Alice Brill's Sao Paulo Photographs: A Cross-Cultural Reading

Danielle Jean Hurd

Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd

Part of the Art Practice Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Alice Brill's São Paulo Photographs: A Cross-Cultural Reading

Danielle Hurd

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

James Swensen, chair
Heather Belnap Jensen
Rex P. Nielson

Department of Visual Arts
Brigham Young University

June 2011

Copyright © 2011 Danielle Hurd
All Rights Reserved
ABSTRACT

Alice Brill's São Paulo Photographs: A Cross-Cultural Reading

Danielle Hurd
Department of Visual Arts
Master of Arts

In this thesis I consider the influence of Alice Brill's transnational background on her photographs of 1950s São Paulo. Brill was born in 1920 to a Jewish-German family. In 1934 she immigrated to São Paulo where she involved herself in local artistic circles. From 1946-47 she received a grant to study at the University of New Mexico and with the Art Students League in New York. Brill learned photography during her time in the United States, hoping to create documentary photo-essays in Brazil which she could send to American illustrated magazines.

None of Brill’s works were published in the United States, however, on returning to São Paulo in 1948 Brill was invited by Pietro Maria Bardi, Director of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, to “record the daily life of the citizens of São Paulo.” Bardi intended the photographs to be published as an homage to the city’s 400th anniversary, but lacked sufficient funding to complete the volume. Brill’s images of São Paulo depict the metropolis in a way unique during the period: as a space shared by multi-racial communities. While many photographers and publications metaphorically white-washed the city by depicting only its most Europeanized attributes, Brill consciously sought out underrepresented groups, specifically the burgeoning Afro-Brazilian community.

Brill’s point of view was shaped by her international upbringing and training: her experience as an outsider compelled her to document other outsider communities in São Paulo. She recognized the traditions of representation already in place in Brazil and manipulated familiar types in order to represent the nation’s true hybridity. Influences on her work include: the long history of part-artistic, part-anthropological studies of the Brazilian people; local photographic traditions for picturing the city and its inhabitants; the European photojournalist style introduced to Brazil in 1944; and the international sensibility of Brill’s patrons, the Bardis. I attempt to show how Brill balanced these considerations with her own personal understanding of Brazil as a multivalent space.

Keywords: Brazil, São Paulo, Alice Brill, Photography, Documentary, Transnational, 1950
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like Alice, I have been blessed with friends and supporters around the globe without whom my project would not have been possible. For their generous assistance I thank Silvia Czapski who introduced me to Alice and shared with me her mother’s life, work, and dreams; Daniela Alarcon who is both wonderfully magnanimous and an insightful counselor; and Virginia Albertini, Cidio Martins, and the attentive staff of the Instituto Moreira Salles who assisted me as I studied, searched, and requested works from Brill’s archive. I also thank the Ferreira family and other friends who aided me during my time in Brazil.

My research in Brazil was made possible through a grant from the Brigham Young University Art History Department. For many years the faculty and staff of the Art History and Visual Arts Departments have cared for me like family. I would especially like to thank Mark Magleby for his undying optimism and constant encouragement, Martha Peacock for her scholarly passion and sage advice, Heather Jensen for being the perfect example of a tenacious but caring feminist academic, and my advisor James Swensen for his patience, flexibility, good humor, and endless editing. In addition I express my gratitude to Marian Wardle for broadening my understanding of art historical practices and methodologies and to Rex Neilson for his invaluable insights into Brazilian culture.

Finally, I thank my mother and father for their many sacrifices on my behalf.
## CONTENT

- Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1
- Origins of the São Paulo Project .................................................................................................................. 4
- Scope of the São Paulo Project ......................................................................................................................... 6
- International Upbringing ............................................................................................................................... 12
- Art Study in São Paulo .................................................................................................................................. 15
- New Mexico and New York ............................................................................................................................. 19
- The Bards as Transnationals ............................................................................................................................ 24
- *Habitat* and the Illustrated Magazine ........................................................................................................ 28
- São Paulo circa 1950 ...................................................................................................................................... 36
- Insider/ Outsider ............................................................................................................................................ 38
- The Growing City ........................................................................................................................................... 42
- Black and White ........................................................................................................................................... 46
- Conclusion ...................................................................................................................................................... 61
- Images ............................................................................................................................................................. 63
- Bibliography .................................................................................................................................................. 110
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Alice Brill, *Libero Badaró com a Praça do Patriarcha*, c. 1950. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 2. Alice Brill, *IV Centennial Mass at the Ipiranga Museum*, 1954. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 3. Pietro Maria Bardi, published in *The Arts in Brazil*, captioned: “Bow-window of one of the few houses in São Paulo influenced by the Neo-Classical style,” São Paulo, c. 1950.

Figure 4. Alice Brill, *Aeroporto de Congonhas*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 5. Alois Feichtenberger, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “Planes from every country link São Paulo with the whole world,” 1950s.

Figure 6. Alice Brill, *O semeador, Parque D. Pedro*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 7. Alois Feichtenberger, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “Many sculptures in the public parks show how the artistical (sic) spirit is alive,” 1950s.

Figure 8. Alice Brill, *Torcedores no Estádio do Pacaembu*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 9. Schlachter, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “Sport-loving paulistanos stand in competition with sportsmen from all over the world. Tens of thousands are attracted by exciting matches,” 1950s.

Figure 10. Alice Brill, *Rua Direita*, c. 1950. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 11. Sascha Harnisch, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “The midday sun creates strange contrasts in the streets...,” 1950s.

Figure 12. Alice Brill, *Vista a partir do Vale do Anhangabau*, c. 1952 (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 13. Sascha Harnisch, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “If not working, people enjoy peacefulness in the parks,” 1950s.

Figure 14. Alice Brill, *Porto*, 1933.

Figure 15. Alice Brill, *Mercado de rua*, 1933.

Figure 16. Erich Brill, *Mulher árabe da cidade*, n.d.
Figure 17. Alice Brill, *Dança indígena*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, c. 1946.

Figure 18. Alice Brill, *The Grand Canyon*, Arizona, 1946.

Figure 19. Newspaper clipping from the personal archive of Alice Brill.

Figure 20. Alice Brill, *O menino pintado*, Mato Grosso, and *Um deus de ferro* from “Convite a fotografar,” by Max Bill, published in *Habitat*, no. 2, Jan-Mar 1951, 68.

Figure 21. Alice Brill, *Minas de carvão*, Ibaiti, Paraná, 1949. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 22. Lewis Hine, *Child coal miners—drivers and mules*, Gary, *West Virginia mine*, September 1908.

Figure 23. Mário de Moraes, spread from *O Cruzeiro* created under the direction of Jean Manzon, published 22 October 1955.

Figure 24. Alice Brill, a page from *Habitat* featuring the photo-essay “Crônicas: gente,” published in *Habitat*, no. 14, January/February 1954, 62.

Figure 25. Alice Brill, *Banca de Jornal no Centro de São Paulo*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 26. Alice Brill, *Banca de journal sob o viaduto Santa Efigênia*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 27. Alice Brill, *Domingo* from “Álbum de fotografias” by Alencastro, published in *Habitat*, no. 4, July/August 1951, 81.

Figure 28. Alice Brill, *Janela no Bairro Popular* from “Álbum de fotografias” by Alencastro, published in *Habitat*, no. 4, July/August 1951, 82.


Figure 30. Alice Brill, *Crianças na rua* from “Psicologia infantil e casa própria” by Betty Katzenstein, published in *Habitat*, no. 23, July/August 1955, 21.

Figure 31. Alice Brill, *Mulher na frente de barraco* and *Homem com sanfona na porta de barraco* from “Habitação para o homem de nosso tempo,” published in *Habitat*, no. 30, January 1956, 6.

Figure 32. Alice Brill, *Mulher na frente de barraco* and *Pedestres na Rua Direita* from “Planejamento, arquitectura, engenharia: Contrastos e confrontos,” published in *Habitat*, no. 38, January 1957, 6.
Figure 33. Militão Augusto de Azevedo, *Rua do Rosário, no sentido do largo homônimo, hoje praça Antonio Prado*, c. 1862. (Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 34. Alice Brill, *Palacete Prates, no vale do Anhangabaú*, São Paulo, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 35. Alice Brill, *O Viaduto do Chá, com vista dos dois palacetes Prates*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 36. Alice Brill, *Fila de ônibus no Anhangabaú*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 37. Alice Brill, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “...whole streets are broken up,” 1950s.

Figure 38. Albert Eckhout, *Negra*, c. 1641-1644.

Figure 39. Albert Eckhout, *Mameluca*, c. 1641-1644.

Figure 40. Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Le Chirugien Negre*, 1831.

Figure 41. Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Les Barbiers Ambulante*, 1831.

Figure 42. Vincenzo Pastore, *endedor de vassouras em rua do centro da cidade*, c. 1910. (Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 43. Alice Brill, *Engraxantes trabalhando*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 44. Alice Brill, *Feira livre*, São Paulo, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 45. Alice Brill, *Posando, no centro*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 46. Alice Brill, *Realejo na praça do Patriarca*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 47. Alice Brill, *Fila de ônibus no barrio de Pinheiros*, December 1950. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 48. Alice Brill, *Crianças em bairro popular*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 49. Alice Brill, *Street vender on the Viaduto do Chá* [Vendedora ambulante no Viaduto do Chá], São Paulo, c. 1953. Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Morreira Salles. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Figure 50. Alice Brill, *Obras no vale Anhangabai*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 51. Lewis Hine, *Power House Mechanic Working on Steam Pump*, 1920.


Figure 53. Alice Brill, *Passageiros em vagão de trem*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 54. Alice Brill, *Procissão no Bairro da Penha*, c. 1948. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 55. Alice Brill, *Procession in the Penha neighborhood*, c. 1948. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 56. Alice Brill, *Procession in the Penha neighborhood*, c. 1948. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Figure 57. Alice Brill, *Cafezinho*, c. 1954. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Introduction

On 24 August 1954 the pajama-clad Getúlio Vargas held a pistol to his chest and fired a bullet into his heart at the same moment that military officers stormed the Presidential Palace in Rio de Janeiro to remove the dictator from power. Delightfully Marquezian, the suicide of President Vargas robbed Brazil of a coup d'état in the archetypical Latin American style. Affectionately called “the father of the poor” by the Brazilian masses, Vargas’ ascendency in 1930 had set upper-class paulistanos—Brazilians of predominantly Portuguese ancestry born in São Paulo city—on edge. Although the industrial capital of Brazil enjoyed more self-determinacy than any other region in the country under Vargas, many were still loathe to accept a leader who was both pro-proletariat and gaúcho.1 As President from 1930 to 1945 and from 1950 to his suicide in 1954, Vargas’ policies shaped Brazil during a period of intense industrialization, increased internationalization, and domestic social reorganization. His problematic relationship with the paulistanos provide the backdrop for a set of photographs created as an homage to the people of São Paulo.

Around 1950 Alice Brill, a Jewish German immigrant to Brazil, was invited by Pietro Maria Bardi, himself an immigrant from Italy and an important critical voice in the Brazilian art scene, to “record the daily life of the citizens of São Paulo” (fig. 1).2 The images were to be published in conjunction with the Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand–MASP, of which Bardi was co-founder and director. Later in her career Brill described the project saying:

In the early 50s Professor Bardi, Director of the MASP, presented me with a project to create a photo-essay about the city of São Paulo on the occasion of the celebration of its fourth Centennial. I was excited about the job, from which resulted many photos of the city, not just the center, but also the periphery, the various neighborhoods, the diverse types of housing, from the poorest shacks to the luxury of the most elegant homes and

---

1 Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.
A native of Rio Grande do Sul.
buildings. I also sought to record plazas, streets, and their inhabitants, surprised in their daily activities.³

Documentation of the commission remains elusive and Bardi was unable to raise sufficient donations to enable the volume’s publication. Consequently there is little official knowledge about the production and reception of the thousands of negatives produced by Brill in the early 1950s. To the few researchers who study them, they are known only as the São Paulo photographs.⁴

This thesis proposes that the content of Brill’s São Paulo photographs was directly influenced by her transnational young adulthood; that Brill, as an immigrant, was especially sensitive to portraying the hybridity of the Brazilian people because she was herself hybrid. As a documentarist Brill provides a glimpse into a dynamic period of São Paulo history and creates a noteworthy critique of modernization’s social implications. Her as-yet largely unpublished oeuvre demonstrates how Brill assimilated the ideas of the international arts community while developing her own, unique vision. The popular press recorded stereotypical sights and idealized character-types, but Brill declined to simply replicate accepted themes at the sacrifice of the cultural heterodoxy which formed the Brazilian reality. By doing so she helped to breakdown social

⁴ Since Brill is practically unknown in the United States and just beginning to receive greater recognition in Brazil, I include here a short summary of the most important literature related to her career. My greatest resource was Daniela Alarcon’s 2008 thesis entitled, “Diário Íntimo: A fotografia de Alice Brill.” Unfortunately the work is not yet published and available only through the author. In 2002 and 2005 the Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS) published the only solo volumes dedicated to Brill’s photography: Arte e inconsciente: três visões sobre o Jaquey and O mundo de Alice Brill, respectively. Brill was also featured in their 2004 catalog Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: São Paulo, 450 anos which documented changing photographic perspectives of the city over the last 150 years. A catalog for a retrospective of Brill’s painting was published in 2007 as Alice Brill: alicerces da forma. Brill has also published several volumes of her own writings, although none comment directly upon her artistic production, these titles include: Mário Zanini e seu tempo: do Grupo Santa Helena às Bienais (1984), Da arte e da linguagem (1988), Erich Brill: pintor e viajante (1995), and Flexor (2005). The only resource in English is Brill’s personal statement entitled “Memories from 1933-45” for the book Odyssey in Exile: Jewish Women Flee the Nazis for Brazil, edited by Katherine Morris. Although short, it provides a fascinating account of her childhood and flight from Germany, and gives insights into Alice and Marte’s connections to Jewish and feminist communities.
hierarchies and prejudices which had been in place since the colonization. In particular, Brill portrayed the Afro-Brazilian community with candid gentility. She recognized and reconsidered the historical discourse of Brazilian photography, manipulating familiar tropes to create a dialogue that was more inclusive and more compassionate than those of her predecessors. In Brill’s São Paulo photographs European aesthetics from Brill’s native Germany, American training, and Brazilian cultural politics fuse to create a social portrait of a nation in flux.

Structurally my discussion of Brill begins by outlining the few known facts about her commission and introducing her patrons, the Bardis. I then discuss a possible model for how the São Paulo photographs may have been organized, had they been published, and discuss the major differences between Brill’s photographs and those of other photographers and media outlets. After laying out the parameters of Brill’s project, I give a narrative of her youth, highlighting the transnational experiences which left her feeling nationless and her first artistic ventures in São Paulo. I describe the year and a half she spent in the United States, where she began to practice photography, and link her growing social awareness to the projects she undertook in Brazil. From there I outline her relationship with the Bardis, whom she met soon after returning. I elucidate the similarities and differences in their international perspectives and cultural outlooks, giving an account of their collaboration, especially on the magazine Habitat.

I then begin to describe the various influences shaping mid-century São Paulo and the photographic traditions that reflected and shaped public opinions. I discuss the rise of the illustrated magazine press, the Brazilian presidency’s role in shaping paulistano life, and the racial

---

Although there were other multi-ethnic communities in São Paulo (in fact some scholars would call me remiss for focusing on the black-white dichotomy), I have chosen to analyze Brill’s treatment of the black community for several reasons. First, Brill photographed them with the greatest frequency. Second, they were the largest and most recognizable ethnic community. Since the gold rush in the early the eighteenth century, the Indian population had largely abandoned or been driven out of the city, at which point it was occupied by white businessmen and their black slaves. Twentieth century urban migration from the northeast increased the black population in São Paulo. Nicolau Sevecko, “De mambeluca, mulata e gótica a moderna, cosmopolita e caótica: as metamorfoses de Piritininga,” in, Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira (see note 17), 321. Finally, I thought it would create a good, broad base for future study.
and cultural confrontations caused by early twentieth century immigration and urban migration. Having established the personal and public historical background for Brill’s images, I give several examples of Brill’s most striking photographs which foreground the Afro-Brazilian community. Finally, I discuss the implications of her representation of São Paulo as a hybrid space.

Theoretically my investigation of the São Paulo project explores the racial apparatuses which made European and American aesthetic traditions viable, but problematic, in Brazil. I investigate issues of marketing and patronage, attempting to reconcile Brill’s outsider view with the art world’s insularity. I also incorporate theoretical discussions of “out-of-placeness” and heterogeneity, issues which inform current discussions of cross-cultural sharing in the early twentieth century. In conjunction with this, I discuss how Brill used photography as a means of coming to terms with her own fractured identity. I hope to prove that Brill’s experience as a national and ethnic outsider influenced her depictions of the fragmented cultures of São Paulo. Her images constitute both a window on Brazilian society and a singular vision of this world as a shared, multi-cultural space. I believe that a second look at Brill’s lost oeuvre can serve to deconstruct the domestic dialogues of mid twentieth-century Brazil and uncover previously overlooked instances of cross-cultural sharing in the modern period.

Origins of the São Paulo Project

In 1950 Pietro Maria Bardi was already recognized as one of the primary Brazilian cultural arbiters of the mid-twentieth century. Head of the MASP, which was among Brazil’s most
prestigious cultural institutions, Bardi was a prolific and respected author. The São Paulo photographs were to be Bardi’s contribution to the official festivities, including a celebratory mass, planned for São Paulo’s 400th anniversary (fig. 2). That Bardi would select documentary photography as his medium of choice, when it was still not widely accepted as a fine art form in Brazil at the time, seems counterintuitive. But he certainly realized that the democratic, familiar nature of photography would be particularly apropos for a project meant to honor common citizens. In addition, his advocacy photography’s recognition as an art form was well manifest: in 1947 he sponsored the first photography exhibition in a Brazilian museum, hosting the work of Hungarian-born photographer Thomaz Farkas at the MASP, and he was himself a published architectural photographer (fig. 3).  

Alice Brill met Pietro Maria and his wife Lina Bo Bardi while working on the MASP staff from 1947-1955 as a collections photographer. From menial tasks like imaging and cataloging works, she progressed to photographing activities and events, especially those of the Instituto de Arte Contemporânea (IAC), a design school established in 1951 and modeled after The New Bauhaus/Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) Institute of Design founded in Chicago in 1937 by László Moholy-Nagy. Brill also photographed for Lina, an architect, writer, and editor of the magazine *Habitat*, one of the many illustrated magazines published in Brazil after World War II. *Habitat* was officially associated with the MASP and dedicated to architectural studies making it

---

8 Alarcon, 144. Farkas was a formalist photographer, a member of the Foto Cine Clube Bandeirantes, whose primary objectives were technical experimentation and modernist abstraction.

9 Alarcon, 195. In addition to working for *Habitat*, MASP, and on the São Paulo project, Brill took private family photos, especially of children. These she bound into albums, which provided a major source of income when documentary projects were scarce. According to Juljan, who was extremely supportive of his wife’s career, serving as her studio assistant in spite of being a full-time medical school student, Brill never went out with the express purpose of taking pictures for the São Paulo project. Instead, she took pictures on the way to and from scheduled portrait sittings and while traveling to various other commercial and documentary assignments around the city. While this would have limited Brill’s scope in some respects, her negatives include images from the city center, suburbs, and periphery and many different classes of *paulistanos*. 
more technical than most illustrated magazines, however, it adopted the basic layout of popular magazines and ran photo-essays on issues of general interest.10

Ostensibly Bardi chose Brill as a collaborator because he admired her painter’s view of the city, but this may not be the only reason for his patronage.11 As immigrants to Brazil, the Bardis and Brill shared European roots which linked them aesthetically, ideologically, and professionally. The three were transnationals, collaborators whose creations, in the words of Micol Siegel, “explore[d] the global in the local.”12 Obtaining citizenship in Brazil while saturated in the artistic techniques of its European colonizers, Brill and her patrons did “not fit national borders . . . because they [were] greater . . . than both.”13 The photographs which resulted from this partnership demonstrate cross-cultural tendencies through cataloging the web of intersecting social networks created by new urbanization.

**Scope of the São Paulo Project**

Although Bardi’s book never came to fruition, publications like the *Isto é São Paulo* (This is São Paulo) series aid in imagining what the final volume may have looked like. Published from approximately 1950 to 1963, these books provided an idyllic view of São Paulo. The *paulistanos* which adorn its pages lead lives of industrial success and leisurely comfort. In spite of its glamorized view of the population, *Isto é São Paulo* contained many images whose composition

---

10 Brill even shot portraits of Lina at home for an essay for *Habitat*. Alarcon, 197-98.
13 Seigel, xiii.
and content echo those of prints in Brill’s archives, but lacked her democratic eye.14 There are a few other deficiencies in the comparison: *Isto é São Paulo* was a relatively inexpensive mass publication whereas Bardi’s art texts were printed in Europe on the finest materials. The text is also ideologically dissimilar, advocating a bigger-is-better approach to city infrastructure that Bardi dismissed. Still, of extant texts from this decade *Isto é São Paulo* perhaps comes closest to reconstructing a panoramic photographic documentation the city São Paulo. Furthermore, the book provides insights about the visual culture of photography in the 1950s. Its views were provided by a variety of photographers, such as Fernando Albuquerque and other prominent Brazilian photojournalists, and each edition included at least one image by Brill herself. In this way the book provides an industry standard against which Brill’s photography can be compared.

Introduced by a preface in five languages (Portuguese, English, French, Italian, and German, in that order), the small volume was meant as a domestic and international propaganda piece. A two-page introduction is its only written material, other than image captions, many of which quote this preliminary text. The part-didactic, part-bombastic rhetoric reads like a newsreel.15 It begins soaringly, “Ships from every country in the world [put in at Santos and] planes from every country, form a veritable air bridge across the skies.”16 The structure of the accompanying photo-essay mirrors that of the preface, with the first shot taken from the tarmac of the new airport Congonhas (fig. 5). Two airplanes, one in the foreground framing a second in the middle ground,

---

14 My references are to the 1959 fifth edition of *Isto é São Paulo: 99 Flagrantes da Capital Bandeirantes* (This is São Paulo: 99 Views of the Bandeirante Capital). However, all of the images I discuss are shared with the 1951 second edition and the 1952 third edition, which were published exactly contemporaneously with Brill’s production.

15 The book’s tone also mimics the “fifty years of progress in five,” slogan of Brazil’s new president Juscelino Kubitschek. After a succession of short presidencies in the wake of Vargas’ death, Kubistschek took office in 1956. The same year he coined the above phrase as a part of his “Plano de metas” (Goals Plan), the most famous of those goals was the construction of Brasilia.

16 I am quoting from the English versions of the preface and captions. The Portuguese versions of these texts are slightly longer, more laudatory, and more detailed, but essentially the same. *Isto é São Paulo: 99 flagrantes de capital bandeirantes*, 5th ed. (São Paulo: Edições Melhoramentos: 1950, 1959), 6 and 17.
loom like behemoths over four standing figures. Emphasis is on the machines, markers of industrial progress as well as literal and metaphorical links to other great nations.

In contrast, a similar image from Brill’s archives de-emphasizes the metallic bodies of the planes, privileging instead the human bodies which travel inside of them (fig. 4). In Brill’s image the principle plane’s cockpit is obscured by the tail of another. White passengers boarding the plane and black workers loading their luggage, command much more attention than the speck-like individuals in *Isto é São Paulo*. That Brill included the black workers at all can be attributed to her interest in São Paulo as a social, rather than a built, environment. Brill’s image suggests that the airplane is less important in its own right than as an agent of human transportation. Hers was a fundamentally different idea of modernity than the industrially and technologically driven version in *Isto é São Paulo*.

In addition to transportation *Isto é São Paulo* chronicles building projects, parks and civic structures, sports facilities like the Jockey Club, arts centers like the MASP, educational facilities, industry, and agriculture, all prominent themes of Brill’s negatives. The two collections contain twin images of the *Semeador* (*Sower*) monument by Caetano Fracarolli, then on display in the Parque Dom Pedro, one of the city’s most well-known green spaces (figs. 6 and 7). Both photographs conflate the statue’s silhouette with São Paulo’s skyscrapers; their monumental vigor make Brazil’s forward march seem like a heroic undertaking. The two tallest structures, the Altino Arantes (commonly known as Banespa) building on the left and Banco do Brasil building on the

---

17 This photograph, the two that follow, and several later in the text have never been published. The titles I use for them are taken from the rights and reproductions agreement provided by the IMS. In cases where the photographs have been published, I used the caption which accompanied as the title. Most were drawn from Antonio Fernando de Franceschi, ed. *Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: São Paulo, 450 anos* (São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 2004) and http://www.itaucultural.org.br.

right, flank the statue in one image and stand as a resolute rearguard in the other.\textsuperscript{19} Brill’s shot includes a much greater vista of the park, a subtle but important difference. The inclusion of more surrounding space means that two black workers can be seen kneeling at the base of the statue weeding the rows of flowers which ring the lawn surrounding the monument. These two men, the only human figures in the work, serve as reminders that São Paulo’s construction and maintenance is predicated upon the labor of lower classes and racial minorities. In \textit{Isto é São Paulo} photographs of new construction, civic planning, and urban living belie the manpower required to erect these economic and social structures. Brill’s is not the sterilized version privileged in print.

Similar comparisons abound. At the newly inaugurated Pacaembu stadium Brill photographs soccer fans frontally and from a relatively near position (fig. 8). Although the crowd is made up entirely of men, Brill captures a cross-section of colors and comportments. Her subject is a group of individual spectators rather than a single agglomeration. The corresponding image from \textit{Isto é São Paulo} is taken from a greater distance with the spectators’ backs facing the camera (fig. 9). In this image the crowd is a mass with no differentiating features. The accompanying caption states, “Tens of thousands of spectators are attracted by exciting matches”; In \textit{Isto é São Paulo} volume supplants personality.\textsuperscript{20} Corroborating this observation are charts at the front of the book which rank São Paulo against other great Pan-American cities. At the time it was the sixth largest city on both American continents—ahead of Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Detroit—the third largest in South America—just below the then-national capital Rio de Janeiro—and the city with the

\textsuperscript{19} “São Paulo Timeline Diagram,” \textit{Skyscraperpage.com}, http://skyscraperpage.com/diagrams/?cityID=909&searchname=timeline. The Banco de Brasil building was not finished until 1955, even though the IMS dates it as c. 1953. Still, this picture would probably not have been taken until after the São Paulo project had already been abandoned, but during the period in which Brill was still working with Bardi on \textit{Habitat}. Even though it could not have been included in the book, I decided to include the image here because it is indicative of Brill’s style and parallels so nicely the photograph from \textit{Isto é São Paulo}.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Isto é São Paulo}, 45.
largest percentage growth, 67.95% between 1940 and 1950.\footnote{Isto é São Paulo, 16. The Portuguese text reads, “Dezenas e dezenas de milhares de espectadores acompanham, atentamente, das modernas arquibancadas, o desenrolar das empolgantes pugnas esportivas.” Notice that the Portuguese texts emphasizes the “modern” architecture, which does seem to dominate the miniscule human figures in the photo.} *Isto é São Paulo* makes clear that mass production, driven by large working classes like those in the photo, is the key to these successes. Brill, however, grants autonomy to her subjects by asserting their individuality.

In addition to leisure activities, *Isto é São Paulo* gives attention to how life is affected by production and consumption, the basis of modern capitalism. The caption of one photograph reads, “The midday sun creates strange contrasts in the streets (fig. 11).”\footnote{Isto é São Paulo, 16.} In the accompanying image pedestrians roam busy boulevards entering and exiting office buildings and retail establishments. The city center appears as a men-only zone, dotted with individuals in black and white suits whose coloration mimics their surroundings. The effect created on the shade-striped street is visually intriguing, but not particularly human. On the other hand, Brill’s shot of the Rua Direita shows a mixed crowd of men, women, and children who pass signs advertising “the best stockings” (as melhores meias) and “London Style” (Estilo Londrino) (fig. 10). A few women stop to look at lingerie in a vitrine while others buy a snack from a street vendor. Lush evening light streaks the pedestrian street, adding to the scene’s aesthetic appeal. The tonal contrasts help to illuminate the shoppers, but do not turn the scene into a formal study of light and dark. As with previous photographs human importance is emphasized over *Isto é São Paulo*’s aesthetic didacticism.

In *Isto é São Paulo* images depicting the city as a human environment are in the minority. A mere handful distinguish individuals from the crowd, and even then he or she is almost always of European descent. Between Brill and this book there is a shared interest in showing off a variety of the city’s important commercial buildings and public spaces, like the Valley of Anhangabau, but
this is the extent of their correlation (figs. 12 and 13). Brill demonstrates a consistent interest in São Paulo’s inhabitants, how they interacted with each other and with the city. This may be explained in part by the two projects’ different theses: Brill was commissioned to create a tribute to São Paulo’s citizens, while the title of Isto é São Paulo suggests that its focus was on the city itself. In any case, the popular press of the 1950s simply did not acknowledge minority communities, carrying on turn of the century conventions that whitewashed the Brazilian ethnic identity.

As individuals Brill’s contemporaries, from photojournalists and commercial photographers to those who practiced photography as a fine art, paid varying degrees of attention to the ethnic communities. There are almost no photographs of Afro-Brazilians in São Paulo from the late 1920s through the 1940s. Even though black Brazilians were flooding the city, photographers and like Hildegarde Rosenthal and Thomas Farkaz, both immigrants to Brazil, do not seem to have paid particular attention to the Afro-Brazilian community, although Rosenthal took a few photographs of Japanese immigrants in São Paulo. In the 1950s photographers Hans Gunter Flieg, Henri Ballot, and Francisco Albuquerque, continued this trajectory. The sporadic appearance of Afro-Brazilians in their published works is better than the record of previous decades, but still infrequent. Perhaps they, like Brill, felt some connection to this displaced community, were fascinated by its exotic appeal, or were simply responding the increasing numbers of Afro-Brazilians who had now proliferated to the point that they could be easily edited out.

Where others passively included or actively excluded members of marginalized communities Brill’s photographs documented human presence in the city, in all of its racially and socio-economically varied forms. The São Paulo photographs demonstrate that she was not also,

---

I have given only a few examples of pictures whose narrative content seems to coincide. A careful study reveals many more such pairings.
but *especially* interested in understanding the cultural dynamics which linked the city’s various groups. This effort to illustrate a broad cross-section of Brazilian hybridity can attributed to her transnational background and training.

**International Upbringing**

Brill arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1934 as a thirteen-year-old escaping the Nazi regime. She was one of about 8,000 Jews who entered Brazil between 1933 and 1939; only the United States and Argentina received more. Brill entered Brazil with her father Erich Brill, an artist and amateur photographer. In São Paulo, Brill’s mother Marte awaited the arrival of her daughter and estranged husband. Unlike later immigrants, whose postwar migration was realized alongside other European immigrants with technical training, most people entering Brazil in the era immediately preceding World War II were refugees. Between 1900 and 1940 immigration and urban migration caused São Paulo to grow from a city of less than 240,000 people to almost one and a half million. While much of this growth was due to an influx of immigrants, urban migration—especially of Afro-Brazilians—within Brazil also brought huge numbers of people to the city. Brill’s parents were more highly educated than many of their fellow escapees, but contemporary misperceptions about immigrants and the sheer volume of those entering meant that many, including Brill, were disparaged and mistreated.

Before arriving in Brazil, Brill spent most of her life in Germany. She was born in Cologne in 1920. In 1933, shortly after her twelfth birthday and Hitler’s election, Alice and Marte left. They

---

24 Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro’s *Brasil, um refúgio nos trópicos/Brazilien, Fluchtpunkt in den Tropen* (São Paulo: Editora Estação Líberdade, 1996), a transnational publication, explores the Jew’s journey to Brazil and the lives of immigrants created there. One section specifically explores the contributions of Jewish photographers. Although Brill is not among them, this was one of the first publications to highlight many of her contemporaries.

25 Jewish immigration to Brazil during the twentieth century began in the mid-1920s when approximately 13 percent of all Jews emigrating from Europe went to Brazil. In the early 1930s thousands entered first from Eastern, and then from Central Europe. Like Brill, most were fleeing Nazism.

26 Carlos A. C. Lemos, “Paisagem Arquitetônica,” in *Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: São Paulo, 430* (see note 17), 351.

fled to Malaga, then Barcelona, Majorca, Geneva, and Florence but were forced to return home when Marte was unable to find work in any of these places. Throughout the difficult journey the twelve-year-old Alice documented her travels with a Bela Box camera given to her by her father (figs. 14 and 15).

Erich Brill was the consummate bohemian artist. Born into Hamburg’s upper middle class, he left the family business to study art in Berlin, much to the chagrin of his conservative father. Erich married Marte for propriety’s sake when she became pregnant with Alice. The baby was born on December 13 and by the end of the year the couple had already separated. Erich could not bear being confined. Alice later characterized Erich as, “an observer of life,” who “loved to study the contrasting costumes, types, and landscapes of different countries.” Exhibiting works which echoed the styles of contemporary German groups like Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter, Erich garnered critical praise in his homeland before embarking on tours of Europe and the Middle East in 1922 and 1924. While abroad, Eric produced photographs of his journeys, some of which were published in magazines like Hamburger Fremdenblatt, a serial marketed to German Jews (fig. 16). The photographs provided much-needed income for the literally starving artist. He never achieved great renown, but Erich’s acceptance in European and, subsequently, Brazilian artistic circles later afforded his daughter access to the São Paulo art groups.

Marte was an equally important and more stable influence on Alice’s early artistic development. Although she earned a PhD in Economics, writing her dissertation on the cotton textile trade in India, Marte worked primarily as a journalist to provide for herself and her

---

28 Even though he was an absentee father, Erich was massively important to Brill’s artistic development. I have written about Brill’s relationship with her father in another paper, Let Me Be Your Father Figure, or The Patriarchal Male in Alice Brill’s São Paulo Photographs, and hope to include more on Erich in future writings on Bill.
30 He traded paintings for passages and stopping in Egypt, Palestine, Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, and Holland, where Alice met him to travel to Brazil. Alarcon, 39.
daughter. She also traveled extensively for research, visiting Palestine in 1925, later Positano and Paris. Many years later Alice recognized in her own artistic career an effort to unite the visual and literary ambitions of her parents.

Alice’s early artistic efforts, including her photographs taken while traveling Europe with her mother and sketches produced under the tutelage of her father in Rio de Janeiro, demonstrate Brill’s fascination with the exotic and a consciousness of her role as an observer of various “others.” Says Daniela Alarcon, “Alice lingered in the streets. She was attracted to ‘firsts’ (to her foreign and adolescent eyes): camels, Mediterranean trees, women covered from head to foot. But another fascination—which would persist in her adult work—competes with this attraction to the exotic: an attraction to the geometric city grid.” Even as a youth Alice was divided between depicting the romantic charm of the various peoples she encountered and geometric formalism.

The effect of Brill’s European youth on her subsequent work is difficult to measure. She left Germany almost too young to remember her native land but old enough to sense its absence. Her feelings of displacement were exacerbated by the fact that she and her mother’s professional and personal contacts were almost exclusively foreigners. In Brazil Europeans were often considered superior, in terms of art and culture, by the native paulistanos. By Marte’s own analysis, Alice’s innate aesthetic sensitivity, derived from her cultural heritage, surfaced in the art she created in São Paulo: “That which Alice brought as her inheritance, which she had absorbed in her

---

31 Marte worked for the Hamburg-Südamerika Shipping Company’s travel magazine and was often paid in travel credit. While she was abroad Alice stayed with her paternal grandmother. It was through the shipping company that Marte obtained passages to leave Germany for Spain and eventually Brazil. Of her mother Alice said, “Although I was on good terms with my father’s family, I was especially attached to my mother, as we enjoyed a close emotional and intellectual relationship.” Brill, “Memories from 1933-45,” 148.

32 Alarcon, 46.

33 “Nas fotografias, Alice se demora pelas ruas. É atraída pelos ineditismos (ao seu olhar estrangeiro e adolescente): camelos, árvores mediterrâneas, mulheres cobertas da cabeça aos pés. Mas outro fascínio – que persistirá em sua obra adulta – dilui a atração imediata pelo exótico: a cidade em sua geometria salpicada de gente.” Alarcon, 56. Alice took at least some of the photographs as a part of an assignment given by her school before she left Germany: if she documented her voyage and sent back her reports, she would be held back a year when she returned. Of course, Alice never returned to school in Germany and many of the reports stayed in her possession.
infancy in her liminal consciousness, the events and impressions that fixed themselves in her mind during her travels through Europe, all returned . . . Everything came now in pictures, in color and form.‖34 Alice’s artistic capability was part birthright and part product of her international exodus.35

Art Study in São Paulo

Alice was unable to attend school regularly from March 1933, when (at only twelve-years-old) her mother took her out of school, to 1935 when she finally settled in São Paulo. Alice learned Portuguese from her mother, a polyglot who spoke eight languages. Still a young girl, Alice’s first job was teaching German to the children of a cosmopolitan paulistano family. An invitation to live with relatives in the United States led Alice to enroll in São Paulo’s American Graded School between 1936 and 1937. There she learned English but ultimately decided to stay with her mother in Brazil instead of traveling abroad. Unable to adjust and missing the European art scene, Erich returned to Germany in 1936. In 1937 he was imprisoned and in 1941 executed at Jungfernhof; his family did not receive notice of his death until 1946.36 After 1936 Alice and Marte were alone in Brazil, with few friends and no family.

As a teenager Brill struggled with feelings of abandonment caused by the departure of her father and her inability to connect with either Brazilians or other immigrants. She remembered, “My mother was against all types of isolation in small groups, so much so that she did not permit me . . . to participate in the [Brazilian] Jewish-German community. I felt this loss, since at that time I was still considered a foreigner and I would have liked to have comrades with a common

34 “O que [Alice] trazia em si como herança, o que absorvera na tenra infância, ainda no limiar da consciência, os acontecimentos e impressões que se fixaram em sua mente durante aquelas viagens por países da Europa . . . Agora via tudo em pinturas, em cor e forma,” Alarcon, 92.
35 Alice gives a more detailed account of her time traveling Europe, her mother’s projects, their departure from Germany and transition to life in Brazil in “Memories from 1933-145.”
36 Alarcon, 106.
Marte’s motivation for separating her daughter from their ethnic community may have sprung from her staunch Socialist egalitarianism. It may also have been precautionary. Although not practicing Jews, the Brills were still Jews, and in Brazil, “Jews [we]re not Jewish-Brazilians but simply ‘Jews’.”

Brazilians received the Jewish community uneasily. Notes historian Jeffery Lesser, “On the one hand Brazil provided a refuge in which Jews prospered. On the other hand, at least through 1945 a negatively constructed Jewish Question was a large part of Brazilian political rhetoric.” European anti-Semitism and “an inaccurate image of Jewish life outside of Brazil” fueled “harsh and unrealistic judgments.” Jews faced rhetorical opposition because they did not fit the elite idea that Brazilians were white and Catholic, but many were able to exploit stereotypes of Jewish intelligence, work ethic, and business acumen which, coupled with pale skin, allowed them to

---

37 “Minha mãe era contra todo tipo de isolamento em grupos pequenos, de modo que ela não me permitiu [...], participar da comunidade judaica-alemã. Eu senti falta disso, já que naquela época eu ainda era uma estrangeira, e teria gostado de ter camaradas com um destino comum.” Alarcon, 95.


Alice stated in “Memories from 1933-45” that her mother was “very interested in all Jewish matters, even mysticism” and that they celebrated the Jewish holidays of Rosh Hoshannah and Yom Kippur while in exile in Florence. The latter events left a deep impression on the young girl, who “wept with emotion” even though she did not understand the words of the prayers. “This Yom Kippur, 1933, we felt reconciled with God, men, and our destiny,” she wrote in her journal. The dislocation from home and simultaneous recognition of her ancestral culture must have been overwhelming, considering her assertion that she did not realize she was Jewish until Hitler’s persecution of the Jews precipitated her flight from Germany. 148-52.

39 Jeffrey Lesser, Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 11. The policies Lesser cites are probably things like the immigration quota Vargas imposed in 1934. However, the efficacy these government actions is questioned by historians. According to Thomas E. Skidmore, quotas were rarely enforced and when the political party Ação Integralista Brasileira began reprinting Nazi propaganda, the Vargas government took action, suppressing all Nazi activity in Brazil by 1938, see Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 206. Nelson Vieira gives a bleaker view of the Jewish plight in period, citing specific instances of state-backed discrimination in Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature: A Prophetic Discourse of Alterity (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), 9.

40 Jeffrey Lesser, Negotiating National Identity, 9.
operate in Brazilian society with a great degree of freedom. Brill was especially disadvantaged since, in spite of his Nazi sympathies, President Vargas was persuaded to support the Allies during the war. German immigrants were subsequently viewed as dubious characters by some Brazilians. Brill was doubly suspicious, discriminated against for her race (Jewish) and her nationality (German).

Financial and political restraints meant that Brill’s educational opportunities were limited and she never enrolled in high school. At the end of 1937, to supplement Marte’s meager income, Alice took a job in a fine arts bookshop run by a fellow Jewish-German refugee Heinrich Veit. As Brill’s close friend and fellow immigrant Eva Lieblich Fernandes attested, the Jewish community was eager for a cultural education and disappointed by the dearth of opportunities:

The conditions of that time were very different, university and high school education, were not something usual among women . . . There came an opportunity [for Alice] to work in the Guatapará bookstore owned by another German Jew . . . It was a specialty bookstore, selling imported books, above all literature and beautiful art books. Alice’s mother . . . saw in this opportunity, besides a kind boss, the possibility of instruction, of intellectual formation, a type of high school substitute, unfortunately beyond the contemplation of her daughter.

---

"Again, there is debate on this point. In “Jewish Brazilians or Brazilian Jews,” Lesser states, “In Brazil the imagined Jew, not the real one, seems to have been considered the danger,” 69-70. On the other hand, Nelson Vieira suggests that Jewish cultural producers lived in fear of anti-Semitic agitators, especially during periods in which Brazil was governed by dictatorships, in Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature: A Prophetic Discourse of Alterity, 2-3.


"Brill felt the sting of prejudice when she was fired from a secretarial job after just three months because of her German heritage. Brill said she was “an enemy of the English, even though the Germans had long ago canceled my citizenship.” “Betrayed and discouraged” she immersed herself in her artistic pursuits, where she found both acceptance and inspiration. “Eu era agora inimiga dos ingleses, apesar de os alemães terem há muito cancelado nossa cidadania. Eu me senti traída e desamparada.” Alarcon, 97.

"Brill’s mother, Marte, was among the earliest of the well-educated Europeans to emigrate to Brazil. Even with an advanced degree, in Brazil Marte was forced to provide for her daughter through a series of secretarial jobs.

"Beginning around 1930, the antiquities and art market grew as European immigrants, especially Jews, set up import companies in São Paulo. The market only expanded in the late 1940s and early 1950s with the devastation of the European art market. Alarcon, 92.

"The original text reads: “As condições de vida daquele tempo eram bastante diferentes. Formação universitária, estudo superior não eram algo usual entre as mulheres . . . Surgiu a oportunidade de trabalhar na livraria Guatapará . . . Era livraria especial, vendia livros importados, sobretudo de literatura e lindos livros de arte. A mãe de Alice, Marte Brill, jornalista e escritora, via nessa oportunidade, além de um emprego simpático, a possibilidade de instrução, de formação intelectual, uma espécie de substitutivo de curso superior, infelizmente então fora de cogitação para a filha.” Fernandes, 15-17."
Working in the shop exposed Alice to Brazilian contemporary artists and reproductions of European works raging from the Old Masters to the Pre-Raphaelites to the Modernists. Chagall, Van Gogh, and Gauguin became her favorites; their exoticism paralleled her own international experience leaving cold Germany for tropical Brazil. 47

Many of the bookstore’s patrons were members of the São Paulo art community and former friends of Brill’s father. These important contacts helped mitigate the many obstacles preventing Brill from entering the art world. Two of the most important were Paulo Rossi Osir and Francisco Rebolo Gonsales, second generation Brazilians and paulistanos of European stock. Rossi Osir was one of the last Brazilian artists of the early twentieth century to study in Europe, as had most of his coffee-fortune aristocrat peers. 48 For several decades after the internationally devastating 1929 stock market crash which evaporated the fortunes of many of the Brazilian elites, few artists went abroad to study. Sixteen-year-old Alice timidly showed Rossi Osir her sketches and was delighted by the invitation to study with him in his downtown studio.

Rossi Osir’s contemporary, Rebolo, was one of the founders of the Grupo Santa Helena, Brazilian painters who, the in the absence of institutions for formal artistic training, banded together to critique each other’s work. With the group Brill learned to sketch from reproductions of old masterworks and participated in live-model and plein aire sessions. 49 Few of Rebolo’s

47 Alarcon, 118.
48 The first generation modernists also had strong connections to photography. Esther Gabara’s book *Errant Modernism: The Ethos of Photography in Mexico and Brazil* explores the photography of Mario de Andrade, a prominent modernist writer. Andrade’s photography was in a much different vein than Brill’s, however, Claude Lévi-Strauss, who lived briefly in Brazil and associated with Andrade, photographed São Paulo between 1935 and 1937. Formally his images are more like Brill’s than Andrade’s, demonstrating the European underpinnings of mid-century photojournalism. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Saudades de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Editora Schwartz, 1996).
49 Tracing the trajectory of Brill’s artistic training and subsequent photographic career is problematized by the fact that she always viewed herself as a painter rather than a photographer. She dedicated a relatively small portion of her career to photography, viewed it as a money-making enterprise, and never took even a family snapshot after 1965. Brill used photography to sustain her family while her husband completed medical school, afterwards returning to painting. Although she exhibited as a painter throughout her later life, in recent years her photography has garnered increasing
generation had studied in Europe, but they managed to bridge the gap between the generation of artists who did go abroad and Brill’s generation of artists who were European by studying imported prints and art texts like those at Alice’s shop. Rossi Osir and Rebolo were more than technical mentors for the aspiring artist, they were also socially connected to the larger Brazilian arts community. The art network into which they introduced Alice eventually brought her work, acclaim, and her acquaintance with the Bardis.

**New Mexico and New York**

Just after Alice left Germany for Brazil, her relatives, including her paternal grandmother, emigrated to the United States. Through these relatives Brill won a scholarship from the American-based Hillel Foundation which allowed her to study at the University of New Mexico and later at Art Students League in New York. In September 1946, at age twenty-five, Alice left Brazil and traveled by boat up the Atlantic coast, through the Bahamas, to the United States. Notes and sketches she made along the way record the Pan-American landscape. The same insecurity which plagued Marte traveling in the 1930s followed Alice on her own transcontinental voyage. Alice was not sure if she would eventually return to Brazil, or stay and build her artistic career in the United States.50

For Brill, training in the United States offered three distinct advantages. First, the United States, like Brazil, was a country where colonizers and the colonized both contributed the national identity. Brill was deeply interested in American indigenous cultures, and the proximity to Navajo and Apache lands was the primary reason she was sent to the University of New Mexico.51 Between classes, Brill took walks in the desert with her camera, toured surrounding pueblos, and visited the artist’s colony at Taos. She drew, photographed, and made linocuts featuring Native American

---

50 Alarcon, 124.
51 Alarcon, 126.
religious rituals and ceremonial dances (fig. 17). She aspired to cross the Rio Bravo to study the native traditions of Mexico, another nation whose rich pre-colonial past intrigued her. Like Brazil, America was a land of immigrants, so Brill was not burdened with trying to negotiate a monolithic cultural tradition. She even wrote an art history paper on the German expatriate artists Arthur Kauffmann and Max Ernst demonstrating her interest in immigrant identities. Much of the work she produced in New Mexico centers on themes of indigenousness and immigration, which Brill felt were essential to understanding her own personal identity. “[My work] has more of me than before,” she wrote home.

A second advantage to studying in the United States was the nation’s growing artistic reputation, especially in photography. Brill had never received photographic training before coming to the University of New Mexico. It was still many years before the school would gain prominence in the field, but professor’s expectations were high. Classes covered both theory and technique, requiring that students memorize filters and lenses, know the specific problems of each, and create photographs using a range of techniques. One extant image from this period, a wide-

---

22 Although Ernst was living in Arizona at the time, there is no indication that he and Brill ever met.
23 Alarcon, 131. She wrote this phrase in a letter to Juljan after submitting pieces to the University Art Department’s annual show.
24 European influence on the Brazilian art world, although still prevalent, was waning and American influence was growing. During the 1940s fear that Brazil would use its increasing industrial might to support the Axis led the United States to instate the Good Neighbor Policy, which actively courted Latin America countries economically, politically, and culturally. The United States’ goal was popular support for their international policies, thus the majority of political forays into Brazil were made using mass media outlets. Although the result was increased sympathy between their publics, Brazilian elites were wary of Americans’ clichéd interpretations of their country. Assis Chateaubriand, the Bardis’ close friend and colleague, was among the critics of American cultural imports. As a result of upper-class disapproval, European aesthetics continued to be more important to Brazilian artistic production until the 1960s. Thus training in the United States, although not as chic, was nonetheless important to Brill’s artistic formation and the development of her global perspective. A contextualized discussion of the development of US-Brazilian relations is found in: Darlene J. Sadlier, “Good Neighbor Brazil,” in Brazil Imagined: 1500 to the Present (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), 209-233. Sadlier also touches upon the exclusive nature of German immigrants in Brazil, some of whom carried with them Nazi affinities. Although Brill, a Jew, would not have associated with these groups, it demonstrates the continuance of European identities among immigrant groups.
25 Alarcon, 141. Although her registration records are unavailable, letters home reveal that she began taking classes in the subject during her year in New Mexico. Daniela Alarcon worked closely with Brill's family while compiling her thesis. She gained their trust and was allowed access to Brill’s private papers, which have never been published and were not available to me as a brief visitor in their private circle. As such, I rely upon her transcriptions and quotations from Brill’s letters.
angle landscape of the Grand Canyon, demonstrates Brills’ interest in the expressive qualities of the desert environment (fig. 18).

The third great advantage to life in the United States was the ability to study art full-time. In São Paulo art was a privilege saved for the hours after work and school. Writing to her fiancé Juljan Czapski in Brazil, Brill said, “I hope I never again have to return to office life. Now, seeing it from a distance, it seems a true hell.” Brill immersed herself in artistic, academic, and activist activities. She participated in debates with the University Women’s Association and the Pan-American Association, speaking on the art community in Brazil, European politics, and the status of women in Brazil and Latin America (fig. 19). Her involvement in these communities coincided with a developing interest in leftist political ideals which began in New Mexico and grew stronger in New York. In spite of the opportunities it presented, America seemed too capitalistic and too individualistic to the young artist. She began to realize the extent to which Brazil had become home.

In July 1947 Brill traveled to New York, where she stayed with relatives while continuing her studies. In the city her art and political ideologies further intertwined. She expressed frustration with the artistic and economic selfishness she witnessed writing:

> Even in art, I believe that the era of pure individualism has passed. I don’t see any sense in an artist who produces alone, for no one. Who will use their art? The rich man in his salon, a museum after [the artist’s] death. There has to be an art for all: a collaboration of...
all the arts to create a more beautiful world that serves everyone, for example, modern cities created through the common effort of artists and architects, mural painting, etc. Brill believed that art had a public responsibility to educate and uplift: it was more important to be accessible than esoteric. At times she contemplated leaving the self-absorbed art world, but decided to pursue photography because she valued its usefulness and democratic appeal.

In New York photography classes and materials were too expensive for Brill to afford. To continue her training, she accepted a position as an assistant to an unknown photographer. With him she learned the basics of portrait photography and went on photographing excursions in the city. She planned an exhibition of the photographer’s work, gaining insights into curating and display. Brill also met with photographic agencies attempting to establish formal business relationships. She hoped to take pictures in South America and send them north for publication in American illustrated magazines. Her contacts told her that content was key, and that she must learn to see what the American public desired. Animated by the prospect of a transnational career Brill wrote, “They [Americans] want things that are alive, not just pretty pictures, preferably: education, industry, agriculture, churches.”

Although never published in the United States, Brill’s first photo-essays in Brazil, featuring Brazilian Indians and southern coal miners, reflected American preferences. Brill’s correspondence reveals that she hoped to sell images from her trip to Mato Grosso and the Carajá peoples of modern-day Tocantins to *Life* magazine. However, her efforts to market the images

---

29 “Mesmo em arte, creio que o tempo do individualismo puro passou. Não vejo sentido num artista que produz sozinho, para ninguém. Quem vai usar sua arte? O rico no seu salão, um museu depois de sua morte. Há de ter uma arte para todos: colaboração de todas as artes para produzir um mundo mais belo a serviço de todos, por ex. cidades modernas criadas por esforço comum dos arquitetos e artistas, pintura mural, etc.” Alarcon, 138.
30 Alarcon, 142.
32 Brill received the commissions while staying with a friend in Brazil’s then-political and cultural capital of Rio de Janeiro in July 1948, shortly after her return from the United States.
33 Alarcon, 151.
were frustrated both in Brazil and the United States. Bardi published a few pictures in Habitat, but editors on both North and South American continents balked at the immodesty of Brill’s submissions (fig. 20).

Shortly after returning from her first documentary expedition, Brill and Juljan traveled to the Paraná state interior. There Brill became interested in the lives of coal miners many of whom, sans labor laws to protect them, worked at young ages in horrible conditions (figs. 21 and 22). Reminiscent of the works of Lewis Hine, and congruent with American tastes in that sense, Brill was still unable to find a publisher for her images because, she guessed, they lacked the exoticism Americans expected in pictures of Brazil.\(^4\) In spite of their limited publication these early photo-essays demonstrate the connection between what Brill saw in America, both in terms of photographic style and cultural diversity, and what she recorded in Brazil. The documentary impulse so prevalent in the United States, the native peoples she encountered in New Mexico, and the rhetoric of social equality to which she was exposed all translated into her work for Habitat and the São Paulo project. Just as she transitioned from New Mexico to New York, she would later move from photographing rural Mato Grosso to urban São Paulo.

Brill’s taste for the American was also cultivated during her time at the Art Students League. The institution’s prestige and nationalistic bent was indicated by its promotion as “the most distinguished names in the art of America.”\(^5\) Brill enrolled in life drawing with Will Barnet, Louis Bouché, and Sidney Laufman, and a graphics course taught by Adams Garrett.\(^6\) She experimented with serial production, including intaglio processes, while training with individuals whose figurative and landscape works were keenly attuned to contemporary social discourse. Progressive themes in the artwork of her mentors epitomized the mission of the school to

\(^4\) Alarcon, 158.
\(^6\) Registration information gathered from Brill’s enrollment card, available in the Art Students League archives.
“embody the most liberal, democratic and progressive ideas in art.”67 The League provided, and Brill selected, teachers whose documentary regionalism celebrated the American landscape and people, rather than propagating the heady individualism of modernist abstraction which Brill distrusted.

When she arrived in New York, Brill wrote to Juljan: “Here there are people, intellectuals and artists who think and feel as I do, who fight for human ideals, against hunger and materialism, here I am at home.”68 However, in other letters Brill compares herself to the mythological figure of the “wandering Jew” condemned to roam eternally. She acknowledged an “out-of-placeness,” a lack of national identity, and separation from both European and Brazilian cultures. This instability became a trope in the images she later produced while collaborating with the Bardis.69

Missing her family, Brill returned to São Paulo in January 1948.

**The Bardis as Transnationals**

By the time the Bardis arrived in Brazil in 1946, twelve years after Brill, the national culture had changed materially.70 Unlike earlier refugees, many postwar immigrants were skilled
professionals; Lina was a practicing architect and journalist before leaving Italy and Pietro Maria was a recognized art critic. In 1951, only five years after immigrating, they were already naturalized citizens. Lina would later say, “When we are born, we choose nothing, it is all accident. I was not born in this place, I chose to live here. For this reason Brazil is twice my country, it is my ‘Chosen Nation,’ and I feel myself a citizen of all of its cities.” Her enthusiasm for Brazil is easy to understand: upon landing in Rio de Janeiro, Lina and Pietro Maria were immediately thronged by members of the Brazilian cultural aristocracy. Architects Lúcio Costa and Oscar Neimeyer, landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, and the politician/publisher/jack-of-all-trades Assis Chateaubriand quickly accepted the Bardis into their circles. Chateaubriand invited Pietro Maria to co-found and direct the MASP.

Brill and the Bardis’ shared immigrant experience made them similar in some respects, but fundamentally different in others. Both were progressive, but Brill seems to have felt a direct connection with marginalized classes, the empathy of shared experience, while the Bardis’s compassion was more intellectual and generalized. Bardi’s writings outline his intertwining social

this period is indexed in the Photographer’s Encyclopedia International and most have only recently begun to be exhibited. See Michele Auer and Michel Auer, Encyclopédie Internationale des Photographes de 1839 a nos Jours (Hermance, Switzerland: Editions Camera Obscura, 1985).

Han’s Gunter Flieg’s work was displayed for the first time in an exhibition at the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, a truly transnational undertaking since his archives are housed with Brill’s and Rosenthal’s in the IMS in São Paulo. The exhibition catalog was published as Ingrid Mössinger and Katharina Metz, Haus Günther Flieg: Documentary Photography from Brazil (1940-1970) (Bielefeld, Germany: Kerber PhotoArt, 2008). The work of Hildegarde Rosenthal, perhaps the most well known of the three, was shown by the IMS in 1999. A catalog with selected images was published in conjunction with the show as Antonia Fernando de Franceschi, Hildegarde Rosenthal: Cenas Urbanas (São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 1998). Rosenthal is the only one of the three to have been written about by an American scholar, David William Foster, in “Downtown in São Paulo with Hildegard Rosenthal’s Camera,” Luso-Brazilian Review, 42, No. 1 (2005), 118-135.

71 Instituto Lina Bo e P. M. Bardi, “Biografia—Lina: da Itália para o Brasil” http://www.institutobardi.com.br/linha/biografia/index.html (accessed 6 December 2011). The site also includes a brief biography of Pietro Maria and information on the couple’s various projects. The most easily accessible reference information on Brill, the Bards, and their Brazilian colleagues is available through http://www.itaucultural.org.br/. See also Silvana Rubino and Marina Grinover, Lina por escrito: textos escolhidos de Lina Bo Bardi (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2009). Although the book is primarily a collection of Lina’s writings about her architecture projects, it demonstrates a cognizance of her role as a European-Brazilian cultural translator and interpreter.

72 Instituto Lina Bo e P. M. Bardi.

73 “Quando a gente nasce, não escolhe nada, nasce por acaso. Eu não nasci aqui, escolhi esse lugar para viver. Por isso, o Brasil é meu país duas vezes, é minha ‘Pátria de Escolha’, e eu me sinto cidadã de todas as cidades.” Instituto Lina Bo e P. M. Bardi.
and cultural ideas. They also demonstrate how his populist views intersected with his internationalism. The theoretical basis for the MASP, for example, shows a cognizance of the artistic communities in both the Europe and United States. Bardi drew from these models in his attempt to shape the Brazilian artistic conscious. For years he traveled back and forth between Europe and South America collecting pieces for his new modern museum. European traditions dominated Brazilian art theory and practice, European immigrants held prominent positions in the artistic community, and the Brazilian avant-garde’s continued to depended on European techniques. Aristocrat-turned-essayist Paulo Prado quipped, “In this country which has practically everything, we import everything: from Paris fashions—ideas and clothes—to broom handles and toothpicks.”

However, Bardi did not advocate a simple, unilateral transfusion of European ideals into Brazilian culture. The Bardis brought aspects of the Old World with them to Brazil, but saw their relocation as an opportunity to rectify some of the self-indulgent excesses of the European artistic tradition. In 1956 Bardi published The Arts in Brazil: A New Museum, a treatise describing the state of the Brazilian art world. Published in Italy in English and Italian, the book was directed at European audiences and meant to call attention to progressive art practices in Brazil. In it Bardi attacked deficiencies of the European art system and defended alternative methodologies in use at the MASP. His major theme was the oppressive weight of European history and the need to re-create, re-energize, and make relevant the contemporary art dialogue. He described museums as “dusty, dimly lit” places with the odor of “staleness” and “moth balls.” Stagnancy, he believed, “smothers the vital flame” of art works and the curiosity of the public. According to Bardi, the

---

74 Skidmore, 204.
75 Pietro Maria Bardi, The Arts in Brazil: A New Museum at São Paulo, trans. John Drummond (Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1956), 9. Bardi’s exact words are: “‘Museum’ is a fine word in itself, evoking thoughts of myth and legend, and the romantic idea of reverence for the vestiges of the past, even though it may have lost something of its glamour, especially in Europe, through the inroads of bureaucracy and its exploitation as a tourist attraction.”
sheer volume of works in European collections, housed in buildings that were not designed as museums, prevented the arts from progressing into the modern era.  

In contrast, Bardi felt that the strength of São Paulo’s art community lay in its youthful freshness and zeal. The electric growth of the Brazilian economy enabled new museums to be founded in spaces designed for the sole purpose of displaying art. The MASP, for example, was the first Brazilian institution interested in collecting modern art and ran extensive educational and technical programs geared toward raising awareness about the arts and integrating artistic disciplines. Bardi believed that art spaces should be engineered to fit the tempo of industrial life. He bemoaned, “How is it that when it is a question of showing industrial products at a trade fair the best architects, designers and artists are immediately called in? But when a masterpiece of Orcagna is to be shown, a nail in the wall, and possibly a strip of faded velvet, is thought quite sufficient.” Bardi did not object to the narrative of western art, only the way it was displayed for contemporary audiences. His desire for the arts to cultivate a more democratic appeal, may be part of the reason that he was so interested in creating an art book that spoke to and about common people. Although socially distanced from the middle and lower classes, Bardi felt an obligation to promote inclusion. 

Bardi advocated looking to the more egalitarian United States as a cultural model, perhaps because he saw it as a less class-stratified. Museological models emerging in the United States echoed Bardi’s belief that the highest goal of art was utility, and that art and life were one.
Democratic as this approach may seem, Bardi’s theories were at times problematic. He and Lina both praised Brazil’s “purity” and “primitiveness” in their writing. Through vacillating veneration and patronization, the Bardis’ recurring thesis is that Brazil must embrace the native “essentialist” nature which was the “country’s genuine force” and simultaneously “be au courant with international developments.” This was “the base of the new cultural action.” Decades before its emergence as a force in the world art market, the Bardis saw Brazil’s potential as an international power.

**Habitat and the Illustrated Magazine**

Considering the Bardi’s desire to be internationally minded and nationally specific, it is no surprise that their major collaborative project was an illustrated magazine. *Habitat* was founded in 1950 during the renaissance of Brazilian photojournalism. Ever since their emergence in the late 1920s illustrated magazines had been a major forum for Brazilian intellectuals. As scholar Esther Gabara explained, even before the debut of illustrated magazines in Brazil, the regional “theory of modernism [was] contained in the contact—material and conceptual—between image and word.” The juxtaposition of word and image coincided with the juxtaposition of global and local in these serial publications. A major attribute of the illustrated magazine was its emphasis on regional

---

79 *The Arts in Brazil*, 18. Bardi wrote that in America “the concept of the museum has been broadened, making it a center of a variety of cultural activities with special emphasis on the unity of the arts.”
80 As late as 1991 Lina insisted, in Gauguinesque form, that “Brazil is free, it has no cultural foundation, it’s also a little crazy, it has aspects of beautiful craziness” (O Brasil é livre, não tem formação cultural, é praticamente um pouco louco também, tem aspetos de loucura belíssimos). Lina Bo Bardi, “Conferência no XIII Congresso Brasileiro de Arquitetos,” in Rubino and Grinover, 180.
81 Lina, however, also admonished, “above all, do not diminish or elementarize the problems [of Modern art], presenting them to the people like a tasteless and nutritionless food” (Não diminuir ou elementalizar os problemas, apresentando-os ao povo como um alimento insoso e desvitalizado). Although she considered Brazilian art “primitive” she did not think the Brazilian people incapable of understanding contemporary art. Lina Bo Bardi, “Cultura e não cultura,” in Rubino and Grinover, 89.
82 Rubino and Grinover, 89.
83 Rubino and Grinover, 89.
84 Esther Gabara, *Errant Modernism: The Ethos of Photography in Mexico and Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 3. Here I am thinking of the collaborations of Tarsila do Amaral and Oswald de Andrade. Gabara’s text chronicles the contributions of Mario de Andrade, a close friend of Tarsila and Oswald, so it is likely she would agree with my assertion of the congruency of their practices.
cultures and traditions while following international models.\textsuperscript{85} The fundamental contrasts between word and text, national and international, generated tensions in the final product. Thus, “the very definition of modernity in the region [was] out-of-placeness.”\textsuperscript{86}

Out-of-placeness was almost unavoidable for a genre whose basic model was a foreign import. One of the earliest and most famous Brazilian illustrated magazines was \textit{São Paulo}. The first edition of 40,000 copies, printed 31 December 1935, sold out within a week.\textsuperscript{87} The basis of \textit{São Paulo} was the photo-essay, which originated with 1920s German magazines like the \textit{Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung} (BIZ) and photographers like André Kertész.\textsuperscript{88} In the 1920s Germany published

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Gabara, 3. Many preeminent artists and writers contributed to these nationally circulated illustrated magazines including Mario de Andrade, one of the organizers of the vastly important 1922 Modern Art Week [Semana de Arte Moderna]. Andrade was also connected to the Anthropophagist movement along with Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral. This movement dealt with the search for a national artistic and ethnic identity as did Brill and her contemporaries. In fact, the Anthropophagists were the first artistic group to explore many of the questions surrounding Brazil’s hybrid identity that Brill later took up. However, in my opinion, there is little ideological connection between Brill’s work and the work of her predecessors. By the time Brill began her artistic training in the 1940s the Anthropophagists were already considered part of the artistic institution. It was against their gentrified practices that Brill contrasted herself as a working class girl struggling to break into the art community. Furthermore, the Anthropophagists’ project was one which attempted to imagine a Brazilian identity, fundamentally unlike the documentary drive to record. Andrade’s photographic projects, which preceded Brill’s by nearly three decades, illustrate the differences between the approaches of the 1920s and 1950s groups. Andrade sought to “decenter modernism from [the] centers of economic modernization.” In contrast, Brill and her contemporary photojournalists worked extensively in urban settings, their projects stemming from a common concern with defining the local in relation to the global. Because of its colonial heritage, Latin American art generally, and Brazilian art specifically, has often been read as either a reaction against or an adaptation of European motifs. While it would be inappropriate to negate the impact of the European heritage which has been traced in this essay, it would also be inappropriate to assert that Brazilian photography was merely derivative.

\textsuperscript{86} Gabara, 17.

\textsuperscript{87} Angela Magalhães and Nadja Fonsêca Peregrino, \textit{Fotografia no Brasil: Um Olhar das Origens ao Contemporâneo} (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 2004), 54.

\textsuperscript{88} Many of Brill’s photographs recall the urban cityscapes of André Kertesz, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Edward Steichen, and Paul Strand and it is likely that she would have been exposed to their work while in the United States. While it is unknown whether Brill had first-hand knowledge of these photographers before producing the São Paulo photographs, she cites Steiglitz, Strand, and Cartier-Breson specifically in her later book, \textit{Da arte e da linguagem} (On Art and Language) published in 1988. In the volume, Brill discusses the 1920s American and European photojournalists as expert technicians, scientific humanists, and the first great documentary photographers. She specifically mentions Steichens’ 1955 \textit{Family of Man} exhibit, which was similar in concept to her own São Paulo project.

\textit{On Art and Language} was compiled while Brill was working on her PhD in Philosophy (with an emphasis on Art History) which she received in 1994 from the University of São Paulo. In 1988 Editora Perspectiva commissioned from her a volume on their series on art theory. The resulting book contained essays originally published during the 1970s in the newspaper \textit{O Estado de S.Paulo} (São Paulo State). Brill deals with intersections of image and text. Most relevant to my discussion is the essay “Art A Função da Fotografia na Arte Contemporânea” (The Function of Photography in Contemporary Art), \textit{Da arte e da linguagem} (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1988).}
\end{footnotesize}
more illustrated magazines than any other country. By 1930, the combined circulation for German illustrated magazines was more than five million copies with an estimated twenty million readers. Later the genre’s epicenter moved to the United States as a result of the exodus of European intellectuals in the years surrounding World War II. Photojournalism was the visual vernacular of the 1930s, the mass language though which print media interpreted and promulgated contemporary culture.\(^9\) In these massively popular periodicals the visual-textual hybrid photojournalism was born.

When the French photographer Jean Manzon immigrated to Brazil and began working for the magazine *O Cruzeiro* in 1944, he raised the quality standard for Brazilian periodicals. His importance cannot be overstated as he is generally credited with revolutionizing Brazilian photojournalism. Owned by cultural maven, and friend of the Bardis, Assis Chateaubriad, *O Cruzeiro* had been published since 1928 but was revolutionized by its new editor.\(^9\) In France Manzon worked for the magazines *Paris Match* and *Vu*, in Brazil he encouraged his team of reporters to emulate these publications and craft photo-essays based on a variety of subjects from social groups to industry.\(^9\) He ran full-page spreads of images and used as many as forty photographs in a four-page story.\(^9\) *Habitat* followed in the footsteps of this pioneering publication, privileging image over text and developing an interest in ethnographic studies. Both magazines

\(^9\) For a more complete history of *O Cruzeiro* and its impact on Brazilian photography see Nadja Peregrino, *O Cruzeiro: A Revolução da Fotorreportagem* (Rio de Janeiro: Dazibao, 1991). The rise of photojournalism corresponded with the decline of *fotoclubismo*, technically rigorous amateur photography inspired by the Photo Club movement in Europe and the United States. Although length restrictions prohibit a discussion of these important and active Brazilian modernist photographers, their work provides another instance of transatlantic sharing. A thorough discussion of the relationship between *fotoclubistas* and documentary photographers can be found in Helouise Costa and Renato Rodrigues da Silva’s *A Fotografia Moderna no Brasil* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2004).
\(^9\) *Vu* was also a model for *Life* magazine, perhaps the most famous of all illustrated periodicals. Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1982), 260.
\(^9\) Peregrino, 23.
reflected contemporary Brazilians’ desire to better understand the people, objects, and cultures indigenous to their country (figs. 23 and 24).\textsuperscript{93}

*O Cruzeiro* paired editors with photographers who worked together to create material, subordinating text to image. As described by Beaumont Newhall the relationship between editor and photographer was meant to be a collaborative and a friendly one. Either could present ideas for photo-essays and photographers were expected to use their intuition to document developing situations. Editors were responsible for the selection of prints to be published, the creation of a coherent narrative, and the organization of an “organic layout,” which usually began “with a large general view as an establishment shot and moved through details to a finale.”\textsuperscript{94} Captions were a matter of upmost care as “words were chosen to explain or illuminate the photographs, not to repeat their content.”\textsuperscript{95}

Brill’s generation of photojournalists were both formally and technically indebted to the German tradition as translated through Manzon. Boris Kossoy, the leading Brazilian scholar on the history of photography, has often made statements about Brill’s indebtedness to European innovations. He emphasizes Brill’s formal similarities to other expatriate German photographers noting their common usage of the 35 mm Leica camera, their increased mobility through the urban landscape, and the influence of foreign aesthetics.\textsuperscript{96} “[Brill and her contemporaries] have

\textsuperscript{93} Brill created her photo-essays on coal miners in Ibaiti, state of Paraná, and Tupi-Guarani Indians from Mato Grosso for *Habitat*. The Bardis believed that, “art, as knowledge (or understanding), becomes an agent of social transformation [possibilidade de ver aqui implantado o projeto pelo qual a arte, vista como conhecimento, aparece como agente de transformação social].” *Habitat*, and Brill’s photographs for the magazine, were manifestations of reality where art, as described above, was a social mediator. Fabiana Stuchi, *Revista Habitat: Um olhar moderno sobre os anos 50 em São Paulo*, São Paulo, Dissertação de mestrado apresentada à Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo, 2007, 13. See also Alarcon, 220.

\textsuperscript{94} Newhall, 257-259.

\textsuperscript{95} Newhall, 257-259. As a side note, the *Illustrated American*, first published 22 February 1890, is usually credited as the first illustrated magazine. Interestingly, the first volume included a fourteen-photograph essay entitled “A Trip to Brazil.”

\textsuperscript{96} “Brazil exhibits photos of immigrant innovator,” *JTA*, January 22, 2006, http://www.jta.org/news/article/0000/00/00/13626/Brazilianexhibition (accessed 18 April 2010). On a technical note, Brill did not use a Leica, she owned an Ikonta 35 mm, but her primary camera for the São Paulo project was a Rolleiflex 6x6.
common origins in terms of culture, religion, geography and politics,” says Kossoy, “They had been influenced by Bauhaus. They have much in common in the way they used their cameras, their use of angles for illustration and their use of backlighting. You can see the influence of cinema and architecture.” Kossoy also points out that in the 1940s Brazilian photography shifted from the domain of Portuguese-Brazilian hobbyists to professionals of foreign background. Although he ignores derivations from European modes made by Brill and other immigrant photographers, Kossoy’s assessment recognizes the incredible importance of the European aesthetics introduced to Brazilian photographers at this time.

The cultural importance of Brazilian photojournalism is demonstrated in several of Brill’s photographs that document the media market emerging in Brazil. Her Banca de Jornal no Centro de São Paulo, c. 1953 (Newsstand in Downtown São Paulo) shows a young newsboy tending a stand with issues of Cruzeiro and Time prominently positioned on the magazine rack’s top shelf (fig. 25). Similar images of newsstands occur repeatedly in Brill’s oeuvre, becoming symbols of urbanization. Citizens are constantly shown analyzing print media, demonstrating their cognizance of the process of modernization. Banca de Jornal sob o viaduto Santa Efigênia, 1950s (Newsstand Under Santa Efigênia Overpass) is shot from a greater distance, so individual periodical titles are not discernible, but the large advertisements, cars, and general cacophony which surround the stand demonstrate that it is a center of physical and intellectual movement and an important site of intercultural exchange (fig. 26). O Cruzeiro was published out of Rio de Janeiro so it is unlikely Brill had personal contact with Manzon, although considering the popularity of the magazine, as

---

“Brazil exhibits photos of immigrant innovator.” In an essay for the retrospective, The World of Alice Brill sponsored by the IMS, Kossoy gave a statement which, although less formalistic, still hesitates to assume the sociological importance of Brill’s work: “Thematic diversity is one of the essential characteristics of her work: a type of necessity to capture the new world, in her diverse geography, in her historical and architectural vestiges, in her artistic production, in the anthropological documentation that reveals the miscegenation of her people.” Boris Kossoy, “Construção de uma visualidade moderna,” in O mundo de Alice Brill (São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 2005), 10.
evidenced in her own photographs, she certainly was familiar with his work and style." Thus it is not surprising that it was Manzon’s artistic vocabulary which Brill used when she set out to document life in mid-1950s São Paulo.

Because Bardi’s book never came to fruition during the 1950s, Brill’s photographs were known only through their publication in *Habitat*, where their appearances were sporadic at best. In addition, the socially conscious, architecturally driven nature of the magazine meant that the images selected most often focused on the relationship between man and his built environment and the physical limitations of city infrastructure. As the name implies, *Habitat* put the city on display. In its pages humans were important as creators and dwellers, but they always seemed to be defined in a relationship to architecture. A brief overview of some of the most notable articles featuring Brill’s São Paulo photographs demonstrates how her vision, although influenced by the techniques of photojournalism and the Bardis’ particular ambitions, was distinct in both scope and narrative.99

“Álbum de fotografias” (Photo album), published in *Habitat*’s fourth issue dated July-August 1951, was one of the earliest photo-essays to include Brill’s photography (fig. 27 and 28). The minimalist text which accompanies Brill’s images demonstrates the paradox inherent in considering people primarily as inhabitants. “The history of São Paulo’s architecture is still being written,” reads its caption, “Especially the history of small, domestic architecture, created according to the taste of the populous, without the help of architects and artists . . . It is this lesser architecture that is the most important in our time because the other, official, grandiose, hybrid,

---

99 There is little evidence that Brill socialized widely with other contemporary photojournalists. Silvia, still very young when her mother was photographing, does not remember her mother associating with any of the São Paulo-based photography circles. Considering Brill’s passion for painting, it is very plausible that she maintained more contacts with her long-time painter friends than with other photographers. Czapski, discussion.

99 Some of these examples from *Habitat* date from after the São Paulo project had already been abandoned, but the images they contain were probably made with that volume in mind. In terms of content and composition the photographs discussed here mirror Brill’s work known to have been intended for Bardi’s volume. Frustrated that his publication was impeded by lack of funding, Bardi is directed some of Brill’s pictures for publication in *Habitat*. 
has no value.”¹⁰ The principle photographs chosen to illustrate the section show paulistanos in homes likely of their own construction. In one photograph an older gentleman leans out of an artisanally constructed multi-pane window. Children gaze out of a more roughhewn opening in another home from a residential neighborhood. No further information is included about the homes or their owners, thus the photographs fall short of their potential as human documents. Although socially motivated, Habitat’s layouts do not do justice to Brill’s broad vision. The sterilized display reflects little of the warmth and curiosity evident throughout Brill’s oeuvre.

A second short piece from the 14th issue of Habitat published January-February 1954 reinforces the assertion that the aspect of human life most salient for the Bardis was housing, and that Brill’s photographs were most often employed to advocate social reforms linked with this concern (fig. 29). In Brill’s image two Afro-Brazilian women wash clothing in what appears to be the open street, while four young girls read and play nearby. The status of the Afro-Brazilian community in São Paulo was an issue of pressing concern for many contemporary intellectuals, but instead of using Brill’s photograph to investigate the specific dynamics of São Paulo’s racial and socio-economic inequalities, the Habitat article seems to focus on the larger problem of global housing deficits. The article title “Casas, eles também precisam” (Houses, they also need them), syntactically and contextually the phrase privileges houses which the rest of the text construes as the coveted prize of anonymous masses. The writer affirms, “From southern Italy to Spain and Portugal, from the villages of New Mexico to the tents of Arabia, from the agglomerates of Persia to the tropical ‘favelas’ the problem of human habitation becomes ever more preeminent, ever more urgent, and presents itself as a fact of social responsibility.”¹¹ Although Brill probably did not compose the text which accompanies her photograph, the editorial pairing of the two means that

---

¹¹ “Casas, eles também precisam,” Habitat 14 (Jan/Feb 1954): 28. Although the mention of New Mexico might suggest that Brill had some input in the composition of this text, there is no evidence that she composed copy for any of her photographic publications.
her work is annexed into a dialogue centered in construction and urban planning, regardless of the photograph’s intent. Brill had socialist leanings, so she likely would have endorsed the message of the article, however, the photographs loose some of their humanity in the generalizations of the accompanying copy.

In its July-August 1955 issue, Habitat again used one of Brill’s images to fly the banner of proper and affordable housing, this time for the sake of the children (fig. 30). In her article, author Betty Katzenstein advocates that psychological and physical necessities be taken into consideration during the construction of a family home. However, the photographs lose some of their humanity in the generalizations of the accompanying copy. Although Katzenstein’s article spends far more time on individual case studies of how people interact with architecture, it once again erroneously pairs image and text. Katzenstein is primarily concerned with small, peripheral construction projects taken on by couples unable to afford housing in the city center. However, the images chosen to accompany her treatise are an anonymous photograph of a colonial mansion and Brill’s image of children taken downtown. Far from exemplifying the parental concern Katzenstein supposes in her writing, these street urchins seem orphaned among skyscrapers. The real situation of these children is unknown, but they might seem more at home in one of the previous articles on urban decay than Katzenstein’s essay geared toward suburban comfort.

Two final examples (fig. 31 and 32) of the appropriation of Brill’s photographs come from articles published in January 1956 and January 1957. Both use the same signature image of an old woman in a São Paulo favela and combat the problem of unrestrained urban growth without accommodations for affordable middle and lower class housing. The later article, a transcript of a presentation entitled “Planejamento, arquitetura, engenharia: Contrastes e confrontos” (Planning, architecture, engineering: Contrasts and confrontations) given by Luiz de Anhaia Melo, contrasts

---

Brill’s image of life on the periphery with one of her views of the Rua Direita at the Praça do Patriarcha, in the heart of downtown São Paulo. At this point in his text Melo is criticizing the bigger-is-better mentality of many São Paulo politicians and much of the populous. His dialogue appealed to intellectuals like the Bardi’s, it reflected neither majority opinion nor Brill’s particular social vision.

As with the previous examples, Brill’s photographs are paired with a text that belies their original purpose. While it was not uncommon for photographers to have their images appropriated out of context, the implications of this disjunction are worth noting. In the case of Brill’s photographs the effect is a greater sense of removal from the realities of life in São Paulo. Her was not diametrically opposed to the Bardi’s but it was subtly more personal. Instead of representing individual Brazilians, the subjects in the photographs published in *Habitat* become symbols of global oversights and deficiencies. Brill’s uniqueness is lost in the universality of the message. This is problematic because one of the most fascinating aspects of her work is the way in which she drew attention to often ignored groups. Because of her vagrant lifestyle, she was fascinated by the specific details of São Paulo, especially by its people in all of their racially and socio-economically varied forms.

**São Paulo circa 1950**

The Brazil into which the Bardi’s arrived and Brill returned in the late 1940s was roughly half way through an era (1930-1954) dominated politically by President Getúlio Vargas. The Presidency played an important role in determining the state’s social climate. Although the seat of the presidency was in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo was the economic capital and its powerful families were accustomed to having nearly oligarchical clout. More than any other Brazilian state, São Paulo had a stratified social system controlled by a small group of quasi-aristocratic coffee growers. This group struggled with the European immigration, urban migration (especially of black
farms), industrialization, and increased international trade which was crafting a new social order in the country’s most populous state. In 1917 the population of São Paulo hovered around 500,000 persons. By 1933 that numbered doubled to one million, and by 1950 it doubled again.\footnote{Richard Morse, \textit{Formação Histórica de São Paulo: Da comunidade à metrópole} (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1970), 365.}

As the anniversary of the state capital approached, the oldest São Paulo families redoubled their interest in tracing their family trees back to the city’s founders in the 1550s. Calling themselves quatrocentões, “paulistas of 400 years” or “four-hundred-ers,” these members of the cultural elite saw themselves as true Brazilians.\footnote{Generally \textit{paulistano} is used to denote a citizen of city of São Paulo and \textit{paulista} for a citizen of the state of São Paulo. I have tried to use the words in this context, but have given preference to the form used by the original author in quoted passages where the intended meaning was ambiguous.} They also hated Vargas, as much for not being a \textit{paulistano} as for his anti-aristocratic policies. He became known as “the Father of the Poor”—the poor being comprised mostly of black and immigrant workers—more because of his rejection by the quatrocentões than any charity he may have shown to the disadvantaged.\footnote{The quatrocentões’ hatred was not entirely unjustified. On November 27, 1937 Vargas held a Flag Day ceremony to assert federal power and celebrate the announcement of the Estado Novo, Vargas' totalitarian regime. As a statement of Brazilian national unity, Vargas burned each of the Brazil’s state flags at an “altar of the Pátria” starting with that of São Paulo. This was a clear assertion of the Federal government’s power to trump state authority, and meant to intimidate the fiercely independent paulistanos. James P. Woodward, “All for São Paulo, All for Brazil: Vargas, the Paulistas, and the Historiography of Twentieth-Century Brazil,” in \textit{Vargas and Brazil: New Perspectives}, ed, Jens R. Hentschke (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 103.} Recognizing a need to appease the captains of industry, “Vargas spilt more ink over São Paulo than over any other unit in the Brazilian federation during this period.”\footnote{Woodward, 84.} In spite of his efforts, a deepening rift between the gaúcho and his upper-class constituency grew resulting in myriad acts of civil disobedience and even open rebellion on the part of the paulistas.

The Vargas period was defined by the struggle between the traditional upper classes and a tidal wave of new citizenry that threatened their hegemony. Brill’s São Paulo photographs represent one of the most interesting documentary studies of this social phenomenon. According to Brazilian historian James P. Woodward, the old guard’s “anti-varguismo, regionalist identity,
and various other forms of chauvinism (ranging from aristocratic snobbery to out-and-out racism)” influenced “the ways they understood, wrote of, and talked about history, society, and politics.”

The magnet city for migrants and immigrants, São Paulo “was undergoing tremendous changes as it was increasingly peopled by men and women who had little stake in the paulista reading of Brazilian history and no place in quatrocentão institutions.”

As the population was transforming, city infrastructure was also being renewed. Quatrocentões were proud of rising skyscrapers and new urban spaces, but their feelings toward the racially mixed people who labored to construct them were lukewarm at best. As Woodward points out, “It is impossible that ordinary folks living in São Paulo—working women and working men who had been born in São Paulo and considered themselves to be paulistanos of a sort, immigrants and those of sufficiently recent immigrant stock to still identify with the old country, migrants from the interior of Brazil, and the interior of northeastern Brazil in particular—did not sense this condescension and did not resent it.”

Vargas recognized that questions of who was Brazilian and how one came to be were socially and politically important and placed special emphasis on creating a national model to describe Brazilianity.

Insider/Outsider

More than just a quest for identity, the struggle to define who and what was Brazilian became a culture war. At stake “was not just the definition of good and bad art, but rather the consecration of good and bad Brazilian art and the enthronement of dominant cultural brokers willing to protect and defend their cultural positions in the name of protecting national culture.”

According to Lesser, “Throughout the twentieth century, members of a growing immigrant elite . . . engaged actively in public discourse about what it meant to be Brazilian—via newspapers, books,

108 Woodward, 97.
109 Woodward, 112.
110 Woodward, 112.
the political arena, and frequently in mass action—with influential state and federal politicians, intellectuals and business leaders.”

Because Brill did not qualify as a true Brazilian ethnically or nationally, evidenced by the persecutions she suffered in childhood, she seems to have sought out aspects of São Paulo which defied traditional definitions of Brazilianity. As a result, Brill was among those who discovered that the apparently static definition of Brazilian was actually multivalent and ambiguous.

Brill’s body of work investigated her local community of São Paulo but did so through the lens of her experience as a national and ethnic outsider. Reflecting on the artistic production of Brazilian-Jews like Brill scholar Nelson Vieira writes, “The aesthetics as well as the themes and ideas generating from Brazilian-Jewish narratives [photo-narratives, in Brill’s case] reflect expressions of alterity because they affirm cultural difference that resist Brazilian national synthesis.” While the Brazilian government and intelligentsia were attempting to delineate the racial and cultural characteristics of the Brazilian people, Brill was creating a counter-chronicle of Brazilian diversity. The city was a microcosm of the nation as a whole, “the background of the country’s national ethos.” Against this as a backdrop she constructed a “vision that challenge[d], through [its] discourse of alterity and difference, the idea of a fixed nationalist character or consciousness.”

Brill did not work entirely independently. Like all artists, she relied upon powerful establishments which bestowed economic means and social legitimacy. As critic Daryl Williams points out the “charismatic model of cultural production,” one that identifies individual geniuses as the chief arbiters of cultural production, is an inadequate methodology for explaining how culture

---

114 Vieira, 20.
115 Vieira, 21.
116 Vieira, 21.
is produced and regulated. Instead, cultural authority is “a product of politicized social and institutional relations.” Artists and other cultural producers, “compete for control of the mechanisms regulating control of the cultural field (for example, patronage, criticism, commercial markets, legislation) because these mechanisms rank individual styles, works, and figures.” As this model implies, in creating the São Paulo photographs Brill was not only vying for legitimacy as an artist, but also as a Brazilian. Her photographic efforts were a means of generating fame and enfranchising herself and other neglected groups. This was a precarious undertaking since “institutional ties and social relations matter just as much as aesthetic quality,” in the creation and dissemination of art. Institutional ties to the Bardis provided Brill with additional notoriety, but also meant that her artistic statements were influenced by their aesthetic and political beliefs and that her images were reviewed and edited before being disseminated.

Classifying Brill as an outsider is a tenuous proposition since she operated within the established structure of patronage and production. Her vision was different, but it was not uninfluenced by the opinions and decisions of her patrons. She shared some of the Bardis’ ideas about architecture and the creation of democratic spaces. Likewise, some of her fellow immigrant photographers seem to have been awakening to the need for greater social equality. Additionally, Brazil’s ethnic profile is defined by its so-called impurity so that in some ways Brill was all the more Brazilian because she was hybrid. But, for a Jewish girl raised by a single mother, contending with the absence of her father, the immigrant experience was particularly alienating. Country hopping had a profound psychological effect: it left Brill unsure of where, if anywhere,

\[ \text{References:} \]

117 Williams, 20. This is interesting in the case of Brill and Bardi as their intended volume was never published, which leads one to question what about their project lacked the necessary appeal to generate patronage. The project certainly would have pandered to paulistano pride. I am tempted postulate that Brill’s relative anonymity and leftist ideologiess may have affected fundraising, but there is no evidence to indicate the reason for the project’s abandonment.

118 Williams, 20. Cultural artifacts (like a book, a painting, a building, a theory, a symbol, a personality) are produced within a system of stratified power that gives status and meaning to all artifacts and their producers, but not equally.

119 Williams, 20.

120 See, for example, Emanoel Araújo’s Brasileiro, Brasileiros (São Paulo: Museu Afro Brasil, 2005).
was home. She only received Brazilian citizenship in 1949, nearly fifteen years after her arrival in the country.\textsuperscript{121} For the majority of her life to this point she had been stranded between countries, without a clear sense of national identity.

In 1949, about a year after her return from the United States, Brill married Juljan and the two settled into an apartment on the Rua São João in the heart of São Paulo.\textsuperscript{122} There they improvised a dark room and Juljan served as Brill’s assistant as she traveled and developed her photos. Their relationship was one of mutual respect and sacrifice. Brill put her first love, painting, on hold and pursued photography as a means of making money while Juljan finished medical school. In return Juljan actively supported his wife’s artistic endeavors, eventually becoming a major advocate of the arts in São Paulo.

Brill’s familial obligations were another factor which separated from other photographers. The couple’s first child was born in 1950, Brill having worked throughout her pregnancy. That year she completed a report on the art therapy program at the Juquery mental hospital which was considered especially risky work for a first-time mother late in her term. After the birth of their first daughter, Inês, the couple had three more children. Photography was a means of providing for her family, but the children limited her mobility. Silvia, Brill’s third child, has stated that Brill was a wife and mother first and an artist second. As such, she did not maintain many social contacts in artistic circles beyond the Bardis and close family friends, like Rebolo, with whom she had associated with since adolescence.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{121} Alarcon, 130.
\textsuperscript{122} Alarcon, 175.
\textsuperscript{123} Limitations on the length and scope of my thesis prohibit me from pursuing all of the theoretical avenues available. As a female, Jewish-German immigrant photographer depicting multi-racial subjects in Latin American, there are a plethora of possible readings of Brill’s work. While a feminist reading would be more than apropos, I have chosen to pursue a cross-cultural reading. However, I have explored feminist and psychoanalytic aspects of Brill’s work—both the São Paulo photographs and her family portraiture—in other papers as well as plotted the place of her Juquery photographs in the historical trajectory of images of the insane. I hope to incorporate both of these subjects with a more thorough comparative study of Brill and her contemporaries, in future publications.
Jewish, female, immigrant, and mother, Brill was always “other.” Being an outsider can be empowering, it allows for a degree of freedom from the restrictions of codified systems. But can also mean the marginalization of one’s productions. Fortunately, Brill’s few, but important, social connections, sense of the aesthetic, and international savvy, gave her enough credibility for her work to gain some recognition, although not nearly as much as she would have liked. Her critical eye disrupted idealizations that contemporary paulistanos embraced. Analyzing popular perception of class, race, and national background was an intrinsic part of the São Paulo project, as Brill constantly foregrounded individuals from the outer edges of São Paulo society.

The Growing City

By photographing ethnic diversity Brill pushed back against photographic as well as social traditions. Starting with the first cityscapes of Militão Augusto de Azevedo in the 1860s Brazilian photographers preoccupied themselves with chronicling and glamorizing the physical growth of the accidental settlement of São Paulo. Often this meant privileging architecture and infrastructure over the general populous. One of the most prolific photographers of São Paulo, Azevedo photographed its nearly empty city streets between 1862 and 1887. Rua do Rosário, no sentido do largo homônimo, hoje praça Antonio Prado, c. 1862 (Rosário Street in the direction of Rosário Square, today Antonio Prado Square) is just one of many images meant to document the metamorphosis of the settlement of São Vicente into the European-styled city of São Paulo (fig. 33). It would be impossible to erase the dissimilarities between Europe and South America, but de Azevedo tried to minimize differences between the regions by featuring locations with overt European influences.

124 Brill’s photography has come to prominence in Brazil only within the past ten years, nearly half a century after her photographs were originally taken.
Sparsely populated or merely staffed cityscapes continued to be popular subjects well into the twentieth century and popular magazines like *O Cruzeiro* used them to illustrate continuing urban change. *Palacete Prates, no vale do Anhangabaú, 1950s* (Prates Mansion in Anhangabaú Valley) is one of Brill’s very few works in this architectural type (fig. 34). In the 1950s, Anhangabaú Valley (in the center of São Paulo) was the economic and cultural heart of the capital, as it continues to be today. The Martinelli building, topped with a “Cosmopolita” advertisement, was considered the first skyscraper in São Paulo when it was finished in 1929, but is now dwarfed by new construction. Across from it in the foreground, protrudes one corner of Prates Mansions, seat of São Paulo’s Automotive Club. Both buildings served as markers of an upper-class, European-patterned space.\(^ {125} \)

In contrast *O Viaduto do Chá, com vista dos dois palacetes Prates, 1950s* (The Overpass Viaduto do Chá with a view to the Two Prates Mansions) reflects the dynamism of Brill’s changing environment (fig. 35).\(^ {126} \) In the image dozens of anonymous businessmen in tailored suits and women in summer dresses crowd the sidewalks of the Viaduto do Chá, one of São Paulo’s busiest pedestrian walkways.\(^ {127} \) High-rises in the background give the industrial capital the air of a European cultural center: São Paulo transformed into Paris or Rome.\(^ {128} \) Advertisements for

---

\(^{125}\) The Martinelli building is named after its designer, the Italian-Brazilian Giuseppe Martinelli. Also featured in the photograph are the Sampaio Moreira building (with the Philips Radios sign atop) and the Altino Arantes building (the slender, white structure at back).

\(^{126}\) The center of São Paulo had become a mass of crowds by the time Brill began to photograph. Some pictures of the more sparsely populated suburbs more closely resemble late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photography. However, these more peripheral images are far less published than those of the city center. For the purposes of this essay, and because Brill’s work is so little known, I have tried to use her most iconic images. As a side note, Brill’s São Paulo photographs were, for the most part, unnamed. I have used the descriptive titles given to them by the IMS and used in the volume *Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: São Paulo, 450 anos*.

\(^{127}\) Viaduto do Chá is literally translated “Viaduct of the Tea” named for the street vendors who sold tea in the nearby public square before the walkway was built.

\(^{128}\) Brazilian intellectuals have compared São Paulo to Western capitals since the 1920s. Oswald de Andrade, a prominent writer and leader of the Brazilian modernist movement, wrote in a 1925 poem that São Paulo was “Sometimes called the Chicago of South America [original in English].” Bardi acknowledged the comparison when he spoke of the founding of the MASP, “It was Chateaubriand’s idea to establish a museum . . . Many people saw a parallel in our situation with that of Chicago” Bardi, Pietro Maria. *Museum of Art, São Paulo* (New York: Newsweek, 1981), 9.
“Philips Lámpadas e Rádios” (Philips Lamps and Radios) and “Óleo e Gordura Rico” (Rich Oil and Shortening) identify São Paulo as a beautiful, industrious modern city in the Western tradition. Brazil’s cultural connection to the “Old World” is emphasized. However, people are also important to the scene and represent the masses who are the makers of modernity. Their presence lends an element of humanity to the photograph which separates it from the emptier architectural studies of the past.

Brill frequently photographed overpasses pedestrian walkways, like the Viaduto da Chá, because they created interesting compositions and aesthetically very European, but also because they were major transportation arteries in downtown São Paulo. They contributed to a figurative and literal sense of movement to the photographs. In *Fila de ônibus no Anhangabaú, 1950s* (Bus Line at Anhangabaú), people spill down the overpass steps into streets where buses and, increasingly, automobiles wait to whisk them away to the suburbs (fig. 36). At the overpasses pedestrian and vehicular traffic converged, as did urban and suburban communities.

If Brill found the lateral movement of transportation corridors fascinating, even more so was the city’s vertical growth. She positioned her camera to capture and emphasize the upward thrust of new construction. Some shots show the literal breaking up of city streets to lay foundations for new skyscrapers (fig. 37). In a photograph published in *Isto é São Paulo*, a man peers into gaping hole, perhaps the foundations of a new commercial structure, while the Altino Arantes building dominates the background. Even the primitive wood scaffolding protruding in the foreground serves as a reminder that São Paulo was literally growing up. The city was energetic and invigorated, rushing toward its prospective future as a global industrial capital. With 3,922 new

---

The Swiss author Blaise Cendrars, a member of Andrade’s inner circle also wrote, “Saint-Paul/Imagino que estou na estação de Nice/Ou desembarcando em Londres Charing Cross [Saint-Paul/ I imagine that I am in Nice station/ or disembarking in London Charing Cross],” Antonio Fernando de Franceshi, “A Revelação da cidade,” in *Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: São Paulo, 450 anos* (see note 17), 9.

As in English, “rich” can imply either rich food or wealth, so the sign covertly emphasizes the prosperous economy of São Paulo.
building projects in 1930, 12,490 in 1940, and 21,600 in 1950, documenting city growth was a fascination for Brill.130 Her images gives visual form to a statement from one of President Vargas’ early speeches: “All of the dynamic forces of the nationality, all of the great movements that agitate the spirit of the race, when they do not actually come from São Paulo, find in its bosom a vibrant and decisive echo.”131

Recent scholarship on Latin American urban aesthetics has emphasized that “cities can be considered works of art, where art is understood in its broadest sense as the material and performative expression of both ideas and sensibilities.”132 Latin American megalopolises like São Paulo are especially prone to this type of reading because of the economic and demographic explosions experienced during the 1950s. Feeling the growing pains associated with a globalizing economy, Brill’s São Paulo underwent a “brutal verticalization,” “entropic proliferation,” and “radical fragmentation.”133 Passive representations were no longer sufficient to show a city into which immigrants and migrants were pouring by the hundreds of thousands. Instead of allowing inanimate objects to serve as descriptors of modern São Paulo, Brill’s photographs critique what author Nelson Peixoto calls “urbanism’s central fallacy: that the city expresses itself through its physical form, through its objects. The city is foremost a field of moving forces and continuous organization.”134 The stream of people passing over the Viaduto do Chá in half-organized, half-chaotic fashion are a metaphor for the “moving forces and continuous organization” shaping Brill’s environment. No longer a static and myopic view of “whited” architecture like the work of de Azevedo or even some of her own contemporaries, Brill’s “vision defines the city more as a pattern

130 Morse, 365-366.
131 Woodward, 105.
133 Nelson Brissac Peixoto, “Latin American Megacities: The New Urban Formlessness,” in City/Art (see note 132), 235 and 237. Peixoto also gives an excellent description of the act of navigating the modern megacity which fascinatedly supposes the experience of observers of urban life like Brill.
134 Peixoto, 244.
of events than a collection of objects.” Key to this paradigm change is her inclusion of São Paulo’s spectrum of ethnicities.

**Black and White**

Many of Brill’s most compelling images seek to create a larger portrait of the Brazilianity by exploring interactions between *paulistanos* of various ethnicities. In Brazil race is an extremely important and historically significant subject matter. The racial variety present in Brazil fascinated artists—especially European ones—since its discovery in the early sixteenth century. Albert Eckhout was one of the first artists of note to focus his attention on documenting racial profiles. Eckhout traveled in Brazil between 1636 and 1644, creating ethnographic studies of native Brazilians, Africans, mulattoes and *mamelucos* (children of European-native unions) for the Dutch royal court (figs. 38 and 39). The analytical approach to race was privileged into the nineteenth century when Jean Baptiste Debret arrived in Brazil with the French Cultural Mission (figs. 40 and 41). Debret’s “scientific studies” of various races and their cultural practices accompanied the Portuguese government’s chart classifying types from most to least civilized. Starting with “Portuguese from Europe, legitimate Portuguese or son of the Realm,” the list continued through “Portuguese born in Brazil” to Mulatto, *Mameluco*, Indian, Black, Goat (“mixed race of black with mulatto”) and finally “Curiboca, mixed race of black with Indian,” the last rung on the social ladder. Both artists and the government essentialized Brazilian subjects, creating racial classifications

---

135 Peixoto, 244.
136 As an American whose writing investigates Brazilian racial relations I risk becoming another in the string of North American historians which Brazilian scholar Antonio Risério accuses of “needing” to prove Brazilian racism: looking to assuage their own guilty conscious by defaming Brazilians. My intent is not to decry Brill’s images as either tolerant or racist, but rather to demonstrate how her treatment of racial issues was informed by her cross-cultural perspective. In effect, race relations are used here as a case study of the effect of international perspectives on an early Brazilian photojournalist.
137 Sadlier, 75. Eckhout’s meticulously detailed paintings served as the basis for illustrations by later artists like Johannes Nieuhof.
138 Sadlier, 113-114.
In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, São Paulo photographers also began organizing Brazilian city-dwellers into identifiable types. However, new social hierarchies were created based on previous ethnocentric models but taking into consideration emerging professions and economic roles. The work of the Italian immigrant photographer Vincenzo Pastore, for example, *Vendedor de vassouras em rua do centro da cidade, c. 1910* (Broom Seller in the City Center), attempted to describe the varying urban roles of *paulistanos* (fig. 42). In *Broom Seller* upper-class white *paulistanos* socialize in the background while a downtrodden mestizo street vendor occupies the foreground. A lady in proper Edwardian costume and a plumed hat ignores the street seller’s offered feather dusters. The juxtaposition of the still, silent vendor with the animated, social elites emphasizes the differences between the two castes. The vendor’s markers of hybridity, especially his skin color, are thrown into high relief against the backdrop of European São Paulo.

Photographic typologies based on race and occupation continued to be popular into the 1940s so many of the characters in Brill’s city scenes were familiar to *paulistano* audiences. Brill was certainly influenced by early European-based social models, but she manipulated these tropes to reveal the multifarious nature of the Brazilian national identity. The most visible, prevalent, and

---

139 Using photography for the pseudoscience of typology seems remarkably apropos, since both practices are part science, part aesthetics.
140 Like de Azevedo, Pastore made his living taking portraits of the bourgeoisie. His noncommissioned genre images also have an intimate quality becoming anonymous portraits of São Paulo’s citizenry.
141 Pastore creates similar tensions in other photographs where railroad conductors are contrasted with begging bag-carriers at the train station and street children play marbles underfoot of passing carriages. Some photographs only contain one “type” but then it is usually “caipiras”—Brazilian country bumpkins—black men and women, or some other iteration of the exotic other, who contrast with the presumably Europeanized viewer. “Human Types” were being photographed as late as 1940 when another German-born photographer, Hildegarde Rosenthal did a series on the subject. However, Rosenthal’s types were usually occupationally, not racially defined. The origin of typologies like Pastore and Rosenthal’s has been traced to similar studies made in London and Paris in the mid-1800s as well as the ethnographic studies I mention. Early typologies were made by artists like Daumier and adopted by photographers like August Sander through the 1910s. Ricardo Mendes, “São Paulo e suas imagens,” in *Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: São Paulo, 450 anos* (see note 17), 423.
controversial cultural interchanges were between the white and Afro-Brazilian communities. Brill documents these exchanges in images like *Engraxantes trabalhando, 1950s* (Shoeblacks at Work) and *Feira livre, 1950s* (Street Market) (figs. 43 and 44). In the first image, black shoe-shines busy themselves with white customers. The white men literally and metaphorically look down on the blacks, bent over their work. Two of the white men are in uniform, contrasting the makeshift apparel of the Afro-Brazilians. In spite of these differences, there is a sense of community in Brill’s image which Pastore’s lacked. Rather than represent the two races as separate spheres with separate cultural norms, the worlds of Brill’s working men intertwine. Uniformed or not, the black shoeshiners wear the same cuts and dark colors as the white men. Also, uniforms signify that the white men, like the blacks, are laborers. Even though not currently working, the men are not cultural elites. Thus Brill’s photograph demonstrates union and communion rather than social stratification.

In *Feira livre*, economic roles are reversed and a black woman is the customer, while a white man is shown at work. The woman turns her face away from the camera and becoming anonymous in the process. But anonymity is not the same as marginalization. Instead of a nobody, the black woman is an “every man,” a symbol of the black community’s public presence. The scene behind the two figures teams with people of various races, ages, and social circumstances, but the overall effect is egalitarian. The market is an equalizer, a place where the masses come to barter and trade. As opposed to singling out the black woman as the aberration in an otherwise white space, Brill’s interest re-enfranchises her. A smartly tailored dress and carefully slung sack

---

By focusing on black-white interactions I do not mean to belittle the importance of indigenous cultures or other, generally Asian, cultures which also began migrating to Brazil in the late 1800s. Native populations were decimated by early settlers, so there was relatively no contact between white Brazilians and indigenous peoples in southern Brazil by 1950. Of the other non-white immigrant groups in the city, the Japanese were probably the largest. While Japanese-Brazilian feature in some of the photographs of Hildegard Rosenthal, I do not know of any in Brill’s collection. The experience of Japanese immigrants have been especially well documented by transnational historians. A thorough investigation of their contributions can be found in Jeffrey Lesser, *Immigrants Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).
demonstrate that the woman plays a role in the European-based society of São Paulo. As in Pastore’s images, Brill’s formal structures and inherent contrasts emphasize difference, but unlike the earlier photographer, she seems to do this out of a conscious desire to demonstrate how Brazilian society is enriched through heterogeneity.

The novelty of these images is their compassionate and inclusive view of the black community, a chronically marginalized group. As the economic heart of Brazil, São Paulo was a mecca for both European immigrants and Afro-Brazilian populations looking to relocate from rural, agricultural areas.¹⁴³ Immigrant and black populations competed for economic prosperity and cultural recognition in the eyes of “native” paulistanos and European workers were often given preference over native Afro-Brazilians.¹⁴⁴ Those Afro-Brazilians who managed to find work were ghettoized, forced into neighborhoods away from important cultural, political, and economic centers. In part this is attributed to their desire for community with fellow Afro-Brazilians, but they were also socially and economically forced into these areas. Even when working in service occupations, black laborers lived near their places of employment, but never actually within white neighborhoods. Ollie Stewart, an African-American visitor to Brazil in 1940 observed the situation of blacks in the city:

In São Paulo, the second city of Brazil, with a million population, where most of Brazil’s wealth and industry is located, and where the coffee barons live, colored children are not allowed in schools past the high school level—and not too many get that far. Most of the avenues for cultural achievements being closed to them, then, the colored Brazilian goes to work on lower levels. And because these levels pay only a subsistence wage, the dark brother rarely has money enough to see the opera, or gamble at the casinos or to lie on

¹⁴³ For an excellent and poetic discussion of race, art and Brazilian national identity, see Emanoel Araújo, Brasiliero, Brasileiros (São Paulo: Museu Afro Brasil, 2005). For a more sociologically oriented approach to the study of race in Brazil, see Stanley R. Bailey, Legacies of Race: Identities, Attitudes, and Politics in Brazil (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009). Both texts deal comparatively with American and Brazilian ideas about race, aiding American researchers—such as myself—to dismantle their own preconceptions about race relations before analyzing Brazil.
the beach or to ride in fine cars or to dine at swanky restaurants. He is told that he is welcome there—but the trick was turned when the money was kept out of his hands. Although there was no legal discrimination, blacks were “isolated,” “discriminated against in subtle ways” that baffled outside observers.

Traditionally, old paulistanos blamed miscegenation for inhibiting Brazil’s development and white immigrants from all regions of Europe were encouraged to emigrate in order to “create a European-like national identity that would smother the native and African populations with its superiority.” As early as the 1890s white immigrant passages to São Paulo were subsidized by the state whose intent was to whiten the population and provide a surplus of labor so that employers would not have to haggle over wages with freed slaves. Many newcomers were from the poorest European classes and maintained a standard of living essentially on par with the black community even though they enjoyed preferential treatment in hiring and were less often faced with open prejudice. “Whites, both Brazilian and immigrant, discriminated against Afro-Brazilians on the

---


146 Frazier, 133. Some of popular stereotypes about the black community are illustrated by a 1967 joint study directed by the University of Paris, Harvard University, and the University of São Paulo measuring prejudice among white middle-class young adults in São Paulo. According to the survey, 91% believed blacks lacked good hygiene, 87% believed they were physically unattractive, 77% believed blacks lacked financial skills, 76% believed blacks to be immoral, 72% believed they were aggressive, 72% believed they were indolent, 62% charged them with a lack of consistency in employment, 51% with being sexually perverse, and 50% found blacks to be exhibitionist.

My research has not encountered any earlier polls concerning stereotypes of Afro-Brazilians. However, as Bastide and Fernandes point out, public opinions of the black community rose at the beginning of the 1970s after a low in the 1950s. The statistics listed here are not dissimilar to studies of prejudice in the United States during the same period. In fact, scholars consider twentieth-century American anti-black prejudice much stronger than Brazilian. With greater exchange between the nations, American influence tended to augment the negative opinion of Brazilians towards blacks. It has also been suggested that German immigrants imported Nazi anti-black ideas. Brill, a German immigrant who spent considerable time in the United States had considerable contact with the two cultures—German and American—primarily responsible for the persecution of the blacks in Brazil. However these international influence must have been mitigated by her own experience as member of the Jewish minority. Bastide and Fernandes, 304.

147 Lesser, Negotiating National Identity, 6 and 11.


149 Andrews, 79.
basis of color, as reflected in such areas as employment, housing, admission to social events, and
government policies,” comments historian Kim Butler.

Writing almost contemporaneously to Brill in 1944 the African-American scholar E.
Franklin Frazier observed that in Brazil, “it appeared that the Negro suffers chiefly from economic
competition of the European immigrant . . . As the Negro is pushed down in the economic scale,
he is unable to acquire the education and skills which would enable him to compete successfully
with other groups.” Europeans made fast in-roads into the Brazilian upper-class artistic scene.
The climb was considerably more difficult for their Afro-Brazilian countrymen, a fact which
becomes apparent in Brill’s views of São Paulo.

Brill’s photographs allude to the unfeasibility of old hierarchies which dominated Brazilian
culture for so long. She debunks the nineteenth-century myth that Brazil could combat the “stain”
of its large black Brazilian population through the importation of additional Europeans by
illustrating the breadth of São Paulo’s racial spectrum. For example, fraternal bonds seem to tie
together the racially mixed group in Posando, no centro, 1950s (Posing, City Center) (fig. 45).
Although the men stare at the camera with a confrontational gaze, amongst themselves they are
completely at ease. Black, white, and all shades in between are represented in this cross-section of
Brazilian ethnicities.

In Realejo na praça do Patriarca, c. 1953 (Organ Grinder in Patriarch’s Square) an even
deeper sense of co-fraternity is developed between a white man and two young boys who form the
photograph’s central group (fig. 46). Here Brill depicts an itinerate organ grinder opening a cage
containing a small animal to show two black children. The boys, with their backs to us, twine their
arms around one another and one boy lifts his right knee, dancing or hopping. They look up at the

---

130 Frazier, 133.
131 Jeffrey Lesser, Negotiating National Identity, 11.
man, who looks down at them kindly. It is not clear in the image whether the white man or black boys are subservient, and the ambiguity lends equality. The vendor becomes a paternal figure who offers not only entertainment, but guardianship to the lonely wanderers. By creating a sense of familial attachment Brill demonstrates the deep, human connection between the members of the group, in spite of physical dissimilarities.

The same consanguine bonds are evoked again, and even more powerfully, in images like *Fila de ônibus no bairro de Pinheiros* (Bus Line in the Pinheiros Neighborhood) and *Crianças em bairro popular* (Children in a Residential Neighborhood) (fig. 47 and 48). In these a maternal force seems to envelope the groups of women and children. In the first photograph a young black mother proudly holds up her baby for inspection by two white grandmother-figures as they wait in line at a bus stop. The mother wears a pretty but simple calico dress, her hair done à la mode, her baby in an all-white infant’s gown. Her son, tidy in his sweater and dress shirt, carries the mother’s purse and packages. Together the three appear near perfect. The elderly white women approvingly coo over the baby and its mother, who grin proudly back at them. White immigrants and older generations were often blamed for harboring racism, but Brill seems to suggest that motherly *caritas* is more powerful than even the oldest and most deeply rooted prejudices.

Brill photographs a less orthodox “family” of street children in *Crianças em bairro popular,* a younger, female version of the group in *Posando, no centro.* The tallest girl standing off to the side in maternal fashion acts as the protectress of the younger ones who giggle and shyly look away. A variety of races mingle together, free of preconceptions or reservations. Although unkempt and unsupervised, the children embody a utopic vision of a racial harmony. Huddled under an ornate lattice work which provides decorative flourish while acting as a gateway to an idealized world, the girls radiate hopeful purity and innocence. Rather than single out individuals based on their difference, as had early photographers, Brill seeks out groups which are united by their diversity.
For Bardi and the MASP, depicting São Paulo as a racially diverse and accepting community, especially for a publication whose target audience was the *quatrocentões*, was risky since color prejudice was especially strong in southern Brazil, where Afro-Brazilians were a conspicuous minority. The late 1940s and early 1950s were not entirely negative for the black population, however. Migration to the city meant greater earning potential and an increased sense of community with members of their race. As the decade progressed they were increasingly considered capable workers and proved hugely important to the industrialization of Brazil.

Some academic groups were also pushing for greater racial understanding. As early as October 1935, a group of well-known São Paulo based intellectuals published the “Manifesto Against Racial Prejudice” in which they described the “transplanting of racist ideas” into Brazil “whose ethnic formation is extremely heterogeneous.” Seven years later, in 1942, the Brazilian Society of Anthropology and Ethnology issued an even stronger directive that, “anthropology furnishes no scientific basis for discriminatory acts against any people on the basis of supposed racial inferiority.” Ideas about racial purity were changing slowly, but employment for Afro-Brazilians remained elusive and racial tension grew steadily until the late 1950s. Industry grew 7,800 percent from 1920 to 1940 and the rapid growth created work shortages which forced employers’ hands. Between 1940 and 1950, industry in the state doubled again, and the percentage of Afro-Brazilians employed finally equaled their percentage of the state population. It was also the year that Bardi began planning his celebratory photo-essay dedicated to the state and its people.

Rather than heroicize the previously disenfranchised black community, Brill’s São Paulo photographs concentrate on bringing it out of the background. From out of the social fabric, black

---

152 Skidmore, 206.
153 Skidmore, 206.
154 Skidmore, 90.
155 Skidmore, 101.
faces materialize in the heart of São Paulo. In *Vendedora ambulante no Viaduto do Chá* (Street vender on the Viaduto do Chá) a black street vendor peaks out from under her sunshade on the steps of the Santa Efigênia overpass to offer something to an adolescent in a handsome suit. To the passersby on the busy walkway she is invisible, but by his stopping the boy draws highlights the woman’s presence and draws her back into the public consciousness (fig. 49). Among her wares are what appear to be fashion magazines, fabrics, and bundles of yarn. She and the boy seem to be bargaining, his stooping gesture and her concentrated expression suggest mutual respect and dependency. Even the act of conversing separates the pair from the silent passing crowds. The cross-generational moment is beautiful in its simplicity, and must have touched Brill, who took several versions of the shot.

*Obras no vale Anhangabaú, 1950s* (Construction in Anhangabaú Valley) (fig. 50) reveals the vital but oft-ignored role of black laborers in city construction and relates directly to Brill’s earlier image of the *Semeador* monument. As in the previously mentioned scene, skyscrapers—including the Altino Arantes building—ring the young workers like massive, omniscient overseers. From out of their hundreds of windows upper-class São Paulo businessmen can supervise the pace of construction. Formally the photograph recalls other early images of industrialization-age labor, like Lewis Hine’s *Power House Mechanic Working on Steam Pump* (1920) (fig. 51). But unlike the heroic protagonist of that image, the mulatto workers are dwarfed by the large wheel they must turn. Rather than an aesthetic depiction of mighty manhood, Brill reveals the hidden truth that laborers were often overworked and underpaid adolescents. Thus, in terms of subject matter, Brill’s photograph is more akin to Hine’s images of factory workers and coal miners (fig. 21).

*Obras no vale Anhangabaú* tempers an exposé of working conditions with Brill’s subtle racially inclusionary vision. The photograph references the progressive spirit of many early American documentary photographers without becoming an overt political statement.
In another shot that looks remarkably like a famous American photograph, Brill captures black faces materializing out of the darkness of a trolley car (figs. 52 and 53). Robert Frank’s *Trolley—New Orleans* (1955) is taken from *The Americans*, a photo-essay which exposed the racial hypocrisy of American institutions like Jim Crow laws. In Frank’s photograph inequalities are underscored by the legally mandated division of black and white passengers. Brazil had no formal legal segregation but Brill’s image of the black passengers still makes them appear distant and detached as if being noticed is uncomfortable after so much anonymity. The image also evokes associations with long distance trains and the urban migration that was causing São Paulo’s urban black population to swell. Nonplussed, disappointed, even a bit accusatory, the female Afro-Brazilian passenger looks down at Brill’s camera while the child sitting across from her peeps his head out of the window toward an unknown destination and future. Compositionally balanced and almost serene, the mood of Brill’s photograph is made unsettling by the ambiguous expressions of its subjects.

A series of images taken during religious and civic festivities are the best examples of Brill’s adeptness at calling attention to her black compatriots. In each scene Brill parts crowds of revelers to focus on a single face, revealing the different reactions of the Afro-Brazilians to their community. In one an elderly black gentleman in a suit and dress shirt watches as a band passes (fig. 54). His slumped shoulders are in line with the passing instrumentalists as if he had meant to march with them but mistakenly stepped out of line. His incongruous positioning is exacerbated by the fact that he is surrounded not only by white people, but by white women. Thus, he is caught between two spheres, of white men in front and white women behind, to neither of which he

---

156 These pictures are among the few taken with a different format camera, possibly Brill’s Leica, and given a slightly earlier date, 1948 (although few of the dates on Brill’s photographs are definitive). This may indicate that they were taken for an earlier or alternate project, but their style and subject matter a congruent with the bulk of the images in Brill’s São Paulo series.
belongs. The tension of this “out-of-placeness” and the man’s quizzical look, perfectly framed between a drum and the trombone, give the scene a tragicomical air.

In another image from this group, Brill centers on a black boy in ecclesiastical dress flanked by white children (fig. 55). Around him spectators and participants swirl in a hurried mass, but this Afro-Brazilian youth is the picture of solemnity. Framed by the blurred figures of two men rushing past the camera, and compositionally crowned by the baldachin held above the visiting church official behind him—one if the poles points directly to the boy’s head—the young worshipper is still as the eye of a storm. Not distracted or fidgety like his peers, he seems almost uncannily contemplative. His attitude and position are mirrored by another Afro-Brazilian boy on the far right, the only other black individual in the picture. The boy’s robes compositionally and contextually accent his position, ringed by a mandorla of white paulistanos.

The third picture in this series, Brill’s shot of a young Afro-Brazilian girl peering beneath the waving flag of a passing vendor, is more secular but just as poignant (fig. 56). Although the vendor gestures to her, the girl ignores him, focused on something in front of her, perhaps even the camera. Brill captured the moment in which the Brazilian national banner framed a perfect triangle as it flounced around the girl’s face. Like the Afro-Brazilian man in the first image from this set, the girl stands slightly closer to the camera than a majority of the other spectators. She is a solitary figure in the middle ground, between the vendor and a small boy—both of whom hold flags—and the crowds behind her. Unlike the previous image, other Afro-Brazilians surround the girl, so although she is isolated, she is not alone. The steadiness of her gaze behind the symbol of Brazilian sovereignty interrogates the viewer. The blatant juxtaposition of patriotic paraphernalia with individuals who problematized the national discourse about Brazilian identity erases any doubts that Brill’s inclusions were accidental.
One of Brill’s most powerful and certainly her most published image since her archive’s acquisition by the Instituto Moreira Salles in 2000, *Cafezinho, c. 1954* (Coffee Break), deals with similar issues of national social recognition and reflects the contemporary racial climate, while conveying the uneasy “out-of-placeness” created by cultural convergence (fig. 57). In this photograph two young Afro-Brazilians in business attire are served coffee at a café bar where they are surrounded by white men. The youths’ faces seem calm, one is confident the other more unsure: perhaps worried about his place in the shop, perhaps only worried his coffee will spill. In either case, the two are well dressed and seem the social equivalents of their white colleagues in all but skin color. The figures to the left and to the right of the two Afro-Brazilians do not seem opposed to literally brushing shoulders in the cramped café, but do not interact socially or emotionally with their black neighbors. The viewer questions whether the distraction of city life or something else precipitates this ambivalence. Brill leaves the picture open to interpretation, it can be example of either alienation and acceptance, depending on attitude the viewer. Although Bardi’s homage to the city of São Paulo was never realized, *Cafezinho* has become a symbolic image of both the progress and prejudices of 1950s Brazil.

Throughout Brill’s oeuvre the black community is shown to be a valuable and vital part of the São Paulo demographic. Of the 14,000 digital scans of Brill’s negatives now housed in the Instituto Moreira Salles archives in São Paulo, roughly 2,000 are associated with the São Paulo project. Of the São Paulo images nearly 100 photographs place Afro-Brazilians in a central or

---

157 In addition to Brill’s archives the IMS, a cultural institution specializing in archiving and publishing Brazilian photography, has collected the work of 43 other photographers and collectors. Although the institution has sponsored exhibitions of Brill’s work and published some of her collection, the vast majority of her photographs have never been published.

158 There is a noticeable difference between *Coffee Break* and photographs of nineteenth-century black white relations in which white and black men rarely posed together as anything other than slave and master. Here the men are equals, despite the social unease. For examples of Afro-Brazilians in photography of the nineteenth century see George Ermakoff, *O Negro na Fotografia Brasileira do Século XIX*, (Rio de Janeiro: G. Ermakoff Casa Editorial, 2004) and Boris Kossoy and Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, *O Olhar Europeu: O Negro na Iconografia do Século XIX*, (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1994).
dominant position. A significant portion also include Afro-Brazilians conspicuous in the crowds. Although the total number of photographs only represent about 5-10% of Brill’s known oeuvre, Afro-Brazilians only made up about 8% of the population of São Paulo, so it makes sense that they would have appeared less frequently. The ratio rises with the consideration that a number of photographs depict landscapes large crowds in which ethnicity is indistinguishable. Even with these considerations, there are considerably more images of Afro-Brazilian’s among Brill’s negatives than in the published photographs from the decades immediately preceding her. While some of her colleagues came from multi-national backgrounds and seem to have shared Brill’s cross-cultural interests, others avoided photographing the Afro-Brazilian community at all. Unless new research uncovers previously unpublished works in their archives, Brill’s photographs constitute a majority of the Afro-Brazilian images from this period São Paulo.

Instances of prominently placed Afro-Brazilians seem to occur with enough frequency to suggest that Brill was invested in their representation. This observation is shared by Alarcon, although it is not the focal point of her more exhaustive study of Brill’s photography. She suggests:

The hegemonic representations of anniversary-era São Paulo were guided by the idea of progress, creating a discourse about the historical legitimation of the process of modernization . . . Alice surpassed these widespread clichés and, in this way, turned her research on the modernization of the city more profound.

159 In addition to her interest in the black community in the São Paulo series, Brill traveled to Salvador in Bahia, where the black population was much greater than in the south. While her photographs of Bahia are poignantly human, they also emphasize its docility and reinforce the stereotypes already engrained in the minds of paulistanos. The Bahia photographs serve as evidence that Brill’s photographic juxtapositions of black and white in São Paulo are not accidental. Brill knew the cultural paradigms about black and immigrant populations and her photographs reflect this cognizance. Bahia was popularized as a subject matter for Brazilian photojournalists by Pierre Verger, another French photographer working for O Cruzeiro. Born in Paris, Verger traveled the globe creating ethnographic essays, most of which focused on African Diaspora subjects, until settling in Bahia in 1946. Verger’s was twice contracted by O Cruzeiro to create essays on Bahia, once in 1946 and again in 1957. For more on these projects see Angela Lühning, Pierre Verger: Réporter Fotográfico (Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2004).

160 The 1940 census lists 108,682 Afro-Brazilians in the city of São Paulo, or about 8% of the total population. The percentage plummeted from about 37% in 1872, largely because of state-encouraged white immigration. Butler, 69 and 71.

161 The full analysis reads: “As representações hegemônicas da São Paulo aniversariante eram pautadas pela ideia de progresso, constituindo um discurso de legitimação histórica do processo de modernização da cidade. Para tanto, era realizada uma operação de apropriação e manipulação das representações do passado. São Paulo buscava mitos de fundação e precisava de deuses para seu panteão. A figura do bandeirante, como símbolo do pioneirismo do estado,
Brill’s profundity came from her ability to detect and depict tensions in the city space, construct narratives, and reveal persons omitted by the images in circulation. The São Paulo photographs are significant because they indicate a new perspective, “a wider view of São Paulo and the construction of its identity, unvel[ing] the social relationships that took shape in this space still in formation.”

The larger question is why Brill was so invested in the fate of the Afro-Brazilian community when her audience and patronage came from classes which chronically ignored the black presence. A possible answer lies in the historic role photography for codification and differentiation. The relationship between the photographer and subject in the third world has been commented upon by anthropologist Christopher Pinney, who postulates that the photographic medium causes life and politics to collide and the resulting image often “reconfigures its referent.” This is especially true, he suggests, in non-European cultures where photography acts as a “globally disseminated and locally appropriated medium.” Brill’s depictions of interactions between various kinds of paulistanos demonstrates the appropriative act.

Photography is especially suited to the process of adoption and adaptation—copying European modes and then modifying image content of image to reflect local demographics—

---

162 Alarcon, 205.
164 Pinney, 1.
because it has been viewed as more factual and democratic.\textsuperscript{165} The quasi-artistic, quasi-scientific nature of photography promoted experimentation. In addition, photography was one of the few artistic mediums to openly advertise itself as portable, affordable, and approachable. In spite, or perhaps because of distributability, cameras, chemicals, films and lenses were still largely manufactured in Europe and imported into Latin American countries into the 1950s. The lack of training required, the mobility of the medium, and the way it translated fragments of reality into aesthetic—albeit mass producible—objects all contributed to its plebeian appeal. In the words of Susan Sontag, “Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.”\textsuperscript{166}

Photography’s manipulability makes Brill’s reinterpretations all the more interesting. Sontag observed the displaced’s drive to document: “People robbed of their past seem to make the most fervent picture takers, at home and abroad.”\textsuperscript{167} Likewise, for Brill photography promoted a greater understanding of her own fractured national identity and her new environment. The seemingly “objective” nature of photography can be an asset when trying to decode the subtleties of social interaction. “The camera lens always includes. The photographer can never fully control the resulting photograph, and it is that lack of control and the resulting excess that permits recoding,

\textsuperscript{165} In part photography has been seen as more democratic because of its availability and ease of use. A relatively young medium, photography was widely practiced by amateurs. In the words of Roland Barthes, “Usually the amateur is defined as an immature state of the artist: someone who cannot—or will not—achieve the master of a profession. But in the field of photographic practice, it is the amateur, on the contrary, who is the assumption of the professional.” (Barthes discussion of the public/private nature of photography in the same chapter applies nicely to Brill’s works, but there is not room for a thorough discussion of space and intimacy in this paper.) Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 98-99.

In addition photography was advertised as a democratic form. Kodak slogans like “You press the button—We do the rest,” models like the 1900 Kodak Brownie were marketed to amateurs and even children. Although professionals sometimes used these simplified, inexpensive models, the primary market was the middle-class. Even Brill, who did receive some photographic training, only had one semester’s worth of formal instruction. Mary Warner Marien, Photography: A Cultural History, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 167-8.

\textsuperscript{166} Susan Sontag elaborates on the perceived factuality of photography with statements like, “To photograph is to appropriate the thing being photographed” and “Photographs furnish evidence,” but finally concludes, “photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are.” Susan Sontag, On Photography (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), 4-5, 7.

\textsuperscript{167} Sontag, 10.
‘resurfacing,’ and ‘looking past,’ ” observes Pinney.168 Photography can be a coping method for the ancestrally deprived and an inclusionary force, capturing what other mediums edit out. For Brill photography was a means to reconnect with European roots and to reanalyze Brazilian stereotypes.

Brill's position on the periphery of a circle of international trendsetters enabled her simultaneously to operate within and to challenge the racial, national, and class systems which defined São Paulo. Her familiarity with the canonical art and techniques developed through training abroad and connections to the European-Brazilian arts community and her methodology borrowed from the European-based photojournalist tradition. However, Brill’s photographs demonstrate the global/local dichotomy, highlighting sections of the population which operate as distinctive markers of Brazilian identity, especially the Afro-Brazilian community. Brill creating a personal vision which was neither utopic nor disdainful, but whose essential characteristic is its heterogeneity.

Conclusion
In the preface to his 1970 publication, New Brazilian Art, Bardi quoted the Frenchman Jean Cassou: “Brazilians are Brazilians above all for the great diversity of their origins. Each of them, in the mad confusion of the present world, is a destiny unto himself. America is the land of such destinies, and this very American America that is Brazil . . . And so, here or over there, these artists carry in themselves an adventure, a habit of taking risks, an inclination to uproot themselves no less than to take root elsewhere.”169 Brill, like other immigrant photographers of the 1950s was keenly aware of the evolving systems of social stratification in her new homeland. However, instead identifying with the upper classes, Brill highlights the humble. Thus, the São Paulo photographs are truly an essay on Brazil’s development as a land and a people.

168 Pinney, 7. Italics in original.
169 Pietro Maria Bardi, New Brazilian Art (New York: Praeger, 1970), 6. Cassou was commenting on Brazilians in the the Paris School in the beginning of the twentieth century.
Alice Brill’s São Paulo photographs are unique for their meticulous representation of the cultural range of peoples living in the city during a period of rapid expansion and diversification. A European Jew, Brill served as a mediator between the world of the majority and the world of the minority. Her black and white photographs of black-and-white São Paulo are part of a long discourse surrounding the link between nationality and ethnicity. Depicting dealings between minorities, especially Afro-Brazilians, and the white community, Brill illustrates contemporary scholarly statements that there were no essential differences between races beyond skin color. The decision to create a more inclusive documentation came not only from a desire to fulfill her commission to photographically depict the city of São Paulo, but also from a democratic impulse, born of being an outsider herself. Like Brill, who left Germany as a child and spent the bulk of her formative years in transit, Brazil is a country whose future is unbounded by geographical limitations.170

170 Afterword: My goal in writing this thesis was not to advocate the resurrection of the works of one obscure photographer, but rather to use Brill as a case study, to demonstrate the wealth of imagery and dearth of research in the field of Brazilian photography. In addition to Brill’s negatives, the IMS holds the archives of forty-three other photographers and collectors, including modernists of national and international renown. I believe that a second look at many of these lost oeuvres can serve to reconstruct the domestic dialogues of mid-twentieth century Brazil and uncover previously overlooked instances of cross cultural sharing in the modern period.
Fig. 1. Alice Brill, *Liéreo Bañaró com a Praça do Patriarca*, c. 1950. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 2. Alice Brill, *IV Centennial Mass at the Ipiranga Museum*, 1954. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 3. Pietro Maria Bardi, published in *The Arts in Brazil*, captioned: “Bow-window of one of the few houses in São Paulo influenced by the Neo-Classical style,” São Paulo, c. 1950.
Fig. 4. *Above*, Alice Brill, *Aeroporto de Congonhas*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Fig. 5. *Right*, Alois Feichtenberger, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “Planes from every country link São Paulo with the whole world,” 1950s.
Fig. 6. *Above*, Alice Brill, *O semeador, Parque D. Pedro*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Fig. 7. *Right*, Alois Feichtenberger, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “Many sculptures in the public parks show how the artistical (sic) spirit is alive,” 1950s.
Fig. 8. Above, Alice Brill, *Torcedores no Estádio do Pacaembu*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Fig. 9. Right, Schlachter, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “Sport-loving paulistanos stand in competition with sportsmen from all over the world. Tens of thousands are attracted by exciting matches,” 1950s.
Fig. 10. *Above*, Alice Brill, *Rua Direita*, c. 1950. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Fig. 11. *Right*, Sascha Harnisch, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “The midday sun creates strange contrasts in the streets...,” 1950s.
Fig. 12. Above, Alice Brill, *Vista a partir do Vale do Anhangabaú*, c. 1952 (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)

Fig. 13. Right, Sascha Harnisch, published in *Isto É São Paulo*, captioned: “If not working, people enjoy peacefulness in the parks,” 1950s.

Fig. 15. *Bottom*, Alice Brill, *Mercado de rua*, 1933.
Fig. 16. Erich Brill, *Mulher árabe da cidade*, n.d.
Fig. 17. Alice Brill, *Dança indígena*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, c. 1946.
Fig. 18. Alice Brill, *The Grand Canyon*, Arizona, 1946.
The position of women in Latin America is the topic of a panel discussion tonight at 7:30 in Room 150 of the Administration Building. Participants, from left to right, are: William Colby, Argentina; Alice Brill, Brazil; Gregorio Brilovich, Chile; Geraldo Nunes, Brazil; Elsa Candoval, Cuba; and Raul Rivero, Peru. Fernando Frías of Mexico is not in the picture.

Fig. 19. Newspaper clipping from the personal archive of Alice Brill.
Fig. 20. Alice Brill, *O menino pintado*, *Mato Grosso*, and *Um deus de ferro* from “Convite a fotografar,” by Max Bill, published in *Habitat*, no. 2, January/March 1951, 68.
Fig. 21. Alice Brill, *Minas de carvão*, Ibaiti, Paraná, 1949. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 22. Lewis Hine, Child coal miners—drivers and mules, Gary, West Virginia mine, September 1908.
Fig. 23. Mário de Moraes, spread from *O Cruzeiro* created under the direction of Jean Manzon, published 22 October 1955.
Fig. 24. Alice Brill, a page from *Habitat* featuring the photo-essay “Crônicas: gente,” published in *Habitat*, no. 14, January/February 1954, 62.
Fig. 25. Alice Brill, *Banca de Jornal no Centro de São Paulo*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 26. Alice Brill, *Banca de jornal sob o viaduto Santa Efigênia*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 27. Left, Alice Brill, *Domingo* from “Álbum de fotografías” by Alencastro, published in *Habitat*, no. 4, July/August 1951, 81.

Fig. 28. Right, Alice Brill, *Janela no Bairro Popular* from “Álbum de fotografías” by Alencastro, published in *Habitat*, no. 4, July/August 1951, 82.
Casas, êles também precisam

Quanto homens são obrigados a viver em casas que constituem o “ílimite” das condições possíveis de vida humana? Quantos são os homens constrangidos a viver em condições incômodas, a ceguira, ao analfabetismo, à mortalidade, às doenças, à desmoralização e à incultura?

Quantos são os homens reduzidos à média de espaço de um metro quadrado por pessoa? O espírito anti-social que impede, possivelmente, decide a construção de edifícios representativos, monumentais, retóricos, impede que se resolvam os problemas mais urgentes e categóricos. Da Itália meridional à Espanha e à Portugal, das aldeias indias do Novo México às barracas da Árabia, aos aglomerados da Pérsia, às “favelas” tropicais, o problema da habitação do homem se torna sempre mais presente, cada vez mais urgente, apresentando-se sempre como fato de responsabilidade social.

Considerações absurdas e folclóricas sobre as necessidades reais do homem, leis e regulamentos restritivos à vida moderna, incompetência de supostos técnicos, baixo teor econômico, confusão política e desorganização da indústria edilícia, eis os obstáculos que a lúdica instante entravam não à solução mas até mesmo e primariamente ordem do dia de forma humana integral do problema.

Numa época de retórica, por eis, quando o regime fascista moveu na Itália a política das arquiteturas retóricas, um tartaruga da resistência da arquitetura moderna, morreu num campo de concentração, uma arquiteta, Giuseppe, estigmatizou a retórica da arquitetura monumental, que com as seguintes palavras, mas por uma mentalidade não esteticamente política ou acomodante e duramente universal: “A luta não é a sujeira de um baixo, mas um monumento”.

Fig. 29. Alice Brill, *Lavadeiras e crianças em um cortiço* from “Casas, êles também precisam,” published in *Habitat*, no. 14, January/February 1954, 28.
Fig. 30. Alice Brill, *Crianças na rua* from “Psicologia infantil e casa própria” by Betty Katzenstein, published in *Habitat*, no. 23, July/August 1955, 21.
Fig. 31. Left, Alice Brill, Mulher na frente de barraco and Homem com sanfona na porta de barraco from “Habitação para o homem de nosso tempo,” published in Habitat, no. 30, January 1956, 6.

Fig. 32. Right, Alice Brill, Mulher na frente de barraco and Pedestres na Rua Direita from “Planejamento, arquitectura, engenharia: Contrastes e confrontos,” published in Habitat, no. 38, January 1957, 6.
Fig. 33. Militão Augusto de Azevedo, *Rua do Rosário, no sentido do largo homônimo, hoje praça Antonio Prado*, c. 1862. (Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 34. Alice Brill, *Palacete Prates, no vale do Anhangabaú*, São Paulo, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 35. Alice Brill, *O Viaduto do Chá, com vista dos dois palacetes Prates*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 36. Alice Brill, *Fila de ônibus no Anhangabaú*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 37. Alice Brill, published in Isto E São Paulo, captioned: “...whole streets are broken up,” 1950s.
Fig. 38. *Left*, Albert Eckhout, *Negra*, c. 1641-1644.
Fig. 40. Top, Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Le Chirugien Negre*, 1831.
Fig. 41. Bottom, Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Les Barbiers Ambulante*, 1831.
Fig. 42. Vincenzo Pastore, endedor de vassouras em rua do centro da cidade, c. 1910. (Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 43. Alice Brill, *Engraxantes trabalhando*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 44. Alice Brill, *Feira livre*, São Paulo, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 45. Alice Brill, *Posando, no centro*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 46. Alice Brill, Realejo na praça do Patriarca, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 47. Alice Brill, *Fila de ônibus no barrio de Pinheiros*, December 1950. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 48. Alice Brill, *Crianças em bairro popular*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 49. Alice Brill, *Street vender on the Viaduto do Chá*, c. 1953. Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Morreira Salles. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 50. Alice Brill, *Obras no vale Anhangabaú*, 1950s. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 51. Lewis Hine, *Power House Mechanic Working on Steam Pump*, 1920.
Fig. 52. Robert Frank, *Trolley—New Orleans, The Americans*, 1955.
Fig. 53. Alice Brill, *Passageiros em vagão de trem*, c. 1953. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 54. Alice Brill, *Procissão no Bairro da Penha*, c. 1948. (Alice Brill/Arquivo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 55. Alice Brill, *Procession in the Penha neighborhood*, c. 1948. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 56. Alice Brill, *Procession in the Penha neighborhood*, c. 1948. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Fig. 57. Alice Brill, *Cafezinho*, c. 1954. (Alice Brill/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles)
Bibliography


----------. 1 August 2010. Discussion with the author. Brasília, DF, Brazil.


----------. “City/Art: Setting the Scene.” In Biron, City/Art: The Urban Scene in Latin America, 1-34.


Czapski, Silvia. 6 July 2010. Discussion with the author. São Paulo, SP, Brazil.


Fernandes, Eva Lieblich. “A arte como a verdadeira vida.” In O mundo de Alice Brill, 14-19.


Kossoy, Boris. “Construção de uma visualidade moderna.” In *O mundo de Alice Brill,* 6-14.


Sadlier, Darlene J. *Brazil Imagined: 1500 to the Present.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008.


