

CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

CHEQUEBOOK AND PASSBOOK FROM BANCO DO FAIAL

It belonged to maestro Francisco de Lacerda
Lisbon (Of. Pap. Luzo-Brazileira, Lisbon), 20th century (c. 1931)
Printed paper and cardboard, 262 x 79 mm; 107 x 174 mm
MAH.FL.8403/ 8298

How many of us can remember the last cheque we wrote? Who knows, maybe it was the one used to buy the house! Truthfully, we didn't stop "writing checks" long ago; it included filling in documents provided by our banks, with the amounts in figures and writing, the full names of the recipients and our signatures, to make large payments. The mere touch of a little plastic card, maybe not even that, has replaced all this ritual.

One would expect to find many copies of these forms of paper money in museums and archives. And yet they still seem to be a rarity, most probably due to the sensitivity of the subject (money or personal (un)wealth). Hence the emphasis that is given to this chequebook and passbook from Banco do Faial, Lisbon branch. It includes records dating from December 1931 to July 1932, belonging to the estate of maestro Francisco de Lacerda (1869-1934), from São Jorge Island. It is currently part of the Angra do Heroísmo Museum's Documentation Center.

Francisco de Lacerda returned to Lisbon in 1928 for health reasons, abandoning his international career. Even so, he would actively participate in the Portuguese faction at the Seville Ibero-American Exposition, in 1929. He also presided over the Funchal City Festivities Committee, in 1932. Around the same time, he would seek a cure for the disease that afflicted him, on Madeira Island, but it would eventually overcome him in 1934.

The Maestro would only use 3 cheques from this chequebook. The passbook recorded his withdrawals in Funchal between January and July 1932.

This connection to Banco do Faial is curious. It was founded on June 5th, 1922, with its headquarters in the city of Horta, and served the island until 1946. It expanded and opened branches or offices in the other islands of the Azores, Madeira, Lisbon and Porto, and some European and American cities, despite the financial instability that the region and the country faced at the time.

It should be remembered that at the beginning of the 1930s, Portugal was emerging from a profound economic crisis and entering the stability of a dictatorial regime. There were some development expectations, which became embodied in institutional emblems. In the case of Banco do Faial, the caduceus and sickle, crisscrossed over the cogwheel, symbols of industry, trade, and agriculture, topped by the regional symbol, the Goshawk.