

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES *FOTOCUBISMO: BRAZILIAN MODERNIST PHOTOGRAPHY, 1946–1964*, HIGHLIGHTING A PREVIOUSLY UNDERSTUDIED CHAPTER OF PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY

NEW YORK, September 29, 2020 [Updated February 1, 2021] — The Museum of Modern Art announces *Fotoclubismo: Brazilian Modernist Photography, 1946–1964*, the first museum exhibition of Brazilian modernist photography outside of Brazil. On view May 8 – September 26, 2021, the exhibition will focus on the unforgettable creative achievements of São Paulo’s Foto-Cine Clube Bandeirante, a group of amateur photographers widely heralded in Brazil, but essentially unknown to European and North American audiences. *Fotoclubismo* is comprised of over 60 photographs drawn generously from MoMA’s collection; together, they bring forward the extraordinary range of achievements of this group, provide valuable insight into the way photographic aesthetics were framed in the 1950s, and afford opportunities to reflect on the significance of amateur status today. The exhibition is organized by Sarah Meister, Curator, with Dana Ostrander, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Photography.

The vast majority of Foto-Cine Clube Bandeirante members were amateurs, meaning they pursued photographic activity without any professional motive or affiliation. The club’s longtime president, Eduardo Salvatore, earned his living as a lawyer, and the list of professions on the membership cards includes businessmen, accountants, journalists, engineers, biologists, and bankers. While photography was an activity pursued outside their day jobs, FCCB members were nonetheless quite serious about their artistic ambition, as evidenced by the striking innovation of their photographs. Works such as Geraldo de Barros’s *Fotoforma, São Paulo* (1952–53), Thomaz Farkas’s *Ministry of Education and Health, Rio* (c. 1945), or Gertrudes Altschul’s *Filigree (Filigrana)* (c. 1952), for example, represent a few of their radical experimentations with process and form and underscore the discovery of imaginative compositions within everyday life. FCCB members responded to the abundant originality of contemporary Brazilian architects, and their attentiveness to the fertility of abstraction as a creative strategy emerged alongside peers in design, painting, and literature. Considering these works together provides a compelling context through which to explore the complex status of the amateur, evolving biases of taste or judgment, and local dynamics of race and gender.

Beyond creating photographs, a critical aspect of the club’s activity was their monthly *Concursos Internos* (internal contests) and *Seminarios*, in which photographs were submitted for peer review and discussed in public and private forums.

As with most amateur photo clubs around the world, the FCCB fostered a collegial environment that tolerated a wide range of artistic approaches. Yet it was also a competitive

one, where critical judgment and artistic ambition were central to the club's identity (and contributed to the enduring quality of the work). The annual salon they hosted and *Boletim*, a monthly magazine published by the FCCB, both demonstrate the breadth of activity pursued under the aegis of the club and highlighted the club's achievements to the international circuit of salons in which they participated, including Otto Steinert and his fellow "Subjective" photographers in Germany, the Groupe des XV in Paris, La Ventana in Mexico City, and the Carpeta de los Diez in Buenos Aires.

Fotoclubismo will be installed along two intertwined, complementary threads within the galleries: monographic and thematic. Of the display's three sections, each is anchored by a focused monographic presentation of an individual member: Geraldo De Barros, German Lorca, and Gertrudes Altschul. These sections begin and end with thematic groupings that suggest the breadth of the photographic community active in São Paulo at that time and offer additional context for the individual achievements. Each theme is derived from the monthly *Concursos Internos* held at the FCCB, which prompted members to respond to a certain theme, often awarding the winner with full-page reproductions and cover features. Two paintings from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros gift and a generous selection of the FCCB's monthly *Boletim*, recently acquired by the Museum Library, will expand the context for the photographs on view.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue with 140 plates from the Museum Collection and a number of important public and private collections in São Paulo, presenting Brazilian modernist photography to an international audience for the first time. The book situates these achievements within the broader contemporary art scene in Brazil as well as within a dynamic network of photographers around the world, and offering fresh insight into the status of the amateur in the postwar era.

SPONSORSHIP:

Major funding for the exhibition is provided by Monique M. Schoen Warshaw in honor of Sarah Hermanson Meister.

Generous support is provided by David Dechman and Michel Mercure and by the Consulate General of Brazil in New York.

Additional funding is provided by Rose and Alfredo Setubal.

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