

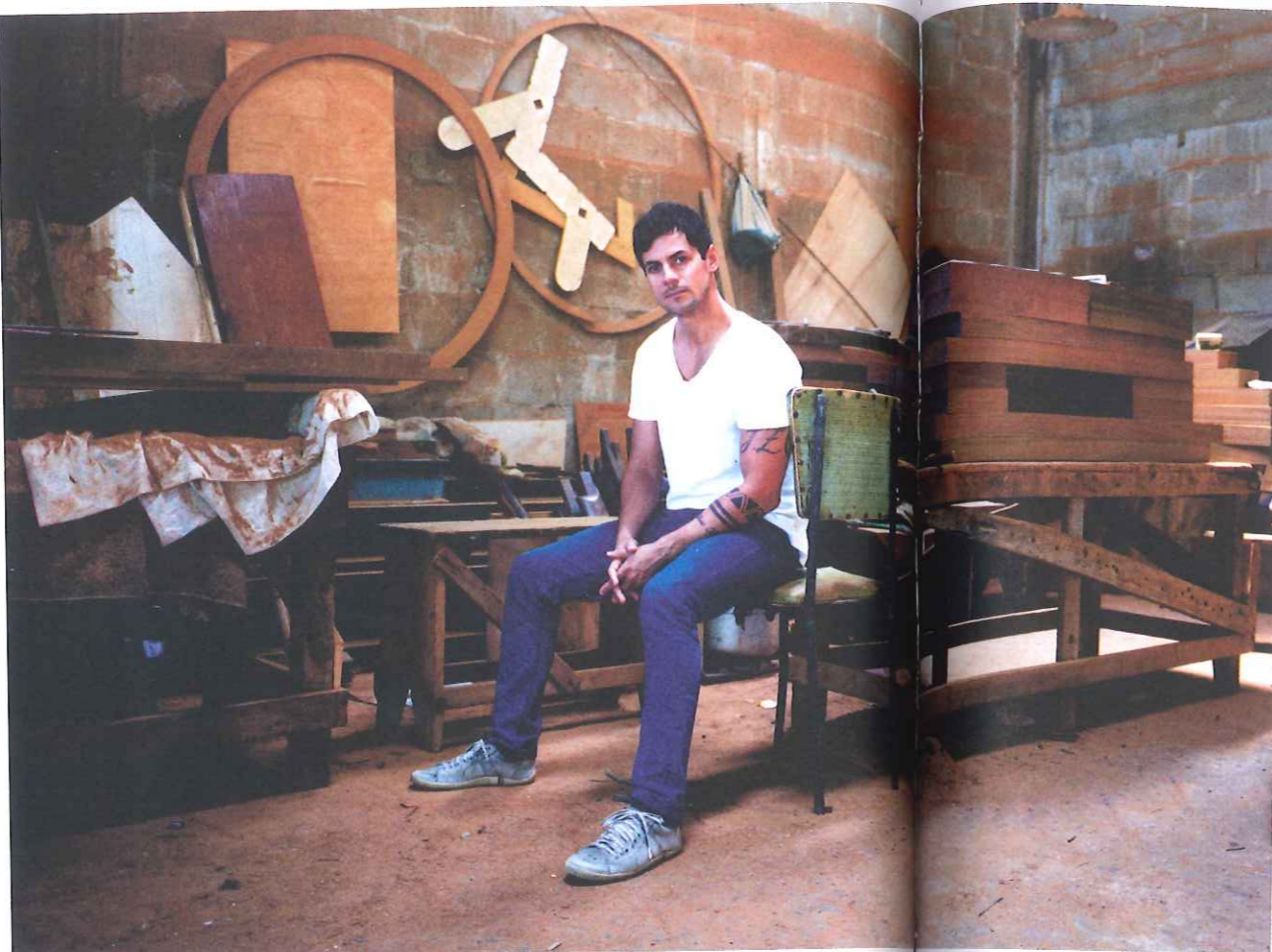
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Zanini de Zanine
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

As the son of Baiano José Zanine Caldas (1918–2001), one of Brazil’s most legendary architects and furniture designers, Zanini de Zanine had the best schooling that an apprentice can have: daily contact with a modern-day master.

Zanine was six when his parents separated. At the time, his mother suggested the boy move in with his father, who was then 66. “She knew he wouldn’t have long left and, smartly, wanted me to take advantage of this time with him,” he says. Zanine used to spend whole afternoons in his dad’s workshop, observing the patriarch execute his furniture commissions. The young lad would use the wood stumps that his father discarded as toys and would accompany him at social events and work meetings outside studio hours, as well as on foreign expeditions. Zanine would come across the great and the good of Brazilian culture and design, who were all hugely influential on his training. His father’s circle included the architect Lúcio Costa, responsible for the construction of Brasília alongside Oscar Niemeyer; “The Girl from Ipanema” composer and musician, Tom Jobim; and the furniture designer Sergio Rodrigues.

“I had the best teachers in the world, without having to leave home,” says Zanine, who studied industrial design at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro. “When I was a teenager I thought about doing international relations because I was dazzled by our trips, but soon I realised that design was already so present in my life that the decision to study the subject was a natural step.”

Zanine was in college when his father died, aged 83, in 2001. From that moment, Sergio Rodrigues became a



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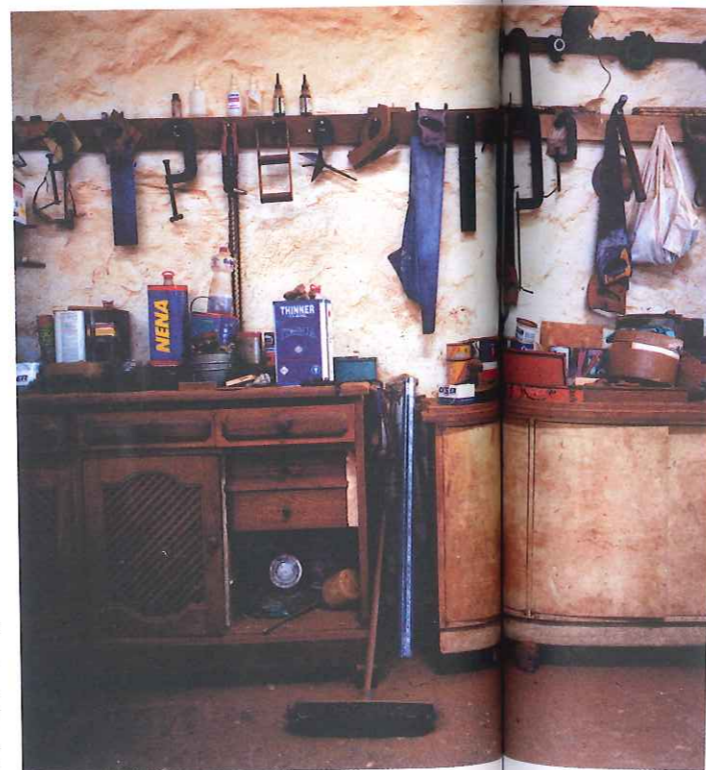
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very strong reference to him; Zanine spent a year as an intern in Rodrigues’ workshop. Today, aged 35, Zanine pays equal respect to his two masters. “It was Sergio who helped me take the decision to chart an independent path in my career,” he says.

Zanine has become one of the most exciting names in a new wave of Brazilian design talent. He has developed pieces in partnership with companies including Cappellini and Slamp and will launch a customised counter sink for the Swiss



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- 01 Zanini de Zanine in his workshop in Rio
- 02 Zanine’s workshop
- 03 A furniture maker in the workshop
- 04 Woodsmiths get to work on building furniture
- 05 Table FF ready for show
- 06 Inflated Wood chair for Cappellini
- 07 Detail of scrap wood at his workshop
- 08 Old joinery equipment, some of them heirlooms

bathroom manufacturer company Laufen next year. In autumn 2013 the New York gallery Espasso hosted an exhibition of works by both father and son.

Zanine recalls the creative influence of his dad and the effect it has even today on his works, most notably an affectionate relationship with wood. “I grew up full of memories, my father showing me textures, smells, colours and even the warmth of different types of wood.”

Zanine currently maintains two workshops in Rio de Janeiro. The most recent opened in 2011 in the city’s docklands area and has seven employees. There he creates products on an industrial scale made with materials besides wood. “Few people know but my dad also made products in ceramic and steel,” he says. His first atelier opened in 2003, located in the far west zone of Rio and dedicated to the production of wood pieces. It is in this studio that Zanine evokes the legacy of his masters, developing items with employees who worked with his father for decades. Somehow, the patriarch is still present there. — RM

Father and son
Zanine family CV

- 1918 José Zanine Caldas born in Belmonte, Bahia
- 1950 Caldas starts producing wooden chairs
- 1978 His son Zanini de Zanine is born
- 2001 Caldas dies aged 83
- 2002 Zanine finishes his degree in industrial design and releases his first creation, the Triangle table
- 2004 Zanine sells his first piece (an armchair) to the international market
- 2012 Zanine wins his first international awards: iF Awards, in Hannover
- 2013 New York’s Espasso showroom pays a tribute to the most celebrated creations of both father and son