EGYPTIANIZING MOTIFS IN ARCHITECTURE AND ART IN BRAZIL
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Introductory context

Brazil is the largest and the only Portuguese-speaking country in South America. The history of its settlement and colonization is fascinating. Spanish, Dutch, French and English, among others, disputed ownership of its territory with the Portuguese explorers and with the Native Indians. Africans also arrived here from the 16th century onwards. During the 19th and 20th centuries, countless waves of European and Asian immigrants arrived, to complete this continent-sized melting pot.

The history of the country and the mixture of the cultures led to a unique cultural context, characterized by a balance between removal and permanence. With reference to Egyptianizing motifs, permanence has been achieved through instruction and teaching of ancient history, and renewal through the dynamic variation of the appropriation of Egyptian elements for different purposes.

This complex Brazilian cultural process combines knowledge of details with imaginative power and an acute artistic sensibility. The Portuguese influence is still evident through the encouragement of the study of Egyptology and ancient history in schools and universities. Admiration and respect for all the symbols, monuments and culture of the Egyptian civilization is maintained, often manifest by the frequent utilization of images of obelisks for commemorative purposes. Such references to obelisks are not exclusive to Brazil, as Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina, has the tallest obelisk in South America. However, in addition to the conservative and respectful usage of Egyptian sychology, Brazil also developed its own lighter way of dealing with such symbols, at times satirical and even bordering on irreverence. A new example is the usage of Egyptian motifs from the exhibit "Pharaonic Egypt", in Rio de Janeiro, adapted this year for the typical Brazilian festival, the 'Carnival'. This excellent exhibit was brought from the Louvre to the 'France-Brazil House', and its motifs inspired a 'Carnival Group'. The group was named 'Tás'. All its members were dressed accordingly, although dancing and singing the Brazilian samba. Carnival in Brazil is a unique and world-famous event characterized by irreverence, freedom and rule-breaking (Da Matta 1990:66). The use of a historical event as the inspiration for a satirical and typical festival like the Carnival is a very Brazilian phenomenon, unlikely to be observed in any other Latin American country.
The permanence of Egyptian elements in art, architecture and other forms of cultural manifestations in Brazil not only has deep roots in the history of the country, but also relies on the traditional, although distinctive, Brazilian practice of qualitative appropriation of cultural elements of other peoples and eras.

This chapter deals with the presence of Egyptianizing motifs in Brazil since the early 19th century. These elements can still be encountered in commemorative monuments, public and commercial buildings, and private houses; mainly in the forms of obelisks and pyramids. The presence of Egyptian symbols in paintings, decorative arts and commercial logos is evident in Brazil. No systematic work on Egyptianizing motifs in art and architecture in Brazil has been undertaken to date, but at least one can say, in the same way that Carlos Sagué Queiroz (1996: 307) does in respect of Spain, that “the interest in ancient Egyptian culture started a very long time ago in this country”.

The acquisition of the first Brazilian collections of Egyptian antiquities must count as one of the most significant steps in Brazil’s relationship with Ancient Egypt. Its most important public collection of Egyptian artefacts is housed at the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro. The first collection of Egyptian artefacts was assembled before the beginning of the Republic, during the Brazilian Empire. After the decipherment of hieroglyphs and the birth of Egyptology, a strong movement developed in Europe to rescue and value Egyptian culture. This cultural trend extended to the Americas, receiving the sponsorship of Dom Pedro I and his son Dom Pedro II in Brazil, both members of the Portuguese Crown.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Portuguese royal family was the influence behind Brazil’s acquisition of knowledge about ancient Egyptian civilization. The most important European period in Egyptology was a result of Bunsen’s expedition to Egypt (1818–1821). The expedition triggered the first acquisitions of Egyptian antiquities by the Brazilian Royal Family. The largest part of the Egyptian collection at the National Museum was purchased at a public auction in 1824 by His Imperial Majesty, Dom Pedro I, from the Italian Jean-Baptiste Faure, who originally had planned to sell the collection to Argentina but had been unsuccessful in so doing.

Before the decipherment of hieroglyphic writing by Champollion in 1822, only a small number of early 19th century travellers had dared to visit Egypt. Those that did had the opportunity to visit temples and tombs which no longer exist. With time, travel to this ‘mysterious’ country became more accessible to a wider public. Dom Pedro II was able to visit Egypt for the first time in 1871. Still on display in Rio de Janeiro is a beautiful painted coffin from the Sesostris Period that was presented by Khedive Ismail to Dom Pedro II during his second visit to Egypt in 1876.

Other private collections in Brazil were created at the end of the 19th century, in 1903, Mísia Zevon Bezzi inherited 36 pieces of Egyptian antiquities from her grandfather, and this collection was then used to form the Museum of Art and Archaeology at the University of São Paulo (Brancação 2001: 23). Other objects were later given to this museum by private contributors, and others were purchased through the Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP), a grant-giving research foundation.

There is another collection of 22 Egyptian antiquities in the Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (MASP). This collection was donated to the museum in 1976 by the former Director and Curator Pedro Maria Bardi and his wife Lina Rio Bardi. The Foundation Eva Klabin Rapaport in Rio de Janeiro also possesses a small collection of Egyptian objects (Brancação 2001: 25).

Despite the presence of ancient Egyptian art and artefacts in the above collections, many people living in Brazil still have little or no opportunity to learn about the civilization of Ancient Egypt. In spite of this, since the end of the 19th century, especially after 1859 with the opening of the Suez Canal, new interest in Ancient Egypt arose throughout the world. In Brazil a wave of using Egyptianizing elements in architecture and arts began. These can be easily observed in the ancient monuments and civil buildings of that period, which were used to legitimize and add an air of solidarity to State practices.

**Egyptianizing architecture**

The interest in Egypt continued to evolve with diverse and divergent readings of ancient Egyptian forms. Egypt was regarded not only as a land of wisdom and justice, but also as a land that possessed the power of eternal life and a land, associated with spectacular structures and foundations (Humbert et al. 1994: 312). The heightened interest in Ancient Egypt was brought to Brazil in a variety of different ways.

One influence can be traced to the work of ‘Mestre master’ Valentim (Valentim da Fonseca e Silva, 1785–1813), who is recognized by scholars in Brazil as having produced the most significant artistic output in Rio de Janeiro during the 18th century. At this time the city was elevated to become the new capital of the Province, situated at the center of the power of the colony, where artistic standards would be created and diffused throughout the country (Monteiro de Carvalho 1995: 7).

Very little is known about Valentim’s history beyond the fact that he was the son of a noble of Portuguese origin and a black Brazilian (Franco 1996). His creations, from sculpture and architecture to urban elements, can be seen as part of the process of enlightenment for the Car义’s society in the 18th century. The primary objective was to respond to the needs of very important governmental and secular institutions. For instance, Valentim designed and constructed several monumental civil buildings in Rio de Janeiro such as the ‘Public Promenade’, as well as several impressive fountains. He also carried out important work for churches as well as for non-religious institutions.

The programme of ‘enlightenment’ in Rio de Janeiro is very evident in the plans and construction of the ‘Public Promenade’ – the most popular place for public relaxation (Monteiro de Carvalho 1999: 25). The model chosen for its plan consisted of a monumental public garden, representing nature, and human control of it, together with an important fountain for people’s use.
From 1772 to 1803, in order to sanitize the swampy and unhealthy lagoon of Bocaiúva da Ajuda, Valentim created two pyramids that were intended to be placed facing the sunsets. These pyramids are considered by some authors such as Maria Eugénia Franco (1996) to be "important by themselves isolated in their time, but created to have more significance and importance in the future". Starting from a pure geometrical form, the triangular pyramid was put on a rectangular base, over a cornice, the latter being an architectural element often used in the baroque period. Small, triangular and quadrilateral pyramids, either alone or considered with other elements, were often used over doorways and façades in Brazilian baroque architecture. As Franco (1996) says, "to emphasize the character and mark of the obelisk. Mestre Valentim excercised an oval medallion in each of the pyramids". These medallions are made from a light marble of local granite, contrasting with the dark carioca granite: "the skill of the sculptor managed to retain the taste of the period for the romantic and the picturesque; on each medallion is engraved 'A saudade do Rio' (To the nostalgia from Rio) and 'Ao amor do público' (To the love of the public)" (Franco 1986).

These pyramids, which by their shape and non-figurative characteristics differ from all other of Valentim's sculptures, are sometimes considered as the precursors in Brazilian sculpture of the emodification of the artist from the constraints of figurative representation.

The "Public Promenade" could be defined as a "court-like garden", similar to some 16th, 17th and 18th century European gardens. Such gardens were meant to create for the observer an architectural illusion of geometrical character. Their decoration consisted of geometric and figurative sculptures in the form of symbols from ancient history such as pyramids, arches, columns, temples, and pools of fountains and waterfalls (Monteiro de Carvalho 1999: 15). From a plan of 1803, it can be seen that Valentim envisaged the "Public Promenade" as hexagonal in shape. The doorway still remains and preserves some of the old decoration, such as exotic Chinese details on the iron gable. Valentim represents the "enlightenment", uniting art with utilitarian purposes (Monteiro de Carvalho 1999: 29). The triangular pyramids gave a new look to the carioca metropolis, public statuary with a non-religious character (Monteiro de Carvalho 1999: 38).

Valentim was also the artist responsible for the adoption of certain Egyptian structures to embellish utilitarian areas. One of the oldest and best examples in Brazil is the "Fountain of the Pyramid", located in the Praça XV square in the centre of Rio de Janeiro (Figure 13.1 col. pl.). In 1786, the Swedish engineer Jacques Funck had been contracted by Viceroy Vasconcelos to improve the existing fountain, which was in ruins and no longer providing the necessary water supply. He urged the construction of a new fountain near to the quay (Monteiro de Carvalho 1999: 9). The resulting pyramid was actually the work of Valentim, who remodelled the old structure of the fountain with two intentions in mind: to supply the ships and the population with water deriving from the Carioca Reservoir, and to create a masterpiece which would embellish the city.

It was Funck's idea to fuse the reservoir and the fountain into one block and to fashion the composition to resemble a church tower. But it was Valentim's version of the fountain, still maintaining the idea of a vertical bell tower and made from dark local granite, that was built. It possesses both baroque and rococo marble ornamental elements, such as coathangers, balustrades and garlands. It can be described as a great prism with a rectangular base, almost a cube, which supports a smaller pyramid (Monteiro de Carvalho 1999: 45).

The oil painting by Leandro Joaquim (Figure 13.1 col. pl.) shows that the fountain dramatically dominated the maritime scenery of the wharf, having on its left side the "Pão" and on the right a building belonging to Teles de Menezes, one of the richest men in the city. In the background stand the monastery and the churches of the First and the Third Religious Orders of the Carmo. The central part of the construction is rectangular, with uneven sides. The alternate concave and convex lines create surprising lighting effects on the surface, contributing to the overall impression of ascension and steepness of the monument. The sides are composed of superposed stones of granite, forming columns. At the top is a classical urn made of granite with a marble pyre, a symbolic representation of the sacred fire of Greek temples. Above this used to be the Portuguese coat of arms (removed in 1842 and replaced by a metallic sphere, sustaining a Brazilian crown). A door in the front façade, facing the sea, leads to a terrace, with a wonderful view of Guanabara Bay. On the opposite façade (towards the Carmelites cloister and church) is an oval marble table, engraved with the name of the Viceroy, comparing his deeds to those of the god of light.

Another very important example of this kind of ancient fountain, the "Fountain of the Saracuras", was also the work of Valentim (Monteiro de Carvalho 1999: 49), built at the end of 18th century. It was originally to supply water to the Convent of the Ajuda, in Rio de Janeiro, and was Valentim's last work for public consumption. The "Fountain of the Saracuras" was sponsored by the Sisters of the Order of the Clarissas, and was intended to commemorate the Conquest of Brazil (1702-1808), the Viceroy of Brazil. The Clarissas Convent was built in 1748 by Brigadier General Engineer Alpoim, occupying a large area in central Rio de Janeiro. In 1786, the fountain was intended for the inner court of the cloister, where it became a place for relaxation. In 1911, it was presented to the municipality by Archbishop Joaquim Arcos de Carvalho, and it now stands in General Osório square, in Rio de Janeiro.

The "Fountain of the Saracuras" is made from dark local granite and contains both functional and ornamental details in bronze, such as fountains in the shape of a bird ("saracura"), a turtle and the heraldic symbols of the Viceroy in marble. The plan has at its centre a cup-shaped fountain surmounted by an obelisk in "needle style", which is mounted on a circular base. On the top of the monument stands a bronze Christian cross.

This monument simultaneously contains elements and styles of the Renaissance, the baroque and the rococo. The composition displays a harmonious articulation in a single block that integrates different architectural principles. As described by Ana Maria Monteiro de Carvalho (1999), the fountain itself recapitulates the idea of centrality (mother/earth), the origin of life (water) and the ideal of eternity (sky/youth), present in old ancient oriental tradition. According to Monteiro de Carvalho (1999: 52), Valentim had recaptured in the "Fountain of the Saracuras" the idea of centrality/eternity present in Bernini's fountain in Rome and, by adding the Latin cross, he had given a sense of transcendency to the monument.
In 1808, Don João VI, at this time Prince Regent of Portugal, landed in Rio de Janeiro, bringing with him around 15,000 members of the Portuguese court. Rio became the capital of the Empire, blossoming as a city with the construction of public buildings and establishing its own architectural identity.

The obelisk, a single tapering rectangular block of stone, is particularly associated with Ancient Egypt. It is the most frequent Egyptianizing motif adopted in Brazilian urban architecture. The obelisk is also commonly used in commemorative monuments. Due to its impressive features, it is a constant source of inspiration for those who aspire to enduring memorials. The Brazilian urban landscape contains several obelisks, erected by both public and private groups. These symbols are associated with all the major moments of Brazilian history, and memorialize events ranging from major battles to city foundations.

The exact number of obelisk-like monuments in Brazil is not known, pending the completion of an inventory being undertaken through a national research project. Thus far, several dozen obelisk-like monuments in several states of the country have been documented (www.egyptomania.br). Nor is there any register of original Egyptian obelisks in Brazil. All the obelisks so far observed are copies or adaptations of originals. They are generally placed in urban settings, erected singly, not in pairs as in Ancient Egypt, their function being purely decorative or commemorative. Several good examples can be found throughout Brazil. One of the best in Rio de Janeiro is a granite obelisk called the ‘Obelisk of the Rio Branco Avenue’, erected in 1906 in homage to the opening of the former Central Avenue (Figure 13:2). Another fine example of a commemorative obelisk is encountered opposite the main entrance to the docks of Porto Alegre, built in memory of the city’s bicentennial.

São Paulo was founded between the rivers Tamanduateí and Anhangabaú, in the plains of Piratininga, far from the coast. Some historians see this location as having been chosen as an act of disobedience towards the Portuguese metropolis, settlements on the coast being encouraged in order to hamper attacks from other European countries. A small school for teaching catechism to the natives was founded in 1534 on the plains of Piratininga, by the priests of the Society of Jesus. On St Paul’s day, an inaugural mass was celebrated in that school, which became a very important location for the development of the settlement. In 1711, the ‘village’ was placed in the category of a city. In the

Figure 13:2 Granito Obelisco da Avenida Rio Branco, Rio de Janeiro (1906).

beginning, the city was very quiet and tranquil but later changed when the diocese was established in 1745. The urban nucleus was enlarged with more buildings with additions on their facades. Wealth changed the way of daily life and required the opening of roads. In 1814, in commemoration of the opening of the road to Sorocaba, Marshall Daniel Pedro Müller, who derived from European ancestry and had completed military and mathematic studies in Lisbon, ordered an obelisk to be erected in the ‘Ladeira dos Fiqueis’ (Slope of the Fiqueis). He contacted Vicente Gonçalves Pereira (Master Vicinto, a well known stoneworker) to build a stone obelisk, measuring 8.79 m high and 1.78 x 1.83 m at its base. It is now known as the ‘Obelisk of Memory’ (Castanheira 1987: 85) and its appearance in 1847 was captured by Miguél Dutra, in a watercolour called ‘Pyramids and Fountain of the Fiqueis’ (Figure 13:3 col. pl.). Vicinto was born in Itu, a small town in the state of São Paulo, and is well known for his numerous skills (Petti 1981); he is considered one of the precursors of plastic arts in Brazil. He was self-taught, and his paintings capture a naïve realism, scenes and customs of the time. The obelisk was built where the muleteers and cattle drivers passed on their way to Sorocaba, now in the middle of the city, in the neighbourhood of Pinheiros. Some record that it was built to mark the provision of canalized water to the city. It stands over a circular masonry basin with iron grids, a sort of fountain reservoir at its lower level. Watered to be channelled from this tank, through hills and boroughs until reaching the central lake of the Botanical Garden.

The ‘Fountain of Memory’ was finished in 1872. In 1919, to commemorate the forthcoming centenary of the Independence of Brazil from Portugal, the Mayor of São Paulo decided to restore the sculptures, masterpieces of the past. The pyramid was maintained in its original place and a new fountain was built in front of a large wall. The glazed tile lining, including the ones decorating the benches and walls, were all painted with ancient landscapes by the artist, J. Wesh Rodrígues. The stairs were conceived in an Art Nouveau style. By the end of the 19th century the fountain was surrounded by high iron grilles. In this enclosure trees grew wild, giving the impression of a small forest. It is surprising to find in such a small area, lost in the middle of a jungle of concrete, so many masterpieces of sculpture, including the ‘Fountain of Memory’ and the ‘Pyramid of Memory’.

The influence of Egyptian style can also be seen in the art of one of the best 19th century Brazilian painters: Minas Gerais’ Hélder Estevés do Sacramento (1863–1903). Hélder Estevés was one of the early Brazilian academic painters whose works were ever-present in the everyday life of Minas Gerais State. He made oil paintings, pastels, portraits, and charcoal drawings. Hélder, the son of a carpenter, had a very humble upbringing, and remained very religious and deeply appreciative of local traditions. At the age of 11 he had started to study art at a design school in Ouro Preto, and it was in 1860 that he visited Rio de Janeiro for the first time. Four years later, by special appointment of the Emperor Dom Pedro II, he moved there, and studied with famous Brazilian painters such as Pedro Americo and Victor Meireles. Estevés’s talent was very well recognized during his studies at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, where he received several prizes.

While living in Rio de Janeiro, he produced his ‘Egyptian Shepherd’ (Figure 13:4). The main subject of the painting is a human figure with Egyptianizing elements, but also with some connection to the artist’s own surroundings. Thus, the Nemes and the
clearly cloth are Esteves’ interpretations of Egyptianizing motifs, while other elements of the composition – including the face of the shepherd, the box on which he is seated, his staff, and the curtain in the background – represent the painter’s environment.

Between 1870 and 1920, many painters were impressed by the art of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (Wormer Chapter 5: Figure 5:11; Whitehouse Chapter 3: Figure 3:6; both this volume) and attempted to follow in his artistic footsteps. It is possible that there was a group of orientalist painters at this time in Brazil (certainly there must have been some influence from such painters whether in Brazil or Europe) to have inspired Esteves. Indeed, one can detect similarities between some of the colours and design effects, clothes and hairdressing worn by Esteves’ Egyptian shepherd in the portrait made in 1887, and the seated men on the right in Alma-Tadema’s oil painting of ‘Egyptian Chess Players’ dating to 1865 (and see Coli 2001: 397).

Public and private buildings in most major cities in Brazil show some Egyptianizing motifs in their architecture and decoration. For example, in Porto Alegre, in Rio Grande do Sul, at the Public Library, there is a fine example of the use of Egyptianizing elements for decorative purposes: the ‘Egyptian Room’ (Figure 13.5 col. pl.). The building was started in 1911 by Alessio Herbst, a German architect, and was opened to the public in 1914 (Bakos 2001). The building still reflects some signs of the strong influence of positivism in Rio Grande do Sul at that time, as its façade is decorated with images of Augusto Comte’s calendar. The rising bourgeoisie in Rio Grande do Sul embraced positivism and Comte’s philosophical system and religion provided the underpinning to support an elaborate structure for social planning (Nachman 1977: 7).

Due to its cultural importance the building needed to be expanded, and its Director wished to redecorate the interior. The result was a series of thematic rooms decorated by a local artist, Fernando Schlatter, with the assistance of one of the most gifted local painters found in the artistic community, mostly immigrants. The redecoration began in 1919 and was completed three years later. The themes which Schlatter used to decorate all the rooms were copied from a German book by Dölenesch (1889), which was adapted in a much simplified form for the Public Library in Porto Alegre. The decoration as a whole was mainly in Roman or Greek style, based on classical inspiration. However, some walls and ceilings show details based on Egyptian themes, such as animals from the Nile Valley, serpents, figures, and winged disks (Bakos 1986: 95). The atmosphere created in the Egyptian Room is probably the only example of this kind in a public building in Brazil. The motifs for the painting of the ceiling and a series of wall panels reveal an emotive imagination, “fused with an exceptional command of dramatic effect, on occasion pushed to delirium” (Humbert et al. 1994: 69). In the Grand Salon of the Public Library, flanking the Egyptian Room, stands a statue of a bearded Nemes-wearing sphinx (Figure 13.6). The sphinx is widely known, and occupies a special position in the history of the survival of ancient Egyptian imagery: it is the element that has been used almost uninteruptedly in the western world. It evokes a dual symbolism in the western mind, being both enigmatic and cruel. In this case, wearing the royal Nemes, the Egyptian sphinx is a manifestation of the pharaoh (Humbert et al. 1994, 86, 136).

Another fine example of Egyptianizing motifs in architecture is an elegant, standing, four-storey building, in downtown Rio de Janeiro. It is located in the heart of
the old city, at the corner of two of the best known streets, the 'Ouvidor' and the 'Rio Branco Avenue'. Its exact construction date is not known, but it was already built by 1930. With the exception of the ground floor, all the others have balconies. On the fourth floor, these are made of cement, with columns of two sizes, while on the other two they are of iron, decorated with figures of winged scarabs. Inserted into the balconies on the second floor are two exquisite iron statues of winged human figures, similar to caryatids. A man and a woman hold a large cup-shaped bowl covered by a smaller dome-shaped lid above their heads. Both wear elegant Egyptian Nemes, pectorals, and loincloths, and stand in the place of honour on the balcony, easily seen by all passers-by (Figure 13.7). The walls are painted in light pink, with ivory stucco friezes on the third floor; and green garlands composed of spirals and small lotus flowers on the second.

Humbert et al. (1994: 21) state that in all western countries, without exception, people have tried to adapt Egyptian art and make it their own. Brazil also follows the role. Obelisks and pyramids are the most popular forms of Egyptianizing motifs adopted in this country. Other Egyptian symbols can be observed in art, construction and decoration. Through the 19th century, the use of Egyptianizing motifs grew more popular in architecture and in the arts. They can be found in isolation or associated with other styles of decoration.

Freemasons and Restructures also incorporated Egyptianizing motifs within the architecture of some of their lodges and temples (Figures 13.8, 13.9, col. pls.; Humbert et al. 1994: 451). Equally remarkable is the presence of Egyptian styles on some burial and family memorials in several cemeteries in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul, where monuments in the forms of sphinxes, pyramids and temples imitate Egyptian originals.

The increasing use of ancient Egyptian names by local construction companies is evident today. Such names are applied to both construction firms and buildings and are apparently successful in delivering a message of solidity and long-lasting quality. In Belo Horizonte city, the firm 'Pyramids Real Estate Enterprise' has named some of its buildings: 'Ramses', 'Tak', 'Rameses I', 'Apis', 'Isi', 'Amun Ra', 'Horus', 'Tuthmosis' and 'Khops'. Similar examples are found in other southern Brazilian cities, but also in the northern city of João Pessoa, where 'Pyramid Construction' call their apartment buildings '1st Pyramid', '2nd Pyramid' and so on. Brazilian companies believe in the 'positive energy' transmitted by such names.
As observed in other countries (e.g. Brier 1990: 40) the use of ancient Egyptianizing motifs always had a single purpose: to attract customers. Egyptianizing references are used to highlight the solidity, permanence and quality of products, by associating them with models that have survived throughout the centuries.

For aesthetic purposes, private houses and residential buildings today are decorated on a smaller scale with Egyptianizing attributes such as small pyramids and obelisks, for example a house in Pelotas, where a pyramid forms the roof of the main entrance hall (Figure 13:10). In the commercial sector, images of Egyptian architectural elements are often used in an imaginative manner. For example, a physical fitness academy in Natal is the ‘Pyramid Fitness Academy’, and is a building with pyramid-like roof and four concrete extensions to form the sides of the pyramid (Figure 13:11). It was built and named specifically to create a reference to the ancient Egyptian traits of strength and endurance. The masstiveness of certain Egyptian forms, like the pyramid, whose weight and solidity are universally appreciated, are perfect for calling attention to simple buildings, and they have been used exactly for this purpose.

The widespread and growing tourist industry in Brazil occasionally uses Egyptianizing symbols to call attention to its buildings. In Natal, on the seashore, the modern ‘Pyramid Hotel’ displays a white pyramid on its roof, facing a luxurious lakeshaped complex of swimming pools, surrounded by coconut trees and thatched-roof bars for refreshments. The exotism of this architecture and its evocative power (Lumbert et al. 1994: 314) are frequently used for commercial purposes.

‘Farol’s Motel’, in São Bernardo do Campo, in the state of São Paulo, has a facade with scenes showing stylized and somewhat satirical human figures of nobles and servants in leisure activities. Painted columns seem to sustain a fretwork surmounted by several stylised pyramids intermingled with vases. At the main entrance, a seated figure of a pharaoh is flanked by two vertical cartouches painted with symbols imitating hieroglyphs, and two columns of concrete supporting a marquee (Figure 13:12). Several other cartouches with fantasy hieroglyphs and human figures, and vases are located around the building. An inner court, with painted walls, shows human figures, lion goddesses, birds and feathers. The rooms are equipped with brass wall-mounted lanterns with figures of a cobra serpent holding over her head a flame-like glass lamp (Figure 13:13). Some suites are called ‘Mycerinus’, ‘Khephren’, ‘Khufu’ and ‘Thebes’.

Over the last 300 years Brazil, the largest South American country – and very distant from the land of the pharaohs – has been influenced by the worldwide and age-old fascination with Ancient Egypt. Evidence of Egyptianizing motifs can be seen throughout the country, mostly in architecture and art. From the 18th century obelisk-like fountains and commemorative monuments to today’s modern hotels and buildings, such Egyptianizing motifs have been used in different ways, but their links have always been to the stability, solidity, royalty and mystery of that ancient civilization.
Notes

1 Caruca is a term used to refer to people or things living in or coming from Rio de Janeiro. It derives from the word karuali, from the Tupi language, and its original meaning was “white people’s horse.”

2 Sítio Batata is a very wary and suspicious local bird. It stays hidden in the vegetation of marshes and swamps during daylight, and comes out from its hiding place at sunset to eat insects, crustaceans and small fish.

3 This obelisk is particularly famous because in 1990, at the end of a revolution, a group of businessmen fronted the winning side and declaring from the South, more specifically from Rio Grande do Sul, help their forces to the obelisk, a landmark of Rio de Janeiro, to symbolize their victory over the government and the end of the civil war.

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Figure 13.3 Watercolour by Miguel Dutra (1847) of "Pyramids and Fountain of the Piques" (Museu Pousoa, São Paulo).

Figure 13.4 Egyptian Room, Fernando Schettino, ca. 1922 (Public Library, Porto Alegre).

Figure 13.8 Front door of the main entrance to the Sanatorio Temple, Vilaena, showing the cartouche of Tuthmose III (D. Fernando C. Reveda).
Figure 13.9  One side of the Sphinx Alley of the Rosicrucian Temple, São Paulo (© Jean-Marcel Humbert).

Figure 10.1  A model showing the Bibliotheca Alexandrina's "cosmopolitan" design (Mecas).