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DESIGN//FORWARD: WORDS W/ STAR DESIGNER ZANINI DE ZANINE

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Zanini in his new signature Serfa armchair, a tribute to the legendary Sérgio Rodrigues

As the son of Baiano José Zanine Caldas, one of Brazil's most legendary architects and furniture designers, Zanini de Zanine had the best schooling an apprentice could ask for: daily contact with a modern-day master. While growing up, Zanini's father worked with [Oscar Niemeyer](#) and [Lúcio Costa](#), learning and observing first hand the carpentry and design styles of his father. Over the years, his furniture has gone on to be exhibited at major shows in Milan, London, Brussels and Los Angeles. The Museu Oscar Niemeyer and Mercado Moderno in [Brazil](#) have recently featured a 10-year retrospective of his work, as Zanini continues to win numerous international awards, along with being named [Designer of the Year 2015](#) by Maison & Objet Americas.



Considered the Art Basel of the design world, the original Maison & Objet was founded in Paris in 1995 to showcase trends in high-end interior design and furnishings from couches to bars, lighting fixtures, and decorative pieces. Now it's held twice a year in Paris but for its expansion into the Americas, the organizers decided on [Miami](#) as the best destination to draw from both the U.S., Canada, and Latin America. We caught up with Zanini at a private showing courtesy of [Espasso Gallery](#) at the iconic South Beach hotel The Shore Club to view never-before-seen and limited-edition pieces. The event was to commemorate Maison & Objet naming Zanini their inaugural Designer of the Year for this first U.S. satellite show.

| Interview with M&O Designer of the Year Zanini de Zanine |

Q. How does it feel to be M&O AMERICAS 2015 designer of the year? And what does that mean to you?

A. It's a good way to measure how my work is doing right now and how far I've come, being recognized internationally, that is. It's also a great way to showcase Brazilian culture throughout the world through design.

Q. This is the first time this show has been featured in the US. Have you been to the other shows? How does it compare?

A. I've been to Milan, it's hard to tell though because this is the first time it's been in the US.



Zanini's signature Vazada Chairs

Q. Design wise, what are your absolute 3 favorite cities?

A. Milan for sure, Paris of course and [Miami](#) is certainly on the rise.

Q. Who were the biggest inspirations of your career?

A. My father and [Sérgio Rodriguez](#) were my two biggest mentors. I had the best teachers in the world without having to leave home.



Zanini's Jacaranda Bench and Vazada Chairs

Q. Does being from Brazil influence your design aesthetic?

A. Definitely. Brazil provides for endless inspiration; the wildlife, flora, fauna, and geography. Brazil demonstrates nature's capacity to develop elegant and efficient structures.

Q. We noticed you mostly use wood and organic materials, at least for these particular pieces.

A. Yes, wood is extraordinary because of its color and grain which make it ideal for individual pieces. I also take inspiration from sculptures and Brazilian artists.



Q. Which artists in particular?

A. [Amílcar de Castro](#), [Sérgio de Camargo](#), and [Franz Weissmann](#).

Q. What comes first – the materials or the design idea?

A. Occasionally, a natural feature can influence a design but it depends on the piece, so both respectively.



From Left: Carlos Junqueira (Founder of Espasso), Zanini de Zanine

Q. We'll be opening Clubhouse Rio in just a few weeks—can't wait to see you there! Are you excited about the opening?

A. [Laughs] yes most definitely. I was there two weeks ago. It's definitely going to be a rich space, not just design wise but also culturally. It will be a great addition to the city.

Q. Does anything compare to it in Rio right now?

A. No, not at all. It's something completely new and exciting.

