

THE COLLECTORS

A passion for collecting is what the Viscountess of Cavalcanti and Eva Klabin had in common. It is not known whether they ever met, but we cannot rule out the possibility that they may have heard of each other.

Amélia Machado Coelho (1853–1946) was born and died in Rio de Janeiro, but she lived for decades in Paris and also spent some time in Lausanne, Switzerland. She was the granddaughter of Manoel Machado Coelho (1787–1862), a wealthy industrialist and merchant. In 1871 she married the lawyer and politician Diogo Velho Cavalcanti de Albuquerque (1829–1899), who was awarded the title of Viscount of Cavalcanti. They went on to have two children: Stella Cavalcanti de Albuquerque (1872–1916) and Fernando Velho Cavalcanti de Albuquerque (1873–1914), an engineer, but neither left any descendants.

Amélia's interest in collecting manifested early in her life. As a child, she enjoyed collecting everyday objects, like reels, as well as insects and minerals. Later, she expanded her interests, studying and collecting objects from the fields of ethnography, archaeology, numismatics, and fine arts. She wrote a work on numismatics, which was first published in 1889 then republished in a revised and expanded form in 1910, as well as some unpublished works in other areas, including *Slavery in Brazil* and the *Brazilian Biographical Dictionary*. Her collections were visited in the 1880s, and were featured in the Anthropology Exhibition held in Rio de Janeiro in 1882 and the Universal Exhibition held in Paris in 1889. She was also a social activist, leading projects for child education, the release of prisoners of war, and people with visual impairment. She worked as an art dealer and produced books in Braille, creating a section for these publications in the National Library.

Eva Cecília Klabin (1903–1991) was born in São Paulo. Her mother, Fanny, and her father, an industrialist called Hessel Klabin, were both from Vilnius, Lithuania. On April 6th, 1933, Eva married Paulo Rapaport (1897–1957), an Austrian who had taken Brazilian nationality, who worked as a lawyer, a journalist, and served as director of the newspaper group Diários Associados. His godfather was Assis Chateaubriand, founder of the São Paulo Museum of Art, MASP. After her marriage she moved to Rio de Janeiro. In her formative years she had resided in Europe and the United States, and throughout her life she traveled widely around the world.

Eva inherited the habit of collecting objects from her father, who greatly appreciated silverware. It was a passion she shared with her sister, Ema Gordon Klabin, and one she continued throughout her life. She collected the first pieces from her collection when still an adolescent: two miniature landscapes, *Dawn* and *Dusk*, by the Dutch painter and engraver Jan Gottlieb Glauber (1656–1703).

As the years went by she consistently expanded her collection with new acquisitions ranging from Ancient Egypt to the Impressionists.

Both Eva Klabin and the Viscountess of Cavalcanti, with no children of their own, were mindful of the fate of their collections. The Viscountess decided to donate her pieces to different institutions in Europe, an example being the ethnographic objects she gave to Museum Volkenkunde, in the Netherlands. She also made donations to the Mariano Procópio Museum, in Juiz de Fora,

Brazil, including a set of Egyptian artefacts, some of which are on loan for this exhibition. Other pieces went to the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute, the National Historical Museum, and the National Museum of Fine Arts.

Eva Klabin chose to keep all her objects in her home and create a foundation to ensure their continuity. To this day, the foundation fulfills the important mission of safeguarding and ensuring public access to this unique collection.



HELENA SEVERO AND DOUGLAS FASOLATO