

# GUILHERME SANTOS COLLECTION IN THE RIO DE JANEIRO MUSEUM OF IMAGE AND SOUND: A THREE-DIMENSIONAL CITY (1908-1957)

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## Abstract

This paper aims to present Guilherme Santos' historical stereoscopic collection, which belongs to the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Image and Sound. As an amateur photographer, Santos widely registered the city of Rio de Janeiro between 1909 and 1957 and his stereoscopic collection is considered one of the most important in Brazil. The historical period in which he developed his work is characterised by the restructuring of Rio de Janeiro as a bourgeois metropolis. The modernised daily life and the new signs of development in the country's former capital were intensely recorded by Santos during his photography trajectory. As an enthusiast of social life, he was constantly cataloguing the most diverse events, different touristic places and the exuberant nature of the "wonderful city". Playing the role of a cultural representation of his time, Santos' photographs give important clues of the shaping of a typically bourgeois lifestyle in Rio de Janeiro.

Keywords: *Guilherme Santos, Museum of Image and Sound, Rio de Janeiro, stereoscopy, city, amateur photography.*

The stereoscopic views produced by Guilherme dos Santos are not the only collection in the Museum of Image and Sound in Rio de Janeiro (MIS), rather, they make up its initial collection. To be legitimised and established as a reference centre for documentation, it was necessary that MIS held documents of great relevance to the memory of the country and the city. Once the required documentation was in place, Santos collection was chosen, together with another three, to start a work which stands until the current days.

In 1965, Carlos Lacerda, the Governor of Rio de Janeiro, required that MIS was built as part of the celebrations of the fourth centenary of Rio de Janeiro. The Museum of Image and Sound was a pioneering project for the audiovisual media in the country. Qualified as a centre for music and image documents, it developed into a place for meetings, dissemination of ideas and practices from the Brazilian artistic vanguard between the 1960's and the 1970's.

Its collection currently consists of 24 archival funds, totalling 300,000 documents in the most diverse media, including photographs in paper and glass, audio tapes, wax and vinyl records, movies, audiovisual tapes, music scores and the most diverse text documents. These funds also include the most diverse musical instruments, medals, signs, clothes, among other objects, and a library with books, thesis, catalogues and magazines.

Most of the MIS collections were received through donation. However, some of them were bought by the Guanabara State

in the period of the museum's foundation. This was what happened to Guilherme Santos' collection, sold by the photographer himself to the Guanabara State Bank in 1964, along with other relevant "phonophotographic" collections.

## Stereoviews In Guilherme Santos' Collection: History Of An Archive

Considered as an undeniably valuable "historical stereoscopic archive", Guilherme Santos' collection is recognised as one of the most significant in the country. It is composed of more than 17,000 negatives in glass, 19,000 positives in glass and 1,300 analogue prints made from these negatives, covering a period between 1908 and 1957.

It is specified in the contract of purchase and sale that in the collection there were:

12,500 negative plates from Rio de Janeiro; 4,500 negatives from the States of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Minas Gerais; 7,000 plates of diverse subjects; 14 highly precise [Jules] Richard stereoscopic viewers, with capacity for up to 300 slides each; 3 [Jules] Richard's Taxiphotes of optical precision with capacity for 300 stereo plates each; 11 record books, with the plate numbers and a briefing summary of each and their dates; and a "Fichet" safe, specially built with 2 doors, completely protected against fire and shielded against electro mechanic drilling.<sup>1</sup>

1) Contract of purchase and sale between Guanabara State Bank, S.A. and Guilherme Antonio dos Santos, April 28th, 1964.

The passion between Guilherme Santos and stereoscopy began in Paris, back in 1906. Following a visit to an exhibition of three-dimensional photography, the merchant, who was on vacation in the French capital, would have been outraged on observing the scarce number of Brazilian pictures displayed, which addressed some picturesque aspects only, such as black women from Bahia selling pineapples, forests and savage animals. This motivated him to buy the necessary material to practice stereo photography, having become, for the next decades, one of its most remarkable representatives in Brazil (Monteiro, 1988).

### Rio De Janeiro In Guilherme Dos Santos' Photographs

As capital of the federation, the city of Rio de Janeiro was undergoing important transformations in its urban structure during the first half of the 20th century. Aiming to adjust the Brazilian metropolis to the image and likeness of European cities, the mayor Francisco Pereira Passos (in office from 1902 to 1906) initiated a political reform in the city, adjusting it to the new capitalist order established right after the slavery system.

It was necessary to create a city that truly stood as the capital of the world's largest coffee producer, although it might demand some significant measures. Passos enlarged the main downtown avenues, channeled rivers, embellished squares, built a large avenue to connect the southern and the central areas of the city and, with some national support, he was able to build the most modern harbour and the largest urban planning changes ever made in the city (Benchimol, 1992:

235-271). The next mayors would follow the embellishment and drainage plans for the city, until the administration of the mayor Carlos Sampaio, who, in 1920, ordered the extinction of the Castelo hill under the allegation that it reduced ventilation in the centre of the city. Sampaio demolished it, making possible the building of the Esplanada do Castelo, where the International Exhibition of 1922 took place, and where, the Cinelândia area, the new Federal city's leisure centre would be established (Abreu, 1987, p.78). Beyond physical change, every part of life in the city was adjusted to a new model of behaviour inspired by the bourgeois life style. During the 1920's, "the city central area was rescaled between areas of leisure and work, and areas of housing and leisure, giving rise to new behaviors and social representations." (Mauad, 1990, p. 55)

Finally, between 1937 and 1945, mayor Henrique Dodsworth's administration, concluded carioca's urban space interventions initiated by Passos and continued by Sampaio, with the "general plan for development." Among the numerous urban projects, the most significant one was the construction of Presidente Vargas Avenue, which was thought to ease the increasing circulation of vehicles in the city. This event inaugurated the skyscrapers era, symbols of modernisation.

In the context of these transformations, not only did Rio de Janeiro, the federal capital, become the bourgeois metropolis, but these transformations also brought about a shift in the social role of photography. In the beginning of the 20th century, photography was incorporated into the main Brazilian newspapers, magazines and almanac editions, always associated with scientific progress and with the true reproduction of the facts, as well as to the registration of special moments lived

by the city during Pereira Passos' administration (Moreira, 1996, pp. 71-78). During this period, Guilherme Santos started practicing photography, acknowledging it as a proof of reality, although he was an amateur photographer and photoclubist.<sup>2</sup> The social origins of Guilherme Santos can tell us a lot about the specific themes he photographed. Merchant, heir of one of the most famous jewellery stores in the city – Casa Luiz Resende—, member of the most important carioca bourgeois group, he was also an intimate friend of famous and wealthy families around the city, such as the Guinles and the Marinhos<sup>3</sup>. He graduated in Languages at the age of 15 in Abílio School<sup>4</sup>. Philatelist, he had the most important stamps collection of his country. He was an Arts lover, used to write poems, played the piano and went to operas, having been member of the extinct Teatro Lírico. He was a collector of paintings, with a personal pinacotheca in which most of the paintings were from French painters arriving for Casa Luiz Resende<sup>5</sup>. As a member of the Brazilian Society of Fine Arts, he used to write articles for the association journal, the Fine Arts Bulletin. A nature lover, Santos raised orchids and cloves in his residence in Petrópolis, RJ. Stereo photography was always present to register images of all these activities. We can therefore perceive that the life style adopted by Santos would translate the objective conditions to which he was used to, according to the concept of *habitus* as the unifying and generator principle of every practice according to the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

Such conditions demonstrate to us that the photographer had a comfortable and distant position in comparison to the world he lived in, which allowed him to observe and have an aesthetical gaze to his city. By doing so, he was stating his distinction against the others around him and his relationship with the others below him. Such objective conditions, which configure his class condition, obviously reflected Santos' photographic production. The choice of themes, the places, the objects, the people, as well as his own way of taking pictures. The techniques he used – since the image conception until its processing -, was beyond the uses and functions he used to attribute to his job. All of them are factors which indicate not only his social origins, but to which groups and interests his photography was useful. To analyse his stereoviews, we will consider the themes to which the photographer dedicated himself the most: both the places and events. Therefore, we have grouped Guilherme Santos' images according to the themes: beach life, natural postcards and carnival.

### Beach Life

It is difficult to mention Rio de Janeiro and not make a direct association to its popular beaches. Paraphrasing the famous singer and writer Tim Maia, "from Leme to Pontal," thinking of Rio de Janeiro is thinking of beach culture. Tanned and naked bodies. Cold ice matte tea and polvilho cookies. Surf, beach

- 2) The checked sources reveal that Guilherme Santos perfectly fit the photoclubist amateur photographer profile in the first decades of 20th century, having become a member of the Brazilian Photo club in 1925. See Photo Revista do Brasil, May, 1925, nº 01, p. 20.
- 3) The Guinles: one of the wealthiest families in Brazil in the 20th century. Its patriarch was one of the responsible for the construction of Cia. Docas de Santos (Santos' city harbor). The Marinhos: owner of one of the world's largest media enterprise, the Globo Group.
- 4) Founded in 1871 by Abílio César Borges, Macaúbas Baron, Abílio School was located in Botafogo neighborhood. It was well known for its excellence, considered one of the best schools in the city in its period and immortalized by Raul Pompéia's memories in his classic work, *O Ateneu*.
- 5) After the patriarch of the family died, the Casa Luiz Resende, besides a jewelry store, also became an art gallery.

volleyball, footvolley, matkot. The beach is the quintessential place for native cariocas. Summer, the most desired season.

We are clearly evoking the largest collection of clichés on carioca culture, produced in a large and significant period. It is obviously a generalisation in which the majority of fluminense's population citizens do not feel represented. Nevertheless, this is the image that Rio de Janeiro and the mass media, sell to the rest of the country, to the world and, especially, to their own inhabitants. Nevertheless, it has not always been like that.

The beach culture assimilation process and carioca's citizen identity were approaching slowly. This took place at the end of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century, as the result of social efforts to associate the image of the city to health, hygiene and salubrity, as it was being practiced and defended in Europe. However, although these ideals were reserved to the wealthiest families, the habit of going to the beach slowly made its way (O'Donnell, 2013).

Our goal in this paper is not to go through the reasons for which the project of beach culture assimilation worked so well in Rio de Janeiro, but it is worth highlight that these habits, so common nowadays, were caught up by Guilherme Santos when they were on the verge of becoming popular. At that time, the sand, the beach sidewalks and the people on them embodied the beauty of carioca modernity (Oliveira et al, 2011). Known internationally, Copacabana beach holds the "most famous title of the world"<sup>6</sup>. In a parallel to the barrio's development (until the end of the 19th century, the

neighbourhood of Copacabana was a sandy place, difficult to access and inhabited by fishermen families), the beach culture would also develop in the city. According to O'Donnell, contrarily to other housing areas, Copacabana rises under the symbol of modernity and salubrity, thus, being considered the neighbourhood of the future, ready to shelter fancy families in republican times. Thus, it is possible to identify, during the first decades of the 20th century, a movement to build images for the suburbs: salubrity, leisure, investment, youth and peacefulness, without allowing the urban structure to fade. It is also in Copacabana that Pereira Passos will impose limits to local building patterns and, later, he will approve the plans for the construction of Atlântica Avenue, so that this neighbourhood would be safe from the risk of disorder. Passos' projects mastered a new way of urban occupation in the beach area and the incorporation of the sea sight to aggregate value. It worked. In 1922, whoever approached Copacabana would find a barrio with more than 22 thousand inhabitants and an Atlântica Avenue doubled in size and illuminated, in which the flow went along with hygiene: "On the sidewalk, people modeled with elegant clothes in groups of two or three, in a relentless discussion while they attentively observed what was happening around them." (O'Donnell, 2013, p.22). In obvious contrast with the carioca suburbs, oceanic Rio gave new meaning to the hygienist ideology, adding an aesthetic dimension related to body care and exposure, and to a lifestyle plan.

Beautiful, strong, healthy, members of Copacabana elite affirmed their prestige beyond culture and *strictu*

*sensu* civilization elements. Due to this, in the beach, Copacabana aristocracy will make the difference. Going to the beach was considered an obligation for those who wanted to look elegant, just like attending presentations at Teatro Municipal or going to tea houses in Copacabana Palace Hotel. By doing so, Copacabana beach will have a very characteristic and special feature, becoming confused with the neighborhood. It is the barrio itself. (Praia, 2013, p. 125)

In Figure 1 we can check, for example, the peculiar sidewalk ('Calçadão') along the beach, very typical since the early 1920's. According to O'Donnell, the sidewalk in Atlântica Avenue proceeded with a practice started in the 1900's by the first local aristocrats. Along the sidewalk, the beautiful young

ladies "modeled their towels and made themselves noticeable, giving prestige to the elegant and healthy youth the beach enthusiasts were so proud of." (O'Donnell, 2013, p.123) The following photograph reveals this very moment of leisure between local women from Copacabana.

Another "elegant" way of socialising at the beach, according to O'Donnell, was by posing on the sand. This habit was also registered by our photographer, as we can see in Figure 2. Here, two young ladies pose relaxed and with a smile while their bodies translate the beauty and health ideal that was so much looked after. It is therefore evident that the ladies go to the beach to socialise and get together by virtue of such a place, an act to which Copacabana might make a plea for genuine pioneering (Mauad, 1990, p.41).

6) We actually know very little of this title veracity, which is commonly spread in mass media and reproduced by the natives in Rio de Janeiro.

It was not only to the “little princess of the sea”<sup>7</sup> that Guilherme dedicated his career. Although beach bathing policies for therapeutic purposes were more intense as the real estate investments in the Copacabana area were increasing, during the mid-19th century, those who wanted to bathe on the beach during the day usually went downtown. In beaches such as Boqueirão, Caju, Retiro Saudoso, São Cristóvão and Santa Luzia, thousands of people would bathe between three and eight in the morning in order to enjoy the sea. Workers, especially merchants, could be found there mainly at the start of the morning hours. They used to bathe before going to work at stores and offices. As the first sun light came through the window, the wealthiest class members arrived at the beach and enjoyed it until 8AM. In 1870, there were seven bathing

places in Boqueirão beach, where the clients could change their clothes – a fact which proves the popularity of beach practices among citizens (O'Donnell, 2013, p.95).

In this way, Santos dedicated a significant part of his work to the registration of beach bathing in downtown beaches. Santa Luzia (Figure 3) and Retiro Saudoso were the places which received more attention from the photographer, where he also registered the shower rooms.

Through these images, we can understand the differences between the bathers of carioca beaches, each one carrying a particular world of meanings, functioning as cultural barriers. With this in mind, we can observe that beaches downtown is

7) Designation of Copacabana beach in the lyrics of well known song “Copacabana” (1944), composed by Alberto Ribeiro e João de Barro, o Braguinha.

Figure 4: Christ the Redeemer: inauguration party, 1931. Guilherme Santos' Collection in Moreira Salles Photographic Institute

represented by the “farofas”<sup>8</sup> who were the less wealthy bathers in this leisure area of the city, and these people would never be seen in beaches such as Urca or Copacabana. After all, going to the Virtues beach, for the Lapa native, was not the same as for a Botafogo native to frequent Urca beach. To the first group, the crucial issue was the fun to be had; to the others, it was worthy because they could be seen (Mauad, 1990, p.41).

### Natural Postcards

Rio de Janeiro's sinuosity was, no wonder, an important aspect which caught Guilherme Santos' eye and helped him

build a group of amazing images from the places that, today, represent the most important symbols of the city: Corcovado, Sugar Loaf and Guanabara Bay.

Even prior to the construction of the statue of Christ, The Redeemer, in 1931, today considered as one of the seven wonders of the modern world, Guilherme used to adventure himself in Paineiras Road in order to get to the peak of Corcovado mountain. During his adventures, Santos did not hesitate to register the long road he had been through, photographing the seasons at Corcovado Trail Road as well as the lush flora and the residences appearing along the way. There,

8) It is common, in Brazil, to refer to groups of people coming from the poorest classes as “farofeiros,” because they tend to take every sort of food and beverage to the beach, as an allusion to the popular manioc flour (farofa), a basic ingredient of Brazilian alimentation, and which can be easily confused with the sand. As, most of the times, the referred groups are the ones who enjoy themselves the most at the beaches, the word “farofeiro” has also become very popular as a kind of social distinction and exclusion.

the photographer made many stereo photographs, benefiting from the almost complete landscape over the city. However, the pictures from Corcovado were not taken only during the photographer's stay in Tijuca forest. From every possible angle and distance, he managed to register one of the biggest Brazilian symbols, before and after its inauguration: the statue of Christ, The Redeemer. So, the opening ceremony of the monument (Figure 4) – on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1931 – and its construction process were part of Santos' stereoscopic series.

Located at the entrance of Guanabara Bay, Sugar Loaf is a natural landmark for its peculiar shape and privileged location. It is also a historical milestone because, below it, there is the area where Estácio de Sá founded the city of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro in 1565. Since its opening, in 1912, with a cable car connecting Urca Hill and Sugar Loaf, this huge rock is considered one of the main touristic sites in the city. The first cable car in Brazil and the third in Latin America, *bondinho*, as it is lovingly named by the citizens, was one of the cornerstones for the development of tourism in Rio. For that reason, Santos also dedicated some of his plates to register the recently opened attraction, but, in most of the cases, Sugar Loaf was photographed with the landscape around it.

It is not by chance that many images from Guanabara Bay mix themselves with the Sugar Loaf pictures. The bay is the scene which appears the most in Santos' work, with a total of 868 negatives produced and 238 printed slides. Surrounded by historical spaces and 14 towns from the State of Rio de Janeiro, Guanabara Bay has more than 20 isles and covers many carioca neighbourhoods; four of which are in the southern area

of the city. The enormous extension of this place, which is one of the greatest icons of the city, allowed Santos to produce photographs of the Bay's farthest and most diverse places. Nevertheless, the most interesting images the photographer ever produced from the Bay are the ones in which the sea is a character. In these images, he plays with and produces wonderful photographic

Another area of the city with a wide variety of lights and landscapes is Rodrigo de Freitas lagoon. To highlight the local sunset, Santos tried to favour the reflection of the water, the chain of mountains surrounding the lagoon. By examining the pictures we can see the groups of mountains of Vidigal (Dois Irmãos Hill) and Gávea Stone (Figure 6), as well as the Corcovado. We can also identify various pictures in which the

the carnival named *Corso Carnavalesco*, *Carnaval do Corso* or only *Corso*.

Widely documented by Santos, the *Corso* was a procession of decorated convertible cars with lots of people celebrating, from Rio Branco Avenue until Beira Mar Avenue, as we can see in Figure 7. It was about a naturally, exclusive manifestation since only those who had automobiles could take part in the party. The poorest attendees could only be bystanders.

Another significant party in Guilherme Santos' work is the *Great Societies* carnival (Figure 8). Three of the most important carnival teams would not go unseen by the lenses of this photographer. They were: *Tenentes do Diabo*, *Democráticos* and *Fenianos*, which had their imponent parades full of allegoric cars with lavish decorations and fine women<sup>9</sup>.

Brought up during the mid-19th century as an alternative which looked to be more adequate than the alleged savagery and barbarity of the traditional night before the carnival, the Great Societies thought themselves to be almost the natural outcome from civilisation, although the carnival practices did not corroborate this idea. Principally composed of merchants, commanders and traders, it was a fact that most of their members were immigrant workers.

Nevertheless, in the early years of the 20th century, the project of the dominant social class for conquering the hegemony of carioca carnival would not be such a great success. They were against another kind of enemy then: ranches and crew,

Atlantic Ocean makes up the background, giving viewers the impression that the sea and lagoon become one.

## Carnival

Among the events Guilherme Santos took pictures of, none was as important as the carioca carnival. The photographer produced nothing less than 850 plates on it, which corresponds to 4% of the total amount of negatives in MIS. It would be vital to identify which carnival editions were privileged by Guilherme and which were less registered or not even registered at all.

Although it is not possible to be precise about the exact quantity of records, it is predominantly a series of pictures about

9) For more information on the commented societies, check: Cunha, Maria Clementina Pereira (2001). *Ecoss da folia: uma história social do Carnaval carioca entre 1880 e 1920*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

perhaps even more dangerous than the previous carnival jokes. Although both manifestations took as reference the mold forged by the Great Societies, they were putting in question the survival of the carioca carnival. That said, they constituted different ways of having fun, as both manifestations had in common the social origin of their members: recruited from slums and suburbs or among manual jobs – a fact which deeply disturbed those who were for a “civilized carnival”.

So, if we consider the way in which the carioca carnival was socially divided, it becomes easier to understand the almost absence of photographs which depicts ranches and crew during the carnival in Guilherme Santos’ work.

The carnival images produced by Santos prove, thus, how much his choices were previously determined by social origins. Photographing the luxurious corso carnival and the

imponent procession halts from the Great Societies looked far more dignified and attractive to be registered than the humble and true fun – which may have been too savage for his classy eyes. Observing ranches and crew which, year after year, seemed to be present in larger numbers through Rio’s streets.

### Final Considerations

When we recognise photographs playing the role of a cultural product that contributed decisively towards propagation of new behaviours and representations of the hegemonic class, we can understand to which groups a collection of pictures like this one, produced by Guilherme dos Santos, serves.

I believe the analysis presented in this paper about the referred collection might take us to a reflection concerning the way the city of Rio de Janeiro was built along the first decades of the

20th century, and this way is now hegemonic. The image presents the capital of the State of Rio de Janeiro as the capital of happiness, relaxation, beaches, samba, carnival and soccer. Besides, the image of a city with wonderful landscapes not only corroborates the title of “wonderful city”, but offsets any problem caused by the vast social inequality and by the subsequent unsuccessful public administrations as well.

If, on one hand, we cannot prove Guilherme Santos was conscious about his idea of the city reinforcing its hegemonic aspect in a not-so-distant future, on the other hand it is evident that the uses and functions he attributed to his work played this exact role. Therefore, when buying Guilherme Santos’ collection in 1964, the Government of the Guanabara State knew exactly that those pictures corroborated the idea of a city proper to the government’s goals: selling the image of the city which is relevant to the ideals of modernisation and

courteousness, while maintaining, since its beginning, some of the “Brazilianness” specific characteristics.

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