The São Paulo Museum of Art Assis Chateaubriand

The São Paulo Museum of Art Assis Chateaubriand - MASP, a nonprofit organization, was founded by the journalist Assis Chateaubriand (1892-1968), with the collaboration of Pietro Maria Bardi (1900-1999).

The Museum supports arts in general and in particular the visual arts, as a mean to contribute to the development and cultural improvement of Brazilian people.

It was inaugurated in 1947 on its first building at Rua Sete de Abril, downtown São Paulo, and in 1968 it was transferred to its definitive headquarters building, designed by Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992) on Avenida Paulista, São Paulo's most famous avenue.

The building is a landmark in São Paulo's architecture and part of the Brazilian heritage. It was listed as a historic site by the CONDEPHAAT (State Department of Protection of Historical, Archaeological, Artistic and Tourism Heritage) in 1982 and by the IPHAN (National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute) in 2003. It is one of the most important museums of Latin America for its artistic quality and for it museologic concepts.

Since its collection is formed by art works from the mainstream of universal art, also listed by IPHAN as a historical heritage in 1969. The collection, the program of temporary exhibitions held regularly, the School of MASP, the Education Department and the Library and Documentation Center have contributed to support the museum as an meaningful institution in Brazil and worldwide.
The MASP Library and Documentation Center

The MASP Library and Documentation Center is formed by the Art History Library and the archives: the Historical Text Archive, the Historical Photographic Archives, the Iconographic Documentation (posters), and the Reference Documentation (dossiers about national and international artists’ life and work and several other subjects).
The aim of the Library and Documentation Center is to preserve, organize and disseminate all the bibliographic and iconographic material kept at the institution.

Among all the activities developed internally, the department also supports the museum’s activities and programs, providing research materials in museology and Art History and acting as a custodian of the records that constitute the history of the museum. It also collaborate the other activities developed by the museum like Educational Service, research for other departments and specific exhibitions in addition to assist art researchers and university students.
The library also holds exhibitions that are usually related to the ones organized by the museum, displaying special textual documentation about artists, photographs, posters and bibliographic materials. It intends to provide different references to the public.

The work is developed by a multidisciplinary team, with different educational backgrounds in various fields such as Social Sciences, History, Library and Information Science and Visual Arts.

The Library

The MASP’s library owns a rich collection of art books and catalogs, most of them related to the museum collection of works of art. The bibliographic collection was acquired along the years, beginning with Bardi’s personal library, which was brought to Brazil in 1947 by the time MASP was founded.
Since then, the library was enriched with books bought by P. M. Bardi to support the research about the works of art that were being acquired by the museum. Its profile, since the beginning, reveals a very close relation with the museum’s collection. Even after the donation of these bibliographical material to the MASP library in 1977, P. M. Bardi, the director of the museum at that time, continued to buy books that he considered significant to the museum’s collection.

Besides Bard’s collection, donation and exchange with other institutions were decisive for the formation of the library collection. Nowadays, it has more than 60,000 volumes and constitutes one of the best Art History research centers of Brazil.

Focusing on the quality of the services, the library aims to develop tools that can improve the treatment of the collection.

There are three support databases available on local server: Thesarte (Controlled Vocabulary of Visual Arts), Artist (standardized Brazilian and foreign artists) and Entidarte (standardized names of Brazilian and foreign museums, galleries, and art and cultural institutions).

On the Internet, the library has two databases:

- **The Online Catalogue** (MASP21 and Gazete) which holds about 27,500 records of books, exhibition catalogues, academic theses, periodical analytics and rare books (http://masp.art.br/masp2010/biblioteca_catalogo_online.php);
• The Controlled Vocabulary of Arts and Authorities Catalogue, comprising the research databases Thesarte, Artist and Entidarte. (http://masp.art.br/masp2010/biblioteca_vocabulario.php)

Thesarte database

The Thesarte database is the result of a collaborative effort that started in 1988, between Art libraries from São Paulo and Itaú Cultural Institution (ICI) with the objective to create a controlled vocabulary of visual arts in Portuguese, non existing in Brazil at that time.

The vocabulary was developed based on Brazilian subject headings, the RILA Subject Readings and the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH).

It was made up of descriptors, equivalent relationships and notes that were defined in these categories:

- Activities – events, methods and techniques;
- Related concepts – terminology about other subjects applied to Arts;
- Artistic movements, styles and groups;
- People and institutions as a subject (e.g.: Museum – Brazil);
- Art materials.

MASP’s library was involved in this project since the beginning and even after its cancellation by ICI, the library has been using and making additions of new terms on the resulting vocabulary.

This continuous study led us to another project supported by FAPESP (São Paulo Research Foundation) entitled The development and dissemination of art documentation tools. As a result for the first phase, it made available on internet the support tools databases (Thesarte, Artist and Entidarte), that before were just available on paper.
The second phase of the project will propose the update of the vocabulary with the analysis of the provisional terms and addition of new descriptors.

**Artist database**

The Artist database was developed at MASP’s library. It involved a close research work to standardize the artist’s names that are part of the collection.
It presents relevant information for the treatment of bibliographical material, assuring the standardization of record information, such as: variant treatment of names; birth and death dates and locations and work techniques.

**Entidarte database**

The Entidarte database was created to supply the necessity of inserting standardized information about institutions on our records. It is also based on Library’s bibliographic materials.
Transaction log analysis

The library is also concerned about the use of these databases. It has been developing a study about transaction log files of both databases.

The log analysis allows more interaction with the web researches since we can view their searches and improve the quality of the treatment of the collection information.

Part of this study was recently present at IFLA Satellite Conference Art Bibliography and Networking Information in Latin America and the Caribbean - A Recent Perspective, held at Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City on August 2011 and published by Art Libraries Journal, special issue about resources for Latin American Art, volume 37, n. 4, 2012.
MASP’s Documentation Center

The MASP’s Documentation Center has three kinds of Archives that have precious records about the São Paulo’s Museum of Art and Brazilian and international art. All the archives contains documents about Pietro Maria Bardi (journalist, art critic, director of MASP), Lina Bo Bardi (import Italian architect), and many artists such as: Max Bill, Alexander Calder, Portinari, Le Corbusier, Wesley Duke Lee, Saul Steinberg. Also we have information about the incredible masterpieces of MASP’s collection that has works made by artists like Renoir, Manet, Picasso, etc among them.

The MASP’s Documentation Center are:

- MASP’s Historical Textual Archive
- MASP’s Photographic Archive
- MASP’s Reference Documentation

MASP’S Historical Textual Archive

The MASP’s Historical Textual Archive provides access to the permanently valuable textual (paper) records. Contains all the institutional documents about MASP. The researcher can consult records of the exhibitions, events, courses, conferences and administrative documents.

The archive have more than 200,000 documents gathered since the museum's foundation in 1947, and offers to researchers a set of fundamental sources to the studies about the institution and Brazilian Art.

The historical textual archive consists in various types of documents such as letters, press-releases, newspapers, invitation, folders of exhibitions, and many others documents about the building, exhibitions, courses, events and the administration of the museum.

The documents are packed in boxes and folders of neutral paper. They are organized by events and within the dossier by documental typologies.
The coordinator Ivani Di Grazia Costa made a study for the organization of the historical textual archive. And the result respects the archival management norms and Bardi’s conceptions.

The Historical Textual Archive database was developed in Microsoft Access software.

- **Historical Photographic Archive**

  The MASP’s Photographic Archive is composed by approximately 100,000 photographs.
  - Photographs related to the history of the museum – Exhibitions, Conferences, events and courses. Ex: 1951 – Max Bill’s Exhibition
  - Photographs made by artists – Pirelli Collection, photos sent for Bardi’s books, Habitat Magazine and Mirante das Artes Magazine and made by Bardi.
  - Images from the final XIX century incorporated to the collection – Arrival of Italian immigrants in Brazil, Italian family’s, The Canudos War.

The records are kept in a database made in Microsoft Access software and organized by a control number. The archive is organized by events arranged chronologically. It has circa of 100,000 images in different kinds of support and format like: negative, photographic plates, nitrate film, acetate cellulose film, albumen print, gelatin silver, gelatin silver resin coated, slides and inkjet paper.

All the collection is stored in a different room that has specific rules about the climate condition to guarantee the conservation of the photographs.

One of the highlights of the collection is the photos of important photographers like Alice Brill, Peter Scheier, Hans Gunter Flieg, Jean Manzon, and others.

**MASP’s Reference documentation**
The MASP’s reference documentation was formed mainly by the research developed by P. M. Bardi, and the documents that he received; it has a big amount of documents about the artists that participate of exhibitions or that aroused Bardi interest, and where collected for his studies, and documents that were sent by people related to the history of MASP, or that have interest in arts in a more general way. Nowadays the archive still receives many records from Brazilian and international institutions.

The folders are organized respecting the original disposal. The documents held in this archive tells the history of the interests that the museum kept along Bardi’s administration, besides that, some of them are directly connected to the researches to books and exhibitions of his authorship. Beyond that there are documents about the Brazilian art circuit in a more general way.

There is a section of folders about international and national artists, adding up 1451 folders; and documents about artists that do not have a folder totaling 8.174 records of Brazilian artists and 4.438 records about international artists. Besides that there is a section with 152 folders about specific subjects (like sculpture, XIX paintings, modernism) and 129 folders about other institutions.

These folders are saved in a cabinet of drop folders, and there is a database made in Microsoft Access that keeps the records about this archive.

**Iconographic documentation**

The iconographic or image documentation is composed of calendars, video tapes, DVDs, CD-ROMs and more than 5,000 posters. Among this documentation, the poster collection has a more important meaning. This collection has most of the posters produced for advertize MASP exhibitions, but has also posters from different institutions and events, being a significant source to researches about graphic design in Brazil.
**Possibilities of exchange:**
The MASP's Library and Documentation Center can provide to the researcher many records about the history of MASP’s and the Brazilian art. We also are available to share information and exchange experiences about ours databases, conservation practices and organization of documents. Currently we are discussing about Projects of digitalization of our collection (photographs, textual records and posters), rights of authorship and development of a controlled art vocabulary and authority files. Also it is always interesting to know about other experiences of another libraries, archives and documents treatment.

For further information about the library consult our website or send us an e-mail:  
biblioteca@masp.art.br

**MASP Library and Documentation Center Team**

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