



The Ambition and Originality of *Fotoclubismo's* Amateur Photographers

The weekend hobby of a group of photographers in 1950s Brazil connects to the way we frame our world today.
[Sarah Meister](#) May 7, 2021

Groucho Marx famously quipped that he didn't want to belong to any club that would have him as a member, but most of us appreciate the feeling of belonging derived from spending time alongside people who share our interests.



Flagrantes colhidos durante excursões do F. C. C. Bandeirante.

FCCB members on an excursion, from *Boletim* 79 (November/December 1952)

The men and women who joined São Paulo's Foto-Cine Clube Bandeirante (FCCB) bonded over their passion for photography: the club was instrumental to their individual artistic development and their esteemed reputation across a dynamic international circuit of amateur photo salons. The works on view in [Fotoclubismo: Brazilian Modernist Photography, 1946–1964](#) highlight the achievements of more than 20 club members with unforgettable prints that traveled extensively along these networks. These are not intimate snapshots of family gatherings intended for the album page (a slightly different twist on the photographic amateur) but works of ambition and originality that had and continue to have a commanding presence on the walls of salons and museums. FCCB members' success owes much to their distinctive blend of camaraderie and competition, nurtured in part by their frequent excursions.



FCCB members on an excursion to Paquetá Island to visit the Sociedade Fluminense de Fotografia, with some of the women photographers signalled out

OS QUE SE DESTACAM

Todos os anos, de conformidade com o regulamento de concursos internos, o F. C. Bandeirante premia os associados que mais se distinguiram nos salões internacionais ou nacionais de que a entidade participa, sendo ofertado ao primeiro colocado, um rico troféu. Fácil é calcular como tal prêmio, pelo que exprime e que praticamente confere ao vencedor o título de "o melhor autor bandeirante do ano", é arduamente disputado, timbrando os associados em enviar para os vários salões os seus melhores trabalhos eis que a vitória reside exclusivamente nos resultados por eles alcançados. Atendendo a vários pedidos, damos a seguir a classificação dos concorrentes que até a presente data totalizaram mais de 200 pontos, computados os resultados de 21 salões. Para a classificação final faltam ainda os resultados de mais 9 salões dos quais o Bandeirante participou.

Nome	Trabs. Admts.	Pontos
Francisco Albuquerque	28	910
Eduardo Salvatore	28	820
Gaspar Gasparian	26	780
Angelo F. Nati	24	780
Nelson S. Rodrigues	24	740
Masatoski Otsuka	23	740
Carlos F. Latorre	21	680
Jacob Polacow	22	680
German Lorca	20	620
Aldo Souza Lima	19	600
Thomas J. Farkas	19	580
José Otiteica Fº	16	510
Luis Vaccari	16	520
Roberto H. Yoshida	16	520
Fernando Palmerio	16	500
Pilino S. Mendes	16	500
Barbara Mors	16	460
Manoel Morales Fº	15	460
Sergio Trovelli	14	460
Julio Agostinelli	13	420
Antonio S. Victor	14	400
Jean Leveque	14	380
José V. E. Valenti	16	360
Euelides Machado	15	340
Gerardo Barros	12	340
Mario Fiori	13	340
Abilio M. Castro	11	320
Guilherme Malfatti	9	300
Arnaldo M. Florence	10	260
Kazuo Kawabara	9	260
Renato Francesconi	10	260
Alfio Trovato	6	240
Asterio Rocha	8	220
Admar Cervellini	9	220
Cyro A. Cardoso	8	200
Ludovico E. Mungiol	7	200

CONCURSOS INTERNOS

A classificação geral de 1950

Com o resultado do concurso de dezembro p.p., foi levantada pelo Diretor Fotográfico a classificação geral dos concorrentes de 1950 aos concursos internos do F. C. Bandeirante e proclamados vencedores, nas várias categorias em que se subdividem os seguintes associados:

Seniors:	TRABALHOS			Pontos
	Inscr.	Classificação	simbol. c/m/a	
1.º - Gaspar Gasparian	28	12	1	140
2.º - Eduardo Salvatore	20	8	1	100
3.º - Francisco A. Albuquerque	12	6		60

Seniors:

1.º - Gaspar Gasparian	28	12	1	140
2.º - Eduardo Salvatore	20	8	1	100
3.º - Francisco A. Albuquerque	12	6		60

Juniors:

1.º - Aldo de Souza Lima	38	17	12	410
2.º - Masatoski Otsuka	20	6	4	140
3.º - German Lorca	33	4	5	140

Novíssimos:

1.º - Eygrio Sato	40	13	13	430
2.º - Armando Nascimento Jr.	20	6	12	370
3.º - Barbara Mors	31	18	7	360

Nos termos do regulamento de concursos internos, foram promovidos para a categoria de "Seniors" o Sr. Aldo A. de Souza Lima, e para a categoria de "Juniors" os Srs. Eygrio Sato, Armando Nascimento Jr. e Barbara Mors, os dois últimos nos termos do art. 3.º letra "b" do Regulamento. Aos vencedores, o Boletim consigna as congratulações efusivas de todos os colegas.

— ★ —

Os Concursos de 1951

Damos novamente, a seguir, o calendário elaborado para o primeiro semestre de 1951 o qual inclui temas dos mais interessantes e sugestivos. Como de costume, as inscrições para esses concursos serão encerradas no dia 20 de cada mês, devendo os trabalhos preencherem as condições constantes do regulamento e havendo, na entrega, a tolerância máxima de 48 horas.

Janeiro	- Tema livre
Fevereiro	- Marinhas
Março	- Tema livre
Abril	- Reflexos (espelhos, superfícies polidas, etc.)
Maior	- Tema livre
Junho	- Sombras
Julho	- Tema livre

Natal Bandeirante

Natal...

Festa de confraternização, de alegria e de bondade, grandes e pequenos em seus corações em torno da figura simbólica de "Papai Noel" para ouvir-lhe a palavra de fé e de esperança num mundo melhor, de paz e compreensão entre os homens.

Nossa sede se engalanou naquela alegre tarde, recebendo numeroso grupo de crianças, para apertarem a mão do carinhoso "Velhinho", recebendo ao mesmo tempo a pequena lembrança que lhes fora reservada.

Nossos clichês mostram, expressivamente, como decorreu o "Natal Bandeirante", festividade que já se tornou ponto de referência nas atividades do ano.

A spread from *Boletim* 57 (January 1951) featuring club rankings on the left, and snapshots from the Bandeirante Christmas (Natal Bandeirante) on the right

Beginning in 1946 the FCCB published a small (often monthly or bimonthly) magazine, the *Boletim foto-cine*, which was given free to members and sold in local photo shops. Its modest scale belied its scope and seriousness: it won special awards for editorial content in the Photographic Society of America's International Competition in 1949 and

1951. (It should be noted the *Boletim* was published exclusively in Portuguese, so perhaps the PSA was influenced by the fact that its own members and their writing—in translation—appeared frequently.)

The *Boletim* played a central role in advertising a social environment that drew people to the club, and also encouraged the competitive atmosphere within it. For many years, the *Boletim* published each new member's name, birthday notices, wedding announcements, and snapshots from excursions, openings, and holiday celebrations at the club headquarters (Santa's annual visit was a recurring feature). These personal touches served as a counter-balance to the equally prominent presence of club rankings: charts and accounts of prizes won and accolades received both domestically and around the world. One might conclude the social niceties were instrumental in fostering an environment in which critical feedback was possible, which in turn contributed to the club's capacity for creative innovation.

It can be useful to acknowledge the ways in which something as invisible and inescapable as taste influences our judgment of a work of art.

[Geraldo de Barros](#) is arguably the best known member of the FCCB. He earned a living at the Banco do Brasil, but his creative spirit was not squelched by his day job. His satirical cartoons are peppered throughout the *Boletim*. This one betrays the anxiety of those whose work is being judged: three diminutive members, one waving a white flag, are menaced by others wielding a gun, a bomb, and a knife. He experimented with collage, montage, multiple exposures, and other interventions in his photographs, he was a founding member of the Grupo Ruptura, an inventive association of painters, and he later pursued a successful career in furniture design. The Museum of Art of São Paulo held a one-person exhibition of his photo-based work in January 1951, which was so confounding to his fellow FCCB members (some photos were rendered as sculptures on pedestals; all played fearlessly with conventions of representation) that this major accomplishment went unmentioned in the *Boletim*. Despite occasional moments of misunderstanding, de Barros was a principal force in the presentation of work by FCCB members in the second São Paulo Bienal in 1953–54, by which time even the club's leadership had embraced the spirit of innovation de Barros had championed for years.



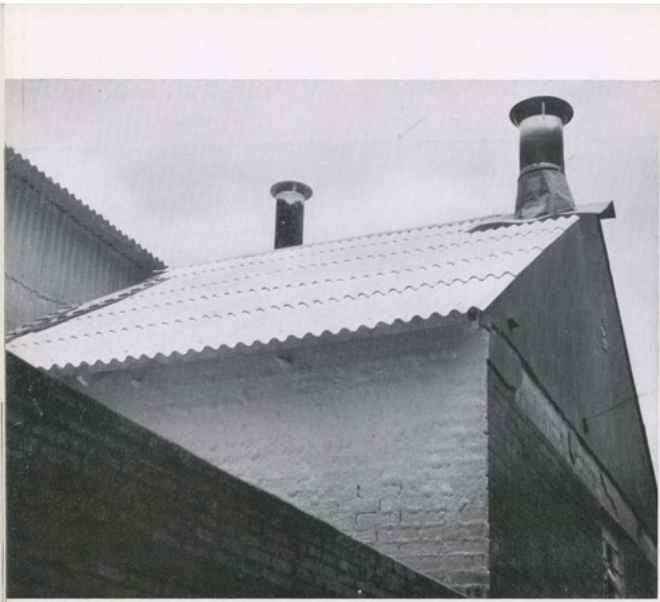
Satirical cartoon of the concursos internos by Geraldo de Barros, from *Boletim* 41 (September 1949)

FCCB members' photographs were awarded prizes in amateur photo salons on six continents throughout the 1950s, and the success of a given work might be proved by turning it over and looking at the stamps and labels that adorn the versos of those prints accepted for display. In the *Boletim*, club members voiced their concern that truly inventive works would be rejected by these salons, thus denying the FCCB the recognition they sought (and deserved). With righteous indignation, they bemoaned the "stagnation" of the "salonite"—photographers whose "main concern is collecting salon labels, albeit at the cost of standardizing their work in accordance with conformism and the annihilation of their own personalities. And the outcome of 'salonitis' is a serious disease whose virus leads its sufferers to spend year after year flooding the salons all around the world with dozens and dozens of copies of the same works in a pure manifestation of vanity, collecting the numbers and statistical rankings so dear to North Americans." Given their own considerable attention to rankings, this warning rings a bit hollow, but the club clearly grasped the dangers of failing to innovate.



German Lorca. *White Roofs (Telhados brancos)*. 1951

The excursions were not merely social outings: they were opportunities to learn alongside fellow members in the field, and to attempt to capture the “best” view of a particular subject. In one view of this distinctive building, [German Lorca](#) has accentuated the contrast between the corrugated roof and the adjacent shadows; in another, [José Yalenti](#) chose to frame the angular structure against the undulating form of a nearby building; in a third (noted in the *Boletim* as having been submitted to the club’s internal contest), Euclides Machado offered a study of texture, tone, and form. Although the club used “scorecards” to judge the relative strengths of images such as these, many of the attributes being judged were grouped within the category “factor psicológico” (psychological factors), which are surely more challenging to rank objectively. Then and now, it can be useful to acknowledge the ways in which something as invisible and inescapable as taste influences our judgment of a work of art.



"LINHAS E TONS"

Euclides Machado

(Do concurso)

— 18 —

Euclides Machado. *Lines and Tones (Linhas e tons)*. 1951. From *Boletim* 62 (June 1951)



José Yalenti. *Angles (Angulos)*. 1951



FOTO-CINE CLUBE BANDEIRANTE

FICHA DE SÓCIO

NOME: ALTSCHUL GERTRUDES M. INSCRIÇÃO N.º 1.008

Admitido em -9- / JULHO.- / 1952 Categoria: CONTRIBUINTE

Residência: R. S. CARLOS PINHAL, 345-AP. 405 n.º (.....) Fone: 31-4890

Trabalha á n.º Fone:

Cidade SÃO PAULO Estado SÃO PAULO

Nacionalidade: BRASILEIRA Data do nascimento: 1 / 1 / 904

Estado Civil: CASADA Profissão:



CARTEIRA de XXXXX n.º E' / E' 583.588
estrangeiro
XXXXX
identidade

Correspondencia na residencia XXXXXX

Deve ser cobrado na residencia XXXXXX
onde trabalha

OBSERVAÇÕES: Palestra 10/6/62

Gertrudes Altschul's FCCB membership card. Courtesy Foto-Cine Clube Bandeirante

Although the members most avidly pursuing the “Anso Girls” (a group of models on a promotional tour for Anso film across Latin America) were predominantly men (and boys), the FCCB made a considerable effort to encourage female members, offering discounted membership fees and featuring their work in the *Boletim*. This, in turn, contributed to the convivial, even familial, atmosphere of the club, as many female members were cousins, sisters, or wives of other members. But it also contributed to the club’s many successes, both domestically and abroad. [Dulce Carneiro](#) was a regular contributor to the *Boletim*, penning memorably critical assessments (describing the work of a French amateur group as “run-of-the-mill documentation and belongs to that ‘kindergarten’ stage of Art Photography we imagined to have been long surpassed”). When she joined the club in 1952 (“older than most beginners,” according to the *Boletim*), [Gertrudes Altschul](#)’s achievements were soon heralded around the world, and her day job making artificial flowers for millinery informed her singularly inventive approach to photographing leaves.

While it is easy for us to recognize the objectification in the images reproduced on this page, it is also possible to empathize with the enthusiasm of seeing the world through a camera’s lens—even if today we are just as often doing so with our phones.



Os "ANSCO-BOYS"... grandes e pequenos (note o garoto com o seu "caixão") acorreram ao E. C. Pinheiros para fotografar as "Anso-Girls".



Um acontecimento inédito

A visita das "Anso-Girls"

Espectáculo fora do comum foi proporcionado aos aficionados paulistanos com a visita a esta Capital, em fins de janeiro p. p., das "Anso-Girls" que em viagem de propaganda da "Anso Division da General Anline & Film Corporation" estão percorrendo a América Latina, apresentando um bellissimo "show" — a "SINFONIA COLORIDA", em benefício de instituições locais.

As "Anso-Girls", são seis encantadoras modelos profissionais, famosos por sua

fotogenia e elegância — cada qual representando um tipo diferente de mulher bonita, desde a "platinum blonde" até à faceira morena tropical.

Aproveitando a estada das mesmas em S. Paulo — infelizmente, apenas dois dias — os representantes da Anso — MESBLA S/A. — e o Foto-cine Clube Bandeirante promoveram interessante concurso fotográfico tendo por tema retratos e flagrantes das "Anso-Girls", as quais para tanto posaram especialmente

Na sede do Pinheiros, as "Anso-Girls" posaram especialmente para os aficionados paulistanos. Os flagrantes que estampamos, são bastante expressivos e dispensam qualquer legenda...



"Visit from the Anso girls" ("A visita das 'Anso-Girls'"), from *Boletim 79* (November/December 1952)



Dulce Carneiro. *Tomorrow (Amanhã)*. c. 1957

- [Sarah Meister](#)

[Curator, Department of Photography](#)