Contributor: Cristina Vasconcelos

**Lemos, Fernando**

(Born José Fernandes de Lemos: 1926 – Lisbon, Portugal; Lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil and in Portugal)

Fernando Lemos’ early photographic artwork is considered his main contribution to modernism. This body of work shows the artist’s connections with the Portuguese surrealistic group of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the course of this stage he profusely explored black and white photography techniques such as film overlapping or partial under- or overexposures. A striking example of the work produced at the time is the 1949 self-portrait *Eu / Auto-Retrato*. However Fernando Lemos’ artist production, still on-going, is manifold. Encompassing drawing, painting, tapestry, ceramics, mural painting, glass windows, graphic/industrial design, film photography, photography and poetry, Fernando Lemos’ production is interweaved by its experimental character with different techniques and by the way the artist shifts between media. Although mainly working with photography and drawing while living in Lisbon, Fernando Lemos developed and explored other media after moving to São Paulo, Brazil in 1953. In Brazil he turned to painting and drawing developing rhythmic geometric forms often using Indian ink. With works such as *Desenho* (1956) he was awarded several prizes at different São Paulo Biennials. In later works Fernando Lemos has returned to the photographic image, now using colour, and reworking anonymous photographs that he scratches and paints, printing the result in large-format photographic paper.



Fernando Lemos, *Drawing*, 1956, 71×52cm, Indian ink, 4th São Paulo Biennial Drawing Award, 1957.

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Fernando Lemos studied lithography and painting at *Escola de Artes Decorativas António Arroio* and painting at the *Escola Nacional de Belas-Artes*, Lisbon. In 1951, he travelled to Spain and France where briefly met Man Ray (1890-1976) at Helena Vieira da Silva’s (1908-1992) atelier in Paris. In the following year, he presented his photographic work together with Marcelino Vespeira (1925-2002) and Fernando de Azevedo (1923-2002) in a collective exhibition at *Casa Jalco,* considered a milestone in Portuguese painting and photography; the works shown at this exhibition stand between Surrealism and abstractionism. Together with José-Augusto França (1922–) he opened the *Galeria de Março* (Lisbon, 1952) presenting his first drawing and photography solo exhibitions.

In the course of 1952 he departed for Brazil, becoming a São Paulo resident and later a Brazilian citizen (early 1960s). His first exhibitions in Brazil at the Museus de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (MAM-RJ and MAM-SP), 1953 presented the photographic work he developed between 1949 and 1952, including self-portraits like *Eu / Auto-Retrato* (1949), nude studies and miniaturised stage photography. In Brazil, Fernando Lemos continued developing a personal artistic approach while working both as industrial/graphic designer and in advertising. He participated in numerous **São Paulo Biennials**, where he was awarded several drawing prizes: 3rd Biennial (1955) *Pintura com Ritmos IV* and *V* [*Painting with Rhythms*]; 4th Biennial (1957) *Desenho* [*Drawing*](Indian ink, 1956, best drawing award) **[fig 2]**; 5th Biennial (1959) *Drawing I – VI* (João A. da Costa Dória National Acquisition Prize for Drawing); 9th Biennial (1967) *Símbolos* [*Symbols*] *22*-*26* (Itamarati Acquisiton Prize). He represented Brazil at the 1st Paris Biennial (1959) and at the 4th International Art Exhibition of Japan (National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 1957). His connection to Japan strengthened during this time and he designed the Nanbam Museum (Nagasaki, 1977) – commemorating the bilateral Portuguese/Japanese relationship started in 1543 – as well as the glass windows for the Congress International Palace (Hakone, 1963). Together with Jorge Bodansky (1942–) Fernando Lemos became the director of photography in *Em Compasso de Espera* [Standing Still] (1969-1973) – a film directed by Antunes Filho (1929).

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Fernando Lemos, *Eu (Auto-Retrato)* [*I (Self-portrait)*], 1949, 60×60cm with framing, black and white photography printed on Agfa paper, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – Modern Art Centre, Lisbon.

Fernando Lemos’ painting changed from geometrical abstraction (1970s) to an organic representation of figurative elements he had already explored in the 1950s. In his later artworks (2000s and on-going), he has been exploring the limits of image and its meanings by scratching, (re)painting and reprinting old anonymous family photographs.

His artworks belong to several public and private collections in Argentina, Brazil, France, Holland, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United States.

**Further Reading:**

Bandeira, Manuel, and Aníbal M. Machado. (1953) *Fernando Lemos: fotografias de arte. Eduardo Anahory: painéis decorativos.* Rio de Janeiro: Museu de Arte Moderna.

Cuadrado, Perfecto E., and Maria de Jesús Ávila. (2001) *Surrealismo em Portugal 1934-1952.* Lisboa: Museu do Chiado.

Durand, Regis, and Jorge Molder. (1998) *Fernando Lemos: fotografien.* Hamburg: Galerie Handelskammer.

Molder, Jorge. *Fernando Lemos* (1993) Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. Centro de Arte Moderna.

Moura, Diógenes [ed.] and Marcelo Mattos Araújo… [et al.]. (2004) *À sombra da luz. À luz da sombra: fotografias 1949-1952* [*In the shadow of light. In the light of shadow…*]. São Paulo: Pinacoteca do Estado.

*Fernando Lemos e o Surrealismo* (2006). Sintra: Museu de Arte Moderna – Colecção Berardo.

**List of Works:**

Fernando Lemos, *Ex-Fotos* [*Ex-Photos,*Photographic Series], 2005-2009, digital printing, 67×100cm. Different private collections.

Fernando Lemos, *Isto é Isto* [*This is This*, Drawing Series], 2007-2008, pencil and pen on paper, 20,8×15cm. Different private collections.

Fernando Lemos, *Memórias* [*Memories*, drawing series], 1984, 51×65cm, private collection.

Fernando Lemos, *Símbolos* *22*, *23*, *24*, *25* e *26* [*Symbols* *22*-*26*, painting series], 1967, acrylic, 100×100cm, São Paulo Biennial Foundation.

Fernando Lemos, *Cores Pretas e Cores Brancas* [*Black Colours and White Colours,* painting series], 1965, oil on canvas, 90×90cm, 120×100 cm and 100×100cm, São Paulo Biennial Foundation.

Fernando Lemos, *S-3-1*; *S-3-2*; *S-3-3*; *S-3-4*; *S-3-5*; *S-3-6*; *S-3-7*; *S-3-8*, 1961, Indian ink, 98,5×72cm or 98,5×71,5cm, artists’ collection.

Fernando Lemos, *Desenho* *I, II, III, IV, V* e *VI* [*Drawings I-VI*], 1958-59, Indian ink, 68×46cm and 99×69cm, São Paulo Biennial Foundation (5th São Paulo Biennial, João A. da Costa Dória Acquisition prize).

Fernando Lemos, *Pintura com Ritmos IV* e *V* [*Painting with Rhythms IV* and *V*], 1955, tempera on paper, 70×50cm, São Paulo Biennial Foundation.

Fernando Lemos, *Refotos (Anos 40)* [*Re-Photos (1940s)*, photographic series], 1949, black and white photography printed on Agfa paper, 40,5×30cm, Calouste Gulbenkian Collection, Lisbon, Berardo Collection, Lisbon and private collections.

Fernando Lemos, Portraits [photographic series of more than 20 portraits each one having as title the photographed person’s name], 1949, black and white photography printed on Agfa paper, different sizes, Calouste Gulbenkian Collection, Lisbon, Berardo Collection, Lisbon and private collections.