



Designs by Carlos Motta.  
Photography by Romulo Fialdini.

# RAW AESTHETIC

**BRAZILIAN DESIGNERS ARE GAINING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR USING INNOVATIVE RECYCLING METHODS IN THEIR WORK, GIVING NEW LIFE TO WHAT IS USUALLY CONSIDERED GARBAGE. BY CLAUDIA JARJOURA**

Many materials going to waste still have great value. However, a new guard of respected Brazilian designers are engaged in the satisfying work of transforming discarded materials into anything from furniture to art projects, large and small.

Studio Campana and Carlos Motta Atelier are two Brazilian design practices renowned for working with recycled, reclaimed or rediscovered materials and giving new meaning to everyday objects.

The two companies have very different design approaches and their work has different aesthetic characteristics but they share some key aspects and philosophies: they both use recycled and raw materials as a point of environmental and social responsibility and they both strive to preserve the integrity of Brazilian design, and to reflect Brazil's culture worldwide.

## STUDIO CAMPANA

The Campana brothers are two of Brazil's most famous designers. Since 1983 Fernando, who graduated in architecture, and Humberto, who studied law, have worked together in their joint studio, a converted garage in São Paulo, transforming rubbish or items of everyday use into works of high design and art. Their work can be seen in art galleries, design exhibitions and architecture all over the world, including MOMA in New York.

The studio is located in the neighbourhood of Santa Cecilia, in São Paulo. It is an inventive and stimulating region where the knowledge and traditions of various cultures, such as Korean immigrants, members of the Jewish colony and migrants from the north part of Brazil, cross over. The address is a summary of the Brazilian cultural miscegenation and provides the Campana brothers

with the community from which they have developed many artistic partnerships, as well as the rich cultural and creative environment that nourishes their designs.

Through the metal door of a converted old garage is the brother's laboratory of experimentation and transformation. In two pavilions divided by a patio, 12 people work – architects, seamstresses and a craftsman – most of whom have been in the Campana family business for almost 15 years. Among samples of leather, crystals and metal wires this team materialises the ideas of Fernando and Humberto that either international companies such as Edra, Alessi and Artecnic will later produce, or Studio Campana will produce under its own limited edition label.

Studio Campana initially became famous for its furniture and intriguing objects. Today, the scale and scope of the works have expanded into many different areas of design with many different audiences and markets.

## How significant is sustainability to Studio Campana?

Initially, Fernando and Humberto chose to work with cheap materials as these were all they could afford. Today it is by choice, conscience and a concern for the environment that they still work with discarded and domestic materials, considering their work as a 'product of scarcity'.

## What is the Campana brothers' creative process?

The brothers describe their creative process as "completely chaotic" with the only consistent aspect being the task of keeping in tune with the times so that they always present the world with something unique.

Their endeavours to humanise design and rescue traditional crafts and skills have an important influence in the production chain. Particularly, in seeking to create a dialogue between emotion and functionality they endeavour to incorporate the arts and crafts techniques and styles into mass production.

In terms of creation they see little distinction between the designer and artist, seeing both as investigators and witnesses of their time.

## How important are the materials in the work of the Campana brothers?

The materials themselves are the elements that determine the projects and concepts. Fernando and Humberto are constantly searching for artistic ways to redeem the nobility of what they find and they explain that the material itself will ask for what it wants to be such as a chair or a lamp. For the two designers, material, form and function articulate together.



*“Since the beginning of my career I had a clear concept: I wanted to design and produce works that are both environmentally and socially responsible”*

Carlos Motta

### How do the Campana brothers position themselves in relation to their Brazilian roots?

Critical to the brothers’ design philosophy is expression of the Brazilian identity. Many of their projects are beautiful and unusual reinterpretations of things that they witnessed in the Brazilian communities. Their work is human, compassionate, humorous and quirky and creates bridges between the rustic arts and crafts universe in which they live and the contemporary and industrial world.

### CARLOS MOTTA ATELIER

Architect, designer and joiner, Carlos Motta has been an advocate for recycling and sustainability in furniture production and architecture since the 1970s. For more than three decades, and with two books published, his name is established in industrial design and architecture, synonymous for working with sustainable timber and for environmental and social responsibility. Motta has also become a reference point for working with, and championing, Brazilian craftsmanship and design identity.

Passionate about surfing, fishing and woodwork, Motta began his work in 1975. While studying architecture, he spent much time collecting drift wood along the beaches of Litoral Paulista, which he then took to a small carpentry shop in São Paulo’s Vila Madalena area. There, he produced his first chairs and armchairs – the prototypes of his distinctive, heavily framed timber furniture. The following year, having graduated, he moved to California to study joinery and construction techniques. In 1978, Motta returned to São Paulo and opened his atelier in Vila Madalena. While he still uses driftwood, he also works with reclaimed timber from demolition sites and also with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood.

With total respect for nature, his philosophy is to design and create furniture, objects, and architecture, causing the least possible environmental impact.

Speaking from his Atelier in São Paulo, Motta tells us more about his work.

“Since the beginning of my career I had a clear concept: I wanted to design and produce works that are both environmentally and socially responsible.

“We achieve environmentally responsible design by using raw materials, certified wood or reclaimed timber in a very sustainable process. We eliminate, as much as we can, the use of chemical veneers or other substances and glue.

“We achieve social responsibility by the way our Atelier operates; the Atelier is a place of learning where experiences and knowledge are always being exchanged. In addition, everyone who participates in the production chain shares the profits. This concept has been in place for 36 years and it still works really well.”

Motta centralises all his activities at his busy Atelier, including:

- Design and production of sophisticated furniture – mainly chairs.
- Design and production of one-off pieces of furniture, plus objects for national and international exhibitions (in Paris, Amsterdam, London, New York, etc.) or for furniture collectors.
- Design and prototype furniture produced in his industrial studio outside São Paulo. These are mainly outdoor furniture pieces made out of demolition timber.
- Design and prototype furniture that is then built by other companies, mainly in the South of Brazil, that share the same sustainable principles.
- Architecture and construction of residential, commercial or public projects.

In addition to his production in Brazil, Motta also produces his furniture in California to supply the local market.

His Atelier now has representatives in major Brazilian cities and in foreign markets including New York and Los Angeles. It distributes their furniture in various countries around the world, including France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Mexico, Uruguay, among others. **z**

By Claudia Jarjoura, in collaboration with Barbara Landsberg.



Image: Studio Campana 2003 *Sushi IV* from Luis Calazans.  
Collaboration: Mayara Proença