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7 € • February 2020

The MAIN STYLE MANUAL



Nini Andrade Silva



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Designer

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Nini Andrade Silva is a Portuguese designer, ranked among the most prestigious international designers.

Born in Funchal, Nini graduated in Design at the Institute of Visual Arts, Design and Marketing (IADE) in Lisbon, having pursued her academic and professional career abroad, studying and working in New York, London, Paris, South Africa and Denmark. Featuring an impressive portfolio, with work all over the world, Nini's projects are made up from the countless life stories she has to tell. Those who are close to her highlight the radiant smile and shining glow in her eyes.

How did a girl born in Funchal during the 60's, become a reference in design and architecture, with projects in the world most important cities?

None of this would have been possible without the support of my parents; 30 years ago, when I decided to study Design, an area that was basically only emerging, they gave me all their support, believing in it as much as I did.

Of course, all this was followed by very hard work - I have often said "the only survivors are those who work beyond their limits."

My life has been dedicated to design, which is what I love to do; I am very fortunate, because for each project I am able to rely on a team of wonderful professionals.



Driven by her enthusiasm, Nini resists the temptation of looking at the wheel of time, always preserving her endless sparkle

All this is a journey, and it has become my life project!

Madeira seems to have an unequivocal vocation for creating stars. Thinking of names like Cristiano Ronaldo and Nini Andrade Silva, or remarkable businessmen like Dionísio Pestana - what is so special about this island?

I usually say that being born and growing up in an island, surrounded by the ocean, makes us dreamy people, endowing us with a will to go further and overcome these limits, which are not just geographical...

I can only speak for myself, but I recognise common characteristics in all of us, such as a desire for greater knowledge and personal growth.

The island is special, an inspiring and pure place, of which we are all very proud!

To achieve this recognition it was certainly necessary to leave Madeira. However, on the other hand, and at a certain point, how important was it to return?

It was obviously necessary to work a lot abroad, export services and develop international projects, but I never had to leave Madeira to make myself great... - it is something that either you are or not, that is born with you and in which you have to believe.

Most of the international projects in my Studio are created and developed in Madeira, where I have the largest professional team.

I agree that it is necessary to leave, explore the world, get acquainted with other cultures, and all the rest being done elsewhere.

But it is as important to leave as it is to come back, to find my inner serenity, my stability - and create.

Madeira is my safe harbour, where I must always return to restore my strength.

After so much success and many travelled life paths, what real richness have you added?

All stories have a beginning, middle and end...



and these are the stories - made of endless trips, people, spaces, episodes and dream pieces - that nurture the great project that is my Studio.

I always add all this up, and - quoting Fernando Pessoa - I believe that we are, and that we "keep" what we give. We also have to know how to receive and how to be happy, both in our work and outside life.

To be happy and to have joy is a way of being more drawn to the act of creating.

What was the most important work you have done so far?

All the work we have done is great! It is great because it was created with a lot of dedication and professionalism. We put the very best of us in each project, therefore I truly like all the work we have been fortunate to carry out. From Portugal to Asia, I believe all projects are superb, not necessarily in dimension, but in their essence.

However, in a relation between dimension and grandeur, the Madeira Savoy Palace, with 252 rooms and 226 apartments, is undoubtedly the biggest hotel I have ever made. It is a fascinating project, due to the challenge of the creative process, and to the execution of the work itself. The Savoy Palace is an ode to Madeira and its beauty. It is a very special process, a passionate journey through our existing natural and intangible heritage. This project pays tribute to Madeira's ancient art and culture - namely to the surrounding nature, the beauty of the landscape with the old levadas and tunnels, the excellence and mastery of Madeira's embroidery art and wicker craftsmanship, and the refined tradition of the unique Madeira wine.

And which is the most rewarding project?

Honestly, I am unable to make that distinction! We have worked in Qatar, Dubai, Colombia,

Brazil, Japan... - all different people, different cultures, perceptions and tastes. To all of them we must be able to deliver the best of us.

All the projects are always very rewarding, and I have many stories that I could tell about each of them.

In Colombia we made nine hotels... all incredible projects! The first was the B.O.G., which won many awards (such as the Best Interior Design of Hotels in the Americas by the International Property Awards). We started this project in the same year that we won the Fontana Park Hotel award for the Best Hotel Interior Design in Europe.

Our name was the first to appear in all internet searches, and we were contacted from Colombia, inviting us to make a hotel. I replied that

if they wanted to meet me, they would have to come here. Barely a week later they were already knocking on our door! They came to Portugal, took me to Colombia and I fell in love with the country. It is a huge debt of gratitude that I have with Colombia.

Have hotels become a speciality of Nini Andrade Silva? How many do you have in hand at the moment?

Hotel projects are indeed a very important core area of my Studio; at the moment we have almost twenty ongoing projects.

Nonetheless, as from the start, we still operate in the private residential area; however, we don't disclose these projects or publish them in the media, since we are subject to very strict confidentiality rules. Our clients' houses reveal

Her passion for painting stands out among her versatility, and her work is present in important collections and museums worldwide, namely in Ireland and New York

much about their lives, therefore we never talk about these projects.

We have also done beautiful offices, restaurants, shops – in short, a whole wide range of very different projects.

When you stay at a hotel designed by you, do you always feel at home? Or do you lose the connection with these spaces as time goes by?

In each of our projects there is the desire to create environments, create fantasy, make fantasy come true. It's not just about placing chairs, tables and sofas.

Our spaces always have some magic, some history, something lurking in the air. These are spaces of mystery and intimacy and I never lose that relationship, just like children that I always watch with great affection.

When I arrive at a hotel that I have designed, I always do a "fine-tooth comb" inspection ... [laughs]; I check the flowers, the scents, the music, the lighting... - everything as if I were in my own house, probably even more rigorous!

I am not able, and neither do I want to create any distance; this can be hard at times, but this is how I am, and how I like to commit myself to work.

Your team is almost all national. Your clients are almost all foreigners. Is this synonymous with a contemporary, capable and modern Portugal?

In fact, I have always had professionals of different nationalities on my team. In my Lisbon studio I had a Japanese architect, Nobu, for more than 10 years. The time came when he felt the need to return to his country and so it was, but he always comes to visit me and we are very good friends.

I had architects from several countries: Belgium, South Africa, India, Venezuela...



Nowadays the team is almost all national and maybe that is a right definition: synonymous with a Portugal increasingly closer to the rest of the world!

Nini is also a painter - some of your paintings are inspired by the famous Madeira pebbles. Is painting a need or a pleasure?

Both! A huge need that results in an incredible pleasure.

It means giving body and soul to my inner self. It is fascinating to arrive at a pebble beach. And I cannot say what fascinates me most about those stones... I just know that I keep them inside me and that afterwards I feel an enormous need to materialise them again, in my paintings.

It is not just what you see, but what you feel... and I want each painting to be special, different... to have a soul, the spirit of the place, to have light, and something from my homeland....

Still on the subject of the pebbles, you founded an association called The Pebble Girl. Who do you support through this association?

First it is important to explain the origin of the designation "Garotos do Calhau" ("The Pebble Kids").

In the past, this was the name given to the children who used to drift along the pebble beaches, and swam towards the anchored cruise ships, diving to pick up the coins tourists threw in the sea.

They were real acrobats, swimming between the "bomboteiro" boats (the small boats that approached the ships selling typical Madeira products). These kids, who are part of the history of Madeira fascinated me, and when I was also a young girl aged seven or eight, what I most wanted was to walk with them along the streets! My mother wouldn't allow me because I had to study...

Nini recently inaugurated in Madeira the Design Centre Nini Andrade Silva, featuring her career projects and deeply inspired by the culture, history and roots of her homeland



Later, and because I never forgot these children, I always had a will to help. I started to paint large canvases with pebbles and created a furniture collection also inspired by pebbles.

I always wanted to create an association, but since I have such time limitations, and my intention is to help, I ended up donating the name "Garota do Calhau" to the Funchal Community Development Association, now called "Associação Garota do Calhau". This association responds to many situations of social needs and vulnerability, supporting elderly people and children in the several day centres it has throughout the island. I contribute with proceeds from exhibitions, conferences and other initiatives that revert to the association.

Finally, the Nini Andrade Silva Design Centre, located in one of the most spectacular

places in Funchal, has as its main objective to make your work known?

Yes, but the Design Centre Nini Andrade Silva Design Centre is more than that!

In fact, it is a place where it is possible to get better acquainted with my work, in terms of painting, equipment design and interior architecture.

But it is also a meeting and sharing place, with unique and special services, such as an exhibition area, shop, a cafeteria and a restaurant.

At my Design Centre I also pay tribute to the pebble boys through an important photograph exhibition belonging to the Vicentes Museum, dedicated to the history of these boys and the tradition of "Mergulhança" ("Diving").

In my opinion, this is almost a mandatory visit for people who come to Madeira.