

## Fabião Studio – a collective memory

This exhibition offers a visual and emotional journey through several decades of photographic work by the Fabião family (José, Paulo and Francisco), whose studio became a central hub in the city's social and cultural life. Much more than a place for producing images, the Fabião studio was a place where generations of people from Leiria recorded special moments in their lives.

Over the decades, the Fabião family, led by José Fabião, built up a vast archive documenting not only faces and families, but also the transformation of Leiria city itself: its places, significant events and urban changes. Each photograph is both an individual portrait and a fragment of a larger story, revealing the deep connection between people's identities and the territory they inhabit.

Of particular note is the importance of José Fabião's photography, characterised by the closeness, continuity and trust between the photographer and his clients.

The exhibition invites the public to revisit the past, to recognise themselves within it, and to reflect on the role of photography as a tool for preserving memory and building a collective identity for Leiria.

### José Fabião (Leiria, 1920 – 2017)

He began his career in photography at the age of 12 in his uncle's studio, José Pereira da Silva, and opened his own studio at the age of 19. He worked as a professional photographer until the age of 86.

He distinguished himself as a portrait photographer, photojournalist and darkroom technician. He photographed major events in the city, such as the visits of General Franco in 1949, the Emperor of Ethiopia in 1959 and Pope Paul VI in 1967, as well as the events of 1 May 1974.

In a full life, he was a photojournalist for newspapers such as *Primeiro de Janeiro*, *O Século*, *Record* and *Diário de Notícias*, a district leader of the

Union of Typographers and Related Trades, and director of the Literary and Recreational Guild of Leiria and the Leiria Sports Club.

In 2006, he received the Medal of Cultural Merit from the Ministry of Culture for his work.

In the studio, Fabião used to say that he “loved studying people’s profiles so that he could photograph them from the best angle”. This way of working remained in the memory of many people from Leiria as an experience they repeated every year. That is why he is still part of this city’s collective memory today.

## The legacy of Fotografia Fabião

José Fabião’s studio was in business for 68 years. In 1939, it opened as Fotografia Liz-Fabião on Rua Gil Vicente in the Bairro dos Anjos neighbourhood, a street that today looks completely different from what we see in this photograph.

José Fabião’s sons, Paulo in the 1960s and Francisco in the 1970s, joined their father. In 1976, they moved to Praça Rodrigues Lobo, opening the Fotografia Fabião studio, where they remained until 2007.

Paulo Fabião (Leiria, 1951–2017) studied photography at IADE in Lisbon in the 1970s and, after some time in London where he undertook a specialisation course in photography, went to work with his father. He had a particular fondness for developing photographs in the darkroom, an area to which he was deeply dedicated.

Francisco Fabião (Leiria, 1954) graduated with a degree in History from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Coimbra. He pursued a career in the fields of teaching, photography and history. From 1978, he began working with his father and brother at Fotografia Fabião, until the business closed. Throughout his life, he maintain an interest in culture, heritage and museology.

Of all the photographic studios that operated in Leiria throughout the 20th century, Fotografia Fabião was the most successful, owing to the

longevity of the business and the loyalty and trust of its customers in this family of photographers. Much of the studio and laboratory equipment, as well as a vast photographic archive comprising over 250,000, are preserved at m|j|mo museum.