



The Brazilian Photographs of Genevieve Naylor, 1940-1942

Robert M. Levine

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In the early 1940s as the conflict between the Axis and the Allies spread worldwide, the U.S. State Department turned its attention to Axis influence in Latin America. As head of the Office of Inter-American Affairs, Nelson Rockefeller was charged with cultivating the region's support for the Allies while portraying Brazil and its neighbors as dependable wartime partners. Genevieve Naylor, a photojournalist previously employed by the Associated Press and the WPA, was sent to Brazil in 1940 by Rockefeller's agency to provide photographs that would support its need for propaganda. Often balking at her mundane assignments, an independent-minded Naylor produced something far different and far more rich—a stunning collection of over a thousand photographs that document a rarely seen period in Brazilian history. Accompanied by analysis from Robert M. Levine, this selection of Naylor's photographs offers a unique view of everyday life during one of modern Brazil's least-examined decades.

Working under the constraints of the Vargas dictatorship, the instructions of her employers, and a chronic shortage of film and photographic equipment, Naylor took advantage of the freedom granted her as an employee of the U.S. government. Traveling beyond the fashionable neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro, she conveys in her work the excitement of an outside observer for whom all is fresh and new—along with a sensibility schooled in depression-era documentary photography of Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, as well as the work of Cartier-Bresson and filmmaker Serge Eisenstein. Her subjects include the very rich and the very poor, black Carnival dancers, fishermen, rural peasants from the interior, workers crammed into trolleys—ordinary Brazilians in their own setting—rather than simply Brazilian symbols of progress as required by the dictatorship or a population viewed as exotic Latins for the consumption of North American travelers.

With Levine's text providing details of Naylor's life, perspectives on her photographs as social documents, and background on Brazil's wartime relationship with the United States, this volume, illustrated with more than one hundred of Naylor's Brazilian photographs will interest scholars of Brazilian culture and history, photojournalists and students of photography, and all readers seeking a broader perspective on Latin American culture during World War II.

Genevieve Naylor began her career as a photojournalist with *Time*, *Fortune*, and the Associated Press before being sent to Brazil. In 1943, upon her return, she became only the second woman to be the subject of a one-woman show at New York's Museum of Modern Art. She served as Eleanor Roosevelt's personal photographer and, in the 1950s and 1960s became well known for her work in *Harper's Bazaar*, primarily as a fashion photographer and portraitist. She died in 1989.

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