture, but also to produce and experience it. On this premise, the Palácio das Artes was conceived as a multifunctional space, comprising core areas that are in constant dialogue, promoting the development of the city's cultural scene and going beyond its traditional role as a performance venue.

The **Centro de Formação Artística e Tecnológica (Cefart)** offers courses in dance, theatre, music, visual arts, and stage technology to the entire community. More than just a learning space, it fosters experimentation and encourages students to explore new forms of expression and to question traditional modes of creation.

Top row, from left to right: the Orquestra Sinfônica de Minas Gerais, the CEFART theatre group, and the Companhia de Dança do Palácio das Artes. Bottom row, from left to right: the Coral Lírico and the Education Sector.  
Photos: Paulo Lacerda (FCS/Palácio das Artes).



The artistic groups at the Palácio das Artes (the **Orquestra Sinfônica de Minas Gerais**, the **Coral Lírico** e the **Companhia de Dança Palácio das Artes**) broaden the concept of repertoire by engaging in dialogue with contemporary artists, commissioning original works, and producing their own performances.

And last but not least, the Education Sector! Recognized as permanent, it operates in a sensitive and dialogical manner, mediating the entire Palácio das Artes. It fosters participatory and accessible experiences for diverse audiences, with a focus on inclusion, a goal that permeates both the artists' creations and the educational mediation.

As we have seen, the Palácio das Artes has always been in constant motion. Since its inauguration, it has experienced pauses, resumptions, and changes that have shaped its history. Now, in 2025, a new chapter is being written: the Palace is undergoing a major restoration and renovation project!

This project operates on two complementary fronts: preserving a listed modernist icon while simultaneously modernizing its spaces, with focus on technology, accessibility, and integration. Following the last significant intervention in 1997, these new ones will bring a breath of fresh air to the residents of Belo Horizonte.

The first step was almost like taking a three-dimensional photograph of every detail of the building. Using a 3D laser scan, a “digital twin” of the Palácio das Artes was created. From this meticulous process, 79 drawing boards were produced, showing the building with extremely high precision. This material has assisted architects and engineers in planning the forthcoming changes with unprecedented accuracy. Some of these images can be found on the following pages.

One suggestion: keep this booklet. In a few years, when you look back at it, it will serve as a reminder of what the Palácio das Artes was like before all these transformations.

In architecture, a drawing board is a type of graphic communication panel used in architectural projects. On it, the architect gathers and organises technical drawings, diagrams, and images to present in detail everything from the central concept to the construction details of the project.

## Grande Teatro

- Replacement of the seats and existing carpet in the auditorium.
- Restoration of the parquet flooring.
- Modernisation of the lift serving the boxes.





Image: Belarq Arquitetura



Image: Belarq Arquitetura

## Outdoor areas

- 12
- Preservation of the original windows and natural lighting.
  - Safe integration of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
  - Open-air amphitheatre and enhancement of landscaping.
  - Restructuring to optimise flow.



Image: Belarq Arquitetura



Image: Belarq Arquitetura

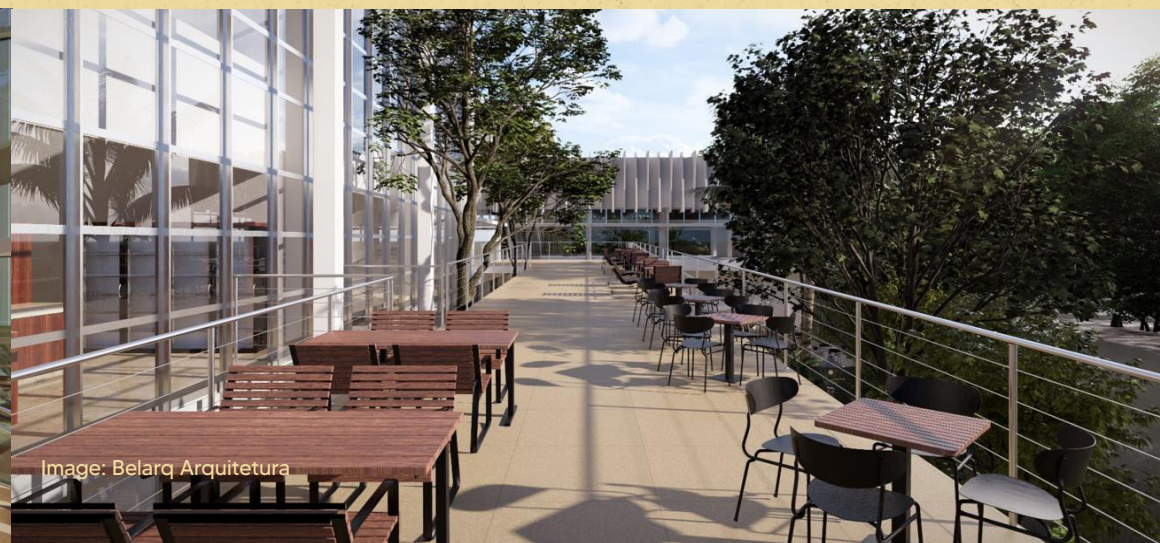


Image: Belarq Arquitetura

In addition to preserving its essence, the restoration introduces new features that make the space even more open and welcoming. A new walkway will connect the foyer to the outdoor area; access points will be expanded to ensure full accessibility; and even previously underutilised areas will be revitalised.

The improvements also aim to ensure the comfort of those who use the Palácio das Artes: spaces with a pleasant climate, renewed acoustics, and modernised infrastructure. Everything is designed so that each visit is an experience of belonging, without losing sight of the original vision conceived by Niemeyer. It's like giving the Palace a new lease of life, without erasing its identity. And there's more: the landscaping will be enhanced with the addition of an open-air amphitheatre, designed to host gatherings, performances, and new memories.

This major restoration project is a joint effort of the Ministério da Cultura; the Government of Minas Gerais, through the Secretaria de Cultura e Turismo; the Fundação Clóvis Salgado; and APPA - Cultura e Patrimônio. It is sponsored by Cemig and the Instituto Cultural Vale, and made possible through the Lei Rouanet (Federal Law for Cultural Incentive).

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Image: Belarq Arquitetura

## Interior spaces

- Maintenance and restoration of historical materials (floors, coverings, window frames, and others) in workrooms, galleries, café, etc.
- Preservation of the original architectural language.
- Accessible toilets.

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Image: Belarq Arquitetura



Image: Belarq Arquitetura

The urban landscape is never static. Have you ever noticed how the places around you change without warning? The businesses that closed their doors, the buildings that were demolished, the new constructions that appear on the horizon... all these transformations, big or small, show that the city is shaped by many hands, the result of the choices and actions of those who inhabit it. This includes me, you, your neighbour, your family, your workplace, the Palácio das Artes, everyone! Making history can mean both painting the façade of a house a new colour and renovating the structure of a cultural space in the city.

Ultimately, it is this continuous practice of living in and transforming the city, both individually and collectively, that shapes our legacy and defines what we hold dear. **Heritage is not only what is preserved; it is also what is lived, and, therefore, transformed.**



Photo: Acervo da Midiateca João Etienne (FCS/Palácio das Artes).



Photo: Acervo da Midiateca João Etienne (FCS/Palácio das Artes).

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