

Cultural Daily

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My Trip to Brazil

Elisa Leonelli · Saturday, April 30th, 2022

The most famous [carnival](#) parade in the world has been taking place in [Rio de Janeiro](#), Brazil since 1723. Last year it was cancelled because of COVID, this year it was postponed from the weekend before Fat Tuesday (March 1) to April 20-30, 2022. Look at some [photos](#) [here](#). Starting in 1984 this spectacular event has been unfolding inside a specially built open-air stadium called [Sambadrome](#), 13 meters wide and 700 meters long, and promoted as “the Greatest Show on Earth.”



Rio Carnival parade © Elisa Leonelli

So I flashed back to 1983, when I planned a trip to Brazil to coincide with the carnival celebrations. I traveled with my friend Jivago, a perfect companion since we were both photographers; we enjoyed a rented two-bedroom apartment, and I was invited to several carnival balls. I mostly remember the excitement of walking along the parade route all night long, running ahead of the colorful floats and the dancing revelers.



Rio Carnival parade © Elisa Leonelli

Upon my return, I wrote a magazine article about the Rio Carnival, that you may [read at this link](#), where you will find the photo coverage, as part of the [Elisa Leonelli Photojournalist](#) collection at

Claremont College Library.



Elisa with Baiana © Jivago Desanges

As for the 2022 Carnival parade, the Salgueiro samba school was inspired for their float “Resistance” by the death of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter. Banners reading “Fora Bolsonaro” protested the government of the racist president of Brazil.



Salvador da Bahia – Pelourinho © Elisa Leonelli

In 1983, after two weeks in Rio, we visited the picturesque port city of [Salvador da Bahía](#), founded by the Portuguese in 1549 and famous for its colonial architecture. A highlight of our stay at the historical [Hotel Convento do Carmo](#) built in 1586 was meeting legendary photographer [Richard Avedon](#) over lunch. I also became acquainted with the goddess of the sea, [Iemanjá](#), a sexier version of the Catholic Virgin Mary, and learnt more about the [Candomblé](#) religion. Read my article and see photos [at this link](#).



Salvador da Bahia © Elisa Leonelli

At the invitation of an Italian professor met two years earlier on [Lake Titicaca](#) during [my trip to Peru](#), Ecuador and Bolivia, I then flew to [Olinda](#), a lovely town founded in 1535. Giuseppe explained to me the charged political climate of this artistic place, in an election year, expressed in colorful murals. Read my article and see photos [at this link](#).



Olinda © Elisa Leonelli

We spent one more week in Rio at the [Copacabana Palace Hotel](#), built in 1923, and I enjoyed the company of a cool friend, screenwriter [Leopoldo Serran](#), who wrote movies like *[Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands](#)* (1976) with Sonia Braga, directed by Bruno Barreto from the novel by Jorge Amado. He taught me to appreciate the unhurried Brazilian lifestyle.



Leopoldo Serran (c) Elisa Leonelli

You may [read here](#) about my 1976 photo trip to New Orleans during carnival.

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