

# BRAZILIAN MODERNIST PHOTOGRAPHY 1939-1964





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CONSTRUCTION, DECONSTRUCTION,  
RECONSTRUCTION

Edited by

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MAC-Museu Arte Contemporânea



Brazilian Modernist Photography 1939-1964 : construction,  
deconstruction, reconstruction..

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# CONSTRUCTION, DECONSTRUCTION, RECONSTRUCTION: BRAZILIAN MODERNIST PHOTOGRAPHY

HELOUISE COSTA AND  
MARCELLA LEGRAND MARER

Within the history of photography, the modernist experiment is seen as a global phenomenon that emerged in response to changes stemming from processes of urbanization and industrialization in Western countries throughout the twentieth century. These changes took on different guises depending on local contexts, leading to multifaceted forms of modernism. In Brazil's case, the movement lasted from the early 1940s to the mid-1960s. During this era, the realms of the photo club, photojournalism, and documentary photography—and even fashion and advertising—all saw the development of distinct ways of addressing the new rationality that was guiding the increasingly technologized world.

This book examines the Brazilian modernist photography that arose from the photo clubs, specifically the Foto Cine Clube Bandeirante (FCCB), founded in São Paulo in 1939, whose works presented a new perspective on the city, not only through conventional photography practice, but also a more experimental approach using for instance the photogram, photomontage, and the manipulation of prints and negatives. By examining over one hundred works—from museum institutions, art galleries, and private collections in Brazil and abroad—produced by thirty-three photographers from different backgrounds and walks of life, the singular field of Brazilian modernist photography is evoked. Three approaches to modernism are distinguished here: modernism under construction, under deconstruction, and under reconstruction.

Studying the experiments of the FCCB allows us to rediscover the output of a group that, over seventy years ago, kickstarted the modernization of Brazilian photography while assisting its international circulation and institutional recognition. To understand the Escola Paulista (São Paulo School), largely unknown outside Latin America, is to broaden the references within modern photography history. This volume emphasizes the importance of upholding this legacy, while looking critically at a certain image constructed around modern Brazil and identifying the contradictions of its societal vision.

## SÃO PAULO AND ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO A SUBJECT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The post-WWII economic boom in Brazil fueled a period of considerable development. As most European countries emerged impoverished from the conflict, Brazil was experiencing a period of prosperity and optimism after almost a decade of living under the Estado Novo dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> The process of industrialization grew more intense with the expansion of the domestic market, the establishment of state-owned industries, and the influx of US investments in return for Brazil's supply of rubber during the war and its consent to the installation of US military bases in the northeast of the country.<sup>2</sup> Urban growth, literacy,



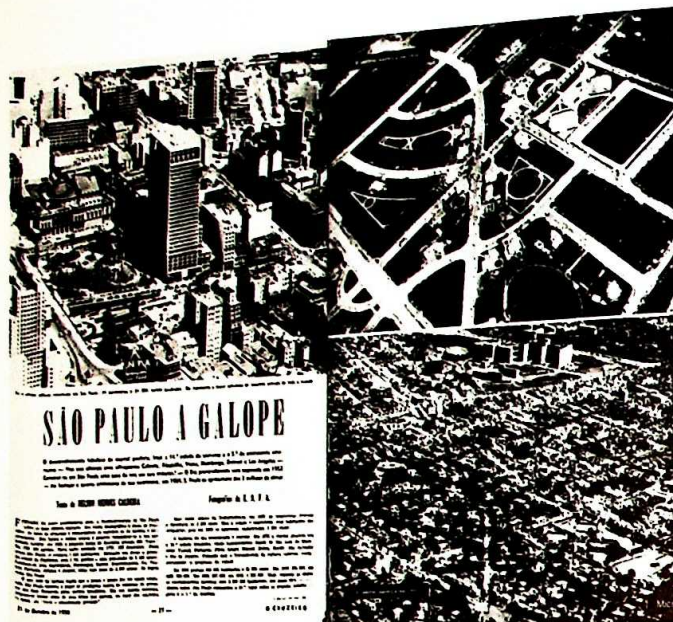


FIG. 1  
"São Paulo a galope,"  
*O Cruzeiro*, October 21,  
1950. Report on the  
exceptional development  
of São Paulo as it  
approaches its Fourth  
Centenary.

and per capita income rose to unprecedented rates, particularly in the Southeast region. This period also saw the emergence and worldwide recognition of currents and creations celebrating the unique qualities of Brazilian culture, such as Cinema Novo, Bossa Nova, modern architecture, and concrete and neo-concrete art.<sup>3</sup>

It was against this socioeconomic backdrop that the nation's primary industrial, economic, and demographic center, São Paulo, celebrated its Fourth Centenary in 1954. The state of São Paulo amassed its wealth between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through an agrarian economy rooted in coffee-growing, which had then suffered a crisis due to the Wall Street crash of 1929. Deprived of its former economic power but maintaining considerable social prestige, the local oligarchy began to join forces with the emerging business and industry sector. This new alliance of forces helped drive the city's development.<sup>4</sup>

São Paulo's Fourth Centenary spurred government powers and civil society alike into a synergistic celebration of progress and modernization (FIG. 1). In the early 1920s, the city had over 570,000 inhabitants, rising to 1,340,000 in the early 1940s, and 2,800,000 in 1954.<sup>5</sup> This exponential growth led to a more diverse population, characterized by deep inequality in terms of

access to employment, goods, and services.<sup>6</sup> From the early 1910s onward, the Southeast had taken in huge numbers of migrants from the nation's other regions, as well as immigrants and refugees hailing primarily from Europe. The phenomenon of domestic migration resulted from the significant gap in government investment between the state of São Paulo and the rest of the country, which effectively restricted the means of survival of large swaths of the Brazilian population. The influx of European immigrants, meanwhile, owed to the spread of totalitarian regimes and conflicts across Europe.

These profound changes have sparked a renewal in the construction aimed at embodying the identity and unity of São Paulo's citizens. The government's propaganda promoted its capital as "the fastest-growing city in the world" and appropriated the figure of the *bandeirante* to describe its inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> This term refers to the men who led colonial expeditions from São Paulo into the nation's Northern and Midwestern regions to scour the territory for metals and gemstones, devastating the lands and livelihoods of Indigenous populations, with disastrous consequences for these peoples. Cherished by the local elite, the notion of courage and pioneering spirit associated with the *bandeirante* was reclaimed

to revitalize the image of state of São Paulo residents—who were faced with the new challenges of modernization—while conveniently overlooking the fact that this colonial enterprise had cost several thousand lives.

Indeed, in the 1940s and 1950s, the city of São Paulo underwent a process of intense modernization and internationalization buoyed by private initiatives, which instrumentalized art and culture as a means of political, commercial, and economic gain.<sup>8</sup> Entrepreneurs and industrialists invested in the creation of major cultural facilities and events, such as the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP, 1947), the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP, 1948), the Companhia Cinematográfica Vera Cruz (1949), and the Bienal de São Paulo (1951).<sup>9</sup> The aim was to promote Brazil's potential for joining the ranks of the so-called "developed" nations and its ability to participate in global capitalism as a way to attract foreign investment and conquer new markets.

Downtown São Paulo became the ideal setting for a cosmopolitan metropolis, breeding a network of highly popular bookshops and movie theaters in addition to the Teatro Municipal, museums, and the Biblioteca Municipal. It also became the site of the Galeria Prestes Maia—a municipally managed space hosting major national and international exhibitions—and the Galeria Domus, one of the first in the country to sell works of modern art. Luxury stores, cafés, *confeitarias*, and restaurants also sprang up during this time, turning the city center into a hub of leisure and socializing for the local economic and intellectual elite.<sup>10</sup> Many artists, architects, designers, advertisers, and other liberal professionals moved to the central districts to live or to install their studios or offices. The city center attracted both amateur and professional photographers; São Bento Street, in particular, became known for its stores selling photography and film equipment. Studios and labs for developing film also began emerging in the neighborhood. It was within this economic and cultural context that the Escola Paulista was born.<sup>11</sup>

## THE FOTO CINE CLUBE BANDEIRANTE

Photo clubs began appearing in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. They brought together amateur photographers who wanted photography to be acknowledged as a legitimate means of artistic expression, since the art world still did not consider it as such. Faced with this resistance, photo clubs operated on a parallel system, setting their own rules and embracing, at first, a predominantly pictorialist aesthetic. Europe's most renowned photo clubs at the time included the Wiener Camera-Klub (1891) in Wien; the Linked Ring brotherhood (1892) in London; and the Photo-club de Paris (1894).

The first photo clubs in Brazil were the Sociedade de Amadores de Fotografia (1893) and the Photo Club Brasileiro (1896), both located in Rio de Janeiro, and the Photo Club Cearense (1899), in Fortaleza.<sup>12</sup> Brazil's economic growth from the 1940s onward contributed to the rise of photo clubs with the creation of others, which followed a more organized, sounder development structure. This phenomenon supported a vast network of international exchange encompassing both large urban centers and smaller inland municipalities. The Foto Clube Bandeirante arose from this dynamic in April 1939 through the initiative of a group of thirty-two amateur pictorialists, who held meetings in a photography equipment store in São Paulo. Its first headquarters were located in Edifício Martinelli, São Bento Street. In 1945, this private, civilian, non-profit, artistic-cultural society was dubbed the Foto Cine Clube Bandeirante.<sup>13</sup>

The choice to use the term *bandeirante* was deliberate, as the members of this new entity (namely, white, male figures of the São Paulo economic elite) expected to break new ground in artistic photography (FIG. 4). Entrepreneurs, industrialists, storekeepers, and learned professionals (primarily lawyers, doctors, and engineers) practiced photography as a hobby.<sup>14</sup> Their professional status enabled them to purchase imported equipment, pay their monthly membership fee, and spend their free time taking part in the activities on offer. The members' profiles were extremely homeogenous. It was a mark of





FIG. 2  
FCCB members  
on a club outing.

FIG. 3  
*Boletim Foto-Cine*,  
no. 45, January 1950.

FIG. 4  
Reference to the  
*bandeirante* on the cover  
of the catalog for the  
VI Salão Internacional  
de Arte Fotográfica, 1947.



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distinction for this social class to be able to join a photo club, as access to leisure artistic activity was limited only to the privileged, initiated few.

Structured in a similar way to a large, international photo club, the FCCB appointed a president, vice-president, and secretary, and was organized into several sections according to various fields of activity: photography, cinematography, competitions, exchanges, lab, and a Women's Section.<sup>15</sup> The club organized seminars, in-house competitions, exhibitions, and national and international salons in addition to publishing magazines and cultivating frequent exchanges with other clubs. It also arranged for its members to make trips to other cities, sometimes along with their families, where they would practice group photography, thereby creating spaces of sharing and learning between beginners and more seasoned photographers [FIG. 2].

Photo clubs operated in line with a strict hierarchy. In this respect, FCCB members were divided according to skill level as novice, junior, or senior photographers. They were able to change their rank by putting themselves forward for in-house competitions, or by entering or winning awards at national and international salons. This male-oriented, competitive fraternity left little room for women who wished to practice photography.<sup>16</sup>

Along with a specialist library, studio, lab, and spaces for exhibitions and socializing, the FCCB provided its members with practical training, which was a crucial asset due to the absence of photography schools in the country. In 1942, the club also created the Salão Paulista de Arte Fotográfica, which from the fifth edition became an international event.<sup>17</sup> Through its members' networks of influence, the salon was able to take



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place at the Galeria Prestes Maia, courtesy of the municipality of São Paulo, which also financed the production of its catalog. The salon attracted large numbers of visitors and went on to become a major event in promoting the circulation of photography from national and international photo clubs within the country. Not only did it increase the visibility of such production among a mainstream audience, it also sparked debate on the artistic nature of photography through the articles that it inspired in the most-read newspapers and magazines of the Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo area.

The FCCB also handled publication of the catalog for the Salão Internacional de Arte Fotográfica de São Paulo [FIG. 12], as well as its information bulletin, which was founded in May 1946, which quickly became a specialized magazine, the *Boletim Foto-Cine* (BFC) [FIG. 3].<sup>18</sup> This bulletin reported on activity at the club itself and at other photo clubs in Brazil or farther afield; announced openings for competitions and salons; and fostered the reproduction and circulation of photographs. To help enrich photographers' knowledge, the BFC also published technical and theoretical texts penned either by club members or by foreign authors who were themselves part of the photo club network. These texts formed an ad hoc corpus of literature and an aid to image production that espoused the principles of artistic photography.

During its first decade, the FCCB implemented an array of initiatives regarding its internal structure and consolidation. Eduardo Salvatore, a lawyer who was elected as club president in 1943, had a notable part to play in rallying members around shared goals.<sup>19</sup> In 1949, the club acquired its own headquarters, purchased exclusively through its members' finances. In November of 1950, the state of São Paulo's Chamber of Deputies recognized it as a "public use organization" and, that same year, the club became a member of the newly created Fédération Internationale de l'Art Photographique (FIAP). These developments turned the FCCB into the country's most influential artistic organization, as it expertly helped circulate its members' output while setting up exchanges with many other organizations at home and abroad.

## MODERNIST PRODUCTION AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE ESCOLA PAULISTA

In the early years, works by FCCB members were aligned with principles of the pictorialist aesthetic, favoring pastoral and urban themes imbued with an aura of nostalgia.<sup>20</sup> This began to change in the mid-1940s, when several of the club's younger photographers turned away from idealized subjects to offer a fresh perspective through the urban transformations underway at the time. Thomaz Farkas, German Lorca, and Geraldo de Barros pioneered new approaches by using unorthodox framing, focusing on the everyday, and shifting toward abstract art through experimentation with the medium. "We could feel from the younger members, that year, that by sometimes bringing a new perspective to older themes, they could make them more objective and thereby instill them with more lived experience," Jacob Polacow wrote in the BFC. "They managed to detach themselves from the old, bucolic genres, often delving into the asphalt to extract images that palpitated with a sense of the now."<sup>21</sup>

While the new generation was conducting these experiments, José Yalenti—one of the club's founding members and a former devotee of

4.



pictorialism—reworked his own style by making use of backlighting and playing with the geometry of architectural features. The pioneering approach of these photographers constituted a turning point for the FCCB. From 1950 onward, many among them tapped into the artistic nature of photography by testing out contrasting effects between foreground and background or figuration and abstraction, engaging with geometric compositions, and building minimalist scenes. This is what birthed the Escola Paulista, which was what the era's critics named the FCCB's modernist photography current, so as to distinguish it from the prevailing conventional aesthetic. Salvatore described this as a clash: "We are witnessing a clash between two approaches: the old style of pictorialist photography, referring to that which imitates academic painting in inert, lifeless photographs tinged with passiveness and contemplation, reducing it to an interim zone between drawing, painting, and engraving; and the new, more photographic, more dynamic form that contains more life and humanity, proposing daring angles and interplays of light, and utilizing all the inherent, singular characteristics of the medium."<sup>22</sup> Although pictorialism did endure at the FCCB, it was no longer the dominant current. While many members were proponents of modernism, the majority fluctuated between the two approaches.<sup>23</sup> This book presents a selection of thirty-two figures from the Escola Paulista, as well as photographer Alice Brill, who joined the FCCB for a brief period but was not an active member.<sup>24</sup>


## MODERNISM UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The increasingly modernized city became a major subject in the works of the Escola Paulista, which embraced low-angle, overhead, or even oblique shots. FCCB members photographed automobiles, bridges, tunnels, steps, poles, walls, electrical connections, railway stations, skyscrapers, and other urban features, transforming them into rigorously composed images that occasionally featured human figures. In other images, seemingly insignificant details were rehashed into abstract-esque compositions.

Photographers differed in style, but all those included in this section displayed an interest in construction as a subject matter. The verb "to construct" is synonymous with building or developing a structure. It is unsurprising, therefore, that photography and architecture should become the core of the modernism movement in 1940s and 1950s Brazil. What underpinned the design of novel architectural forms and the invention of a new photographic vernacular was the ideal of constructing a modern nation, as evidenced in Lorca's photograph *Oca* [SEE PAGE 41].<sup>25</sup> Taken days before the official opening of Ibirapuera Park, it depicts one of the most daring constructions in this architectural complex that Oscar Niemeyer hoped to turn into the main showpiece of modernity for the State of São Paulo. The edifice stands on beaten earth and seems to capture, all at once, a remote past, a present under construction, and a future filled with possibilities. It embodies a shared fate—a destination toward which different generations are all headed. This image's strength lies not in its ability to capture reality, but rather to create an allegory capable of symbolizing a collective sentiment regarding a nation's future, which it achieves through carefully composed photography.<sup>26</sup>

The Escola Paulista sought to modernize people's perception of the city by conveying the new sensory experiences that arose from the speed, simultaneity, fragmentation, and shifts of scale that characterized the future metropolis. Such was the photographic approach favored by Marcel Giró, as seen in his 1953 work *Autorretrato com sombras* [SEE PAGE 93]. The image depicts his own silhouette cast alongside the shadow of a stilted building, creating a strong sense of spatial ambiguity that arrests the viewer in a disorienting interplay of foreground and background. His goal here was not to capture a scene, but to tease out new perceptions both toward the urban space and the role now played by the modern subject.

FIG. 5  
Alice Brill's registration  
form for the FCCB,  
1949.



# FOTO-CINE CLUBE BANDEIRANTE

## FICHA DE SÓCIO

NOME: BRILL - Dr. Alice INSCRIÇÃO N.º 602

Admitido em: 16 / fevereiro / 19 49 Categoria: CONTRIBUINTE

Residência: São Paulo n.º 180(-ap)55 Fone: \_\_\_\_\_

Trabalha á \_\_\_\_\_ n.º \_\_\_\_\_ Fone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cidade: SÃO PAULO Estado: São Paulo

Nacionalidade: Alemã Data do nascimento: 13 / 12 / 1920

Estado Civil: Solteira Profissão: Fotógrafa

CARTEIRA de estrangeiro n.º 560.714 Correspondência na residência

onde trabalha Deve ser cobrado na residência

OBSERVAÇÕES: ELIMINADO POR FALTA DE PAGAMENTO, EM REUNIÃO DE DIRETORIA DE 9/11/50

5.

## MODERNISM UNDER DECONSTRUCTION: BEYOND THE ESCOLA PAULISTA

In February of 1949, the FCCB gained a new member, Alice Brill, a young artist recently returned from a study trip to the United States [FIG. 5]. After paying her membership fee for six months, she was dismissed at the end of the year with no reason given as to why she had never attended the club.<sup>27</sup> Her production is nevertheless worthy of consideration here, as it offers a counterpoint to the Escola Paulista. It presents an alternate perspective on the city, serving as evidence of the diverse and sometimes conflicting approaches at play. In the same way, while most FCCB members adhered to the Escola Paulista's principles and obeyed the rules in place for producing photographs in line with criteria at salons, some photographers, including Thomaz Farkas, Gertrudes Altschul, Ademar Manarini, André Carneiro, Marcel Giró, and Palmira Puig, turned their attention toward social reality. Their works focus on those untouched by the benefits of modernization, deconstructing the uniform vision of the Escola Paulista.

Farkas became acquainted with the sociocultural diversity of the city of Rio de Janeiro—the country's capital at the time—through his friend José Medeiros, whom he met in 1946. A photojournalist who had recently joined the magazine *O Cruzeiro*, Medeiros introduced him to the art scene—particularly dance and theater—and to journalist circles. He also exposed him to everyday life in the suburbs and to African Brazilian cultural events. This experience profoundly shaped Farkas' photographic production, which shifted its focus to the world of suburbs, beaches, bars, *rodas de samba*, and public dances.<sup>28</sup>

Gertrudes Altschul, meanwhile, took pictures of markets, parks, elderly people, children, and individuals living in precarious conditions, as well as many women subjects, including the employees of her small business.<sup>29</sup> She took an interest in undocumented workers, highlighted the exploitation of child labor, and exposed the gender and class inequalities within certain sectors of the economy. While she did not present this corpus of images to the FCCB, its inclusion in her private archives is indicative of her commitment to these issues.

In the 1950s, Brill devoted her work to individuals who remained on the sidelines of modernization. Formally speaking, some of her images

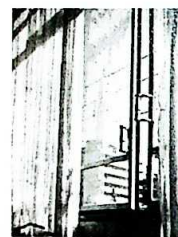




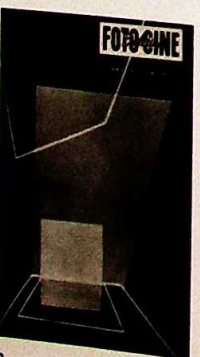
6.



7.



8.



9.



FIG. 6  
Boletim Foto-Cine,  
no. 52, August 1950.

FIG. 7  
Boletim Foto-Cine,  
no. 84, 1953.

FIG. 8  
Boletim Foto-Cine,  
no. 95, April-May 1955.

FIG. 9  
Boletim Foto-Cine, no. 101,  
August-November 1956.

were closely aligned with the Escola Paulista aesthetic, but she sought not to exalt the era's progress and instead chose to reveal its heavy societal toll. Journalist Daniela Alarcón notes that a significant portion of her images from the first half of the 1950s were commissions for the then director of the MASP, Pietro Maria Bardi, to be included in a special book for the Fourth Centenary of the city of São Paulo.<sup>30</sup> That book was never published, however, likely due to the photos' indictment on predatory capitalism and social inequalities. Brill had in fact already expressed her opposition to these phenomena in correspondence from her trip to the United States.<sup>31</sup>

The social approach in these images serves as a critical counterpoint to the Escola Paulista. These photos expose the contradictions of the modernization process in a nation whose past was steeped in colonialism and slavery, and whose promises of development were aimed at the elite residing in the large urban centers of the Southeast. Opportunities for women to take part in photo club activities were scarce, while individuals of African descent remained at a distance due to a latent segregation and their sociocultural backgrounds. The meticulously composed images circulating at the time among photo club salons and publications attest to the lack of diversity of perspectives, recalling Brazil's racial democracy myth and demonstrating how this played out in 1950s São Paulo.<sup>32</sup>

## MODERNISM UNDER RECONSTRUCTION: AVENUES OF EXPERIMENTATION

While a discerning eye was central to the images of the Escola Paulista, some proponents turned to experimentation as a way to shatter all ties with reality and reconstruct it in a free, inventive manner. José Yalenti, Ademar Manarini, Gertrudes Altschul, Roberto Yoshida, and many others explored the creative potential of form by harnessing the techniques of photomontage, photogram, or solarization. Geraldo de Barros and José Oiticica Filho, for their part, committed fully to this pursuit by offering works that were now strictly experimental. One of the aims here was no longer to

separate photography from the realm of fine arts, as had been the case until now, by establishing links with the various abstract currents featured at the new museums and the Bienal de São Paulo.

De Barros was a sketch artist, painter, engraver, photographer, and one of the signatories of the *Manifesto Ruptura*, which introduced concrete art to Brazil.<sup>33</sup> Between 1948 and 1950, this well-known figure on the local artistic scene produced his series *Fotoforma*, which combined photograms, multiple exposure, dry-point and Indian ink drawings on negatives, collages, and manipulation of photographic prints, as well as his own lab-grown techniques. "While I was searching for a subject for a photo, I was thinking about how I would transform that photo in the lab," he recalled. "When I photographed the shoe, I instantly pictured the girl taking form within that shape. In this way, it became a working method, a process."<sup>34</sup> [SEE PAGE 161].

The—primarily abstract—images resulting from these experiments caused a certain disturbance among his peers at the FCCB, who did not consider them to be photography. On the other hand, de Barros showed his works to Pietro Maria Bardi, director of the MASP, who invited him to exhibit them at the museum. This led to the 1951 exhibition *Fotoforma*, which presented a few images from the series, mounted on specially made structures that emphasized their physical presence and sculptural character.

José Oiticica Filho also ventured into experimentation some years later. Despite living in Rio de Janeiro, he joined the FCCB in 1946. Although he was one of the most respected pictorialists, he began exploring geometric abstraction in 1954, using an array of processes, such as combining negatives and positives, photograms, and macro lenses, which had been reserved for scientific photography.<sup>35</sup> In an interview published at the time in *Jornal do Brasil*, he stated, "Photography is created in the lab."<sup>36</sup> Such a provocation no longer shocked the members of the FCCB, with experimental images causing little controversy, given their frequent appearance in the club's journals and salons. In the latter half of the 1950s, José Oiticica Filho's photographs formed a close dialog with productions by his son, Hélio Oiticica, then at the start of his career, who later became one of the figures of neo-concretism [SEE PAGE 185].



De Barros' and Filho's research mainly took place at the photography lab, countering the notion that all decent photography should stem from an observation of the outside world. By merging the worlds of the photo club, concrete art, and neo-concretism, both artists forged a link between art and photography that was unprecedented in Brazil. The evocative power of their respective images breaks with the distinction between figurative and abstract art prevailing at the time.

## SHARED MODERNISM: FORMING NETWORKS AND EXCHANGES

Founded in Switzerland in 1950, the FIAP sought to bring together as many photo clubs as possible from around the globe. The FCCB was one of its founding members and the only club established outside Europe. Historian Alise Tifentale describes the FIAP as embodying the dream of a global, transnational forum for photography, governed by the principles of equality and inclusion.<sup>37</sup> In addition to regulating club activities, the FIAP organized exhibitions and published annual directories to help develop and support networks of international exchange.

Inter-association exchanges were one of the principal missions of photo clubs—and mainly involved submitting photographs to national and international salons. This practice required clubs to be highly organized in order to accommodate

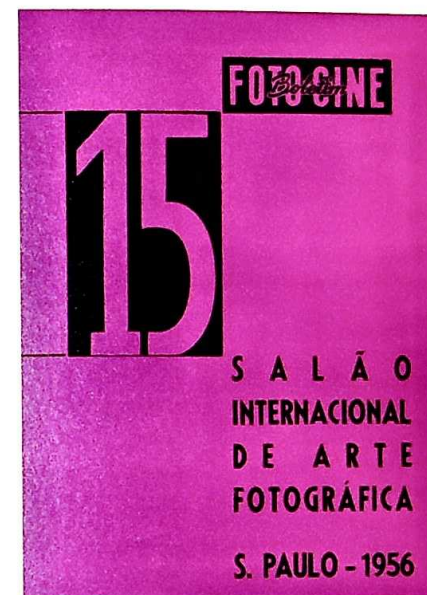
the packed calendar of events, so much so that the FCCB devoted a specific section to such matters. The FCCB had contacts across the Americas [FIG. 10], as well as in Europe, Asia, and Oceania. According to de Barros, in order to facilitate group entries, all club members were given a drawer where they were required to keep their photographs ready for exchange.<sup>38</sup> Copies sent to salons would be stamped or labeled on the back, certifying the entry and any prizes that it had received [FIG. 11]. These stamps and labels served as marks of recognition that distinguished photographers among their peers. They also confirmed that their production had fulfilled the criteria of excellence set by the international exchange networks. In 1951, the FCCB sent twenty-two of its members' photographs to the Salon international d'art photographique in Paris. They are now held within the collections of the Société française de photographie.<sup>39</sup> To give a sense of the extent of these exchanges, the FCCB took part in sixty salons in 1953, thirty-seven of which were international.<sup>40</sup>

Clubs did not limit exchanges to the world of salons, either, as they were also involved in traveling exhibitions and hosting guest members from other associations. In 1951, the FCCB organized the *Exposição de arte fotográfica - Annemarie Heinrich* at the MASP, displaying one hundred works by the German-born, Argentina-based photographer—the first exhibition by a woman photographer at a Brazilian museum.<sup>41</sup> In 1954 and 1955, the FCCB produced two important exhibitions: *Otto Steinert e seus alunos*, presenting a portfolio by the German group Fotoform, which opened at the MAM-SP,<sup>42</sup> and the following year

FIG. 10 A-B  
Photoclub portfolio exchange box containing ten photographs by different FCCB authors, circulated among ten members of the Photographic Society of America so that they could enter their comments on each photograph in their respective cards.

FIG. 11  
Verso of a photograph showing stamps. FCCB collection, São Paulo.

FIG. 12  
Catalog of the XV Salão Internacional de Arte Fotográfica, 1956. FCCB collection, São Paulo.



12.

the club hosted in its headquarters an exhibition of French photographers—some from the Groupe des XV<sup>43</sup>—whose works soon became incorporated into its collections.<sup>44</sup> Alongside the Salões Internacionais de Arte Fotográfica, which the FCCB organized every year, these exchanges enabled its members to keep abreast of productions from the worldwide photo club network.

In the 1960s, the FCCB began to struggle to innovate, which caused the number of new members to dwindle. Many also left the club, which became excluded from the institutional spaces that it had once conquered. The situation worsened in 1964, when a civilian-military coup ushered in a long and violent dictatorship in Brazil. The photo club movement entered a state of decline, with more politicized intellectual circles deeming its amateur and elitist nature to be out of touch with reality. As such, the FCCB's legacy fell into almost two decades of obscurity.

In 1985, the FCCB's production became a subject of research, resulting in a book published ten years later.<sup>45</sup> From the 2000s onwards, modernist photography from the photoclubs underwent a wide-ranging process of dissemination and institutionalization. It became part of the collections of Brazilian institutions, such as the MAM-SP, the MASP, the Instituto Moreira Salles, Banco Itaú,

the Sesc SP, the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo and the Casa da Imagem – Museu da Cidade de São Paulo. These became a major topic of academic interest and featured in an increasing number of exhibitions and publications, which mainly studied the legacies of individual photographers.

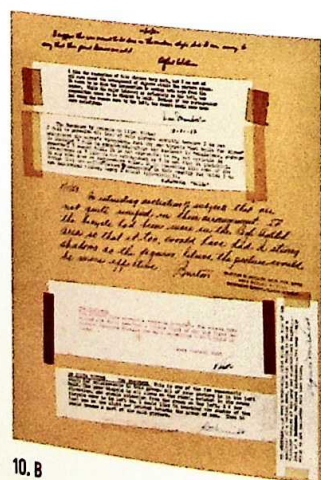
This growing visibility drew the attention of art galleries that recognized the untapped market potential, in turn encouraging the development of both private and institutional collections. The research then became decentralized and took an interest in the photo clubs of other Brazilian states, including Minas Gerais, Goiás, Rio Grande do Sul, and Pernambuco. Eventually, this momentum grew beyond national borders as photography from Brazilian photo clubs entered European and US art salons, and became part of museum collections, including the Photo Elysée in Lausanne, Switzerland; Tate Modern in London; MoMA in New York City; the Museu de Lleida, in Catalonia, Spain; Centro de la Imagen de México; and the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC), in Barcelona.<sup>46</sup>

Driven by the optimism of a period of time between two dictatorships, the work of the Escola Paulista revived the legacy of the global photographic avant-garde, engaging in a dialogue with the artistic trends of its time to renew Brazilian photography in the face of the challenges of modernization. The Escola Paulista cannot be summed up as a mere exercise of form; rather, it prompted an overhaul of the conceptual foundations of the country's photography practices, helping internationalize productions and bring them into the realm of arts system.<sup>47</sup> It also included some of the biggest names in photography, such as Geraldo de Barros, Thomaz Farkas, German Lorca, Chico Albuquerque, and Marcel Giró, who went on to become professional photographers or pursue artistic careers in other areas.

Restoring the legacy of Escola Paulista photography today is in line, more broadly, with a revision of modernist photography's firmly established hierarchies to include productions from Latin America, African, Asian, and Eastern European nations.<sup>48</sup> The aim here is to acknowledge the diversity of artistic cultures through decentralized, inclusive frameworks of reference that incorporate the perspectives and experiences long overlooked by the dominant narratives.



10. A



10. B



11.



1. Editor's note: Estado Novo was founded in 1937 after a coup d'état led by President Getúlio Vargas, who had been at the nation's helm since 1930. His dictatorial regime fell in 1945 after he was deposed by the military.
2. This strengthening of ties between the two countries culminated in trade agreements that did not always favor Brazil, ultimately causing an accumulation of debt and economic dependence that would have grave consequences on the nation some years later. See Antonio Pedro Tota, *O Imperialismo sedutor. A americanização do Brasil na época da Segunda Guerra* (São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 2020).
3. For a more in-depth study of the Brazilian artistic and cultural context between 1940 and 1960, and its ties to the geopolitical situation of the Cold War, see the text by Rafael Cardoso, on pages 213–19.
4. Candido Malta Campos, Lucia Helena Gama, and Vladimir Sacchetta, eds., *São Paulo, metrópole em trânsito. Percursos urbanos e culturais* (São Paulo: Senac, 2004).
5. José Ribeiro de Araújo Filho, *Alguns aspectos da população da cidade de São Paulo*, *Revista de História* XII, no. 25, (January–March 1956).
6. Raquel Rolnik, *São Paulo: o planejamento da desigualdade* (São Paulo: Fósforo Editora, 2022).
7. Bruno Zorek, *O futuro de São Paulo na década de 1950* (Lisbon: Instituto de História Contemporânea, 2024).
8. Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda, *Metrópole e cultura: São Paulo no meio do século XX* (Bauru: Edusc, 2001).
9. The Museu de Arte de São Paulo was founded by Assis Chateaubriand, who owned the country's largest press conglomerate and had built up a collection dating from the Renaissance through to the modern art period. He owned the magazine *O Cruzeiro*, which became an important voice in constructing Brazil's modern identity. See Helouise Costa and Marcella Legrand Marer, *La Photographie moderniste brésilienne* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2025). For its part, the Museu de Arte Moderna São Paulo—created under the impetus of industrialist Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho—embraced historical avant-garde movements and international modern art in equal measure. Matarazzo was also responsible for setting up the Companhia Vera Cruz and the Bienal de São Paulo.
10. Editor's note: The *confeitarias* of that era were bakeries-delicatessens that doubled up as cafés and tearooms, with some being veritable institutions frequented by the elite.
11. Helouise Costa and Renato Rodrigues Da Silva, *A fotografia moderna no Brasil* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2004); Helouise Costa, "O Foto Cine Clube Bandeirante no Museu de Arte de São Paulo," in *MASP FCCB, Coleção Museu de Arte de São Paulo – Foto Cine Clube Bandeirante*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa (São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2016).
12. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the network developed with the creation of the Photo Club Paraense (c. 1901), the Photo Club (c. 1903), and the Photo Club Helios (1907), in Porto Alegre. See Fábio D'Almeida, "Antes do Photo-Club Brasileiro: revistas internacionais e as origens da fotografia artística no país (1900-1914)," in Helouise Costa and Heloisa Espada, *Fotografia moderna no Brasil. Arte, poder e saber* (São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 2024), 136–67; Ary Bezzerá Leite, *História da fotografia no Ceará no século XIX* (Fortaleza: self-published, 2019), 360–64.
13. This name change was due to the creation of a cinematography department under the direction of Jan Jure Roos, which was then taken over by Jean Lecocq in 1953. According to Lila Foster, its output was severely limited by difficulties in obtaining film and the high costs involved in shooting amateur films. As such, the club prioritized film screenings—followed by discussions—over film production and kept no collection of the films produced. See Lila Silva Foster, "Cinema amador brasileiro: história, discursos e práticas (1926-1959)," PhD diss., ECA-USP, São Paulo, 2016.
14. The amateur photography practiced at photo clubs should not be confused with family or travel photography practiced by photographers with no specific training. In the photo club context, the term refers to individuals who displayed artistic ambition, a penchant for photography, and excellent technical proficiency, but who did not operate as professionals in the sector.
15. This is the setup that existed in 1946, when the Women's Section was created to include members' wives, following on from the creation of the Cinematography Department in December 1945.
16. See the text on women's involvement in the FCCB on pages 117–19.
17. The Salão Internacional de Arte Fotográfica de São Paulo was not an annual event, but took place up to 1989 before being relaunched by the FCCB in 2022.
18. The *Boletim Foto-Cine Clube Bandeirante* started out as a monthly information bulletin distributed in house to members. In 1951, it changed its name to the *Boletim Foto-Cine*, a trade magazine marketed and sold to the general public. It was published sporadically between 1946 and 1982. *Boletim Foto-Cine* no. 79 (February 1953), 23.
19. Eduardo Salvatore presided over the FCCB until the early 1990s. Although his management contributed to the club's longevity, the FCCB's productions under his direction were rather conservative, which ultimately drove many members away.
20. For more on pictorialism in Brazil, see Fábio D'Almeida, "Antes do Photo-Club Brasileiro: revistas internacionais e as origens da fotografia artística no país (1900-1914)," in Costa and Espada, *Fotografia moderna no Brasil*, 136–67.
21. Jacob Polacow, "VII Salão – Salão dos novos," *Boletim Foto-Cine* no. 32 (December 1948), 13–14.
22. Eduardo Salvatore, "Considerações sobre o momento fotográfico," *Boletim Foto-Cine*, no. 67 (November 1951).
23. Iatã Canabrava and José Antonio Navarrete, *Foto Cine-Clube Bandeirante: itinerários globais, estéticas em transformação* (São Paulo: Almeida e Dale, 2022), 58–69; Diógenes Moura, *Gaspar Gasparian – um fotógrafo* (São Paulo: Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2010).
24. Some of these photographers did not attend the club regularly, and little is known about their lives. Alice Brill's photography, however, appears in the section entitled "Modernism under Deconstruction." See page 99.
25. The Tupi word *oca* refers to an Indigenous form of collective dwelling made from wood and straw.
26. Helouise Costa, "German Lorca: a construção do momento decisivo," in *Fotografia como memória. German Lorca*, ed. Diógenes Moura (São Paulo: Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2006).
27. Alice Brill received a scholarship to complete her artistic studies in the United States, where she resided during 1946 and 1947. In addition to painting, sketching, and engraving, she took classes in photography so as to pursue this as a career upon returning to Brazil. In the United States, she also came to discover socially charged documentary photography. See Danielle Stewart, "São Paulo não vista: as fotografias do quarto centenário de Alice Brill," in Costa and Espada, *Fotografia moderna no Brasil*, 34–55.
28. Thomaz Farkas, *Thomaz Farkas: uma antologia pessoal* (São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 2011).
29. Adriano Pedrosa and Tomás Toledo, eds., *Gertrudes Altschul: Filigrana* (São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2021).
30. Daniela Alarcón, *Diário íntimo. A fotografia de Alice Brill* (São Paulo: Escola de Comunicações e Artes da Universidade de São Paulo, 2008).
31. Ibid.
32. Barbara Weinstein, *The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
33. Heloisa Espada, ed., *Geraldo DeBarros e a fotografia* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2015).
34. *Geraldo de Barros: imaginário, construção, memória* (São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2022), 213.
35. See José Oiticica Filho, *José Oiticica Filho* (São Paulo: Carcará Photo Art, 2019).
36. José Oiticica Filho, "Fotografia se faz no laboratório," interview with Ferreira Gullar, *Jornal do Brasil* (August 24, 1958).
37. Alise Tifentale, *The "Olympiad of Photography." FIAP and the Global Photo-Club Culture, 1950–65*, PhD diss., City University of New York.
38. Geraldo de Barros, "A sala de fotografia," *Boletim Foto-Cine* no. 87 (February–March 1954), 12–17.
39. Four of these photographs appear in this volume. See also: Lucas Mendes Menezes, "Images voyageuses: photographie amateur brésilienne dans la collection de la Société française de photographie," PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2019.
40. Marly Terezinha Castro Porto, "Confrontos e paralelos: o Salão Internacional de Arte Fotográfica de São Paulo (1942-1959)," master's thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2018.
41. Annemarie Heinrich was a founder of the photography association La Carpetta de los Diez. She was a steady presence in the bulletins and salons of the FCCB. See Julieta Pestarino's piece on pages 220–27.
42. For more on the FCCB's collaboration with museums, see page 43.
43. Founded in Paris in 1946, the Groupe des XV was a collective of fifteen French humanist photographers.
44. See also: Rubens Teixeira Scavone, "A exposição fotográfica francesa," *Boletim Foto-Cine*, no. 91 (August 1954), 19–22; Dulce Carneiro, "Arte fotográfica francesa. Groupe des XV," *Boletim Foto-Cine* no. 91 (August 1954), 23–25.
45. Helouise Costa and Renato Rodrigues Silva, *A fotografia moderna no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1995). See also: Paulo Herkenhoff, "Fotografia – o automático e o longo processo de modernidade," in *Sete ensaios sobre o modernismo*, eds. Paulo Sérgio Duarte and Ana Maria Miranda (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1983).
46. Helouise Costa, *A invenção da fotografia moderna no Brasil* (São Paulo: SP Arte/Foto, 2016), 139–45.
47. For more on the photography practiced in Brazil before the FCCB's creation, see Heloisa Espada, ed., *Moderna pelo avesso. Fotografia e cidade. Brasil 1890-1930* (São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 2023).
48. See the exhibitions *The Modern Lens: International Photography in the Tate Collection* (Tate Modern, London, 2015); *Modern Photography from the Thomas Walter Collection* (MoMA, New York City, 2015); and *Fotoclubismo. Brazilian Modernist Photography, 1946–1964* (MoMA, New York City, 2021).