Rio de Janiero
Two Centuries of Urban Change. 1808–2008
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An exhibit
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Rio de Janeiro is a magical place, a city of fabled beauty and dramatic contrasts, where nature and the human hand have joined to create a landscape of panoramic views and iconic images—Guanabara Bay, the peaks of Sugarloaf and Corcovado, the rows of royal palms, Copacabana and Ipanema beaches, the arcos of the eighteenth-century aqueduct, the Avenidas Rio Branco and Beira-Mar, the statue of Christ the Redeemer, historic churches, and hilltop shantytowns known as favelas.

This exhibit shows how over the past two hundred years artists and photographers have repeatedly been drawn to these images in a process of icon building within a dynamic context of urban growth and modernization. Such visual presentations reflect not only the changing times through which the cariocas—people of Rio—have lived, but are tied to their indomitable spirit as manifested in Carnival, popular music, beach culture, and daily life. Transcending persistent problems of poverty and crime, Rio is internationally acclaimed for its fun-loving atmosphere and its people, who call it the “marvelous city.”

Materials selected for this exhibit, principally from the Research Library Department of Special Collections, illustrate the depth and variety of UCLA’s collections on Rio de Janeiro. Printed books, periodicals, and photographs are featured, as are to a lesser extent manuscripts, maps, films, original artworks, lantern slides, stereocards, chapbooks, and ephemera.
Rio de Janiero

Panoramic Rio

The dramatic topographic features of the city, its environs, and Guanabara Bay have inspired the production of panoramic images from the engravings of the early nineteenth century to the digital color photographs of today.

During the year he spent in Rio in 1819-1820, where his father was British consul, Henry Chamberlain, naval officer, and amateur artist, documented the landscape, architecture, and scenes of daily life of the city in his richly-detailed drawings, watercolors, and oils. “View of the City of Rio de Janeiro” is reproduced from Chamberlain's celebrated 1822 album of colored aquatints.


Albumen print highlighting various districts of the city and its natural surroundings. Ferrez, of French descent, was a leading pioneer photographer in Brazil in the late nineteenth century.

Panoramic photogravure of the urban landscape.
Rio de Janeiro
Iconic Landscape

The peaks of Sugar Loaf and Corcovado blend with the lush tropical landscape and background of ocean and bay to give the city its instant and lasting image of recognition for foreigners and Brazilians alike. Despite its growth to a population of more than eight million in an endlessly modernizing cityscape, it has remained possible from certain vantage points to appreciate nature in its pre-urban state.

Reproduction of a previously unpublished 1816 watercolor by Emeric Essex Vidal, “Frigate in a Squall under the Sugar Loaf entering Rio de Janeiro Harbor.”

Albumen print of the entrance to Guanabara Bay, and view from the hills of Niterói.

A romantic panorama in sepia-tone of Guanabara Bay and beyond.

Contemporary color photograph of Tijuca National Forest in Rio de Janeiro, showing Corcovado and Sugar Loaf.
An era of urban change began in 1808 when the Portuguese Crown, fleeing the armies of Napoleon, transferred its seat of empire from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro. With its elevation to capital, three centuries of colonial restrictions were lifted, and the character of the city changed economically and culturally, as well as politically. Trade expanded as the Brazilian ports were opened to the world. The influx of immigrants and slaves swelled, new cultural institutions were established, and printing was permitted for the first time. Foreign artists, later joined by local photographers, chronicled this transformation, creating an explosion of visual imagery, which continued through the years of the independent empire until its overthrow in 1889.

Hand-colored lithographs of drawings by Jean Baptiste Debret of Carnival scenes and portraits of King D. João VI and Emperor Pedro I. Debret, a French artist, came to Brazil with the French cultural mission in the second decade of the nineteenth century, and served as painter to the royal and imperial courts. His work is highly prized for its esthetic and documentary qualities.

The German artist Rugendas published a series of 100 lithographs on Brazil. Among these are some of the early depictions of the expanding city and its new suburbs as represented by a view of downtown from Glória hill (plate 5) and development around Botafogo Bay (plate 7).
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The mid-century photographs of Victor Frond were transformed into lithographs by Paris artists in a collection compiled by Ribeyrolles. The Arcos, an eighteenth-century aqueduct, brought water to the city and later served as a pathway for streetcars.
Hermann C. Raebel.
While on patrol in the South Atlantic, United States Navy Lieutenant Hermann Raebel painted 46 watercolor views of landscapes and daily life in various Latin American cities. The watercolors displayed here were gifts of Darvel Lloyd and family, descendants of Raebel.
Hermann C. Raebel. *Don Pedro I.*
Original watercolor, ca. 1866.
Hermann C. Raebel. *Street Scene*. Original watercolor, ca. 1866.
The dynamics of Rio de Janeiro’s development accelerated even further with the long-anticipated end of slavery in 1888, and the establishment of the Republic a year later in 1889. Parisian-style modernization ensued, reflected in the demolition of the old city and the creation of broad boulevards. Other improvements changed the city, such as the construction of improved docks, the extension of bay-front, and later, beachfront avenues, the creation of new residential suburbs to the south and industrial areas to the north, the development of sanitation and public health systems, and improved urban transportation. Transformations—at times radical—have continued over the ensuing decades to the present day. Foreign models and local styles of architecture and landscape design have blended into the natural setting to give Rio de Janeiro its distinctive image, while the growing slum districts of the favelas have shown a different side of informal urban expansion.

City map by Carlos Aenishanslin, highlighting the important civic, religious, and military sites in Rio de Janeiro of 1914.

The store Maison Chic sold postcards and other widely popular photographic views of the city.
In the quest for additional central city space, hills were leveled for building sites, and the earth was used as infill in the bay, providing space for new transportation systems, large avenues, and the Santos Dumont airport. Shown here is the hydraulic destruction of Morro do Castelo.
This construction heralded a major high-rise expansion of the Copacabana suburb, which, in the ensuing decades, became one of the most densely settled places in the world. In a note scribbled on the back of the photograph, a tourist declared: “The Copacabana Hotel is the finest hotel in all Brazil.”
The dynamic and successful modernization of the city, accompanied by the substantial expansion of favelas, have resulted in widely held negative images produced by two hundred years of often conservative and elitist waves of urban reforms. The bad press emphasizing poverty and crime, both at home and abroad, time and again dampens the enthusiasm for the more positive aspects of life in Rio de Janeiro.
Juan Gutierrez. Album, ca. 1893.

Sepia-tone albumen prints of Rio de Janeiro by the Spanish photographer Juan Gutierrez, who worked in Brazil in the 1890s. “View of the City from the Ilha das Cobras” shows the downtown port.
Juan Gutierrez. Album, ca. 1893.

Sepia-tone albumen prints of Rio de Janeiro by the Spanish photographer Juan Gutierrez, who worked in Brazil in the 1890s. “Entrance to the Bay” shows the growth of the city and its suburbs.
In 1822, D. Pedro I was acclaimed Emperor of Brazil from a small wooden palace in Campo de Santana, now Praça da Aclamação. The growing sense of the urban change that followed in downtown Rio and its suburbs, depicted by the Brazilian writer Machado Assis (1839–1908) in many of his stories, is captured in this passage in “Conto de Escola,” from his 1896 collection *Várias Histórias*: “[I] paused between S. Diogo hill and Campo de Santana, which wasn’t then a park, an upper-class project, but a rustic space, more or less infinite, crowded with washerwomen, grass, and donkeys on the loose.”

The cover illustration combines references to the iconic landscape, the extension of electric trolley (“bonde”) service to the beachfront suburbs, and the ubiquitous figure of a bikini-clad “garota de Ipanema.”

The first of two views, by the Brazilian photographer Salomão Scliar, of the Avenida Presidente Vargas, the broadest boulevard of the city, which was cut through after 1930 as a modernist extension of the urban planning symbolized earlier by the Avenida Rio Branco.
The second of two views, by the Brazilian photographer Salomão Sciliar, of the Avenida Presidente Vargas, the broadest boulevard of the city, which was cut through after 1930 as a modernist extension of the urban planning symbolized earlier by the Avenida Rio Branco.
Beach scene of growing traffic congestion and young surfers in the 1950s and 1960s.

A typical tourist map showing the various districts of the city and major features such as Santos Dumont airport, the aerial tramway to Sugar Loaf, the Jockey Club, the Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas, and the major beaches.
Rio de Janeiro has been at the center of Brazil’s development of vibrant urban popular culture. Carnival, soccer mania, beach culture, and music — choro, samba, bossa nova, and MPB — have influenced the city’s distinctive patterns of life, and contributed to the stereotypical images of the fun-loving cariocas.
Carnival in Rio is one of the most exuberant popular celebrations in the world, involving all social classes and attracting visitors from around the country as well as from abroad. The illustration displayed here shows different popular elements dressed as baianas, native Brazilians, and beach-goers.
Photograph by Jean Manzon of Maracanã, the largest soccer stadium in South America. Opened in 1950 to host the World Cup tournament of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), Maracanã provides the setting for Brazil’s soccer mania.
The Bossa Nova of Antonio Carlos (Tom) Jobim and other young musicians swept Brazil and the rest of the world in the late 1950s. “Garota de Ipanema” (“The Girl from Ipanema”) became one of the all-time international hits thanks in part to the collaboration of stars like saxophonist Stan Getz and Frank Sinatra.
A group of photographs showing the formalized Carnival parades and Sambadrome beneath the scene of a growing favela, in sharp contrast with Rio’s leading café from the Belle Époque, the Confeitaria Colombo.

Portuguese-born samba singer and Rio superstar Carmen Miranda (1909-1955), a key precursor of Tropicalismo, gained international fame promoting Brazil in Hollywood, where she became one of the highest-paid artists—and by some accounts, the highest-paid woman in the United States.

This construction heralded a major high-rise expansion of the Copacabana suburb, which, in the ensuing decades, became one of the most densely settled places in the world. In a note scribbled on the back of the photograph, a tourist declared: “The Copacabana Hotel is the finest hotel in all Brazil.”

An early tourist guidebook to the city. Visitors began flocking to Rio de Janeiro in the early 20th century, and tourism has risen steadily up to the present day.

By the 1990s, tourists were even humorously advised to become cariocas.
On special assignment from *Life*, Parks traveled to Brazil in 1961 to photograph the slums of Rio. His photo essay, “Freedom’s Fearful Foe: Poverty,” documented the poverty and social misery of the Da Silva family, whose young son, Flavio, was dying of asthma and malnutrition. Parks later expanded his portrayal of the boy, and his life in the favela, to include a 1964 documentary film, and the 1978 biography, *Flavio*. 

This cover was taken from the poster created for Pan American Airways by Paul George Lawler in the 1930s.
This view of a favela, with contrasting advertising billboard, represents two aspects of contemporary Brazilian life in Rio.
Images of Rio have repeatedly appeared in ephemeral formats, including postcards, stamps, currency, commemorative medals, glass lantern slides, stereocards, and chapbooks, or *folhetos*, of *literatura de cordel*. 

*Ephemera*

Postcard.
Avenida do Mangue, Rio de Janeiro.

Postcard.
Photo album.
Slide. Palm tree-lined street.
Slide. Cable car at base of mountain.
Slide. Sugarloaf mountain.
Slide. View of city and ocean.
Slide. View of buildings.
Slide. View of city street.
Lantern slide. Shaded Avenue in Tijuca, a mountain top suburb of Rio de Janeiro.
Lantern slide. Avenida Biera Mar from Mt. Castello, Corcovado in Distance, Rio de Janiero.
Lantern slide. Palm-Fringed Rua Viscounte de Itauna and Mangue Canal, Rio de Janiero.
Lantern slide. Avenida Rio Branco from Hotel, Avenida on a Holiday, Rio de Janeiro.
Folheto de Literatura de Cordel.
Bronze medals, front and back.
Silver medals, front and back.
1.000 cruzeiros
Banco Central do Brasil (Republica), 1937
Impressor: Casa da Moeda do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro.

Reverso: Licor policíaca, uma caricatura, ofensa à epigrafia.
No centro visto da sua fachada, em frente ao museu, é a estátua de um rio que tem na sua base vários navios. À direita, um edifício de origem colonial, com gótico e renascentista. À esquerda, um hotel de luxo, e ao fundo, um parque com árvores e flores. No canto inferior esquerdo, o Teatro Nacional, com estátuas de importantes personalidades do país.

3-0

208.000 r$.
Nacional (Republica), 1936
Impressor: Weisner & Sons Ltda., London.

Reverso: Venda, em caricatura.
No centro, uma fachada de um prédio, com uma escultura do corredor principal. À direita, um edifício de origem colonial, com gótico e renascentista. À esquerda, um hotel de luxo, e ao fundo, um parque com árvores e flores. No canto inferior esquerdo, o Teatro Nacional, com estátuas de importantes personalidades do país.

200.000 r$.
Banco do Brasil (Republica), 1937

Reverso: Licor policíaca, uma caricatura.
No centro, uma fachada de um prédio, com uma escultura do corredor principal. À direita, um edifício de origem colonial, com gótico e renascentista. À esquerda, um hotel de luxo, e ao fundo, um parque com árvores e flores. No canto inferior esquerdo, o Teatro Nacional, com estátuas de importantes personalidades do país.

10.000 cruzeiros
Banco Nacional (Republica), 1935

Reverso: Venda, em caricatura.
No centro, uma fachada de um prédio, com uma escultura do corredor principal. À direita, um edifício de origem colonial, com gótico e renascentista. À esquerda, um hotel de luxo, e ao fundo, um parque com árvores e flores. No canto inferior esquerdo, o Teatro Nacional, com estátuas de importantes personalidades do país.

Currency.