Brazilian architect. He was an influential eclectic architect highly active in Rio de Janeiro and a professor at the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (ENBA). Soon after graduating from the ENBA, he established his firm in 1898. The son of Custódio José de Mello, a republican admiral and cabinet minister, Mello benefited from his family’s connections to garner major commissions early in his career. Thanks to the large-scale building campaigns then occurring in Rio—as the enlargement of the harbor and the opening of Avenida Central (now Avenida Rio Branco)—his office became one of the earliest large planning and construction firms in the Federal Capital.

Around 1902, Mello built several warehouses in the new port. In 1905 he had at least seven buildings under construction in the Avenida Central, such as the Navy Club, designed by São Paulo architect Tommaso Bezzi (1844–1915); the Engineering Club; the Bazin Perfumery; and a Swiss-styled commercial building. Among his first civic buildings, the Military Police Garrison (1906) was designed as an intimidating castle overlooking the working-class neighborhood of Gamboa. Other garrisons and police stations followed in 1907, 1908, 1909, and 1913, all in various medieval styles with a military character. Some still stand, such as the Marine Corps Garrison (1908) on Cobras Island.

In 1908 he was awarded the Grand Prix for his pavilion designs for Brazil’s National Exhibition, though he was not retained as director of works. In the same year, he won the competition for the National Congress, with a Greek Revival design which was to remain unbuilt through the architect’s lifetime. Thereafter, Mello displayed a consistent use of Beaux-Arts aesthetics in public commissions, such as the Jockey Club (1913) and the Derby Club (1917). Outside the capital, he had some important commissions as the Central Post Office in Belo Horizonte. In 1914 he contracted the construction of a series of civic buildings that were part of a major scheme conceived by French architect Emile Dupuy Tessain for the Republic Plaza of Niteroi. To complete the ensemble, he designed the State Legislature and the Teachers College.

His plans for private houses, numbering around fifty, comprise mansions and bungalows in the Vienna Secession, Tudor, Swiss, and several other styles. Among these still stands a picturesque cottage (1910) in the Botafogo neighborhood, and the exceptional Eduardo Otto Teiler residence (1912) in the Flamengo neighborhood. He also designed schools in Petrópolis and Nova Friburgo (upstate Rio de Janeiro). In 1912 Mello was admitted as professor of Architectural Composition in the ENBA, but resigned the position a few years later due to failing health.

His firm was also in charge of the erection of buildings designed by other Rio de Janeiro’s prominent architects, such as the Army Central Hospital (1911) by Francisco Marcelino de Souza Aguiar (1855–1935) and the São Joaquim Palace (1912) by Adolfo Morales de los Ríos. Young architects that would attain professional prominence started their career in Mello’s firm, such as Archimedes Memória (1893–1960) and Lucio Costa (1902–1998). In partnership with the Franco-Swiss architect Francisque Cuchet (b 1885), Memória carried on the office after Mello’s death, posthumously executing a number
of his designs, such as the City Council (1920) and the National Congress (now State Legislature of Rio de Janeiro, 1922-1926). Memória also took over Mello’s chair at the ENBA. In 1921, the neocolonial philanthropist and advocate José Marianno Filho created, during his tenure as director of the ENBA, the Heitor de Mello Prize in the architect’s memory.

**Bibliography**


