

Memory lenses: discovering the photography of Alberto de Sampaio **17th September to 1st November 2015**

This exhibition presents to the general public, for the first, the archive of Alberto de Sampaio (Rio de Janeiro, 1870), one of the pioneers in amateur photography in Brazil. An enthusiast of images, a lawyer by trade, he began pursuing his passion by the end of the 19th century, in Rio de Janeiro, and for over 40 years he documented nature and urban sceneries, creating a singular visual memory of the state's capital. This exhibition, conceived and curated by Adriana Maria Martins Pereira, is divided in three axes and brings us around 120 photographic records, in addition to personal objects, photographic laboratory materials used by Sampaio and 16mm film projections shot by him.

The first axis, "The amateur's home", presents a series of images from Alberto de Sampaio and his family's day-to-day life, and also window cases with the photographer's documents and objects. The other axes are dedicated to images of Rio de Janeiro. Several photographs portray the city's effervescent urbanization process. According to the curator, "Through his lenses we can see a city that continuously rebuilt itself, a moment in which the façades of new and remodeled buildings, in the European style, were transformed in the changing structure of the metropolis that was emerging", says Pereira. Advertising images with their slogans, shelves displaying photographic laboratory materials and film projections complete the exhibition.

The curator came across the archive by accident in the main offices of the Sociedade Petropolitana de Fotografia, in the city of Petrópolis (RJ), and began devotedly organizing it, an undertaking that earned her a master and doctorate degree. During her research, she discovered that this material was kept in Alberto de Sampaio's own home for almost a century before being partially donated by his heirs – together with the materials from his lab, which was kept intact – to the Sociedade Petropolitana de Fotografia, where it remained for another 30 years.

All of his photographs have never before been publicly shown, and are a portrait of a time, revealing the lives of ordinary people crossing over with crucial events in Brazilian history. Among these images, it is worth pointing out the inauguration of the Avenida Central (today Avenida Rio Branco), in 1905; the inauguration of the Palácio Monroe (demolished in 1976) in Cinelândia, in 1906; the 1907 eclipse, photographed from the Observatório do Morro do Castelo (Alberto de Sampaio was the only photographer to register this event); the demolition of Morro do Castelo, among other relevant events during the urban transformation that Rio de Janeiro went through in the 1920s; the beautiful and virtually deserted beaches in the city's Southside, the 16mm films shot at the Flamengo beach featuring sunbathers and swimmers, and the arrival of the first Zeppelin in Rio, the Graf, in 1930.

Alberto de Sampaio also photographed his family life and the changes that the advent of photography and film brought to the domestic environment. According to the curator, "His photography is a portrait of a time and the possibilities it saw arise; images that reveal to us subjective intimacies. Led by his photographs, we enter the home of the amateur, open the windows, see the light from between the narrow gaps, in a materiality transformed into object", she adds.

An accessible pathway with audio-descriptions of the photographs (recorded in audio and in the presence of a screen), a website with detailed descriptions of each image and a cellphone app make this exhibition accessible to people with visual impairment. The realization of this project and the digitalization of the archive were only made possible by the sponsorship from Unipar Carbocloro. According to João Rafal, the company's Human Resources Director, "we understand that Culture and Education are fundamental subjects when building a better world. The support to this exhibition is a way of recovering the memory of the urbanization process that our country went through. With this sponsorship, Unipar Carbocloro reasserts its commitment to promoting and stimulating relevant actions for society's development". After São Paulo, this exhibition is scheduled to go to Cubatão, still in 2015, and in Rio de Janeiro, in 2016.

About Alberto de Sampaio

Alberto de Sampaio was a lawyer and dedicated amateur photographer who lived in Rio de Janeiro and Petrópolis. Born in 1870 to a wealthy family, had several hobbies, such as poetry, painting and photographing, his passion, which he pursued until his death, in 1931. He began photographing in 1888, at the age of 18, and was most active between 1905 and 1914. His photographs document Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of the country, which was going through a modernization process initiated by the mayor Pereira Passos (1902-1906). He captured memorable scenes, with beaches that were still deserted and streets where the first cars began to drive around. A passionate and dedicated photographer, he followed the technological advances from his time. He had big wooden cameras like Perken, Son & Rayment (manufactured between 1892 and 1899) and more modern versions like The Sanderson and Folding Pocket Kodak (both manufactured in 1904), predecessors of personal photography.