

# SOUTHERN MODERNISMS

**CRITICAL  
STANCES  
THROUGH  
REGIONAL  
APPROPRIATIONS**

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## **SOUTHERN MODERNISMS**

### **Critical Stances through Regional Appropriations**

Conference proceedings

Edited by

Joana Cunha Leal, Maria Helena Maia and Begoña Farre

IHA | Instituto de História da Arte, FCSH-UNL

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Joana Cunha Leal, Maria Helena Maia and  
Begoña Farré Torras

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## **SOUTHERN MODERNISMS**

### **Critical Stances through Regional Appropriations**

The hegemonic definition of Modernism has been subjected to an intense critical revision process that began several decades ago. This process has contributed to the significant broadening of the modernist canon by challenging its primal essentialist assumptions and formalist interpretations in the fields of both the visual arts and architecture.

**This conference aims to further expand this revision, as it seeks to discuss the notion of “Southern Modernisms” by considering the hypothesis that regional appropriations, both in Southern Europe and the Southern hemisphere, entailed important critical stances that have remained unseen or poorly explored by art and architectural historians.** In association with the Southern Modernisms research project (FCT – EXPL/CPC-HAT/0191/2013), **we want to consider the entrenchment of southern modernisms in popular culture (folk art and vernacular architecture) as anticipating some of the premises of what would later become known as critical regionalism.**

It is therefore our purpose to explore a research path that runs parallel to key claims on modernism’s intertwinement with bourgeois society and mass culture, by questioning the idea that an aesthetically significant regionalism – one that resists to the colonization of international styles and is supported by critical awareness – occurred only in the field of architecture, and can only be represented as a post-modernist turn.

Submissions are invited that engage with all aspects of the title. Papers might include (but are not limited to):

1. the discussion of current definitions of modernism(s), regionalisms, folk art, vernacular architecture, and those of the tangent notions of avant-garde, tradition, nationalisms, rationalism, popular or mass culture and primitivism;
2. the effects of established dichotomies such as centers vs. peripheries; high art vs. low art (including folk art), etc; as well as the challenges raised by north/south and west/east conceptual divides;
3. the impact of modernist approaches on the history of Modernisms; the hegemony of teleological discourses positing abstraction as the necessary historical outcome for the arts (thus neglecting other ongoing interrogations on the means and possibilities of

representation), or as far as architecture is concerned instrumental notions of rationalism;

4. the political implications of the above-mentioned interpretations: the impact of fascism's populism on Southern Europe; the potential of regionalism as resistance; the political implications of validating popular and vernacular modes in the realm of high art, and their relation to the avant-garde militant anti-bourgeois positions; the problems raised by the surveys on folk and vernacular cultures through the lens of modernist visual culture (particularly through the use of photography), etc.



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## **Conference organization**



## **KEYNOTE ADDRESSES**



## **SOUTHERN MODERNISMS**

**Joana Cunha Leal**

IHA / FCSH, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

### **Abstract**

*Southern Modernisms explores the possibility of a critical revision of modernism's prevailing definition on the basis of a hypothesis: the foreseeable possibility that Southern European modernisms don't fit that definition, not because they shared an insurmountable condition of "belatedness", had an "inner" incapacity of understanding the main debates occurring in the field, or were condemned to fail, or strained the art being produced, but because a different choice, a different path was being constructed.*

*If one puts the hierarchical divide between center and periphery aside, maybe a different constellation can be drawn: one that allows us to see, for example, southern modernisms entrenchment in popular culture (folk art and vernacular architecture). And perhaps one might ask if such relation to popular culture cannot be thought of as a kind of anticipation of some of the premises of what would later become known as critical regionalism (as defined by Feivre e Tzonis, and Frampton). This is exactly the research path we're exploring, while defining a critical approach that parallels other key revisions of Modernism's definition – including those articulated within Anglophone circles (namely those coming from a "new art history", committed to break down autonomy's ivory tower by showing Modernism's intertwinement with bourgeois society and mass culture; or those committed to show that rationalism's purity might be looking at other areas of the vast regions of "tradition" after all).*

*Through the presentation of our project, this paper shall focus on the two notions bounded in the title of this project – south and modernisms – and their artistic, historical and political resonances.*

### **Author identification**

**Joana Cunha Leal.** *Is Assistant Professor in the Art History Department of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, where she teaches graduate and post-graduate courses on 19th and early 20th century art and architecture, art theory and historiography. She is also Associated Researcher of the Art History Institute of the same University, where she leads a research group on Art theory, historiography and criticism. She is also a permanent collaborator of the CEEA research group from ESAP.*

*Her recent work privileges the study of modernism and the avant-garde. Her research project on "Other Modernisms? The case of Amadeo Souza Cardoso" was awarded a Fulbright Research Fellowship in 2010. She was also a fellow of the Stone Summer Theory Institute 2010 – "Beyond the Aesthetic and the Anti-Aesthetic" (Chicago, July 2010). She currently PI of "Southern Modernisms" (EXPL/CPC-HAT/0191/2013).*

## **IBERIAN HOUSES, THE MAGIC OF CREATION**

**Ana Tostões**

IST-UL / Docomomo International, Portugal

### **Abstract**

*The one-family house program would be the main research theme in Iberian architecture, in the framework of criticism of the modern carried out in exceptional works executed with programmatic materials, formal and spatial alike, and where the vernacular was synthesized on the basis of dissimilar international references, following an intense line of development in which, according to Alberto Sartoris, "the traditional magic of Iberian art was reencountered with the path of a long interrupted fountain: that of imagination." In the course of the 1950s, the modern abstract prototype became an equation which today we solve with nature, topography, light, wind, views, sense of place, and intensity of cultural roots. It was the period of the revision of the modern, which in the Iberian context of technological backwardness constituted a potential to be explored. Each project was studied with patience and passion, from first sketch to obsessive presence on site. The house bore the magic of experimentation, and thus became the focus of the architectural debate.*

### **Author identification**

**Ana Tostões.** *Is chair of DOCOMOMO International and is Full professor of architecture at IST-University of Lisbon, where she specializes in twentieth century architectural and urban history with an emphasis on Re-Use practices. She has published widely, curated exhibitions, and taken part in juries and scientific committees. Tostões has been vice-president of the Portuguese Border of Architects and the Portuguese section of the International Association of Art Critics.*

*Her research field is the theory and history of architecture and construction of the twentieth century, focusing on post-war II period and on the relations between European, American, African and Asian production. On these topics she has published books and scientific articles, curate exhibitions and taken part in juries, scientific committees and given lectures in European, American, Asian and African universities. Some of her works: Modern Architecture in Africa: Angola and Mozambique (2014); The Buildings. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (2012). Let's talk about [7] Houses in Cascais. Private life architecture (2010-2012); Pardal Monteiro, uma fotobiografia (2009); Arquitectura Portuguesa Contemporânea (2008); Lisboa 1758: The Baixa Plan Today (2008); Gulbenkian Headquarters and Museum, The Architecture of the 60s (2006); Arquitectura e cidadania. Atelier Nuno Teotónio Pereira (2004); Biblioteca Nacional. Exterior/Interior (2004); Portugal: Architektur im 20. Jahrhundert (1998); Keil do Amaral, o arquitecto e o humanista (CML, 1999); Arquitectura moderna portuguesa 1920-1970 (2003). She was the coordinator of the research project (PTDC/AUR-AQI/103229/2008) "Exchanging World Visions" focused on the Sub-Sahara African architecture developed during the Modern Movement period.*



**PAPERS**



## THE REDEMPTION OF THE VERNACULAR IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE MODERN:

### Two cases from the South: Manolo Hugué and Alberto Sanchez Sílvia Vieira de Almeida

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#### Abstract

*This paper aims at exploring a conception of Modernism which is strongly linked to the Southern experience and, in this case, to the Spanish cultural heritage. A Modernism in which the essence of a people, the popular culture and the rural world have a role to play.*

*According to this purpose I will take two case studies which were chosen mainly for their differences. Having made this choice it is my intention to emphasize that this Modernism provides deep pluralistic answers.*

*Manolo Hugué (1872-1945), and Alberto Sánchez are the two main characters of this approach on Modernism. Their sculpture represents two facets of the vision which I intend to explore.*

*Manolo is frequently presented as an artist whose work lies under the noucentisme's conceptual formulations. On the other hand, Alberto is often associated to surrealism and abstraction. Without discussing their stylistic affiliations, which would be useless to this paper purpose, I will analyze how these two artists work their cultural identity, how they rescue the vernacular and how they understand and express their modernity.*

"...returning to the tradition of the unique art of the Mediterranean lands; escaping the French impressionism, the English pre-raphaelism, the German symbolism"; a "unique art of the man from here, of our religion, of our celebrations, of our life." Thus spoke the Uruguayan theorist and painter Joaquín Torres-García (1874-1949), in the journal *Empori*, in an article written as a manifesto, entitled "La nostra ordinació i el nostre camí"<sup>1</sup>. An article where he formulates explicitly the principles of Mediterranean essentialism<sup>2</sup>, pointing the way to finding personality itself<sup>3</sup>. Being Mediterranean, being of the South, as opposed as being from the North. Finding in their own cultural roots a unique identity of being modern, as opposed to the international modernism that is not concerned with nationality nor tradition. An essentialism that meets the Catalan

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<sup>1</sup> Torres-García, Joaquín, "La nostra ordinació i el nostre camí", In *Empori* (Barcelona) Any I, núm. 4 (IV-1907), pp. 188-191.

<sup>2</sup> Vallcorba, Jaume. (1994). *Noucentisme, mediterraneisme i classicisme: apunts per a la història d'una estètica*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Torres-García, Joaquín. (1986). *Escrits sobre art*. Barcelona: Edicions 62 i "La Caixa", p. 37.

*noucentisme*<sup>4</sup>, widely informed on the Parisian artistic vanguard, but that vindicates its own statement<sup>5</sup>.

This search for cultural identity was not exclusive of the *noucentisme*, as it was also alive in other Spanish regions, namely in Madrid, where the literary movement known as the Generation of 98, with its nationalist and regenerator spirit, dwells on the nature or essence of Spain<sup>6</sup>. A discussion in which Sculptor Júlio António (1889-1919) took part when attempting to set the fundamental types of the race, through the sculpting series "Bustos de la Raza", produced between 1909 and 1914<sup>7</sup>.

This discussion acquires new meaning in the 20th century's 20's and 30's, namely through sculptor Alberto Sánchez (1893-1962) of who I will speak about ahead, painter Bejamín Palencia (1894-1980) and their Madrid followers.

The search for an uncontaminated national essence based on archaic roots, in popular culture, and in the experience of nature are the basis of a regional-featured modernism. A modernism which is rooted in the living of the South and its cultural tradition, and that have similar examples in Portugal, Italy and even Greece.

In the exploration of this idea, and as starting point of this communication, I will look over two sculptors I chose more for their differences than their similarities, seeking to underline this modernism to which I refer that is profoundly plural in its own answers.

The two chosen artists, Manolo Hugué (1872-1945), framed by historiography in the conceptual principles of *noucentisme*, and the already mentioned Alberto Sánchez, usually linked to the surrealism and the

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<sup>4</sup> Torres-García's artistic work is often referred by Eugeni d'Ors, the intellectual father (and inventor of the term) *noucentisme*, not only in several articles, but also in his work "La ben plantada", a book which summarizes the ideology of the *noucentisme*. However, Torres-García had his own theoretical elaboration, explicit before the configuration of *noucentisme* around 1910. See Sureda Pons, Joan. (1998). *Torres-García, Pasion Clasica*. Madrid: Ediciones Akal.

<sup>5</sup> See Peran, Martí [et al.]. (1994). "Noucentisme y vanguardia", In *El Noucentisme: un projecte de modernitat*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.

<sup>6</sup> See Cf. Bozal, Valeriano. (2001), Catálogo de la exposición *Alberto 1895-1962*. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, p. 120.

<sup>7</sup> About this sculptor see Milani, Antonio Salcedo [et al.]. (2002). *Julio Antonio: 1889-1919*. Madrid: Fundación Gregorio Prieto.

abstract, represent the two sides of this modernism view that I intend to explore.

The work of these two sculptors is characterized by very dissimilar formal solutions, more so because the artists are of two different generations.

Manolo Hugué was born in 1872 in Barcelona. He was a great admirer of Joseph Llimona (1864-1934), a sculptor who was affiliate to Sant Lluç circle, which was founded in 1893 and which favours the separation of the South from the North and the return to Mediterranean spirit.

Manolo was one of Picasso's great friends. They left for Paris in that same year, in 1900. Manolo stayed for a decade, until moving to Ceret, in the French Catalonia, in 1910. The Mediterranean and archaic sculpture impressed him during his visits to the Louvre, and it is also probable that he visited the ancient Iberian sculptures exhibition that the museum hosted in 1905.

His artistic culture was a result of his observation. It was not formed by any kind of erudite knowledge neither his artistic skills were a result of any kind of academic practice<sup>8</sup>.

Whenever he had the chance to express his thoughts in records he knew were to be made public, he presented himself as a rude man, with no hint of sophistication, provocatively provincial. I believe it is what one can obtain from sentences: "The smell of meat on the grill is better than all the luxury perfumes that they sell in Paris." or "Flowers are pretty, but let us not exaggerate. A cabbage, especially in the morning, with dew drops (...) is as beautiful as a flower", or even, "the sheep is the animal I like most, if I could I would always have three or four sheep around me."<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, it seems to be the defiant tone that stands out when he makes sure to point out his inaptitude and show himself completely nonchalant about his art, presenting it as the opposite of the virtuous, academic or noted artist (though he was noted). It is what he expresses when he states: "Moréns said about poetry: - La poésie? Ça ne m' interesse

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<sup>8</sup> Plá, José. (1930). *Vida de Manolo: contada por él mismo*. Madrid: Mundo Latino.

<sup>9</sup> Idem, pp. 219-220.

pas... I say the same about sculpture" or "Art is not an essential thing and I don't need to sculpt to be who I am (...) I make shapes and lines, I see movements and colours, and, if I represent something it is because I am not completely stupid."<sup>10</sup>

On another perspective still, Manolo seems to want to compose his profile with a good dose of ingenuity. It is what he manifests when he states: "I don't believe we came from the monkey. If we had come from this animal we'd be painting landscapes. The grass pleases us and puts us in a good mood. In case we do come from something, we came from the cow and the ox."<sup>11</sup>

Like Manolo, Alberto had no formal artistic education. He was born in Toledo and became a baker as his father. When he had his first exhibition in Madrid, in 1825 - The Iberian Artists Exhibition -, the press talked about him extensively and praised his work. Everyone was surprised: "But, you are a sculptor?" since then he started his career as an artist, at the age of thirty.

All of the artists that took part of this Iberian Artists exhibition then left for Paris, except for Alberto and Palencia who decided to remain in Madrid, with the deliberate purpose of arising a new national art<sup>12</sup>. They initiated long walks through the fields, the capital's surroundings, intentionally South, where the landscape was harsh, as opposed to the aristocratic North, which had been a source of artistic inspiration since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>13</sup>.

The reunion with rural, agrarian, nature was a way to reunite the Castilian essence with its origins. The description of these walks shows that there was something ritualistic in them, something magical and they bring to

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<sup>10</sup> Idem, pp. 214, 223.

<sup>11</sup> "Frases de Manolo Hugué", In *Quadern [Sabadell]: els Amics*. Núm. 12 (gen-febr. 1980), p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Sanchéz, Alberto. (1975). *Alberto Sanchéz: Palavras de um escultor*. Valencia: Fernando Torres.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bozal, Valeriano. (2001), *Catálogo de la exposición Alberto 1895-1962*. Madrid: Museu Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, p. 120.

mind Paul Gauguin's (1848-1930) text accounting how he walked, with an indigenous friend, in search of a tree trunk to sculpt<sup>14</sup>.

According to the sculptor, from these walks in the fields, through the region of Vallecas, the idea was born to create a new school, the Escuela de Vallecas – a name referred only in 1860<sup>15</sup>. This idea "taken as true fanaticism", made the two artists begin collecting stones, sticks, sand and any and all objects of plastic quality. The "Monumento a los pájaros", considered as a poetic manifesto of Vallecas, was a sculptural construction made off of gathered rocks, which Alberto abandoned to its fate, on "Cerro Testigo".

As Manolo, also Alberto let himself fascinate by archaic sculpture, namely the Iberian sculpture found in Cerro de los Santos, which he visited every time he could, since 1921, in the archeological Museum in Madrid. The simplicity of these figures and their unpretentious form fascinated him, as if they had been sowed by nature itself<sup>16</sup>. The fact that they were of small scale but seemed so gigantic pieces, impressed him. This impression would be the mark in his works – normally small-scaled pieces, but often destined to monumental sculptures.

Also Alberto emphasizes his lack of academics and his contempt for technical dexterity and for the virtuosity in the composition of sculpture. As he referred, the Iberian sculpture, were "sculptural objects (...) from others semi-illiterate as (he)", reason by which these objects proved that in art, much culture and craftsmanship were lesser things. For that same reason, he despised good and bad opera singers, preferring the song of a man mounted on his little donkey, crossing hills and valleys. This song was for

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<sup>14</sup> See Wilkinson, Alan. (1983). "Rodin, Gauguin et la génération de Picasso et Moore: du romantisme au primitivisme", in *Rodin et la sculpture contemporaine*. Compte rendu du colloque organisé par le musée Rodin du 11 au 15 octobre 1982 au Musée Rodin. Paris, p. 129. Also quoted by Alix Trueba, Josefina. (2001). *Un nuevo ideal figurativo: la escultura en España 1900-1936*. Madrid: Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> See Sánchez, Alberto. (1975). *Alberto Sánchez: Palavras de um escultor*. Valencia: Fernando Torres.

<sup>16</sup> Sánchez, Alberto. (1975). *Alberto Sánchez: Palavras de um escultor*. Valencia: Fernando Torres, p. 24-25.

him profoundly human, the sap of a people, capable of interfering in the elements of nature (the wind, the rocks, the rivers, the crops)<sup>17</sup>.

In 1960, speaking of his path as a sculptor, Alberto referred that it was his main wish to create an art plastically different from what all others composed till then. However, when he observed his first drawings, from which he expected to create sculptures, it began clear that they represented fragments of women, animals, mingled hills and country side and he clearly understood that he would never be able to create inexistent things. So he reassured himself and stopped resisting his search for his forms in the nature around him. In truth, he began to take a survey of these forms of the land, to try and capture the sobriety and simplicity that the land of Castile transmitted.

His sculpture is populated by references to the rural and the country side: the birds, the bulls, the vineyards, the wheat fields, the rocks eroded by time<sup>18</sup>. This sculpture wishes to be the product of a profound Castilian nature experience, a sensorial experience of the rural setting and popular culture: "Give shape to what you see in the field at five o'clock in the morning..."<sup>19</sup>.

Like Alberto, Manolo chose, for his artistic researches, scenes of the world around him, but with a different purpose.

Manolo declared that "sculpture is exclusively form". He would not concern himself with meaning but rather be aware of the basic and primordial gesture of sculpting, using to that purpose the world he chose to live in. Like he said: "When I want to work, I open a window and I sculpt what I see in front of me. Everything is admirable."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Idem.

<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately most of the earlier sculptures produced in the thirties by Alberto have disappeared. What we have are later works from the fifties and sixties produced during his exile in Moscow which are thought to be much close to the first ones. They are a synthesis of animal, vegetable and human forms, created in recycled materials, in clay and plaster, and that capture subjects of rural life and the experience of nature.

<sup>19</sup> Azcoaga, Enrique. (1977). Alberto. Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> Plá, José. (1930). *Vida de Manolo: contada por él mismo*. Madrid: Mundo Latino, p. 215.



The rural inhabitants of Ceret's world or the traditional bullfights are the subject of his exercise of modernism, through the depiction of original models, geometric play and bold synthesis.

In Ceret he lives surrounded by cubist artists, with whom he is friend's and interacts with. However, I do not agree that the presence of the classic in Manolo's work is just a formal solution that he adopted to correct his inability to access to the theoretical speculations of the new trends<sup>21</sup>. I think the cubist researches clearly did not interest him. He was closer to the French Catalan Maillol (1861-1944), whose influence is visible in Manolo's work, not only in the extensive volumes, often times monolithic, but also in the pre-classical inspiration.

Maillol's sculpture "La mediterrané" portrays the noucentiste sculptural program; the southern alternative to the northern romanticism<sup>22</sup>. Given this, Monolo was also closer to the "new artistic creation" that the *noucentisme* believed could be nurtured by the rural and popular culture of a region.

He effectively finds this creative stimulus in the rural surroundings of Ceret, but also in Caldas de Monbui in Catalonia, where he resides for long periods of time. He, so, keeps in regular contact with Barcelona and its intellectual and artistic activity, also because he counted among his friends the painter Joaquim Sunyer (1874-1956) and the sculptor Enric Casanovas (1882-1948), two important figures linked to the *noucentisme*.

Alberto found his inspiration in the countryside around Madrid; Manolo found his in the rural inhabitants of Ceret's world.

Alberto intended to provide through his sculptures a stimulus to the new man, giving him a new breath. Simultaneously, some of his sculptures were thought to work as a kind of landmark, a link between the modern architecture around it and the popular and national roots. He had a political agenda. He believed art could change the society. He believed his art could

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<sup>21</sup> Puig, Arnau, "Dónde debemos situar a Manolo Hugué dentro de la plástica catalana?", In *Artes Plásticas Barcelona*. (1975 – Any 1, núm. 2), pp. 19-22.

<sup>22</sup> See d'Ors, Carlos. (2000). *El Noucentisme: presupuestos ideológicos, estéticos y artísticos*. Madrid: Cateria, p. 122-128.

start the spectator's consciousness on a journey through human solidarity and personal elevation<sup>23</sup>.

Manolo purposes were rather different, as we have seen.

There is, however, a certain innocence which seems to characterize both artists. There is, in the work of both, a certain naiveté, as if what is seen is being looked at for the first time; as if the look itself was the first; as if the gesture of doing was also original, pure, stripped of all knowledge, free of any preconceived idea. The result is a sculpture permanently linked to the act of composition, holding the mark of the human hand. Clay is the material that both used frequently, as well as other materials traditionally not considered as noble or as definitive, as is the case of plaster.

The women, the birds, the bulls present in the sculpture of both artists are, on the other hand, images with tremendous precedence in the History of Spanish Art, which the artists recovered without prejudice.

In the same way, they kept an evident link to reality, though rejecting the illusionist representation, and never broke with figuration. Their modernism was not a "no" to the traditional, but rather a "yes". Tradition was, more so, a fertile source for their innovative solutions<sup>24</sup>.

It is clear that this approach does not exhaust the innumerable possible approaches to the work of both sculptors, nor was it my intention. As I mentioned in the beginning, the sculpting of these two artists is profoundly different and, namely in Alberto's case, there are many other reflections to his work, especially when it comes to the way his work anticipates the *installation* and even the *performance*. It is not the case here to proceed with any stylistic classification and discussing it. Nor even to debate on which of the two artists would be more relevant or irrelevant in their own modernism.

What matters to me, most of all, is to leave a statement with two ways of approaching sculpture in the South of Europe, enhancing the fact that there

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Azcoaga, Enrique. (1977). Alberto. Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, p. 86.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Idem, p. 69.

are essential aspects, which are intrinsically and unavoidably linked to the living in this region and to the wish of maintaining this essence. And as this search for identity shapes the way this modernism expresses itself – between the redemption of the vernacular and the understanding of the modern<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> I freely quote an Eugenio Carmona's expression in regards to Alberto, but I believe that can be applied to both studied cases. Carmona, Eugénio. (2001), Catálogo de la Exposición *Alberto 1895-1962*. Madrid: Museu Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, p. 128

## **A CREATIVE RESPONSE TO MODERNISM:**

### **The case of Greek modernism as seen through modern Greek sculpture Klairi Angelou**

University of Bristol, UK

#### **Abstract**

*This paper will examine how Modernism was developed in Greece and more specifically by discussing its connection to the notion of Ellinikotita (Greekness) as a procedure towards a national and international identity.*

*Modern Greek culture – with special reference to sculpture – will be examined under the lens of centre and periphery – with Greek art seen as periphery (or – paradoxically – occupying both the centre and the periphery because of the centrality of the Greek canon to Western visual culture).*

*I aim to bring to light the different notions Modernism acquired in the periphery, where local cultural idiosyncrasies gave it a new dynamic. Therefore, I will elucidate the specific historical and socio-cultural context in which Modernism not only was developed, but also challenged in Greece. The notion of Ellinikotita entails a complex matrix of ideas and through time different notions have been attributed to it, resulting in different aspects of visual culture being employed in order to address these different versions of Ellinikotita. Especially in the years following World War II, this debate on Ellinikotita was shaped around a polarised response to foreign influences, as a dilemma of choosing between the East and the West; the former going hand-in-hand with tradition and the latter choosing to be influenced by contemporary European movements.*

*In order to provide evidence of the centrality of ethnicity in the case of Greek modernism, the practice of Jeanne Spiteris-Veropoulou (1920-2000) will be given as an indicative example; how her work was received and discussed by art critics with constant reference to her ethnicity, how it was received by foreign and Greek art critics and if there is any difference in discussions of her work by foreign and Greek scholars. Her work will be examined not only as response to the central/ European movements, but will be placed within the context of the periphery's own experience of history.*

#### **Author identification**

***Klairi Angelou.*** *Is a third year PhD student at the University of Bristol. Her research focuses on Modern Greek sculpture, looking especially at the case of Greek women sculptors after World War II. Her research interests include the reappraisal of modern Greek sculpture both in national and international scale in view of women sculptors' work, as well as how the debate of a national and international identity influenced the work of Greek artists during that time. She is also interested in the use of the past in modern cultural practices and how issues of gender and identity influence the creation and reception of artists' work.*

## **DAMNED WORDS:**

### **The use of Modern and Regional as attributes of folklore modernist rendition in stage and costume design at the turn of the 1930's Carlos Bártolo**

CITAD/ULL + IHA/FCSH-UNL, Lisbon, Portugal

#### **Abstract**

*Diário de Notícias newspaper published a weekly magazine entitled O Notícias Ilustrado between March 1928 and 1935, which coincide with the arrival to government of António Salazar (April 27th 1928) and the regime stabilization after the 1933 Constitution ratification.*

*It was the first Portuguese magazine entirely printed through rotogravure technology and thus graphically fresh and modern due to an innovative use of composition, photography and modern typography. It focused mainly on reporting the modern and urban cosmopolitan life: sports, novelties, entertainment, the jet set lifestyle and other mass culture phenomena while also alluding (more or less lightly) to politics.*

*As one of the most innovative general periodicals, it was directed, and on it collaborated, several figures of the Modernist generation some of whom, after 1933, would be associated with the official cultural policy.*

*Throughout its pages it is possible to perceive the renovation of theatrical revue as well as of other popular entertainment: theatre, dance, music and cinema. These theatre plays presented elements that, in tune with some foreign tendencies, were broadly inspired by an earliest interest of modernists for folk art and for the rediscovery of national or local heritage, while synchronously an international hegemony in design was rising.*

*A straightforward analysis of the magazine titles and texts reveal that this modernist interpretation of folklore for the stage (on sets, costumes, but also in music and choreography) was mainly announced as a 'modern' context up to the moment where an official culture policy was set by SPN; from 1933 onwards this modern aspect was veiled as the praising of 'regional' and 'popular' original roots was now strongly displayed.*

*This analysis could be viewed as a representative case of how the diverse terms (for the same kind of works) implied and expressed different contexts in 1930's Portugal.*

**Keywords:** Modernism, nationalism, Estado Novo, theatrical revue, set and costume design

#### **Introduction**

Between 25 of March 1928 and 6 of October 1935 *Diário de Notícias*, one of the main daily Portuguese newspapers<sup>1</sup>, published on Sundays an

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<sup>1</sup> Published since December 1864, it is referred as the first Portuguese exempt newspaper, free of sectarian propaganda and politics agendas (Tengarrinha, 1965, p.188). Technically it would be also innovative being one of the first to be printed on a high speed rotary press, and the first, in 1904 to use a *Linotype* typesetting machine (ibid, pp.206-207).

illustrated magazine entitled *O Notícias Ilustrado* that visually complemented the newspaper.

The magazine appeared, coincidentally, one month before António Salazar's (1889-1970) government arrival (27 of April 1928), at the end of a still unstable period ensuing the military *coup d'état* (28 of May 1926) that implemented the dictatorship, thus ending the liberal-democratic efforts experienced since approximately one century before by the *Primeira República* [First Republic] and the monarchy before it. It would be printed in the next seven years, accompanying Salazar subsequent power seizing, and ending its publication two years after the 1933 stabilization of the *Estado Novo* [New State] regime<sup>2</sup>.

Like its competitors — *ABC*<sup>3</sup>, *Ilustração*<sup>4</sup>, *Ilustração Portuguesa*<sup>5</sup> — *O Notícias Ilustrado* reported periodically on social, political, cultural, artistic and sport life but, relatively to the others, focused mainly on the modern and urban life in a more light-hearted way: sports, novelties, entertainment, the jet set high-life and other mass culture phenomena, faintly alluding to politics. This way the magazine managed, like the newspaper, to maintain a more neutral (and as such almost permissive) stance on the national political turmoil happening at the same time<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Since 1928, gradually, Salazar secured prominent roles in the government until he arose to Prime Minister in 1932, incarnating a stoic *persona* that carried out the divine duty of fathering the country (Rivero, 2010). With the *1933 Constitution* ratification (published February 22th 1933) — establishing the power on a corporative regime that would entitle itself as *Estado Novo* —, Salazar held his position in practice as a dictator, balancing out the different factions of the Portuguese far right. For the equilibrium of these forces (from the poles of the *ancien régime* to the 'pro-fascists') Salazar, himself a Conservative Catholic close to Integralism, created a single-party regime congregating in the regime reactionaries with modern-authoritarians while answering to the different society sectors yearnings, all against a unique enemy: the 'social-liberal-democratic' system (Rosas, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Published regularly every week from 1920 to 1931 and occasionally until 1940 (Pires, 1986, pp. 49-50; 1996, pp.31-33)

<sup>4</sup> Published biweekly by the *Aillaud* and *Empreza Nacional de Publicidade* editing houses from 1926 to 1939 with latter occasional printings for protection of the title's name (Pires, 1996, p.195; Correia, 2009a).

<sup>5</sup> Published weekly by the *O Século* newspaper from 1903 to 1930 and approximately twice a year until 1993 (Pires, 1996, pp.201-202; Correia, 2009b)

<sup>6</sup> Obviously the political situation would emerge from time to time and, if during the first years references to Salazar were sparse, after 1932 he would be progressively apparent on the magazine pages, through his actions, ideas, or just simply him. This orientation would emerge around the time the report mentioning his likeness with one of the characters portrayed in the 15th c. *S. Vicente altarpiece* was published (December 1932), that

In its pages, through the innovative use of rotogravure technology, the freer use of image — photography (mainly), drawing and modern typeface (geometrically hand-drawn), all cropped, juxtaposed and reorganized in dynamic photomontages <sup>7</sup> — allowed the appearance of a more contemporary composition, almost in tune with modernist graphic design experiments done all through Europe. This allowed the magazine to boastfully self-refer as '*the only graphic newspaper of modern and European appearance*' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1929d).

The magazine was directed, and on it collaborated, several figures of the Modernist generation: at its direction were José Leitão de Barros<sup>8</sup> (artist, architect, writer, journalist, and art, theatre and film director), and Carolina Homem-Christo (a female journalist, still a rare thing in the 1920's Portugal)<sup>9</sup>. Between the long and varied list of writers it's possible to find poets, novelists and journalists like António Ferro, José Gomes Ferreira, Norberto Lopes, Norberto de Araújo, Artur Portela, António Lopes Ribeiro, Augusto de Santa-Rita, *Reporter X* (pseudonym of Reinaldo Ferreira) and even Almada Negreiros and Fernando Pessoa — signing as himself or as Álvaro de Campos. Illustrations, cartoons and drawings of artists such as Carlos Botelho, TOM (Thomaz de Mello), Tagarro, Stuart Carvalhais, Júlio de Sousa, Emérico Nunes and even by the Mexican-American Miguel Covarrubias<sup>10</sup>. Also the work of photographers like Salazar Diniz, Deniz Salgado, Ferreira da Cunha, José Lobo, Marques da Costa, Mário Novaes, Silva Nogueira, Manuel Alves de San Payo e Judah

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happened, probably not by chance, at the same time Ferro's interviews with the dictator, already Prime-Minister were printed on *Diário de Notícias* newspaper.

<sup>7</sup> An analysis of the magazine indicates that only one side of the pages was composed that way, the verso being done according to more traditional typographic technics, mainly columns of texts with titles, smaller photographs, vignettes or drawings (illustrations or cartoons) conformed to the general rigid composition grid. On the overall, and after a cover with an emphatic photo, the magazine was formed by sequenced pairs of more discreet text pages and bold photomontage ones, thus permitting the normal printing of texts — essays, chronicles, interviews, reviews, small novels, ads or small news — permanently intertwined with strong graphic pages leading to the *modern* perception that the magazine was mainly image.

<sup>8</sup> Beside *O Notícias Ilustrado*, he was collaborator on several other newspapers and even director of other illustrated magazines like *O Domingos Ilustrado* or *O Século Ilustrado*.

<sup>9</sup> Belonging to a family of writers and politics — from a republican father to a fascist brother — Carolina Homem-Christo would become, in 1939, directress, and then owner, of *Eva*, the main feminine Portuguese magazine throughout the middle 20th c.

<sup>10</sup> Some of the 'American articles' of António Ferro were illustrated by Covarrubias's drawings of Harlem nightlife characters, acknowledging the original publication on *Vanity Fair* magazine.

Benoliel. Part of these authors would become associated, more or less officially, with the formulation of the new regime cultural policy and its identity definition. From them it's necessary to single out Antonio Ferro<sup>11</sup> as the main character after his designation as director of the *Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional - SPN* [National Propaganda Bureau] on 25 of September 1933.

Due to the time coincidence between the existence of *O Notícias Ilustrado* and Portugal's political history it is possible throughout its pages to observe political circumstances 'collateral effects' on the more mundane world: mainly the shift from a more progressive and cosmopolitan understanding of the nation core interests, to an identity search of new social, moral and politic values that the dictatorship would implement with it's emergence.

### **A cosmopolitan magazine**

As stated before most of the magazine was about reporting the society modern urban character, that was lost in the allure for ersatz fame and glamour, so characteristic of the 'roaring twenties': novelties were applauded, the foreign praised<sup>12</sup>, and the focus was on celebrities, first and foremost the heroes and stars from the national and international sport and entertainment world.

Therefore *O Notícias Ilustrado* reported how everybody was rushing to 'premiéres' at *Avenida* to idolize 'vamps', 'stars' 'cowboys' on cinema 'ecrans' [screens], while discussing how Hollywood 'studios' were the best

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<sup>11</sup> With 19 years old (1915) he edited *Orpheu*, the avant-garde magazine that laid the Portuguese modernist movement foundations with Pessoa, Sá-Carneiro and Almada, among others. While working as journalists, Ferro wrote novels, poems and plays (some creating public outrage). As reporter he interviewed d'Annunzio, Maurras, Pétain, Rivera, Mussolini, even Hitler, but also Cocteau, Mistinguett or Poirer. Politically he began as a Republican Party sympathizer, evolving to the authoritarian modern Sidonists and the Conservative Republicans, while progressively admiring contemporary authoritarian regimes, especially Mussolini's. In 1932, interviewing Salazar, the political role of culture was discussed; months later Salazar would invite him to create *SPN*.

<sup>12</sup> As Duarte Ribeiro de Macedo, ambassador secretary to the court of Louis XIV had said in 1675 '*For this helped the common error according to which we [the Portuguese] perceive that everything that comes from abroad is the best*' (Macedo, 1675 [1817], p.89).



producing movies full of 'trucs' [tricks]; the men adventured to stroll the streets without hats, going to vaudeville theatre's 'matinées' and 'soirées' hoping to see 'divettes' at the 'foyers', while enjoying 'scenas' [scenes, acts] where actresses and actors, sometimes in funny 'travestis', were top billing attractions; at the 'dancings', 'clubs', 'bars', and 'casinos', appearing everywhere, 'jazz' of electrifying rhythm was listen, and American "distinctively savage dances" (Ferro, 1928), like the 'charleston', 'black-bottom' or 'jive' danced; the chorus girls were now known as 'girls', and the athletes as 'sportsmen', being 'foot-ball' and 'box' the most popular 'sports', and some 'goals' celebrated as national events; ones and the others, the 'girls' and 'sportsmen', appeared in the 'clichés' [photos] of the 'magazine' news pages more bare than dressed announcing a new body-related moral, where the beach suntanned and gymnastic modelled figure reigned supreme. Overall, the dream of every 'midinette' [seamstress], 'dactylo' [secretary, stenographer] or 'vendeuse' [saleswoman], daily fantasising on movies and novels, was to secure one 'chic' gentleman, impeccably wearing a 'frack' [tailcoat], that could fulfil her wish of a luxurious and frenzied 'high-life'<sup>13</sup>.

The [ab]use of the foreign words in writings<sup>14</sup> was proof that what was normally understood, and desired, as foreign was now viewed as common inside the country borders, and when that wasn't an accurate true, it could be exaggerated or even invented<sup>15</sup>. And so inventions, electricity, technology, cinema, cars, airplanes and zeppelins, progress and velocity, luxury, newness, the fashion and glamour were everywhere. Finally it looked like Lisbon was an international city and Portugal a modern country...

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<sup>13</sup> All the words within single quotation marks in this paragraph were used that way — as their Anglo, American or French original or as an adapted version — in the middle of texts written in Portuguese at *O Notícias Ilustrado*, between 1927 and 1935.

<sup>14</sup> The use of Anglicisms, many of them Americanisms, outdoing the use of Galicisms was also a sign of an international cultural hubs shift, from the Francophone world to the Anglo-American one, denoting the beginning of the 20th c. supremacy of the popular mass culture.

<sup>15</sup> As an example it could be mentioned the imaginative reports-chronicles of Reinaldo Ferreira, known as Reporter X, that described Lisbon or Oporto low-life at the fascinating level of any American capital of gangster crime, following examples seen on the cinema (Queirós, 1997).

## A new Theatre

The entertainment world reigned supreme and the blooming Portuguese cinema, with its meagre group of stars, had front page every time anything relevant happened<sup>16</sup> (this way challenging the European or American industry present in almost every edition). Even though, the Portuguese theatre (more prolific in productions, companies, rivalries, stories, 'scandals' and gossips) was more recurrent on the magazine pages.

From 1925 onwards the Portuguese theatrical revue<sup>17</sup> scene began to present some signs of renovation and modernity<sup>18</sup>. These happened years after the *Ballets Russes* presentation (1917-1918) in Lisbon<sup>19</sup> (nevertheless still present in the memory of many of the modernist players), and after the thrill caused by the recent passage of the Spanish theatre company *Hermanos Velasco*. Experimentally some modernist artists<sup>20</sup> would work for theatre stages like: Eduardo Malta in *Tiroliro*

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<sup>16</sup> The magazine followed attentively the Portuguese cinema life as an obvious sign of modernity and another attempt to level up with the rest of the world. It goes without saying there was a predominance of reports of the movies done by the magazine director Leitão de Barros: the urban eulogy documentary *Lisboa, Crónica Anedótica* (1930) — following Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* [Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis] (1927) or Dziga Vertov's *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* [Man with a Movie Camera] (1929) —, the 'fake' ethnographical documentary *Maria do Mar* (1930) — closer to the work of Robert Flaherty —, and the historical and literary dramas *A Severa* (1931) — first Portuguese all-talking sound film — and *As Pupilas do Senhor Reitor* (1935).

<sup>17</sup> Theatrical revue developed in the late 19th c. as a light, lowbrow, fast-moving and sophisticated entertainment formed by a collection of short sketches, songs, dances, comic interludes and even short plays. This genre would differ from variety theatre in that the acts were linked by a topical idea or theme growing in time the emphasis on wit and style rather than music and spectacle (Victoria & Albert Museum, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> In part supported by a campaign of Antonio Ferro, in his *Diário de Notícias* theatre review column, against the lethargy that reign on the 'frozen and inexpressive [stages], twin brothers of chromolithograph prints' (cited by Santos, 2000, p.5).

<sup>19</sup> Received on a mix of astonishment and indifference in the course of the Sidonist revolution mayhem, the influence of Diaghliev company would be perceived and admired only by part of the Portuguese intellectual elite more receptive to the vanguards' experiments, nevertheless the constant appearance of news and reviews on Lisbon press (Castro, 2014). Several of the dance plays presented at *Coliseu dos Recreios* and *S. Carlos Theatre* were inspired in tales from the Slavic ethnography, an influence revealed not only in the music score but also in the sets and wardrobe design: *Les Danses polovtsiennes du Prince Igor* (1909) with sets and costumes by Nicholas Roerich (Bowl et al., 2009, p.116-119); *Sadko* (1911) by Boris Anisfeld and Natalia Gontcharova (op.cit., p.162-167); and *Le Festin* (1909) and *Thamar* (1912) by Léon Bakst (Pritchard, 2010, pp.136-137 e pp.8 e 71). Several photographs of *Thamar* dancers in costume appeared in *Ilustração Portuguesa* magazine announcing the presentations (Ilustração Portuguesa, 1917).

<sup>20</sup> Beside the 'pure' artistic practice most of these artists worked for the graphic arts, advertisement or entertainment industries as a primary mean of support, shifting back and

revue (1925); Almada Negreiros for *Chic-Chic* (1925), *Actualidades de XPTO* (1927) (Santos, 1987, p.10), and, in tandem with Jorge Barradas, in *Pomada de Amor* (1926); and some others working in more or less occasional collaborations between young artists and stage world<sup>21</sup>.

The theatrical revue managed to regenerate itself in the middle of applaud and reactionary indignation. *Água-Pé* revue presented by the Luísa Satanela and Estevão Amarante company in the Summer of 1927 is understood as the first mainly 'modernist' play of this genre. The play presented a music score by Frederico de Freitas, sets and costumes by José Barbosa and choreography by Francis Graça (that for the first time, transformed the decorative chorus girls in a real *corps de ballet*). In 1928, after a commentary of Ferro referring to how the '*clothes have life and colour but speak too much Russian*'<sup>22</sup> (citado por Santos, 2000, p.6), the play was redone with a new opening of the second act. This scene was an immediate success presenting a group of actresses dressed as 'national provinces' coming to greet a more cosmopolitan Lisbon. Following earlier sporadic experiences in this thematic, both the design of the backdrop curtain and the dresses freely adapted national folklore elements: from traditional costumes forms and features to iconographic details typical of Minho embroideries or Alcobaça printed chintz scarfs.

This model would be repeated on other plays<sup>23</sup> but, but despite their emergence and success, these folkloric acts continued to appear mingled

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forth from these different disciplines thus making them permeable to each other influences.

<sup>21</sup> Briefly working as set or costume designers: António Soares, Leitão de Barros, Sarah Affonso, Raquel Roque Gameiro, Júlio de Sousa, Tom, Carlos Botelho, Stuart Carvalhais; and on a more constant routine: José Barbosa, Maria Adelaide Lima Cruz, Armando Bruno, António Amorim, Jorge Herold, Mário Gomariz, Laierte Neves and Pinto de Campos (Santos, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Ferro's critique of the foreign influence could be justified by the existence of an act entitled "*Bonecos Russos*" [Russian Dolls] where Satanela and Francis danced dressed with 'traditional' Slavic costumes (Notícias Ilustrado, 1928b), probably inspired by the previous presentations of the Diaghliev company.

<sup>23</sup> On José Barbosa's costumes for the act *Arredores de Lisboa*, at *A Rambóia* revue (1928) (Santos, 2000, capa); costumes and sets by the same author for *Beiriz* act — a true product placement of the Beiriz carpets company associating, on the verses written on the backdrop curtain, the Minho folkloric *Vira* dance and the industrial production — (Santos, 1985, p.8), and António Soares's set for the final number *O Arraial Português*, both from *Chá de Parreira* revue (1929) (Santos, 1985, capa); sets and costumes by António Amorim for *Riquezas de Portugal* act at *O Tremoço Saloio* revue (1929) (Notícias Ilustrado, 1929f; Santos, 2000, p.15), or *Belezas de Sintra* on *Feira da Luz* revue (1930) (Santos, 1985,

with others of a complete diverse character, a common situation in a theatre genre characterised as a series of unrelated independent musical, comedic or dancing scenes that reviewed the latest events, stories or fads<sup>24</sup>.

Between *girls* more or less bare, actors with witty remarks and funny up-to-date dialogues and songs, glamorous and spectacular acts that tried to copy the Broadway *Ziegfeld Follies's* spirit (or the Champs-Élysées *variétés* theatre and the most recent Hollywood musicals) and as the seasons gone by, a succession of these merry popular fantasies were developed: with music and dance inspired on the most cheerful national folklore (*viras, fandangos, corridinhos*, etc.<sup>25</sup>), carried by the most popular characters (like *varinas* [women fishmongers] and *saloios* [rural peasants of Lisbon outskirts] the ones nearest to the capital references) and presented on stage with costumes and sets that stylised folk arts<sup>26</sup>.

In reality since the earlier decade the 'oxymoronic' interest by the modernist generation on elements from the vernacular world — '*valued at that age through all Europe as an escape to the academic discipline*' (Raquel Henriques Silva about "Louça de Barcelos" by Eduardo Viana in

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p.26), where Maria Adelaide Lima Cruz would also collaborate (Notícias Ilustrado, 1930b); Armando Bruno's costumes for the singer Corina Freire in *Nina del Portugal* act from Maurice Chevalier *Parade du Monde* revue, presented at Paris casino in 1937 (Santos, 2000, pp.12-13); and Jorge Herold's work for *Santo António está no Trono* act of *Fanfarra* revue (1938) (Santos, 2000, p.17). The titles of the acts, and even of some plays, also addressed popular terms, themes and references.

<sup>24</sup> As an example of this mixture, on *Cantiga Nova* revue (1933) the act entitled with the same name and a dancing duet act were inspired in the national folklore. Nevertheless other act designated *Habanera* was of Andalusian *flamenco* inspiration; another presented oriental exotic costumes; two more were done according to Hollywood musical models, one of them an amorous dancing duet in the Astaire manner; there was another in a romantic neo-roccaille mood and one last, the '*curious number «Good by boy»*' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1933a), with Luísa Satanela and all the *girls* in Dietrich style travesti.

<sup>25</sup> Eugénio Salvador (in a dancing duet with Lina Duval as Lina & Salvador) and Francis (famous for his duet with Ruth Walden) would create repertoires based on traditional dances that were presented, originally, in revue theatre or cinema 'live complements' (during movies intermissions) and latter in autonomous performances that would contribute to the popularization of dance as an art in itself and eventually the elevation of the male dancer role (Santos et al., 1999; Chiaradia, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> On serious dramatic arts the vernacular references were used every time the narrative required it, but never in a stylised or distorted manner, trying to be more respectful to the authentic. As an example *Maria do Mar* movie by Leitão de Barros (1930) dubbed "A documentary of the race" (Notícias Ilustrado, 1930a) or Abílio sets and costumes to *Tá Mar* play by Alfredo Cortez, presented at D. Maria II National Theatre by the *Robles Monteiro Rey Colaço Company* (1936) (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1990, pp.36-37), both stories centred on the adverse lives of Nazaré fishermen.

Fundação De Serralves et al., 1992, p.90) — had made possible the release from classical clutch, allowed by a research of naïve (and to a certain extent exotic) archetypes and the development of new '*exercises of formal and colour schemes, enabling also the broadening of themes and a revolution on Art memories through the contact with popular aesthetic*'<sup>27</sup> (op.cit.).

At the Portuguese theatrical revue and using the same references and analytic-synthetic methods (distant from their primeval veracity or their noble aesthetic exploratory reasons and oblivious to possible wrongful mixtures, provenances, or misrepresentation), the modernist artists plainly reduced the genuine original materials, proportions, colours or features to a collection of depurated decorative elements. These were used and recombined by the artist's whim, eventually with other diverse and odd references (from foreign folklore to modern expressionist or even abstract references) as fanciful decorative elements on more mundane objects. Consequently, under a dreamy notion of tradition, these adulterated references were cheerfully presented to the urban masses that, through this, identified themselves with an era or place not that distant but right now invariably pretty and joyful. This fondness (mix of pride and nostalgia) for these faultless national picturesque reinvented fantasies<sup>28</sup>, was interpreted as 'modern' when compared with the stagnant classic styles and the mouldy historical strictness of a country 'genetically'

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<sup>27</sup> Since the 19th c. the attempt to escape the academic clutch induced, all through Europe, artists to search inspiration on their local vernacular roots, or even on civilizations outside the classical western world, thus the immersion on late medieval or Japanese art by the English Pre-Rafelists or the French Nabis; a general enchantment for Oriental, African or several other indigenous people arts; the research on rural vernacular origins done by many European architects; a similar research on vernacular forms and production methods by the Arts and Crafts designers; the rediscovery of national folklores that provoked a renovation of European music and dance (being the *Ballets Russes* a major example); and the interest on popular arts artefacts by many of the avant-garde artists. In Portugal, this leaning produced not only the discussion around the *Casa Portuguesa* [Portuguese House] (1880's onwards), as consequences of it were perceived earlier on works of Eduardo Viana, Amadeu de Sousa Cardoso, Almada Negreiros, and on work of artists from the following generation like Bernardo Marques, Jorge Barradas, Carlos Botelho, or the older Emmerico Nunes.

<sup>28</sup> This theatrical interpretation and adaptation of traditions supposedly popular or regional could be, in part, behind the creation of new 'old traditions' like the *Marchas dos Bairros/Marchas Populares*, the popular parades created during the 1930's through the municipal festivities commission, and the support of *O Notícias Ilustrado*, *Diário de Lisboa* and *Parque Mayer* administration, as part of the city annual festivities, developed to happen through June, on the eve of the popular St. Anthony day (*Notícias Ilustrado*, 1932b, 1935b).

defeatist and subservient to foreign influences. Associated to the modernist thought, its reference sources weren't that important, thus its 'regional' or 'popular' origins dismissed, and only the outcome originality or its developing methods were announced and sublimated as a sign of its own modernity and of this discontinuity with [academic] traditions.

## **A New State**

The resource use of vernacular as an inspiration by the modernist artists was done as a reaction to the seriousness severity of the academic world and the progress-ridden society. Nevertheless the rescue of this guileless elements from ages of being treated condescendingly as products of the rude and ignorant people was originally done free of a political agenda (at least an official one). Obviously, it shouldn't be forgotten that the Romanticism reacted against the classicism restraint and rejected the Enlightenment rationalism emphasising the primacy of the individual and thus cradling the growth of nationalist yearnings. This would be ultimately fructified by the incessant socio political and economic belligerent state of affairs that the western world sustained beyond the Great War.

In Portugal, in the final decades of the 19th century, a nationalism consciousness partially lead to the appearance of ethnographic studies, even if their results would only become manifest on the second decade of the following century. Officially, the varied governments had continue to favour the glorified styles associated with the nation historical grandness periods (the chaste Romanesque of the Reconquest, the exuberance of the Discoveries Manueline, or the opulence of the baroque Joanine age) thus perpetuating an academic historical stance and refusing to praise, or even acknowledge, the simple peasant's production, understood as the work of the illiterate overlooked by the domineering globalised civilizational progress.

With the outcome of the *coup d'état* in 28 of May 1926 and the emergence of the ultra-right regime Portugal, like similar contemporary regimes, inflamed its autonomic and nationalist principles dutifully

campaigning against the 'internationalisms': either political (communism, socialism or liberal-democracy), economic (capitalism), moral (atheism, individualism) or of social posture (progress, modernity, cosmopolitanism). For the new regime 'modern' was a bad word (as bad as many others from the 'modern' progressive world) and to some extent identified itself with the motto of the ephemeral political right-wing magazine *Ordem Nova* [New Order] (1926-1927)

anti-modern, anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-bourgeois and anti-bolchevik, counter-revolutionary; reactionary; catholic, apostolic and roman; monarchic; intolerant and uncompromising; unsympathiser with writers, journalists and any professional of the letters, arts and press (*Ordem Nova*, 1926-1927)

The national values exaltation, formed on their mythical origins, would promote the celebration of Portugal's history and uniqueness, allowing, from now on, the [re]discovery of folk arts as the, now honoured, innocent expression of the Portuguese people character, the founding basis of the nation. This policy would be strongly supported by Antonio Ferro's considered concern on national cultural and artistic development

The Art and Literature conscious and deliberated development is, after all, as needed to a nation progress as its sciences, public infrastructures, industry, commerce and agriculture development. [...] The *Política do Espírito* [Policy of the Spirit<sup>29</sup>] [...] it's not just necessary, although of the utmost importance in such point of view, to the Nation's outer prestige. It's also necessary to its inner prestige, its reason to subsist. A country that doesn't see, read, listen, feel, doesn't walk out of its material life, becomes a useless and bad-tempered country. (Ferro, 1932)

This question, previously discussed with Salazar (during the 1932 *Diário de Notícias*'s interviews), would found the program that Ferro officially developed at the head of *SPN* in 1933, envisaged as more than a mere

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<sup>29</sup> Ferro mentioned the homologous conference presented just days before by Paul Valéry at the *Université des Annales*, November 15th of 1932, "*La politique de l'esprit, notre souverain bien*" (later published in 1936).

propaganda department. There, he would establish culture as one of Nation's priorities and so the ethnographical study of folk arts was conscientiously developed, promoted and reconfigured. The friendlier and more approachable popular culture, or its somewhat [in]direct outcomes, was officially presented as a valuable alternative to an aloof erudite culture, customary heir of international influences.

In *SPN* with Ferro would collaborate 'a bunch of lads, full of talent and vigour that wait, anxiously, to be useful to their Country!' (Ferro, 1932b: 59), most of them Ferro's old modernist comrades<sup>30</sup>. This official search for the regional genuine, this *return to the roots* (or this creation of re-invented ones) would be done mainly by this group, and was fundamental to the formulation and promotion of the regime values and ideals, supporting the creation of a 'New' State — not 'modern' anymore.

### **Those damned words**

During the first years on *O Notícias Ilustrado* pages the word 'modern' was a common attribute to almost everything: from a new invention to a new hairdo or any other momentary fad. But it was used, obviously, to identify modern architecture<sup>31</sup>, modern cinema<sup>32</sup>, modern theatre or

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<sup>30</sup> Among the team of *artistas-decoradores* [artists-decorators], responsible for most of the regime initiatives, were Bernardo Marques, Carlos Botelho, Eduardo Anahory, Emmérico Nunes, Estrela Faria, José Rocha, Manuel Lapa, Maria Keil, Fred Kradolfer, the Novais brothers, Paulo Ferreira, and Tom (Thomás de Mello). Working with these *lads* numerous activities were developed: several popular competitions; the creation of theatre and ballet companies; traveling cinema and libraries services; diverse editorial lines (from tourism guides and art catalogues to propaganda pamphlets in various languages); an extensive program of national prizes; the development of an ethnographic collection presented all around the world (housed since 1948 in the now defunct *Museu de Arte Popular* [Popular Art Museum]); the production of a large number of exhibitions; and the significant task of presenting Portugal abroad in different events and media.

<sup>31</sup> Erich Mendelsohn *IG Metal* building in Berlin and *Schocken* department store in Chemnitz; Fritz Höger's *Chilehaus* and *Sprinkenhof*, Schoch, zu Putlitz and Klopheus's *Mohlenhof*, and Gerson brother's *Ballinhaus* in *Kontorhausviertel* area of Hamburg; Mallet-Stevens street in Paris; Paul Tournon's *Église de Sainte-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus* in the outskirts of Paris (presented as the first modern reinforced concrete church); and several articles and interviews of the Portuguese modernist architects as Carlos Ramos, Cristino da Silva, Pardal Monteiro, Cottinelli Telmo, Jacobetty Rosa, etc.

<sup>32</sup> Interview and reports on Fritz Lang movies (*Metropolis* and *Frau im Mond* [Woman in the Moon]), Murnau (*Aurora*), Abel Gance (Napoleon) and various russian directors: the revolutionary Eisenstein's *Staroye i novoye* [The General Line], Vsevolod Pudovkin *Potomok Chingiskhana* [Storm over Asia] and Viktor Tourjansky's *Volga Wolga* [Volga Volga]), with an article by António Lopes Ribeiro explaining the greatness soviet



dance<sup>33</sup> and modern arts<sup>34</sup> in general, permanently reported with a more or less accurate use of the term in the context of the actual definition or characterization of the arts movements.

A number of the magazine, published on 24 of February 1929, was almost completely devoted to the Portuguese modern/modernist scene with diverse articles and photographic essays on the different arts. Curiously, the cover would present *Rapaz das Louças* [The Pottery Boy], a 1919 painting by Eduardo Viana on an almost Orphist style (influenced by his friendship with the Delaunay couple) depicting a county fair seller, surrounded by pottery, holding a painted clay figurine whistle in the shape of a pair of bulls, typical of Barcelos popular artisans.

In the inside pages there were: a text about the Portuguese futurists by Feliciano Santos; portraits of the precursors of the modernism in Portugal<sup>35</sup>; photos of the principle contemporary modernists sculptors, painters, architects, poets and writers; representation of two 1913 'cubist' paintings by Santa-Rita Pintor and Sousa-Cardoso (both deceased in 1918); poems by Almada Negreiros (illustrated by himself) and Augusto Santa Rita (with a Cottineli Telmo's illustration); an article on the modernist paintings for the *Seville Exposition* of 1929 by Jorge Barradas, Lino António and Abel Manta; a page with several examples of modernist interiors<sup>36</sup>; and, last but not least, an article about modern art in theatre presenting sets by António Soares and Leitão de Barros with Martins

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cinematographic experience but also its necessary censorship to the national audience. About Portugal there were reports on Leitão de Barros's movies, obviously, António Lopes Ribeiro, Chianca de Garcia, but also about the experimental *Douro Faina Fluvial* of Manoel de Oliveira or on Artur Costa Macedo's documentaries.

<sup>33</sup> In a country with an almost inexistent dance scene all the new dancers or choreographers, which appeared with a rush of fresh air and a scent of contemporaneity, even if just importing the last trends from the musical theatre world, were immediately called 'modern'.

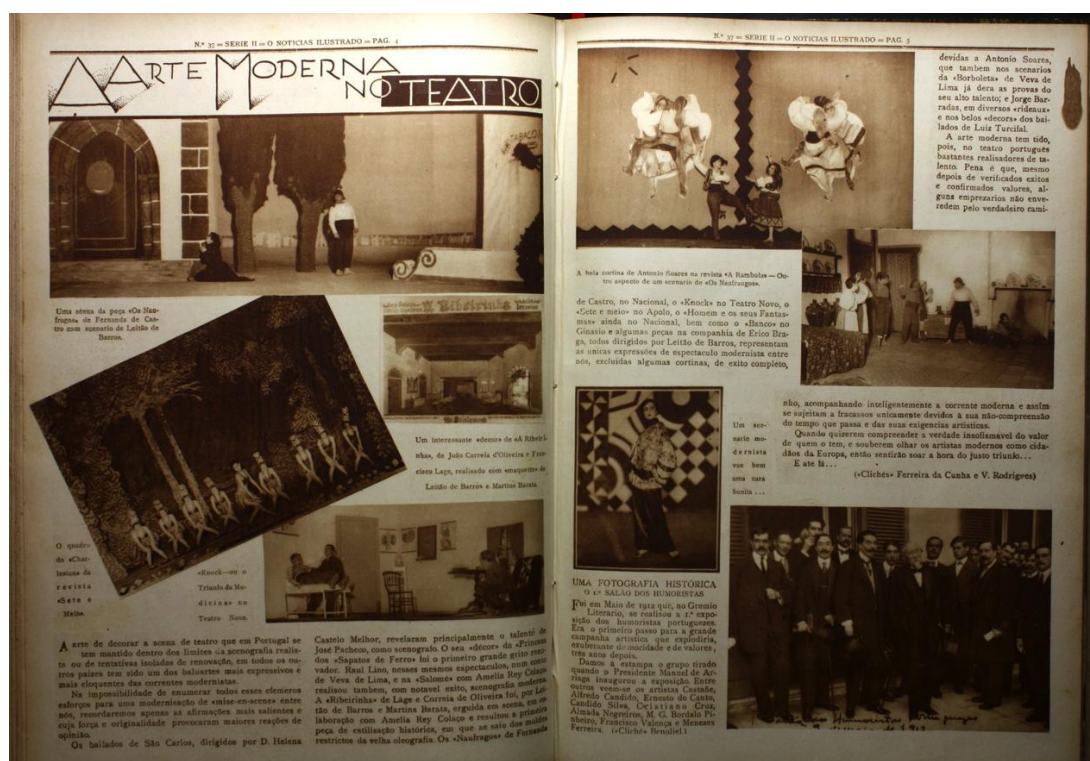
<sup>34</sup> The Portuguese modernist art would have more space than the foreign counterparts, from the fine arts to literature and poetry: from the 'leaders' Almada Negreiros and Fernando Pessoa (and Álvaro de Campos, one of his pseudonyms) to many others contemporary or younger (like Sarah Affonso, José Tagarro, António Botto, Tom, etc.) with articles reporting exhibitions openings, editions or just praising their work.

<sup>35</sup> Almada Negreiros, José Pacheco, Amadeu de Sousa Cardoso, Santa-Rita Pintor, Mário de Sá Carneiro, Raul Leal, Alfredo Pedro Guisado, António Ferro, and four repeated Fernando Pessoas, as himself and his three pseudonyms.

<sup>36</sup> The panels of Almada and Jorge Barradas to *Café Brasileira* mentioning the other artists present, the Bernardo Marques's frieze in António Ferro's apartment illustrating folkloric dancers, and Carlos Ramos's decoration of *Bristol* nightclub with works by Ernesto do Canto, António Soares and Almada.

Barata, but also mentioning the work in scenography of Raul Lino, José Pacheco, Jorge Barradas and Luiz Turcifal.

Following the development that happened in the theatrical review other articles that emphatically referred the intrinsic modernity of it appeared during these earlier years. The most interesting for our study are the ones that depicted the folkloric acts mentioning them as 'modern/modernist', at the same time dismissing references of its vernacular sources.



**Figure 1.** "The modern art on theatre". *O Notícias Ilustrado*. (Feb. 24th 1929) pp.4-5

The mentioned article about modern artists interventions on theatre, entitled "The modern art on theatre", presented António Soares's set to *A Ramboia* revue, with two dancers in regional costume dancing in front of a backdrop curtain depicting expressionist twisting pairs of folkloric dancers surrounded by a zigzag border (Notícias Ilustrado, 1929a).

Another set of António Soares for *Chá de Parreira* revue, presented in an article entitled "The modern decorations on Theatre", was illustrated by a photo of the stage with the chorus girls dressed as Minho peasants and Lisbon outskirts *saloias* in front of a backdrop curtain painted with a

festivity in the main square of a rural village described as a '*good and stable example of a modern scenic decoration*' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1929b).

The photographic essay "Theatre: the brilliant collaboration of the Modernists" (Notícias Ilustrado, 1929e) presented four different sets from 1929 revue *O Ricocó*<sup>37</sup>, two of them once more under a national folkloric theme.



**Figure 2.** "The modernist costumes of Maria Adelaide Lima da Cruz and António Amorim". *O Notícias Ilustrado*. (Feb. 2nd 1930) pp.20-21

On "The modernist costumes of Maria Adelaide Lima da Cruz and António Amorim" article drawings from these two artists, a '*vanguard of the young artists from our country*', were mostly inspired on regional costumes and it was expected that '*their work directives don't get lost from the modernism approved by the best painting schools and the boldest pictorial conceptions*' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1930b).

<sup>37</sup> By Stuart Carvalhais, Ruy Roque Gameiro with Salvador Barata Feio, and Luiz Benavente with Vasco Marques.



**Figure 3.** "A grand note of Modern Art: Francis and Ruth". *O Notícias Ilustrado*. (May 14th 1930) back cover

Still in 1933, on a back cover photograph, Francis and Ruth are pictured dressed as peasants and dancing with an accordion on a scene from *A Cantiga Nova*, with the caption 'A grand note of Modern Art: Francis<sup>38</sup> and Ruth, the remarkable dances of «Cantiga Nova», colossal success in *Politeama*' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1933b).

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<sup>38</sup> Articles about Francis Graça (choreographer and dancer) would refer to him as modern: dancing 'bizarre choreographic modern motives, American, Indian and Africans, but also beautiful classic evocations' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1928c); 'Modern Artists § Francis the elegant and stylised dancer' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1928a); 'Francis: a rehearsal master of modern dance performances' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1929c); 'Legs's Dictator [...] creator of new rhythms and brand new horizons for the Portuguese theatrical dances [...] that other have followed this modern tendencies' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1930c). Approximately after 1932, articles continued to mention the excellence of his work and the mastery of his dances, but the 'modern' epithet disappeared (Notícias Ilustrado, 1932a). From 1933 onwards his choreographic work, founded on folkloric dances, would be praised for the remembrance of the tradition of a 'genuine Portuguese festivity' during the SPN sponsored presentations in Paris (Notícias Ilustrado, 1934c); the same year, reporting their return from Rio de Janeiro and the following trip to Paris, it would be praised as the 'distinguished stylist of the Portuguese popular dances [...] art, in its essence as Portuguese as the motives he developed and perfected. [...] Our popular dances, so beautiful and picturesque like any others, were just waiting for someone that add the civilized beauty that was missing' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1934b). On 1940 he would be put in charge of the SPN *Bailados Verde Gaio* dance company, a creation of Antonio Ferro inspired on Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* (Ferro, 1950).

On none of these articles a mention to popular, regional or traditional references appeared, not even the picturesque of a scene is alluded. Nevertheless these attributes appeared on other articles about county fairs, annual religious processions or rural festivities, events happening outside the urban space. At best they could be mentioned on Lisbon presentations of peasant folk groups or on fantasised re-enactments, but never about the cosmopolitan stages of the capital. Things couldn't be confounded.

Approximately from 1933 onwards (at the time of the *SPN* creation) the situation became different and the 'modern' allusion would be substitute by 'regional', 'popular' or 'traditional' (probably not coincidentally).

In an article reporting on *O Fim do Mundo* revue a folkloric act with a backdrop curtain representing the views of the colonial exhibition and the chorus girls dressed with pseudo-traditional costumes, is described as '*the final act, a stylisation of costumes from our provinces*' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1934a).

*Zé dos Pacatos* revue was '*a great popular entertainment*' (Notícias Ilustrado, 1935c) and had scenes inspired in the most recent cinema successes: *Severa* and *As Pupilas do Senhor Reitor*, both movies inscribed on traditional themes: the first on the story of a famous 19th century *fado* singer and the other on a rural romance by Júlio Dinis.



**Figure 4.** "A great theatre decorator: Maria Adelaide Lima da Cruz will exhibit in Paris". *O Notícias Ilustrado*. (May 27th 1934) pp.4-5

Even the work of Maria Adelaide Lima de Cruz, formerly one of the 'vanguard' artists, was again mentioned about an exhibition in Paris, but now all the drawings 'marvellous of picturesque, of fantasy, of decorative beauty', and one more time founded on traditional costumes, had the reference of each region or province from where they were originate (Notícias Ilustrado, 1934d).

On one of the last magazine editions, *Sardinha Assada* revue was once again presented as 'popular', but it was explained that popular wasn't an attribute to cheapness, modesty or an easy-going attitude to gain audiences, like it was done before. Now *Sardinha Assada* was 'popular' because it was what the audience wanted: an excellent, even luxurious presentation, one of the best presented to date (Notícias Ilustrado, 1935a).

This coincidence between the period of transition from the use of 'modern', to its replacement with 'popular' or 'regional' on the magazine pages, and the moment when an official culture was set by the regime (through the *SPN* development of the *Política do Espírito* supporting the regime values and morals) is unavoidably evident. Although not an irrefutable proof it is, nevertheless, a strange occurrence that should be interpreted as a representative case of how the same kind of works, addressed by diverse terms, implied and expressed the different contexts of the 1930's Portugal.

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# **SOUTHERN MODERNISMS DEFAULT MATERIALITY OF WHITENESS AND ITS CONNECTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE**

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## **Abstract**

The terminology of the expression of the 'modern' is frequently attached to characteristics such as 'rational', 'utilitarian', 'functional', 'clear', 'clean', 'minimal' or 'efficient'. The colour white – incessantly and conveniently linked to all these characteristics – seems to be both the product and the expression of a self-conscious Modernism and whiteness thus becomes its default materiality.

This alleged default materiality of whiteness is in the centre of the discussion of the classification of one modernist style such as classified in the *International Style* versus different Modernisms. The investigation into the whiteness of Modernism therefore serves as a tool into the overall analysis of the change of different modern architectural design languages within cultures and times. The whiteness used in the architecture of Southern Europe in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century therefore differs in its purpose and usage to an international style language used in the US and might equally be seen as a characteristic of its regional and vernacular styles as well as derived out of various influences of architectural histories. In the case of Alvaro Siza the continuity as well as its connection to an international design language is questioned though his diverse projects as well as his many influences and his relation to continuity and change.

**Keywords:** Modernism, International Style, White, Alvaro Siza

## **Essay**

The idea of Modernity has always been accompanied by a notion of visual simplicity. Philosophers, historians and critics tend to employ terms like 'rational', 'utilitarian', or 'functional' to describe the modern movement. In recent decades these have been supplemented by more specific terms like 'hygienic', 'clear', 'clean', 'minimal' or 'efficient'. In all this, the colour white seems to be both the product and the expression of self-conscious Modernism.

The argument about whiteness in architecture overlaps with the argument about ornament. One could argue that the prohibition of ornament would essentially mean the abolition of applied colour, that a modernist building should stand undressed in a mode of literal honesty. Ornamentation, like colour, should be swept away by a revolutionary inauguration of transparency. Paradoxically, the sign for this transparency is the colour white. The confusion upon which this part of the narrative rests is the confusion about colour and ornament on the one side

and the colour white on the other. Its protagonists treat both colour and ornamentation as ways of dressing a building. A coat of paint is just that – a coat. On the other side, to regard white as not an ornament (dressing) the protagonist has to deny that white is a colour. White is clearly being used as not only a symbol but a symbol of a non-existent object - no dressing! The very clear logical contradictions here are no obstacle to the public sense that a white building with a flat roof and plain walls is not only a modernist building but which corresponds to the overall demands of Modernism itself. This alleged 'default materiality' of whiteness is in the centre of the discussion of the classification of different Modernisms.

In *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, Mark Wigley (1995: xiv) states that the white that 'was successfully disseminated to an international audience' was only the surface of the architecture itself but that this surface similarly defined the architecture of Modernism. That surface becomes the defining element of modern architecture and has to be first of all cleansed of all excessive elements hindering it to be seen as the pure surface – or, indeed, architecture - itself. This cleansing process is linked to the removal of all decoration, which started in the mid-19th century by such advocates as Adolf Loos. According to Wigley, an architecture without decoration would ultimately lead to the "naked wall" (1995: 2) 'This erasure of decoration is portrayed as the necessary gesture of a civilized society. Indeed, civilization is defined as the elimination of the "superfluous" in favour of the "essential" and the paradigm of the inessential surplus is decoration.'

In Wigley's argument it is also precisely this importance of the white surface that allows for a "new kind of space" to be defined, as he is quoted (1995, 3) 'The look of modernity is that of utility perfected, function without excess, the smooth object cleansed of all representational texture.' Wigley's argument of the white wall as the ultimate defining element of modern architecture develops out of his argumentation of a connection of fashion and architecture. He puts fashion into a direct relation with architecture arguing that modern architecture is precisely defined by the conscious exclusion of fashion and thus fashion becomes an

integral part of modern architectural design as no discourse can isolate itself from fashion. Wigley (1995, 37) argues that modern architecture was explicitly launched against fashion, and its white surfaces played a key role in that attack.' Modern architecture becomes the anti-fashion look of architecture and the white wall becomes the means to achieve that.

In *White Walls, Designer Dresses – The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, what emerged from the debates about resisting a fashionable look, at the end, is the stripping down of the clothing of the building to the bare minimum, the essential, naked look of the building, the white surface. The link between fashion and architecture, is not only achieved by modern architecture's aim to be timeless - or the anti-fashion look for Wigley - or by the metaphor of the connection between dress-design and dressing the surface wall of a building but also by its close connection *to* fashion, which Wigley argues derives out of the reform against fashion.<sup>1</sup> According to Wigley (1995, 161ff) 'any anti-fashion that attempts to establish a timeless style is always itself a fashion statement... The very idea of being modern cannot be detached from fashion. What could be more fashionable than the desire to be modern?'

This creation of the modern fashion image is also reflected upon by Beatriz Colomina who argues in *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* that Modernity was created by the image itself rather than the functions and mechanism that go into creating the art object. The state of the "modern" is therefore a representation and this modern representation goes as far as being produced by the image, and thus the mass media, itself. She points out that the widespread publication of *The International Style* was in fact the generator of this image, rather than the travelling exhibition itself, for which the publication was created. The accompanying book had, in fact, such an impact that the exhibition is known under the name of the publication, rather than what it actually was called: *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*. Colomina (1994, 207ff) states that

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<sup>1</sup> Wigley argues that if modern architecture is truly a form of clothing reform, it cannot resist fashion as reforms tend to become fashions and reforms are equally carried out *by* fashion.

'If the International Style is to be thought of as a publicity campaign for modern architecture, this publicity was aimed at a public much larger than that which 'can afford art'... It is not just the house that is for sale in these promotions... The International Style publicized the private... It offered that image for mass consumption.'

It was the image of this style that has since been attached to a perceived modern architecture and which is still used in a minimalist style of today, seeking to sell a life-style as much as an architectural design. Although it is granted that the all-white image of modern buildings was supported by the black-and-white photographic image that formed the symbolic white of the modern architecture itself.

Le Corbusier, to this day, is still regarded as the founding father of modern architecture and thus his architecture is often considered as all-white. However, Le Corbusier's extensive research into polychrome architecture and the introduction of coloured photographic images only later superficially changed the perception of an all-white modern architecture. While his buildings appeared monochrome, not least due to the black-and-white photographic images taken during that time, Le Corbusier became unwillingly associated with an all-white architectural style. The whiteness however was always essential to a polychrome architecture for him as it was the means to control the colours and put them in the right spatial order. In the introduction to his testimony on modern architecture *Vers une architecture (Towards an Architecture)*, it is evident that the industrial revolution would change aspects of life as well as architecture, rather than the drive for an aesthetically pleasing design. Le Corbusier (2008, 5ff) states: 'a great epoch has begun. There exists a new spirit. Economic law inevitably governs our acts and our thoughts... Industry on the grand scale must occupy itself with building and establish the elements of the house on a mass-produced basis... We shall arrive at the 'House-Machine.' What followed from this glorification of the machine was his 1925 book *L'art decorative d'aujourd'hui (The Decorative Art of Today)* and was once again a praise on the white wall, as Le Corbusier (1987, 188) is stated:

'imagine... Every citizen is required to replace his hangings, his damasks, his wall-papers, his stencils, with a plain coat of white Ripolin. His home is made clean. There are no more dirty, dark corners. Everything is shown as it is. Then comes inner cleanness, for the course adopted leads to refusal to allow anything at all which is not correct, authorised, intended, desired, thought-out: no action before thought.'

The architectural characteristics of the modern image of the building, that of the white wall and flat roof, were taken up and promoted as "an essential aesthetic significance"<sup>2</sup> of that style by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in the 1932 exhibition now referred to as *The International Style Exhibition* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. It had been the aim of the curators to show the American public the new movement in architecture that they had found in Europe.

The exhibition came to prominence and wide-spread recognition through an accompanying book that was simultaneously written by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson called *The International Style*. This publication aimed to establish the principles that made up the new style. According to Hitchcock and Johnson (1995, 36) these were:

First, a new conception of architecture as volume rather than as mass. Secondly, regularity rather than axial symmetry serves as the chief means of ordering design. These two principles, with a third proscribing arbitrary applied decoration, mark the productions of the international style.

Although white as the chosen colour of modern architecture was not greatly referred to in *The International Style* publication, it was as though it was already implied that the smooth surface that would create the volume, the regularity of the standardized products and the avoidance of any applied decoration could only result in a monochrome surface throughout the building. Although mentioned in connection with the surface, whiteness was not exclusive but could be replaced by a wide colour range. However, when discussing applied

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<sup>2</sup> As Hitchcock and Johnson refer to in the exhibition *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* and accompanying book to the exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1932

decoration, the history of colour in modern architecture and thus the justification for the use of whiteness was explained by Hitchcock and Johnson (1995, 87):

In the use of color the general rule is restraint. In the earliest days of the contemporary style white stucco was ubiquitous. Little thought was given to color at a time when architects were preoccupied with more essential matters. Then followed a period when the use of color began to receive considerable attention. ...Colors were artificially applied and the majority of wall surfaces remained white. At present applied color is used less. The color of natural surfacing materials and the natural metal color of detail is definitely preferred. ...In surfaces of stucco, white or off-white, even where it is obtained with paint, is felt to constitute the natural color. The earlier use of bright color had value in attracting attention to the new style, but it could not long remain pleasing. It ceased to startle and began to bore; its mechanical sharpness and freshness became rapidly tawdry.

It is then, that Mark Wigley's argument about the white wall as the default setting becomes simply unquestionable. White is used to create *volume*, it has to be repeated to create *regularity* and at the end it also serves to *avoid any applied decoration*. This is also the case for many projects build today, yet it must be questioned if such a generalisation of a classification of style is still applicable to todays' architecture and if the whiteness is the means to make this visible in the form of the "modern image."

The architecture of Alvaro Siza in this sense becomes a fitting case study for a different kind of Modernism, a Southern Modernism or more precisely, that of Portugal. As Frampton (2000, 12) already acknowledges that 'Siza's early works are inseparable from the larger effort to re-cast the Portugues tradition in modern terms.' The white wall is embedded into Southern Modernism due to its vernacular style and as such pre-dates a classification of an *International Style* by centuries. Alvaro Siza, educated in the times immediately succeeding early Modernism, followed a modernist design language due to his education. His use of whiteness however, cannot only be credited to an international style classification. To him the changes in architecture are constant and as such there



is an evolution in architectural design.<sup>3</sup> His use of whiteness is thus not a continuation of an international design language, yet rather a reaction to different architectural projects in different locations and at different times. One of his first projects, the swimming pool in Leça Da Palmeira in 1963 was built in concrete due to its location in the middle of a rocky shore. It also had to be maintained as inexpensively as possible and was therefore not painted as the paint would have been washed up by the sea. In other projects he used brick as in the Dutch Social Housing of Schilderswijk-West in The Hague in 1988 as a material of good maintenance.<sup>4</sup> Referring to this project he is quoted:

The critics hated me for using brick. In Holland in the 1980s there was some division between architects. Some considered the white the modern colour and the brick the old tradition, relating also to the school of Amsterdam which was the opposite of rationalism... But the irony is that in Holland I would never use white. It had to be brick. So, the critics said it was not modern. Brick has always been used and it is still used. It is a very economical material<sup>5</sup>

Siza thus acknowledges that 'there are many-pre-concepts about colour but at the end it is not a problem of taste. There are many problems behind the decision of colour.'<sup>6</sup> The whiteness mainly used in his interiors he defends as often being used for economic reasons but points out that the use of material also depends on the context as well as the climate. As the white colour protects buildings in hot weather from the hard climate conditions, this vernacular tradition is one of the main reasons for the white wall in Southern Modernism. Aesthetically, this could be considered as an "international style" when in effect it was derived out of context and culture.

In another of his well-known projects, he again found inspiration from modernist roots away from the aesthetics of the white wall. In the Bouça Social Housing in 1977, he introduced a bright red wall on the exterior façades of the four parallel

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<sup>3</sup> As Alvaro Siza stated in an interview I conducted with him on 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2012 at Alvaro Siza Offices in Porto

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

four-storey high blocks comprising over a hundred apartments. Leoni (2009, 43) refers to the whole scheme as 'More evident references to Dutch and German social buildings of the second half of the twentieth century – and to J.J.P Oud in particular... based on the serial repetition of duplex dwellings. There is no lack of elements for re-reading popular tradition, although in an especially abstract form here.' This abstract form is made evident through the bright red wall, which in turn is homage to another modernist, known for his polychrome design rather than his white walls. As Siza is quoted:

I had visited Berlin and had been very impressed with Bruno Taut's architecture and his social housing and Bouça was also a social housing project. The programme was to support the poor people and to also discuss the projects with them. So, the architects could clearly see what the needs were and in turn would create a kind of pedagogical work with them. The red I introduced there was homage to Bruno Taut who also worked for cooperatives in Berlin and had a very strong contact to the users. He collaborated with people in the Berlin area just before the war and with participating organisations. So in my mind it was like homage to Bruno Taut. It is a colour he used a lot. And so I explained to the users this story and explained to them who Bruno Taut was. The programme was interrupted due to political change for 35 years in the middle of construction. So, it looked degraded and only a part of the hall was constructed. [Thirty years later], it was presented like this - as an example of the poor quality of such programmes. Some technicians of the municipality visited to stop the work and they tried to convince the inhabitants that it was a crazy project. They said: "Look at that red? It's horrible." And one of the poor people, said "oh, no, this is an homage to Bruno Taut! He is a great architect."<sup>7</sup>

As was the case with Bouça for Siza, influences in his work are constant and manifold. The continuity of his work is also a reflection of the continuity of architectural history itself for him and due to these various influences there cannot only be one style describing his architectural work as well as these of his contemporaries.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

The first contemporary stories of architecture begin firstly with a rationalist idea, with the evolution of techniques, appearance of steel and concrete and so on. But several relate to a time much sooner and go back to the 18th century. They don't begin with what we now call rationalism but go further back. At the end it is a reflection that we not only see new things in the new architecture, but we see more and more things that are taken from the past. And the interesting thing for all architects is that we see more and more past relationships in what we perceive as new architecture.<sup>8</sup>

The status of contemporary architecture not only in Southern Modernism and its continuous link to an aesthetic of the modern style, is made visible through the use of the white wall. Yet, the use of white has since been disconnected from a design language influenced by social and political conditions of Europe at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas in Europe the modern aesthetic had itself established out of a move away from the Arts-and-Crafts Movement, as well as a social and political necessity of pre-fabricated building products, modern architecture in the branding of the "international style" was then recognized as an intellectual method of formal analysis of architectural space. By doing so, modern aesthetics were applied as a continuation of these stylistic principles and thus the modern fashion image has become the medium itself.

Modern influences are thus connected to the architecture of Southern Modernism, as in the work of Alvaro Siza, but as is the tradition of an "international design language" by many different cultures and many influences as opposed to one element alone and the white image of Southern Modernism must be differentiated from the fashion image for an international audience. It is in this sense that Reyner Banham (1962, 18) can be quoted:

The pure white image of a new architecture... has become a threat, a whited sepulchre in which modern architecture could die... All that had happened, in fact, was that modern architecture had ceased to be a stylistic teenager, and its practitioners were no longer compelled to wear

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

the uniform of their peer-group for fear of expulsion from the gang... But the teenage uniform of modern architecture, the so-called International Style, or White Architecture, nowhere near exhausts the possibilities inherent in its heredity and formation. The next move was not as many people thought around 1950, simply to put the clock back half a century and write off modern as a mistake; there was no need to go back to the old architecture that was before 1900.

As much as this was true in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the internalization of this image becomes even more evident as its power was again and again proclaimed and its image attached to that of an international modern design language.

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## **WIDENING THE SCOPE OF MODERNISM: is there room for Portuguese fascist architecture?**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines and discusses the scope of the postmodern historiographical revision of the concept of modernism in architecture. On the one hand, it highlights the deconstruction of the militant meta-narrative of the Modern Movement and the consequent expansion of the frontiers of modern architecture. On the other hand, it shows that, despite this conceptual broadening, remnants of an evaluative scale of modernisms linger on (one pure and complete; the others hybrids, derived from the first) and the ideologically motivated refusal to draw parallels with the contextual architectural approaches found in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes still endures.*

*It is argued that the construction of a critical historiography of the architecture of fascist regimes requires three conditions: a) renunciation of the general link between modernism and the political left; b) conclusive rejection, as a gauge, of the imagery and the Modern Movement assumptions of the 1920s and 1930s; c) adoption of a broader concept of modernism. Based on the maximalist definition of modernism proposed by Roger Griffin, the public architecture of the Portuguese Estado Novo (New State) fits into and is characterised as an alternative modernism. It is contended that the rejection of stateless internationalism and the demand for a (never specifically defined) 'national modern', whose implementation is sheltered under an effective legal web that conditions the artistic process, reveals a palingenetic attitude. Having diagnosed the perverse effects of the Western modernisation process, both the regime and its architecture sought to regenerate a decadent homeland, threatened by an amnesic and placeless globalization. Taking the historical past as power source and compass for the 'National Revolution', it is argued that traditionalism (forced and very often invented) incorporated the totalising project of the social transformation of society, applied with relative success by Portuguese fascism.*

**Keywords:** Modernism, Fascism, Estado Novo, architecture

In the context of the historiographical revision driven by the impact of postmodernism in scientific production, in recent decades the concept of modernism in the arts has been the subject of a major effort of questioning and enlargement. In the sub-category of the history of modern architecture this process led to investment in three inter-related aspects.

First, it underpinned the deconstruction of the meta-narrative of the Modern Movement (Tournikiotis, 1999), woven by the first wave of theorising about this phenomenon, featuring the contributions of Nikolaus Pevsner (Pevsner, 1936), Emil Kaufmann (Kaufmann, 1933), Sigfried Giedion (Giedion, 1941) and Henry

Russell Hitchcock (Hitchcock, 1929, 1932). Doubt is thus cast on the selective, teleological and supposedly cohesive interpretation of architectural development. In face of this, it is sought to enshrine as a universal standard what is actually only one of several manifestations of modernity: the functionalism and rationalism proposed and practised in particular by Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe.

The architectural languages that distanced themselves from the above-mentioned formalist archetype during the first half of the twentieth century and, as a result, were silenced by the inaugural militant historiography of the Modern Movement, asserted themselves as an attractive subject for study after the Second World War. The history of modern architecture was re-written from then on. Its plurality was emphasised (Jencks, 1973), a critical attitude was adopted (Frampton, 1980) and the position of dissident and previously marginalised architects was even reversed: their production would, after all, play a saving role, to restore the human dimension of architecture (Wilson, 1995).

Second, the multiple architectural experiments that sought to reconcile modernity with tradition and the specificity of the place have been retrieved and converted into a growing research topic. While Bernard Rudofsky's influential work, *Architecture Without Architects. A Short Introduction to Non-pedigreed Architecture* (1964), was not the first to focus on this heritage (Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, 1961), it did give it unprecedented visibility. Meanwhile, Kenneth Frampton conceived '*critical regionalism*' as a tool to fight the homogenising philosophy of the International Style and agenda for an architectural practice able to critically harmonise the universal with the local, the contemporary with the ancestral, industrialization with local techniques and materials (1985). The artistic historiography mirrored the centrality of the identity issue – the so-called '*return of ethnicity*' (Hall, 1996, p. 623) – through, above all, the attention paid to the dialogue between the modern and the vernacular (Canizaro, 2007; Cardoso, Leal, & Maia, 2012; Coad, 1995; Geist & Monleón, 1999; Isenstadt & Rizvi, 2008; Leal, Maia, & Cardoso, 2013; Lejeune & Sabatino, 2010; Real & Gyger, 2013; Sabatino, 2010; Umbach & Hüppauf, 2005).

Finally, there was a significant expansion of the geography underlying the conception of modern architecture as a result of the postmodern and postcolonial

refutation of the Eurocentric paradigm of modernism, seen as exclusivist and tending to rank artistic experiences according to the degree of approximation in relation to a canon proclaimed as the 'unique' or the 'best' expression of modernity on a universal scale. Reactively, the margins and fringes, the divergences and minorities, hybridism and syncretism, fragmentation, discontinuity and otherness were overrated.

The '*provincialisation*' of Europe (Chakrabarty, 2000) and the resulting challenge of the '*cultural centrality of the West*'<sup>1</sup> (Hall, 2006, p. 83) is evident in the historiographic effort to document the diaspora of the Modern Movement, from Germany to Argentina, from France to New Zealand, and consequent phenomena of adaptation and acclimatisation of a formula originating in Europe (Sharp, & Cooke, 2000). This global expansion is found symbolically in the choice of places where the International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement (DOCOMOMO) has held its international conferences, from 1990 to the present.

Although the borders of the concept of modernism have been expanded, resistance, especially that of an ideological nature, to recognising the modernity in the architecture of authoritarian/totalitarian regimes still persists. This is, in our view, a trace of the '*operative historiography*' (Montaner, 2007; Tafuri, 1980; Tournikiotis, 1999) of the Modern Movement. It is adverse to a comprehensive conception of modern and established a connection between architecture and politics, according to the following deterministic view: a socialist or democratic society would emerge as a result of a new formal language (tending to be abstract and rooted in the metaphorical or literal reference of the machine), in turn arising from new materials and construction techniques (with emphasis on iron and reinforced concrete).

The excessive connotation of modernism with progressiveness/left wing politics, which many would consider dated and superseded, survives in recent scientific literature, as is seen in the attempt by Christopher Wilk to determine the common denominator for sundry cultural expressions that the term modernism covers (2006, p. 14). The exceptions are rare and justified only by their formal characteristics. Indeed, the small list of buildings which, although built during a fascist regime, is generally allowed within the boundaries of modern architecture,

has an imagery that is coincident with, close enough to or on the path of the Modern Movement. Examples include the Casa del Fascio by Giuseppe Terragni (Italy, Como, 1928-1936), the National Institute of Statistics by Pardal Monteiro (Portugal, Lisbon, 1931-1935), the Sotiria Hospital laundry and kitchen unit by Periklis Georgakopoulos (Greece, Athens, 1939-1940), the Estacas Complex by Sebastião Formosinho Sanchez and Ruy d'Atouguia (Portugal, Lisbon, 1949-1958), the Tarragona Civil Government building by Alejandro de la Sota (Spain, 1956 -1964). If anything, it paves the way for an architecture that may be classed as a critical reappraisal of the Modern Movement, capable of ensuring its survival in the post World War II period (for example, the Portuguese Leca de Palmeira swimming pool by Álvaro Siza Vieira, 1966).

The artificiality of modern architecture inventories in countries that have experienced more or less extended periods of authoritarian or totalitarian government has started to cause some discomfort and doubt even in those who run them (Cortés, 1997, p. 166). In fact, often, the architects whose works are acclaimed produced many others that are omitted because they do not fit in with the fixed standards. A monologue about modern architecture is thus perpetuated, one that cannot see that modernisation, as complex and destructuring phenomenon, led to multifaceted and conflicting answers.

How the relationship of twentieth century architecture with tradition is interpreted (in both its national and regional facets; either in its classical or popular dimension) is the aspect that most denotes the current bias. When this connection occurs against a conservative liberal, demoliberal and democratic backdrop historiography sees it as an integral part of modern architecture. In the context of postmodern euphoria, it is even praised as prophylaxis against the universal ambitions of the Modern Movement and signal of the stimulating (and never so dazzling) world's diversity. However, when the link between tradition and modernity that some authors have called the '*third way*' (Ben-Ghiat, 1996) is recorded at both ends of the political spectrum, the phenomenon turns into an archenemy: the ultimate example of the anti-modern. The exception boils down to the Italian rationalists in the service of Benito Mussolini, situation, which, however, as Alan Colquhoun rightly emphasises, '*has always been an embarrassment to architectural historians*' (Colquhoun, 2002, p. 183).



This double standard is backed by the alleged possibility of distinguishing the quality of the resulting hybridism. Labelled as artificial, mimetic, sentimental, folksy, pastiche or kitsch in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. In all others it is classed as critical, innovative and genuine, able to engender a synthesis (not a simple collage) that is informed, authentic and contemporary. However, this is a subjective (as it implies a valuation) and Manichean argument which, like all those based on a binary opposition, proves to be far from foolproof when faced with the complexity of reality. The application of this thesis would prompt many claims to the status of exception which, instead of confirming the rule, would evince the fragile operability of the initial premise. A dispassionate view of the built environment in the twentieth century would conclude that the inventiveness of attempts to reconcile modernity and tradition does not necessarily depend on the type of political regime.

Given the above, it seems pertinent to readdress a question that was thought to be superseded: are we actually prepared to deem as modern the twentieth century architecture that dialogues with the past? Is the abstractionist and allegedly a-historic rationalism not still regarded, even unconsciously, as the perfect and complete manifestation of modernism in architecture? At first sight, everything suggests that tradition and modernity are currently agreed to be inescapably interconnected. As Dell Upton notes, *'the adjectives traditional and modern are themselves artefacts of modernity: tradition did not exist until it was imagined as the defining complement of modernity'* (2001, p. 298). Globalization, *'rather than doing away with tradition, (...) has delivered new conditions for its emergence; installed new mechanisms for its transference; and brought into being new political imperatives for its performance. Under globalization, tradition has been reshaped and enlivened in a range of unexpected ways'* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 30-31).

We should therefore not be surprised that, in the architectural field, internationalism has developed not only simultaneously but also dialectically, with the strengthening of national and regional/local identities. Moreover, even when it comes to the designated pioneers of modern architecture (often hastily portrayed as strong advocates of a universal language without historical footprint), a growing number of studies show that far from operating a break with the past, indeed, they were related to it in a complex way (Garnham, 2013).

However, the postmodern historiographical revisionism of the role and place of tradition in the development of modern architecture is still far from supplanting the old current paradigm of its assessment. To prove this we examine the event that would theoretically be least likely to substantiate this claim. We are referring to the 9th International DOCOMOMO Conference on the theme *Other Modernisms*, focusing precisely on highlighting the heterogeneity of modern constructions. This meeting took place in Turkey in 2006 and resulted in the clear perception that, alongside or in opposition to the stateless primer of the Modern Movement, contextual architectural approaches existed across the globe throughout the twentieth century. Instead of representing the exception or a rare or residual manifestation, their high incidence has become indisputable. The search for a national modern architecture is an international phenomenon (Tournikiotis & D'Orgeix, 2007).

Nonetheless, as often happens in much of postmodern literature, the effort to enhance and disseminate the otherness ultimately strengthens and essentialises the paradigm which initially it was intended to question. The greatest epistemological turnaround – one that describes a 360° angle – eventually brings us to the very point where we were (zero degree angle). Hiroyasu Fujioka seems aware of this when he opens the article on the Japanese case by stating that *"Other Modernisms" implies that there are two kinds of modernisms; original and perfect modernism, and imperfect or hybrid modernism, influenced by the former'* (2007, p. 61). Other inputs, such as that by Ivan Nevzgodin and Lyudmilla Tokmeninova on modern architecture in Eastern Russia, mould the maintenance of an evaluative scale of modernisms, contaminated for ideological reasons. This attitude, summarised in the title of their essay, *'Modernism repressed, otherness blooms'*, leads them to defend this interpretative thesis:

while abroad the works of the constructivists and the rationalists were greatly prized, in their own country they were supported only by some advanced politicians, although the buildings of "Other Modernisms" were greatly appreciated by the masses from their very beginnings. This, later on, allowed the concept of socialist realism (Sotsrealism) to crystallize, so that the true modernists were forced to turn into "Other Modernists". (2007, p. 85)

The space given to public buildings of fascist regimes is marginal, whereas the purpose of the Conference – to show the reverse of the International Style – enabled a more extensive analysis of this reality. In addition, although constructions that respect a stylised and monumental classicism are regarded as “other modernisms”, the refusal to document the blatant parallels with Nazi art (among others) still endures.

The construction of a critical historiography of the architecture of fascist regimes requires, in our view, three conditions: a) renunciation of the general link between modernism and the political left; b) conclusive rejection, as a gauge, of the imagery and the Modern Movement assumptions of the 1920s and 1930s; c) adoption of a broader concept of modernism. It can be found in the pivotal work of the renowned historian and theorist of fascism Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (2007). Since this is not the place for a summary of either this book or its reviews, one merely stresses one of its most fruitful contributions for art historians. In a postmodern climate featuring distrust of global interpretive systems, Griffin provides a new conceptual paradigm that helps us understand the coexistence and articulate, in a clear and unique ‘*maximalist definition*’ of modernism (which the author does not reduce to the sphere of aesthetics), the diversity of artistic reactions, sometimes conflicting but all palingenetic, before the perception of the alleged decadence resulting from Western modernisation (2007, p. 54-55).

In the field of visual arts, the term modernism would encompass both the individual pursuit of spirituality recognised in Kandinsky, and the intention of the constructivists in placing art in the service of the revolution. More important as support for the thesis that this article proposes: fascist modernism is no longer seen as an oxymoron. Modernism in architecture was manifested as much in the belief that a standardised construction would meet the pressing social and economic needs of a contemporary city as in the fight against a ‘denationalising’ and ‘amnesic’ globalization through an aesthetic capable of currently reflecting and driving the timeless *volksgeist*, felt to be under threat.

The confirmation and frequent overestimation of the traditionalist and agrarian dimension of the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974), fascism<sup>1</sup> with António de Oliveira Salazar at the helm until 1968, has hampered the historiographical recognition of the modernising side that is also part of it. As a result, its architecture is a particularly useful case study to test the conceptual boundaries of modernism.

The thesis that modernisation, conveyed by two major doctrinal streams, industrialism and the neo-physiocratic agrarian reformism, was never a goal in itself, but a concession in favour of the regime's survival, is shared (Rosas, 2000). Therefore, it materialised gradually (slowly, reconciling inherited barriers with those established in the meantime) and pragmatically (with compromises, not shaking the balance of diverging interests that existed in the base, secured or to be seized, of support for the dictatorship).

However, like other fascist regimes, the Portuguese dictatorship did not intend to tread the path back to the past. Indeed, the rescue of the homeland historical legacy, exorcised of its 'unhealthy' episodes, was intended to act as a spiritual substrate to face the mission of national regeneration to be undertaken in the present. And there was a concrete programme for this. The *Estado Novo* (the very name is palingenetic) devised and applied with relative success a comprehensive project of intervention in Portuguese society. The totalising vocation of the project was expressed in the size of the apparatus created for mobilising and inculcating its ideology, so that a 'new man' would be created (Rosas, 2001). Far from being reduced to a simply reactionary phenomenon, Salazarism was a political form of modernism.

Faced with an allegedly sick nation, after more than a hundred years of monarchical and republican liberalism, it was presented as a countervailing 'National Revolution'. It publicised the programme to build a new order as one of resuming the old, genuine, course of the nation. In the words of Oliveira Salazar, '*our duty is not to save a society that is rotting, but to utilise the old healthy beams to launch the new society of the future*'<sup>2</sup> (1937, p. 44). In many of his

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<sup>1</sup> There is no consensus on the classification of the *Estado Novo* (New State) as fascism in Portuguese and international historiography. Since it is beyond the scope of this article, we do not discuss it and have adopted our position without substantiating it. We are also aware that Roger Griffin regards Salazar's *Estado Novo* as a '*para-fascism*'. However, we do not feel that this invalidates the application of his concept of modernism to the Portuguese reality, as we in fact had the opportunity to ascertain, having the author address this possibility, in writing, in 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Translation by the author.

public addresses, the head of state described the task undertaken as a '*work of regeneration*'<sup>3</sup> (1935, p. 153), '*revolutionary*' and '*national salvation*'<sup>4</sup> (1935, p. 318). The new era that was beginning was conceived rhetorically as a rebirth, an essential feature of what Roger Griffin calls the quest for an '*alternative modernity*' (2007, p. 31).

The historiography of the cultural policy of the *Estado Novo* has predominantly examined the devices and events that, for internal and external consumption, produced a consensus on the portrait of a rural, popular, Portugal, faithful to its origins and essence, untouched by city anarchy (Alves, 2013). The promotion and enforcement of a '*nationalist-ruralist-traditionalist model of popular culture*'<sup>5</sup> are undeniable (Melo, 2001, p. 375). However, it should be noted that the inculcation of this mental archetype operated alongside the fostering of the image of an effective, rational and entrepreneurial state. Folk groups, festivals, parades and villages were promoted simultaneously with the modern general plans for the country's urbanisation and a wide-ranging programme of public works supervised by engineers and the catalyst of the latest generation of architects.

The same room where once the embroidery of a particular region was on display housed the modern art exhibition of the National Propaganda Secretariat (Alves, 2010, p. 190). Abroad, both the "creative fantasy of rustic people"<sup>6</sup> (Alves, 2010, p. 184) was exported, and the participation of the Portuguese vanguard was secured in international exhibitions<sup>7</sup>, even when these artists opposed the ideology of the regime. Under the wing of state commissioning, we find either Almada Negreiros or Severo Portela Júnior, Francisco Keil do Amaral or Cottinelli Telmo.

The regime's public architecture reflects this inclusive logic, typical of fascisms, both in terms of the political and ideological positioning of the architects hired (Brites, 2014), and at the level of the aesthetic languages adopted (from the imagery of rationalism to the cleansed reinterpretations of classicism, mediaeval

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<sup>3</sup> Translation by the author.

<sup>4</sup> Translation by the author.

<sup>5</sup> Translation by the author.

<sup>6</sup> Translation by the author.

<sup>7</sup> The doctoral thesis by Ulrike Zech under way will document and illustrate the image of modernity which the New State conveyed at international exhibitions.

and Baroque styles, taking in regionalism, significantly imposed and often invented). In spite of this relative heterogeneity, a core aspiration can be discerned that runs through the entire output of the *Estado Novo*, particularly from the second half of the 1930s. It is a catchphrase, never defined with clarity and therefore tested by approximation, trial and error: the demand for a national modern, a construction style that was at the same time contemporary and suited to the locality and/or specificity of the country. This agenda accommodated various formulations, depending on the evolution of the regime itself, the type of public building in question, the place for which it was intended, the profile of the people responsible for its appraisal and the margin granted to the architect-designer.

Salazarism never upheld anachronism or the practice of an archaeological type of architecture. It did not reject modernity entirely, but disliked disaggregating, standardising, stateless foreignness, embodied by the architectural abstractionist internationalism (dubbed 'boxes'). An alternative modernity was thus aspired to and achieved which, far from being an exclusive diktat of the state, pervaded the discourses of the timid specialist press and of civil society and the dilemmas of the architects themselves.

The quest for a national character in art in general and a 're-Portuguesifying' of architecture in particular, albeit not born with the *Estado Novo*, was radicalised and assumed a totalising dimension and an unprecedented operational capacity. Indeed, the legal fabric set up for choosing architects and for approving and overseeing public works projects – in which spheres and mechanisms of local (municipalities) and central (various ministries, the Court of Auditors, Council of Ministers, and so forth) decision-making joined together – ensured the functioning of a coherent and effective system capable of progressively paring down and improving any architectural proposal, in the light of the aesthetic ideals supported (while evolving).

In conclusion, trying to find remnants of the Modern Movement in the public architecture of Portuguese fascism with a view to legitimising its modernist nature would be *'to miss the point'*, as Roger Griffin has said about the same effort in the Nazi case (2007, p. 294). Whether we find them or not (and in fact they have not been entirely eradicated), the public architecture of the *Estado Novo* was modern. The need for *'ontological security'* (Giddens, 1990, p. vii) was

linked with the ambition to be the visible face of the new chapter of national history. Its most archaic features do not hurt its palingenetic nature at all. Just like the nurtured nationalist cultural, folklorist and rural policy retained an underlying purpose of social transformation: to shape the worldview of the people by forging an equivalence between the values espoused by the regime and the supposed features of Portuguese identity. The way the state architectural output was envisioned and conditioned is a fine example of the practice of what Zygmunt Bauman called the modern '*gardening state*' (Bauman, 1991, p. 20). Reacting selectively to the process of modernisation, healthy species were encouraged, plants that could still be useful were domesticated, weeds were pulled up and crops were monitored. In the new garden, certainly metamorphosed by changes in the climate conditions, new pasts were manufactured and the commitments and balances of forces were managed in each present, in order to guarantee a future.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by the author.

## PARALLEL PATHS

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### Abstract

*This study focuses on the work produced during the first three decades of the 20th century by four architects, who were born and lived at the two ends of Southern Europe: Greece and Portugal. They belonged to two successive generations – Raúl Raul Lino (1879-1974) and Aristotelis Zachos (1871-1939) belonged to the first generation; Carlos Ramos (1897-1969) and Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968) belonged to the second generation – and they all shared the same ability to dialogue with modernity while remaining close to local tradition. Therefore, they allow us to rethink the role played by their projects in the architectural culture of their time beyond the habitual reading of the binomial centre/ periphery diffused by historiography.*

**Keywords:** Modern Architecture, Portuguese architecture, Greek Architecture, Vernacular Architecture, South

This study focuses on the work produced during the first three decades of the 20th century by four architects, who were born and lived at the two ends of Southern Europe: Greece and Portugal. They belonged to two successive generations – Raul Lino (1879-1974) and Aristotelis Zachos (1871-1939) belonged to the first generation; Carlos Ramos (1897-1969) and Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968) belonged to the second generation – and they all shared the same ability to dialogue with modernity while remaining close to local tradition. Therefore, they allow us to rethink the role played by their projects in the architectural culture of their time beyond the habitual reading of the binomial centre/ periphery diffused by historiography.

Both Portugal and Greece were affected by identity crises during various periods of their modern history, with some specific moments of national humiliation in both cases – the English *Ultimatum* to Portugal<sup>1</sup> and *The*

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<sup>1</sup> The British demand for the African territory located between Angola and Mozambique and that corresponds mainly to Zimbabwe culminated in 1890 in an ultimatum in which Portugal either retreated or faced war with Britain. The Portuguese government's acquiescence to British demands led to an internal movement of opposition and revolt which significantly advanced the republican cause, as well as intensified nationalism.

*Catastrophe* to Greece<sup>2</sup> – with impact in a subsequent emergence of nationalist and identity impetuses, with which the recovery of vernacular architecture is closely linked.

The subsequent demand for *Greekness* and *Portugueseness* in both countries architectural culture corresponds to a demand for national roots to support it. The search for both a *Portuguese house* and a *Greek house* constitutes the more visible aspect of this aspect common to the two countries.

In Portugal, this incident originated an outbreak of nationalism in the press that resulted in the emergence of appeals for the nationalization of art and architecture. As concerns the latter, these appeals lead to a large extent to the investment in creating the *Portuguese house* that would constitute an alternative to imported architectural models.<sup>3</sup>

In the Greek case, the effects caused by *The Catastrophe* are very similar to the Portuguese case, however with some nuances related to the definition of boundaries. The Greeks were compelled to redefine their “own spiritual and intellectual origins into a search for the components of a self-generated cultural identity” (Giacumacatos, 1999: 27). The demand for Greekness led to the reconstruction of the national self-esteem that had been deeply fractured. But this demand also acted as a political and cultural weapon, essential to search for autonomous cultural references that could reconstruct an identity of a people, anchored on its own geographical and cultural territory, and achieve their recognition as a nation.

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<sup>2</sup> This historical episode has its roots in the expansionist political ideology that was diffused as *Megali Idea* by the Greek State, almost immediately after the international recognition of its frontiers in 1831. The idea was to create a big state as a revival of the Byzantine empire that would assemble all regions inhabited by Greeks in their multi-ethnicity, and that encompassed not only the area within the national borders, but also in Ottoman territory, where most of the Greeks actually lived. After advances and retreats from its original premises, this attempt ended as a complete failure in 1922 (a defeat by the Turkish and loss of territory as Smyrna) and had such humiliating and traumatic consequences (about 1,3 million Greeks were deported from ottoman territory) that it is denominated by the Greeks as *The Catastrophe*

<sup>3</sup> The stylistic scenography-like combinations and the fashion of the chalet, which had spread in the outskirts of Lisbon and were described as “an hybrid and hallucinated confusion of the Swiss chalet, the English cottage, the Norman fortification, the Tartarian minaret and the Muslim mosque - were considered a stain and outrage in the Portuguese (Ortigão, 1896:115) and were particularly criticized.

The “discovery” of vernacular architecture in both countries provided a new universe of reference in this exploration of possible paths. The examples that could be found in poor and rural milieus were given special importance and were, therefore, understood as the most genuine representative of national culture.<sup>4</sup>

However, the vernacular reference is not the only one present in the formal invention of the *Portuguese* or *Greek house*, which must be understood within the framework of the general movement to nationalize architecture. Various contradictory suggestions, criticisms and compliments were made to the architects in charge of this task.

Architectures of different styles disputed the place as the main holder of signals both in *Portugueseness* and in *Greekness*.

In the Portuguese case, one argued that the *Manueline* formal repertory should be adopted as reference<sup>5</sup> and it was used in some of the first attempts to execute the *Portuguese house*.<sup>6</sup> An alternative was seen in the first projects by young Raul Lino, or in the projects with a *rural taste*, such as the house of Conde Aroso in Cascais (Maia, 2012).

In the Greek case, there were some militants' currents in defence of a pure style to replace the cultural memory of the New Greek State to their cultural roots, after a “dark” period of more than three hundred and fifty years of Ottoman dominion.

At the first moment of post- independence, the rebirth of Classicism was very comfortable because it was completely integrated into the European architectural culture trend of the time. The fact, the neoclassicism “was not

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<sup>4</sup> This approach resulted, to a larger extent, from a still existing Romantic view of the people as “situated outside progress, regarded as a bastion of archaism and tradition, immutable entity faithful to itself, prime emblem of a «domestic» alterity that shall demonstrate rather than be demonstrated.” (Branco & Leal, 1995: 5)

<sup>5</sup> Thus, one shall not wonder that in 1895 the partisans of Manueline ranked preferably among those demanding the nationalisation of architecture. In concrete terms, the architects were advised to search for inspiration in, and copy parts of, the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos as “present buildings for present uses.” (Pereira, 1895: 26)

<sup>6</sup> For some authors of the late 19th century/ early 20th century, the scenographic compositions of Francisco Vilaça, which were dominated by image values and were strongly marked by Manueline reference, constitute a possible way. See: the O'Neill/Castro Guimarães House, in Cascais that was then appointed as one of the examples of the “absolutely satisfactory solution” to the problem of the *casa portuguesa*.

only considered an 'international' architecture but an architecture that also returned to its 'birthplace'" (Tsiambaos, 2014).

However, that connection with a glorious past that one attempted to recover, albeit artificially, was the very basis of a gradual loss of adherence to neoclassicism, which was becoming increasingly strange and uprooted in face of more genuine cultural values that Greece aimed to recover at the end of the century as is the byzantine or the vernacular culture.

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With distinct degrees of success, the four architects in study share, the same "perspective of particular balance between a local critical conscience and an international critical influence", as it was already argued by Pedro Vieira de Almeida (2013: 52-53), with regard to the two Portuguese architects. We can also accentuate the complicity of the two Greek architects with cultural values that are closer to the East than to the West.

Both the understanding of the potential cultural complexity of modernity, in which to be modern wouldn't imply the rejection of the tradition, and the effort to translate this conviction into pedagogical and architectural terms constitute further characteristics in common.

Their inherent motivations for the local traditions as well as the specific way how influences of vernacular architecture were understood by each one, reflected in a constant self-reflexion and in a critical stance towards their cultural and professional milieu, constitute a remarkable contribute in the ever present and lively debate between regional and international.

These four architects were somehow pioneers, at different moments, on the paths outlined from vernacular culture, which we believed, may have acted as a critical filter through which to read architectural currents coming from abroad.

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Raul Lino and Aristotelis Zachos have in common the fact that they studied architecture in Germany. Lino studied also in England (Pimentel, 1970: 8).

It is precisely, in Germany, that they enter in contact with the international debate on the detached house of the bourgeoisie, born with the English *domestic revival* and promoted in Germany by the work by Muthesius (1904).

Thus the concern shown by both Lino and Zachos regarding the detached house and search with a traditional foundation to reconvert it, in order to equip it with the comfort demanded at the time, has an absolutely modern character. Moreover, based in their respective countries, Lino and Zachos concerned themselves with a problem that occupied a central place in the contemporary discussions taking place in the Anglo-Saxon world, and created original solutions in order to solve it. "Their common feature was that all constituted original syntheses of innovative and traditional elements. They have got all the modern amenities without the stylistic homogeneity of modern homes". (Fessas-Emmanouil, 2001:84)



**Figure 1.** Aristotelis Zachos, Angeliki Hatzimichali's house, 1924-27

© Alexandra Cardoso (2014)

Here, it must be observed that, in the two cases, the solutions suggested by both architects adapted their own traditions, developing them in a nationalist cultural context. Lino also refused, similar to what has already been said about Zachos, “the new trends that downgraded the relationship between architecture and the environment, culture and history” (Fessas-Emmanouil, 2001:84)

The two architects also share an evident interest for the traditional architecture of their respective countries.

Lino’s informal trips around Portugal in 1900 enabled him to understand the “formal values of an architecture of the sun, the subtleties of clear-dark, of transparencies and reflections on whitewashed walls, and, in a more responsible way, the living values defined by this vocabulary” (Almeida, 1970: 138). His taste for the *azulejo* (painted tiles), that he uses in order to stress “the volumetric and the thickness of the walls” or “to punctually raise the plastic tension of a part of the construction” (Almeida, 1970: 142), may also have the same origin.



**Figure 2.** Raul Lino, Cypress house, 1907-1012

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Zachos made systematic surveys of Greek vernacular architecture, especially in the Macedonia region, and defended the importance of its study and its diffusion in the seminal article *Vernacular Architecture* (1911). There, he expressed the fundamental character of those studies “if we would like to have a really genuine contemporary Greek style of architecture with a purely Greek aesthetic”.

Zachos also pleaded for the valorisation of vernacular forms and the manner in which they are experienced. In his opinion, this recognition was fundamental “in order to rectify our architectural taste, which has been so warped by imported styles alien to our own customs and traditions”. (Zachos, 1911)<sup>7</sup>.

\*

Carlos Ramos and Dimitris Pikionis belong to the next generation. In contrast to Lino and Zachos, Ramos and Pikionis studied in their native countries, at a time when the French influence was dominant. However, both travelled in Europe, at the final stage of their formation. Ramos visited Spain, France and Belgium whereas Pikionis went to Germany and France. Both of them also taught architecture for many years, and were interested in vernacular architecture.

Dimitris Pikionis himself started a set of field surveys focused on vernacular tradition that he always considered as valuable work instruments in the natural process of making architecture. He carried out his first field research with his study of the house that had been built by peasant Alexis Rodakis, circa 1880 in Messagros, on the Island of Aegina. This house constitutes an almost mythical reference both for the ethnologists and for the architects, as it represents the genuine character of the relationship between a *simple* man and the surrounding nature.

Still during the same year, Pikionis collected graphic information (1912-1918) in order to illustrate one of his authored publications – *We and Our*

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<sup>7</sup> Article published in *Through the Lens of Aristotelis Zachos 1915-1931*, Neohellenic Architecture Archives – Benaki Museum, 2007



*Vernacular Art* (1923) – where he reflects upon the values of vernacular tradition. Simultaneously, he shows a deep interest for traditional architecture in Aegina (1918-21) that he developed during the various trips to the island he made, initially alone, and from 1921, with his students of Architecture<sup>8</sup>.



**Figure 3.** Rodakis House: Survey by D. PIKIONIS. Messagros, Aegina, 1912  
Benaki Museum Neohellenic Architecture Archives

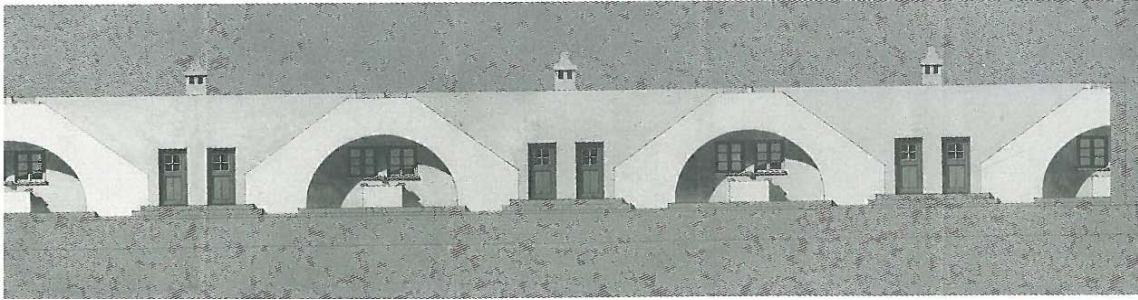
In Oporto, Carlos Ramos became the director of the Escola de Belas Artes, commonly known as “Escola do Porto”, and gave it an international reputation. He invited geographers, such as Orlando Ribeiro and anthropologists, such as Jorge Dias, to give lectures. He accepted to supervise students wishing to prepare theoretical dissertations on architecture, at a time when nobody did it. He encouraged the students to participate in anthropology campaigns and in surveys of folk architecture. (Filgueiras, 1986, sp). He played a role of relevance in the natural

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<sup>8</sup> For the various surveys conducted by Pikionis to vernacular architecture, we researched the Neo-Hellenic Architecture Archives Benaki Museum (July 2014). In this collection, we would like to thank every assistance given by Polina Borisova.

architectural culture, and, in simultaneous, kept always the international contact.

Ramos belongs to the 1927 generation, which he called *generation of compromise*. He was responsible for combining the different currents that existed in Portugal at the time and his work is especially useful in order to exemplify a new use of vernacular as a vehicle of modernity.



**Figure 4.** Carlos Ramos, project for a working-class neighborhood in Olhão

Dimitri Pikionis covered a parallel path. In his opinion, the foundations for the construction of “a new contemporary architecture, appropriate to local building materials, climate, and cultural life” (Theocharopolou, 2010: 112) could exclusively be found in a clear understanding of “vernacular language” in its *placeness* meaning.

Pikionis is, above all, “a refined interpreter of his time. Although observing it from an apparently distant time, he demonstrates that he understands in its own reason, which is the Greece that goes on living”. (Furlenga, 1999: 10)

It must be stressed that Pikionis absorbed the Greek vernacular naturally and constantly as a source of modernity throughout his career. On the contrary, the way that very same architectural universe was absorbed by international architectural culture, was neither natural nor acceptable for him.

In Pikionis exists, apparently, a negation to the uncritical internationalisation of the regional values that cannot be standardised by using formal criteria. This reaction may have arisen, firstly by the concern that his students would begin to move and “to reconnect with the architectural vision of the Bauhaus” or their common conviction on “form

follows function' or 'less is more'" (Papageorgiou-Venetas, 2002), and secondly, by the fascination of his professional colleagues as concerns the "innovative" guidelines presented by the CIAMs.

Indeed, Pikionis vigorously opposed to the CIAM IV<sup>9</sup> that would take place in Athens in August 1933,<sup>10</sup> probably because he was afraid that the Greek architects could be influenced by the presence of international stars eager to have a place where they could test their proposals.

The need to house c. 1,3 million people, *i. e.*, the Greeks repatriated from the Turkey, and the uncritical application of imported models could lead to the destruction of the Greek landscape, a sensitive subject for Pikionis, who always argued that "Man took nature as his teacher on his way, in his life." (Pikionis, 1925).<sup>11</sup>

This warning of Pikionis is specially legitimated by the fact that, at the beginning of his trajectory, he adopted some principles of the Modern Movement, *i. e.*, "its organic simplicity" and by its promise "to become the embodiment of organic truth" (Dimitris Pikionis).<sup>12</sup> However, after the construction of the Elementary School of Lycabethus (1930/1932)<sup>13</sup>, he feels unsatisfied with the same principles, because it occurs to him that "the universal spirit had to be coupled with the spirit of nationhood" (Dimitris Pikionis)<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Carlos Ramos, who actively adheres to UIA, will stay away of CIAM. Maybe, because, as already noted (Almeida, 1986, sp), albeit Ramos defined himself a *modern*, he used in many of his works "a language that could be considered 'traditionalist', in the uncertain sense, in which the term was used at the time, due a certain lack of formal conviction, and an

<sup>9</sup> For more details about this meeting, see Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, First MIT Press paperback edition, 2002

<sup>10</sup> Theocharopolou, I. (2010). Nature and People. The Vernacular and the Search for a True Greek Architecture. See footnote 21

<sup>11</sup> Apud Giacumacatos, A. (1999). From Conservatism to Populism, Pausing at Modernism: The Architecture of the Inter-War Period.

<sup>12</sup> Autobiographical Notes in AA, VV. (1989). Dimitris Pikionis, Architect 1887-1968 'A Sentimental Topography', Architectural Association London

<sup>13</sup> See d o c o \_ m o m o \_ International working party for documentation and conservation Minimum Documentation Fiche 2003

<http://rlicc.asro.kuleuven.ac.be/rlicc/docomomo/Registers/2007%20Education%20Fiches/Greece/GR%20Pikionis%201930/GR%20Pikionis%202007.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Autobiographical Notes ...

evident lucidity in owns' limits to elaborate an alternative proposal in this field".

Pedro Vieira de Almeida (1986: sp) has already drawn our attention to Carlos Ramos's speech about architecture in 1933, when he quoted Emile Schreiber's statement that "international penetration, national interpretation *voilà* the whole secret of harmony in the world of tomorrow".

Finally, we refer to the capacity to play with the modern *moves* that were happening in an international context and local tradition, thereby reinventing a modernity that, albeit its geographical periphery, is equally valid and original.

These architects, who were reactive to the formulary offered by the CIAM, somehow, anticipated the combination of *critical regionalism* (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 1981; Frampton, 1982) with *critical internationalism* (Almeida, 2005), that will characterise the best of contemporary culture.

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## **TRAVELLING MODERNISMS:**

### **The tours and acquaintances of Portuguese architects**

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#### **Abstract**

*With a special interest in the nature of the interwar Portuguese dictatorial regime, this paper will analyse the path followed by contemporary European aesthetic paradigms among the Portuguese architects. The aim is to understand whether these ideas paradigms were internally absorbed and externally implicated in the built environment. To achieve this aim, architects' travels will be reconstructed, minding that travel will be conceptualized in a broad sense, encompassing different contacts with non-Portuguese reality, such as through personal libraries, attendance to congresses, visits to exhibitions, study tours, vacations, education abroad, and acquaintance with foreign architects. This knowledge is expected to enlighten whether certain right-wing dictatorial political models, like Nazism and Fascism, were apprehended and embodied by architects involved in public buildings' commissions; or, conversely, if the aesthetic influence of Portuguese long-standing allies, like the United Kingdom and France, was still dominant. Stretching the argument, one might even wonder if the autarchy's political claims during the Portuguese regime were also extended to the architectural field. All in all, the research's initial hypothesis was that some architects were more cosmopolitan than acknowledged. In proving it, the emphasis put by the art history and architectural history on Portuguese atavism loses strength, as architects would have been inspired and influenced by as many as the existent European regimes.*

**Keywords:** Estado Novo, architecture, transnational modernism, transnational fascism

This paper draws upon two premises. First, as pointed out by the architect Luiz Cunha, the Portuguese architecture during the Estado Novo (New State) had a close relation with the individual taste of its supporters. These had generally no significant artistic culture, hence refusing what they could not understand (Almeida, Proença & Vaz, 2006, p.118). This statement matches with what Carlos Ramos had claimed: *'we had no other job; we knew that our proposals would be rejected or amended if not in accordance with national expression'*. However, this does not prove the existence of an official architecture. In fact, the second premise is that, as it was argued by the architect Pedro Vieira de Almeida (2008, p.93-96), there is no such thing as the Estado Novo architecture. As Cunha further explains, in a country where innovations were few and where the past was regarded as a

paradigm, people preferred aesthetics rooted in the past rather than avant-garde movements (Almeida, Proença & Vaz, 2006, p.118).

It was in fact the need to adjust architects' views to the dominant taste that hampered their adhesion to the Modern Movement. This assertion makes the following Carlos Ramos statement to seem a mere excuse to continue applying traditionalist elements during the dictatorship: *'hardly were the ideas and modern theories known by us; it cannot be said that we had great convictions about what we were doing'* (Portas, 1969).

This paper expects to demonstrate how close Portuguese architects were to the European vanguard. The research is still ongoing, but some preliminary insights are already possible. The argument is not new: Jorge Segurado, an architect receiving many commissions from the regime, claimed it in a hyperbolic manner. First, he considered that the minister of public work Duarte Pacheco, known for the significant development of public buildings, was a narrow and rustic minded, uneducated, unable to quote intellectuals in any conversations. Conversely, some architects - among whom were himself, Carlos Ramos, Adelino Nunes, Cottinelli Telmo, Gonçalo de Mello Breyner, Cassiano Branco, Veloso Reis Camelo, Januário Godinho and Viana de Lima - were intellectuals who admired European modernist architects, such as Walter Gropius and Erich Mendelsohn. In his opinion, Portuguese architects' work even rose above Corbusier ideals (Segurado, 1989).

### **Research hypothesis**

Despite the architects' exaggeration, the research hypothesis is that at least some architects were more cosmopolitan than usually acknowledged. Indeed, the emphasis put by art history and architectural history on Portuguese atavism seems to lose strength when considering that architects were inspired and influenced by as many as the existent European regimes and their particularly architectural modernisms, these being fascists or not. By modernism it is meant a cultural and political reaction to the previous *status quo*, a reaction that is identified with a 'technological utopianism' (Antliff, 1997, p.149) and a fascination with 'the impulse towards the "new"' (Shiach, 2010, p.17-18).



In 1938 the National Union of Architects (Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos - SNA) founded under Salazar's corporatist regime identified 75 architects legally working in Portugal<sup>1</sup>. In 1944, Cristino da Silva argued that in Spain there were hundreds of architects while in Portugal there was only a scant hundred<sup>2</sup>. The research is grounded on these architects' life paths and their professional and intellectual practices.

Looking for links, transferences and commonalties within the interwar dictatorships, this paper starts out in 1932, when Oliveira Salazar became the President of the Council of Minister, and ends up in the aftermath of the World War II. This timeline was not only determined by the latter's political and cultural significance, but also because it marks the date when the president of the architect's Union was replaced. Architects' travels will be scrutinized, minding that travel will be conceptualized in a broad sense. It encompasses architects' different contacts with non-Portuguese life, such as attendance to congresses, visits to exhibitions, study tours and vacations, education and training abroad, personal libraries, and acquaintances with foreign architects.

### **Informal networking**

Architects maintained one to one contacts with several renowned foreign architects.

It is known that Pardal Monteiro was friend with Pierre Vago (1910-2002) with whom he exchanged private correspondence. Monteiro was also friend with André Bloc (1896-1966), founder of the *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and the *Réunion Internationale d'Architectes* (RIA), who knew well Le Corbusier (1857-1965), Auguste Perret (1874-1954) and Henri Sauvage (1873-1932). Like Perret, Monteiro also attended to the RIA meeting in Rome in 1933<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Minute n° 184 of the National Union of Architects board, 7 December 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Third Congress of Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda, 1944.

<sup>3</sup> It is plausible that in 1937 Monteiro had gone to Algeria along with Duarte Pacheco to watch the works of the author of the Church of Notre Dame *du Raincy*, Auguste Perret: *Cathédrale d'Oran* (1912), *Maison de l'Agriculture* (1932), *Bureaux du Gouvernement*

An autographed book by Rouz-Spitz (1888-1957) can be found in his personal library proving that they met at least once. In a report of the commission created to construct a national stadium in Lisbon, Monteiro testified that he usually visited the Louis Faure-Dujarric's '*very perfect facilities*' guided by the French architect himself. He also knew Étienne de Gröer since they had worked together on the Belém urban plan (Lisbon). Alfred-Agache and Cesar Cort (1893 - 1978) travelled to Poland and the Soviet Union with Monteiro in a study tour organized by RIA in 1932 (Tostões, 2009) and the Brazilian Nestor Figueiredo, president of the Brazilian Institute of Architects, was Monteiro's friend.

During the early thirties, Jorge Segurado made contact with the Spanish architects Luis Lacasa and Sanchez Arcas (Galvão, 2003, p.211). Segurado even met William Lescaze once. While staying in New York to prepare the Portuguese pavilion to the 1939 international fair, the Portuguese architect invited Lescaze to be the United States correspondent of the Portuguese journal *Arquitectos*: '*I have asked Lescaze to be our journal correspondent and he kindly agreed. As you know, he is one of the first-line architects and very well connected*'<sup>4</sup>. Segurado was then writing to Pardal Monteiro.

Carlos Ramos was friends with the famous Brazilian architect Lúcio Costa, who also contacted with Raul Lino, although on a more formal basis (Lino, 1937). Through Caldeira Cabral, Raul Lino also met the German architect Konrad Wiesner, who was working on the Nuremberg stadium.

Cristino da Silva was friend with Pedro Muguruza(1893–1952), who was responsible for the Directorate General of Architecture and the Directorate General of Devastated Regions and Repairs (Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas y Reparaciones) (1939-1957), and the author of the Valley of the Fallen design plan(1940-1948).Apparently, Muguruza had close relationships with Portuguese architects. He was mentioned for the first time in a minute of the Portuguese Architects' Union. Pardal Monteiro, its president, informed his colleagues that Muguruza had sent a letter to

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*Général d'Algérie* (1934), *Hôpital Sétif* (1934), *Hôpital Civil de Mustapha* (1939), *Immeubles de Studios* (1939-48), *Hôpital Barbier-Hugo* (1936-55), *Yacht-Club* (1934-1952).

<sup>4</sup> Pardal Monteiro Studio Archive, Folder 69 – National Stadium.

Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade expressing the intention of promoting a Spanish and Portuguese architects' meeting in Madrid<sup>5</sup>. From then onwards, contacts were fruitful.

When in 1938 Cottinelli Telmo planned a tribute to Pardal Monteiro, he invites Honoré Bloch, Pierre Vago, Albert Laprade, Auguste Perret, G. H. Pungunsson, P. Sirvin, Georges Sebillé, Sabatou, J. Coulon, Le Corbusier, Mallet Stevens, Dudok Utrechtsche, Henri Pacon, Michel Roux Spitz, Faure Jujarric, Henri Prost<sup>6</sup>.

Ties with foreigner architects are also well illustrated in the competition to build the already mentioned sport stadium, held in 1936. The most famous Portuguese architects worked in association with foreigner architects, engineers and companies. Swedish, French, Belgian, German, Spanish and Italian companies presented proposals to the competition. Constantino Constantini, the architect that designed the Reggio Emilia stadium, the Mussolini Obelisk and other facilities of the Forum Mussolini, was a member of the Cristino da Silva and Vasco Lacerda Marques' team. This team also counted on an important Italian building company that erected the fascist stadiums of Livorno and Bari. No wonder that the proposal spoke about a 'spectacular', 'harmonious', 'monumental' and 'imposing' architectural ensemble<sup>7</sup>. Classicism and regionalism seem to have been preferred by all firms, although Carlos Ramos had applied with the Dutch architect Jan Wils (1891–1972), one of the founding members of the *De Stijl* movement.

Clearly, Portuguese architects were not confined to a national milieu.

### **International Exhibitions**

Regarding international fairs, some architects attended to the International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts, held in Paris in 1925. There, they had direct contact with modernist architecture. Luiz Cunha, Pardal Monteiro and Cassiano Branco saw Le Corbusier's *Esprit Nouveau*

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<sup>5</sup> Minute n° 281 of the National Union of Architects board, 22 March 1943

<sup>6</sup> Pardal Monteiro Studio Archive, Fold 104.

<sup>7</sup> IRHU, PT CAONEL-0013/03 – Lisbon Stadium - Proposals.

pavilion and the Konstantin Melnikov Soviet pavilion. It is highly likely that Cristino da Silva visit them also as he was living in Paris at that time. According to João Paulo Martins, Cottinelli Telmo should have been there also (Martins, 1995, p. 136).

Not surprisingly, some of the Portuguese architects, such as Pardal Monteiro, Jorge Segurado, Keil do Amaral, Luís Benavente, and Frederico Caetano de Carvalho, went to the International Colonial Exhibition and the Congress on Urbanism in the Colonies and Tropical Countries held in Paris-Vincennes in 1931. There, they could observe the building planned by the French architects André Granet and Roger-Henri Expert Le *Cactus*.

In 1937 another great international exhibition was organized by the French government. Again, Pardal Monteiro, Jorge Segurado, Keil do Amaral, Luís Benavente, Jorge Segurado and Frederico Caetano de Carvalho attended to the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*. This time they had the opportunity of seeing Picasso's Guernica, Alexander Calder's Mercury Fountain and Miro's Catalan peasant in revolt. The Finnish pavilion of Alvar Aalto must have amazed the Portuguese architects.

In short, attendance to international exhibitions evinces Portuguese architects' empirical knowledge of international architecture and architects.

### **Cultural Diplomacy**

Contrary to the establish wisdom, cultural diplomacy was not a Nazi or Fascist exclusive. Propaganda was used by the Axis Powers, the Allies and neutrals. In the early thirties, two exhibitions on German architecture and technique were inaugurated, the first in 1941 and the second in 1942. In 1943 a Swiss exhibition was held. Within its leaflet Le Corbusier was mentioned as the architect responsible for the creation of a new architectural style. Apparently, Nazi events grasp more intensive attention of the media, since the Modern German Architecture was inaugurated by Albert Speer and the President of the Republic, Óscar Carmona (Ninhos, 2012, p.111), also with the presence of the President of the Council of

Minister Oliveira Salazar<sup>8</sup>. After that, the book entitled *Moderna Arquitectura Alemã* was offered by Albert Speer to all the SNA's members, inclusive the Oporto affiliates<sup>9</sup>.

There were also some magazines sponsored by foreign governments. The American embassy printed the magazine *Noticiário de Arte e Arqueologia na América do Norte*, that had a section entitled 'Architecture', reproducing works by Walter Martens, Pietro Belluschi, Holabird & Root, O'Dell, Hewlett and Suckeback. The *Jovem Europa* [Young Europe] was published in Portugal and by many other countries and the German Siegfried Graf zu Dohna was its responsible in Portugal being also in charge of cultural academic exchange. In 1940 the *Institute Français* promoted a conference with the French architect Charles Siclis, who designed the *Casa de Serralves* in Oporto, about theatres' architecture.

## Congresses

Another kind of event that fostered contacts between Portuguese architects and European vanguards were the international architectural meetings. In fact, Portuguese architects participated in several of these events (Madrid, 1904; London, 1906; Rome, 1911; Holland, 1927; Rome, 1935). An illustration of their thoughts regarding what they had seen is the report that Pardal Monteiro sent to Salazar about the 13th International Congress of Architects held in Rome. The architect reproduces Mussolini opening speech:

I am for modern architecture. I want the respect and cult of the past. But I do not want the past to defeats us. The eternal Rome will always be timeliness. [...] A few years ago, Rome was a historical city. The fascist Rome, crossed by new and beautiful roads, is a city of today in which everything that represents the past is valuable and preserved, providing that this past does not damage the development of the Fascist Era. [...] The fascist Rome can't be crushed under so

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<sup>8</sup> Torre do Tombo, AOS/DI-3, 8 Novembro de 1941

<sup>9</sup> Minute n° 248 of the National Union of Architects board, 19 November 1941.

many old stones in a way that it cannot breathe. Therefore, along with buildings from other eras, there are Fascist-era buildings, indicating to the future what Italy is in this moment.

Pardal Monteiro continued his letter by mentioning two opposed fascist Italian architectural styles: modernism versus classicism. He also gave some examples of new buildings that had originated violent protest being labelled as barbarian, foreigner, internationalist, on contrary to the Italian tradition and fascist nationalism: Florence train station planned by the architect Giovanni Michelucci, and the Genoa maritime station planned by Luigi Vietti (1931). In Monteiro's view, these were planned in the new national styles and he thought Salazar should follow Mussolini's recipe in order to facilitate the arisen of a new national style<sup>10</sup>.

Pardal Monteiro have been at *the Réunions Internationales d'Architectes* – held in Moscow, Milan and Prague in 1932, 1933, 1935. In 1935 Cottinelli Telmo met Monteiro in Prague since he was going to attend to the *International Penal and Prison Congress* in Berlin.

The 1931 Deutsche Bauausstellung and the International Exhibition of Urbanism and Dwelling held in Berlin where visited by Jorge Segurado and Frederico Caetano de Carvalho. Adães Bermudes participated in the Fourth *Pan-American Congress of Architects* assembled in Rio (1930), during which architects expressed two opposite trends: modernism and traditionalism. Other Portuguese architects attended to the International Conference of Museums in Madrid in 1934 (e.g. Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade), and the International Congress of Hospitals in Paris in 1937 (e.g. Raul Lino).

An Iberian architects meeting was promoted by Pedro Muguruza in Madrid and Lisbon in 1944, gathering twenty Portuguese architects and over sixty Spanish architects. Personalities like Lopes Otero, the director of the works of the university city in Madrid, Cesar Cort, a urban planner and professor, Francesc de Paula Nebot, the Director of the School of Architecture of Barcelona, and Jose Fonseca, the chief architect of the Institute of attended this First Meeting of Portuguese and Spanish architects where there.

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<sup>10</sup> Torre do Tombo, AOS/CP-184, pt. 6, fls. 81-116. Letter to Oliveira Salazar, 8 September 1936.

Aware of the architectural international debates, the Portuguese architects' professional contacts with their international fellows were positively more wide and intense that one might think in face of history's emphasis on Portugal's seclusion from Europe's intellectual stage.

### Foreigner journals

Reinforcing the idea that Portuguese architects were up to date regarding the architectural vanguards is the fact that many of them subscribed foreigner journals. Jorge Segurado testified that, during his education, Carlos Ramos used to bring foreign journals to the Fine Arts School and he already knew 'that thing of Bauhaus' (Portas, 1969). Furthermore, Segurado wrote to Eduardo Andycoberry, director of the *Arquitectura*, in Madrid, telling him that Carlos Ramos, Adelino Nunes e Paulino Montês wish to subscribe the Journal (1930). In fact, during a meeting of the Union, Cristino da Silva stated that almost all architects subscribed foreigner journals<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, the Union itself promoted exchanges and subscriptions of foreigner journals like:

1. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, which was founded by Andre Bloc and associated to the vanguards, publishing several works of distinct architects, like Le Corbusier and Monteiro;
2. *Bulletin Société des Architectes Diplômés par Le Gouvernement*;
3. *L'Émulation, Journal of the Société centrale d'architecture de Belgique*;
4. *Modern Bauformen*, published in Stuttgart;
5. *South African Architectural Record*, whose co-editor was Rex Martienssen, an architect deeply influenced by Le Corbusier who nominate him as member of CIAM in 1937;
6. *Arquitettura Italiana*, directed by the fascist architect Armando Melis;

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<sup>11</sup> General Assembly of the National Union of Architects in 17 February 1938.

7. *Revista de Arquitectura* – Journal of the Sociedad Central de Arquitectos from Argentina, identified with art nouveau but which reproduced Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mendelsohn, Mies van der Rohe texts (Méndez, 2010).
8. *Arquitectura e Urbanismo*, published by Instituto de Arquitectos do Brasil;
9. *Cuadernos de Arquitectura*, published by Colégio Oficial de Arquitectos de Cataluña y Baleares;
10. *Casabella*, first published by an editorial committee that included Giuseppe Pagano(1933-1953);
11. *Architettura*, journal of the Italian Fascist Union;
12. *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal*.

The generalized idea of Portuguese architects' lack of knowledge on the international architecture seems to lose strength. After all, these journals disseminated the work of the modernist architects in Europe, assembling different aesthetic and ideological stances.

### **Portuguese Press**

Information about the Modern Movement in the Portuguese specialized journal *Arquitectos* (1938-1942) prevailed over classicist and vernacular buildings, though these design plans were also reproduced<sup>12</sup>. However, more radical architectural solutions were discarded. The Portuguese journal also promoted acquaintances between national and foreign architects. Laprade, Mustafa Bey Fahmi and William Lezcase, for instance, were invited to collaborate with the *Arquitectos*. All of them accepted, although Lezcase did not publish anything within the journal.

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<sup>12</sup> Some examples are the modernists Virgile Bierbauer (a Hungarian member of CIAM), Howard Robertson (member of CIAM), Nicolosi Giuseppe, László Králik, Angelo A. Murgel, R. H. Uren, Alfred Kasiner; the fascist modernists Calza Bini, Rafael Fagnoni; the regionalist Albert Laprade, and the classicist Albert Edward Richardson.



Besides specialized journals, generalist magazines also published pictures and articles about new architectural tendencies. It is the case of *A Esfera*, a pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist journal. It disclosed the new German churches and highlighted the church of Charlottenburg designed by Gustave Adolf<sup>13</sup>. One of its covers even published the Nuremberg tribune of honour<sup>14</sup>. In 1925 the Soviet pavilion in the International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts was replicated in the *Europa* along with the description of some pavilions: Czechoslovakia (Josef Gočár), Austria (Joseph Hoffmann) and Soviet Union (Konstantin Melnikov). The train station in Hadrec Králové, also planned by Josef Gočár illustrates an article written by Cottinelli Telmo in *Boletim da CP*. Another article, also written by Cottinelli, is accompanied by a picture of the Karl Marx-Hof, a building complex that held 1,382 apartments, with the following subtitle: '*social housing in Vienna, remarkable work that has exceeded our expectations*'<sup>15</sup>. In 1934 pictures of the Corbusier work were published in the *Magazine Bertrand* while the booklet *Lisboa Oriental* by Manuel Vicente Moreira quoted some Corbusier's sentences (Toussaint, 2013, p.204).

In other words, the Union not only provided access to international architecture via its library and exchange policy, as it published itself illustrations of the work that was being done throughout Europe. This is true also true for other kind of publications.

### **Professional Associations**

SNA established links with other professional associations such as the Instituto Central dos Arquitectos from Brazil and the Royal Institute of British Architects<sup>16</sup>. Nestor de Figueiredo was made honorary member of the SNA and Pardal Monteiro became an honorary member of the Brazilian institute in 1940. RIBA offered assistance and its library to the Portuguese Union's members staying in London. José Luís Monteiro, Cristino da Silva e

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<sup>13</sup> *A Esfera*, 77, 20 October 1943.

<sup>14</sup> *A Esfera*, 80, November 1943.

<sup>15</sup> *Boletim da CP*, December 1935 and December 1936.

<sup>16</sup> Minute of the National Union of Architects board, 26 September 1938.

António Couto became its honorary members. Pardal Monteiro was also member of the Société Centrale de L'Architecture de Belgique and Pedro Muguruza was a member of SNA.

Some architects belonged to other associations. Pardal Monteiro was the Portuguese representative in the RIA and, between 1931 and 1933, Segurado was member of the *Internationaler Verband Für Wohnungswesen* (International Association for House and Planning) based in Frankfurt (Galvão, 2003, p.322).

### **Studying abroad and professional training**

Some Portuguese architects studied abroad. Surprisingly, none of them seems to have been particularly modern and certainly not modernist. José Augusto Magalhães attended the School of Fine Arts of the University of Rio Vasco Regaleira, José Augusto de Magalhães and Augusto José Maria Rodrigues da Silva studied at the Royal Institute of British Architects. Raul Lino was educated in Germany and England. António José de Brito e Cunha, José Marques da Silva, Manuel Marques and David Moreira da Silva obtained the French Government degree of Graduate Architect. Fernando de Barros Santa Rita also graduated with a foreigner degree. And Cristino da Silva was an inter architect in Paris, working in Victor Laloux's studio.

### **Travelling abroad**

Apart from vacations, most of the Portuguese architects who composed the restrict elite that worked for the state travelled abroad on behalf of the government. For each building program, the minister of Public Work Duarte Pacheco (1932-1936, 1938-1943) created a three members commission. Usually, it gathered an engineer, an architect and someone related with the functional program of the planned building. These members travelled in order to learn from the similar experiences in other countries. The program for the National Stadium competition, for example, was designed

accordingly to the learning of a member of the commission during a study trip<sup>17</sup>. For that reason, some went on a multiple destination tour.

Usually, Monteiro's study tours take not least than one month and sometimes it makes sense speaking about *grand tours*.

The engineer Eduardo Rodrigues de Carvalho and Pardal Monteiro, for instance, went on a long trip to study maritime stations. When writing the report, the engineer explained that the Lisbon's maritime stations were planned after carrying out a comparative study with its congeners abroad: the maritime stations of Verdon, Cherbourg and Le Havre, in France; and the Genoa (two stations) and Trieste buildings, in Italy. Although they did not go to North America, the two authors asserted to have also taken into consideration the Los Angeles maritime station<sup>18</sup>.

Some of these architects stayed for long periods outside Portugal. For example, Jorge Segurado spent a full year in the USA preparing the Portuguese pavilion for the 1939's New York World's Fair. A letter from to Pardal Monteiro shows the impact the trips had on the architect' views:

I am convinced that Americans are the masters of construction. As you know, here, there are outstanding professionals: architects, planners and engineers; however, what we thought of America in that side of the Atlantic falls far short of direct impressions. To know the entrepreneurial strength of the Americans is mandatory to come up here. Prepare your bags and come. Look, bring Pacheco with you, because what you see here cannot be seen in Europe<sup>19</sup>.

Analysing the Portuguese architects destinations, one might be surprised to find out they travelled more around before the end of Second World War. However, it must be minding that in that period they were younger and supported by the Minister of Public Works who died in a car accident in 1943. From then onwards, the Ministers of Public Work succumbed to

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<sup>17</sup> IRHU, PT CAONEL-0093/01 – Documents concerning the Stadium competition.

<sup>18</sup> IHRU, PT DGEMN: DSARH-005/125-4686/05 - Divers: maritime stations / Report 6 March 1936.

<sup>19</sup> Pardal Monteiro Studio Archive, Fold 69 – National Stadium, Letter from 22 September 1938.

Salazar's will, who always have preferred savings rather than expensive building programmes (and journeys). The absence of German after the World War II, once the Bauhaus' siege, requires further comprehension.

### Travels to European Countries

Destination	1890-1945	%	Destination	1946-1968	%
1 France	57	29%	1 Europe (not discriminate)	15	32%
2 Spain	54	28%	2 France	10	21%
3 Germany	19	10%	2 Spain	9	19%
4 Italy	18	9%	3 Italy	4	9%
5 Belgium	15	8%	3 Switzerland	4	9%
5 Netherlands	15	8%	3 England	4	9%
6 England	13	7%	4 Belgium	1	2%
7 Europe (not discriminate)	4	2%			
	195	100%		47	100%

### Personal libraries

This restricted elite of architects also collected foreign books on architecture purchased both in Portuguese bookstores and during their stays abroad.

It is possible to access some of these personal libraries through the studios of Pardal Monteiro, donations to public libraries - Cottinelli Telmo, Adelino Nunes, Keil do Amaral, David Oliveira Lopes - and the archives of DGEMN, MOP, CAPOPI. Although this research is not yet concluded and probably many libraries were incomplete and dismantled, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn. The analysis was carried out taking into account

the canonical architectural books identified by Sarah Goldhagen<sup>20</sup>. Pardal Monteiro and the SNA were the only ones that had Corbusier's books. However, none of them bought *Vers une architecture* (1923) but rather *La Ville Radieuse* (1935). Pardal Monteiro was the only one to have the book from Gustav Adolf Platz, *Baukunst der Neuesten Zeit* (1927). Monteiro also possessed the *Groszstadt Architektur* by Ludwig Hilberseimer (1927). DGEMN, Adelino Nunes and Pardal Monteiro had the Alberto Sartoris' *Gli elementi dell'architettura fuzionale* (1932). Absent from all the libraries were the works written by or on Walter Gropius, Adolf Behne, Walter Curt Behrendt, Henry-Russel Hitchcock, Nikolaus Pevsner.

Recalling that these architects travelled abroad, one might question if the absence of these fundamental books on modernism was a matter of choice, rather than opportunity, as recurrently implicit in the history of Portuguese architecture. The explanation can also be more prosaic: the books were still in the hands of their families or were sold in used book shops.

### **Foreign architects working in Portugal**

Portuguese architects acquaintances with foreign architects were also promoted within the national territory. Some French, German and Italian architects such as Donald-Alfred Agache, Étienne de Gröer, Charles Siclis, Hermann Diestel, Marcelo Piacentini, Giorgio Calza Bini and Giovanni Muzio were invited to work in Portugal. There are also some German landscape architects to be considered: Heinrich Wiepking-Jürgensmann, Himmler's adviser and friend who had worked in the Berlin Stadium; Georg Gunder,

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<sup>20</sup> This includes: Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture*. Paris 1923; Walter Gropius, *Internationale Arkitektur*. Munich, 1925; Adolf Behne, *Der moderne Zweckbau*. Munich, 1926; Walter Curt Behrendt, *Der Sieg des neuen Baustils*, Stuttgart, 1927; Adolf Gustav Platz, *Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit*. Berlin, 1927; Sigfried Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton*. Leipezig, 1928; Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Internationaleneue Baukunst*. Stuttgart, 1928; Henry-Russel, *Hitchcock, Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*. New York, 1929; Bruno Taut, *Modern Architecture*. London, 1929; Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*. New York, 1932; Alberto Sartoris, *Gli elementi dell'architettura fuzionale*. Milan, 1932; Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius*. London, 1937; Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass., 1941. See Goldhagen, 2005, p. 145.

who worked on the Reich's sport field and Olympic village in 1936; and especially Konrad Wiesner, who had worked in the Nuremburg's stadium.

### **Quotations on the Modern Movement**

In 1931 Segurado made a reference to Corbusier while lecturing in Madrid under the topic *Un Maison, Un Palais* (Galvão, 2003, p.252). Rogério de Azevedo, in a conference held in 1934, consistently quoted the French architect Le Corbusier (Toussaint, 2013, p.204). In turn, Raul Lino, in the book entitled *Auriverde Jornada* argued that Lúcio Costa intended to reinforce his opinion with Le Corbusier's statements (Lino, 1937). Cottinelli Telmo mentioned Le Corbusier as following: 'A smart French architect, an agitator to whom we all owe recognition, who is able to defend lies with the same intelligence that sustains truths, who created the formula of "house: living machine". This was funny when was new; today, is boring, I think it is of an ignoble romanticism. Why a machine? May I be when imagining myself as a dishwasher? How can I get satisfaction while imagining myself as something entering home through a door and going out clean, dressed, satiated, keeping a cigarette in the corner of my mouth?'<sup>21</sup>. There is also a Pardal Monteiro's text referring important architects of the Modern Movement: Otto Wagner, in Austria; Peter Behrens, Bruno Taut and Mendelsohn in Germany; Dudok in Holland; Ostberg in Sweden; and Le Corbusier, '*the most discussed of polemicists of architecture*'. These are, he argued, 'the drivers of new ideas' in architecture (Monteiro, 1950).

Clearly, Portuguese architects were informed about the Modern Movement. Whereas they adhered to it is a different issue requiring further research.

### **Conclusion**

The following episode summarizes the argument of this paper: Jorge Segurado wanted to build a ten storey building with one hundred apartments to lodge intellectuals and artists. However, Salazar, not sharing

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<sup>21</sup> Isabel Cottinelli Telmo Archive, text probably written in 1938.

Cottinelli's views regarding the huge apartment block, vetoed the proposal, recalling what had happened during the Austrian Civil War in 1934. The Karl Marx Hof was the scene of a workers' repression carried on by Dollfuss Austro-fascists (Segurado, 1989). Salazar represented the general taste and, as Pardal Monteiro stated in a conference, '*the Portuguese architects worried about their earnings, follow de public taste, succumbed to the wishes of the tasteless and ignorant owners, practicing an architecture that tends to be the opposite of what it should be*': nice façade, rich materials, and non-functional design<sup>22</sup>.

In conclusion, it was the nationalist pressure on the elite that jeopardized the architects' modernist impetus. In the end, highly depending on the state, architects gave in on their thoughts and did what the regime expected. They accepted the recommendations of the state's agencies headed by individuals adverse to the vanguard movement, in line with Salazar's views, and attuned to the taste of the private sector. That ended up giving rise to a mitigated modernism, a modern classicism and a vernacular traditionalism. However, it cannot be said that the Portuguese architecture stems from architects' ignorance.

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<sup>22</sup> Pardal Monteiro Studio Archive, Fold 64A, 'Para onde vai a arquitectura', Pardal de Monteiro conference held in August 1945.

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**GREEK MODERNITIES IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD:  
Architectural Contradictions between Neoclassicism and  
Regionalism**

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**Abstract**

*After the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which resulted the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece, as the Greeks formed themselves into their own nation state, artists and intellectuals gradually turned from their previous practice of reviving historical styles and concentrated instead on the quest for new means of expression, seeking to redefine a uniquely Greek quality in the arts. As the intellectual and artistic communities debated how best they might «return to their roots», young architects reacted against the academic architecture of the European schools and turned for their inspiration to the study of traditional architecture, laying the foundations for a middle way in Greek architecture – between the revival of classicism and the emergence of modernism.*

**Keywords:** Neoclassicism, Regionalism, “Return to our roots” movement, Modernism, H. Hébrard.

After the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which resulted the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece, as the Greeks formed themselves into their own nation state, artists and intellectuals gradually turned from their previous practice of reviving historical styles and concentrated instead on the quest for new means of expression, seeking to redefine a uniquely Greek quality in the arts. As the intellectual and artistic communities debated how best they might *return to their roots*, young architects reacted against the academic architecture of the European schools and turned for their inspiration to the study of traditional architecture, laying the foundations for a middle way in Greek architecture – between the revival of classicism and the emergence of modernism.

As the new nation states broke free of the great European empires architects turned to the medieval traditions of their respective countries to assert a new identity in contrast to the public image of the previous regimes.

Within this general trend Greece pursued her own distinctive path. There were two key reasons for this. Firstly, the Ottoman Empire had made only scant investment in the public architecture of the regions included in the early Modern Greek state, so that there was not an urgent necessity for the country to differentiate itself from previous practice in this area. Second, and more important, Greece had its own historical heritage, more glorious than the mediaeval past of Byzantium, from which architects could draw their main inspiration: classical antiquity and the artistic models of the golden century of Athenian democracy. The country's reconnection with classical antiquity was achieved – before any conscious attempt to seek a national character in architecture – via the neoclassical models brought from Munich by king Otto and the Bavarian architects. Neoclassicism had returned to its birthplace. Neoclassical architecture had returned to its birthplace. Greece identified with the neoclassical style and through the architecture of the Greek communities still subject to the Ottoman Empire it spread the style to every corner of the Greek inhabited East.

With the annexation of the "New lands" after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Greece comes in contact with its own medieval past, thus restoring the architectural continuity which was so violently and arbitrarily had catalyzed the imposition of neoclassicism in the young Greek kingdom. The architects of Neoclassicism seeking the roots of their own imported architecture exclusively to classical antiquity excluded from their sources of inspiration, all intermediate forms of Greek civilization.

Though, the contact with the post-Byzantine tradition still alive in Macedonia and Epirus will provide new issues to the architectural research in an attempt to redefine the identity of Greek architecture and get rid of all stylistic revivals.

If it has little influence to public architecture in the cities of "Old" Greece, which through the survival of classicism maintains its "Greek" identity, in the private sector, the "Return to our roots" movement attempts to oppose the international character of neoclassicism or eclecticism that succeeded him.

The most important architect of this artistic movement was Arist. Zachos, educated in Germany, particularly known for his works in the field of religious architecture (1904-1938). Among his other works, we mention the house Ang. Chatzimichali in Plaka, Athens (1924-1929), his own house in Mets, Athens (1928-1929), the Zosimaia Academy in Ioannina (c.1930) the Vellas' ecclesiastical school in Epirus (c.1935) and the suburban villa of D. Loverdos in Barypompí (1928-1930).

N. Mitsakis, a graduate of the Architecture School of NTUA (1921), one of the most important representatives of Greek modernism, while he was working in the Ministry of Education from 1926 to 1928 will design a significant number of schools of (Kastoria, Thessaloniki (Mevlachane), Naxos, Tinos) in an effort to integrate new school buildings in a traditional architectural environment. The relatively small scale of these buildings prevented incompatible interventions in the continental or insular landscape, but failed to avoid the decorative use of traditional forms.

It is obvious that it makes it difficult for morphological loans from the local tradition of mainland Greece to adapt in large scale and to specific programs of public architecture, for the simple reason that in the recent tradition of Turkish rule there were no respective types of buildings.

In contrast, island architecture -despite the absence, there also, of respective building types- its horizontal lines and geometric volumes, were closer to modern movement aesthetics and could easily be adapted in a larger scale, conforming to the asymmetric organization of the facades and the composition of volumes which were dictated by the new architecture.

According to An. Orlandos (*Technika Chronika*, 1933, p.1002), professor of History of Architecture at NTUA, in a speech at IV Congress of CIAM which took place in 1933 in Athens, "*The school embraces all early modernism principles not only because of the soundness of its theories, but because it also derives largely out of our architectural tradition*" and he invites his foreign colleagues to observe the white geometric volumes of Cyclades and agree with him that Greece "*can boast that in the these*

*humble houses of the islands one can detect the archetypes of modern architecture".*

The built examples do not meet these expectations, particularly with regard to the integration of new construction in a traditional environment. For instance the school of Ano Syros, built by G. Zogolopoulos in a popular neighborhood, creates an out of scale intervention in island's architecture. The fact that this architecture was closer to modern aesthetics and therefore could easily be adapted to the functional needs of the new architecture was unable to overcome the difficulty of integration of a special building program into the island landscape.

In the private home sector, the ability to adapt island architecture on a small scale provided the pretext for many modernist architects to develop local tradition -the famous *genius loci*- often under the approval of foreign critics. In fact, the various house types of this period were delimited between a "Neo-Greek" and a "Modern" architecture.

In the first case, French magazine *L' Architecture* has used the term "Néo-Grec" in order to describe the style of another holiday home of Loverdos family in Loutraki, a project signed by the Russian architect M. Fomine, member of the French School of Athens (Demangel, 1926, p.151). A sophisticated use of tradition in an over all eclectic composition reveals the preference of a certain social class for the picturesque.

In the second case, together with the gradual prevalence of modernism in the private home sector, another French magazine, *Cahiers d' Art*, eight years later, proposed to Greek architects, as to all architects of the Mediterranean countries, a sort of "critical regionalism". In particular, invites them "not to obey slavishly to forms of modern architecture that came from the West, but to adapt these forms to the climatic conditions of a country that has the privilege and disadvantage at the same time of an excessive quantity of sun and light" (*Cahiers d' Art*, 1934, p.121).

The works of Greek modernists, in their overwhelming majority, followed the European codified models of modernism and only retrospectively they based this architecture on the local tradition of Cyclades seeking the

plasticity of the works of Le Corbusier in the islands' geometric forms. What indeed he had discovered in Greece were not the forms, but the way that structures were integrated into the landscape, the human scale and handling of light (F. Choay, 1960, p.10).

I would like to conclude this presentation with an exceptional case study; the architectural interpretation of the new plan of Thessaloniki by E. Hébrard after the fire of 1917, just five years after the city's incorporation in the Greek State.

In fact, E. Hébrard elaborated comprehensive architectural studies for individual public buildings and for the use of *façades ordonnancées* along some of the city's most prominent axes and squares, in an attempt to present a new proposal for the local character of contemporary architecture. His architecture could be compared with the appearance of the local element in the public architecture of new Nation States, as opposed to the architectural expression of the former regime power. In Thessaloniki, for the first time in Greece, the "local" tradition is used to differentiate the image of the country's second-largest city from the excessive eclecticism of the Ottoman era.

Although little has been written about the types of new building proposed by Hébrard, the morphology he chose and its importance in the architectural development of the reconstructed city were much discussed and criticized by his contemporaries, and also by more recent students of his work. Architectural historians have characterized his work variously as neo-Byzantine, Arabizing, colonial and Parisian – in the latter case with particular reference to the Rue de Rivoli and Place Vendôme, and the *façades ordonnancées* of Haussman.

It is my belief that there is some basis for all these claims: the fact is that Hébrard had the broad cultural education required to handle and combine a wide range of historical references, supplying the inspiration which enabled him to find the appropriate architectural forms for the projects in question.

The Christian monuments of Thessaloniki, especially the basilicas of Acheiropoitos and Aghios Dimitrios, were the third and most important source of inspiration for Hébrard in his attempt to supply the local colour which he believed architecture must have. He endeavoured to establish the model of a learned architecture, both local and international, a *critical regionalism* (K. Frampton, 1996). He sought the middle way between international architecture, eclectic or modern, and local tradition, without simply copying or imitating any particular tradition. In Thessaloniki he opted for the Byzantine period in the city's history, and particularly that of the earliest basilicas, believing this was the most appropriate style for the public buildings of the city in its new incarnation, especially as it was during this period that the city had enjoyed its greatest heyday (V. Colonas, 2012, p.23).

Hébrard also wished to differentiate the public face of the city from that of the last years of Turkish rule, when architecture had been dominated by a particular form of eclecticism and from the late neo-classicism of the first "official" buildings of the city in the wake of the liberation.

In the way in which the specific architecture was finally interpreted, the compositional laws underlying the structure of the monument were not understood; its proportions were altered, and in the end its archetypal architecture was conveyed only through the facile adaptation permitted by the imported neo-Byzantine style and the arabisances of the Neo-Moorish style.

As a result, some of the new buildings erected in the part of the city destroyed by fire would follow the morphological proposals contained in the Hébrard plan, would be subject to the influences of neo-colonial or Moorish architecture or would evoke memories of the city's Byzantine past.

Neo-Moorish architecture, especially popular in the leisure facilities of the European spa towns, would provide the pattern for the design of similar buildings in Thessaloniki, such as the Mediterranean Palace (1922), the hotel owned by Koukouflis, Kapountzis and Varsano (1925), projects by

M. Delladetsimas, graduate of the *École Spéciale* in Paris, and the Thessaloniki Club (G. Siagas, 1925). At the same time the neo-Byzantine style was deemed more appropriate for educational institutions, mainly of a religious orientation, such as the YMCA building (1924), also the work of M. Delladetsimas, and the De la Salle high school (1927), designed by the French engineer J. Pleyber, a member of the committee working on the new city plan. The surprising similarity of the buildings designed by Delladetsimas, director of the City of Thessaloniki architects' department, and those of Hébrard, especially his designs for the PTT building, was noticed by his contemporaries, who, in 1929, accused him of plagiarism, setting off a storm of protest which, for many days, occupied the pages of the local press (V. Colonas, 2012, p 103).

In no circumstances, however, could we place these buildings, either stylistically or ideologically, within the "Return to our roots" movement. This was a movement which sought to redefine the essentially Hellenic element in art, and whose architects drew their inspiration from the study of traditional architecture and a critical approach to modernism.

What might be regarded as the only representative example of this movement in Thessaloniki is D. Pikionis' Experimental School of the University of Thessaloniki (1936). It is a unique example of the correct assimilation and application of traditional Macedonian architecture to the principles of the modern movement and the needs imposed by the large scale of the project and the special requirements of the buildings. The inward-looking lay-out of the complex, the search for and application of a common morphological vocabulary (projecting upper story – bay windows), the creative use of the natural gradient of the site in the plastic articulation of volumes, and the functional use of the semi-open spaces all lay the foundations for the further interpretation of traditional architecture. The project reflects the feeling expressed by Pikionis at this time: "The ecumenical spirit must be combined with the spirit of the nation" (*D. Pikionis*, 1987, p.103).

By way of contrast, the Aghias Sophias school (1931) by N. Mitsakis, although one of the same group of schools built under the educational

reforms of Venizelos' liberal government (1928-1932), failed in aesthetic terms to avoid a sterile interpretation of tradition through the neo-Byzantine style and the use of neo-Byzantine features to mask what was in all respects a modern building.

One need to wait several years for a genuine interpretation of tradition, a better integration with the climate and the landscape, the use of local materials, and ultimately the spontaneous submission of the form to function. A new regionalism in search of a "Greekness", as a continuation of the movement "Return to our roots" and contrary to the international character of post World War II modernism, would be developed gradually to peak in the late 50s, with main representatives Dimitri Pikionis and particularly Aris Konstantinidis.

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## **The GATCPAC as the Barcelona's Mediterranean critical Regionalism background**

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### **Abstract**

*During the Spanish Civil War, and the post war, too, Barcelona develops an architectural attitude in order to escape of the academicism imposed by the regime, seeking a new language that maintains the progressive and emancipator postulates that initially proclaimed the Modern Movement, but to recover the values of the Mediterranean popular tradition: Mediterranean Critical Regionalism.*

*However, there is an important background, represented by the architectural group GATCPAC, during the thirties, which make this architecture incline the balance towards a certain regionalism rather than to do it towards the standardized uniformity of the International Style. The humanization of architecture and its integration with real productions of local context are its main objectives.*

*With the participation of GATCPAC to the CIAM, especially the one in Athens in 1933, it will be shared with other south European countries, such as Italy, Greece and the south of France, these regionalist trends, that were starting growing simultaneously.*

*Thus, the Mediterranean context acquires during the thirties a kind of mythographic identity for a European intelligence fleeing the abuse of an alienating mechanistic ideology, such as the big metropolis of contemporary civilization. There is a fervently desire of architectural renaissance, based on a more authentic dimension than the one hitherto existing, and on the contact with a virgin and uncontaminated tradition where humans can participate of existential and representative forms linked to the local sense of belonging.*

*In conclusion, the reference to local tradition becomes an open criticism of certain aspects of modernity. Historical, artistic, topographic and climatic roots, as well as the identity strength of the Mediterranean, will be too strong to let themselves be carried away by the radical German centralism.*

**Keywords:** GATCPAC, thirties, Barcelona, architecture, Mediterranean

No style, no school's decorative worries and practiced by people who haven't had another teacher than the 'constructive' tradition (...) the popular Mediterranean architecture has, for these reasons, some constants that are repeated throughout all Mediterranean countries. (...) Main features common to this architecture are its elements: doors, windows, porches, etc., all on a human scale and a complete absence of superfluous decorative motifs and absurd contrivances. If any of its details could be interpreted as decorative, it is almost always derived from the

construction, with some rational basis that reinforces it (AC n° 18 writers, 1935, pag. 15).

With this quote GATCPAC (Catalan Group of Architects and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture) positioned itself definitely in defense of the modern architecture of Mediterranean tradition, fully contextualized in the interwar period and, in theory, dominated by megalomaniac Modern Movement.

### **Le Corbusier' mediterraneanism: the key role for GATCPAC**

The origins of GATCPAC's latinize will goes back to the mid-twenties, before the creation of the group, at the time of Josep Lluís Sert youth and his encounter with Le Corbusier. Three years after the publication of *Vers una Architecture* (1923), and as a result of the Catalan first trip to Paris when still a student of architecture, acquires the book, later shown to his colleagues. This is their first contact with the modern architecture. From Oscar Miguel Ares' point of view Catalan architects had become faithful allies of Le Corbusier regarding the claim of the new architecture in relation to the Central European thought. Ares cites an interesting phrase of Josep Maria Rovira:

Le Corbusier had a bias against Northern cultures that he always felt different from the ideal of order that the Mediterranean civilization offered him and, since 1911, his [first] journey to the East, had idealized in the image of the Parthenon, the real protagonist of *Vers une architecture*.

And in the end of the decade Le Corbusier delves into the Mediterranean regional universe in order to face the problems of the real and not abstract human being, common and concrete, through the knowledge that can facilitate this direct approach and generate fully testable realism even in the world of representation (Le Corbusier (a), 2006).

The links begin to interweave when Le Corbusier goes to Barcelona to give a lecture in May 1928 and Sert and Torres Clave show him the *Hotel on the beach* project (Pizza, A. (ed.); Rovira, J. M. (ed.), 2006). And a few months later,

along with other classmates, including Sixt Illescas, they undertake a study tour for almost two months in Europe. Among other cities visited, they choose again Paris. Sert returns in January of the following year, leaving the university for three months, he started working in Le Corbusier's studio fact that will create a turning point in the future all the Catalan modern architecture.

In the editorial of the first issue of *Plans* magazine, Le Corbusier wrote: "Real human expression in its natural element, able to facilitate the achievement of its fullness. Development of the human civilization where men dominate the tyranny of machines designed for comfort, will be held again in the universe" (Le Corbusier (b), 1931).

This idea is even more emphasized during the IV CIAM held in Athens in the summer of 1933 where again GATCPAC members met Le Corbusier. Only the Catalan delegation of GATEPAC (Sert, Torres Clave, Ribas Seva and Bonet Castellana) participate and presents three collages with graphics and mappings carried out on Barcelona, the project of the City of Rest and Holidays, the state of progress of Plan Macia and several projective essays about workers' housing (Pizza, 2006, pag 76).

### **GATCPAC's anti northicism**

In 1930, coinciding with the end of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, Fernando Garcia Mercadal, along with Manuel Aizpúrua, Sert and Torres Clave, founded in Zaragoza GATEPAC, with the aim of promoting rationalism in Spain and as the opening to the developing European trends and at the same time, becomes the Spanish section of the newly created management body during CIAM II, the CIRPAC (International Committee for the Solution of the Problems of the Contemporary Architecture). In addition, obtaining the right of first publication of the work of its members (for all Spanish-speaking countries) that the AC magazine has, promotes it internationally.

From 29 March to 2 April 1932, GATCPAC organizes in Barcelona the meeting of CIRPAC to prepare the IV CIAM in Athens. For the first time the meeting takes

place in an environment away from the predominant European continental centralism and is situated within the Mediterranean shores.

Of all the GATEPAC's sections, the most successful is the Catalan one. The group is formed in Barcelona in 1930 and its main members are Sert and Torres Clave, together with Raimon Duran Reynals, Germán Rodríguez Arias, Joan Baptista Subirana and Sixt Illescas. Because it maintains contacts with the Catalonian Government, they do many public works which allows a better and broader dissemination of the movement and its ideals. Their projects aim to make a more human and natural architecture; a regionalist architecture, interested in the actual production of the local context, an environmental architecture, able to interact productively with the peculiarities of the site. The aim is to make a different and simple architecture, that has the ability to combine the different specificities of each place and that is against the uniformity of standardization.

While GATCPAC's primary objective is to promote the Central European avant-garde architecture, following the conclusion of the IV CIAM its manifestations begin to opt gradually towards a more spiritual kind of architectural conception. In fact, in early 1934, the conference Sert gives at the Alumni Association of the College of Architecture, clearly shows the distance that exists with respect to the radical rationalist north. Sert divided the conference into three parts. The first analyzes several moments of modern architecture and concludes that it does not consider the spiritual needs of the individual and, therefore, is deficient and incomplete:

The theories of modern architecture led architects of some countries to create a 'functional' architecture that, regardless of the spiritual needs of the individual, has resulted in works which cannot meet our aspirations, which are always beyond of material needs. (...) There is a 'functional scholarship' as dead, as academics and as dangerous as the academic school. We have an example of it in the German Siedlung. These spiritually miserable constructions are another example (...) the danger of misinterpreted theories and that never the great works have been done only by theories. (...) Instead of these, the spirit of creation and things

done without prejudice, copied the elements that now we can call 'decoration machinist': pipe railings, windows cabin, lifesavers, etc. (...).

In the second part of the conference Sert reflects on how to resolve the future of architecture in Catalonia:

We must defend a climate architecture, a Mediterranean architecture made for intense sun, a clear atmosphere and friendly landscape. (...) If we analyze the works done in the Mediterranean lands, creations of spirits from different periods, we see that are linked by a recurring characteristics thousands of years apart and found in all the coasts of this sea.

And finally, the third part defense and enhances the progressive and emancipatory resources brought by the Modern Movement:

(...) Wonderful works have been done, new ways have been identified and new bases of urbanism have been established. (...) There is a new living and of our time architecture, (...) vibrant and youthful. (...) Works that fit the need of a new social structure that satisfies our spiritual and material desires. We can, for this, use all the means at hand, from the most traditional to the most modern; from stone to brick and reinforced concrete, steel and glass, provided they are controlled by a spirit of order, clarity and respect for the ancient constants, spiritual framework of all major architectural creations (Sert (a), 1934, pag. 43-44).

The following year the group published in AC the defense of the supremacy of the modern Mediterranean architecture in regard to the Central European:

Modern architecture, technically, is largely a discovery of the Nordic countries, but spiritually is Mediterranean architecture without style that influence this new architecture. Modern architecture is a return to pure, traditional forms, of the Mediterranean. It's a victory of the Latin sea! (GATCPAC (a), 1935, pag. 33).

## From Rationalism to Regionalism

In this context, the approach to the vernacular themes in the *Weekend Houses at the Garraf* (1934-1935) by Sert and Torres Clave acquire a clear Mediterranean identity with particular attention to lyrical and spiritual factors negated by the German functionalism. While similarities can be drawn regarding the *Detachable House* (1932), built only three years earlier, morphologically the Garraf homes are opposed based on their relationship with the environment: in the *Detachable House* contact with the natural environment is established through a process of double abstraction, while the houses at Garraf tries to maintain a relationship with the context through the inclusion of regional materials. This similarity-opposition relationship is remarkable, especially in one of the elements common to both houses: the terraces. While it was intended an optimization of the distribution spaces trying to offer a minimum of habitability to a maximum of functions, terraces, in both projects, are born like a contradiction, justifying itself as transition elements between the outside and interior. In the case of the *Weekend Houses* this contradiction is accentuated. They exceed the exclusively functionalist concepts and takes a leading role: "It will be for many, useless and not functional, but these factors, lyrically and spiritually, are of primary importance" (GATCPAC (b), 1935, pag. 36). In connection with this fact, appears the creation of a new language: Sert and Torres Clave mention the "lyrical" and "spirituality" concepts to justify a project option and move away from the thought and the technical language that they had expressed in the *Detachable House*. It can be glimpsed, therefore, the influence of the traditional Mediterranean building, such as the Catalan vault used in the house Type C or the furniture that moves away from the industrial veneration and it's adorned with all class of ceramics, wicker or craft chairs.

In the article that Ares writes about these homes, he detects a violation of the new constant sets by the CIAM congresses: "Standardization seemed replaced by craftsmanship; universalism by localism; rationality by tradition; and economics by the logical waste of local resources against industrial product optimization" (Ares, 1996, pag. 124).

The reference to local tradition becomes, therefore, an open criticism to the dogmatic aspects of modernity. Indeed, on Christmas 1934, the *Here and There* magazine published an article by Sert called "Architecture without 'style' and 'architect'", in which he insists on various aspects already stated from the first issue of AC of the constants of popular or traditional Mediterranean architecture, and adds a strong criticism of the "architects and theorists, especially Germans, who want to take the functionalist tests to the absurd" (Sert (b), 1934, pag. 33). Moreover, in this same issue, Sert speaks about architecture and highlights the changes taking place in a commentary dedicated to some works of Le Corbusier:

Modern architecture can use all the materials. The architect should not impose himself narrow limits. He can continue using traditional materials such as stone, next to reinforced concrete forms. Alternate flat and curved surfaces. It is the modern spirit, that it is the work. An open spirit and in constant creation" (Sert (b), 1934, pag. 34).

That is materialize by the Swiss in his works, fleeing mechanistic Central European trends and tending towards a more lyrical concept, and at the same time worshipping what is vernacular. The case of the *Maison de week-end* (1935) La Celle (France) is key, as evidenced in its affinities with the Weekend Houses (1934-1935); not only in terms of formal resolution and the use of local materials, but especially for the use of the Catalan vault, result of the interaction among members of GATCPAC and Le Corbusier (Pizza, Rovira, 2006, pag. 79).

The road that GATCPAC will travel in its few years of life will be most enriching: from the historical period in which the movement begins to modernize the appearance of Le Corbusier as an indisputable guiding figure; and from the in tune reclaim with the international movement up to the creative search of an autonomous way to join this "referential cosmology" (Pizza, Ares, 2006, pag. 106). The historical, artistic, topographic and climatic roots are too strong to let them be carried away by the radical German centralism. For GATCPAC but also for the municipalities and regions that it represents, the link with the "site" is such that it is impossible to give up its personality. Thus, the link with the Mediterranean is the common denominator that begins to develop in these



areas. Their strength of its identity will prevent that the internationalist architectural design and strongly formalism of the North roots. And so the group proclaimed the year of its decommissioning:

"The builders of this architecture, always show a great predilection for pure forms and volumes clearly stressed. (...) There has always been an architecture outside these styles [classic], an architecture 'without style' (...) and generally without an architect and without a blueprint. These Mediterranean buildings from all eras, purely utilitarian, most of the times of a magnificent simplicity and a dignity that we would like to see lavished in today's big cities (...) Everything in them is natural, everything has been invented to serve man; all its elements have the right size, human measure. (...) The elements of these buildings, up to its smallest details, are mass production, which have been refined and perfected over the centuries: doors with precise height and width, windows, cupboards, furniture, ceramics. Forms, always the same with slight variations, which are repeated throughout the Mediterranean coast. The facades at noon, are protected from too much sun, by trellises or porches, elements that screen light without depriving the view of the outside scenery. The roofs are flat, terraced, or of Moorish tiles and always very gentle slope; so that the prism that supports them dominates the whole, retaining all its strength and purity. (...) The interesting and vital in this Mediterranean architecture, is what the schools of architecture does not seek to perpetuate and constitute its basis: primary volumes, large smooth surfaces, clear and bright polychrome, matching constructions with the dominant lines of the landscape in which they are located and which requires creating new forms for each location, to invent new solutions. It can't interest us the regional architecture of limited use. What interests us is an architecture based on existing elements, an architecture for a climate, a light and a given landscape (GATCPAC (b), 1935, pag. 31).

## The future

The outbreak of the Civil War in July 1936 will mean, however, a radical break in the chronological continuity of the architectural modernization events; and once passed, the long and dark postwar period. Franco's regime will be a terrible social, political, economic and cultural setback. As for the architectural context, the academic and monumental autarkic be the only way accepted by the regime. However, after the first years of strict repression and darkness, and, in Barcelona with the celebration of the Fifth Assembly of Architects in 1949, which will put the eye on the new modern architecture, also begin a new path for the architecture of the city. It will create new architectural languages that respect the technological advances brought by the Modern Movement, but that recover the forms and functions of the vernacular architecture of each place, in a gesture of reinterpretation of its inherited identity. This will be the main reason for this return to the past, a return to what it was before the devastation caused by the war. But it shall not return as a copy of a previous architecture, already out of context, but it will be readdress and adapted to new and real needs, following the principles of critical regionalism applied to the Mediterranean context.

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**A CRITICAL APPROACH TO MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE IN SPAIN.  
Rumours and Truths  
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**Abstract**

*When the Civil War started in 1936 Modernist architecture had changed the drift of architecture in Spain, starting with Madrid's '1925 Generation' and a sort of Critical Regionalism, recently termed Reasonabilism. Previously called Spanish Rationalism, the concept and reasons for the name were too diffuse. Interestingly, this generation produced relevant works, among which the outstanding Madrid's La Zarzuela Racecourse, by Carlos Arniches and Martín Domínguez (1934, with help by engineer Torroja), along with most of the milestones of the pre-war period – Madrid University, JAE buildings and Instituto Escuela complex, Clinical Hospital, New Ministeries.*

*In the early thirties, a new Modernist group appeared as a result of the second CIAM, the GATCPAC, derived from the GATEPAC, the Spanish branch of CIRPAC. These architects promoted the strictest and most aboriginal, orthodox principles. They were a branch of a Spanish Modern Movement that had been active since 1925, when the '1925 Generation' of architects emerged. Where did all these groups originate, what were their principles, goals and challenges is part of what this study wants to unveil.*

*Rumours and truths regarding this period intertwine and have produced a number of historical fallacies hard to overcome nowadays. Questions like whether to call it Modern Movement, Madrilean Rationalism, avant-garde or International Style; whether the author of Madrid's Hippodrome was Eduardo Torroja, like Wright once said, and Torroja stated; or whether the University was not built in early Francoist dictatorship, are just some of the common uncertainties usually shared by both lay and specialized people with respect to 20th century Spanish architecture still these days.*

*The present paper aims at clearing the field and tracing the roots of Spanish Modernist principles to bring full light into the origins and development of Modernist architecture in Spain, and its drift throughout the last century.*

**Keywords:** 'Generation of 1925', G25, Avant-garde architecture, Modern Movement  
Spain, International Style Spain

[*The avant-garde*] felt the yearning for the union of life and art'. Octavio Paz<sup>1</sup>

### **For Monstrification'**

In 1975 Lucio Blanco authored a twelve-minute short-film *Arquitectura para después de una Guerra*<sup>2</sup> as a student at the Faculty of Communication Sciences in Madrid, recently exhibited giving several academic colleagues the chance to watch a stupefying film.

The ground-breaking short aimed at picturing Spain's post-war oppression through the architectural materialisation. In turn, it pictured the architecture produced after the Spanish Civil War *by*, rather than *during* the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975). Those forty years' summary included the avant-garde and Modern Movement periods. However, not all the architecture filmed fit inside the Francoist tyranny (Zavala, 1945). Some relevant works remained out of their reach, as happened with the most critical currents' works tacitly considered degenerate (Diez-Pastor, 2012) – which had subsisted thanks to the intellectual embroidery of the architects to skip post-war censorship.

What Blanco's (1975) film showed, anyway, a melange of the previous fifty years architectural repertory *all included*, a sort of compendium of the architecture produced in Spain since 1925. The avant-garde, critical regionalism (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2003) and early Modernist works were all mixed up with the '*aboriginal*' (Mumford, 1924) and uncritical totalitarian works (Diez-Pastor, 2012) – as was denounced by the end of the Spanish War (Zavala, 1945).

The film was extremely critical of the dying regime, posing the question as to what might have produced such an ideological purée where critical architecture was taken for anti-modernist. The author's explanation – that 'as lay in architecture, I was not aware of the architectural truth, just looked at it from the facts lived' (2005) – revealed the intriguing chain of events behind general misbelief. Blanco had courageously spoken aloud, though he was transmitting what was common shared knowledge - with the authentic and the fraudulent fused.

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<sup>1</sup> '[La vanguardia] tenía la pretension de unir vida y arte', in Octavio Paz's original version.

<sup>2</sup> Architecture for a Post-war.

Truths and lies, conveniently administered and expanded by the regime had provoked mislead knowledge, so masterly worked out that even anti-Francoist students believed that the master buildings of the critical Madrilean avant-garde of the 1920's – the '1925 Generation' – were totalitarian. This totalitarianism even reached the architects of the mid-century rebellious '1940 Generation' (Baldellou, 1976, p. 9) who abhorred the 1953 Alhambra Manifesto (Baldellou, 1976, p. 18).

The regime had used Modernist architecture as a ready-made palimpsest, terming it degenerate while appropriating it to build their own totalitarian style (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p. 260). It was only natural that the 1970 youngsters infer any Modernist building be of totalitarian production, even beyond chronology. Modernist architecture became ugly, rejectable and alien to them, who unknowingly made theirs Ruskin's (1849: 87) words. Modernist buildings were '*ugly things, the expense of which ought in truth to be set down in the architect's contract, as "For Monstrification"*'. That is, architectural monstrosities.

### **The rise of Spanish Modernism: the '1925 Generation'<sup>3</sup>**

To understand how could Modernist works ever be taken for monstrosities, how such misunderstanding could possibly occur, flashback is required to retrace the origins and evolution of Spain's Modernism.

At the turn of the century, in 1898 Spain had witnessed the loss of the imperial remains falling frantic with depression. Architecture gave herself to Eclecticism which soon turned into the early 1900's tragic Neo-regionalism (Diez-Pastor, 2012). As González-Amézqueta (1968) said,

Around the turn of the century, the absorbing worry of Madrilean architects focused all means in finding a style mostly centred in ornamental problems, which could express any specifically national

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<sup>3</sup> From now on, the G25 – constituted by Luis Lacasa, Manuel Sánchez Arcas, Miguel de los Santos, Agustín Aguirre, Carlos Arniches, Rafael Bergamín, Luis Blanco Soler, Martín Domínguez, Fernando García Mercadal, Casto Fernández-Shaw, Eduardo Figuerola and Juan de Zavala. For the reasons given in 2003, this list differs from Carlos Flores' one of 1961.

characteristic. Undoubtedly such position corresponds to the nationalistic and purist thought of the great majority of the generation of 1898<sup>4</sup> (González-Amézqueta, 1968).

The 1898 architects, with no clear principles or prospects other than to recover the lost identity<sup>5</sup> and identified with Unamuno's (1913) '*tragic sense of life*', were to become masters to those born at the turn of the century – the groundbreaking avant-garde G25. As Baldellou (1973: 8) explained, '*the thread of the Madrilean architectural tradition ... was to get lost by those early years of the century*', however having partly influenced the avant-garde generation. Interestingly, Baldellou (1973) mentions Amós Salvador's *Gal Factory* in Madrid (1915), as the last great Neo-Mudejar work (1973: 8). It could be argued, however, that the last ultra-nationalist, Neo-Regionalist work was Antonio Palacios' *Porriño Town Hall* (1924) which caused the rebellion of Modernist thought against that current (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p. 258). The fact that Palacios taught Project Design to some G25 members while at School influenced their need to put an end to an architecture they no longer identified with. Salvador instead, a renowned openminded and socially concerned architect and politician evolved towards deeply critical stances (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p. 258), while Palacios remained the same uncritical 'folklo-regionalist' (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p. 256) for life.

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<sup>4</sup> The term is used generally, not as the 'Generation of 1898' which refers to the famous group of authors, poets, thinkers and intellectuals – among which Unamuno, Baroja, Azorín, Valle Inclán, Machado, Ortega y Gasset, Arniches Sr, Gómez-Moreno, et cetera -, who constitute a very specific event in Spain's history and culture.

<sup>5</sup> An architecture deduced from Juan de Villanueva's style and works. Even though it had started as Villanueva's own way, it had rooted as 'typical of Madrid'. By the turn of century it had fell under the influence of the uncritical Neo-Mudejar thread of Neo-Regionalism – that is, the latter was a stain, whereas the former became a part of history of which to be proud.



**Figure 1.** From top to bottom, Fernández-Shaw's *Porto Pi Petrol Station* (Madrid); Bergamín & Blanco Soler's *Marquis of Villora's House* (Madrid); and García Mercadal's '*Goya's Corner*' (Zaragoza). (Photographs of public domain. This view, by the author.)

The G25 architects graduated from the School of Madrid between 1918 and 1924, when Europe had changed forever due to the horrendous Great War. Spain's clash of 1898 seemed too far from their time, they no longer identified with the Unamunan tragedy they had been raised into. They were conscious of their time and place as their master Torres Balbás (1918) had taught them to do. Their free revolt of the architectural panorama, starting in 1925 Madrid only came as the natural result. Still, theirs was no conscious assemblage nor established on purpose under any manifesto. It was rather a matter of tacit agreement to a set of principles (Diez-Pastor, 2005, pp. 35-39). Some of these architects were unfairly termed *folklorists* (Flores, 1961, pp. 169-172), an idea later softened (Flores, 1965, p. 24). Other theorists (Bohigas, 1970, pp. 132-134) maintained that the G25's attitude was inevitably entangled to their progressive attitude which paradoxically resisted to forget tradition, ratifying this



idea in years to come (Bohigas, 1998) as the G25 had always defended (Zavala, 1945).

The first G25 works appeared in 1927, soon becoming the milestones of a new architecture for the new times being - Bergamín & Blanco Soler's *Marquis of Villora House* (Madrid), Fernández-Shaw's *Porto Pi Petrol Station* (Madrid) and García Mercadal's '*Goya's Corner*' (Zaragoza). The same year Carlos Arniches had been appointed Architect Director by the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios<sup>6</sup> and won with Martín Domínguez, his working partner, the national competition for the *Albergues de carretera*<sup>7</sup> (Diez-Pastor, 2010a).

Changes, however, had started earlier, on those architects' visit to the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs* of Paris in 1925 – after which the group were named (Diez-Pastor, 2005, p.47). The impact of the event made them reflect about the new architecture and emerging figures, the attendances and absences, their ideas and those of their elders. Criticism took an unprecedented shape, jumping from the cafés to the media.

Architecture as a human product ought to reflect its authors' concerns and principles (Mumford, 1941). The G25 were not so much attracted by Le Corbusier as by Tony Garnier and Auguste Perret; they commented on the reasons for the German misplacement, the deceiving Austrian pavilion where Peter Behrens had been invited to participate; they enjoyed the Czech pavilion, and had a fine surprise with Mallet-Stevens' – that is, they spoke their minds freely. Their interest was to explore whatever seemed interesting, rather than subscribe any particular movement. They did not care for names or manifestos as much as deeds. Paris provided the G25 with the gunpowder to ignite their creativity and ideas of change (Diez-Pastor, 2005, pp.41-55).

As a result a brand new focus appeared, modern and reflective about the social changes and needs, in line with European currents though critically adapted (Diez-Pastor, 2005, p. 33). Materialization was still the toughest part, all the more when referred to the domestic sphere, since the reasons for the

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<sup>6</sup> From now on, the JAE, the Board of Further Study and Scientific Research to which institutions like the Instituto Escuela, the Rockefeller Institute and the Residencia de Estudiantes belonged.

<sup>7</sup> Highway Inns, built between 1928 and 1930.

transformations that had metamorphosed Europe in the blink of an eye had escaped Spain due to its World War I neutrality. Having duly followed the European conflict, however the neutral rigidity (Fuentes Codera, 2014) had ideologically polarized the Spanish society, either providing a way to critical progress or a means of affirmation of the nationalist spirit (Fuentes Codera, 2014). As Unamuno (1976) stated in 1916, '*in rigour, there are no neutrals. We are all at war*'. That is, the Great War reopened the old 1898 wounds while Spain stayed aside from the beneficial changes internationally experienced. These were first witnessed in Paris by the G25, who thought them necessary to improve Spanish life, no matter if difficult to apply.

Back in Madrid, articles started to appear contradicting their seniors. Criticism, held in the afternoon gatherings of the cafés as usual in Madrid, reached its peak while to everybody's amazement it had jumped into the written media. Not just the specialized press, – mainly *La Construcción Moderna* and *Arquitectura* – but also publications like *La Gaceta Literaria* or *La Esfera*, and the newspapers, from *El Sol* to *El Debate*, raced to publish the architects' opinions and works. García Mercadal's example with his chronicles on European architecture for *Arquitectura* started to be followed by other colleagues (García Mercadal, 1926)<sup>8</sup> who would soon try to follow his frenetic activity.



**Figure 2.** *Central Power Station*, Ciudad Universitaria (Madrid), 1932. Luis Lacasa and Manuel Sánchez Arcas. (Photograph by the author.)

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<sup>8</sup> Report of his stay at the Academy of Spain in Rome (1923-1926). Written in 1926, it was first published in 1998.

Criticism gave these men the power to explain their society the novelties, and transformations required. People their age soon engaged into their discourse. They soon reckoned that houses ought to evolve and seek comfort through a better distribution and the inclusion of new facilities and materials that would help them be well heated in the winter. Health, then a main concern, started to make itself visible in the G25 works, with shelters to protect from the sun while reminding of the need to be outdoors; new mechanisms for doors and windows allowing for better ventilation; or new soundproofing materials that eased community life.

Still the most difficult part dealt with the deep social transformations required. While Europe had witnessed the loss of their young and productive men, sending their women to work, drastically reducing the family size and supressing domestic service, Spanish middle class was still constituted by well-established families with no less than four or five children and at least three people to service them. Houses were full of bedrooms and large living and kitchen areas, which soon became the G25 target. Social concern remained synonym to charity work.

Making themselves visible represented for the G25 a chance to educate the whole society on the need for those changes, yet also a challenge. Such was, for instance, Arniches and Domínguez's interest with their weekly column in *El Sol* (Diez-Pastor, 2005, pp.61), where they discussed issues from 'Kitchens' to 'Built ensembles' – all of them starting new interests in their legions of readers (Diez-Pastor, 2005, p.63). Other colleagues soon followed.

### **The avant-garde as a vision of the world**

The prestige of the G25 grew as their speech revealed consistent with their works. By 1935 hardly any reader of the daily press ignored who they were. Between 1925 and 1936 they participated in the most relevant works then

started in Madrid<sup>9</sup>, from collective works like the Ciudad Universitaria or the JAE campus to national competitions individually attended – like the new airport and racecourse in Madrid – or relevant private commissions<sup>10</sup>.



**Figure 3.** *Apartment Building in Menéndez Pelayo* (Madrid), 1928. Casto Fernández-Shaw. (Photograph by the author.)

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<sup>9</sup> In Madrid's Ciudad Universitaria (1927-1943), Luis Lacasa and Manuel Sánchez Arcas were commissioned with the *Clinic Hospital* (1928) and *Central Power Station* (1932); Miguel de los Santos the *Faculty of Sciences* (1928) and *Faculty of Medicine* (1928); Rafael Bergamín and Luis Blanco Soler the *Sports Fields* and *Residence Hall Jaime del Amo* (1929); and Agustín Aguirre the *Faculty of Philosophy* (1928). The new campus for research and education, the JAE appointed Carlos Arniches as its architect in 1927, whom with his working partner Martín Domínguez won the *Albergues de Carretera* [Highway Inns] competition. Meanwhile, Fernando García Mercadal and Martín Domínguez collaborated at Secundino Zuazo's office in Madrid and Casto Fernández-Shaw won the *Barajas Airport* competition (1929). Most G25 architects were privately active while they continued their public activity attached to the Ciudad Universitaria, or to new public developments. Like Aguirre, in charge of the *Faculty of Law*; De los Santos with the *School of Dentistry*; or Lacasa and Sánchez Arcas, with the *Residence Hall for Teachers* and *Rectorate* buildings.

<sup>10</sup> Like Figueroa, whose works included several apartment buildings and the *Apartment Building in José Abascal*; Bergamín & Blanco Soler, who authored '*El Viso*' housing estate; García Mercadal, who did *Villa Amparo* (Majorca), *Díaz-Caneja's House*, and won the *Museum of Modern Art*; De los Santos, who built an *Apartment Building in Alfonso XI*; Zavala, responsible for some apartment buildings by Madrid's Parque del Oeste; or Fernández-Shaw, author of an *Apartment Building in Menéndez Pelayo*. Lacasa & Sánchez Arcas built the *Hospital of Toledo*, and Sánchez Arcas the *Algeciras Market*, while Arniches & Domínguez won the competition for the new *La Zarzuela Racecourse*.

Notwithstanding the number or relevance of the works commissioned, it was the new architectural concept and principles over which it stood that operated the transformation, introducing Modernism in Spain.

Shortly, most of the buildings had become milestones of Spain's architecture, even praised abroad. They represented a whole new architectural concept built with new means, materials and techniques, often experimental, supporting the new panorama (Diez-Pastor, 2005). The use of reinforced concrete generalized among these architects who often sought the civil engineers' opinion to refrain their calculations even if not required (Diez-Pastor, 2003, pp.317-370). Some building companies<sup>11</sup> in charge of the works unexpectedly openminded were keen to accept new techniques, materials and means, even acquiring patents abroad (Diez-Pastor, 2010b, p. 363). The effort done by all the parties involved was coordinated and agreed, offering an unprecedented chance to develop a new architecture. Such a unique opportunity to unleash creativity, so long restrained, spurred the group's working capacity.

Yet the G25 most genuine contribution materialized in their new concept of architectural space which determined their buildings. Among their strongest influences were Adolf Loos' idea of space, the *Raumplan*, described by him as interconnected continued spaces in a way that the changes were functional though unnoticeable. Like Loos', the G25's architecture was not conceived through drawings but rather through spaces. These concepts evolved from Schmarsow's theory of dynamic space, with geometrical abstraction and '*the modernist preoccupation with shaping internal space to address functional needs*' (Schwarzer, 1991, p. 57) as clear outcomes. As a result, their planning started from inside advancing outwards, producing interesting assemblages of volumes never seen before. The process, still, did not end outside the building in its façades, but rather went on towards the environment and into the landscape (Diez-Pastor, 2008), producing a series of transitions aimed at integrating architecture with its context – be it natural or built, rural or urban, visitable or habitable. It was an architecture in the line Mumford (1924) proposed, '*based on*

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<sup>11</sup> AGROMÁN, whose founder accepted any suggestions of patents on new materials and techniques to acquire, was one of those companies.

*the perception of "place"* (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2003, p. 19). However, even though it was highly critical with any principles of modernity as voiced by the different currents, it cannot be termed 'regionalist' (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p.59) strictly speaking. In fact, any regional element or technique they used – from arches to brick walls – was immediately given a wholly new turn – functional and symbolic. Far from the folklorist manners of their elders or a poor sense of regionalism, the G25 architects were self-critical and reflexive. Le Corbusier, Gropius and all the leading lights of Modernism who visited and lectured in Madrid those years were enthusiastic about them (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p.259).

Renunciation to their culture, time and place, or the heritage received was not an option for these men unless the process happened to suggest the opposite – in which case they took the challenge. Servility to Modernist principles was neither a choice for architects who, if anything, rejected to classify their works or be classified, and in the best of cases defined their style as *reasonable architecture* (Diez-Pastor, 2005, p.33). Only Luis Gutiérrez Soto, a younger colleague to the G25, surrendered to leading trends adopting anyone likely to become popular rejecting criticism (Baldellou, 1973, p.14)<sup>12</sup>.

The G25, instead, benefited from a society surrendered to their talent and their architecture. Providing their pedagogical deployment to explain Modernism's benefits to a general audience, people would naturally be eager to adopt a Modernist way life, free from constraints and future oriented. As Octavio Paz described it, '*... the avant-garde was not just an aesthetics and a language; it was an erotic, a politics, a vision of the world, an action: a lifestyle*'<sup>13</sup> (1987: 148). However, demand was still too moderate for the urgency with which most of these young architects had expected the changes to come.

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<sup>12</sup> The fact that he had graduated with the best grades seemed in the eyes of the following generations enough reason to award him with a supposed membership of the noblest generation of architects in the history of Spain since the times of Juan de Villanueva.

<sup>13</sup> '*...la vanguardia no fue únicamente una estética y un lenguaje; fue una erótica, una política, una visión del mundo, una acción: en estilo de vida*', in Octavio Paz's original text.

## Rumour has it ...

The Francoist regime declared Modernist architecture as degenerate while they used it as the foundations for their regressive infra-style based upon the rawest folklore and religion (Zavala, 1945, p. 158), termed by Torres Balbás (1918b: p.176) 'national-traditionalism' – including the then emerging 'Spanish style' based on the same principles -, or 'national-exaltation style' (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p. 260). Its first signst had shily appeared before the Civil War around Pedro Muguruza and his circle, though had been clearly despised by the Modernists. Muguruza, appointed General Director of Architecture from 1939 by the Francoist regime, institutionalized the architectural madness and resentment against those who had ignored him for so long<sup>14</sup>. He established the guidelines of the new style and architectural censorship meant to rule until the end of the Francoist tyranny<sup>15</sup>.

Very conveniently, the G25 was uniformed by the dictatorship into what they called 'Madrilean Rationalism', – meaning theirs was 'degenerate art' – unifying architects who had rejected any preset rules other than those of logic, who did not fit under any labels or uniforms (Zavala, 1945, pp.158-159). The G25 members preseved their own personality and character, traceable throughout their work. To classify them under the Rationalist label - which they seldom followed as understood worldwide – is little descriptive, if not unfair (Diez-Pastor, 2005, pp.33-39). Perhaps for this reason, when interviewed by García Mercadal (1928) on their architecture, Lacasa said his was *logical* while Arniches and Domínguez defined theirs as *reasonable* using a much more moderate tone than Blanco Soler's (Mercadal, 1928, p.4). While Sánchez Arcas and Lacasa were members of the Communist Party, and Bergamín and Blanco Soler open communist sympathizers, Figueroa and Zavala supported Falange. Their

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<sup>14</sup> Pedro Muguruza (1893-1952) had graduated as an architect in 1916 with the highest grades, yet was never considered a good architect – in the line with the Spanish historic tradition in this respect. It is worth remembering that Muguruza is the author of the most important Francoist monument, the *Valle de los Caídos Monument*. He also organized the Architects Purge Process after which all those architects who had held public posts or even had worked for the administration were severely fined and lost their rights to work as architects, thus forced them to underground work or exile.

<sup>15</sup> Muguruza counted on Luis Gutiérrez Soto and Pedro Bidagor – a second line architect who had lived on his draughtmanship at Secundino Zuazo's office until the War – to define the 'new style', choosing two younger architects as if to confer some validity and reliability to the rules.

affiliations showed in their adoption of more or less radical stances in their practice, like Sánchez Arcas' and Lacasa's proximity to the ideas *scientific rationalism* expressed by *ABC*, and their drift parallel to Hannes Meyer's (Diez-Pastor, 2005, pp.36-37) – as made evident in Lacasa's contribution to the *Spanish Pavillion* in Paris International Expo, in 1937. Rationalism could hardly apply to such an heterogeneous group. Still, it helped to depict them as Modernist architects conveniently avoiding rash ideological explanations.



**Figure 4.** *La Zarzuela Racecourse* (Madrid), 1934. Carlos Arniches and Martín Domínguez. (Photograph from AGA, use entitled to the author.)

Later depictions earned the G25 be called *folklorists* (Flores, 1965, p.24) due to their opposition to break with history and their culture. Instead they believed that Modernism ought to adapt to the circumstances (Mumford, 1924) which to others responded to a progressive attitude that refused to reject tradition, *'perhaps generating the most refined and progressive image of republican Madrid'* (Bohigas, 1970, p.132).

Their social concern was shared by the younger GATCPAC members, the Catalanian section of the GATEPAC<sup>16</sup>, the Spanish branch of CIRPAC founded by

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<sup>16</sup> There were several groups within the GATEPAC were Centre – based in Madrid -, North – including San Sebastian and Bilbao – and East – based in Barcelona. The East group, or GATCPAC, clearly outnumbered the rest, fed with the young students of the Barcelona School of Architecture.



García Mercadal and Zavala in 1930 as a result of CIAM<sup>17</sup> (Ucha, 1980, p.182; Zavala, 1945, p.158). Constituted by Sert, Illescas and other young Catalanian architects it also defended the need to build a better world. Even so, both the G25 and the GATCPAC approached it from different Modernist interpretations. While the G25 were pioneers of Modernism in Spain, the GATCPAC affirmed Spanish Modernism. The main difference was their relation to CIAM. Until 1936 all Spanish representatives at the CIAM had been G25 members. While they practiced Modernism of their own criteria, the GATCPAC defended an orthodox Modernism, slavish (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p. 259) of the CIAM principles, showing great respect to some of the G25 architects – i.e., Carlos Arniches (Sert *et al.*, 1933). Francoism dismissed their receptivity to foreign architectural ideas as ‘the most degenerate of all degenerate art’ (Diez-Pastor, 2012, p. 259).

Among the post-war group of resented, architects, engineers and companies alike sought a chance to collect their *debt*. Though praised by all their collaborators as much for their technical as their artistic talent (Zavala, 1945), the fact that the G25 be now out of the way, purged<sup>18</sup>, left a huge void for the resented to jump to the first line of practice (Diez-Pastor, 2005). Hence their chance to tell tales about the past, once that the former first line had died or exiled, or had been deactivated (Ucha, 1980).

A relevant example was Madrid’s new *La Zarzuela Racecourse*, whose competition had won Carlos Arniches and Martín Domínguez in 1934, calling on Eduardo Torroja as technical adviser. As is now known, Félix Candela’s<sup>19</sup> cooperation was decisive to the evolution of the project solving the key

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<sup>17</sup> The *Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne* (CIAM), and the *Comité International pour la Réalisation des Problèmes de l’Architecture Contemporaine* (CIRPAC).

<sup>18</sup> The post-war Purge of the Architects was another of Muguruza’s deeds, who conceived it in way in which architects ought to denounce and accuse their colleagues in order to be able to continue into practice. By way of two examples, Manuel Sánchez Arcas was sentenced to a fine comprising more than all he had, and banned to continue into practice either in the public or private sector. His was the highest of all G25 purges, though none of them escaped to be fined in the best of cases.

<sup>19</sup> Félix Candela (1910-1997) graduated from Madrid School of Architecture in 1935. He had a leading technical profile as an expert in the latest reinforced concrete techniques and had been Lecturer at the Material Resistance Chair still being a student. The long time required to obtain his diploma signed by the President of the Republic – more than one year – made it impossible for him to obtain it before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936, when he was forced to flee Spain. He exiled in Mexico where he studied the degree again due to the impossibility to produce any demonstrative document of his profession.

technical problems of the structure throughout the process (Diez-Pastor, 2003). The architectural idea, based upon a structure that aimed at reproducing the horses' last effort on arrival, had started with a unique shelter present even before the final team was established – that is, before Torroja's appointment – and with the traditional Spanish concept of *plaza mayor* in mind – which explained the forefront arcade. Torroja's commitment was to supervise the structural calculations as greater warranty of success. The building company, AGROMÁN, set as a condition to accept the construction that Torroja did not intervene as director of the works due to his full-time supervision of the Ciudad Universitaria works. However, years later Torroja, on the brink of explaining *his idea*, incurred gross architectural errors (Diez-Pastor, 2003, pp. 317-407) among which the arcade was termed an artistic licence. The idea as explained by its real authors – Carlos Arniches and Martín Domínguez – in its natural terms was however consistent with their previous and subsequent work. Taking from the vernacular concept of the *plaza mayor*, they organized the whole setting both as a spectacle for people and a horse show. While the horses raced giving their best, people could sit and watch, walk around while they chatted, or bet, all in a completely natural and easygoing way cleverly planned to benefit from Spanish culture and character. The building was to provide the best for both events – that is, to let the horses do their best comfortably while people could benefit from the show in a memorable journey to which the arcade was essential (Diez-Pastor, 2005, pp.172-198).



**Figure 5.** Projected canopy between every two classrooms of the *Kindergarten of the Instituto Escuela – JAE* (Madrid), 1935. Carlos Arniches. (Photograph by the author.)

Arniches also had to face the rumour that the canopies planned by him, calculated and legalized under his name for the *Instituto Escuela Kindergarten* within the JAE campus, had been Torroja's work. As evidence show and Bohigas (1970) explained, '*the architectural quality of Torroja's work is so varied that we feel inclined to attribute the mos significant spatial and formal decisions to the successive architects with whom he worked*' (1970: 34). However, despite the documents rumour has it still nowadays that it was Torroja's.

### **We cannot remember without Architecture**

*'The avant-garde is the great rupture, and with it the tradition of rupture closes'*<sup>20</sup>, said Octavio Paz (1987: 148) in very descriptive terms. That was the aim of G25 buildings offering new possibilities for an improved new way of life aimig to solve problems.

The period between 1925 and 1936, – from Primo's dictatorship and the II Republic to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, – though short was the most prolific since Juan de Villanueva's time. Once again, architecture took the lead, seeking out the general benefit. The wave involved the architects as much as other professionals.

However, the social and political agitation of the times, the Civil War and the turn to the '*folklorist "aboriginal"*' (Mumford, 1924) currents imposed by the Francoist regime later confirmed by the Alhambra Manifesto (1953), made it even more difficult to tackle with the historical facts.

The truth being that history is told by the winning party, also in charge of the evidences, made Spain's Modernist Movement a tough case. Evidence was often lost if not conveniently burnt or disappeared from the archives; validity and reliability of the (few) remaining direct sources relied on the ideology of both interviewer and interviewee as much as the memory, good will and courage to tell the truth of the latter. In such circumstances deep serious research seldom

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<sup>20</sup> 'La vanguardia es la gran ruptura y con ella se cierra la tradición de la ruptura', in Octavio Paz's original version.

occurred unless it might produce a scoop – save for the case of those deeply committed to unveil the truths, which were sure to be considered politically incorrect. In the end, it used to be more gratifying for researchers to look forward than try to disentangle rumours and misunderstandings going over the old scars even if theirs be a noble prospect.

It may still take a few more decades to settle the facts of the Spanish architectural avant-garde and Modernism, though no doubt they meant the great rupture. However, the work ought to continue since, as Ruskin (1849: 147) once said, ‘... [*a*]rchitecture is to be regarded by us with the most serious thought. We may live without her, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her’.

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## **MEDITERRANEITÀ OLTREMARE:**

### **Assimilation, Appropriation, or Rejection? The Imposition of the Fascist Aesthetic Ideology of Mediterranean-ness Overseas from 1935 to 1940**

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#### **Abstract**

*In the 1920s, fascist ideologues promised Italians a prosperous global empire, one which would expand to include lands of the former Roman Empire and beyond. Imperial expansionism was not only geo-political, but also cultural. In order to justify this cultural expansion into former Roman lands in the Mediterranean basin such as North Africa, the concept of mediterraneità was employed a propaganda tool. It was then applied to regions beyond the basin, such as East Africa and South America, but its logic became increasingly convoluted along the way. In East Africa, it was mainly used as a means of 'civilising' the backwardness of indigenous people. In parts of South America which had been populated with large Italian expatriate communities for decades, terms such as Roman-ness and Latin-ness were implemented to convince these communities and peoples of Iberian descent that they shared a common Latin culture. Indigenous people and those of African decent were conveniently ignored in the equation.*

*In the case of Africa, the colonies became realised, while in South America, they became desired. This essay first sets the historical context (early 1920s – mid 1930s) and then illustrates through key examples from 1935 – 1940 how the overall strategy of mediterraneità was implemented as part of both hard and soft rhetorical arguments aimed at realised and desired colonies, respectively. It also addresses how these arguments were received by natives of these colonised lands. Were they assimilated, appropriated, or rejected?*

**Keywords:** Migration, Architectural History, Italian Fascism

*Italianità (Italian-ness) or mediterraneità (Mediterranean-ness) were the two terms most frequently used to describe the formal qualities of a design identified as distinctly Italian.*

*Dennis P. Doordan*

*Architecture was born in the Mediterranean and triumphed in Rome in the eternal monuments created from the genius of our birth: it must, therefore, remain Mediterranean and Italian.*

*Florestano Di Fausto*

#### **Introduction - Mediterranean = mare nostrum**

Much is written about Mussolini's attempts at creating a global fascist empire, one based upon, or justified by, the fact that Italians were the rightful heirs of the former Roman Empire. Most accounts focus on specificities pertaining to particular countries and/or colonies. The focus of this essay, however, attempts

to show how an overarching strategy of *mediterraneità* (Mediterranean-ness) was implemented in both *realised* and *desired* colonies. North and East Africa exemplify the former, while parts of South America represent the latter.

Generally speaking, the terms "*italianità* (Italian-ness), *mediterraneità* (Mediterranean-ness), (*romanità*) (Roman-ness), and *latinità* (Latin-ness) were viewed as interchangeable tools of propaganda by Italian fascist ideologues. Employing any of these terms often depended on the context in which the fascist promoters were trying to prove or justify their actions to Italians, other powerful nations, or indigenous peoples in both her *realised* and *desired* colonies. Part of the political rhetoric argued that Italy had the right to (re)conquer former lands of the Roman Empire such as North Africa. In this case, there was a logic, however misguided it was. When applied to East Africa and South America,<sup>1</sup> however, the logic became increasingly convoluted.

Fascists had to adapt their overall strategy in order to transform the *desired* into the *realised*. In the case of *desired*, a soft, veiled rhetoric was employed, appearing on the surface to be more gentile. In reality they were simply being passive-aggressive, hiding the true malevolence of fascism. In the case of *realised* colonies, the strategy was to utilise a harder, more direct rhetoric accompanied by inhumane actions.<sup>2</sup>

Polemical questions in both the *desired* and *realised* colonies arose: How would people in the colonies, particularly those who did not fit into the ethnic and racial categorisations of a common Roman ancestry, receive the constant onslaught of fascists' propagandising of Italian superiority, particularly in architecture and aesthetics? Would the displacement of Italian cultural capital needed to implement said superiority have to be fused with localisms, resulting in hybridised products in order to mitigate said colonised peoples? If so, would acknowledgement of said localisms be deemed a sign of weakness by fascist

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<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the desired colonies, to which I am referring, are Argentina, Uruguay, and (southern) Brazil.

<sup>2</sup> When analysing the terms of *mediterraneità* and *italianità* in relation to the arts and architecture produced during the fascist period, it is easy to overlook the brutality of the regime's actions by merely focusing on aesthetic qualities. inflicted on said peoples. It is important to remember that the terms had a very dark side.



ideologues? After all, how could any other culture produce anything comparable to the grandness of Roman-ness?

*Italy certainly has a colonial past, albeit one that is often described as rimosso ("repressed" or "displaced") ....*

Mia Fuller

## Time Frames

In her book, *Modern's Abroad*, Mia Fuller (2007: 88) outlines three specific time frames in regards to Fascism and its relationship to the arts and architecture: 1) early 1920s into the early 1930s; 2) Early 1930s to 1936; 3) 1936 to the early 1940s. The first period was characterised by the emergence of *Razionalismo*, *Futurismo*, and *Novecento* movements. Each of these movements was competing to be designated as the official aesthetic of the fascist state, while also arguing to be the most appropriate to modernise and unify the cultural national identity of Italy.<sup>3</sup> The second time frame was defined by the fascist state increasing its financial commitment to commissions. Pluralistic approaches to design continued, as did debates both home and abroad over the appropriate direction to take aesthetically. The third period was characterized by a tightening of aesthetic expression both home and abroad and increased inhumane and authoritarian policies.

This essay is focussed roughly on the last period, more precisely from 1935 - 1940,<sup>4</sup> but first some key facts are outlined to contextualize the events of this later period.

*This imperial expansionism of Italian culture, which, like a river that never stagnates but is fed by other rivers, gives and takes universally assimilates and is assimilated, is a spiritual attitude characteristic of fascism and its ever intensifying revival of the universal and imperial ancient tradition.*

Margherita Sarfatti

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<sup>3</sup> Previously, these debates were dominated by those promoting medieval revivalisms, Neoclassicism, and the Liberty Style (known more commonly outside of Italy as *Arte Nouveau*).

<sup>4</sup> As 1935 is a pivotal year, I wish to include this in the main body of text, not merely as a point of reference.

## Early 1920s – mid 1930s - Italy and Her Realised Colonies in Africa

Part of the harder, more direct rhetoric employed by fascists in the 1920s was aimed at Italians, telling them to sacrifice immediate material gain for the promise of reaping the rewards of a soon-to-be-realised global fascist Empire. For some Italians, this meant transferring to lands which once fell under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire and beyond in order to inculcate the local primitive peoples with a superior sense of Roman-ness. Fulfilment of this important mission, Italians were led to believe, would help to bring prosperity to all of Italy.

In order to realise a global fascist Empire, aesthetics and architecture were often linked directly to Roman-ness. Populating the realised colonies with Italian stock meant the transference of their cultural capital would serve to civilise the natives whilst proving to other European colonisers in Africa that Italy was also a powerful country.

Various fascist intelligentsia and cultural promoters, such as Margherita Sarfatti's personal endorsement of *il Novecento*, were campaigning for the displacement of a particular form of Italian cultural capital. Carlo Enrico Rava, one of the founders of *Razionalismo*, went one step further by linking his preferred movement to the concept *mediterraneità* in essays he published in *Domus* in 1931. Rava argued that '... it is in this "Mediterranean spirit" that we should then look for the characteristic italianità that is still lacking in our new rational architecture' (Capresi, 2012, p. 59). Rava found potential of this 'spirit' in the local forms of North Africa, but any incorporation of them into *italianità* had to be justified by linking their origins, and therefore their worth, back to Roman-ness.

Also during this period, many designs in the *realised* colonies were defined by an eclectic negotiation of ancient Mediterranean forms - local vernacular ones included - and modern forms. Often, this negotiation had less to do with modern forms and more to do with forms based on revival movements such as neo-Renaissance or neo-Moorish. Were these various eclectic and flexible design approaches simply a matter of aesthetic preference, or could they have veiled a

political motive? Had the fascist regime used such syncretism as soft rhetorical means of appeasing indigenous peoples? In the case of North Africa, Krystyna von Henneberg (1996: 377) pointed out:

Keen to the need to put a benevolent face on Italian rule, many architects developed an uncharacteristically eclectic and flexible approach to questions of design. The militant anti-regionalism of Italian Rationalist and fascist architecture was frequently eclipsed by a more syncretic style that incorporated 'orientalizing' and local elements.

Not everyone, however, was convinced that pluralistic approaches and/or their resulting hybridised forms, particularly when derived from eclectic revivalisms, were of any merit. For example, important Italian architects such as Rava and fellow rationalist Luigi Piccinato thought neo-Moorish buildings in North Africa were inappropriate (Fuller, 2007, p. 118). Many architects felt there was a need to find a unified colonial architectural language, which in turn could benefit the regime by leaving a strong impression on colonised peoples and neighbouring European powers alike (Fuller, 2007, p. 15). Yet, would the implementation of a singular approach abandon or incorporate localisms? The answer, in the opinion of von Henneberg (1996: 378), was more complex: *'Eclectic or neo-Moorish structures proved difficult to reconcile with an official architectural discourse based on unity and order. Diversity, after all, had been clearly identified with liberal rule, and with weakness'*.

### **Early 1920s – mid 1930s - The Desired Colonies in South America**

The fascist regime utilised the concept of *mediterraneità*, more precisely Roman-ness and/or Latin-ness, in both its cultural and political rhetoric pertaining to South America. Unlike in the *realised* colonies, Italians had already been living in these *desired* colonies for decades. The goal, therefore, was to first gain the support of *Italians citizens who happened to be living abroad*<sup>5</sup> and then to

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<sup>5</sup> This was the viewpoint of the fascist regime who refused to acknowledge the expatriates and their offspring as Argentines or Brazilians who happened to be of Italian descent. Those displaced to South America, tended to view themselves as the latter.

convince them and people of Iberian ancestry that they shared a common Roman heritage - Roman-ness and/or Latin-ness.<sup>6</sup>

In order to promote the transference of Italian cultural capital into the region, private impresarios, cultural institutions, and government agencies sponsored cultural events. Each event served as a soft, persuasive rhetorical means of espousing the virtues *italianità*, hidden under the guise of a shared Roman-ness.

Italian art, architecture, literature, and language<sup>7</sup> were promoted in said events with each containing a varying degree of political propaganda. Some of the key events included: Filippo Marinetti's lecture tour to promote *Futurismo* in 1926 in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Córdoba, Rosario, Buenos Aires and Montevideo;<sup>8</sup> Margherita Sarfatti's 1930 *Novecento* Art Exhibit in Buenos Aires and Montevideo; Pietro Maria Bardi's 1933 *Architettura d'oggi* Exhibit in Buenos Aires which featured the architectural works of Razionalismo.

Contemporaneously, the soft rhetorical argument of Roman-ness was advanced in Argentina to the point of linking the country historically to *italianità*. '*Between 1922 and 1931, the fascist regime wanted to convince the Argentines that their history, or part of it at least, was a direct outcome of Italian historical agency*' (Finchelstein, 2010, p. 87). Dating back to even before the time of Garibaldi, Italians had played key roles in the development of Argentina and the fascists wanted to embellish this fact. In addition to offering their own interpretation of Argentine history to the general populace, the fascists realised that they also had to court potentially like-minded politicians. '*Throughout the 1930s an Argentine group of politically conservative nacionalistas met with Mussolini personally*' (Finchelstein, 2010, p. 111). Included in the group was the upcoming politician, Manuel Fresco. Yet why limit the effort solely to Argentina? In 1934,

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<sup>6</sup> In this instance, the terms Mediterranean-ness and Italian-ness were most likely avoided as the former could have been easily interpreted differently by both the Portuguese and/or Spanish creoles; the latter would have exposed the fascists' overtly offensive belief in Italian superiority.

<sup>7</sup> Literature and language were also important parts of the soft rhetorical campaign, but they are not the main focus of this essay. The following literary cultural events took place: Mussolini confidant, Franco Ciarlantini's 1927 book fair in Argentina; Piero Parini's 1931 lecture tour, aimed at spreading the Italian language and nationalism throughout Argentina; and noted Italian author, Massimo Bontempelli's 1934 tours in South America.

<sup>8</sup> Except in the case of Rio, the cities chosen for the tour were ones which had large Italian expatriate populations, '*Italians who happened to be living abroad*' in the eyes of the Italian fascists.

Mussolini attempted to broaden his sphere of influence in the region. Professor Finchelstein pointed out: '*... Mussolini wrote to his South American embassies that the time was "favorable" to expand fascist propaganda in their respective countries*' (2010: 94).

### **1935 – 1940 - Italy and Her Realised Colonies in Africa**

Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 brought extensive changes for the Italian people both home and abroad. The fascist regime fought back widespread international condemnation and sanctions by becoming increasingly more repressive (Denison, Ren, & Gebremedhin, 2006, p. 63).<sup>9</sup> As a result of the war in Ethiopia, '*(a)ll of Italian political life, architecture included, turned to greater uniformity*' (Fuller, 2007, p. 88). Pluralistic design approaches were now succumbing to the stranglehold of fascism as the regime tightened its grip on the creative process.

One of the potentially last fine examples of a pluralistic approach to design may be found in the *realised* colony of Tripoli, Libya. The eclectic negotiation of ancient Mediterranean and modern forms found Artisanal Market, Souk al-Mushir was designed by one of the most prolific architects in the North African colony,<sup>10</sup> Florestano di Fausto. His new centre was both '*Cubist and rational in its conception, the market-place satisfied the claim of Italian authorities both to modernize and support local traditions*' (von Henneberg, 1996, p. 386).<sup>11</sup>

This probable end reflected a greater change which started to take place the following year in the *realised* colonies. According to Fuller (2007: 134), '*... architects' attention shifted from North to East Africa in 1936 ... the question of colonial-architectural syncretism faded out all together...*' Von Henneberg's description of the Artisanal Market in syncretic terms was possible in North

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<sup>9</sup> In the *realised* colony of Ethiopia, Italians introduced anti-miscegenation laws in order to enforce the separation of the races, which in turn, led to much misery and anguish for Eritreans.

<sup>10</sup> Florestano di Fausto had been responsible for many important works previously in the *realised* colonies in the Aegean Islands.

<sup>11</sup> Interesting, von Henneberg also pointed out that the fascists and architecture press in Italy ignored the building.

Africa where *local traditions* represented the '*Mediterranean spirit*' which Rava had previously usurped in order to rhetorically justify *italianità*. '*The militant anti-regionalism of Italian Rationalist architecture*' that von Henneberg was also discussing as preferable by many in North Africa was now more attainable in East Africa. From a fascist ideologue's point of view, the latter was a cultural *tabula rasa* in regards to built form due to the nomadic nature of its society. These least civilised peoples and their built history left little or no localisms, no regionalisms, to appropriate.

Part of this shift to East Africa, resulted in Asmara experiencing unprecedented growth from 1935 – 1941 with buildings more characteristic of more humble or simplified versions of *Razionalismo* and *Novecento* principles. Over previous decades in Asmara, many neo-revivalist works had been built, but during this period, they were more modern in character.

In the midst of the massive building campaign under way in Asmara, in 1937 Italian attitudes in urban planning acknowledged the need for flexibility whilst designing for the various conditions related to climate and races of peoples who, as the delegates thought, had different habits and levels of civilisation (von Henneberg, 1996, p. 382). In other words, the blackness of Asmara and its lack of ancient Roman structures had to be treated differently, not necessarily with respect for the locals. Localisms post-rationalised as related to *mediterraneità* were not part of this argument. Instead, Roman-ness in this instance must now be implemented as a means civilising the natives.

Harsh, restrictive fascist policies, such as the ones mandating the separation of the races, influenced the layout of the modern city of Asmara. The works in this part of the city that were once intended for Italians only, have now been appropriated by the very people who were originally excluded from inhabiting them. The legacy left behind from decades of Italian rule is a mixed one. '*For many Asmarini the cultural capital attached to the Italian past provides them with a claim to a long-standing cosmopolitanism*' (Fuller, 2011, p.14). Yet for the many who can remember the atrocious actions carried out by the fascists, painful memories endure.

## 1935 – 1940 - The Desired Colonies in South America

In 1935 in South America, renowned Italian architect Alberto Satoris continued to utilise lecture tours as a soft rhetoric means of promoting architecture, more specifically *Razionalismo* and its connection to *mediterraneità*. At venues such as the First Argentine Congress on Urbanism, The Scientific Society, and the Faculty of Architecture in Buenos Aires, he unashamedly attempted 'to raise awareness of the accomplishments of fascism in the field of urbanism' (Ballent and Crispiani, 1995, p. 60). His lectures titles also clearly linked fascism and architecture: *Architecture and the State*, and *The Architecture of the State as 'Inherent to the Fascist Concept of the City'* (Liernur, 2001, p. 172 ).

The fascist ideologues promoting the transference of Italian cultural capital in the *desired* colonies must have thought their efforts were finally coming to fruition. Mussolini's continuous meetings throughout the 1930s with Argentine *nacionalistas*, his regime's close diplomatic ties with Brazil,<sup>12</sup> his instructions to his South American embassies to expand fascist propaganda in 1934, Bardi's 1933 Exhibition of Italian architecture, and the constant bombardment of soft cultural rhetoric aimed at Italian expatriates in the region, must have all contributed to this perceived breakthrough.

The main targets had always been two-fold – direct political engagement with local creole elites *and* soft rhetoric trying to convince those of Italian lineage living abroad to embrace the fascist vision. In 1935, in Brazil, Marcello Piacentini, the regime's most powerful architect, was starting to benefit from this dual targeting strategy. In the case of the former, he was invited by the Brazil government to design a public work in Rio de Janeiro; while in the case of the latter, he received a private commission by an Italian immigrant/entrepreneur, Ermelino Matarazzo in São Paulo. Contemporaneously, from 1936 – 1940, the dual strategy seemed to converge positively in Argentina. Those years marked the political reign of the previously mentioned *nacionalista*, Manuel Fresco, as governor of the Province of Buenos Aires. Fresco had commissioned his friend,

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<sup>12</sup> Brazilian President Vargas was an admirer of il Duce.

Francisco Salamone, an architect/engineer of Italian origins, to design projects in the province.

In the midst of the convergence of politics and architecture in South America, the soft rhetoric became aimed at cajoling those of Iberian ancestry into believing that they were linked to Italians through a common heritage of Roman-ness and/or Latin-ness. In a bold statement in 1937, Emilio De Bono, a founder of fascism who previously had governed in Libya from 1925 – 29, declared:

*The Latin republics of America are living expressions of Roman-ness ... in the new continent ... If a Roman citizen of the time of Augustus were to be reborn in Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, or Brazil ... this Roman citizenship would feel the same beating of heart, the same geniality of mind, the reblossoming of intelligence, as in the lands of the Empire ... Fascist Italy, elevated to the rank of imperial Italy, is sending today her caring and inaugural salute to her sisters of America ...* (Finchelstein, 2010, pp. 105-106)<sup>13</sup>

Gentile phrases were abound in De Bono's statement, but strikingly omitted were any references to those of native or African origins who populated these Latin republics. Yet would such soft rhetoric persuade the governments and people of Brazil and Argentina to embrace their fascist imperial Italian sisters?

It would appear to be so in the case of Piacentini who was originally appointed by the Brazilian government to design the campus of the Cidade Universitária do Rio de Janeiro. His designs for the buildings on the campus, a process that spanned from 1935 - 1938 (Tognon, 1999, p. 175), were formally and spatially reminiscent of those he had previously designed throughout Italy. Regardless of location, all his designs expressed a pure *italianità* version of Mediterranean-ness in the form of his signature stripped-down classicism. Carioca architects, such as Lucio Costa, were not accepting of Piacentini's proposal and wanted Le Corbusier's inclusion in the project.

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<sup>13</sup> Excerpts originally taken from La Rázon (Argentina), 24 May, 1937.



At the time, Brazil was having similar debates in architecture which tried to reconcile modernisation, localisms, and national identity, *brasillidade*. Costa acknowledged *'that the new architecture was international, but emphasised its Latin roots, which would make it more acceptable for Brazil...'* (Quezado Dexkker, 2001, p. 17). In this case, the specificity of terms such as Latin-ness and/or Mediterranean-ness varied depending on the nation concerned. Costa's interpretation of the term Latin-ness was not directly related to the fascist's promotion of *italianità*. Mediterranean-ness for many Brazilians was defined by *brasillidade* and, although it had its origins in Roman-ness, it was more aligned with the historic period of Portuguese Colonialism. These differences in defining terms fuelled the national debates which led in part to the fascist architect not receiving the commission for the campus.

Perhaps Piacentini, and by extension fascism, would have more success in São Paulo which had a very large Italian 'colony'.<sup>14</sup> Piacentini's design of the Edifício Conde Matarazzo, 1935 -1939 (Tognon, 1999, p. 182), was an example of pure *'italianità'*, as it appropriated few localisms, and thus appeared more like an Italian building strangely misplaced. Despite its odd displacement, the building today has been transformed into the Prefeitura for São Paulo. Matarazzo retained Piacentini services to reconfigure his villa, 1939 – 1941 (Tognon, 1999, p. 189), and to design the Universidade Commercial Matarazzo which he began in 1938 (Tognon, 1999, p. 193). There was, however, no real breakthrough for fascism to take hold.

Would De Bono's persuasive rhetoric be more convincing in neighbouring Argentina? Many intellectuals felt that decades of heavy Italian immigration had been undermining the essential Hispanic character of the nation. Mediterranean-ness to this group of creoles was aligned more specifically to *hispanidad*, which represented an attempt at reclaiming the Hispanic roots of the country. Instead of Mediterranean-ness being seen as an overarching concept connecting creoles of Spanish descent with Italians, this group's preference of identifying with *hispanidad* drew a line between the two groups. At the same time, this group of

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<sup>14</sup> In Italian, the word for 'colony' can also applied to a large group (of Italians) living abroad. It does not necessarily mean that said group is under the jurisdiction of the Italian government.

creoles was denouncing the *cosmopolitanism* that was being promoted by other European (Italian inclusive) and North American influences in the country (Finchelstein, 2010, p. 145).

Architectural design in Argentina reflected pluralistic approaches – from those advocating the appropriation of elements from a Hispanic colonial past to the various proponents of cosmopolitanism. Fresco himself employed architects with varying approaches. Commissioning Salamone for a series of public works projects, however, would appear on the surface to demonstrate Mussolini's success in cajoling Fresco. This appeared evident in Argentine scholar Ramón Gutiérrez account of Salamone's works: '*the conservative governor Manuel Fresco populated the province of Buenos Aires with town halls that, in the rationalist language recalled the medieval palazzi comunali with towers as much as the designs of Mussolini's fascism*' (Belluci, 1983, p. 575).<sup>15</sup> It is true that many of Salamone's works contained quasi-fascist formal and spatial content, but according to Argentine professor René Longoni, the architect was not a fascist, but someone who was politically shrewd in his ability to gain commissions through Fresco. Salamone, like many Argentines - especially those of Italian origin - did not necessarily embrace fascism or his Italian-ness wholeheartedly. Instead, he appropriated various architectonic elements, like most Latin Americans did at the time, when they suited his needs. Once again, what appeared to be a breakthrough in the eyes of Italian fascists, in reality led nowhere.

## Conclusion

Mediterraneità (Mediterranean-ness) and all its variants were used by Italian fascists as means of propaganda aimed at convincing various groups of people that she had the right to reinvent herself as the modern day version of the Roman Empire. The strategy was to employ both *hard* and *soft* forms of rhetorical arguments and actions to try and achieve this imperial expansionism

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<sup>15</sup> Originally taken from Ramón Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura y Urbanismo en Iberoamerica*, 1983, p. 575.

in both her *realised* and *desired* colonies, such as North and East Africa and parts of South America, respectively. The arts and architecture played key roles in the fascist propaganda machine, particularly with many projects designed from 1935 -1940. Yet how did the people in the colonies receive the constant onslaught of fascists' propagandising of Italian superiority in architecture and aesthetics? What is the legacy, if any, resulted in the transference of Italian cultural capital to her *realised* and *desired* colonies?

In the case of the former *realised* colony of Libya, which was the inspiration for Rava's concept of *mediterraneità*, it experienced a deliberate dismantling and categorical rejection of said concept under the four decades of the rule of Colonel Gaddafi.

In the desired colony of Brazil, the results were mixed. Brazilians in Rio at the time rejected the works of Piacentini, but the Italian architect's design for a private commission in the late 1930s was built and today has been adapted into the city hall in one of the world's most populated cities. Do contemporary *paulistas* even know who built their city hall?

It is interesting to note that the transference of Italian cultural capital was viewed at least in two cases as containing the gravitas of *cosmopolitanism*. In one case, it appeared negatively as posing a danger to *hispanidad* in the *desired* colony of Argentina in the 1930s. In the other case, in the former *realised* colonial city of Asmara, present day *Asmarini* have appropriated it as a means of differentiating themselves from their less-worldly African neighbours (Fuller, 2011, p.15). Rejection or acceptance of *cosmopolitanism* was based on its ability to threaten or enhance one's cultural identity.

The traces of displaced Italian cultural capital into either *realised* and *desired* colonies did not translate into the prosperity that a global fascist empire was supposed to bring. Contemporary prosperity, however, may be found in the form of displaced Italian cultural capital in aesthetics. Its success in the world is still due in part to *soft* forms of rhetorical arguments, except this time the source is not fascism but capitalist marketing machines. Rampant desire for Italian cultural capital in the form of designer products in developing markets such as

China, embrace the contemporary rhetoric of consumerism, thus ensuring that the transference of Italian cultural capital, devoid of political propaganda, will live on into the twenty-first century. Italian cosmopolitanism lives on in the contemporary *desired* consumer colonies! *Viva italianità!*

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## **“UNE AUTRE MODERNITÉ.”**

### **The Modern Tradition of Tunisian Architecture in '40**

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#### **Abstract**

*At the end of the spring 1943, the German forces were finally defeated in Northern Tunisia and had to leave the country. This allowed the French protectorate to take power and change in the years to follow, thanks to a massive American economic aid, a very important project for architectural construction and reconstruction. All of Tunisia was concerned, but in particular, the 4 main cities (Tunis, Bizerte, Sousse and Sfax) which we see rising expansions citizens and reconstructions of entire parts of city.*

*“Une autre modernité” is the result of this incredible period, during which a group of architects from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris developed a personal language confronting modern with traditional Tunisian patterns found throughout the country. The shortage of building materials and the deep desire to modernize the country are the foundations on which the research of architects such as Jacques Marmey (1906-1988) and Bernard Zehrfuss (1911-1996) in the second half of '40 is based.*

*Despite the short time available and the great amount of work that lies ahead before we proceed to thoroughly studying the styles and distinctive architecture, obtaining a traditional study on housing will serve as a model for further interventions.*

*The reinterpretation of the original Islamic space is carried out metrically and in the materials and embodied in exemplary projects, both public and private, of considerable intensity and value.*

*The “Other” concept of modernity is, like some episodes in Europe in the same period, the confirmation that the tradition is the matrix of the modern language, becoming not an element of rupture, but of continuity in the sphere of Mediterranean architecture. What remains today is a tissue still present in all these cities, and even if it is sometimes difficult to recognize, it remains a unique experience for all of modernity.*

**Keywords:** Tunisia, traditional architecture, modern, B. Zehrfuss, J. Marmey.

#### **I. Historical introduction**

«Geometry enlightens the intellect and sets one's mind right.» (Ibn Khaldun)<sup>1</sup>

The structure of Tunisian cities owes its shape to the Arab invasion (after the Roman's and later Byzantine's), in which the core is predominantly made up of an autonomous body that is the *medina*, or the old town, enclosed within a wall

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Khaldun (Tunisi 1332 – Cairo 1406) was one of the most important historians and philosophers of the Maghreb. He is considered the father of modern sociology and economics of the Muslim world, also for the modernity of his books.

system, which connects strategic points which are the *kasbah*. The Arab invasion also changed the type of housing that became an architectural form with a courtyard typology, developed over one or two floors, forming often irregular blocks that create a fabric of hierarchies determining steps from the most public (such as the *souk* and the mosque) to the strictly private household. The traditional type of house we find in the villages of the south-east of Tunisia, Medenine or Matmata for example: here the houses are built with local materials or dug into the soil, keeping some common traits like the patio or courtyard and vaulted roof. In this sense, the type of housing is a "poor" version of the Mediterranean model of the courtyard, a key element of which, in Tunisian architecture, is the *ghorfa*, a cell-barn along an elongated rectangular plan constructed with side walls topped by a parabolic section. At the basis of this method of construction is the concept of aggregation of several modules (*ksars*) in series, starting from the basic cell. In this sense the most common type is that which has is formed in a square of four linear blocs, enclosing a central courtyard. Between traditional and colonial architecture, there was a brief period of rupture: the French protectorate (started in 1881) is revisited as a European context of urbanization with the *Villes Nouvelles*, or new parts of the city alongside the *medinas* where eclectic colonial North African styles developed (the so-called *Arabisation*). In Tunisia this architectural and urbanistic approach lasted until the end of the '30s, going hand in hand with an *orientalist* cultural approach that came to a close only with the end of World War II.

## II. What happened in 1943 in Tunisia?

"La Tunisie est le seul des trois pays d'Afrique du nord qui doit être considéré, après la guerre, comme un territoire sinistré. Les opérations militaires qui se sont déroulées dans les Régences et les destructions systématiques auxquelles elles ont donné lieu avaient durement atteint les installations de toutes sortes: les habitations, le matériel et les divers moyens dont disposait la Tunisie avant la guerre." (*L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, n.10, 1948,p.2)

So began the 1948 special issue of the famous review *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* dedicated to Tunisia, clearly outlining the difficult status circumstances in which the country found itself at end of the War. Allies in fact landed in Morocco in 1942 (during the so-called *Operation Torch*) while General Rommel lost the battle in *El-Alamein* in Egypt and retreated to Tunisia, fortifying the southern part near Gabes. In May of 1943, while the future President Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000) was transferred from France to the Italian fascists, the allied forces, through a heavy bombing campaign, broke the defenses of the axis and hunted the Nazis at the decisive battle of Cap Bon. They would move on to Sicily within the next year but in the meantime what they had before their eyes was a disheartening picture: about 120 connecting roads, bridges and viaducts destroyed (235 km of roads and 69 bridges), the main electric stations in the country had been torn down, and more than 16,000 buildings had been bombed. In historical maps you can still see how the major cities beg the description, "a chessboard" if we consider the bombed areas and those still intact. If we add to this scene a profound imbalance between the European and the local population, coupled with the increased migration to the main cities (with the consequent creation of "slums") and the fact that these urbanization movements were not linked to the development of an industry able to provide work resulted in something fairly discouraging. For these main reasons, the four years from 1943 to 1947, following release from the Axis forces, were called the years of *Reconstruction*.

When Bernard Zehrfuss arrived in Tunis he was 32 years old, had been awarded a *Grand Prix de Rome* in 1939 and obtained an official position in the French government to assess the damage that the long war had inflicted on the Tunisian territory. His task, initially that of an advisor, almost immediately turned into something different, something which would fundamentally change the history of the country and the post-war reconstruction. His arrival from Algiers coincided with the death of the Director of the Department of Architecture, G. Glorieux; for which no one was quite prepared. Given the already critical situation, the Prefect Roger Gromand immediately promoted Zehrfuss to head of the department, but not only that. Gromand launched



Operation "*Sauterelles Marocaines*" following the experience in Morocco during the three years before, and replaced all the officers present in key positions of the administration of the protectorate, and in this, the position and role of Zehrfuss was one of the most important. Gromand had come to understand in Morocco that urbanism and economic development had played a primary role in the management of the country, coupled with the fact that France had to prove itself able to quickly resolve the problems of Tunisia, including the supply of essential services to the city and the problems of living space which were becoming critical. In a short time Zehrfuss created a young and capable team, dividing the country into four zones and instituting pyramidal management of the territory. The group directed by him was assisted by Paul Herbe (along with Jacques Marmey, the only senior architect with field experience) and Jean Drieu La Rochelle. The division for research and studies was conducted by Jacques Marmey who boasted important experience both as a technician and as a theorist, already gained in Morocco (where he had grown up from the age of six before moving to Algeria and other countries of the Maghreb). Robert Dianuox was appointed to the urbanism section, while head of architecture was Jason Kyriacopoulous, assisted by Jean Paul Ventre and Lu Van Nhieu. There were then four more sections, each corresponding to four major cities of the country: there was Claude Blanchecotte in Tunis, Jean Le Couteur in Bizerte, Robert Le Greco in Sousse, and Paul Laingui in Sfax. This division turned out to be remarkably important because these architects were not limited only to bureaucratic management and advisory roles, but will be the names that recur on all major projects of the following years. They had their chance to operate in absolute freedom from centralized bureaucracies or departments due to the fact that Tunisia was never a colony but only a protectorate. As France became increasingly committed towards greater efforts in Morocco and Algeria this strategically important but enormously problematic land was left in the background.

### III. The "Reconstruction"

The first months were spent carrying out important preliminary steps: the architects traveled all over the country familiarizing themselves with the traditional architecture and getting in touch with the situation of Tunisia at the end of the Second World War. They visited the *menzels* in Djerba and the *Ksour* of Medenine and Tataouine, the brick buildings typical of Tozeur (that J. Le Coteur reused in the neighborhood *Les Andalous* in the city of Bizerte) and the great mosques in Kairouan. They saw the medinas and unlike the other myopic European architects before them, understood that this cluster of houses and souk was not only a traditional building, but a brilliant functional solution for climate problems of places that are very hot in the summer. The problems of climate and sun exposure are two of the important points on which they built their thinking when it comes to design. The lessons learned by those who have lived there proved useful when it came to building in barren and sunburned territories. Almost simultaneously Paul Herbe and Jacques Marmey founded an experimental school for teaching the principles of building to local students on site, collaborating with the École de Beaux-Arts in Paris.

The department lasted for four years, during which the foundations were laid for a fundamental renewal for the whole country. Public infrastructure and fundamental re-housing interventions were created, in addition to the structures put to the test by the bombs. The urban projects really began only in 1945, and with the expansion of urban Bizerte (which provided for a "new town" which almost doubled the city itself on the other side of the bridge over the last stretch of the lake of the same name) the first problems began to rise: the large number of expropriations and other uncertainties related to the creation of Bizerte-Zarzouna gave the department a bad name. Then a few years later, Habib Bourguiba led the liberation of the country; difficult years in which feelings against the occupying power in themselves were already intense and problematic.

#### **IV. The characteristics of Reconstruction 1943-47**

Generally speaking, the situation of the Regency cities was astonishingly confused. No administration, no collectivity had concerned itself with the question of urbanism, and the metropolitan areas had developed in the most disastrous disorder, with the speed characteristic of Northern Africa. [...]. The sanitary and building equipment of the communities attested to the complete lack of any directives. (Zehrfuss: 1945,p.1)

The architect Bernard Zehrfuss immediately noticed the difficult situation in which he found Tunisia. Just under three million people were living in a situation of constant emergency that threatened to block the country and which worsened from month to month. They had to act relatively quickly and simultaneously find a pragmatic solution to the widespread lack of building materials and the shortage of suitable workers. Tunisia is a very fertile land, but primary resources for the construction industry are in short supply: in fact one of the reasons for the trips made by the architects of the department of architecture and urban planning was also to understand the construction techniques and the ways in which the various architectures were developed. What was needed was a search that determined guidelines for the many projects that the country needed, and therefore, for individual designers. The answer came precisely from these trips.

In addition to the link with the local tradition, the architects of the team, all relatively young, had studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and Marseille, and during their training had come in contact with the theories of the modern movement, specimens of which had already been spreading since the 20s, increasing in the decade '30-'40. When they arrived in Tunisia they demonstrated familiarity with the principles of the Athens Charter and a distance from French academicism which saw colonial architecture still in terms of *Arabisation*.

Le Corbusier himself was very much present in the memory of the architects that worked in Tunisia in those years. They were influenced by the publication in 1926 or, in 1938, by the French translation of the Athens Charter (resulted from

the IV CIAM held in 1933). Le Corbusier had worked in Tunisia in 1928-'29 on a house project, Villa Baizeau, located in Carthage. At the same time the architects who worked in the country in the 40s, such as Zehrfuss, participated in CIAM and thus entered into direct contact with the main protagonists of modern architecture. Therefore we can risk saying that their reading of tradition is both partial and mainly interested in the pragmatic aspect, as Marc Breitman also wrote in his famous text, when he says that for the architects of the department:

"This fascination for Arabo-Islamic Architecture is not the result of a true cultural recognition but rather of a *coincidence*, the *place* of a single link born from the contact between the Mediterranean tradition and the modernity in the North. It was translate by this search for an order made of purity." (Breitman: 1986, p.142).

## **V. Tradition *and* modernity**

But in which kind of tradition were the architects based? Tunisia has particular regional differences, especially depending on the geographical position, nearer or further from the sea, and more or less to the south (from the coast to the desert). In addition to cultural difference, what adds to these differences is the presence or not of particular construction materials. Throughout the coast, olive trees are plentiful and their wood is important for the structures of all the *medinas* of major cities. In Tozeur for example, building blocks are fundamental, while in the mid 900s houses carved into the rock of Matmata (already in full desert territory) were still inhabited. In all this, we cannot discount the importance of religious architecture, such as the mosques and *madrasas* (koranic schools), into which the community poured its major constructive efforts. The Islamic tradition of "the ban", the representation and human stylization has brought about a taste for geometry differing from the traditional European. This is an important point because, as Brietman also wrote, the fortuitous language developed by Zehrfuss and the research team owes much to their ability to select only some of the traditional elements over others, and put

them together in a modern language. Twenty years before, in 1923, Victor Valensi, architect and urbanist Tunisian, wrote *L'Habitation tunisienne*, one of the first essays of traditional architecture. While it may still be considered to fit the *orientalist* mould, we are already faced with those elements that fascinated architects of the department of architecture and urbanism of '43: the white plastered walls, pure volumes, the roof-terrace and the absence of ornament. Approaches to Le Corbusier's "five points of architecture" being read back immediately as something known to modern architects. Zehrfuss said: "Nous étions plus tunisiens parce que nous avons des moyens plus faibles, c'est à dire au fond, c'étaient des murs enduits de chaux et puis des fenestres peintes en bleu".

The deep pragmatism of French architects allows the typology to be summarized briefly with simple variables with which to re-build across the country. The same Zehrfuss would later attempt to prevent Tunisia from becoming so "*big*", so they could safely use types common throughout the territory. The architectural choices approached the housing typology private to the public (from housing to school), not only to better manage the large number of projects, but also for the clarity and recognition of its language and its link with the past architecture. We must not forget that Tunisia was not a colony, but a protectorate, and that this meant that French investment also had "other" purposes as suggested by Edward W. Said (2003): '*Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate*'.

All these new projects were related in language but distinguishable from the pre-existing history. This occurred for strategic reasons as well; often the public buildings were outside the towns to be equidistant from agglomerations which they were to serve. This meant that they became, in connotative meaning, tracks that while strongly integrating the modern, manifested the power of the occupying power.

The other big reason why these architects turned to Islamic Mediterranean local tradition can be explained by the lack of materials and skilled laborers that

plagued Tunisia at the time of the Second World War (in fact, a school of building was created for this purpose early on to teach builders and professionals). Using widely known and simple construction systems was one reason why it was able to start work quickly in an area plagued by urban-housing emergencies. These projects, produced in the 40s, spread out from the north to the south of Tunisia, stand out for their consistency, despite the many technicians and engineers involved in the reconstruction.

Another element is the great importance given to the climate issue, always looking for forms that would allow a greater degree of energy performance, a preference for natural methods of cooling and ventilation, already congealed by tradition. However, what most markedly characterizes the work of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning under the direction of Bernard Zehrfuss was the great freedom with which they acted, without suffering the charm of a dogmatism, that Europe was increasingly codifying in the actions of many architects. They had no prejudice against using what was rooted in the architectural traditions of Tunisia, discarding the excessively decorative-formalistic. The architects did not impose typically European models of living-matrix, but maintained easily recognizable forms, offering a chance of immediate physical and cultural appropriation by the locals. They tried to take advantage of the simple forms of tradition in their modern taste, integrating it with their training in modern European. A tangible example of continuity is the new markets built in the 40s, that of Sidi Bou Zid, for example, where the square is the central element and the *portico* serves as a rhythmic architectural element. In 1948 Eugène Claudius Petit, Minister of Reconstruction and Urbanism wrote:

"Mais c'est à Djerba qu'il fait aller chercher la leçon d'architecture; des volumes simples, des dimensions humaines, une fantaisie qui ne désarme pas font des menzels comme des mosquées – si proches des hommes – les témoins de ce que vaut une tradition qui ne perd pas la mesure."  
(*L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, n.10, 1948, p.3)

The effects of this design effort lasted four years, from 1943 to 1947. You can see quite clearly in contemporary Tunisia, as well as in subsequent projects,

where the architecture of the time remains clear in this coherent language which also inspired the years following the revolution. If the actual results achieved by Zehrfuss's team were significant, so is the component that this conceptual approach developed in those years. It's difficult to consistently trace the individual paths of the architects who worked there, and still more their training courses. Those of the European scene of the period and of Auguste Perret, for his theories on the structure and form of 'architecture were fundamental. First, in all their designs is the presence and a tendency to purity through the use of simple shapes, figures easier to read that would allow immediate recognition of the typology. These forms can be identified by the use of the barrel vault (at the school or in the market), in the dome (often small), and the use of space and geometry, as well as the color white, typical of the Mediterranean tradition.

The actions of the Department of Architecture and Urbanism were divided into three main types, depending on their scale and directly following the contingent needs of reconstruction. The main projects involved the residential sector, as well as the construction and re-construction of public buildings (schools, clinics, markets, hospitals, roads and bridges). Working on the city with major urban projects that would respond rationally to the needs of expansion and reconstruction of the urban grid was still stuck in the *orientalist* dichotomy between the old town (medina) and new Town (European). The building systems were to remain similar to those that were in the individual areas, in order to make the most of the locally available materials. The *minima house* was organized as the traditional one around a central courtyard, but unlike its predecessor allowed the addition of new parts over time to meet the needs of the inhabitants. Also, while in the traditional Tunisian house it was only possible to access the rooms via the central courtyard, in the modern house it was thought that at the distribution level it would be better to allow secondary articulation of space that eschewed the centric space of the ancient house. Thanks to this and certain bureaucratic actions it was possible to issue around 4,000 building permits between '44 and '46.

After 1947 there were political pressures and Zehrfuss had to leave the department and until 1953, moved to work in Algeria with some of the architects

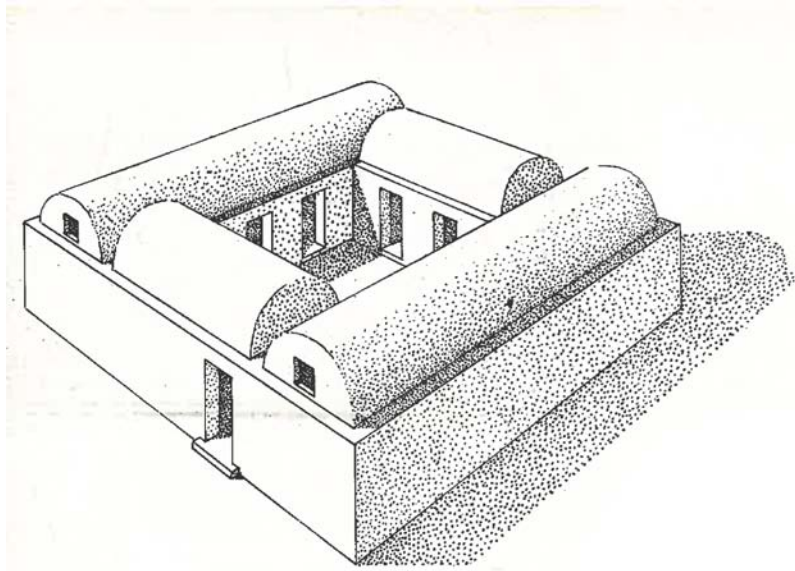
of the old department. Meanwhile Herbe and Marmey founded a small architecture firm in Sidi Bou Said, and little by little the arrival of materials such as concrete and iron again changed the face of Tunisian architecture bringing it closer to the European rationalist language of the 30s. After seventy-five years of French colonial occupation, as had happened in Morocco and in Algeria before, the French government became aware of the approaching Tunisian independence in middle of 1954. In 1955, in fact, Habib Bourguiba returned to Tunis and in 1956 the declaration of the country's Independence was signed. In this way all the great projects undertaken by the protectorate were blocked for lack of funds, as well by the radical changes that the country was set to face. The important thing that remains in Tunisian architecture of the '40s, of the *Reconstruction* and that still remains in *continuum* with a sort of "African modernism", which spread in the '50s and '60s (for example the works in Tunisia of architect Olivier Clément Cacoub), can be summarized in these words already written by J. Cotereau in 1930:

"I settle for drawing lessons from history, in the increasingly deep conviction that there is nothing new under the sun. Perhaps I might throw out some ideas that would be interesting for the architects, remind some at least that wisdom consists neither in ignoring the architects of the past, nor in following them to the letter, to the point of pastiche, but in understanding their spirit so as to borrow from it freely for inspiration."





**Figure 1.** Medenine, Tunisia. Located at the crossroads between Djerba, Libya and South Sahara, has been a capital since the sixteenth century. It was the meeting point of the nomadic community. Here had concentrated the fortified granaries, which represented a strategic point for the Tunisian territory. The form of a huge "Ksar", and the minimalist home are examples of typical rational construction.



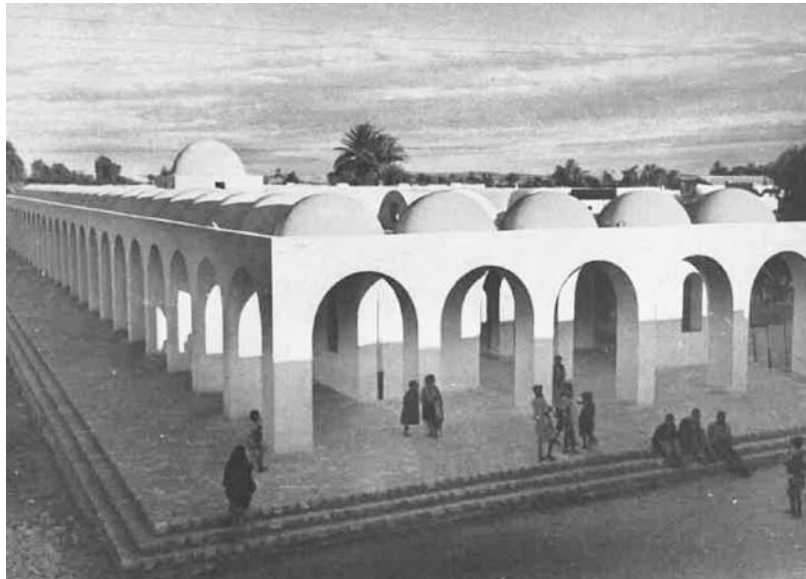
**Figure 2.** The *maison minima*, of B.H.Zehrfuss and J.Kyriacopoulos, is the form-minimum housing, which is present throughout the country; a basic module of articulation and programmatic spatial distribution. Articulating spaces and the materials used, the matrix is not only used in housing but also public works, quail markets, schools, and other infrastructure reconstruction.



**Figure 3.** Sousse, Tunisia (1948, 2014). The housing complex in Sousse is an example of the "maison minimum" being applied. Built by the architects Lu Van Nieuw and Greco, transformed without an architectural logic to respond to growth and to the needs present, by raising and distorting the original matrix.



**Figure 4.** Bizerte-Zarzouna, Tunisia. Regional Civil Control Center, Arch. J.Marmey.



**Figure 5.** Sidi Bou Zid, Tunisia. Covered Market, Arch. B.H.Zehrfuss, J.Drieu, J.Kyriacopoulos.

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## **A SOUTHERN MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY: CRITICAL STANCES OR AN OLD NARRATIVE**

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### **Abstract**

*As suggested by the present call the many folk and vernacular art and architecture surveys put through in Europe and America during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the consequence of the nationalisms that followed the 1<sup>st</sup> WW had a profound effect on the modern expressions of the interwar period. Permeated by the European cultural turmoil of that period South America, and in particular, the Brazilian intellectual elite incorporate in a critical stance, or "anthropophagically", as proclaimed, the modern and the nationalist discourses with its operative tools. In this context the cultural effervescence of the 1930s combined with the authoritarian, nationalistic and populist atmosphere of the Estado Novo imprinted the construction of a Brazilian modern architecture historiography and its instrumentals. The present study intend to analyze the pervading and long lasting elaborations presented by architect Lucio Costa as the first proposer of a Brazilian modern architecture historiography, through three main approaches. The first approach discusses Costa's own concept of history focusing on the way he operated the ideas of transferences, exchanges and dialogues in the contemporaneous cultural space. The second approach analyzes Lucio Costa's embrace of a fictive ethnicity translated by the identification of a vernacular Brazilian vocabulary since colonial times, and the development of a figural relation between Brazilian colonial architecture and modern architecture. The third approach confronts Lucio Costa's commitments to the assertion of a national identity with the supra national elaborations of the American historians George Kubler and Robert Chester Smith his contemporaries in the field of Iberian colonial art and architecture, both infused by the European humanism that reach America with the intellectual exiles intellectuals of the same interwar period.*

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## **(NO) LAUGHING MATTER:**

### ***Noucentisme, modernity and Xavier Nogués' Cartoons***

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#### **Abstract**

*This paper considers the notion of modernity in art by focusing on noucentisme, a cultural, political and social renovation movement, with a strong emphasis on the arts, which emerged in Catalonia in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In its artistic dimension noucentisme is often understood as a conservative endeavour, promoted by a Catalan nationalist bourgeoisie who had secured political control of the region's newly established regional government. This perception becomes particularly acute when the modernity of noucentista art is judged against that of the historiographically consecrated European avant-gardes, with which it co-exists. In consequence, the former and the latter are easily presented as opposing poles of artistic activity.*

*In fact, noucentista artists, theorists and critics were keenly interested in the avant-garde trends emerging from Paris and other European capitals. They refused, however, to simply copy them. Instead, from a Southern perspective, they advocated the critical appropriation of any new proposals deemed useful to their project of creating an art that was modern but profoundly Mediterranean. There are, indeed, palpable differences in the radicalness with which the avant-garde and noucentisme took on the task of modernising art. Notwithstanding these, however, the first part of this paper will question the neat distinction between both currents in the Catalan context. It will do so by briefly pointing out the theoretical common ground they shared, as well as by stressing the substantial internal diversity of noucentisme, which resulted in various degrees of affinity by its artists to avant-garde concepts.*

*One of these artists, Xavier Nogués, will be the focus of the second part of the paper. The discussion here will centre on his original contribution to the modernisation of Catalan art, namely through caricature, from what appears to have been a critical position both towards the avant-garde (or at least Cubism) and towards the noucentisme movement that he identified with.*

**Keywords:** Noucentisme, Avant-garde, Modernity, Xavier Nogués, Caricature.

#### **Introduction**

Grasping the development of modern art in Spain in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century becomes particularly complex in the case of Catalonia due to the co-existence in the region of two different yet interrelated currents, *noucentisme* and the avant-garde.

*Noucentisme* started out as a 'campaign for a self-consciously modern and Catalan national culture mounted from around 1906 in Barcelona' (Green 2005,

137). It was initiated by the critic and essayist Eugeni d'Ors who coined the term *noucentisme* – literally 'twentieth-centuryism' – and remained its principal ideologist well into the century's second decade. D'Ors aligned his artistic agenda with the insistence on progress and modernity that was part of the programme of the catalanist conservative party Lliga Regionalista, then in power (138).<sup>1</sup>

In artistic terms, *noucentisme* stressed a classicist notion of order and structure aimed at moving from the previous generation of artists, the self-styled *modernistes*<sup>2</sup>. Their work was seen by *noucentistes* as excessively concerned with sensation over form, and too direct a copy of *art-nouveau* European movements, all of it characteristic of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the new movement sought to leave behind (Peran, Suàrez, and Vidal 1994, 52).

However, for all the movement's modernising intent, its focus on classicism and its close association to the wider cultural programme promoted by a government representing the Catalan bourgeoisie, have sometimes led to a sweeping (and dismissive) characterization of *noucentista* art as conservative. This perception is made even sharper when *noucentisme* is opposed to the contemporary avant-garde movements:

Avant-garde art developed more slowly in Barcelona than in Paris, partly because the community of progressive artists in Catalonia was smaller and less organized, and partly because many artists remained committed to Noucentisme, an ideology associated with conservative Catalan nationalism (Robinson 2007, 305).

This implicitly suggests that artists essentially had a choice between one and the other; they either jumped on the progressive avant-garde train or remained committed to conservative *noucentisme*.

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<sup>1</sup> Having secured local and regional political power at the turn of the century, Lliga Regionalista set in motion a far-reaching modernisation programme for Catalonia involving infrastructures, education and the institutionalisation of culture. On this subject see (Peran, Suàrez and Vidal 1994, 15–44).

<sup>2</sup> The modernista artistic movement in Catalonia developed roughly from 1890. In architecture, sculpture, graphic and interior design, including the work of Antoni Gaudí, it is often associated to the various Art Nouveau currents around Europe. In painting it is a very diverse movement with affinities to impressionism, expressionism and symbolism among others.



It is true that *noucentista* art does not possess the radical edge of avant-garde enquiries. It is also true that the bourgeois social context it emerged from, however keen on progress, conditioned *noucentisme* to pursue '*a controlled evolution, not a revolutionary adventure*' (Peran, Suárez and Vidal 1994, 66). What seems less accurate, however, is to reduce *noucentisme* to a conservative endeavour by opposition to the avant-garde. As I will discuss in the following section, a complex web of interaction between the former and the latter paints a far richer and more compelling picture of the strive for artistic modernity in Catalonia, and specifically Barcelona, in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Noucentisme and the avant-garde***

Broad generalisations on *noucentista* art tend to miss the mark because the movement was in fact very diverse. Its diversity is palpable at the outset in the much-quoted 1911 *Almanach dels Noucentistes*, which acted as a manifesto of sorts but did not give stylistic guidelines. Instead, it expressed a new endeavour, a generational break, and a consciousness of the new century, while including '*works by a wide range of writers and artists who did not necessarily subscribe to one another's postulates*' (Falgàs 2007, 233–234). As a result, art produced within this movement was actually highly heterogeneous.<sup>3</sup>

*Noucentista* art could therefore take many forms, but from a firm belief in the social role of art, all of them were called to contribute to the collective project of bringing Catalonia in line with what were perceived to be the most advanced countries in Europe (Peran, Suárez and Vidal 1994).

To this end, the brief was to create an art that was both modern and Catalan, as opposed to a mere import of foreign novelties (Fontbona 1985, 174). One way to go about it was to tap into Catalonia's classic Mediterranean heritage, with *noucentista* art criticism even advocating a '*Mediterranean School of Painting*'

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<sup>3</sup> In Jordi Falgàs' view, the perception of *noucentisme* as an operative category is therefore to Eugeni d'Ors' credit as a propagandist (2007, 235). He subscribes to Francesc Fontbona's words: '*d'Ors was able to make his readers believe that everything being created, more or less anarchically by this disparate group of the country's more dynamic painters, draftsmen, and sculptors, responded to a common idea*' (1994, 75).

(*Vell i nou* 1916, 22); this view placed modern Catalan art within a supra-national cultural region that also encompassed Southern France, Italy and Greece. Another major tenet of *noucentisme* art theory, determinedly promoted by critic Joaquim Folch i Torres, was that the essential Catalan values that would guide this modern project were to be distilled (not merely transposed) from popular art and culture (Peran, Suàrez, and Vidal 1994, 280).

However, none of this quest for Catalan-ness in art stopped the *noucentista* milieu from also taking a keen interest in the avant-garde enquiries emerging around Europe. On the contrary, while refusing to uncritically adopt foreign novelties, *noucentisme* was curious as to what these could bring to its project of modern art. As Robert Lubar (1990) and Christopher Green (2005, 141) have pointed out, a part of *noucentisme* saw great value in cubism at a theoretical level because it perceived it to be about constructive intelligence and structure. Conversely, but still on the interaction between these two currents, Green has also explored the role played by the Catalan nationalism of *noucentista* cultural institutions and social structures – in particular those promoting the exploration and charting of the Catalan territory, symbolically taking possession of it – in the development of Picasso's Horta d'Ebre<sup>4</sup> cubist landscapes (2005, 137–152).

Barcelona was at the time a dynamic hub of artistic creation and critique where artists, regardless of their *noucentista* or avant-garde penchants, interacted and could exhibit together in venues such as Galeries Laietanes<sup>5</sup> while contributing to a broad-ranging debate in a variety of art-critical magazines, such as *Revista Nova*, *La Revista*, and *Vell i Nou*.<sup>6</sup> It was an artistic vitality and liveliness of debate which gathered further pace during the First World War – with the return to Barcelona of Catalan artists based abroad, and the arrival of foreign ones – but which had been there from before the War (Leal 2016 in press).

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<sup>4</sup> Or Horta de Sant Joan, in the province of Tarragona, about 150km south of Barcelona.

<sup>5</sup> While Galeries Dalmau tended to remain more exclusively committed to avant-garde proposals.

<sup>6</sup> A key, if little studied, figure in the interplay between *noucentisme* and the avant-garde was Santiago Segura. A ceramics industrialist and art promoter, Segura was the owner of Galeries Laietanes, which became the main meeting place for *noucentista* artists and critics, and was equally open to exhibiting avant-garde work. In this regard, for example, Laietanes exhibited in 1916 Pablo Gargallo's most cubist-leaning work (Minguet and Vidal 1992, 483), while in 1919 it showcased the work of Agrupació Courbet artists, which included Josep Llorens Artigas and Joan Miró, alongside Nogués' *Catalunya Pintoresca* cartoons (Fontbona 1987, VI). Segura was also the financial backer of the above mentioned art magazines, among others.

As a result of this interplay, what we find is that the distinction between *noucentisme* and a substantial part of avant-garde art produced in Barcelona at the time is blurrier than might be inferred from statements such as Robinson's. In effect, artists like Pablo Gargallo, Manolo Hugué, and Josep de Togores oscillated between *noucentista* and avant-garde aesthetics; others, including Juli González and Joaquin Torres-Garcia initially aligned with, even heartily championed, *noucentisme*, and subsequently veered towards more avant-garde positions (Fontbona 1985, 170, 177).<sup>7</sup>

What is more important, for the purposes of this paper, is that in its diversity *noucentisme* also encompassed alternative proposals in which the strive for artistic modernity does not appear linked to the degree of affinity to the international avant-gardes. Such is the case of Xavier Nogués, the artist whose work will be the focus of the next section.

### **Xavier Nogués**

Born and trained mostly in his native Barcelona, with a formative period also in Paris,<sup>8</sup> Xavier Nogués (1873-1941) only devoted himself fully to art relatively late in his life.<sup>9</sup> When he did so, he quickly gained recognition as an engraver and cartoonist (Fontbona 1985, 177) with regular contributions to satirical magazines such as *Papitu*.<sup>10</sup> In effect, as a keen observer of the social reality

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<sup>7</sup> The difficulty in labelling the above artists either *noucentistes* or avant-garde, and the current state of revision on the subject, becomes apparent in the recent revamping of the Modern Art Collection at Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, where some of their works have been moved from the avant-garde section to the *noucentisme* section, and vice-versa. Further, a bibliographical case in point is provided by Togores: in the collective publication *Barcelona and modernity...* (Robinson, Falgàs, and Lord 2007), this painter appears as both *noucentista* (Suàrez and Vidal 2007a, 264) and avant-garde (Burgess 2007, 506).

<sup>8</sup> Nogués first travelled to the French capital in 1901, where he set up an atelier with Alejandro de Cabanyes and attended two art academies, Colarossi and Vity. His subsequent stays in Paris are dated 1903-04, 1912 and 1921 (Museu d'Art Modern (Barcelona) 1984, 5-6).

<sup>9</sup> What is considered his first major work, the etching *The card players*, was published in *Papitu* magazine in 1909, when Nogués was 36 years old. Previously to this, his only known works are a number of landscape paintings from a formative phase (dated 1903-1904) and occasional illustrative work published from 1902 in several general-interest magazines (Vidal 2010, 64).

<sup>10</sup> *Papitu* magazine was founded and edited by fellow caricaturist and writer Feliu Elias with whom Nogués would go on to work closely in other editorial ventures. For a complete list of Nogués' contributions to periodicals see (Vidal 2010, 64-69).

and popular culture around him, Nogués, by his own admission, preferred caricature to any form of art (Benet 1949, 49).<sup>11</sup>

Nogués fully shared in *noucentisme's* purpose to modernise Catalan art. In 1910 he was a founding member of *Les Arts i els Artistes*, a group of artists 'formed in response to the wish for artistic regeneration [which] brought together the most shifting sectors of the art world and represented the most innovative production of the day. [It was] initially, a revulsive in the Catalan art scene' (Minguet and Vidal 1992, 472–473). With the backing of figures from the artistic and political scenes, the group's goals included organising two annual exhibitions and founding a museum of contemporary art (475).<sup>12</sup>

In 1911 Nogués contributed to the already mentioned *Almanach dels Noucentistes* and he became increasingly active in the artistic debate taking place in Barcelona at the time, involving both the avant-garde and *noucentista* currents. In 1914, and in the same spirit of art criticism and renovation, Nogués became co-editor, with Feliu Elias<sup>13</sup>, of *Revista Nova*, a newly-founded magazine devoted to the discussion of modern art.<sup>14</sup> It was through his cartoons at *Revista Nova* that he expressed his views, for example, on Cubism; contrary to the interest raised by this avant-garde proposal among some *noucentista* artists, Nogués' appreciation for Cubism does not seem to have been positive.<sup>15</sup> To a self-acknowledged cartoonist, draftsman and engraver, avant-garde enquiries

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<sup>11</sup> Nogués' critical fortune agrees with the artist's self-perception. He is seen as 'an extraordinary draftsman and engraver, [whereas] his paintings seem less important [...] his serious works as a painter came late in his career [the 1920s and 1930s] and belong to a slightly vacuous decorative realism - with some affinity with the Italian Novecento - toward which a large part of noucentista painting was moving' (Comadira 2007, 258).

<sup>12</sup> Though ambitious in intention, the collective's activities were in reality 'limited to an irregular series of exhibitions running up to 1936, a few lectures and the publication of a series of books [...] It had an eclectic character and included figures from the circles that have been labelled noucentistes and postmodernistes, those with an innovative dimension. It brought together all the significant figures of the century's second decade and it monopolized much of the artistic pursuit not aligned with the avant-garde.' (Minguet and Vidal 1992, 475).

<sup>13</sup> Feliu Elias used this, his original name, to sign his paintings. His writings as an art critic were signed Joan Sacs and his caricatures, Apa.

<sup>14</sup> With the financial backing of Santiago Segura, *Revista Nova* was launched with the following statement of purpose: 'Unlike current art publications dealing mostly with old art and archaeology, and only incidentally with modern art, this magazine will analyse and bring forth almost exclusively the latest artistic trends, so that the energy and anxieties of people with a new spirit will not find themselves unsupported as they have until now' ([http://www.bnc.cat/digital/arca/titols/revista\\_nova.htm](http://www.bnc.cat/digital/arca/titols/revista_nova.htm))

<sup>15</sup> See cartoon published in *Revista Nova*, June 27 1914.

around the construction of the pictorial field through colour may have seemed somewhat remote. His own modernising endeavours would have to take other paths.

### **Noucentisme ideals and the 'picturesque' Catalan reality**

In 1912 Nogués was commissioned to create an engraving for the novel *La ben plantada* (*Of good presence/Firmly rooted*) by Eugeni d'Ors, *noucentisme's* main ideologist. In line with the spirit of the movement promoted by this author, the novel's heroine embodies his vision for a new, modern Catalonia; a serene, dignified, Mediterranean beauty, invulnerable to any chaos, ugliness and incivility that might surround her. The book became '*the bible of the new Catalan mythology*' (Fontbona 1985, 174) and her protagonist's portrayal as a tall, strong, tranquil woman, a recurrent theme in *noucentista* painting and sculpture.

Such is precisely the image that Nogués drew for the cover of the novel (Fig. 1). *La ben plantada*, a woman of good presence, stands tall, modest and serene amidst the commotion created by a number of small, agitated male figures harassing her.



**Figure 1.** Xavier Nogués, cover illustration for Eugeni d'Ors' *La ben plantada*, etching and aquatint, 1911. (Vidal 2010, 81)

Nogués depicted a classical beauty in accordance to *noucentisme's* idealised image of a civilised Mediterranean society, the new Catalonia that the movement intended to build. He then resorted to caricature to contrast this with the grotesque reality of this very society that art was meant to inspire into civil modernity<sup>16</sup>. From this point onward, Nogués' most compelling work would be focused on the second element of this equation - the reality of Catalan society - as a critical stance on *noucentisme* from within.

Nogués' attentiveness to the reality around him went hand in hand with his interest in popular culture and art which, as mentioned before, was a key component of the *noucentista* artistic agenda. From 1914 he began translating this concern into a series of cartoons - published initially in the art magazine *Revista Nova* – which gave graphic expression to popular language. The (humorous) illustration of aphorisms and proverbs, often with moralising purposes, was far from new. There were celebrated precedents among others by Goya, an artist greatly admired by Nogués (Vidal 2010, 79). Nogués' purpose with this series of cartoons, however, was different; what he composed was a critical survey of the reality of Catalan society at the time through its colloquial everyday language translated into cartoons. The result was not a flattering picture; the series showed a society of carefree drunkards, thieves and idle types prone to brawling, often before the very eyes of a ridiculed bourgeoisie which appeared at times alarmed, at times indifferent, at times even partaking in the ruckus (Fig. 2). Nogués' message was clear: if this was the society to be modernised through Mediterranean ideals and the civilising powers of art, *noucentisme* had got its work cut out for it.

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<sup>16</sup> The notion that art should promote civility is recurrent in Eugeni d'Ors writings (1907, 258).



**Figure 2.** Xavier Nogués, 'L'hereu escampa' (The spendthrift heir), first published as part of the 'Popular Types' series in *Revista Nova*, June 6 1914. (Nogués and Pujols 1990, 41)

Challenging d'Ors' classicist insistence on order, structure and beauty, Nogués executed these cartoons in particularly harsh lines and disorderly compositions, leaving little room for aesthetic enjoyment. In a further turn of the screw, he then compiled the series into a book ironically entitled 'Picturesque Catalonia'<sup>17</sup> which has been considered 'the masterwork of critical *noucentisme*' (Fontbona 1987, V). Rather than graphically commenting on current events and political figures at the time, as caricature often did, what Nogués brought forth was a collective look in the mirror, one that forced *noucentisme's* utopian ideology to keep in touch with reality.

There are mixed reports as to the reception of this particular cartoon series at the time.<sup>18</sup> Judging from contemporary articles, his grotesque, often unpleasant depiction of Catalan society was labelled monstrous by some, and several artists

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<sup>17</sup> Of the fifty cartoons that make up *La Catalunya pintoresca*, published in 1919 by Salvat Papasseit Llibreters, fourteen had been published for the first time in *Revista Nova* in 1914 (Vidal 1990, 10).

<sup>18</sup> In the preface to the book's second edition Nogués himself claims the first one was a failure (Nogués 1933, 4). This however contrasts with Joan Sacs 1920s report on the total success of that first edition, which was immediately sold out (Sacs n.d.).

and critics then felt the need to defend his work from such criticism (Aragay 1919; Llorens i Artigas 1920; *Vell i nou* 1919). Interestingly for the purposes of this paper, the debate generated by Nogués' work touched directly on the question of its perceived modernity. In effect, authors supporting him highly valued Nogués' grotesque, unforgiving cartoons because of the collective self-criticism they prompted, which they considered an essential condition for modernity. An unidentified author writing for *Vell i nou* magazine further asserted the value to the avant-garde of caricature's conceptualism.<sup>19</sup>

### The Galleries Laietanes project

A year after the first cartoons of the series started appearing in *Revista Nova*, the magazine's promoter and financial backer, Santiago Segura, asked Nogués to undertake a major decoration project at Galleries Laietanes, an exhibition venue of his property. The gallery had a two-room cellar in the basement that Segura wished to turn into a meeting place for artists, writers and critics, much as the *Els quatre gats* café had functioned for the previous generation of *modernista* artists. The cellar became exactly that; members of *Les Arts i els Artistes* would often meet up at Galleries Laietanes, sometimes with Eugeni d'Ors in attendance (Benet 1949, 56). The cellar was also the venue for a dinner in honour of Picasso on this artist's return to Barcelona in 1917 (Comadira 2007, 251).

Nogués had previously gained some experience in mural painting under Aleix Clapés at Gaudí's Casa Milà, between 1904 and 1906 (Vidal 2010, 135). What he devised for the Laietanes cellar, however, was a completely different proposition. He covered both rooms, floor to ceiling and wall to wall, in a celebration of wine culture, once again, in the form of caricature. And in doing

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<sup>19</sup> 'Lately, the intensifying and conceptualist (symbolist) character of caricature has influenced pure [as in fine] art, as attested by some of the most cerebralist schools: Futurism, Cubism, even Literary Cubism. Today, only backward or barbarian peoples don't know caricature, and conversely, developed peoples are those who have practiced it the most' (*Vell i nou* 1919, 295) (my translation). I would like to venture the possibility that this unidentified author is Feliu Elias, given his regular contribution to *Vell i nou* generally as a critic (Joan Sacs), his own practice as a caricaturist (Apa) and his known admiration for Xavier Nogués.



so, he took his critical stance on *noucentisme* one step further, this time through a formal challenge.

The classical and Mediterranean element championed by *noucentisme* is clearly part of the cellar decoration, from the wine theme to the arcades opening up (in some cases) to idyllic land- and seascapes, or the numerous Renaissance and Baroque ornamental citations (Suàrez and Vidal 2007b, 231). Even *La ben plantada* herself makes an appearance; a clear citation of Nogués' own 1911 illustration for d'Ors' quintessential *noucentista* novel, sheltered under an elaborately decorated arch, admired from below by a bourgeois character in a top hat<sup>20</sup>. But for the most part, the classical arches that structure the composition throughout are instead populated by Nogués' trademark drunkards and mocked bourgeoisie (Fig. 3) accompanied by celebratory popular sayings on wine and its virtues. As in the *Revista Nova* cartoons, therefore, Nogués' work at Galeries Laietanes 'embodied the popular component of Noucentisme that acted as a counterweight to a sometimes obsessive mythological classicism inclined toward pedantry' (Comadira 2007, 251).



**Figure 3.** Xavier Nogués, wall decoration (fragment) at Galeries Laietanes, tempera on plaster, 83 x 70 cm. 1915. © Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (2014). Photograph by Jordi Calveras

<sup>20</sup> Image available at <http://www.museunacional.cat/ca/colleccio/fragment-de-la-decoracio-mural-del-celler-de-les-galeries-laietanes/xavier-nogues/042420-000>

But Nogués' critique to *noucentisme* here went beyond the subject matter. By taking cartoons out of their conventional medium – printed paper – and blowing them up onto walls, he was taking a jab at *noucentisme's* reverence for mural painting. Indeed, as a movement committed to a socially engaged art, *noucentisme* theory highly valued the potential of mural painting for reaching large swathes of society with inspiring artistic proposals. Spearheaded by Joaquin Torres-Garcia, this endeavour advocated fresco painting as the most 'noble' form of mural art (Sacs 1914, 7).

Nogués, on the contrary, treated the whole notion of wall painting with deliberate irreverence. Not only did he introduce humour through caricature, but he also executed it summarily; far from the artisan-like effort required by fresco painting, his characters and the arched composition framing them are for the most part simple large-scale drawings quickly executed on the wall with tempera and a thick paintbrush.

However, the formal harshness that characterised the *Revista Nova* cartoons all but disappeared in the gallery cellar. Instead, the lines were softened to create a jolly and relaxed atmosphere. The purpose here was not jolting the observer into a disagreeable reality; with his work at the cellar Nogués simply ensured that the *noucentista* milieu would now meet up to discuss art surrounded by a subtle and good-humoured critique to its lofty ideals.

### **Caricature on applied arts media – ceramics and enamelled glass**

Nogués' interest in popular art forms led him to also experiment with the medium of painted tiles<sup>21</sup> that had traditionally been used in decorative wall panels in Catalonia as in much of Spain. At Galeries Laietanes he had created his first small panel where, in line with the overall theme of the place, he had replaced the somewhat naïf figuration traditionally given to these compositions by his hallmark caricatures.

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<sup>21</sup> Before trying his hand at tile painting, Nogués had already gained some experience in ceramic painting, namely on vases (Ainaud 2010, 157–159).

Having seen these, architect Cèsar Martinell asked Nogués to contribute to the external decoration of a building he had designed for a wine and oil cooperative in Pinell de Brai, about 150 km south of Barcelona (Ainaud 2010, 162). Nogués was commissioned to create a long frieze in painted tiles (45,5m long by 80cm tall) for the building's façade representing labours related to the production of wine and oil.

Again, there was not much new about creating ceramic panels representing different crafts and professions; these had been a popular form of decoration in the previous centuries. Once more, however, Nogués updated their conventional popular naïf style by turning them into full on cartoons. The result is a unique display that manages to bring in humour to what would otherwise have been a conventional idealised portrayal of rural labour. Instead, Nogués depicted his by then popular characters busy at work, but also idle at rest, even apparently inebriated (fig. 4), thus contradicting the edifying character that would be expected in the wall decoration of a work facility.



**Figure 4.** Xavier Nogués, painted tile frieze (detail) for wine and oil cooperative in Pinell de Brai, 1920-1921. (Vidal 2010, 165)

Not that such virtuous dimension was completely overlooked. The very nature of this commission meant that the humorous element of this work could only be taken so far by Nogués. Thus, while some of the characters retain the caricature features that we have seen in both *Catalunya pintoresca* and the Laietanes gallery, many others are depicted in a more conventional manner, though apparently contrary to Nogués' original will.<sup>22</sup>

The formal treatment of the whole frieze is necessarily more meticulous than in the Laietanes cellar, where the purpose of the decorated room as a laid-back meeting place for artists allowed a more casual approach to the work. The rendition of the figures on the tiles, on the contrary, is achieved by carefully applying the pigment in short thick parallel lines of alternating colours.

Finally, Nogués experimented with cartoons in yet another medium, that of enamelled glass. From 1916, and in cooperation with glass enameller Ricard Crespo, Nogués worked in overcoming the formal and technical challenges presented by applying his popular characters to the curved, transparent surfaces of glass cups and saucers (Vidal 2010, 190). The first pieces were, once again, related to the Laietanes project: wine cups and glasses populated by his cheerful drunkards, for use by the artists, critics and writers assembling in the gallery's cellar (Fig. 5).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Resistance to Nogués' strive to modernise this medium through the use of caricature becomes apparent in the substantial difference between his preparatory drawing for a section of the frieze and the actual end result, both reproduced in Ainaud (2010, 164). Based on these, it seems as though Nogués was planning to introduce a grotesque humorous element throughout, but was only allowed to do so in the representation of some of the idle figures, being required to use a more conventional pictorial language in those portraying 'serious' work activities.

<sup>23</sup> The idea to reproduce the figures on glass did not come from Nogués originally, but rather from the gallery's owner, Santiago Segura. He handed the commission to glass enameller Ricard Crespo, who knew Nogués' work and had been keen to collaborate with him (Vidal 2010, 190).



**Figure 5.** Xavier Nogués, enamelled glass, 1916-1918. © Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (2014). Photograph by Jordi Calveras

The formal treatment of the figures was largely based on simple contours that were then coloured in using traditional enamelling techniques.<sup>24</sup> The Galeries Laietanes cups were very warmly received and gave rise to a an extensive joint production of enamelled glassware with Ricard Crespo.<sup>25</sup> This was highly appreciated also among avant-garde artists for its modern approach to a traditional medium (Llorens i Artigas 1924).

## Conclusion

As part of *noucentisme*, Xavier Nogués showed an active and critical engagement in the artistic discussions of his time. A recognised draftsman and engraver, Nogués produced his most thought-provoking work in the form of

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<sup>24</sup> The technical difficulties of transposing his cartoons onto glass become apparent in the image provided, which shows how the colour fields could become accidentally fragmented.

<sup>25</sup> In the 1920s three exhibitions devoted to Nogués' and Crespo's work on this particular medium were held at Galeries Laietanes (Vidal 2010, 194).

caricature; he took cartoons out of their conventional medium - printed paper - and experimented with them on a range of supports, from plastered walls to painted tiles and glassware, at widely different scales and requiring each their own formal solutions.

In the process he challenged *noucentista* notions on beauty and the inspiring role of art and injected a dose of collective self-criticism into the movement. His work simultaneously incorporated *noucentisme's* Mediterranean-ness and interest in popular art forms, while questioning basic tenets of this art milieu such as the superior nature of fresco painting.

Nogués' work was consciously and purposefully representational and, being satirical in nature, was inevitably socially engaged. He experimented with the formal possibilities of caricature while, from an informed position, choosing not to engage in the avant-garde's concerns with what would come to be termed the '*self-sufficient rightness of colour and shape*' (Greenberg 1989, 62).

Instead, Nogués resorted to popular culture (the colloquial language and everyday life experience of the common people) and updated popular art forms (with caricature on applied arts media) to put forward a novel proposal in the Catalan art scene of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a valuable contribution, one which suggests that outside Paris, and beyond – or alongside, or even in opposition to – the internationally recognised avant-garde movements, there were other relevant ways to pursue modernity in art.

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**NOUCENTISME AND THE AVANT-GARDE:  
The Case of Barradas, Vibrationism and Torres-García**  
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**Abstract**

*Although Rafael Barradas' Vibrationism is often recognised as one of the first avant-garde movements to emerge in Spain (in 1917), little attention has been paid to its intellectual roots and its Catalan and European context. This paper will examine the birth of Vibrationism as the Uruguayan painter's response to his contact both with the European avant-garde, in particular Futurism and Simultaneism, and with the Catalan context in which it appeared. As we shall see, the concept of "vibration" was central to many European modern artists, such as Delaunay, Kandinsky or Kupka, but it also played a significant role in the poetry and art criticism of a number of Catalan intellectuals whose work oscillated, in this period, between Noucentisme and the avant-garde. The brief story of the movement shows us how some of the more consistent answers to the pictorial issues raised by the European avant-garde of the 1910s were to be found on what has traditionally been understood as its periphery, even though Barcelona's role in the European artistic context was, in this period, recognized by many of its protagonists. It is also an example of how the avant-garde itself could interact in the most productive way with other artistic trends such as, for example, Noucentisme which, at first glance, might appear to be quite unrelated.*

**Keywords:** Rafael Barradas, Joaquín Torres-García, *Noucentisme*, *avant-garde*, Celso Lagar

1917 was a crucial year in the artistic development of the Catalan-Uruguayan painter, Joaquín Torres-García (1874-1949). Beginning with the important lecture he gave at the *Galeries Dalmau* on February 22nd, and ending with the cancellation of his commission to paint the frescoes at the *Palau de la Generalitat*, he went through a period in which he increasingly distanced himself from *Noucentisme* as a collective and ideological project. This personal evolution was reflected in many articles he published during that year, and especially in a book of fictional correspondence tellingly entitled *El descubrimiento de sí mismo. Cartas a Julio, que tratan de cosas muy importantes para los artistas* [Self-discovery. Letters to Julio dealing with very important things for artists]. In it, he wrote:

*Forget the past, including your own. Look upon it as a dead thing that must have nothing to do with the present so that none of that past will overcome you, and, thus, the originality that shall sprout from*

*you at all times, as from a fountain, shall have the freshness of living things. (...) In the end, my friend Julio, be a new man in every moment, and don't bother to check whether or not this new man looks like the old man, the dead man, the man from yesterday or the one from an hour ago!* (Torres-García, 1917, p. 25)

Despite the strength of feeling behind this declaration, the fact is that Torres-García's transition from *Noucentisme* to the avant-garde never implied a complete rejection of all of its artistic principles, as is shown, for instance, by the texts he wrote for the journal, *Cercle et carré*, in 1930 (Prat, 1984). His case, in fact, may be seen as one of many examples of the closeness that existed between the two movements, especially in a period in which *Noucentisme* – while remaining an ideological and aesthetic attitude shared by many Catalan artists and intellectuals – was not as homogenous as it had been some years before.

Also in 1917, Torres-García met for the first time the Uruguayan painter, Rafael Barradas (1890-1929), an encounter that would have a strong impact on both artists; Barradas had come to Europe in December, 1913 and, until May, 1914, he travelled to Paris, Switzerland and Milan where he discovered the works and texts of the European avant-garde, especially in relation to *Futurism*, *Cubism* and *Simultaneism*. At the end of May or the beginning of June, 1914, he made his first visit to Barcelona, staying till the end of that year when he moved to Zaragoza. In this first Catalan period, he published some drawings in the periodical, *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* (Santos Torroella, 1993), but there is no other evidence of any further contact with the Catalan artistic scene. It was not until his second stay in Barcelona, which ran from the end of February or the beginning of March, 1916 until August, 1918, that the implications of what he had seen and learnt during his European journey would find full expression in his work.

At some point between the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, Barradas began to use the concept of *Vibrationism* to refer to his new artistic proposal; the movement lasted until 1920 and Barradas was essentially its only practitioner, with the short-lived adherence of Torres-García. The principal authors that have looked into *Vibrationism* (Pereda,

1989; Brihuega, 1993; Carmona; 1993) have found it difficult to explain its seemingly sudden appearance, considering that between his European sojourn and the presentation of his first Vibrationist works, about three years had passed. Nevertheless, *Vibrationism* did not appear from a void, and it can only be understood by taking its theoretical and aesthetic context into consideration. The first crucial aspect relates to the presence and importance that the concept of "vibration" had attained in the avant-garde artistic scene, mainly in Futurist artistic theory, but also in the work of artists such as Delaunay, Kupka or Kandinsky (Faxedas, 2015). Whatever knowledge Barradas would have acquired of these artists' works and theories was refreshed in Barcelona by his contact with the *Galerías Dalmau*. This space promoted avant-garde exhibitions by several important European artists who were then refugees in the city, and Barradas had the chance to see work by Charchoune and the Delaunays, for instance (Casamartina, 2004; Rousseau, 2005).

Another important issue to consider is Barradas' relationship with the Castilian painter, Celso Lagar (1891-1966). Lagar had travelled to Paris as a sculptor in 1911, where he had been in contact with almost all the avant-garde trends of the moment, especially with artists such as Modigliani or Metzinger (García, 2010). The outbreak of the First World War forced him to come back to Spain, and he settled in Barcelona at the end of 1914. This same year, he devoted himself to painting rather than sculpture, and immediately engaged in significant activity which led to three one-man shows in 1915 (at the *Galerías Dalmau*, *Athenea* and *La Cantonada*), and subsequent shows in the *Galerías Laietanes* in 1916, 1917 and 1918. He also exhibited in Madrid, where he lived from November 1916 to May or June 1917, and in Bilbao, before he moved back to Paris for good in 1919.

Barradas met Lagar at some point between March and November 1916, when the Uruguayan artist had just moved back to Barcelona and was going through a period of very little artistic output (indeed, no works by Barradas have been reliably dated to the year 1916; Pereda, 1989: 62). The two painters had much in common: they were almost the same age and they had been in contact with avant-garde art in Paris; neither of them were

Catalan but here they were in Catalonia, struggling for artistic recognition. When they met, Lagar's involvement in exhibitions and the critical attention he had already received placed him in a far better position than that of Barradas, who was almost completely unknown. Despite this, the relationship they established in their Catalan period, between 1916 and 1917, played a key role in the development of their respective careers. In the summer of 1917, Lagar took Barradas to visit Torres-García in Terrassa for the first time (Torres-García, 1990: 136; Lubar, 1991), and it was probably also Lagar who introduced Barradas to the poet, Salvat-Papasseit. Also in 1917, Barradas resumed his artistic activity, participating in four exhibitions: a cartoonist's exhibition in Madrid; a collective exhibition of *affiches* in Barcelona (according to Pereda, 1989: 66); the exhibition organized by the *Galeries Dalmau* to honour French artists (to which he sent two drawings) and, most importantly, the exhibition that he had on December 1917, together with Torres-García, also in the *Galeries Dalmau*, where a still nameless *Vibrationism* was shown publicly for the first time.

One of the aspects of Lagar's work that would interest Barradas was the fact that he had already created his own avant-garde movement, called *Planism*. Its birth is attested to by a very brief text that heads the catalogue for his 1915 exhibition in the *Galeries Dalmau*: '*Après le sentiment la couleur et la forme comprise dans le planisme et le volume sont les éléments du bel art*'. This is the only theoretical statement about the movement offered by its author and only practitioner; it seems that *Planism* was born in Paris<sup>1</sup>, but no mention of it was made in the titles of the works shown in this first exhibition. However, in the exhibition that Lagar opened in September 1916, in the *Galeries Laietanes*, he exhibited a work entitled *Ensaig de llum per planisme*; and in 1918 he had another show in the same gallery where there was a section specifically called "Planism", with 13 works, one of them being the famous painting *Raid - Guynemer Somme Alsace* (1917), dedicated to the poet and art critic Josep M<sup>a</sup> Junoy.<sup>2</sup> The brief statement about *Planism*, along with the works we can clearly

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<sup>1</sup> This is apparent from the fact that Lagar seems to have invited other artists living there, such as the Catalan painter Domènec Carles, to join him in the movement (Santos Torroella, 1969: 162)

<sup>2</sup> Junoy had published his calligram dedicated to Guynemer on October 6th, 1917, in the journal *Iberia*.

associate with it, suggest that it was born from Lagar's own assimilation of the Parisian avant-garde; even if he seems to have rejected a complete acceptance of Cubism, he assumed some of its principles, such as the negation of perspective and three-dimensionality, and the emphasis on a constructive composition rooted in Cézanne's work. To this he would add a richness of colour inspired by Gauguin, a reference that, together with fauvism, was often mentioned by his critics (Jori, 1916; Sacs, 1916).

Lagar's *Planism*, quite possibly, inspired Barradas to create his own *Vibrationism*, and under Lagar's influence it was easier for him to reconnect with his own avant-garde works, once he had started to paint again in Barcelona. On the other hand, Barradas' first one-man show held in the *Galerias Laietanes* in March 1918, where he presented a full vision of *Vibrationism*, may have encouraged Lagar to present the section devoted to *Planism* in his own exhibition later that year. So, even if *Planism* existed before Lagar came to Barcelona, its consolidation and artistic development took place in the city, and is closely related to his meeting with Barradas and the Catalan context. *Planism* and *Vibrationism* show certain affinities in the colour intensity of the images, their modern, urban iconography, and the use of words and numbers written in print letters; in fact, some critics used the concepts of *Vibrationism* and *Planism* to refer to either artist's work.<sup>3</sup> Lagar's paintings, however, do not express the synaesthetic dimension that is so important in Barrada's work (Faxedas, 2015); *Planism* is also much more structured and constructively organized than *Vibrationism*.

However, Lagar's critical reception in Barcelona did not necessarily limit him to the avant-garde. As happened with other artists, including Picasso, there were attempts to associate his work with *Noucentisme*. Eugeni d'Ors (under his pseudonym, Xènius), for instance, wrote a positive review of Lagar's 1915 exhibition in which, even if he did not adopt him as an outright *noucentista*, he pointed out certain values in Lagar's painting that revealed his own interest in Cubism, which d'Ors and others had previously related to

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Eduard Puig (pseudonym of Joaquim Folguera) mentions *Vibrationism* in his criticism of Lagar's 1918 exhibition (Puig, 1918: 19); some years later, *Planism* would be used to talk about Barrada's work, and he himself even entitled one of his drawings *Guignol planista* (García, 2010: 81).

*Noucentisme* (Vidal, 1996). The connection between cubism and Noucentisme was established precisely through notions such as structure and construction. According to d'Ors, Lagar, though he might have seen himself as a rupturist, bore with him the virtues of the Castilian and Spanish tradition, which could at the same time be interpreted from a modern point of view: *'And if world literature can show us a great cubist, well, he would be Castilian and his name was Don Francisco de Quevedo'* (d'Ors, 1915). D'Ors discovers in Lagar a *'solid and very modern willingness toward construction'* (Ors, 1915). The article ends with a warning addressed to Sunyer and other Mediterraneanist artists: they should not get distracted, because as shown by Lagar and Picasso, *'Although the light may still come from the North, it may be that the chariot of the light shall reach us pulled by the fiery young colts of Western breeds'* (Ors, 1915).

This positive attention expressed by somebody as influential as d'Ors probably encouraged Lagar to make approaches to *Noucentisme*, as demonstrated by works such as some of his 1916 drawings, or paintings like *Pastor en el camp* (1915) or *Pastoral* (1916), in which Sunyer's influence is evident. There is further evidence of this rapprochement: in Girona, he exhibited his work in *Athenea*, a space consecrated to *Noucentisme*, and published an article there in the journal *Cultura*, *"El renacimiento del arte después del cubismo"* (Lagar, 1915), which he dedicated to Xènius. In this article, Lagar attempted to theorize his artistic proposal (albeit without mentioning *Planism*), relating his work to Cézanne's and, like him, appointing himself as the primitive of a new art. Lagar uses concepts such as cubism, architecture and structure, together with other, more personal ideas, which make the text somewhat confusing; he tries to express the idea that painting, which is flat and two-dimensional, must endeavour to capture volume while at the same time making its flatness clear, anticipating a key idea in later discussions about modern painting.

Lagar's proximity to *Noucentisme* - as superficial as it may have been for a painter who is usually discussed in the context of avant-gardism - is not at all exceptional, considering the characteristics of the Catalan artistic scene of the time (Molas, 1983: 35). *Noucentisme* aimed to assimilate almost

everything that could be deemed 'modern' or else construed as an attack on the *fin-de-siècle* decadentism and this could include a wide range of art, from Cézanne to certain aspects of Cubism. The barrier that isolated *Noucentisme* from the avant-garde was more porous than may have seemed at first glance, especially around 1917; if, on the one hand, we can clearly identify compositional influences from Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907) in such an iconic work as Sunyer's *Cala Forn* (1917) (Balsach, 2009: 261), we can also, on the other hand, find Salvat-Papasseit dedicating a poem, *Linòleum* (1919), to Xènius. And in the avant-garde journals that flourished in Barcelona at this time it was not uncommon to find contributions by prominent figures of *Noucentisme* (Carmona, 2002: 51).

Another example of the heterogeneous nature of the artistic and ideological activity of the time concerns the careers of Josep M<sup>a</sup> Junoy and his friend and collaborator, Vicenç Solé de Sojo, who shed light on another key aspect of the context that allowed the emergence of *Vibrationism*. Junoy's position as a poet and art critic in the 1910's has been comprehensively studied by Vallcorba (1984), and this has helped us to understand that his closeness to *Noucentisme* implied neither a complete assumption of its ideas, nor a total identification with its aesthetic model. Solé de Sojo, a much lesser known poet and art critic, began his poetic career as a Parnassianist, then moved closer to *Noucentisme*, and finally, around 1917-1918, stood close to Junoy as a practitioner and defender of the avant-garde; he wrote a number of visual poems that are important examples of the genre in Catalan literature (Molas, 1983).

Although limited, their work between the end of 1916 and the first months of 1918 offered a real critical context for the avant-garde artists operating in Barcelona. Both contributed to the newspaper *El poble català*; Solé de Sojo published his art criticism under the penname *Florián* from the beginning of 1917, and on December 14th, 1916, he also began a daily column called "Ecos". In the same newspaper, Junoy published some of his art criticism in a poetic form, which would then be republished in the avant-

garde journal he promoted, *Trossos*.<sup>4</sup> In this journal, we can find some of Solé de Sojo's avant-garde poems alongside drawings by Lagar and Torres-García, and brief critical reviews of exhibitions by Barradas and Lagar. The concept of "vibration" appears quite often in the texts of both poets - always with positive connotations<sup>5</sup> - even before Torres-García had mentioned it in *Un enemic del poble* (Torres-García, 1917b) or before Barradas himself adopted it (Faxedas, 2015).

These references to vibrations appeared at the same time as other comments that both Junoy and Solé de Sojo made concerning Cubism, Futurism, and whether a confluence between the two movements was appropriate (Vallcorba, 1984: lxxv-lxxiv). Although their ideas on the possible convergence of the two most important trends in the European avant-garde of the time seem to be slightly contradictory,<sup>6</sup> the fact is that they contributed to the diffusion of both movements and to bringing the ideas of the European avant-garde to Catalonia, to the point that Solé de Sojo even compared Sunyer to the "vibrant" Boccioni and Severini, considering him as close to Futurism, and crediting him with an artistic vision that would seem more typical of Barradas' Vibrationism.<sup>7</sup> It's also worth remembering that, as an art critic, Solé de Sojo wrote positive reviews on exhibitions by Lagar and Barradas, as well as by Torres-García, whom he had previously supported in 1913 (Solé de Sojo, 1913). Junoy also wrote about Barradas (Junoy, 1918), and his relationship with Lagar is

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<sup>4</sup> This name of this journal appears in at least two of Barradas's works, *Affiche* (1917, MNAV) and *Acuarela* (1917, MNAV).

<sup>5</sup> In the *Ecos* column of February 28th, 1917, Solé de Sojo mentions that a French newspaper had described Barcelona as a "vibrant" great city, and not only did he consider this to be "praise [...] that greatly excites us", but added that the French journalist could search every dictionary he could find and "he would never have found another word as flattering".

<sup>6</sup> In the *Ecos* of February 1st, 1917, Solé de Sojo writes that "a little cubism and futurism is necessary in a country in which three quarters of its [artistic] production is tainted with the sin of Olotism..."; but in his critical review of Helene Grunhoff's exhibition, published in March 29th, 1917, he condemns what he sees as her attempt to fuse both Cubism and Futurism in her work.

<sup>7</sup> "This is our *Carrer Nou* [new street] *de la Rambla*. To paint it, you need to follow the ways of Futurism [...] you sit at a table in any one of the innumerable terrace bars that populate the *Carrer Nou*. After a while, the planes begin to change and move themselves about and you do not know if the candle is steel or the steel is candle. The table, round, becomes a well. In the cheeks of a passing woman there is jeweller's display-case. No one knows where the guitars in their cases come from. The tankard of beer you're drinking grows and grows to an immense size. A tram arrives and pulls into the tankard of beer. The tram guard appears with a candle holder in his hand. [...] This is the vision transmitted by our painter, Joaquim Sunyer" ("*Ecos*", *El poble català*, 18-II-1917)



demonstrated by the aforementioned Guynemer painting which Lagar dedicated to the poet.

This review of the Catalan artistic context of 1917-1918 which made the emergence of *Vibrationism* possible would not be complete without a reference to Joan Miró, who in 1917 was an active observer of the artistic scene in Barcelona; on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917, he wrote in a letter to J. F. Ràfols:

I believe that tomorrow, there'll be no more schools ending in "ism" and we'll see a canvas of a speeding train painted in a way that is completely different from a landscape done at midday. To the free spirit, every aspect of life will produce in him a different sensibility, and all we'll want to see via the canvas is the vibration of a spirit, a fully heterogeneous vibration. (Miró, 2009: 68)

Miró would also refer to the concept of *vibration* in other letters of the same period; 1918 would be the year of his artistic emergence: some of the principal events involving Miró that year (Minguet, 2000: 51-52) include his first one-man show at the *Galeries Dalmau* and his inclusion in *Arc Voltaic* (an avant-garde journal promoted by Salvat-Papasseit) together with Torres-García and Barradas (February); his being claimed as "one of us" in *Trossos* by J.V. Foix (March); the creation of the *Agrupació Courbet* and its participation at the *Saló dels evolucionistes*, which also included Barradas and Torres-García (April), and his participation in the official *Exposició d'art* at the *Palau de Belles arts* (May - June). It may be worth remembering that Miró's artistic roots lie also in *Noucentisme* (Balsach, 2009), and that he himself insisted in the classicism of his work (Minguet, 2000: 54). In any case, his painting can be placed in the same avant-garde context shared by Torres-García, Lagar and Barradas; it may not be a coincidence that paintings by Barradas and Miró were reproduced on the same page of an article reviewing the *Exposició d'art* (O.F., 1918: 508), nor was it strange that all these artists shared certain iconographic motifs, such as the carriage wheel.

Barradas' *Vibrationism*, therefore, was not an artistic eccentricity or a spontaneous creation; quite the contrary: its birth and its evolution during its Catalan period are closely connected to a very specific artistic environment where the artistic ideas that Barradas had discovered in Europe found a context where they could mature and develop. Even if both his work and his sense of himself as an artist were completely alien to the contemporary Catalan artistic traditions and, most specifically, to *Noucentisme*, the artistic scene he immersed himself in was absolutely embedded in it. Barradas can very well be described as a disruptive agent of change who made a strong contribution to the apparition of avant-garde poetics in Catalonia and the whole of Spain, but his reactive plough worked a field that had been fertilized, in the main, by *Noucentisme*.

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**THE HASSAN FATHY'S NEW GOURNA VILLAGE:  
In the crossroads of modern and vernacular  
Zara Ferreira**

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**Abstract**

*Built in Luxor, between 1946 and 1952, New Gourna Village was the result of an experiment project commissioned by the Egyptian Department of Antiquity, with the purpose to shelter the community of Old Gourna, who had lived for generations above the ancient cemetery of Thebes. The relocation of the population came as the solution to stop the damage to the pharaonic tombs. Standing on a complex position concerning debates on modernity and tradition, New Gourna Village, designed by Hassan Fathy (1900-1989), is an extraordinary example of collective housing conceived through a sagacious match between local ancestral knowledge and innovation; between vernacular technology and modern architectural principles.*

*New Gourna Village consists on a reinterpretation of traditional urban and architectural Egyptian setting, based on an appropriate use of local materials and techniques. The potential of mud brick construction was explored as a non-cost solution, extraordinarily sensible to local necessities and able to contribute for social cohesion, supported by the fact that inhabitants participated in the construction of their own houses. Documented on "Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt", published in 1976, by Hassan Fathy, this experience was internationally recognized as an appropriate solution to house low-income rural communities. Within the era of the Modern Movement, this project demonstrated that sustainability and social cohesion could be reached with vernacular principles, occupying a complex position within the debates around modernism and tradition and contributing for humanistic discussions about the connections between people and places.*

*Based on this case study, the paper aims to demonstrate how it is possible to reinterpret traditional urban and architectural settings through modern demands and requirements. Using mud, natural resources and craftsmanship, Hassan Fathy sought to conceive decent housing for impoverished masses as an alternative to the "concrete matchboxes" which were being crowding developed till then, through a local interpretation of the Modern Movement global ideology.*

**Keywords:** New Gourna Village; Egypt; Hassan Fathy; Modern; Vernacular

*Culture springs from the roots  
And seeping through to all the shoots  
To leaf and flower and bud  
From cell to cell, like green blood,  
Is released by rain showers  
As fragrance from the wet flowers  
To fill the air.*

*But culture that is poured on men  
From up above, congeals then  
Like damp sugar, so they become  
Like sugar-dolls, and when some*

*Life-giving shower wets them through  
They disappear and melt into  
A sticky mess.*

Hassan Fathy, 1969

### **The countryside: a lost paradise, a lesson and a dream to pursue**

Divided between his father, who didn't allowed him to visit the countryside in his childhood - a hideous place, full of nefarious bugs and polluted water, only useful as an income source - and his mother who nostalgically told him stories about the simple, quit and self-subsistent life that she had in her childhood, Hassan Fathy (1900, Alexandria - 1989, Cairo) developed a complex love for the countryside. Up to the 27 years of age without visiting the country, it was, however, a *'love for an idea, not for something [he] really knew'* (Fathy, 1969: 1): in his mind the countryside was like a paradise infected with bilharziose. The lack of practical knowledge about it, that he just used to watch from the train, made him fail the admission-proof in the School of Agriculture. Instead, he went to study Architecture in Cairo.

When he first visited the lands of his father and after visiting the place of his first architecture project, in Talkha, using his own words, he was disgusted with the smell of the narrow streets, where all the garbage was thrown, and haunted by the *'hopeless resignation of these peasants to their condition, their cramped and stunted view of life'* (Fathy, 1969: 3). Hassan Fathy realized that the countryside had no connection with the idyllic place of your imagination. His childhood dream was becoming a certainty: he would *'to restore the felicity of paradise to the Egyptian countryside'* (Fathy, 1969: 2).

According to the United Nations, 800 million of cottager - 1/3 of the world population - were at that moment doomed to premature death because of their inadequate housing. Fathy wanted to save them through the construction of decent houses. But how? People were *'too sunk in their misery to initiate a change'* and houses were way too expensive.

That was the moment when he started his own research about vernacular architecture, trying to understand how the peasants built their own houses. He found the construction made of mud bricks, dug out of the ground and dried in the sun; *'for centuries, the peasant had been wisely and quietly exploiting the obvious building material, while we, with our modern school-learned ideas, never dreamed of using such a ludicrous substance as mud for so serious a creation as a house'* (Fathy, 1969: 4). The peasant's house might be dirty and dark - he thought - but it was due to the lack of design project. The combination of the most natural material, with the rationalism of the spatial design for which the architect is skilled, it was the most logical solution.

He started to design country houses in mud brick, and timber for the roofs. However, when the war started, the wood supply from Romania<sup>1</sup> stopped. Fathy realized that, with brick earth and nothing else, he was at least as well as provided his ancestors. After his first failed attempt to construct domes without wood truss, as the Ancients, resulting on its collapse, he went to travel to find how his forefathers constructed domes in mud without timbers. In Gharb Aswan he found a typical village of your dream landscape: *'a village from some dream country, perhaps from a Hoggar hidden in the heart of the Great Sahara - whose architecture had been preserved for centuries uncontaminated by foreign influences'* (Fathy, 1969: 6). Immediately we went to find the craftsman that were able to construct the domes we wanted to build and learned.



**Figure 1.** Mude domes being built (Fathy, 2009 [1969]: 22).

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<sup>1</sup> And the steel from Belgium.

For him, *'it was like a vision of architecture before the Fall: before money, industry, greed, and snobbery had severed architecture from its true roots in nature'* (Fathy, 1969, 7). Hassan Fathy believed that mass communications, mass production and mass education, as the marks of the modern societies, being formally imported from Europe directly to the suburbs of Cairo, were a poison for the authenticity of the tradition and individuality and not the thought-out response to a change in circumstances in Egypt, as it might be in Europe and America. He would refuse himself to use *malakan*<sup>2</sup>!

In Gharb Aswan he was sure that the solution to Egypt's housing problem laid in Egypt's history. *'The answer is to be found in this photograph'* (...):

*'For those who have eyes to see, this room is the answer to Egypt's housing "problem." What aspects of the problem does it solve? First, that of money. It is built entirely of mud and costs nothing. Second, that of space. With the money problem solved, there is no limit to the size of the house; ten rooms are as cheap as one. Third, that of hygiene. Space means health, both physical and mental, while the material, mud, does not harbor insects as thatch and wood do. Fourth, that of beauty'* (Fathy: 139).



**Figure 2.** Gharb Assuā, Nubia (Fathy, 2009 [1969]: 135).

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<sup>2</sup> *Malakan* means American and it was how Egyptian named the European doors that were being used at the time, replacing the traditional doors built with wood scraps that created unique patterns.



### **New Gourna: '*An Experiment in Rural Egypt*'**

The village of Gourna was built on the site of the Tombs of the Nobles, area full of unobstructed tombs with archaeological objects of high interest. Literally on these graves lived 7000 peasants, whose economy was based on the looting of the valuable tombs of their ancestors. The excavations and theft caused a great loss to Egyptology. When an entire wall of carved stone was stolen, the Department of Antiquities decided to take major actions: it was issued a ministerial decree which expropriated all the residents of the area. It was necessary to relocate the 7000 people in a very cheap way. the Department of Antiquities, impressed with the former low cost buildings by Hassan Fathy, commissioned him the construction of a new settlement from where the inhabitants of Old Gourna were to be relocated.

This project provided Fathy with an opportunity to create a model village, which he himself called of an '*experience*', that he hoped would provide a basis for changing the living conditions of all of Egypt's rural poor. He documented the experience in the *Architecture for the Poor* (1969).

He had to construct 900 houses in 3 years: 1 house by day. How it would be possible except through the standardization of houses, asked the Government. Fathy argued that '*to talk of prefabrication to people living in such poverty was worse than stupid, it was a cruel mockery of their condition*' (Fathy, 1969: 32). He believed that tradition among the peasants was the only way to safeguard their culture; to break that would be a cultural murder. That's why Fathy decided to consult all the villagers themselves, to study their habits and the social organization of Old Gourna: then we would design each house individually, accordingly with the necessities of each family and he would teach everyone how to construct their one houses, through a cooperation system. The first buildings to be constructed would be the public ones, as an opportunity of learning. That way, if the State could not build many private homes, knowledge have up-to developed, the center of the village would be done and the inhabitants could continue their work alone. He wanted that the construction could become a communal activity as it was the harvesting, the firefighting, the weddings and

the funerals: a village built by its own inhabitants would be a living organism able to continue to live and to grow and it would be much more cheaper than if you would have to pay to builders.



**Figure 3.** Learning center for builders (Fathy, 2009 [1969]: 133).

His concept was that the more people are involved in creating their environment, the more healthy they would be physically and psychologically (El-Shorbagy, 2001), due to their sense of identity to the place. Fathy also insisted on the construction of schools, a mosque, and a *souk*<sup>3</sup> within the village, remaining still nowadays as a place strongly rooted in the social principles of access to education, commerce and religion (World Monuments Found). Designed with *haras*<sup>4</sup> instead of *boulevards*, children could play and people meet *'and the relationship between them is different from when you have a large street (...) where you have cars and where people don't meet'* (Fathy, 1969).

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<sup>3</sup> Open-air marketplace or commercial quarter in Middle Eastern and North African cities.

<sup>4</sup> Alley.

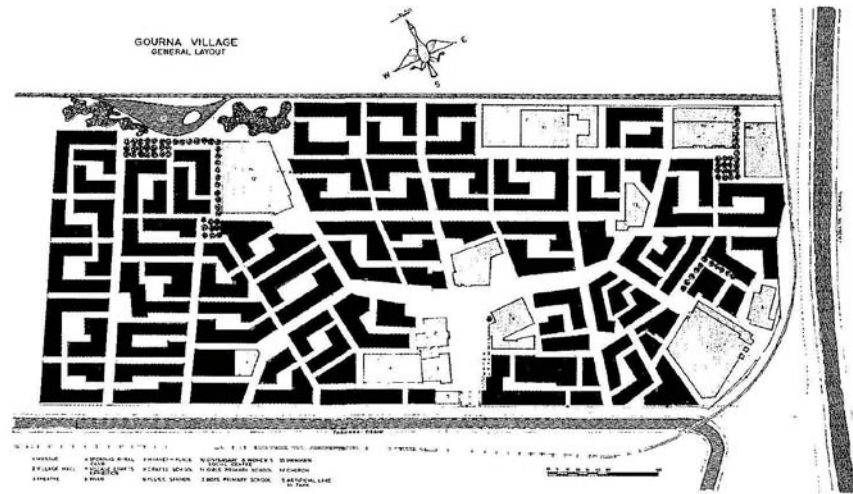


Figure 4. Plan (Fathy, 2009 [1969]: 77).

Even against prefabricated systems, the standardization was a present principle since, in order to be equal, economic, quick and effective, all the constructions should be developed based in the same elements in slightly varying size, even shaped and combined in different ways.

All this ideas made some researchers consider Hassan Fathy the father of the sustainable architecture. Not only because of the social and economic strategies, but also due to environmental ones, through the use of the mud brick and Egypt traditional knowledge: the mud, as one of the worst heat conducting, kept the houses cool during the day and warmer at night. Also the use of the patio, the *malkaf*<sup>5</sup> and the right orientation of the houses accordingly to the sun and the winds, Hassan Fathy assured the quality of the interior environment.

In the end, Hassan Fathy believed that when the peasant, after having lived in a really beautiful and worthy village, he would not anymore aspire to the modernism of importation.

*'But the Gourna experiment failed. The village was never finished, and is not to this day a flourishing village community'* said Fathy in 1969. Only part of the plan was realized due to political and financial constraints and due to the opposition of the residents in the relocation. The project was presented by the

<sup>5</sup> Scavenger air, through which the hot air leaves the house.

architects from the Ministry as *'an interesting failure, a sentimental excursion along a byroad that could never lead to success'* (The Daily Telegraph, 1964).

*'Only two things flourish. One is the trees I planted, now grown thick and strong, perhaps because they were not subject to the administration, and the other is the forty-six masons we trained, every one of whom is working in the district, using skills he learned at Gournā—proof of the value of training local craftsmen'* (Fathy, 192).

Today nearly 40 percent of the original buildings have been lost (World Monuments Found) and there is an expression the dwellers say, *'Rebuild with the spirit of Hassan Fathy, but not with the mud of Hassan Fathy'* (Sayed, New Gournā resident), since the *'architecture is falling apart because of the increase in groundwater, the lack of a sewage system, and absence of a proper drainage system for agricultural lands'* (Hassan in World Monuments Found, 2011).

But, New Gournā is nowadays a subject of interest for international organizations that such as UNESCO, DOCOMOMO, ICOMOS, ICCROM, DOCOMOMO, CRAterre-ENSAG, World Monuments Fund, and others developing initiatives of safeguard the village. Fathy inspired generations of architects and planners worldwide due to his integration of traditional materials with modern architectural principles. Even it has failed in many points, as the proper admitted, *'New Gournā has changed, and it is precisely that process of evolution that validates and perpetuates Fathy's principles of community empowerment and sustainability'* (World Monuments Fund, 2011).

### **In the Crossroads of Modern and Vernacular**

Even stating to be against the Modern Movement architecture, is my belief that Hassan Fathy always had been questioning the same basic assumptions that the modern architects:

First of all, he continuously re-evaluated the role of the architectural profession, while questioning the intentions of architectural movements and their social

relevance. Both believed that architectural styles should not be applicable mismatched from its temporal context.

Then he tried to develop a global ideal concept which would save the society through the construction of good, beautiful and healthy houses. He believed that good architecture would be able to give happiness and self respect to people. Also, it would contribute to develop a more fair and democratic society, not only due to his cooperation systems of construction, but because an egalitarian society would be achieved when everyone had good houses.

As the modern western architects, since he identified the problem of the house, Fathy developed a theoretical project defined by a strategy structured by irreducible and measurable tools and principles. Accordingly to that, the project of Hassan Fathy shared even the failures of the Modern Movement, in the moment that the dogmatism of a theoretical, single and conceptual project failed when it is not promoted by the particularities of each case: ironically, Gournah not even had brick fabricators and he had to import them from outside, increasing the price of the construction. His ideal vision of the countryside and its peoples, let him to fail on this experience in the same point that some productions from the International Style failed when trying to give equality for all the people, ignoring that not all the people were the same around the world. Accordingly to Mitchell and Taragan, Fathy had a fundamental inability to understand the world view of the villagers he was working with, which himself admitted. Even, reading his childhood dream - *'to build a village where the fellahs would follow the way of life that I would like them to'* (Fathy, 1969, 1), we can find the same arrogance that we can find in modern architects.

Fathy also developed a standardization system based in the principles of the Islamic-Arabic house and the Egyptian vernacular: his constructions were constituted by the coordinated systems between independent elements used repetitively such as the *mifiiiz*, the *qii'iih*, the *dfirqii'iih*, the *'iWiin* and the courtyard. There is even some researchers that claim that New Gournah failed for *'poor application of an industrial supply system to inherently non-industrial craft building techniques'* (Pyla, 2007).

Concerning differences, it can be obviously stressed that modern architects centered their field of action in improving urban conditions, while Fathy's main concern was the rural living conditions of the poor. But the main difference was, in fact, that Fathy advocated the application of traditional and handcrafted techniques and materials, instead of the creation of the new. But what we have to understand is that he wouldn't be modern if he had import systems and materials that was not produced in the place, that would be just irrational it was for the moderns to use some decontextualized architectural style from other time. As the moderns believed that the appropriate forms should be result of the use, it was part of the same belief that architectural styles were not universally applicable and that the uniqueness of different parts of the world should not be denied. That's why it's my belief that Hassan Fathy was not really against *modernity*, but against *westernization*, being the main problem he was always addressing the question of identity. In this boarder sense, the big difference is that while modernists required a total break with the past to find solutions form the contemporary problems, Fathy looked for continuity (Richards, 1985).

But in the end, his architecture was shaped by a conceptual framework that intended to give contemporary responses to the environmental, urban and societal conditions of existence, which I believed to be the main assumption of modern architecture. And from here comes also the concept of beauty and what I believe to be the result of the attitude that put the modern and the vernacular in the same line of thought: *'One's beautiful designs must serve the humble everyday needs of men; indeed, if these designs are true to their materials, their environment, and their daily job, they must necessarily be beautiful'* (Fathy, 1969: 50). And in fact, if we briefly look at both constructions, we will find endless similarities. Curiously at same point, he can even read in Hassan Fathy book this comparison, in the context of his discovering of ancient architecture: *'Ancient Egyptian secular buildings like houses were light constructions, simple, with the clean lines of the best modern houses'* (Fathy, 1969: 20). And it's that we can find the timelessness of good architecture, whether modern or vernacular.



**Figure 5.** New Gurna (Fahty, 2009 [1969]: 76).

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## JOSEF ALBERS AND SPAIN:

### Cultural Transfers, 1929

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#### Abstract

*In the summer of 1929, Josef Albers travelled to the Mediterranean in order to visit the Barcelona International Exhibition and shortly after continued his trip to the Atlantic Pyrenees to meet Paul Klee and Vasily Kandinsky, who spent over a month there on holiday. First in Barcelona and later in Donostia-San Sebastián, Albers must have seen the two buildings constructed in Spanish grounds that would be part of the 1932 MoMA Modern Architecture Exhibition: the renowned German Pavilion by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as well as the Nautical Clubhouse by Joaquín Labayen & José Manuel Aizpurúa. However, Albers did not record any of these buildings in his photographs; instead, he captured several other elements of Spanish popular culture, which he later represented in drawings and paintings.*

*Albers translated the material, texture and handcrafted complexity of the Spanish traditional wicker-chairs he saw in the exhibition grounds of Barcelona and the Mediterranean shadow architectural elements of a typical interior block of the city in "Pergola," a glass painting he created shortly after at the Bauhaus. The activity of the bullfights Albers captured in Donostia-San Sebastián and the breakage of the ring he composed in the form of collage are a prelude of many of the experiments he created with organic forms in the beginning of the 1930s.*

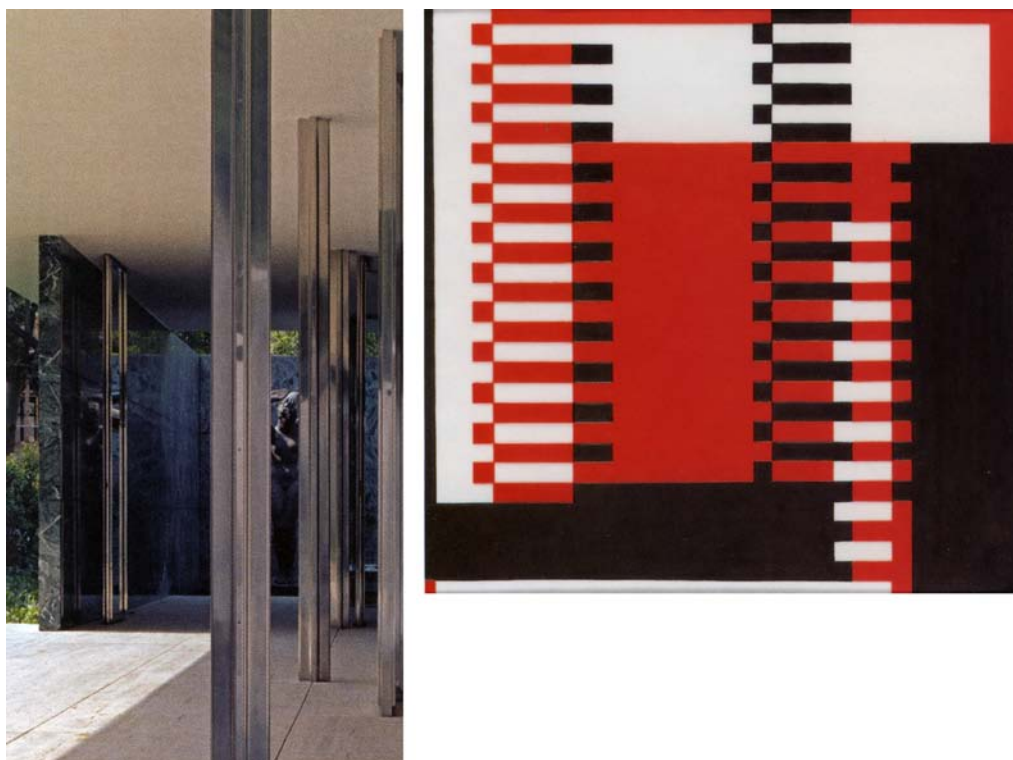
*Albers, who was the first Bauhaus master (1920-1933) to immigrate and to extend his pedagogical legacy in America had never been interested in form itself, but in discovering the multiple spatial readings of the architectural form. And this is where the importance of his work resides. An educator of generations of artists and architects, first at Black Mountain College (1933-1949) and later at Yale University (1950-1960), spatial relationships allowed him to create the maximum effect, with minimal means, and to keep consistent to the axiom he always shared with Mies.*

**Keywords:** Transparency, spatial relationships, collage, popular culture, modern architecture

"Viva Mies." That shortly, and in Spanish, is how Josef and Anni Albers congratulated Ludwig Mies van der Rohe on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup> The Alberses may have always reminded Mies related to Spain, since it was in the Barcelona Pavilion they visited in August 1929, where Josef Albers found –architecturally materialized– many of the tectonic explorations he had developed in his glass paintings during the 1920s [Fig. 1].

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Private Correspondence, Telegram sent by the Alberses, March 27, 1966. Box 4, Birthday Correspondence, 1966. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



**Figure 1.** Mies van der Rohe. Chrome columns of the Barcelona Pavilion (1929), reconstruction 1986. Josef Albers. *Pillars* (1928), Sandblasted glass with black painting, 29,9 x 31,1 cm.

Albers's glass paintings were a personal research project he developed according to the tectonic concerns of the times, in parallel to the work of his contemporary architects.<sup>2</sup> Glass was the medium, but Albers's tectonic studies surpassed the composition of windows and enclosing systems.<sup>3</sup> Beyond analysing the openings

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<sup>2</sup> Among the work of other architects, Albers must have seen the models of Mies's buildings at the "Internationale Architecture" exhibition at the Bauhaus in 1923. Albers's series of "Skyscrapers" (1929) owed a great deal to the way Mies have presented this new typology, as skin-and-bones buildings, already in 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Albers developed two different kinds of works as a *Werkmeister* of the Bauhaus glass workshop: the glass paintings and the glass windows. In consistency with Bauhaus idea of bringing art to industry, Albers, in parallel to his pictorial work and his compositions as an artist, also developed commissions of glass windows (individual panes that shaped entire openings) for different buildings. Albers collaborated with other members of the Bauhaus in the Sommerfeld house designed by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer, with a glass window of 8 square meters he designed for its entrance (1921-22). Another example was the design he developed for the house of Fritz Otte, also in the outskirts of Berlin (1921-22) in which a limited number of related parts could be reproduced and recomposed in infinite series. Later on, Albers started his collaboration with Puhl & Wagner, Gottfried Heinersdorff, and at the end of the 1920s, he designed the glass windows for the Ullstein Publishing Company in Berlin (1927) and the Grassi Museum in Leipzig (1927). For a thorough account of Albers's glass windows see Brenda Danilowitz, "From Symbolism to Modernism: The Evolution of Josef Albers's Architectural Glass Works," in *Josef Albers. Vitraux, dessins, gravures, typographie, meubles*, Fernan Hazan, Paris, 2008, pp. 169-81.

of buildings, Albers thoroughly examined and represented the architectural elements of spatial and structural systems.

Albers's glass paintings showed how modern architecture had achieved the complete continuity of space, distinguishing the supporting elements from those responsible for setting the spatial limits. They also identified architecture's vertical communication cores and the horizontal trays where program unfolded, avoiding the representation of the skin or the limit between the interior and the exterior. Albers also used to express the play between regular supports and cantilevers, shaping dynamic balconies in plain facades; and he even investigated different textures and openings for building enclosures and managed to dematerialize the structural supports of the building themselves. Employing single pieces of opaque glass, and with surfaces of different colour, Albers produced an effect of spatial superposition that created the illusion of transparency. The sewing of bands in groups of different widths and visual weight and the variety of positioning of groups inside different vertical columns contributed to create such an effect.

In Mies's pavilion Albers must have experienced the distinction between the enclosure and the structure he had expressed in "Frontal" (1927), the interior-exterior transparency and continuity of space he had revealed in "Interlocked" (1927), as well as the dematerialization of supporting elements that he had achieved in "Pillars" (1928) and "Walls and Screens" (1928). It is no coincidence that Mies and Albers, whether in buildings or glass paintings, both tried to surpass the anatomical condition of architecture during the 1920s.

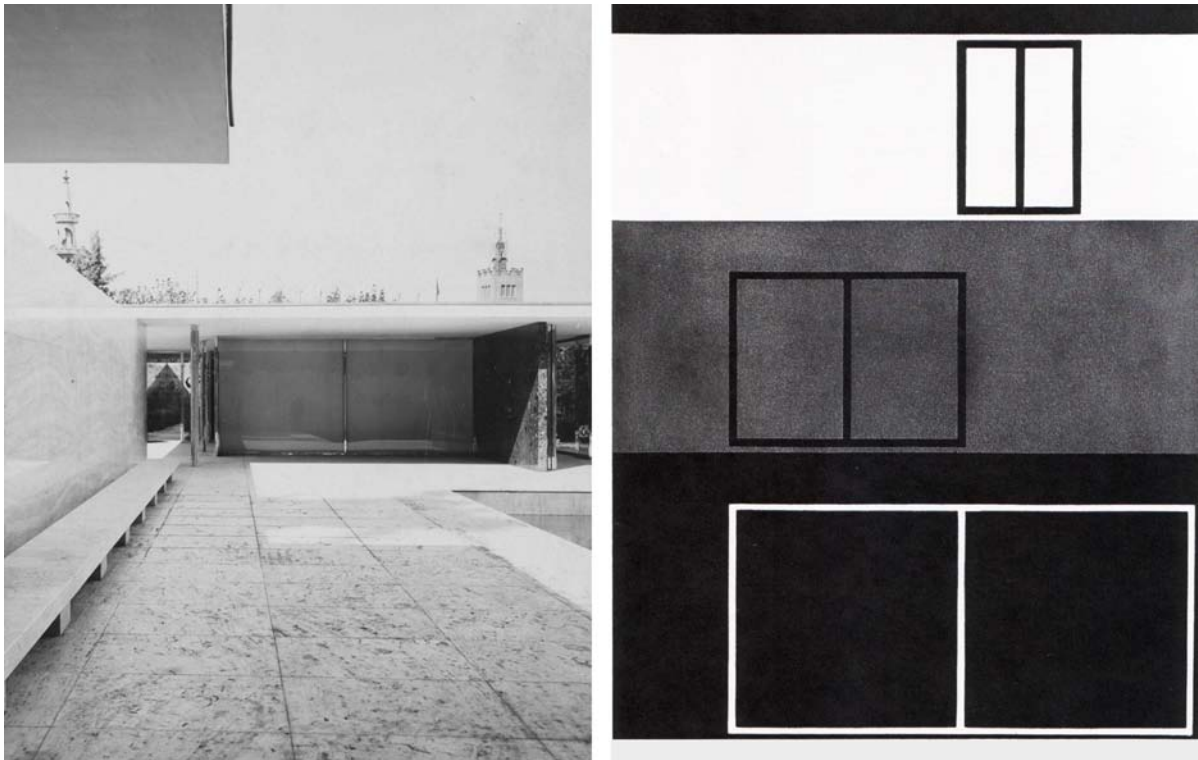
Mies had also dematerialized the building supports in 1928, when he designed his cruciform steel pillars (composed by L and T sections) covered in chrome. The four quadrants shaping the single columns were able to extend the material reflection infinitely in four cardinal directions, as it could be experienced in the Barcelona Pavilion. Moreover, in this representative building, Mies had led to an extreme the ambivalence and multiplicity of meanings that Albers played with in his glass paintings, impeding the distinction between the supporting parts and those delimiting the pavilion. Although the marble surfaces were not load

bearing, Mies exchanged the illusion of supporting and enclosing roles with the cruciform shape and reflective materiality of the pillars, the polishing of the marble walls and the transparency and translucency of glass screens. The pillars seemed to blend with the carpentries and to dematerialize in space, while the marble walls seemed to be in charge of supporting the building.

The large glazed wall composed by two reflecting panes of white glass in the Barcelona Pavilion must have created a great impression to Albers. An impact he very soon represented in the different versions of "Interior" (1929), the series of glass paintings he produced shortly after his European trip showing floating windows in black, grey, and white monochrome bands. When looking together to the view of the Pavilion from the pond and the glass paintings of monochrome bands in different degrees of colour, the influence of one into the others seems quite shocking [Fig. 2]. Especially if we observe that Albers created at least two different versions of this work, in which beyond a relative positioning of the windows, the mullions changed their colour, from black, white, and grey, up to merging together with the background.<sup>4</sup> In truth, choosing and creating different versions of the same painting in three colours was the only way to represent reflection –and therefore the changing colour of chrome– in a medium such as the glass painting, in which colour could not be modulated.

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<sup>4</sup> In a conversation with the famous Chicago critic Katherine Kuh in 1962, Albers explained that "Interior" was the fourth in a connected series of twenty-nine glass paintings. And to the question about whether architecture had played a role in his work, Albers confirmed there was an architectural element, and that for a long time he had "used window as a theme." Conversation between Josef Albers and Katharine Kuh published in *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeenth Artists* by Katharine Kuh (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 11–22. Excerpt photocopies with handwritten corrections (from 1960), Box 67, Folder 3, The Papers of Josef and Anni Albers. Republished in "Josef Albers. An Anthology (1924-1978)," *Josef Albers: Minimal Means, Maximum Effect*. Commentaries on texts by and on Josef Albers by Laura Martínez de Guereñu. Fundación Juan March, Madrid, 2014, 287-289.



**Figure 2.** Mies van der Rohe. South elevation of the Barcelona Pavilion, 1929 (MoMA AD129 CCCR). Josef Albers, *Interior A* (1929), Sandblasted opaque flashed glass with black paint (32,5 x 25,5 cm).

To see the Barcelona Pavilion may have been one of the reasons for Josef and Anni Albers to travel from Central Europe to the Mediterranean Sea in 1929. However, in all probability, the motivation was also to see the two sections of the German Exhibits of the Barcelona International Fair in which the Bauhaus was present: the Palace of Decorative and Industrial Arts and the Palace of Textile Industries, both designed in partnership by Mies and Lilly Reich.<sup>5</sup> The interior spaces of the Palace of Decorative and Industrial Arts and the Palace of Textile Industries, both with a perimeter distribution and a main central space, were ground-breaking in terms of the design of exhibition spaces. The continuity of the glass and wood panes and the purity of the geometrical lines created a neutral background where the exposed objects acquired full meaning. The vitrines opened at different heights within the simple cabinets, which shaped the

<sup>5</sup> Archival research has shown that the Bauhaus was listed as an industry in the Palace of Decorative and Industrial Arts and the Palace of Textile Industries. Box 47174, Expo 1929, Inventari objectos de artes, Arxiu Contemporani de Barcelona. It should be remembered that, at that time, Anni Albers was still a student of the Bauhaus weaving workshop and some of her own work –or that of her professors or classmates– must have been on view.

perimeter circulation through a sequence of white panelling. In the central area of the Palace of Textile Industries, the weavings were hung from bars of different width and height that advanced over an array of freestanding translucent glazed walls of chrome carpentries.

Surprisingly, Albers did not record any of these modern interiors of the Exhibits, nor the Barcelona Pavilion itself. Instead, he captured in photographs several other elements of Spanish popular culture, which he later composed in the form of collage. As the glass paintings, the collage was a technique that allowed Albers to play with ambivalence and multiplicity of meanings and to reveal the different facets and relationships of simple forms.<sup>6</sup>

There are only two photo collages of Barcelona that have reached to us. The first one, of a single image, is from Albers's visit to the Exhibition Grounds of the International Fair. It represents a lining up of various rows of wicker-chairs that went through the Avenue of the Lights in all its extension. Albers may have captured one of the moments when the wicker-chairs were organized in series, ready for the next event to happen. This kind of chairs, which permeated all the representative spaces and the main axis of the fair grounds, were in clear contrast to the pieces of furniture in chrome tube that were part of Mies's pavilion and the German industrial exhibits. The "coffee corners" composed by Mies's "MR1 stools," "MR10 Weissenhof Chairs," "MR20 Armchairs," and "MR130 tables," invaded the different German industrial sections, and the "Barcelona Chair" was especially designed for the reception of King Alfonso XIII during the official opening at the Barcelona Pavilion. However, the wicker-chairs that Albers framed expressed the economy of form that was very much aligned with his teaching and material explorations at the Bauhaus.<sup>7</sup>

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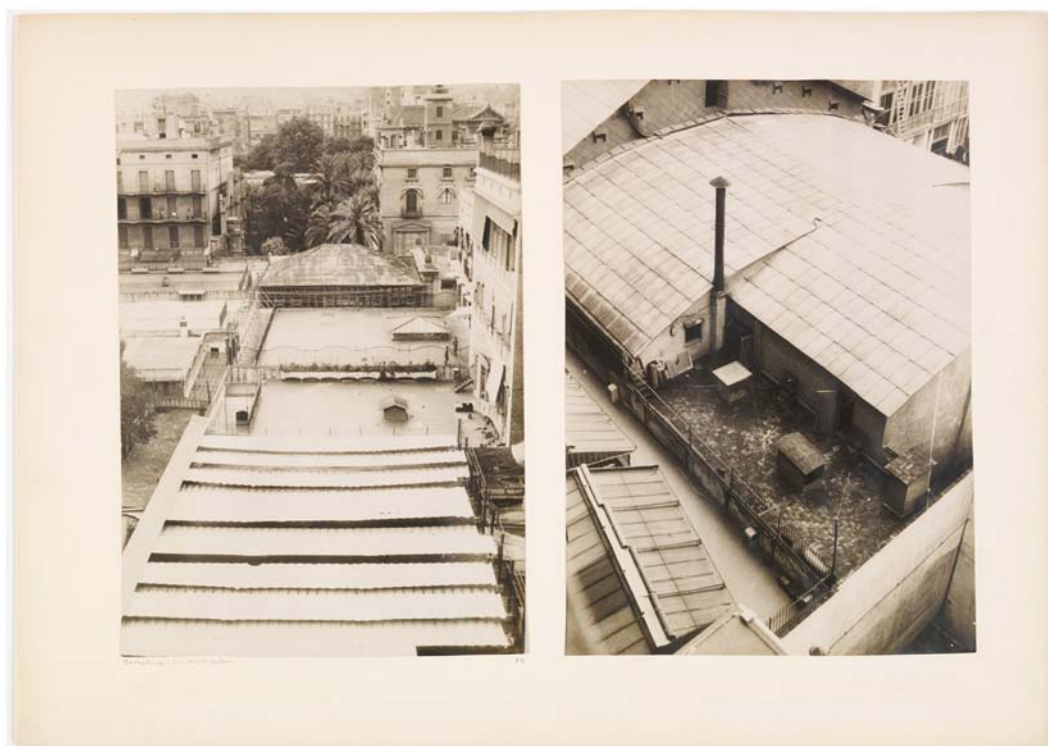
<sup>6</sup> John Szarkowski explains that the investigations of Angela Tau Bailey suggest that Albers mounted the most part of his European collages in 1932. See, *The Photographs of Josef Albers: A Selection from the Josef Albers Foundation*, American Federation of Arts, New York, 1987, p. 11. Most part of these collages remained unknown until 1976, when Nicholas Fox Weber discovered them in Albers's warehouse shortly after his death. See Nicholas Fox Weber, *The Bauhaus Group: Six Masters of Modernism*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2009, p. 284.

<sup>7</sup> Albers first published the material exercises he developed at the Bauhaus in "Teaching Form Through Practice" (1928). Originally published in German as "Werklicher Formunterricht," in *Bauhaus (Dessau)*, no. 2/3 (1928): 3-7. Republished in English in *Josef Albers: Minimal Means, Maximum Effect*, Fundación Juan March, 2014, pp. 211-215.

The second photo collage composes two photographs with views of the interior patio of the hotel block in Plaza Catalunya where Josef and Anni Albers stayed [Fig. 3]. It was the Hotel Colón, a popular building of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century designed by Eduard Sagnier, located in the north-west block of the plaza, facing Paseo de Gracia and opened towards the Gran Vía across its broad patio. The hotel block was part of the urban tissue of the 19<sup>th</sup> century extension of Ildefonso Cerdá, a very idiosyncratic fabric of the Catalan city, characterized by 113,3 x 113,3 meters blocks with ample opened patios, which allow for double oriented dwellings in contrast with the gothic city and its narrow plots. The huge extension of the *Eixample*, the ample dimension –and open patios– of its blocks, as well as the richness and variety of plots that make the urban fabric must have created a great impact on Albers. In fact, at the time Albers was very much interested in capturing the life of the modern city, as he had revealed one year before in “City” (1928), one of the twenty glass paintings he exhibited at the Kunsthalle in Basel.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “City” represents an abstract urban landscape that mixes blocks of different heights and sizes and points to their interior life as well as to that of their streets and inhabited roofs. It is one of the twenty glass paintings that Albers exhibited in Basel shortly before his summer trip of 1929. The complete checklist of works is unknown although five of them were classified as “window images” (fenster-bilder) and fifteen classified as “wall images” (wand-bilder). This exhibition marked Albers’s definitive recognition as an artist, since he exhibited alongside his colleagues and teachers of the Bauhaus. *Bauhaus Dessau* (Josef Albers, Lyonel Feininger, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Oskar Schlemmer), Exhibition Catalogue Kunsthalle Basel, April 20 to May 9, 1929.



**Figure 3.** Josef Albers. *Barcelona from the Hotel Colón '29*, c 1929. Gelatin silver prints, mounted on cardboard, photo collage (29,5 x 41 cm) (1976.7.11)

Albers made two photographs from the window of his room towards the interior patio of the block. The image on the left reveals an unmistakable Mediterranean architecture, with several elements to protect the openings of the windows from the sun. In the northwest, the Gran Via can be seen across an empty plot with remains of a historical construction; to the east, a collective dwelling opens towards the patio through a glazed gallery covered with shutters and lattices. The ground level of the entire patio is occupied by different commercial extensions, and some of them are protected with subsequent bands of long horizontal pergolas. The image on the right zooms into an industrial building occupying the patio and shows part of another glazed gallery in the background.

Sigfried Giedion, who stayed in the Hotel Colón three years later, described the interior space of the block as “the most lively patio [he] had ever seen.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> “View of Spain,” published as “Blick nach Spanien,” in the newspaper *Frankfurter Zeitung*, July 17, August 5 and 25, September 16 and 28, and October 5, 1932. Spanish version of the text, “Visión de España,” in *Maestros de la Arquitectura Moderna en la Residencia de Estudiantes*, Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid, 2010, pp. 351-381; and *Escritos escogidos* (selection and



Giedion ironically explained that the glazed galleries of the main facades of buildings in provincial cities had been “exiled” into the rear facades in Barcelona’s patios. And for this reason, he thought the most original city of the world would be created, should the houses of these blocks of Barcelona be rotated in 180°. Giedion explained the Arabic origin and the long tradition of these glazed constructions in Spain, and lamented seeing how the Spanish architecture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had not relied on the state of the art technology to further develop these traditional windows. According to him, this was a missed opportunity, which had impeded to develop the cultural bonds of Spaniards by means of architecture.

Albers had started taking photographs in 1928 as a medium of representation that allowed him to isolate the abstract condition of objects and nature, in order to later extrapolate them to his paintings, drawings and non-objective impressions.<sup>10</sup> And this is precisely what Albers did with Barcelona’s photographs once he was back at the Bauhaus, when he developed the study for a glass painting “Pergola” (1929), in which we can see a strong influence of Mediterranean architecture, and in particular, of the horizontal elements for shadow production he captured in Barcelona. Likewise, one may say that “Bowers” (1929) was nurtured by the same southern influence. This last painting represented another typical element for shadow production from Mediterranean culture, and its texture may even remind us the wicker fabric of the chairs of the International Exhibition.

Josef and Anni Albers continued their trip to Barcelona through the French-Spanish border up to the Atlantic Pyrenees to meet Paul Klee and Vasily Kandinsky, who spent over a month there on holiday.<sup>11</sup>

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introduction by Josep M. Rovira translation by Jordi Siguán) Murcia, Colegio Oficial de Aparejadores y Arquitectos Técnicos de Murcia/ Librería Yerba/ CajaMurcia, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> It is very likely that Albers started taking photographs with a Leica he received as a present for his 40th birthday. 1928 was also the year in which László Moholy-Nagy left the Bauhaus and in which the Alberses occupied his house, which had a darkroom in the basement where Albers could develop his photographs. For a longer account of Albers’ relationship with photography see *Josef Albers: Photographien, 1928-1955*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne/ Schirmer Mosel, Munich, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> The encounter with Paul and Lilly Klee is documented in a collage of three photographs that is kept at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. Josef Albers, Klee, Guethary (Biarritz), photo collage

Two photographs, showing a dazzling reflection of sunlight into the water, stand out among the many images Josef Albers took in Biarritz. The light is so brilliant that the silhouettes are merged with their shadows. The bodies, outlined from the upper part of the frame, become unimportant when they are compared with the disorienting refractions and distortions of their shapes, which constantly change with the sun and the water. The visual focus of the beach scene of Biarritz is not a quotidian story (we would never know where the ball is), but a blurring and reflective mist in which the players' shadows are faded and confused into the black. It is not difficult to think that these photographs helped Albers exploring the degrees of absorption and reflection of light into materials, and the multiple expressive variations that can be obtained by very limited means.

The Nautical Clubhouse by the Basque architects Joaquín Labayen & José Manuel Aizpurúa was one of the main attractions of Donostia-San Sebastián when Josef and Anni Albers visited the city.<sup>12</sup> The modern language of the Nautical Clubhouse highly contrasted with the old casino in its vicinity. It was a rational building with perfectly articulated plans endowed by great glazed surfaces that opened towards the bay of La Concha from many of its areas. Giedion mentioned the building in 1931 and said that the two architects could not have direct forerunners in Spain.<sup>13</sup> In fact, due to its transatlantic shape, criticism has

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(1976.7.5). Inscription by pencil by Albers: "Klee, Guethary (Biarritz)/ VIII. 1929/ + from Klee." The fact that the Alberses spent some time with the Kandinskys is also documented in a postcard the Alberses sent (from Biarritz to Hendaya) to the Kandinskys and that is kept at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. "Professor and Mrs Kandinsky, Hotel Liliak, Hendaye, Côte Basque. Postmark: Basses-Pyrenées, 27.VIII.1929. Dear Kandinskys/ Now we shall have to save the exchange of holiday experiences for Dessau. During the last few days the sun kept us at the beach. Tomorrow morning we leave for Paris and then home./ We wish you all the best for the rest of your holidays./ Love from both Albers." See Nicholas Fox Weber and Jessica Boissel, *Josef Albers and Wassily Kandinsky: Friends in Exile: A Decade of Correspondence, 1929-1940*, Hudson Hills Press, Manchester, VT, 2010, pp.18-19.

<sup>12</sup> The data of 1929 for the Alberses's trip to Donostia-San Sebastián has recently been proved by the author. Up to 2014, all chronologies of Josef and Anni Albers had incorrectly dated the trip to the Basque city to 1930, basing themselves on the manuscript annotation "Sommer 1930" written by Albers on one of the photographs of that trip. This is probably an error on the part of the artist, who dated the photograph some years later when he was preparing a photographic collage on card with images of the trip. The Alberses's passport of 1930 has the entry stamps for Italy and Switzerland, but no trace of those for Spain or France. Josef and Anni Albers's passport issued on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1930. Box 28, Josef Albers Papers (MS32), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

<sup>13</sup> Sigfried Giedion, "L'architecture contemporaine in Spagne," in *Cahiers d'art*, n° 3, 1931, pp. 162-164.

always inserted the building in a rationalist genealogy and has compared it to Le Corbusier's work. Nevertheless, Labayen & Aizpurua were very much aware of the architecture that was being developed in Germany –and in the Bauhaus– at the time. Aizpurúa had been at the CIRPAC conference in Basel in February 1929 and had met there several German architects, including Marcel Breuer.<sup>14</sup> The photographs of the interior of their office at the Calle Prim in Donostia-San Sebastián undoubtedly remind the “coffee corners” of Barcelona's German Exhibits as well as the interiors of the Bauhaus masters's houses. Their library was full of German publications, and the photographs they took from themselves –jumping one towards each other– in the roof of their office, clearly point to T. Lux Feininger's photographs of the Bauhaus.

Again, Josef Albers did not capture the Nautical Clubhouse in photographs, although it was only 150 meters away from Main Street, where he shot the dome of the Santa María Church. Later on, Albers composed a collage of two photographs in which he contrasted the dome of the church and the perpendicular axis of the old city to which it opened with a section of the circular geometry and clean outline of the bullring of the city.

Albers created a second photo collage out of six different images he took during the bullfight they attended in Donostia-San Sebastián [Fig. 4]. The great amount of public crowded in the rows of seats, in the terraces, and in the handrails of the roof to see the activity in the bullring, suggest the day Josef and Anni Albers spent there was one of the main festivities of the city, and probably even the day of the official opening of the Nautical Clubhouse.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Louis Mumford, *The CIAM discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> There were four bullfights in San Sebastián in August 1929, on the 11, 15, 18, and 25. The Alberses left Biarritz to Paris on August 27, and sent a postcard to Kandinsky which explained how “during the last few days the sun kept [them] at the beach.” This fact discards August 25 from the list. And the amount of people at the plaza entertain the idea that it was August 15, the festivity of the Assumption of the Virgin, the big day of the “Semana Grande” of Donostia-San Sebastián, in which coincidentally the opening of the Nautical Clubhouse took place.



**Figure 4.** Josef Albers. *Bullfight in San Sebastián*. Gelatin silver prints, mounted on cardboard, photo collage (29,5 x 41 cm) (1976.7.14)

One by one the photographs remind Albers's fascination for the rupture of circular geometries as well as for the series of objects. Placed together however, the photographs show Albers's lifetime concern for the achievement of transparency. The fragmentation of the circular forms in several pieces and their replacing in a collage, as well as the view of the cars parked in the exterior in relation to the people's rows of seats in the interior, foreground the importance Albers always gave to spatial experience over form. In this sense, both the upper and the lower part of the collage remind Albers's obsession to narrate spatial continuity. Several works he created shortly after, such as "Aquarium" (1934) or "Cosmic" (1934) in which he overlapped full and broken circular forms, confirm such an interest.

The photographs of Barcelona and Donostia-San Sebastián are part of a broader itinerary that Josef and Anni Albers followed that summer of 1929, which also includes Genève and Avignon before arriving to Spain, and Paris on the way back to Dessau.

In Genève, Josef Albers made two photographs of the interior space of a hotel, which show his interest on the way spaces are articulated. One of the photographs frames the perpendicular angle of an ascending flight of stairs with a continuous balustrade intersecting a cascade of white steps; the other image shows a similar perpendicular angle with the same balustrade located in the continuing interior space to which the hotel rooms opened. However, in order to create unexpected spatial relationships, Albers inverted one of the photographs when putting the two images together in a collage, and created the illusion of a virtual space in the form of zig-zag. Later, Albers further explored these experiential continuities that happened in vertical communication spaces, as his "Study for Construction in Red-Blue-Black" (1939-40) reveals.

In Avignon, Albers offered two opposed points of view of the Palais des Papes. The first one represents the vertical arrangement of different volumes through a promontory and its continuity and merging with the fabric of the medieval city. The second one emphasizes the arrival to the palace with a foreshortening of the main entrance that includes the stairway. Put together, the centrifugal and centripetal shots offer an ambiguous reading of the Palais des Papes as both a man-made and a natural construction developed over time.

In Paris, Albers made two photographs from the interior of the Eiffel Tower towards the ground, reinforcing the transparency experienced in the act of moving vertically through steel circulation cores. "Stairs" (1932), the glass painting in monochrome bands Albers created shortly after, may have been inspired by the steel stairs without risers he discovered at this monument.

Josef and Anni Albers's trip of the summer of 1929 happened only a few years before the project of modernism was abruptly interrupted both in Germany (1933, with the rise of the Nazi Party) and Spain (1936, with the start of the Civil War). In 1933, after the closing of the Bauhaus, the Alberses immigrated to the United States following the invitation of Philip Johnson, to join the faculty of Black Mountain College.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The letter of invitation from the Museum of Modern Art to Josef Albers in Charlottenburg, Berlin reads: "Dear Mr. Albers: / My description of your work has caused a great deal of interest here, so

One year before, Philip Johnson (with Henry-Russell Hitchcock) had put together the 1932 *Modern Architecture: International exhibition* show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. From the almost eighty buildings of fifteen countries featuring at MoMA, Johnson selected two buildings constructed in Spanish ground, which coincidentally are the two works Josef Albers saw –but did not document– on the French-Spanish border: Mies’s pavilion in Barcelona and Labayen & Aizpurua’s Nautical Clubhouse in Donostia-San Sebastián. Additionally, Johnson chose the interior of an individual apartment that Albers himself had designed in 1931 for the German Exhibition of Architecture in Berlin. Johnson highlighted formal features for all of them: “aesthetic rather than functional considerations determined the plan,” said when referring to Mies’s pavilion; or “the marine character of the design is justified by site and purpose,” in regard to the Nautical Clubhouse; or “wooden chairs designed without reference to tradition” for Albers’s interior.<sup>17</sup>

The American curators put together the exhibition in relation to three basic formal criteria: architecture as volume, regularity, and the avoidance of applied decoration. The idea was to set up a formal reading of modern architecture that could be imported from Europe to America. In this context, the absence of volumetric enclosure of Mies’s pavilion –which did not fit in the classification– was simply presented as an exception that confirmed the rule. The exhibition, according to Johnson, established “architecture in the art world’s eyes,” and we may even say that it compared architecture to objects, endowing to it a very restrained formal dimension.

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much so that one institution of learning, the BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE of BLUE RIDGE, N. C., wants very much to have you and Mrs. Albers come to America to teach there this coming Winter [...] Since the school is new, I do not exactly know what you will be called upon to do, but you would presumably head the Department of Creative art which they consider a subject of vital importance rather than, as in most American schools, a subject of secondary importance./ There might also be an opportunity for Mrs. Albers to teach weaving.” Typed letter from Philip Johnson to Josef Albers, August 17, 1933. Josef Albers Papers (MS 32), Box 1, Folder 14, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Published in *Josef Albers: Minimal Means, Maximum Effect*, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, 2014, p. 219.

<sup>17</sup> Mies’s pavilion in Barcelona (pages 187-188), Labayen & Aizpurua’s Nautical Clubhouse in Donostia-San Sebastián (page 174), Albers design of an apartment for the German Exhibition of Architecture in Berlin (page 110). In Henry Russell Hitchcock Jr./ Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1995 (1932), p. 110.

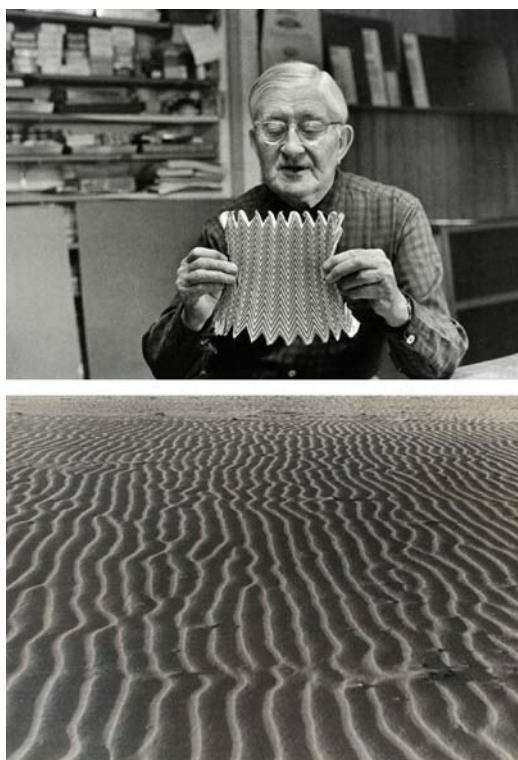
Josef Albers was the first Bauhaus master to immigrate and to extend his pedagogical legacy in America. Albers had never been interested in form itself, but in discovering the multiple spatial readings of the architectural form; and this is where the importance of his work resides. His research with glass paintings showed a thorough concern for tectonics, for the creation of spatial relationships, and transparency. His photographic work, searching the way life happens in interiors of buildings and urban fabrics, constructed the base of a new visual laboratory. An educator of generations of artists and architects, Albers landed in America in 1933 with a single goal to accomplish with his work: "to open eyes."<sup>18</sup>

There is one photograph by Henry-Cartier Bresson from 1968, following the series in which Josef Albers explained the difference between "factual facts" and "actual facts," which is specially compelling. Albers is holding a "zig-zag folding" in his hands, a material exercise he first developed at the Bauhaus, and he continued developing with his students over time, primarily at Black Mountain College (1933-1949) and at Yale University (1950-1960). This material exercise brings us back to "Rippled Sand" (1929), a photograph Albers took in Biarritz during his trip to the French-Spanish border, which shows us the unbreakable consistency of his work as an artist [Fig. 5]. Albers could very easily move across different media, from the discovery of form through the practice of materials, to the tectonic explorations of his glass paintings and photographs. Albers could explore vernacular or modern architecture, but for him form was never what mattered. Instead, spatial relationships allowed him to create the maximum effect, with minimal means, and to keep consistent to the axiom he always shared with Mies, which was made explicit in the buildings and landscapes he saw in 1929 in Spain.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "I am impressed with the fact that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see." Albers used the following quote in a short speech given at Black Mountain College Tea, Cambridge, Massachusetts, On December 15, 1939 in order to explain that the fundamental task of teaching was simply "to open eyes." Typescripts with handwritten corrections, Box 27, Josef Albers Papers (MS 32), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

<sup>19</sup> For Albers the origin of art relied on the "discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect," while the measure of art was the "ratio of effort to effect". See "The Origin of Art" (ca. 1940),



**Figure 5.** Henri Cartier Bresson. *USA Connecticut. US painter, Josef Albers, at home.* 1968. Josef Albers, *Rippled Sand* (1929), Gelatin silver prints, mounted on cardboard, photo collage (17,9 x 25,2 cm) (1976.7.197)

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which appeared in numerous catalogues and articles on him and his work. Republished in "Josef Albers. An Anthology (1924-1978)," in *Josef Albers. Minimal Means, Maximum Effect*, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, p. 253. Mies may have first heard the famous and so often repeated "less is more" from Peter Behrens. Franz Schulze explains how in a recorded exchange with architecture students in 1960, Mies was asked about the origin of his phrase "Less is more." To which he replied: "I said it . . . I think I said it first to Philip [Johnson]. Oh, I think where I heard it first was from Peter Behrens. Yes. You know it is not original, but I like it very much." Franz Schulze and Edward Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe: a critical biography* (New and revised edition), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2012, p. 205.



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## THE GREEK PAVILION IN THE “EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE DES ARTS ET TECHNIQUES DE LA VIE MODERNE”, 1937:

The turn from an art of national inspiration to a “national art”

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### Abstract

*This paper concerns the influence of general ideological trends of the Exposition Internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne which took place in Paris, in 1937, on the conception and realisation of the Greek pavilion. The modern arts exhibition it showcased will serve as a case study to investigate notions of regionalism. I highlight the effort to link modernism and tradition, the role of international exhibitions in the construction and promotion of the ideology of “Greekness”, as well as the importance of popular arts in this debate. This case is approached as the paradigm of a systematic turn of the Greek intellectual world towards tradition after the 1930’s, in view of a nationalist art with regional characteristics and the turn from an art of national inspiration to a “national art”, one that aimed not only to preserve memory, but also to construct identities.*

**Keywords:** Exposition internationale, Greece, regionalism, Paris, modern art

The *Exposition Internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne*, which took place in Paris between May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1937 and November 25<sup>th</sup> of the same year, was undoubtedly the major international arts event of the 1930’s. It was realised in the midst of political tensions: the Spanish Civil War, Nazi Germany, the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, etc. In the exhibition, which happened in a climate of underlying menace, just two years before World War II erupted, the radicality of the aforementioned conflicts was already apparent. At the same time the exhibition aspired to promulgate ideas of peace and themes of international solidarity and to lead the way towards “universal happiness”, aspiring to be a lesson of “high progress” “beauty” and the “power of optimism” (Labbé E., 1938, p. XI). On an artistic level, it incorporated very diverse styles: from neoclassical models with nationalist connotations like the 21-foot bronze *Apollon musagète* by sculptor Henri Bouchard in front of the Palais de Tokyo or the Louis Billotey mural *Tragédie*, to the modern architectural propositions of Alvaar Aalto or Mallet-Stevens. This overview of all modern arts and crafts (as the title suggested) was as much linked to notions of tradition, national identity,

popular and vernacular art or artistic realisms as to notions of modernity, universalism, avant-garde formations and abstract painting.

In this paper I will consider the conception and the realisation of the Greek pavilion in this very context, especially on what concerns the modern arts exhibition it showcased, as a case study to investigate notions of regionalism. More specifically, I will seek the influence of general ideological trends of the *Exposition Internationale* on the synthesis of the artists' list. I will highlight the effort to link modernism and tradition, the role of international exhibitions in the construction and promotion of the ideology of "Greekness"<sup>1</sup>, the importance of popular arts in this debate and the turn from an art of national inspiration to a "national art", one that aimed not only to preserve memory, but also to construct identities.

### **About the 1937 exhibition: on locality and progress**

The *Exposition Internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne* was conceived as a continuation of the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* and was the first one to be realised in France following the rules established by the Convention de Paris of 1928 (Cohen E. 1999, p. 167, 168). Its organisation was decided already in 1931, by the French government and in 1934 Edmond Labbé was chosen as the General Commissioner and publicised the exhibition's first program (Labbé E., 1936) asserting that it will gather works by craftsmen, artists and industrials and that it will be creative, educative while provoking realisations that seem to belong to the future. As was apparent by the first steps of the project, he stressed the need for art in all facets of everyday life and focused on the effort to prove the necessary unity of

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this ideology see Tziouvas D., *Ο μύθος της γενιάς του Τριάντα, Νεοτερικότητα, ελληνικότητα και πολιτισμική ιδεολογία*, Athens : Πόλις, 2011.

"art" and "technique" (Labbé E., 1936)<sup>2</sup>. Also, in the context of economic crisis and international political tensions, the exhibition tried to promote peace but at the same time was overshadowed by various displays of nationalism as apparent by the German and Russian pavilions (Kangaslahti K., 2011).<sup>3</sup>

Most importantly Labbé directly promoted regionalism (Whalen: 2007 and Labbé: 1938, vol. XI, 365-387). Labbé himself stated at the fair's opening: "I have chosen a watchword, regionalism" (Edmond Labbé quoted in: Golan, 1995, p. 120) referring to the strong participation of 23 french provinces<sup>4</sup>. In the relevant chapter of *Rapport General* of the exhibition (Labbé E., 1938, vol. VIII, p. IX-XVI) this notion was explained as the intelligent interpretation of tradition in order to "condition progress" (Labbé E., 1938, p. IX). Labbé clearly stated that regionalism:

[...] entend [...] réaliser les apports combinés de l'expérience et de l'art locaux, pour montrer une fois de plus que le régionalisme n'est pas étroitement confié dans le culte du passé. Il s'agit en somme pour chaque région de garder son caractère bien marqué celui que le climat, les matériaux, les conditions de la vie ont imprimé à l'architecture. [Les arts régionaux] ne doivent pas être des copies et des pastiches du passé mais une résurrection de son esprit, sous des formes appropriées aux temps actuels. [...] [Il faut] trouver le moyen d'adapter à chaque 'climat' régional les solutions modernes. [...] En donnant à l'exposition un caractère régionaliste nous avons servi la cause de l'art lui-même. [...] L'art moderne a péché par excès d'abstraction. Nous avons voulu le mettre en contact avec ces réalités méconnues ou tenues apparemment pour négligeables

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<sup>2</sup> He claimed that they weren't two opposing notions but that their unity was necessary: "aucune incompatibilité n'existe entre le beau et l'utile, [...] l'art et les techniques doivent être indissolublement liés" (Labbé E., 1936).

<sup>3</sup> It was marked, for instance, by the opposition of the German and Soviet pavilions on both sides of the Léna bridge, or by the impact of Picasso's *Guernica*, exposed for the first time in the Spanish pavilion. For more on the period see Pagé S., Vidal A. (eds), *Années 30 en Europ. Le temps menaçant 1929-1939*, exh. cat., 20 February-25 May, Paris, Musée d'art Moderne de la ville de Paris, Paris: Flammarion, esp. P. 377-464.

<sup>4</sup> They were represented in the Centre Régional which was dedicated to promoting the "Renaissance des Provinces françaises".

[...] par les stratégies d'avant-garde : le climat, le paysage, les mœurs, les traditions encore vivaces de nos provinces ». (Labbé, 1938, p. XI)

Thus, compared to the 1925 project, regionalism in 1937 appeared as a more permanent and established value. This agenda was apparent both at the Centre Rural and the Agricultural pavilion's conjunction of city and country, which allowed for a coexistence of left and right, progressive and conservative, regionalism and cosmopolitanism. This meant, on what art and architecture were concerned, that the general umbrella for the exhibition especially privileged the introduction of natural and vernacular forms, landscape painting, works that, although retrograde in style, prevailed as a consoling "lieu de mémoire", symbolically alluding to France's postwar reconstruction, as Romy Golan notes (Golan, p. 1-22). In addition, it set forth a renewed figurative art with subjects of labour peasantry, and nude, related to the concept of new Man. Although the exhibition included many pavilions dedicated to achievements of industrial age and to modern life, as the railway and the aeronautic pavilions, the Palais de la Découverte, the publicity pavilion, etc. it was also very conservative in that it was dedicated to reclaim the importance of the past, by allowing the fields of Science, Arts and Crafts to claim their "glorious predecessors" and to prove the "continuity of human mind" (Labbé E., 1938, vol. I, p. XI). Labbé, chosen in 1934 by a right wing government, was accepted by the socialists, in power since 1936, since this part of his project clearly responded to the agrarian agenda of the Popular Front while at the same time ensuring the continuation of a conservative world view of the fair.

### **The Greek pavilion: antiquity, the "land", nationalism and "Greekness"**

At that time in Greece the Regime of the Fourth of August had established itself in power, since 1936, as a dictatorship under the general Ioannis Metaxas, who governed until his death in 1941. His policy was

characterized by its fascist perspectives but also by a more mediocre authoritarianism, by state intervention on all aspects of cultural and intellectual activity, and by imposed censorship, violence and suppression of democratic rights and values (Matthiopoulos, 1996, p. 671-677). However, literary and artistic creation were not interrupted, and many liberal artists and cultural agents remained in place. This was in part due to the fact that Metaxas did not have a particular ideological program except negative notions of anticommunism and "anti-parliamentarism" combined to the aspiration for a "renaissance" of Greek culture and the birth of the "third hellenic civilisation". In this framework, in order to promote but also to disguise its totalitarian agenda, the dictatorship favoured the arts and education and adopted the cause of "Greekness" putting it in a framework of nationalistic ideology, which he tried to establish by combining classical Greek references and modern creation and language (demotiki)<sup>5</sup>. In this framework, Metaxas was not hostile, within the arts field, to liberal trends and personalities. Consequently, the intellectual domain and its protagonists resulted in a curious mix of nationalistic views according to fascist ideology and experimentation with progressive trends.

This controversial climate, marrying totalitarian politics with progressive ideologies, was reflected in the choices for the Greek pavilion. According to the exhibition's correspondence between Greek authorities and the Ministère du Commerce et de l'Industrie in charge of the *Exposition Internationale*, a letter dating 11 may 1936 places the decision for Greece's participation<sup>6</sup>. The selection of Nikolaos Politis as National Commissioner, seemed a logical one. Appointed during the summer of

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<sup>5</sup> In this period the First Panhellenic Exhibition of Artists was organized. At the same time the School of Fine Arts was reorganized and works in public buildings were assigned to modern artists such as Gounaropoulos, Kontoglou, Parthenis and Vasileiou.

<sup>6</sup> Documents regarding the official invitation of the French authorities as well as the Greek response to that can be found at: Archives Nationales, Paris, France. Exposition internationale de 1937 à Paris. Rép. num. ms., par A. Labat, 1994-1996, F12.12273.

1936<sup>7</sup>, Nikolaos Politis (1872-1942)<sup>8</sup> had been Ambassador of Greece in France since 1924, close collaborator of former liberal Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, as well as Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1914-1920. His success and experience as National Commissioner of the Greek pavilion of 1925 (Kosmadaki P., 2012) secured him a position in this important office in 1937, even if he was far from Metaxas' fascist ideology and had long served the liberal government and its modernization program. Politis was assisted by Niko Fotopoulos, Commercial attaché of the Greek government, who was in charge of the technical and administrative details.



**Figure 1.** Façade of the Greek pavilion in the 1937 Exposition Internationale. (Labbé E., 1938, vol. IX, p. 205-208).

As he did in 1925, Politis wholeheartedly embraced the guidelines of the Exhibition's General Commissioner. As stated above, these guidelines were that all products are accepted

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<sup>7</sup> See letter of July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1936 from the Greek Embassy in Paris to Edmond Labbé, Archives Nationales, Paris, France. Exposition internationale de 1937 à Paris. Rép. num. ms., par A. Labat, 1994-1996, F12.12273

<sup>8</sup> Politis studied Political Sciences and Law in Paris and was Professor of International Law until 1914, when, invited by E. Venizelos, he returned to Greece to take over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1920 he was the first representative of Greece in the newly founded Société des Nations and from 1924 onwards he was Ambassador of Greece in Paris.

à condition qu'ils répondent à l'article 8 du Règlement Général, c'est à dire qu'ils soient d'une inspiration nouvelle, d'une originalité réelle, exécutées par les artistes, les artisans et les créateurs de modèles, en se rattachant d'une manière quelconque aux Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes. Elle n'excluait aucune production, à la condition que celle-ci mette en évidence une idée d'art dans l'expression d'un besoin moderne" (Labbé E., 1938, vol. 1, p. 37-38).

The question of locality and regionalism was also central. The national Pavilion was obliged, by the official contract established with each State<sup>9</sup>, to comprise products made in the state in question<sup>10</sup> except when it came to artists and original works of art, that had to be created by people of Greek nationality. While respecting this framework Politis also tried to maintain a balance of a conservative, retrograde neoclassical style that responded to the ideals of Metaxas' regime, local characteristics which would defend the value of Greek culture's spirit, and at the same time promote it in an environment longing for *couleur locale* as well as progressive trends that would align with the exhibition's program for innovation and invention.

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<sup>9</sup> « Convention » dated 12/12/1936, Archives Nationales, Paris, France. Exposition internationale de 1937 à Paris. Rép. num. ms., par A. Labat, 1994-1996, F12.12551

<sup>10</sup> "C'est la situation du lieu de production qui détermine la qualité de l'exposant national et non pas la nationalité de l'exposant." « Convention » dated 12/12/1936, Archives Nationales, Paris, France. Exposition internationale de 1937 à Paris. Rép. num. ms., par A. Labat, 1994-1996, F12.12551





**Figure 2.** Interior of the Greek pavilion in the 1937 Exposition Internationale. (Labbé E., 1938, vol. IX, p. 205-208).

A public competition was launched in June 1936 for the architectural design of the pavilion, situated in front of the Porte Albert-de-Mun. The project adopted was a neo-classical building with an ionian portico by Zoulias, hosting in its enclosure a copy of the sculpture of Poseidon found in Cape Artemision.



**Figure 3.** Ionian portico of the Greek pavilion, hosting a copy of the sculpture of Poseidon found in Cape Artemision. (Labbé E., 1938, vol. IX, p. 205-208).

Zoulias collaborated with French architects Robert Mondries and J. Neel. The pavilion was built around an open atrium, in a composition alluding to a rural Greek house, opening to a garden with plants and flowers from all over Greece. According to the organisers, it « represented the national character by a joyous alliance between ancient and modern architecture” which was secured by marrying the ionian columns to modern simplicity (Labbé E., 1938, vol. IX, p. 205-208). This was the introduction, in the entrance, to a classical journey promoted by the official Tourism Office. The exhibits comprised photographs of Greek monuments, mostly ancient but also from other periods, ceramics, carpets, weaving from the islands, crafts, mostly issued from familiar workshops around Greece, like wooden furniture from Skyros<sup>11</sup>. Those were exposed next to industrial products ranging from biscuits, chocolate and cigarettes to fabrics, shoes and pharmaceuticals as well as to products coming from nature or from the

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<sup>11</sup> See the « Liste des exposants » Archives Nationales, Paris, France. Exposition internationale de 1937 à Paris. Rép. num. ms., par A. Labat, 1994-1996, F12.12273.

soil whose “exceptional quality was due not only to the warmth of a generous sun, but also to the ingenuity and care undertaken during their preparation”: flour, wine, ouzo, soap, oil and olives, sponges, honey, wool, silk, furs. The whole was combined to paintings and sculptures which did not particularly retain the attention of the organisers in the *Rapport Général*. They appear to have merely played a minor role in this synthesis which contributed, as expressed in the report of the exhibition, to that “Le pavillon grec, tout en faisant d’opportuns retours vers le grand passé, s’ingéniait à mettre en valeur l’apport spirituel de la Grèce actuelle dans les arts et techniques modernes”. The first stone was placed by King George on February 26 1937, while at the inauguration on July 3d of the same year Edmond Labbé as well as Nikolaos Politis pronounced the official speeches. Various manifestations and performances took place in the pavilion, for instance the representation of the tragedy *Perses* by Eschylos by the groupe théâtral antique de la Sorbonne (Labbé E., 1938, vol, IX, p. 205-209)



Figure 4. Interior of the Greek pavilion in the 1937 Exposition Internationale. (Labbé E., 1938, vol. IX, p. 205-208).

## **National and regional variations: the fine arts selection of the Greek pavilion**

On what concerns works of art chosen to be displayed in the Greek pavilion, the same equilibrium between progress and locality, modernism and regionalism was pursued: antiquity was alluded to through casts of well-known sculptural works, such as the *Ephebus* of Marathon whereas representative samples of byzantine icons were shown as well. A big part of the pavilion was, to the satisfaction of the organisers, dedicated to popular art, in their view particularly "original, colourful, full of *poésie*" (Labbé E., 1938, vol, IX, p. 205-209). In this field, two of the pioneers of popular art exhibitions and publications, such as Angeliki Hadjimichali<sup>12</sup> and Ellie Papadimitriou appeared in the official selection. On regards to popular art objects it is indicative of the nationalistic spirit of the exhibition that they were described as proof of "the taste and the refinement of the Greek technicians' race, in a specifically oriental direction" (Labbé E., 1938, p. 207). Interestingly, although filtered through the conservative lens of the Exposition's officials, these representations were loaded with a rather agonistic and progressive political content<sup>13</sup>.

As noted, the official (conservative) discourse especially valued these folklore expressions and the national characteristics (perceived in an essentialist way) they promoted. This is why most works of art were chosen by the same criteria. The core of the fine arts selection comprised mostly paintings, sculptures and engravings by living Greek artists, who had for the biggest part studied in Paris, worked in either

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<sup>12</sup> Angeliki Hadjimichali was a painter and folklorist, known for her dedication to the study of popular Greek culture, especially the publishing of studies like the ones on *Sarakatsanaioi* and Greek popular costumes the but also for organising the first exhibitions. of Greek artefacts in the beginning of the 1930's

<sup>13</sup> Ellie Papadimitriou was committed to the Left and known for her struggles, around 1922, for the welfare of the Asia Minor refugees and for preserving their cultural traditions, while she was later active in the anti-Fascism struggle in the Middle East (1941-1945). Both Hadjimichali and Pamadimitriou's paintings were academic-impessionist renditions of Greek landscapes and still-lives, however the ideology behind them revealed a progressive intent.

academic/impressionist or post-cubist styles and systematically used references to the particularities of Greek land and Greek men. "Le choix des tableaux n'était pas moins heureux et plusieurs d'entre eux, lumineux de coloris, puissants de composition représentaient les aspects typiques de la Grèce" acclaimed the organisers (Labbé E., 1938, p. 207).

In this spirit, the work *Hercules and the Amazons* by Constantinos Parthenis — a last minute addition since it did not appear in the original list — was the most successful participation and earned the Golden prize (Matthiopoulos E.D., 2008, p. 13). It clearly reflects the leading orientation of the selection as "he was one of the first artists who had conceived and attempted to form, not only thematically but also stylistically, the matter of 'Greekness' as a demand for developing a new 'Greek canon' and not as a continuance or revival of some Greek tradition" (Matthiopoulos E.D., 2008, p. 13). In this kind of works he acknowledged the ideological role of past styles, and used them not didactically but in a "modernist" manner, in order to investigate the formal qualities of painting, rather than to "Hellenise" modernism.

Other artists like Aglaia Pappa, Héléne Zongolopoulou, Agenor Asteriadis Georges Gounaropoulos or Yannis Mitarakis (J. Mita), who participated with portraits or nudes, experimented in combining modernism with local features and investigated a growing attention to form and directions given by avant-gardes before the war with a special interest in the creative potential of Greek resources. Gounaropoulos for example, focused on combining the modern and the classical, in accordance with the demands of the times, to conform to some sort of general call for measure and order linked to the *retour à l'ordre* current. Living in the French metropolis since 1919, he followed Parisian styles, especially cubism, surrealism and expressionism, and associated them with the symbolic use of mythological subjects, the simplification of form and colour and a reference to the typical line that characterizes attic vase painting. The linearity and simplification inspired from ancient Greek vases represented for him an

ethnic component, which added local features to French modernism (Skaltsa M., 1990).

Older and acclaimed artists, like P. Vyzantios and Sp. Vicatos were also included. They presented landscapes and portraits representative of the bourgeois aesthetic, favouring styles like impressionism (Vyzantios) or the romanticism of the Munich School (Vicatos) thus attesting of the origins of Greek art's turn to European currents of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this framework more interesting and original was the combination of mythology and symbolism in the work entitled *Hercule tuant le grues de Stymphale* by Frixos Aristefs, one of the few Greek artists influenced by the "Jugendstil".

On the contrary, other painters used post-cubist vocabulary that resulted from Picasso's classical turn, Le Corbusier's purism and references to Greek sources or landscapes in order to establish and propagate in Greece some of the underlying "constants" of the universal aesthetic experience, which allowed the faith in the superiority of Greek heritage to coexist with the modernist commitment to primitive art and to autonomous form. They thus lay the groundwork for the connection of painting and sculpture with a "Greekness" movement, and associated the ideology of the autonomy of form with the cultivation of a collective national identity. Ghikas for instance, who associated with both the cubists and the purists, was personally acquainted with Picasso, Léger and Le Corbusier, focused on geometry and structural symmetry of the work, in order to find "the essence of things" and trace their internal structure (De Rycke, Paissios, 2004). He promoted the idea of the permanence of the Greek spirit throughout time and claimed for modern Greeks an inherent sense of beauty found in ancient art, through the surviving traces of the austerity and purity of the Greek spirit (Ghika, 1935). In his works of the 1930's, he took this investigation a step further and connected the preference of the Ancients for proportion and purity with the country's geomorphology and the unique character of Greek nature.



**Figure 5.** Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas, *Stonebreaker*, 1936, oil on cardboard, 42 x 27 cm., Unknown collection, Ghika Gallery, Benaki Museum, inv. no. ιδιωτΧΓ490.

It is very telling that in the work submitted for the show, - that also won a medal – Ghikas opted for a very unique and unexpected subject. He distanced himself from portraits, still lives, interiors or landscapes, and presented the *Stone-breaker* (1936), a work far from his well-known bourgeois subject matters. Apparently inspired by the many artists and architects living in France who were concerned with modern people in modern society at the time (Green, 2000, p. 173-182), a fact that “increasingly brought an explicit political agenda to the modernity they observed and dreamed” as Christopher Green remarks, Ghikas favoured realism. He followed the example of non-communist modernists, like his friend Léger, who embraced new “popular” subjects, in order to celebrate, as the program of the Exhibition called for “la vie ouvrière et paysane”.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This is of course to be linked to the ideology of the Popular Front then in power (Green, 2000, p. 175). In fact, the impact of the Depression during the 1930s had further accentuated the shift toward organicism (Golan, p. 62) influencing the works of modern artists such as Leger, Le Corbusier and Ozenfant but also Ghika, who turned their attention to manual craft, site specificity, texture and local colour.

This was also the case of left wing artists like M. Matsakis (here represented by the work *Déchargement d'une péniche*) who, according to Matthiopoulos (1996, p. 413) turned in the beginning of the 1930's to realist depictions of Greek landscapes, in order to distance himself from impressionism. Similarly, D. Yannoukakis, who had pursued liberal studies in Paris, presented a *paysage* that combined influences of Cubism, Fauvism and Expressionism with Greek light and colour. G. Velissaredis' *Maison à Santorin* also exploited cubist vocabulary to translate in a modern language typical Greek islands' architecture. Such depictions coexisted with more conventional and conservatist approaches, such as the *Coin d'un village* by Kosmadopoulos, or the landscapes presented by D. Braessas, Sophie Laskaridi or Maria Anagnostopoulou, which proposed romantic, lyrical depictions of national landscape and peasantry in a nostalgic attitude. The same «safe» choices were also made by previously progressive artists, such as engraver Angelos Theodoropoulos.

The direction towards the land, the soil, peasant life, traditional customs and outdoor living also marked the choices of the printed works decorating the Greek pavilion. It is a fact that, as most of Greek engravers were leaning towards realism in style but also subject matter, their works conformed perfectly with the regionalist agenda of the Exposition, even if ideologically they distanced themselves from the conservatist political and cultural stance of Metaxas' government. For instance, Koroyannakis' three works *Moisson*, *Vendanges* and *Pêcheurs* manifested his inclination towards socialist realism, while celebrating labour and reflecting the effort to "question how art could relate to the proletariat" (Green, 2000, p. 175), very strongly posed in 1937. Similarly G. Moshos, an artist specialising in woodcuts, represented landscapes and architectural subjects, that combined Byzantine-style and folk elements, with emphasis on detail and realism.

On what concerns sculptural works, one could find academic busts in marble and bronze by Antonis Sochos, a sculptor who then opted for the



revival of classical style even though he would turn later to popular art capable of “expressing the peoples’ soul” as he claimed (Matthiopoulos, 1996, p. 495). At the same time the selection included modernist works like the marble *Poissons*, *Femme Assise* and the abstract *Synthèse en deux tons* by Michalis Tombros. Tombros, who was close to Ghika. He combined elements from different currents of the École de Paris with national and local characteristics (Pavlopoulos D., 1996) and drifted from one style to the other in order to serve his personal and professional aspirations: to attain the style of modernism and secure his acceptance into Parisian modernists’ circles. He studied ancient art, especially Cycladic and archaic sculpture, and simplistically referenced methods of modern French sculpture, from Maillol to Brancusi, with the ambition, as he expressed in his own journal, *20os Aionas (The 20<sup>th</sup> Century)*, and I quote: of a “new hierarchisation and a new publicity of modern Greek art, that will henceforth count in the international world”. Although essentially opposite to neoclassical trends, this view equally served the Exposition’s demands as the artists’ ultimate aim was to bring forth “the spiritual liberties and the liberated qualities of our Mediterranean and primitive race” (Tombros M., 1933). The quest to fuse French primitivist style with archaic Greek references in an effort to propose a modern Greek style in sculpture also marked the participation of Bella Raftopoulou with the works *Une tête* and *Deux têtes* (Raftopoulou B., 1980). A student of Bourdelle (1925-1930) Raftopoulou had also carefully studied ancient vases (Mavrommatis E., 1983), and followed her master’s precept to turn to archaic art<sup>15</sup>. She thus rejected both realism and classicism, favoured abstract forms and direct carving and adopted archaic art’s simplification, schematization and anthropocentrism.

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in: Apatris Th., *Από Ανατολή σε Δύση*, Athens 1984, p. 62.

## **Conclusions on the Greek participation in the 1937 Exposition Internationale**

The tendency for regionalism which prevailed in the 1937 coincided with Greek artists' investigations towards a plastic language that originated from local culture yet was internationally relevant. The French context of the exhibition, in regard to local characteristics of French provinces as well as of foreign nations, urged Nikolaos Politis to respond to the demand to incorporate national characteristics with features such as locality, order, humanism and progress. Of course this context allowed for a coexistence of masters and students, conservative and progressive approaches, modern and classical references, exactly as in the majority of the works shown in the Exposition. Although representing very different styles and ideologies, the chosen artists had in common that they incorporated local characteristics in their work as much to support and generate artistic innovation, but also to reinvent national identity, in order to ground an hellenocentric modernism.

Greece's previous national participations in international exhibitions - from London's Great Exhibition in 1851 to Greece's participation in the *Exposition Internationale* of 1925 (David F., 1927) - had not managed to respond to the ambition of presenting abroad a glorious image of the nation. This, according to contemporary accounts, was due to the fact that they opted for established artists and did not invest on the dynamic potential of modernists<sup>16</sup> (Kosmadaki, 2012; Matthiopoulos 1996, p. 27).<sup>17</sup> So we encounter the following paradox: although in 1925 the planning and realization of the Greek pavilion were closely related to the liberal party's program of modernization, the choices of the artists (mostly members of the *Association des Artistes et Gens des Lettres Hellènes de*

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<sup>16</sup> Ευγένιος Δ. Μαθιόπουλος, *Η συμμετοχή της Ελλάδας στη Μπιενάλε της Βενετίας 1934-1940*, Διδακτορική διατριβή, δακτυλ., τόμ. Α', Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης, Ρέθυμνο 1996, σ. 27.

<sup>17</sup> It is for instance a fact that artists such as Parthenis, Ghikas, Tombros and others belonging to the *Omada Techni 1930* (Perpinioti-Agazir, 2002) although already active in Paris, were excluded from the 1925 pavilion.

*Paris*<sup>18</sup>) reflected a more conservative attitude – apart from the rural style pavilion that was again aligned with the exhibition's regionalist program. On the contrary, in 1937, under a totalitarian regime and in a neoclassical building that reflected its ideological inclinations, the turn to popular culture as a channel for modernism was combined to a fine art's selection reflecting the nations' creative breadth and a clearly progressive attitude towards the past (Kosmadaki, 2015). This attitude also supported the then growing argument on the cultural continuity between ancient and modern Greece.

Even if the political landscape radically changed in Greece as in the rest of Europe after 1936, we discern in this selection elements of patriotism and systematic modernization proper to Venizelos' second period program (1928-1932) (Mavrogordatos, Hadjiiosif 1992, p. 84) that attest of the continuation of its principle aspirations: that the renewal of Greek civilisation identified with cultural equality with Europe, while the international promotion of Greece was an absolute institutional priority. Contrary to France, here the turn to locality emerged from a progressive political agenda reflecting on the one hand modernisms' regression during the 1930's but also incorporating internal discussions on national art and leading to what may be considered the most modern breakthrough of Greek art. The Greek participation to the 1937 exhibition represents the progressive culmination of this hellenocentric current's trajectory while it is still extrovert and being shaped in accordance with French modernists' regionalist and classical turn. This decision and the selection it showcased also brings forth the importance of Greece's institutional presence abroad for the shaping of a new Greek identity: international promotion of Greek culture functioned as a vehicle to achieve its internal reestablishment.

Although not a major show, this selection made possible a national get together of artists and intellectuals towards a common cause: the

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<sup>18</sup> See the catalogue of the exhibition Association des Artistes et Gens des Lettres Hellènes de Paris, . *Exposition d'un groupe d'artistes hellènes de Paris*, 1-20 March 1926, Galerie Charles Brunner, Paris 1926.

Polina Kosmadaki, *THE GREEK PAVILION IN THE "EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE DES ARTS ET TECHNIQUES DE LA VIE MODERNE", 1937: The turn from an art of national inspiration to a "national art"*

transition from an art of national inspiration to a national art, from an art that aims to preserve national memory to an art aspiring to universalism and internationalism and to playing a role in the global art world.

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## THROUGH THE LENS OF SIGFRIED GIEDION: CIAM IV and the Stay in Greece

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### Abstract

*In the black and white photographs of the Sigfried Giedion private archives, the contrast between ancient and modern, vernacular and international, shadow and light is evident, as it captures the impressions of the Swiss art historian from his first visit to Greece. On occasion of the fourth meeting of Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM IV), Giedion – together with an assorted group of architects, men of letters, artists and poets – would acquire unmediated impressions of a Southern European country, in which the efforts to overcome the financial and political ramifications of its past were cogent. These were manifested also through aspirations to align with Western European expressions of modernity in the grounds of architecture and urbanism; a fact that led to a warm reception of the CIAM IV delegates, aboard the steamboat *Patris II* at the port of Piraeus on August 1, 1933. From the position of the general secretary, Giedion had served a crucial role in the organisation of the Congress, assisted by key coordinators, namely Stamos Zervos, Stamo Papadaki and, his envoy, Fred Forbát. Following the cancellation of the original plans to hold the Congress in Moscow, it had been an immediate organising process after all. By exploring Giedion's involvement in CIAM IV, I traverse the Congress's chronological framework, extending beyond its initial spur and across its later evaluation. Through the photographic and literary lens of Giedion, I focus on his appreciation of early manifestations of the Modern Movement in the extended area of Athens, including Villa Fakidis (Papadaki, 1933) and the primary school on the foot of the Akropolis (Karantinos, 1930), seen in juxtaposition with the built remnants of Ancient Greece and the vernacular architecture of the Cycladic islands. By doing so, I address a reciprocal relationship between Greece and the Western world – a dynamic discourse between areas and eras, as the former was striving to define its identity.*

**Keywords:** CIAM IV, Sigfried Giedion, Greece, Greek vernacular, Modern Movement.

The arrival of the steamboat *Patris II*, carrying the members of the fourth meeting of CIAM, at Piraeus port, survives as an alluring point on the map of modern architectural history. Its association, however, to Sigfried Giedion – general secretary of the Congress (1928-1956) and writer, by then, of the influential *Bauen in eisen, bauen in eisenbeton* (1928) and *Befreites wohnen* (1929) – is obscure; but, as I argue here, calls for further investigation. If for CIAM members, such as Le Corbusier and Fred Forbát, Greece was a familiar

destination<sup>1</sup> due to their visits preceding the Congress, for Giedion remained an undiscovered territory. 'Modern Greece is still unknown ground for us', as he had mentioned in his lecture *L'état actuel de l'architecture contemporaine* during the official opening of CIAM IV on August 2, 1933 at *Hotel Cecil* in Kifissia. 'We note the existence of many good intentions, many problems to be solved and we do not doubt that it is possible for a solution to be found on these magnificent grounds', Giedion had pointed out, referring to a place 'where a timeless tradition demands to be restored in the modern sense' (Giedion, 1933, p. 1140).

The contrast of light and shadow on the rear façade of the Erechtheion temple, a column fragment of the Parthenon temple laying on the ground, a group of children on the base of the Chora of Seriphos island gazing at the camera; these were all testaments of the timeless tradition of Greece, which Giedion captured in 1933 through his photographic lens<sup>2</sup>. However, among the aforementioned pictures, paradigms of recently constructed buildings in the region of Athens, namely Villa Fakidis in Glyfada (Papadaki, 1932) and the primary school in Akropoli (Karantinos, 1930), are also found; they could be regarded as seeds of the modern sense, representing the anticipation of a new era. Drawing upon rare photographs and documents in the Sigfried Giedion private archives, I explore here the context of Giedion's first encounter with Greece, as well as his contribution to the organisation and later evaluation of CIAM IV. By doing so, I lay emphasis on his critique of the vernacular architecture in Greece, but mainly of its influence on Western representations and definitions of the modern.

### **'On board a ship instead of on land' | Anticipating CIAM IV**

In January 1928, Christian Zervos – founder and director of the *Cahiers d'Art* journal (1926-1960) – was in quest of a contributor to cover the field of modern

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<sup>1</sup> In addition, approximately one year before the fourth meeting of the Congress, Heinrich Lauterbach had published his article *Notizen von einer reise in Griechenland* in *Die Form*, whereas in 1931 Erich Mendelsohn's memoirs from his 1930 trip to Greece came to light in the pages of *Berliner Tageblatt*. The same year Bernard Rudofsky defended his thesis on *Eine primitive Betonbauweise auf den südlichen Kykladen, nebst dem Versuch einer Datierung derselben* at the *Technische Hochschule* of Vienna, after his 1929 long stay on the island of Santorini.

<sup>2</sup> The pictures located at Sigfried Giedion private archives at gta/ETHZ are attributed to their collector, taking into account the possibility that they had not been shot by him in their entirety.

architecture<sup>3</sup> and Giedion appeared able to 'operate the synthesis between the bold promises of Le Corbusier in Paris, the realisations of Gropius at Dessau and of Mies van der Rohe at *Weißenhof Siedlung*' (Derouet, 2002-2003, p. 44). Although the bond between the two men concluded in the end of 1934, their association and the fact that Zervos had been keen on demonstrating the houses of Santorini island to Giedion since February 1931 (*Ibid.*) served as catalysts for the organization of CIAM IV. An immediate response to Moscow's indication that the earliest date for the Congress to take place in the city would be in 1934 was crucial after all.

Although it was Marcel Breuer who had suggested that the fourth meeting of the Congress 'should be held on board a ship instead of on land',<sup>4</sup> in response to the search for a place that would allow for 'intimate personal contacts' among the members<sup>5</sup>, the fact that Zervos had direct links to the Parisian branch of the navigation company *Neptos* facilitated Breuer's original suggestion<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, Fred Forbát's reassurance that 'the opportunities for our group in Greece are objectively exceptionally good'<sup>7</sup> (Forbat, 1933), reinforced the selection of the Mediterranean region of Athens as host for the Congress.

Forbát had arrived to Greece in the end of February 1933 and reported to Giedion on monthly basis, mainly from the residence of architect Gustav Eglau on rue Dimokritou 11, regarding the progress of the Greek group formation, the arrangements of the Congress, and at times, his impressions on Greek architecture and its representatives. 'There are still some very good architects, who work more or less in our sense', he had mentioned in his correspondence,

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<sup>3</sup> This is the first traceable correspondence between Giedion and Zervos; in that period the latter was seeking to expand his journal across more artistic disciplines, also planning a German language edition, approaching Roger Ginsburger and Adolf Behring, as well. See: Weiss, 2012, p. 39-40.

<sup>4</sup> According to Giedion's recollection, following the cancellation of the Moscow plans and Breuer's suggestion, Le Corbusier phoned to Zervos and 'the very next morning', they received a letter from the Greek maritime company *Neptos*, confirming that they would provide the delegates with the steamer *Patris II* 'under advantageous conditions.' See: Giedion, 1949, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> In chapter VII, entitled *Eine Griechenlandreise/Athene*, from the memoirs of Fred Forbát kept at the Swedish Museum of Architecture, the Hungarian-born architect expands on his acquaintances during his stay in Greece, namely with Dimitrios Pikionis, Ioannis Despotopoulos, and Wilhelm Dörpfeld.

<sup>6</sup> It was Christian Zervos's brother, Stamos, one of the friends through whom the Greek steamboat could be placed to the disposal of the delegates. See: Fessas-Emmanouil, 2014, p. 209.

<sup>7</sup> Forbat, letter to Giedion, 05.04.1933, gta archiv/ETHZ-CIAM.



referring to Dimitris Pikionis, Emamnouel Kriezis, and the young Ioannis Despotopoulos – who had links to the Bauhaus and would soon construct ‘a very beautiful public sanatorium’ (*Ibid.*).

The contribution of Sigfried Giedion’s contacts to the organization of the fourth meeting of the Congress was multilayered; these covered a wide international range, which verified Madame de Mandrot’s original request to organise the initial CIAM meeting in 1928. Assuming that Giedion’s previous relationship with Zervos facilitated the determinance of steamboat *Patris II* as the main location of the Congress’s fourth meeting, then his correspondence with Forbát allowed for an additional programming of the delegates’ stay in Greece, which would be finalised through Papadaki’s involvement. It was just on April 30, 1933, however, – just three months before the commencement of the Congress – that Giedion announced to Papadaki – head of the Greek group during CIAM IV – that this would be held on the voyages of *Patris II*, with an intervening stay in Greece<sup>8</sup>.

### **‘Without doubt a new life begins’ | Encountering Greece**

In contrast to the CIAM IV discourse, the urban structure of Athens did not allude at that time to an organic city, as in no other field ‘could the lack of a creativity capable of knowledge, feeling and will to fight the forces of evil be more evident’ (Pikionis, 1933, p. 795). Aiming to define a healthy, functional and efficient urban structure, the generated discourse at CIAM IV deployed the terms organic and biological<sup>9</sup> as metaphors in its discourse; however, the biological approach to spatial and urban design was not new. It was preceded by the CIAM II lecture of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, in which they argued that ‘habitation is a biological phenomenon’ (Steinmann, 1979, p. 60), as well as by Siegfried Ebeling’s prompt to engage the importance of a plasmatic approach

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<sup>8</sup> Following a telegram received from the respective Commission, communicating that a meeting of the Congress could not be held to the city of Moscow prior to 1934. Giedion, letter to Papadaki, 30.04.1933, gta archiv/ETHZ-CIAM.

<sup>9</sup> Sokratis Georgiadis draws on the perception of function as concept and guideline in the context of CIAM IV by making references also to Van Eesteren’s mention of the city as a living organism, as well as to Le Corbusier’s comparison of the city to a genuinely biological creation in *Le Charte d’Athénés*. See: Georgiadis, 2014, p. 49-59.

to architecture – one that would ‘relate to the human body more directly than ever’ (Ebeling & Papapetros, 2010, p. 34) –, while it anticipated the definition of a settlement as ‘a continually evolving organism’ after the combination of biology and technology in the theories of Constantinos Doxiadis (Wigley, 2001, p. 87). From within an urban region that was struggling to respond to human necessities, the Congress’s investigation into the organic city was contradictory, but nevertheless imperative.

Aiming to adopt to modern social needs and ‘replace the neo-classicism of its tired mid-nineteenth century’, the rapid growth of the city of Athens was neglecting the fact that planning was a crucial factor for efficiency and seemed to ‘run into a vacuum on all sides’<sup>10</sup> (Beyer, 1967, p. 114). That said, the lack of planning in the Athenian territory was not apparent solely in the fields of urban structure. Following Stamo Papadaki, in Greece ‘all kinds of constructions are performed without architecture’<sup>11</sup>, and thus coordinated responses beyond urbanism and across the field of architecture were of vital importance. This absence of planning – ‘the violation of the principles’, according to Pikionis (Pikionis, 1933, p. 795) – was identified with the ‘forces of evil’ and sought an active response. Contrary to the unfavourable observations about the city, Giedion expressed optimism about the possibility of resolving the spatial and urban issues in Greece, extending his view across Mediterranean countries, such as Spain, Italy and Algeria, which during the 19th century had been ‘asleep’ and only ‘followed the results verified with the North’ (Giedion, 1933, p. 1140). ‘Without doubt a new life begins’, Giedion exclaimed.

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<sup>10</sup> Erich Mendelsohn records his impressions of the Athenian urban structure, acquired during his visit to Greece in 1930, by deploying the metaphor of the organic, when he describes the urban development running into ‘an unplanned space, the filling up of which can at best lead to partial solutions but never to the organic growth of a great city.’ See: Beyer, 1967, p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> Approximately two years before the CIAM IV congress, Papadaki wrote to Giedion and requested ‘a service to our section’, due to the obscurity that accompanied the Congress’s work and purpose in Greece. In particular, he asked for Giedion’s written testament, which he could later translate and publish in key technical journal of the time. Papadaki, letter to Giedion, 04.05.1932, gta archiv/ETHZ-CIAM.

Among the sites of ancient heritage – such as the temples of Parthenon (Akropolis), Poseidon (Cape Sounion) and Aphaia (Aegina) –, the CIAM IV delegates, also visited selected contemporary constructions, in the period between August 5-8, 1933, situated in the extended region of the city of Athens. If the Italian members of CIAM IV, such as Gino Pollini and Giuseppe Terragni, demonstrated enthusiasm for Ancient Greek monuments, Giedion – together with László Moholy-Nagy, Carl Hubacher and Rudolf Steiger – were equally attracted by the aforementioned Modern Movement architecture manifestations. Embracing the hypothesis that modernity alludes to the ‘experience of the new and the hope for emancipation’<sup>12</sup> (Heynen, 2014, p. 95), the newly constructed structures, highly influenced by Modernist appropriations of Western Europe in the early 20th century, conveyed a similar aspiration.

For instance, construction works at Villa Fakidis in Glyfada – a Southern suburb of Athens – designed by Stamo Papadaki had recently concluded, featuring a combination of morphological shapes testament of the, innovative at that time, ‘structural potential of cantilevering in reinforced concrete’ (Tzonis and Rodi, 2013, p. 104). The building was clothed in white plaster emphasizing an ‘exquisite formalist exercise’ (Ibid.), which echoed the ‘vigour with which Athens adopted the housing and architectural model of Modernism’ (Vatopoulos, 2008, p. 169). Here, the terrace ‘has become the main element of the house’ (Karantinos, 1934, p. 121), onto which one could take pleasure in the ample views to the Saronic gulf and the proximal islands, due to its seaside location. In contrast to the pictures shot by Carl Hubacher<sup>13</sup>, for example, which frame close-ups of the visit to the building – such as the delegates’ wanders on its roof, the painters applying the last strokes of colour and the juxtaposition of the

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<sup>12</sup> Note that Hilde Heyne in her 2014 essay *The most modern material of them all...* reflects on the understanding of modernity in a broader sense, by posing the questions ‘what if we understand it to be – as Marshall Berman would have it – about the experience of the new and the hope for emancipation? What if we were not to see modernity as something that emanates from the West and slowly radiates to the other parts of the world, but rather as a set of hopes and dreams that can be appropriated in many ways and that gives rise to multiple variants?’

<sup>13</sup> Carlo Theodor (Carl) Hubacher was a Swiss architect engineer and amateur photographer – in partnership with Rudolf Steiger at that time – who was aboard the steamboat *Patris II* with his wife and professional photographer Grete, and contributed significantly to the photographic documentation of CIAM IV. See: Weiss, 2012.

flat roof with the longitudinal line of the horizon – Giedion captures the house in its entirety.



**Figure 1.** Stamo Papadaki, Villa Fakidis, Glyfada, 1933. Sigfried Giedion archives, gta/ETHZ.

In one of the surviving pictures, the white single-detached volume of the house is situated in the middle of the composition; it is framed by the sea, a neighbour building and the soil of the unprocessed road that leads to the sea, alluding to the significance of the whole in Ancient Greek architecture (**Fig. 1**). Giedion would later emphasise on the importance of the agreement, instead of the form, referring also to Le Corbusier's interest in the perception of Ancient architecture as a whole. 'In front of the temple of Aphaia at Aegina, I accidentally threw a glance over the shoulder of Le Corbusier opening his big sketchbook', Giedion describes, mentioning that 'he does not draw the details of forms, he notes the ensembles (Giedion, 1934, p. 80). In the case of Villa Fakidis, Giedion perceives architecture and the surrounding landscape, through his lens, as an inextricable entity, appreciating the value of contextualisation (Popescu, 2011). As in his succeeding discourse on monumentality, here, the natural elements, namely the sea and the soil, complete the picture and are grouped in a unified architectural ensemble (Giedion et al. 1943a). Similarly to his picture from the temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion (**Fig. 2**), architecture considers the ground and at the

same time, 'erects proudly the abstract building' (Giedion, 1934, p. 78); following Giedion, this was the objective of contemporary architecture, as well.



**Figure 2.** Temple of Poseidon, Cape Sounion, Attica, ca. 444 BC. Sigfried Giedion archives, gta/ETHZ.

From within the same discourse on the appreciation of the surroundings – in reference to the architectural artifact – derives the picture of the school in Athens, built by Patroklos Karantinos<sup>14</sup> in 1930 (**Fig. 3**), from the visit on August 3, 1933. In this case, Giedion's picture does not depict the entirety of the building, but captures a partial perspective of the school. Following the newly initiated guidelines of the architectural department at the Ministry of Education, the school featured a flexible spatial structure with white orthogonal volumes, which opened up to outdoor spaces following a 'rhythmic stepping up of terraces' (Tzonis and Rodi, 2013, p. 96). In one of the surviving pictures in Giedion's archives, a group of children is caught while running on its longitudinal rooftop, in contrast with the static volumes on the Akropolis of Athens in the background and the roofs of the neighbouring houses.

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<sup>14</sup> In 1933, following the CIAM conference, Patroklos Karantinos would follow up on his acquaintance with Giedion and send him a portfolio of his works, accompanied by the note: '*Quelques de mes travaux. à M. Giedion, avec amitié et reconnaissance.*' The selected works included the public schools at Charokopou, Kalamaki, Nauplion, Psychikon and Kavala, as well as the Villa at Chalandri.



**Figure 3.** Patroklos Karantinou, School in Akropoli, Athens, 1930. Sigfried Giedion archives, gta/ETHZ.

This frame alludes to Giedion's mention of Moholy-Nagy's observation that on the island of Santorini the houses 'merged so plastically into one another that the children were playing on their neighbours' flat roofs', while due to the natural steepness of the slope they were built on, these 'graduated steps' allowed each house unobstructed views over the sea (Giedion, 1949). Through this prism, in his visual records from the Cycladic islands, the pictures of local persons standing in the intermediate rooftops are frequent. In them, one cannot distinguish the boundaries between the houses, which succeed one another – on horizontal or vertical level (**Fig. 4**), as the architectural ensemble is expressed through alternative means. For Giedion, these architectural forms could not be equally appreciated if removed from their geographical and topological context, as they had been 'originally born out of this light and of this land'. 'As the detached figures of the Parthenon become dull in the North and as the marble needs the Greek atmosphere to maintain its shine,' Giedion writes, 'the Greek form is not transportable' (Giedion, 1934, p. 80).



**Figure 4.** Residential settlement on Santorini island, Greece, August 1933. Sigfried Giedion archives, gta/ETHZ.

The exact route of the former English coal ship, which part of the delegates rented with the help of Papadaki, during the cruise among the Greek islands is unknown<sup>15</sup>; Giedion would later refer to Aegina, Poros, Santorini and Cape Sounion, as the selected stops of the trip, but in his archive photographs from Seriphos and Ios islands also feature. Narrow alleys formed by the close proximity of buildings, children framed by the steep development of a Cycladic town, and dry surfaces of land fading away to the sea represent his poles of interest. Apart from the presence of contemporary architecture principles (Djelepy, 1934, p. 93) on these unspoilt grounds, in the photographic collection of Giedion the impact of the natural surroundings, the texture and colour of the houses and above all, the natural light – evident also throughout Moholy-Nagy's film – are also being recorded.

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<sup>15</sup> Eric Mumford, based on information provided by Isaac Saporta, notes that the schedule prepared by the Greek group listed the places to be visited as Hydra, Milos, Santorini, Naxos, Paros, Delos, Sounion, Monemvasia and Mykonos. See: Mumford, 2000, p. 295.

## 'A need to return once again to Greece' | Evaluating the stay



**Figure 5.** Residential settlement on Santorini island, Greece, August 1933. Sigfried Giedion archives, gta/ETHZ.

Long after the return of the steamboat *Patris II* to Marseilles, Giedion would recall CIAM IV with an essence of sentimental longing, characterising it as 'the most inspired of all congresses' (Giedion, 1942, p. x). It was, undoubtedly, a multifaceted testament of inspiration. Regarding the potential of the Congress to address the rising issues of the modern city, Giedion later argued that it had 'laid down the basic lines of the present-day city building' and thus 'had great influence on the authorities' (Giedion, 1955, p. 28). In reference to the delegates' engagement with Greece though, another source of influence had become apparent. In citing Moholy-Nagy, Giedion emphasized on 'how directly the Greek world speaks to us – though in a very different sense to what the nineteenth century understood by this' (Giedion, 1949, p. 37). Elements inherent to the Greek landscape, such as the mathematical precision of archaeological remains, the organic freedom of forms and the abstractness of vernacular dwellings (**Fig. 5**) were poles of deep interest for Giedion. They served as a vehicle to touch upon notions of transportability, permanence and influence – to re-evaluate the principles of the modern epoch.



Notably, references to Mediterranean architecture were 'deeply embedded in the whole Modern Movement from 1905 onwards' (Colquhoun, 2007, p. 148) and appeared, at times, as influential as the evolution of technology<sup>16</sup> (Meganck, L. et al., 2013). On Greek grounds, the recording of Modernist structures was often accompanied by their analogies to the vernacular architectures of the Greek islands<sup>17</sup>, as in Heinrich Lauterbach's observation that 'the Greek architects are in happy union with their architectural tradition on the Aegean islands' – assessing this union as a genesis, 'not a convention' (Lauterbach, 1932, p. 346). Through the same prism, Panos Djelepy in his *Cahiers d'Art* article dedicated to the houses of the Greek archipelago stated that similarly to the contemporary minimum dwellings, the houses of Skyros island, for instance, feature a common room that occupies most of the built surface (Djelepy, 1934, 97).

In addition, concepts of order, in the juxtaposition of the Athena Nike temple with the *Delage Grand-Sport* (Le Corbusier, 1923, p. 107), and architectural character, such as the white surfaces and the cubic forms, in the parallelism of the coastal town of a Greek island with the *Wießenhof* and *Schönblick* urban settlements (Schultze, 1929), had already been recorded as influences of the Greek vernacular to West modernity, prior to the fourth meeting of the Congress. In discussing the 'eventual emergence of a genuinely contemporary culture', Giedion had later expressed the need for a 'common language on similar lines', which would also be reflected on other artistic or scientific disciplines (Giedion, 1949, p. 37). The abstractness of Greek vernacular architecture echoed in Modern movement structures. Meanwhile, the characteristics of Western modernity were reflected onto several constructions in Greece, which sprouted in the early 1930s, namely public schools, sanatoria and factories.

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<sup>16</sup> Mediterranean vernacular characteristics have also been extremely influential in forming the mature ideology of Le Corbusier, whose references to the Mediterranean vernacular, such as cubic forms and white walls, was just as prominent as the idea of industrial standardisation. See: Colquhoun, 2007, p. 148.

<sup>17</sup> Note that Stavros Martinos refers also to Stamo Papadaki's article for *Bâtir* journal, entitled '*Renouveau du vrai classicisme. Le Grèce et l'architecture fonctionnelle*', in which he juxtaposes a picture of the residential settlement of the island of Ios, shot by László Moholy-Nagy, with one of Villa Fakidis.

In the years following CIAM IV, Giedion expressed in several of his correspondences the need to return to Greece. It was undeniably a place from which, despite the short period of his first encounter, he had acquired 'decisive impressions' – as he wrote to Alexandros Dragoumis<sup>18</sup> in January 1935. Notably, one year earlier, he had initiated contact with Professor Dr. Otto Waser – founding member of the *Hellas. Swiss Association of Friends of Greece* (1926) – stating that the reception of the CIAM IV members had been 'friendly and generous in every way' (Giedion, 1934a). 'For many of us there is a need to return once again to Greece', Giedion stressed, as there lies the 'intersection of modern architecture will with the ancient, (which is) for us of particular interest today' (*Ibid.*). Indeed, this intersection continued to stimulate architectural, theoretical and cultural discourses, in the attempt to delineate a common language on similar lines.

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<sup>18</sup> In the surviving records of Giedion, it is apparent that he maintained correspondence with Dragoumis, in the years following CIAM IV (1934-1936). Except from issues regarding the fourth meeting of the Congress and the *Comité international pour la résolution des problèmes de l'architecture contemporaine (CIRPAC)*, they also discussed the inclusion of didactic elements from the Greek Classical period in the exhibition *Das Bad von Heute und Gestern* (Kunstgewerbemuseum, Zurich – 6 April 1935).

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## **SOUTHERN ARCHITECTURES**

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### **Abstract**

*Our task is to analyze the Southern modernisms, which we have so far studied in relation to housing, from a wider architectural point of view. More precisely, we intend to discuss the architectural culture of Southern Europe, both in its local specificities, as well as its relationship with international architecture. We are also interested in understanding the degree of intentionality and the theoretical conscience of each of these manifestations.*

**Keywords:** Southern architecture, critical regionalism, international regionalism, transition-space

Our task is to analyze the Southern modernisms, which we have so far studied in relation to housing, from a wider architectural point of view. More precisely, we intend to discuss the architectural culture of Southern Europe, both in its local specificities, as well as its relationship with international architecture. We are also interested in understanding the degree of intentionality and the theoretical conscience of each of these manifestations.

This project explore the possibility of revising the dominant definition of *modernism*, based on the following hypothesis: the modernisms of Southern Europe have affirmed themselves and established their roots in popular culture (in vernacular art and architecture), anticipating, to a large extent, the movement that would be later coined as *critical regionalism* (Lefaivre and Tzonis, Frampton). Indeed, we have considered the hypothesis of the existence of regionalism from a very early date and that would establish itself as a form of resistance to the hegemony of international styles and to gain "critical" consistency.

Departing from these premises, and focusing our attention on the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we have attempted to understand the architectural culture of Southern Europe, more precisely, of Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece. Accordingly, we argue that it is, firstly, important to clarify that, in our approach; we will use contemporary critical tools, such as the notions of *critical regionalism* and *critical internationalism*, whose formulation was carried out in the aftermath of the epoch in study. The concept of *critical regionalism* was formulated by Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis in 1981, and it was reformulated by Kenneth Frampton two years later. Ever since, this concept has been widely used, as a theoretical and critical tool, in order to study the architectural trends that developed during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The same concept is characterized by the enhancement and the reconversion of local architectural traditions by contemporary production. This process reflects an aspect of resistance to hegemonic tendencies of different nature, that is to say, cultural, political or economic trends. Obviously, similarly to all other regionalisms, it has a strong **identitarian** component and is, in this particular case, a clear reaction to cultural universalisation.

As summarized by Pedro Vieira de Almeida (2005: 71), "with due care – the same care that Frampton also used, when he avoided deliberately sentimental, populist and vernacularly demagogic interpretations -, we may declare, even if in an approximate way, that the *critical regionalism* intends to promote local values to the level of an international language." However, the notion of *critical regionalism* may be somewhat rigid, as it implies the understanding of local values as a pre-defined, static reality that can be later appropriated by others.

Vieira de Almeida draws our attention to the insufficiency of this perspective, and suggests, instead, the notion of the *critical internationalism* as an indispensable complementary tool, in order to understand a reality he considers more dynamic. In his opinion, "the recognition of the potential validity of local values must be interpreted in the light of the recognition of international values" and vice-versa (Vieira de Almeida, 2005: 71). Underlying this stays the idea that the *critical internationalism* "should establish and regulate the cultural trade with

all the cultures involved". In simultaneous, "local cultures, with their own cultural values, will act mainly and fundamentally as the "critical filter" of this dispersed influence" (Almeida, 2005: 71).

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The same author (1986) also draws our attention to the speech on architecture delivered by Carlos Ramos in 1933, in which he later quoted Emile Schreiber's statement: "international penetration, national interpretation, *voilà* the whole secret of harmony in the world of tomorrow". This affirmation could very well be considered as a definition of *critical internationalism* (Almeida, 2005: 71). It also means that the critical awareness at the foundation of this notion dates back to, at least, the beginning of the 1930s.

On the other hand, Tzonis & Lefaivre (1986: 7) place the theoretical foundations of the *critical regionalism* in an earlier period, that is to say, in the previous decade. In their opinion, a glimpse of those foundations could be already caught in Lewis Mumford's work, namely, in his book *Sticks and Stones, a Study of American Architecture and Civilization* (1924). In this book, Mumford proposed a project based on the concept of "the interaction between popular culture and its place of origin", *i. e.*, he apparently defended the existence of regional architecture.

However, these issues gained theoretical significance in the post-war time, with Giedion's (1954) reflections on the movement he called "the new regionalism". Giedion argued that modern architecture conserved the mark of its regional origin, even in its most international element. From his viewpoint (1954: 209-211), the coloured horizontal plans of the Dutch fields and the vertical plans of the traditional buildings' plain façades would explain Mondrian's "neutral forms" or Theo van Doesburg's abstract forms. Similarly, the works of both Tony Garnier and August Perret, that are two possible examples, are directly based on French building tradition. Giedion had no doubt that "the regional contributions may lead to a universal architectural concept."



The following year, Paul Ricoeur (1955) reflected upon globalisation and raised the question “how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization” (apud Frampton, 1983: 148). In the definition he proposed of the *critical regionalism*, Frampton (1983: 148) draws our attention to the fact that, in the words of Ricoeur, “a ‘world culture’ will only originate, through a cross-fertilization between rooted *culture*, on the one hand, and universal civilisation on the other”, so that “a regional culture must also be a form of world culture”. In contrast to Frampton, who considered this “proposition as paradoxical and impure”, Pedro Vieira de Almeida agreed with Ricoeur. From the point of view of Vieira de Almeida, the only mistake of Ricoeur’s theory was that he didn’t understand the filtering role that this “rooted culture” could play.

Vieira de Almeida reminded us that he had already defended the notion of a plural post-modernity as early as 1984. This notion “would have as consequence, or as characteristic, the emergence of a new assumption of regional values of modernity, not only as a proposal – as embraced by critical regionalism –, but also, as a specific reading filter. This filter would deliberately reject the cultural hegemonic attitudes representing an assumed - but by then already fictional - centrality that both the modernism and the post-modernism had accepted without hesitation” (Almeida, 2008: 86). Moreover, this filter was also called *critical internationalism* by Vieira de Almeida.

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Regardless of our definition of the critical tools used or of our choice to consider the definition of critical regionalism and critical internationalism as a very important right from the beginning, it assumes crucial to understand the difficulties and challenges that were posed by the chronological delimitation of the period under study.

The field of architectural culture is a crossroads of realities that can be only understood by going back to the previous century and to the multiple paths opened by the first vanguards.

Seldom has history witnessed the same simmering of artistic ideas and proposals that characterized the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Multiple movements believing to be ground-breaking and potentially universal mushroomed everywhere, with an epicenter in Paris. Moreover, or shall we say, therefore, it was a time characterized by wars: the First World War, from 1914-1918; the October Revolution of 1917; the Greece-Turkey War of 1919-1922; the scars left by the war with the USA and the English Ultimatum that marked the entrance of Spain and Portugal, respectively, into the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and, finally, the emergence of the totalitarian regimes that spread everywhere in the 1920s. Those times were dangerous but, in simultaneous, stimulating in order to both live in and to serve as case studies.

The presence of vernacular architecture as a recurrent source of inspiration was less visible during this time than it had been at the turn of the century or from the 1930s, but its presence was, nevertheless, felt, as our research aims to demonstrate.

Indeed, we argue that the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were marked by a strong presence of the vanguards, in addition to having also constituted a fertile soil for the resolution of problems of cultural or national identity. Vernacular forms played an important role in this process, due to the richness of their formal repertory, the consolidated experience of lifestyles they reflect, and also due to the fact they can be identified with some form of original purity that contrasts with erudite forms. These times also assisted to the reinvention of the house, in the order to become a modern and comfortable character.

Our research ends at the beginning of the 1930s, when the modern movement, that had a special association with international architecture and the CIAM, become historically hegemonic, leading to the present reevaluation of the architecture of the time.

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We infer an unexpected proximity between the Portuguese and the Greek cases, based on the survey made of the architecture produced during this period in the

four countries in study. The relation between the Spanish and the Italian cases is less direct than we expected initially.

Nevertheless, we infer the same interest for vernacular architecture, the same search of solutions for single-family houses, the same fascination for traditional forms. Capri, Ibiza, Aegina or Algarve gave the image of a pleasant tradition to the constructors of the new modernity.

For instance, Capri and Ibiza became election places for both artists and intellectuals. Their landscape was depicted, and served as case study within the debates on the constitution of a Mediterranean architecture with Mediterranean roots. (Sabatino 2013: 207).

However, this Southern tradition offered itself to the North that visits and absolves it, and motivated its reappearance in new architectures, sometimes combined with its own past.

In that period, the use of vernacular as source of modernity was not exclusive to the South, but can be found everywhere, from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean. However, the cubic volumes of the whitewashed walls characteristic of the Southern architecture were an ideal instrument to give an historical thickness to the new proposals of a rationalist architecture, thus representing a convenient discovery for everybody.

In 1922, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti praised the *practical style* of vernacular architecture of Capri, "for its rational rather than picturesque qualities", classifying it as a futuristic island (Sabatino, 2013: 207). In the same year, the Portuguese António Ferro<sup>1</sup>, described Olhão, in Algarve, as a cubist peasant village (see Agarez, 2012: 72). This town has frequently been associated with modernism. In 1934, an English traveller wrote that the architecture of Olhão "could give points to many a modern young architect priding himself on the functional use of the materials." (Gordon, 1934: 212 apud Agarez, 2012: 70).

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<sup>1</sup> António Ferro, a journalist related to Futurism, will be the future director of the the Portuguese governmental institution Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional [Secretariat of National Propaganda].

For Marinetti, the vernacular architecture of Capri offered beauty and freedom, as it rejected “any kind of order reminiscent of classicism” (apud Sabatino, 2013: 208). Nevertheless, we argue that the classical tradition was eventually always present in of Southern architecture at its own right or through its vernacular reflex.



**Figure 1.** Beira Alta house. Photo published in *Arquitetura Popular em Portugal*. Lisboa: Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, 1961

This and other suspicions slowly arose during our study. For example, the idea that the secular architectures that were defined in Southern Europe and Mediterranean would predominantly correspond to a poetic of *thick walls*, in which mass is a determinant element in the perception of space. (Almeida, 2010). As we have already demonstrated, this is the case of Portugal, as concerns vernacular architecture. (Maia, Cardoso & Leal, 2013)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> We refer to the project *Popular Architecture in Portugal. A Critical Look* (PTDC/AUR-AQI/099063/2008) that was carried out between 2010 and 2013. This project explored two expressive parameters of architecture: the *thickness* – that configures a poetry of thick walls or, by contrast, a poetry of thin walls – and the *transition-space* (See: Almeida, 2010, 2012 and 2013; Maia, Cardoso and Leal 2013).

We further suspect of a constant presence of *transition-space* more to the South. This space that “is neither internal nor external” is always present in Southern architecture, since antiquity. In the peristyle, on a private level, or in the stoa, on a public level, the *transition-space* translates an ancestral lifestyle in the Mediterranean (Almeida, 2013 [1963]: 92).

Vieira de Almeida, who created this concept, quoted in this respect Eglo Benincasa, who explained that the relation with the external is very different between North and South, corresponding to distinct lifestyles. For the Southern man, *life in the open air* doesn't translate the necessity of contact with nature that is essential further North. In the South the *life in the open* are air evolves “in an open space protected from the Sumer sun and the Winter wind, we can call it as semi-open”. Thus, from his point of view, “a problem that should be of great significance in Southern architecture is to keep the maximal intimacy in open environments.” (Benincasa apud Almeida, 2013 [1963]: 92).



**Figure 2.** Dimitris Pikionis, Acropolis paths

These are the spaces, defined as *transition-space* by Vieira de Almeida that came up in a great variety of forms, translating the richness of an ancestral lifestyle in the South.

This was perceived by the Italian architects, who found the fundamentals of modernity in the combination of the vernacular *Mediterraneità* with the classica *Grecità* (see: Sabatino, 2013: 208).

Peristyles, terraces, pergolas and trellis are connected to porticos, and teach a vernacular lesson full of classical references.

In order to illustrate the point, see the work of the Portuguese architect Raúl Lino that is centered on the middle class single-family house. Framed by the British *domestic revival* and by its German version, this work was totally modern at the time. But Lino's houses includes, in this modernity, the characteristics of an architecture of light and sun, of thick walls, *transition-space* and traditional materials such as *azulejo* [glazed tile] he learnt during his trips in Southern Portugal.



**Figure 3.** Raul Lino, Cypress house, Sintra, Portugal ©Pedro Vieira de Almeida

Also exemplary in this respect is the work of Aristótelis Zachos, a contemporary architect to Lino, who redrew architectures that he wanted Greek, trying to ignore, perhaps because of a patriotism feeling that vernacular Greek also assimilated the Ottoman tradition in its totality.

Modern *Portuguese house*, *Catalan house* and *Greek house* were invented at the beginning of a very nationalist century. The aim was to understand the traditional dwelling forms in order to reinvent single family house based on them.

In the 1930s, the debate in Italy focused on the classical-vernacular Mediterranean *patio-house*. This house type, characteristic of the Mediterranean region since Ancient Antiquity, “proved to be adaptable to the functional requirements of modern dwelling, but it also facilitated a typical Mediterranean lifestyle that involved spending part of the day in the open air” (Sabatino, 2013: 201). That is to say, it responds to the necessity of an external existence of controlled intimacy.



**Figure 4.** Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini, Villa-Studio for an artist, Milan, V Triennale, 1933. Published in Alberto Sartoris, *Encyclopédie de l'architecture nouvelle*, vol. 1, Milan, Hoepli, 1948 and later in Sabatino, 2013.

In these years, in Italy, the *casa-patio* solved apparently the single-family housing problem for general satisfaction: of the rationalist architects that saw in it “an expression of effective planning with limited space”; of the nationalists and of the historicists that interpreted it as “an expression of *Italianità* that could be flaunted to the rest of the world” (Sabatino, 2013: 201).

Pikionis, in Greece, who belonged also to the 1930's generation, was closely related to vernacular architecture, which he considered as expressiveness of *thick walls*, the experiences of *transition-spaces*, the intensity of the clear-dark effects of shading elements that recall a lifestyle with a strong Southern character.

At this stage of our work, we are still not sure about the existence of a Southern architecture. However, we argue that there exists a Southern lifestyle. Indeed, we are not completely sure about the existence of the South, but anyway, it seems to us a good invention.

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**MODERNISM IN LATIN AMERICA:  
Between the two sides of the Atlantic  
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**Abstract**

*This text analyzes the first modernist houses designed and built during the late 1920s in Brazil (the Modernist House by architect Gregório Warchavski, 1928), in Mexico (the modernist house and studies of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, designed by Juan O’Gorman, 1929 and 1931) and in Argentina (Alejandro Bustillo’s project for Victoria Ocampo, 1928). In all these architectural projects, it is possible to detect an exchange of ideas with architect Le Corbusier. Paradoxically, the gardens of these residential projects have cactus species that are native to America. Having documentary texts and iconographic registries of the time as our starting point, we revisit the discussion of internationalism versus nationalism in the arts and in modernist architecture in these countries, and the ideas that permeated the cultural environment of the 1920s and 1930s in Latin America.*

*The analysis of these three examples of modernist architecture are part of the debate over the updating of arts and architecture with international esthetical expressions and the search for a national identity, where the design of utopism of plastic artist Torres-García “Our North is the South”, 1933, demonstrates the complexity of the boundaries between national and international. Thus, we have tried to analyze the value of the connections and articulations existing between “north and south”, “eurocentric modernity and peripheral modernity”, in the paths taken by architects, artist, and intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic*

**Keywords:** Modernism; internationalism; nationalism; Latin America

**Introduction**

The various nuances of Latin-American modernism, specifically regarding the aesthetic and poetic avant-garde, the debate on internationalism and nationalism has permeated the Latin-American cultural critical historiography, which is a constant and complex issue. Art critic Aracy A. Amaral, analysing the Modern Art Week held in 1922 in Sao Paulo, considered Brazilian modernism an “interesting intermediation between the two poles of Latin American modernism represented by Mexico (nationalism) and Argentina (internationalism) within the art scenario of the 1920’s in our continent <sup>1</sup> (AMARAL, 1998: 21), an assertion that will be discussed in this article, presenting another approach regarding the value of connections between “North and South” within the scope of ideas on both sides of the Atlantic.

The debate about the renewal of arts and architecture with international aesthetic expressions and the pursuit of a national identity, relies on an intense critical wealth produced in the 1990's in Latin America, and especially in Brazil, according to the vast mapping and critical analysis made by Schwartz (2008)<sup>2</sup> on Latin American avant-garde from the manifestos, magazines and anthologies of the period, which became a reference for the cultural historiography during that period, emphasizing poetic avant-garde.

Schwartz (2008), analysing the conflict between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, considers it to be the most constant and complex controversy in Latin America, due to the fact that intellectuals and artists of the continent sought "greater awareness of their alterity in relation to the colonizers, thus emerging the need to assert their specificities" (Schwartz, 2008, p. 533). This debate has been adjectivised ever since Mario de Andrade, who sought to "Keep pace with the newest artistic trends in international centres and then, work out the treasures of popular Native-Portuguese-African life (Bosi, in Schwartz, 2008: 35)<sup>1 3</sup>

Thus, we have placed, within the cultural critique of the Post-War 1920's, the analysis of the initial modernistic inquiries in Brazil (São Paulo), Mexico (Mexico) and Argentina (Buenos Aires and Mar del Plata) and their external spaces. In such projects, as noted above, we find that the exchange of ideas between Latin American architects with Le Corbusier (architect) and paradoxically, the project and construction of residential gardens with plants of the *Cactaceae* family, which are native of the Americas.

In fact, the garden of the Modernistic Residence (Casa Modernista) becomes relevant as a record of a dialogue consisting of re-interpretations and adaptations between the Latin American production centres, resulting from the

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<sup>1</sup> During recent decades has been conceived as "peripheral modernity" (Sarlo, 2010); hybrid cultures (Canclini, 2008); national and foreign (Sérgio Miceli, 2007); among other designations in the debate about cultural critique .

The excellent collection of articles organized by Dawn Ades: *Art in Latin America: the modern era 1820 – 1980* (1997) also presents an excellent critical view regarding modernism themes and the pursuit of historical roots and Latin American identity.

Concepts of "appropriate modernity" (Cox, 2011) permeated the field of Latin American architectural critique, critical regionalism (Kenneth Frampton, Alexander Tzonis y de Liane Lefaivre ( in Toca, 1990) and divergent regionalism (Waissman, 1990, in Antonio Toca, 1990) in the creation of narratives and a theoretical body, more specifically, of Latin American architecture over the last decades.

flow of ideas in the continent in the 1920's and 1930's. Mina Klabin's work is contemporary to the garden designed for Juan O'Gorman's modernistic residence, between 1928 and 1931, in Mexico City; as well as the gardens designed and built at Victoria O'Campo's residences in Argentina, respectively in Mar del Plata, by Pedro Botazzini and Palermo Chico; Buenos Aires, by architect Alejandro Bustillo, also in the 1920's. In these gardens, the cacti, from the *Cactaceae* family, which are typically tropical, are used incisively, contrasting with the vegetation of that period in Latin America.

Modernism's historical gardens designed by Mina Klabin in the Modernistic residence of Gregori Warchavchik; the garden at the Cecil O'Gorman residence and the property of Frida Kahlo's and Diego Rivera's studios designed by Juan O'Gorman, and in Victoria O'Campo's residences, have a documentary value, for documenting inaugural modernistic gardens and residences in these countries and for encouraging a dialogue that includes architecture and gardens, which were characterised as the internationalism or universalism of artistic expression and nationalism with underlying values regarding local cultures, from the second decade of the 20th century.

Projects of modernistic residences with outdoor areas with cacti in São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Mar del Plata and Mexico City record the flow of ideas in the continent's modern architecture in the 1920's, providing such projects with a unique importance as the record of modern architecture historiography - vertical and landscape, expanding the complexity of national and international boundaries, as defined by Amaral (1998).

### **The Modernistic Residence on Santa Cruz Street and its gardens: inaugural milestone of modernism**

The Modernistic residence on Santa Cruz street, in São Paulo, built by Gregori Warchavchik (1896-1972) in 1928 and completed in 1929, has great critical value, from the book by critic Geraldo Ferraz - Warchavchik and the introduction of modern architecture in Brazil (MASP, 1965) <sup>4</sup> - the most emphatic work about the importance of this immigrant architect; Yves Bruand (1943) *Brazil Builds*, with the first references to the Warchavchik's Residence Santa Cruz; the work of

Henry Mindlind, in 1956, *Modern Architecture in Brazil*<sup>2</sup> showing the Warchavchik Modernistic Residence as the prelude for the arrival of Le Corbusier in Brazil.

We can certainly affirm that the most important cultural value assigned to the Modernistic Residence on Santa Cruz Street was its pioneering nature, for it is a prismatic volume without the use of decorative elements, containing various aspects linked to traditional architecture (Carrilho, 2001). This is modernism's inaugural work in Brazil, which forms a set of Warchavchik works documenting the foundational phase of modern architecture in the city of São Paulo and also in Brazil (the other two residences are on Bahia street and Itápolis street, in São Paulo), with the Modernistic Residence on Santa Cruz street constituting a transitional model. Warchavchik would live as an immigrant, a relevant issue in his production by seeking to link the international doctrine and the ideological need for some level of Brazilianness in his architectural production (Ferreira Martins (2006), as stated by Geraldo Ferraz regarding the residence on Santa Cruz street (the architect's own residence), Warchavchik made an effort to show appreciation for the country that had welcomed him and confirmed, through the use of traditional elements and resources, a symbol of an internationally updated form of architecture and at the same time profoundly Brazilian (Ferraz, 1965).

The gardens designed by Mina Klabin in the modernistic residence designed by Gregori Warchavchik, located on Santa Cruz street, in the city of São Paulo, built in 1928 and renovated in 1934, is the inaugural work of a modernistic garden in Brazil, with the use, above all, of cacti (mandacaru) plants. Of the studies conducted, we found surveys of existing vegetation (Condephaat), works on the possibilities of restoration from photo documentation (Marcondes, 2004, 2009 and 2014) and the relationship between gardens and residences (Perecin, 2001)<sup>5</sup>.

The gardens designed by Mina Klabin<sup>3</sup>, from a formal point of view, presented no ruptures with garden models under the auspices of eclecticism, being

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<sup>2</sup> See also Bressan (1999) analysed this pioneering work regarding difficulties with establishing modern architecture in São Paulo up to 1950. The reflection on Warchavchik's work was also well documented and analysed by National Historical and Artistic Heritage bodies (IPHAN, Condephaat and CONPRESP, above all, the studies of Carrilho and Marcos), and later within the academic area (Lira (2011), Ferreira Martins (2006) and Falbel (2005).

configured with the same pattern of a central axis up to the residence. The proposed changes included the selection of representative species of the American continent, and emblematic in view of a peripheral modernism in Latin America. We understand that the inaugural milestone refers to the use of tropical plants, in opposition to the gardens with prevailing eclecticism.

According to historian Sevckenko, the artistic movements of São Paulo during the 1920s, were the result of unprecedented experience represented by the new metropolitan technologies, requiring cultural responses that should "rearrange the symbolic and perceptive systems of communities, due to the demands of the rhythm, scale and intensity of modern metropolitan life" (SEVCENKO, 1992) <sup>6</sup>.

Gregori Warchavchik, a Ukrainian architect, began his studies at the Odessa Art School (Ukraine) and the Institute of Fine Arts in Rome, where he graduated in architecture and worked with architect Marcello Piacentini, always emphasized in his work in the IPHAN dossiers about the Modernistic residence being declared a national historic landmark.

Warchavchik would further write and publish the first modern architecture manifesto in Brazil, with the title "Regarding Modern Architecture", in which certain authors (Ferreira Martins) indicate his Corbusier view by defending the design commitment to rationality (originally published in Italian with the title "Futurism" in the *Piccolo* newspaper and in 1925 in the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper <sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> During her education, Mina Klabin had close contact with the European culture, especially Paris – the cultural capital of Europe during the first half of the twentieth century, and after her marriage to Warchavchick, she began to promote Cultural Salons as a cultural practice established with the presence of modernists.

She sought, we believe, to upgrade the Brazilian style with the contemporary world, in other words, the universalism of expression and nationalism, emerging as an expression of the Brazilian cultural values.

Tarsila do Amaral's painting, "Abaporu", 1928, which inaugurates and establishes the anthropophagic movement, was certainly an attempt by Brazilian modernists to "keep up with international avant-garde and the nationalistic affirmation and reformulation of the Brazilian nature" (Schwartz, 2008) provide the aesthetic contours of this inaugural garden design of Brazilian modernism. The statement is reiterated by manifestations of groups of artists and intellectuals of this modernistic movement, gathered in the Salons of São Paulo, of which Warchavchik's residence and his family, and artists and intellectuals of the modernistic anthropophagic movement.

<sup>4</sup> It is also noteworthy that in 1932, Lucio Costa is designated to design Alfredo Schwartz's residence in the city of Rio de Janeiro, an architectural work with Burle Marx's garden design (with the same national/international dichotomy) followed by several other projects and works with the architects of the so called "Carioca" Architectural School that precedes Le Corbusier's work in the

Thus, Warchavchik would internationally modernize Brazilian architecture and provide "Brazilian characteristics to building designs, as stated by Ferraz (1965), by means of traditional construction elements, and above all, the gardens designed by Mina Klabin, in which cacti prevailed: such as the cereus; as well as other tropical landscape families: Brazilian fire tree, agaves, dracaenas.



The confluence takes place through the cultural repertoire that links him to his training and European professional practice and doctrinal theoretical links with Le Corbusier. In 1930, Le Corbusier assigned him as a Latin American representative in the CIAM - International Congress of Modern Architecture. The recommendation is widely documented by Ferraz (1965) during a meeting between Le Corbusier and several architects in the Warchavchik Residence on Santa Cruz Street. For the III CIAM, in Brussels, Warchavchik drafted a Report (1931) on the modern architecture situation in Brazil and South America <sup>5</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Modernist House Santa Cruz and its gardens, São Paulo, Brazil, 1928. Source: Revue *Ilustração Brasileira*, 1929

### **The Residences of Juan O'Gorman and their gardens: universalism and local traditions in Mexico**

Cecil O'Gorman's Residence, designed by Juan O'Gorman, in 1929, is considered the first modernistic residence in Mexico City, followed by the Residence of Edmund O'Gorman, also in 1929, and the studio residences of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, designed in 1931 and 1932, respectively; all designed by the aforementioned architect and artist. Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo's Studio Residences are contiguous to Cecil's Residence, in San Angel, south of Mexico City<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Warchavchik's report was drafted after the IV Pan-American Congress of Architecture, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1930. This Congress was held after Le Corbusier came to Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. Warchavchik reported that "Recently, a Pan-American Congress was held in Rio de Janeiro, and I was able to study the South American architecture situation. (Warchavchik, 1931p. 178-179 originally published in *Cahiers d'Art*, 1931).

Juan O'Gorman was the youngest member of the Mexican muralist generation, including Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David A. Siqueros (Gonzales Lobo, 2008, Arquine, O'Gorman Guide). He graduated in architecture at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma of Mexico in 1925 <sup>6</sup>.

O'Gorman was a pioneer in modern architecture in Mexico, as well as in the criticism of this functionalist and rational nature of architecture, anticipating narratives and questioning modernistic architecture. Gonzales Lobo points out in the O'Gorman Guide that he considered architecture "an artistic expression that is directly related to geography and history of the place where it takes place. Thus, architecture becomes a harmonic instrument between man and nature, reflecting on the shape and colour of the surroundings where the work is executed (Gonzales Lobo, Carlos, O'Gorman Guide, Arquine, 2008)<sup>8</sup>.

The first residence designed by Juan O'Gorman was for his family members, Cecil O'Gorman's residence, recently restored (completion in 2013) by Victor Jimenez. In this residence he sought to implement the functionalist and rationalist principles of construction and aesthetic principles. To him, architecture "is a functional art with potential for social transformation, concepts that will be implemented in his role as Director of Education in the implementation of schools in scale during the Post- Revolutionary government. Edward Burian states that Juan O'Gorman had contact with Le Corbusier's writings in 1924, which was crucial to his architectural education. (BURIAN, 2005) in his article, Modernity and Nationalism: Juan O'Gorman and Post-Revolutionary Architecture in México 1920-1960.

The work of Juan O'Gorman has been analysed from the perspective of a dichotomy between the avant-garde traditions and the Mexican regionalist identity between the two phases cited earlier.

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<sup>6</sup> Juan O'Gorman early in his career, he worked with the architects José Villagran and Carlos Obregón, but soon he began an independent career, having built the first modernistic residences in Mexico and several other works; among them, 33 public schools for the Post-Revolutionary Government, of which he was a member, in which he used the *standardization* of constructive elements to reduce construction costs and time. Such a production, between 1928 and 1936, is characterized by a rationalist and functionalist architectural phase. Between 1945 and 1956 he designed major works in an organic and regionalist architectural vision, standing out among such works are his home in San Jerónimo, in 1953; and the stone mosaic mural of the Central Library of the University City, in 1949.

Cosmopolitanism and nativism in Latin America, to use Octavio Paz's words (Burian, 2005), in the work of Juan O'Gorman we can learn; however, since his rationalistic phase and even the inaugural phase of modernism with the design and work of Cecil O'Gorman's home. The Garden of cacti illustrates this perspective, albeit deployed in a linear and symmetrical form in the residential property. The use of strong colours also indicates the search for the Mexican identity, and simultaneously, artistic expression and universal architectural, more precisely European.

The Studio Residence of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, designed and built between 1929 and 1931, in Mexico City, by Juan O'Gorman had high visibility as the first modernist building in Mexico, because the Residence of Cecil O'Gorman was destroyed and, having been bought by INBA - National Institute of Fine Arts and turned into a museum dedicated to artistic works, personal items and documents by both artists

Consisting of two identical buildings, forming the couple's studios, Juan O'Gorman's design, at the end of the 1920s, introduced the rationalist concept with the Corbusier influence and elements of local tradition. The building was conceived with straight lines without any ornamentation, juxtaposing this architectural concept is the use of strong colours and light and shadows, forming an amalgam between universalism and local traditions <sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> The restoration of this garden, along with the studios', took eight years of investigation by the National Institute of Fine Arts, and was completed in 1995 (studios) and 2013 (Cecil O'Gorman residence). In the case of the gardens, cacti were planted according to the original design, because the works were widely documented throughout its history, and a drainage system was developed to constantly keep the soil dry, as before.



**Figure 2.** Diego Rivera and Frida Kaho's Studio Residences and Their gardens, 1932 Mexico, City, Mexico. Source: Photo Noelle Grass, Louise , 2011

When Diego Rivera visited the residence designed by O'Gorman, he decided to have his studio on the property, designed under the same principles. Diego Rivera was already an iconic figure for the artistic expression between European avant-garde and nationalism<sup>8</sup>. Bosi notes that "Of the Mexican muralists, Siqueros, Rivera and Orozco, the critics said how much they knew how to fuse motifs of national history with formal suggestions of Cubism and Expressionism" (Bosi, 2008). Schwatz also considers that in the issue of nationalism/cosmopolitanism, Diego Rivera's image could not be ignored due to his importance in the fine arts. His training was influenced by European avant-garde, where he lived for fifteen years: from 1907 to 1921, a decade in Paris at the height of Cubism. His production is notoriously cubist in its initial phase. Upon returning to Mexico, he dedicated to muralism - politically engaged art with a social commitment to his art, leading him to incorporate elements of the Mexican traditions and socio-political reality in his murals.

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<sup>8</sup> Diego Rivera's 1915 work, *Zapatista Landscape - The Guerrilla*<sup>8</sup>, is a cubist painting. "It shows a Mexican peasant's hat hanging on a wooden crate, behind a rifle. Painted without any preliminary study, in my studio in Paris, it is probably the most faithful expression of the Mexican atmosphere that I have ever managed to capture Rivera, Diego, apud O Modernismo e a busca de raízes, in ADES, Dawn (org.) Arte na América Latina: A era Moderna, 1820-1980, São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 1999.

In Rivera's studio design, architect Juan O'Gorman included pink colours (Diego Rivera's studio) and blue (Frida Kahlo's studio) and intense greens of the *cacti* on the property. <sup>9</sup>We have found that O'Gorman himself designed the residence's gardens.

Le Corbusier's presence in Latin America, between the 1920s and 1930s, up to the 1950s has been emphatically researched; therefore, the flow of ideas in modernistic architectural projects in the 1920s is resonated in the historiography. However, the design of areas outside the building, with garden configuration using plants of the same botanical family gives new meaning to these modernistic designs, with the emphatic use of tropical flora, indicating a proper modernity in Latin American architecture.

Despite the diversity of countries in Latin America, there is convergence and the existence of specificities in common in the development of its landscape architecture throughout its history. The perspective of creating a repertoire and internal articulations for Latin American countries stands as a fundamental and rich approach in possibilities for a better understanding of the production process and the completion of projects.

### **The Residences of Victoria O'Campo and their Gardens: the plant of America**

The dimension of the modern movement in Argentinian architecture is relativized by various authors, considered to be incipient when compared to the European modern movement, and even in other Latin American countries. As stated by architect Francisco Lienur (1986) in an article in Summa Magazine, "There is no doubt that the radicalism achieved by our avant-garde is highly attenuated when compared to the virulence established in Europe." Lienur points out certain popular works in the 1930s, and the residence designed by Alberto Prebisch, also in 1930, and by Alejandro Bustillo for Victoria O'Campo in 1931, indicative of the implementation of an incipient movement of modern architecture in the country<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> This information was obtained on a visit to the Museum Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, in 2005, given by the employees of the museum

In an article introducing modern architecture in Argentina, author Jorge Ramos (2011) <sup>10</sup>considers that in Le Corbusier's view - focused on a valuation of Eurocentric modernity, the modern architecture movement was incipient in this country <sup>10</sup>

Paradoxically, Le Corbusier's presence in Argentina was quite emphasized; a country in South American, which has works designed by this architect. During his visits to Argentina in the late 1920s and early 1930s, he established close contact with essayist Victoria O'Campo. In 1929, Le Corbusier went to Argentina as a guest of the "Asociación Amigos del Art, Amigos de la Ciudad" and by Victoria O'Campo to give lectures, which were later published in the book, "Precisions sur un état de "Precisions sur un état presente de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme"<sup>11</sup>.

Le Corbusier designed a residence for Victoria, but the work was not materialized. However, the essayist, a prominent figure in the cultural environment of Buenos Aires at that time, built a modernistic residence in Palermo Chico in 1928, with another architect, Alejandro Bustillo, seeking to incorporate Corbusier's ideas and formal repertoire, with cubic volumes, white facades and no ornaments.

Victoria O'Campo had a prominent role in the renewal of the arts scene in Buenos Aires. She founded and directed the anthological Sur Magazine in 1931, with Waldo Frank, Maria Rosa Olivier and Eduardo Mallet. Sur Magazine was the precursor of the avant-garde magazines in the city in the 1920s, which assumed an aesthetic cosmopolitanism; the magazine's name was suggested by Ortega and Gasset.

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<sup>10</sup> Jorge Ramos , however, throughout the article, he extended this Corbusier perspective, analysing the various architectural concepts of diverse influences, highlighting regional rationalism, of a new space for peripheral debate and discussion of modernity, such as the *Casas Blancas* (white houses) that emerged at the end of the 1950s, in which he questioned the orthodox rationalism.

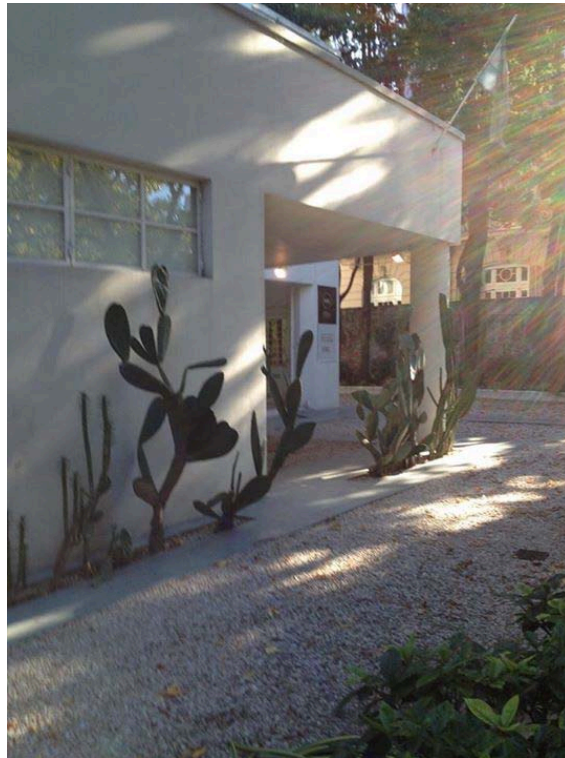
Berjman (2007) <sup>12</sup> analysed Victoria O'Campo's modern gardens in the book *La Victoria de los Jardines*, emphasizing the presence of cacti in these gardens, noting that Victoria sought to break with the ideology of French formalistic gardens in Buenos Aires.

In Palermo Chico, architect Alejandro Bustillo designed a cubist building with pure volumes. Author Berjman states that "Victoria also sought this effect in her gardens," contrasting the simplicity of pure volumes with the use of sculptural and volumetric plants such as cacti. This garden made the transition between the residence's rationalist space and the "green surroundings from another dimension and style: the picturesque style of Charles Thays" (BERJMAN, 2007, p. 244), the green neighbourhood designed by Thays in 1912, called Park Neighbourhood.

Victoria O'Campo describes the vegetation:

(...) The emblem of the residence, the owner's coat of arms, is the cactus. Cactus is America's essential flower: a prickly and powerful exuberance that, under the tropical sun and over the squalor of the desert, stands out and explodes in the blooming of colours (FRANK, 1950, p. 25)<sup>13</sup>.

The residence in Palermo Chico, currently owned by the National Arts Fund, was transformed into a Cultural Centre, after being restored incorporating changes made over time by Victoria (up to the 1940's). The garden was restored based on the initial plan outlined by Victoria O'Campo, documented in the book about Alejandro Bustillo<sup>14</sup>.



**Figure 3.** Residence of Victoria Ocampo, and their garden Palermo Chico, Buenos Aires City , 1928. Source: Photo: The Author, 2014

### **Final Considerations**

Luis Pérez - Oramas, art critic and curator, indicated in the catalogue of the 30th Biennial of Sao Paulo that, "Every word has an image as imminence, which serves as the foundation; every image has a word as imminence, which serves as resonance" (Pérez-Oramas, 2012)<sup>15</sup>. I believe that the images of the first designs of the modernistic residences in Latin America, and their gardens, echo the pendula movement between nationalism and internationalism in Latin American with all intensity and complexity, indicating the dialogue between both sides of the Atlantic.

The analysis of the three works of modernist architecture are inserted in the debate about the updating of art and architecture with international aesthetic expressions and the search for a national identity, in which the utopian painting by Torres-García "Nosso Norte é o Sul" (Our North is the South), 1933,



demonstrates the complexity of the limits between national and international, in the three countries analysed <sup>11</sup>

Thus, this article aims to explore the imminence of the images in these first residences and their modernistic gardens in Latin America, in which Warchavchic, Juan O'Gorman and Victoria O'Campo, through the design of Pedro Botazzini and architect Alejandro Bustillo, undoubtedly sought to implement, in Latin America, the so-called "new spirit" in the aesthetic and ideological field, and the attempts of "cultural rooting".

In fact, the gardens of the Modernistic House (Jardim da Casa Modernista) becomes relevant as the record of a dialogue made of re-interpretations and adaptations between the Latin American production centres, resulting from the flow of ideas in the 1920s and 1930s. Mina Klabin's work is contemporary to the garden designed and executed for Juan O'Gorman's modernistic residence, between 1928 and 1931, in Mexico City; as well as the gardens designed and executed for Victoria O'Campo's residences, in Argentina, respectively in Mar del Plata by Pedro Botazzini and Palermo Chico, Buenos Aires, by architect Alejandro Bustillo, also in the 1920s. In these gardens, the cacti, from the *Cactaceae* family, typically tropical, are used incisively, contrasting with the vegetation of that period in Latin America.

The historic modernistic garden by Mina Klabin in the Modernistic residences of Gregori Warchavchik, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera designed by Juan O'Gorman and in Victoria O'Campo residences - has a documentary value, for documenting inaugural gardens and residences of modernism in these countries and, for fostering a dialogue, which included architecture and the gardens and had the characteristics of internationalism or universalism of artistic expression, and nationalism with underlying values of the local cultures, from the second decade of the twentieth century.

The modernistic residence designs with outdoor spaces with cacti in São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Mar del Plata and Mexico City record the flow of ideas in modern architecture on the continent in the 1920s, giving these projects a unique

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<sup>11</sup> The analysis of the three works of modernist architecture is set in the debate on arts and architecture update with international aesthetic expressions and the search for a national identity, in which the utopianism painting by Torres-García "Nosso Norte é o Sul", 1933 shows the boundaries complexity between national and international.

importance as a record in modern architecture historiography - vertical and landscape, increasing the boundary complexity between national/international as defined by the critic Aracy Amaral.

The analysis of the three works of modernist architecture established in the debate on arts and architecture update, with international aesthetic expressions and the search for a national identity, in which the utopian painting by Torres-García "Nosso Norte é o Sul" (Our North is the South), 1933, shows the complexity of limits between nationalism and internationalism in fine arts, architecture and landscape architecture; in the cultural context.



**Figure 4.** Painting of Torres-García, Our North is the South, 1933. Source :ADES, Dawn (org.) Art in Latin America: the modern era 1820 – 1980 (1997)

Therefore, we have the connections and representations values between "North and South", Eurocentric modernity and peripheral modernity", in displacement of architects, artists and intellectuals, pointing towards new horizons and devices between both sides of the Atlantic.

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**MEDIATING THE MODERN:  
Domesticity and Design in Milan, 1930-1960  
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**Abstract**

*Between 1930 and 1960, first under fascism and then during reconstruction and the advent of the miracolo economico, the home—la casa—was a constant point of reference for Italian architects, politicians, and cultural commentators across the political spectrum. Focusing on Milan, my paper will examine this discourse of domesticity and its construction of the home as a mechanism to counter-balance the atomizing impulses of the industrial city with the traditional rituals of family life.*

*During the middle decades of the century, Milan provided both the site and the subject for an intensive exploration of modern domesticity by a circle of architects that included Franco Albini, Giò Ponti, and Ernesto Rogers. From vast housing projects to furniture and appliances, Rogers and his peers re-designed every facet of the home in their effort to construct domestic environments that would effectively mediate between the present and the past and thereby address the complex problems unleashed by modernity while simultaneously seizing the potentials it offered for material and technological advancement. Through several case-study projects, including displays at the Triennale and housing projects such as the Fabio Filzi and Cesate quarters, I will examine how these architects worked to reinforce the established rhythms of everyday life by re-deploying certain conventional forms and techniques within their modernist practices.*

*My analysis of these case-studies points to several significant conclusions. First, against the conventional notion of a clear break between pre-war and post-war practices, these architects maintained a stable conception of the home throughout this period that served as the foundation for their evolving approaches. Second, the fundamentally uneven experience of industrialization in Italy meant that modernity itself, especially in a place such as Milan, was fundamentally defined by tight, sharp contrasts between new and old. Finally, that in many locales, modernism developed around a core ambition to devise synthetic practices that forged precise paths of continuity between the past and the present rather than articulating the distance between the two.*

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**Jonathan Mekinda.** *Is an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago with a joint appointment in the Department of Art History and the School of Design. His research focuses on the history of modern architecture and design during the middle decades of the twentieth century, particularly in the United States and Italy. He has received grants from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, and his writing can be found in journals such as the Journal of Architectural Education, the Journal of Design History, and Design Issues. In 2013, Chicagoisms, which he co-edited with Alexander Eisenschmidt, was published by Park Books, and in 2014 they curated a related exhibition with the same name at the Art Institute of Chicago. In addition to several on-going projects related to Chicago, Prof. Mekinda is also currently at work on a book titled Building the "House of Man": Design and the Modern Home in Milan, 1930-1960.*

## MODERNISM AND THE PORTUGUESE TEATRO DE REVISTA

Jorge Palinhos

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### Abstract

*Largely due to the conservatism of audiences and critics, Portuguese theatre was mostly indifferent, if not downright hostile, to the avant-garde theatre coming from elsewhere in Europe. Therefore, naturalistic theatre and historical drama were the staple of Portuguese theatres until the 1950s, with the only exception of the plays of Almada Negreiros and symbolist plays by Fernando Pessoa, Raul Brandão and António Patrício. However, modernism found its place on stage in one of the most typical Portuguese theatre forms: «Revista à Portuguesa», the Portuguese revue theatre, which welcomed the first generation of Portuguese modernist painters to work as set and costume designers. Artists like Jorge Barradas, Milly Possoz, José Barbosa, among others, took the influence of the Ballets Russes of Diaghlev, and the avant-garde visual arts, to change the appearance of the most typically Portuguese theatre genre, Revista à Portuguesa.*

*With this paper I will try to document how modernist painters gained entry in «Revista à Portuguesa» and created an art that fused the commercial interests of theatre entrepreneurs, the tastes of the bourgeois audiences and their own artistic sensibilities.*

**Keywords:** Modernism; Theatre; Set Design; Almada Negreiros; António Ferro

### Introduction

The avant-garde movements of the beginning of the XXth century had a definitive influence in several artistic and non-artistic areas of the life of that century until the present time. Its foremost pioneers came from the visual arts, which were trying to deal with the shock of Romanticism facing the rapid industrialization of Europe.

It can be said that Modernism started with an enthusiastic embrace of progress and of the rapid transformations that society, culture and technology were facing. Modernist artists were looking to express a new sensibility that included the Romantic tradition, but didn't reject all the advances they were discovering in science, engineering and social organization, or the ideas of thinkers like Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson and many others.

The arrival of Modernist ideas in Portugal was surprisingly fast for a small minority, but much slower for a larger majority, and namely for the artists who

depended more on public support or state financing. As was the situation of theatre.

In fact, Modernist theatre took a long time to install itself in Portugal, but its pioneers started to work in one of the most beloved and traditional Portuguese theatre forms – Teatro de Revista.

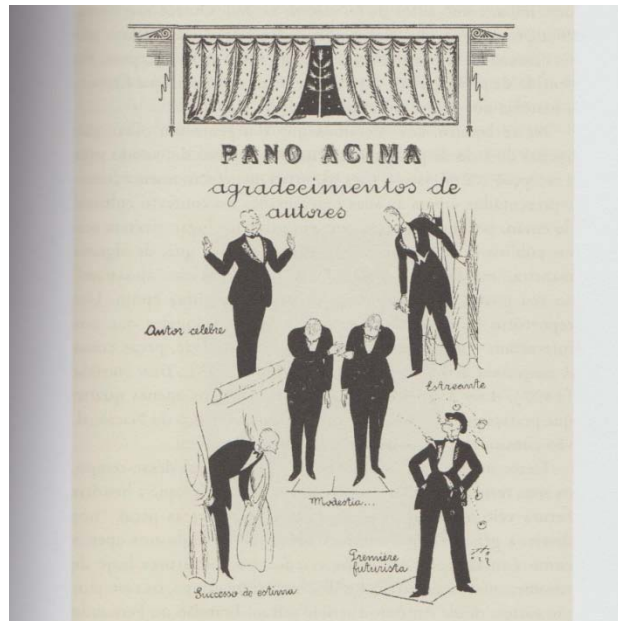
### **Teatro de Revista**

«Teatro de Revista», also called «Revista à Portuguesa» is a popular Portuguese form of a satirical socio-political theatre, which strives to read and reenact some of the most popular, well-known and controversial current affairs and events of a society. Its beginnings can be found in France in the end of the XVIII century. Amidst the turmoil of the French crisis and revolution, theatre became a popular tool to inform and reflect about the events taking place, so a specific type of theatre appeared, the revue de fin d'année (Pavão dos Santos, 2000: 2). It was used to tell, show and comment on the main political and social events of the previous year. Combining song, humor, and current affairs became a popular hit and quickly spread across Europe. Portugal was not an exception, and, after the revue arrived in Portugal in the middle of XIX century, with the first one being, according to Luiz Francisco Rebello "Lisboa em 1850" ("Lisbon in 1850), the revue de la année quickly stopped being just an annual event, but became a commercially successful enterprise, that happened multiple times a year, through several productions.

Teatro de Revista was also the first theatrical art form to welcome the first modernist artists in theatre in Portugal. Even if Modernism, in Portugal, was at first welcomed by a small clique of artists, most of them with ties to France, their ideas and works were mostly rejected at first, namely in theatre. It is well-known that Orpheu, the most significant modernist magazine of the time was at first regarded as an "insanity" and a small success mostly for scandalous reasons, not for any real appreciation of the audience.



In theatre, such rejection also happened among the audience and critics. In Figure 1 we have a caricature published in one of the foremost theatre magazines of the era, joking about the reception of futurist authors in Portugal by hostile audiences.



**Figure 1.** A caricature in the De Teatro magazine, showing how the playwright should thank the applause after the première. On the lower right, the futurist or modernist author is showed bravely enduring the rain of tomatoes and other vegetables thrown by the furious audience.

Such hostility was present even regarding foreign productions. The Ballets Russes, managed by Sergei Diaghilev, were the foremost dance company of the time, working according to Modernist principles, and partnering with some of the most important modernist artists of the time, like Pablo Picasso, which created the costumes and scenarios of "Parade" (1917) and "Le Tricorne" (1919) for that company. Sasportes (1979, 57) notes that the Portuguese artists that were in Paris, like José Pacheco and Amadeo de Souza Cardoso were fascinated by the works of the company. The Ballets Russes were already also performed in Portugal, in 1917, while the First World War was taking place and the company had limited possibilities for touring.

The show, which should be composed of the pieces «Le Spectre de la Rose» and «Thamar», among many others, had 8 presentations in the Coliseu de Lisboa between 13-27 December 1917, and 2 in Teatro São Carlos in 2-3 January 1918.

The presentations seemed to have been a failure, facing the indifference of the audience and the hostility of the reviewers. At least one reviewer, Álvaro Lima, wrote an hostile review, comparing the scenography to the «ridiculous blots of “futurist” painting» (Pavão dos Santos, 2000: 4)

Obviously, the main defenders of the show were Portuguese modernist artists, like António Ferro and, specially, Almada Negreiros.

Almada Negreiros was already an admirer of Ballets Russes, which he knew from the French magazines to which he subscribed, and he seems to have been fascinated by their scenography and costumes. Negreiros can be considered the only modernist playwright in Portugal of the time, with plays like *Deseja-se Mulher*, but most of his plays went unstaged through most of his life.

Also influenced by Ballets Russes, he projected with his friend Sonia Delauney a dance project, called “Ballet Veronese et Bleu” which never took place (Pavão dos Santos, 1992: 10). But, in 1919, Almada, with the financial support of Helena Castelo-Melhor, actually staged a dance performance, called “A princesa dos sapatos de ferro” (The princess of the iron shoes).

António Ferro also was an admirer, and when we created the Portuguese dance troupe “Grupo de Bailados Portugueses Verde Gaió”, considered them the Portuguese “Ballet Russes”, according to Castro (2009: online).

But, most significantly, the show at the Coliseu had a brochure with illustrations by Jorge Barradas, which would become one of the most important set designers of Teatro de Revista in Portugal.

## **Modernist set design and Teatro de Revista**

According to França (1992, 103), Teatro de Revista had an important presence in Lisbon. There were at least 10 stages devoted only to teatro de Revista, most of them run by the same entrepreneur, António de Macedo. Teatro de Revista was a commercial enterprise that needed to draw regular and numerous audiences, many times fulfilling that aim by employing celebrities, famous tunes, addressing current affairs and novelties. One of the most well known examples of the use of these novelties that could draw the attention of the audience, is the Revista «Ó da Guarda», which, in 1907, used the novel technology of cinema to suggest the fictional kidnapping of one of the most famous actresses of the time.

Teatro de Revista was also the first genre of theatre in Portugal to employ the work of modernist artists in its costumes and scenography.

According to Pavão dos Santos (2002: 2) at the time most scenography in Teatro de Revista was made by Eduardo Machado and Augusto Pina, as well as Luís Salvador, and the costumes were mostly made by Manuel Francisco dos Santos. Yet, after the visit of Ballet Russes to Portugal, and even in spite of the bad reception the dance company received, something new took place.

This change seems to have been in a way promoted by António Ferro. In 1925, Ferro started to criticize openly the conventional set design of most plays, on the theatre reviews he wrote for *Diário de Notícias*, clearly defending a new Modernist aesthetics.

And, on the same year, Eduardo Malta, then considered a modernist painter, made the set design of the Revista «Tiroliro», being applauded by Ferro. And also in 1925, Almada Negreiros made the set design for the Revista «Chic-chic», in which is widely considered to be the first truly modernist set design in Portugal.

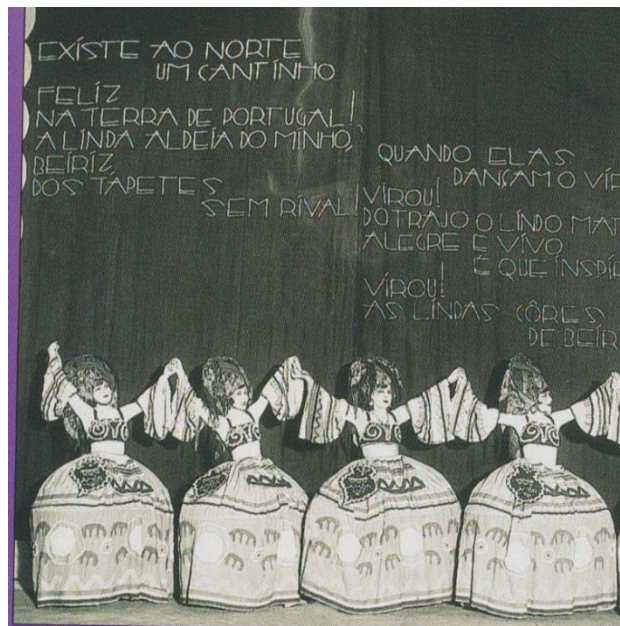
Negreiros would go on to create several other set designs for theatre, but modernist aesthetics would take hold on at Teatro de Revista, with several modernist artists contributing to it.

Among these artists we find Jorge Barradas, the same painter who had drawn the illustrations of the Ballets Russes's brochure at the Coliseu, who contributed to the set design of "Sete e Meio" at 1927. And on the 1929, he, together with Stuart Carvalhais, Barata Feio e Rui Gameiro made the set design for «Ricocó», which was largely praised by António Ferro (França, 1992: 104).



**Figure 2.** Detail of a set design, with actors, of Jorge Barradas, for the play «Lua Cheia».

Another artist, José Barbosa, son of another set designer of more conventional style, Barbosa Júnior, became also a renowned set design, and his drawings for «Água Pé» draw general praise and, supposedly, even draw applause from the audience during the shows.



**Figure 3.** Detail of José Barbosa's set and costume design for the play «Chá de Parreira».

Other artists in the same style working in teatro de Revista were Maria Adelaide Lima Cruz, António Amorim, Jorge Herold, Laierte Neves, Pinto de Campos, just to name some of the most famous and with larger experience, although other modernist artists also had an occasional hand on some plays, like Alice Rey Colaço, Raul Lino, Leitão de Barros, António Soares and Frederico George.

While this article cannot give a detailed overview of all these artists, or their individual works and styles, it is possible to notice a strong inspiration in motives of Portuguese folk lore or tradition, heavily stylized through the geometrical patterns of modernism, and a strong closeness to the picturesque image of Portugal that was heavily promoted by Estado Novo.

There is also a notorious emphasis in representing the multitude, the crowd, and luxurious and the grandiose, with the purpose of causing an impression on the audience, through strong contrasts of colours and deeply contrasting shapes and repetitions of the human body.

All this creates an art that was instantly appealing for the audience, at the same time looking fresh and familiar, which may explain the growing acceptance these

style developed in most plays of Teatro de Revista from the end of the 1920s onwards.

### **Modernist style in Teatro de Revista**

Although it seems somehow puzzling that the Modernist style would dominate one of the most commercial genres of theatre in Portugal, several reasons can be given for that.

One reason was the constant need of Teatro de Revista's entrepreneurs to surprise their audience. This demanded a constant search of novelties that could surprise, interest and attract audiences. Sometimes to watch revamped versions of old plays. Modernist art, through the embrace of new technologies and techniques was specially able to do that.

Another reason was the predisposition of Modernist Art to presenting deep contrasts, luxurious settings and awe-inspiring works that could be used to awe the audience of Teatro de Revista, most of which looking for distraction, entertainment and a break in the monotonous life of Portugal under the Military Dictatorship.

One last reason was the embrace of National motifs that could better seduce the audience, looking for a more grandiose reenactment of the traditions and daily life it knew and the Teatro de Revista deftly explored through humorous and musical sketches.

Therefore, it is possible to believe that, following the ideas of its main promoter, António Ferro, the Teatro de Revista became one of the main promoters of Modernist Art in Portugal. This was a more popular art that was embraced by Teatro de Revista as a mirror of daily life that could awe and draw crowds.

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## **FRANÇA'S "QUIET MODERNISM":**

### **Acknowledging the maturation of Portuguese regionalist architecture in the interwar period**

**Mariana Mata Passos**

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#### **Abstract**

*This article discusses some of the terms used by historians throughout the twentieth century when referring to traditional architecture propositions. Creating a relationship between the legitimization of the term Regionalism applied to architecture and the need of acknowledgement of the relation between Regionalism and Modernity in the context of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. It also raises the issue of using modernist narrative categories in the history of Portuguese architecture, highlighting the term "Quiet Modernism" by José-Augusto França as the exception.*

**Keywords:** Regionalism; Nationalism; Historiography (of Art History); "Quiet Modernism".

I have always found conflicting that Russel Hitchcock entitled an entire chapter of his book on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture "*Architecture Called Traditional in the Twentieth Century*" (Hitchcock, 1989 [1958]). It seemed to me that he was trying to make a point: one could call it so many different things that not even an entire book on the subject would be enough to acknowledge the diversity traditional architecture embraced. But despite asserting that the Twentieth century architectural landscape was composed, for the larger part, by what he defined as traditional architecture (Hitchcock, 1989 [1958], p.531), Hitchcock felt no need to detail those accomplishments or even to address some of the broad issues it seems to raise. Instead throughout the chapter he argues that traditional architecture had to be judged by nineteenth century standards due to its endemic anachronism and that although it represented the biggest part of global architectural production in the first half of the twentieth century, it had to be interpreted as a national phenomena (Hitchcock, p. 533).

So, to my disenchantment, the chapter was entitled "Architecture called traditional in the twentieth century" because the historian thought unnecessary to conceptualize its achievements and to further expand the terminology. The author's conclusion: "*To pursue the subject of traditional architecture further would be merely to explore what can now be seen as to have been not so much a cul-de-sac as road without a goal.*" (Hitchcock, p. 534).



Knowing the part the historian Henry-Russel Hitchcock, together with Philip Johnson and Alfred Barr, played in the definition of *"International Style"*, one cannot not be surprised with his words of "advice". In fact, the principles outlying *"International Style"* were based on a heavy criticism to what was perceived as the stylistic chaos of eclecticism for long associated with traditional architecture. (Hitchcock and Johnson, 1997[1932], p. 34). Furthermore, his understanding of architectural history depended on a historicist perspective of History and on the antithetical discourse that gives shape to Modernism master-narrative.

The reason why I have chosen to pick Hitchcock's account on the subject of traditional architecture is (first) because I have always wondered about the reasons why a group such as Hitchcock, Philip Johnson and Philip Barr had decided to call Modern Architecture by the name of *"International Style"*. Although, as Joana Brites argues one can read *"International Style"* as reareangement or a *"tractable version of European Modern Movement for american internal consupcion, with its revolutionary ideological dimensions surpressed"* (Brites, 2014, p.204), I felted that the term *"Internacional"* served to well the need to diferenciare Modern Architecture from Traditional Architecture in the context of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes with nationalistic agendas. And, even though the term *"International"* might not have been chosen to bear such a meaning, I have little doubt that it has been already used in that sense by architects, critics and historians that make use of national historiographic narratives in their narratives. And that is the case of José-Augusto França.

In a rough comparison, Hitchcock and França share the same opinion about International Style and about Traditional Architecture. In José - Augusto França's account of the history of portuguese architecture, Modernism is *"associated exclusively with what became known as "International Style"* (Salgueiro, 2012, p.67). Also, he uses the vague term *"traditional architecture"* to diferenciare *"International Style"* from the rest of the architectural production of the period. But, contrary to Henry-Russel Hitchcock, França does not seem to agree that traditional architecture lacks plot to be translated into History (Hitchcock,1989 [1958], p.533). In fact, in França's narrative the aim to understand why so called non-modern art was still being produced in the Twentieth century, in Portugal, seems to be one of the historians

priorities. Although França considers that traditional architecture is an anachronistic accomplishment in the account of Portuguese art history, he relates that anachronism with the idea that there is an external reason to that delay.

José-Augusto França's pioneer studies are of the utmost importance for the study of Portuguese Art History from the eighteenth century (Leal, 2004) onwards and offer a comprehensive account on Portuguese achievements in the fields of painting, sculpture and architecture. Being the major reference in the field, his discourse shaped the face of Portuguese art history master narrative (Santos, 2011). Rooted in the tradition of national historiographic traditions, his perspective is based on two apparently conflicting ideas; one, the notion that Portuguese art suffers from a cronical delay from what is happening in the center (namely Paris, at the time França deligned its theory), and two, the ideia that Portuguese art has a specific nature (Santos, 2010).

Although an important part of José-Augusto França's work has been written in the context of Portuguese Estado Novo dictatorship, his perspective *"articulates and promotes political agendas that are relevant to the cultural circumstances in which he is located"* (Moxley, 1995, p. 401). As the author himself states, his aim was not only contributing to a better understanding of the present, but also promoting some kind of social progress through study and a deep knowledge of the past (França, 1990, p.8). That being said, and although *"allegories of subjectivity we call history must inevitably be opaque"* (Moxley, p. 401) one might speculate if the author's appraisal for modernist art can be seen not only as an aesthetic choice based on historicist and essentialist assumptions, but also as a veiled manifest for the defense of art's autonomy from political power, made from the perspective of an historian *"committed to change the national situation"* (Salgueiro, 2012, p. 118).

França's account on Portuguese architecture starts in the XVIII century with "Lisboa Pombalina e o Iluminismo", in which the historian already uses the same antithetical categories to counteract an ideal of modernity, associated with the Pombaline project, to the courtesan *tradition* that originated the Queluz Palace. As a result of this antithetical framework that informs França's narrative of Portuguese art history, only a reductive selection of architectural examples are included in twentieth century

chronology of modern architecture<sup>1</sup>. Despite the fact that França accounts for a significant part of XXth century architectural production in one of the volumes dedicated to Nineteenth Portuguese century art, the historian develops a concept that somehow seems to jeopardize the antithetic structure that in Modernist narrative opposes modernism to tradition: *"Quiet Modernism"* or *"Modernismo Sossegado"* in Portuguese (França, 1990 [1968], p.353). The fact the term is only used once in the one of the last chapters of *"A Arte em Portugal no século XIX"* might be one of the reasons why it has remain concealed. In addition, because both critics and historians have largely adopted the Historicist and Essentialist Modernist narrative oppositional framework that easily allows an overlap between Traditional, Regionalist, Historicist architecture and the idea of an Official Style, imposed to the architects by Estado Novo conservative regimen, the use of the term *"Quiet Modernism"* was pointless. In fact, França himself does not discuss its relevance or meaning. And, in any case, the historian apparently implies that the term is related to a different series of events than those that are discussed in his narrative.

As Partha Miller pointed out that *"[t]he difficulties of studying contemporary art forms that do not conform to a particular avant-garde discourse have led art historians to propose alternative modernisms or regional modernisms"* (Miller, 2008, p. 541). The revision of Modernist paradigms, the critique of Historicism and teleological narratives have made more clear that there is not such a strict opposition between tradition and modernity. The result in the field of architectural history and criticism was that in the last few decades there has been an effort made towards a more inclusive understanding of traditional architecture in the twentieth century based on the assumption that there has always been a *"complex interaction"* (Maeyer and Meganck, 2014, p. 7) between what I have been calling traditional architecture and modern architecture. Increasingly debated, the renewed focus on regionalism architecture as opened a path to explore questions related to architecture and the identity of the place and the impact of vernacular architecture to modern architects<sup>2</sup>. Arguably this renewed interest began in the early 80's, with Frampton conceptualization of *"Critical*

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<sup>1</sup>França's account of modern architecture starts in the late 20's (França, 2009[1974] ,p. 159). But then, according to the author, modern architecture development suffers an inflexion around 1940, due to the vision of António Ferro, the head of Serviço de Propaganda Nacional (the regimen's Propaganda Office).

<sup>2</sup>For instance, (Lejeune and Sabatino, 2010) and (Leal and Maia, 2013).

*Regionalism*". The notion, to the extent that "helps defining and organizing some architecture as a *resistance strategy*" (Almeida, 2008, p. 84), became a potentially useful critical tool to acknowledge the diversity of architectural production in the twentieth century and the prolific encounter between modernism and local traditions. The description of what can be perceived as a *Critical Regionalism*" emphasizes the importance of *such things as the range and quality of the local light, or in a tectonic derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site*" (Frampton, 1983, p.21) and less, as noted by Pedro Vieira de Almeida, *cultural bearers*" of local traditions (Almeida, 2008, p.86). In Frampton arguments in favor of acknowledging the importance of an *architecture of resistance*", the author underlines the importance of *maintaining a high-level of critical self-consciousness*" (Frampton, 1983, p.21) in order to *distinguish between Critical Regionalism and simple-minded attempts to revive hypothetical forms of lost vernacular.*" (Frampton, 1983, p.21). The rigid distinction between attempts to revive hypothetical forms of preindustrial past and an *architecture of resistance*" is highly problematic if one wants to use the concept of *Critical Regionalism*" as is, in a much broader chronological frame that the one implied by the contemporary architectural examples Frampton chooses to illustrate his argument with.

Up to a point, the very idea of *simple-minded attempts to revive hypothetical forms of lost vernacular*" reveberates the biased perspective that ornamentation is anachronic, instead of the idea that *styles past and present could be appropriated to generate stingly new meanings*" (Miller, 2008, p. 537). What seems to be at stake here is, once again, the dialectical opposition between *Imitation*" and *Invention*" and the historicist critique (Canizaro, 2007, p.22) that acritically dismisses referentiality as Populism (Frampton, 1983, p.21) and *is often erroneously aimed at both the respectful and irresponsible attitudes equally*" (Canizaro, 2007, p.22).

The "heterogenous collection of motivations and prescriptions" (Canizaro, ,p.16) of regionalisms has made possible both respectful and irresponsible appropriations of its critical stances in the context of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. But as long as one continues to "explain the rise of regionalism in national terms" or to enclose its interpretation, as is the case in José-Augusto França's narrative, in national historiographic traditions it will be difficult to acknowledge the maturation of regionalism in the interwar period (Storm, 2003, p. 12) or to understand what "Quiet

Modernism" stands for - a "moderate modernism" that incorporated "the renewed interest in traditional materials and techniques, adapted to the people and their psychological needs, and the "genius loci"" (Maeyer and Meganck, 2014, p. 8).

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## REGIONALIST PROJECTS OF ROGÉRIO DE AZEVEDO

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### Abstract

*In the work of the architect Rogério de Azevedo – mostly realised from end of twenties to forties – the regionalist option was always present. Sometimes by his own initiative, sometimes as an answer to the rules of governmental programmes.*

*Regardless of the condition of the State to work with regional types to built in series, supposedly respectful of local sensitivities, the constraints and technical materials led the architect to adopted techniques and appropriate languages, in a personal interpretation, where modernism and vernacular are mixed. Here a decisive factor is the counterpoint between the project for the city and the project for the rural environment.*

*If in some cases the State order was determinant, in others, particularly in projects of late twenties and early forties, the architect and his vision of the relationship between the placements, the materials available and expressive values that inform his work, are the reason of being of his works.*

**Keywords:** Modern Architecture, Architecture Vernacular, Regionalism

The Estado Novo<sup>1</sup> developed numerous infrastructure construction programs and equipment in the thirties. The country, mostly rural and low economic development, has been object of a methodical and structural policy of public works carried out by the will and power of Duarte Pacheco, Minister of Public Works and Communications and Salazar man of action.

This is how the most talented and innovative architects of his generation '*build the new panorama of the works of the system*' (Tostões, 2003, p. 113) exploring unconstrained language of an internationalist model they already experienced, supported by the new construction methods, in an apparent adequacy of modernism to the official expectations.

But the modern option in this generation of embryonic modernist architects training, alternating in their practices with regionalism or historicist eclecticism, is not an ideological, social or philosophical question. For them the modern is just another style available, a new way to build integrating a functionalist and

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<sup>1</sup> The Estado Novo [New State], by some also called Second Portuguese Republic, is the name of the authoritarian political regime, autocrat and corporate that existed in Portugal for 41 years, since the 1933 Constitution up to the 25 April Revolution of 1974.

rationalist conception of architecture (Martins, 1999, p. 121). It's a generational attitude, revivalist training eclectic, bet on linguistic renewal '*without integrating the ideological principles of international modern movement*' (Tostões, 2003, p. 110). On the other hand, the increasing use of international standards in the construction of modernist public facilities is understood by the power as another "style". A moderate style by monumentality and dignity values that are part of the meaning of public work. And the idea of modernity associated with the progress strengthens, at this stage, the image of the power.

Rogério de Azevedo does not escape the contradictions of its co-generation and also he designed some public facilities through a variety of languages. Examples of this are the Vila Flor and Póvoa de Varzim Municipalities (early thirties) or the Captaincy of the port of Viana do Castelo (1933).

But much of the equipment programs with expression at national level are developed using project-type regionalist matrix. These regionalist character concerns do not appear to be linked to an ideological position of those who order, the return values to a rurality that span the political speech or inspiring models of nationalist allegedly drawn, because at the time did not exist. And the Ministry of Public Works delivery implementation to modernist architects, external to their services, thereby circumventing the shortcomings of their structures.

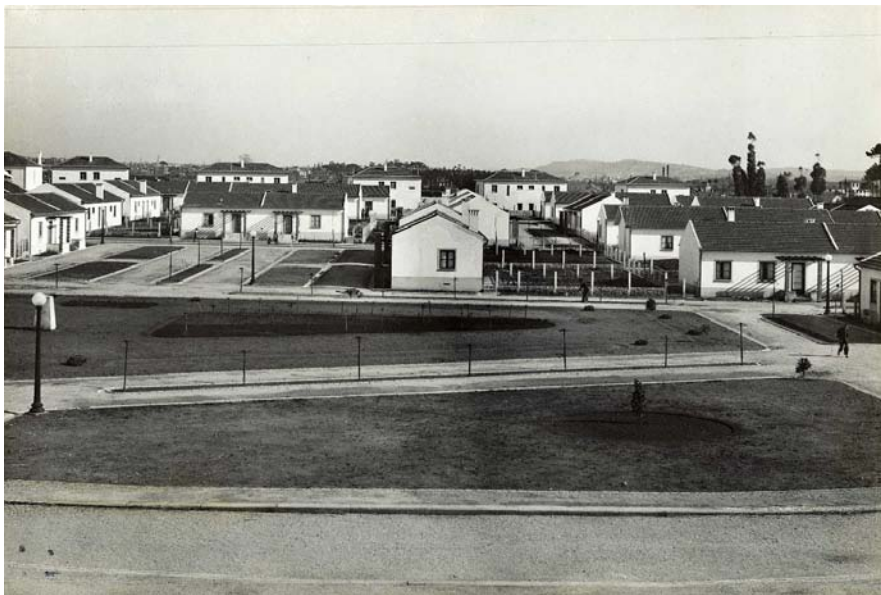
Among these programs lies the Economic Houses, 1933. In it the Estado Novo defines its policy on social housing. It is an innovative policy in two ways: first because chooses the image of the english garden city in terms of city concept; second because establishing a new type of contractual relationship with the tenant to his home. In the monthly installment for the purchase of housing is associated with an insurance system of social protection as a means to secure the population.

Public intervention in housing the urban population of lower income is achieved through single-family housing, an anti-collectivist model '*more in line with the national character, more hygienic and more suitable for the material and moral strengthening of the family*' (*Casas Económicas*, 1943, p. 16).



The houses are presented from different classes aimed at different social strata. Only exceptionally, the construction of houses of all classes in the same housing development, could be authorized. However, *'in this case, the neighborhood had to be divided into different sectors, playing well, to her bosom, social zoning strategy officially defended'* (Gros, 1994, p. 87). With this model that create small clusters on the outskirts of cities. They define a differentiated urban space that approximates the model neighborhood of the city-garden. But, given its small size, its design *'identifies more with the garden suburb'* (Howell, 1999, p. 152).

The construction must be of *'portuguese savour, typically regional and can adapt to the building systems and construction materials from different regions of the country'* (Casas Económicas, 1943, p. 17). It is by following these precepts that the Neighborhoods Economic Houses, having expression in the urban fabric, present consisting of different types of villas with garden at the back and garden next to the main facade, thus breaking an idea of uniformity<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Neighborhood Economic Houses of Paranhos, Porto, undated. Archive DGEMN: SIPA, IPA n° PT011312100438, FOTO.0551323

<sup>2</sup> Worked in project design standard of the houses of all classes, all of which may present one or two floors, architects such as Raul Lino Correia, Rebelo de Andrade, Couto Martins, Alberto Cruz or Rogério de Azevedo, among others. With the implementation of the program are built new neighborhoods in Braganca, Braga, Covilhã, Lisbon, Porto, Faro, São João da Madeira and Vila Viçosa.

At first the Estado Novo gave greater emphasis to the house than to the neighborhood. However, the Economic Houses clusters built in the thirties, in Porto, were to include the building of Primary Schools type Douro sort of regionalised type projects, 1935, designed by Rogério de Azevedo, after minor changes.

As in all works carried out by the Ministry of Public Works, also the Neighborhoods Economic Houses were abundantly photographed. It sought not a documentary record but obtaining images to publicize their achievement through the publications of the National Propaganda Secretariat. Some of that photographic record of work in the neighborhoods of Porto fit the studio *Photographia Alvão*.

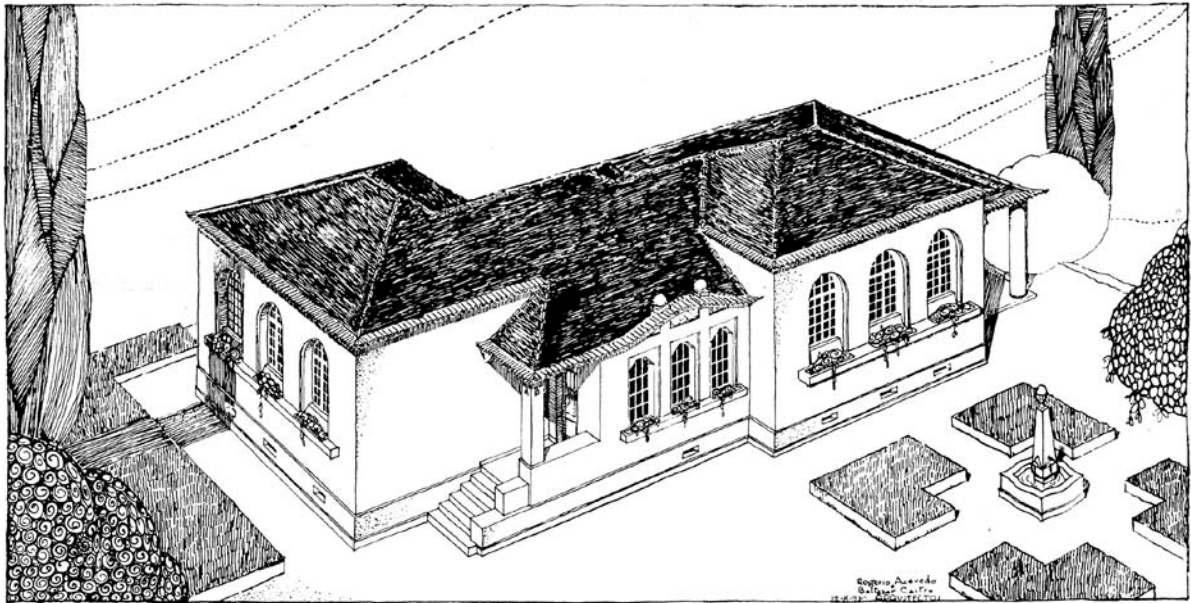
But perhaps the most paradigmatic case of the programs implemented by means of standard projects is the regionalized projects-types of Primary Schools officials to build in series, 1935.

Among the projects with the General Directorate of National Buildings and Monuments (DGEMN) began operations in 1929 are the *Schools Dr. Alfredo de Magalhães* in Viana do Castelo district. Rogério de Azevedo projected six of these schools. Them reflects the deep knowledge that holds about the school built heritage in the 20s and the concern to integrate locally and play with traditional or revivalist character details.

With the destruction of the Primary School of Lourosa, motivated by the need to free the Church from all outbuildings<sup>3</sup>, is ordered to Rogério de Azevedo the draft of a new school. This project of a school building two classrooms, hall, cloakroom, teachers and covered atrium room, consists of two staggered bodies organized along two orthogonal axes, a central body to articulate all the spaces and covered recreation in the hollow of volumetric composition, will contaminate or be reused by architect with variations in other primary schools that performs in the thirties.

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<sup>3</sup> Current practice in restoration work for conducting surveys and studies for the restoration of monuments. In this case the work was started by order of Dr. Alfredo de Magalhães and profusely accompanied by the magazine *Ilustração Moderna* and by Eng. Henrique Gomes da Silva (Director-General DGEMN).



**Figure 2.** Primary School of Lourosa, Oliveira do Hospital. Project architects of Rogério de Azevedo and Baltazar de Castro. Axonamétrica Vista, 1930. Ass., Dat.: Rogério Azevedo and Baltazar Castro, architects, 12/08/1930. *Ilustração Moderna*, 5th year, No. 46, August 1930, p. 192.

But the General Directorate approved or materialize projects expressing various concepts held by different authors. Including the architect Jorge Segurado<sup>4</sup> working intensively in school buildings, but without the inclusion of regionalist concerns taken by Rogério de Azevedo.

In the early years of this decade, the system aims to establish itself in rural society<sup>5</sup> by establishing a regime that refers to the local authorities a share in the works of 50% of its value. Many of the school buildings are constructed by popular initiative, other donated or subsidized by benefactors<sup>6</sup>.

It is in this context that Rogério de Azevedo develops, in collaboration with Januário Godinho, the School-Canteen project in Alijó (1930). It is an

<sup>4</sup> Jorge de Almeida Segurado (1898-1990) developed several projects for school buildings, including the town of Estremoz (1931) and the town of Pombal (1932); project type for the Primary Schools of the Municipality of Cascais (1931); building for Schools of Social Neighborhood Arco do Cego, Lisbon (1932); Central School Infante D. Henrique, Angra do Heroísmo (1933) among many others.

<sup>5</sup> Decree No. 19502, March 1931 (published 03/24/31), defined the *Rural Improvement* policy, stipulating a scheme for the *construction, repair and adaptation of roads and schools*, allowing the allocation of budget subsidies general State.

<sup>6</sup> This gesture is encouraged by the State that gives donors the right to indicate people for placing teachers in these schools. Decree No. 19531 of March 30, 1931.

architecture built in granite, robust and thick, in dialogue with the materials and the transmontana landscape, '*volumetrically characterized from the organization of the plant*' (Tavares, 2012, p. 35).

Since 1932 that existed in DGEMN an architecture section, headed by architect Guilherme Rebello de Andrade, ready to make new Primary Schools projects. Of their efforts resulted in the presentation of a *Memory*<sup>7</sup>, in 1933, in which the precepts to be met by the school buildings to be constructed by the government are defined. In this *Memory* are some rules that previously had not been defined.

On the first page appears written that projects should be designed '*in accordance with the characteristics of the regional architecture, imposed not only by the application of these materials own regions but also by climate changes*'. And explicit the idea: it is intended to the assimilation of new buildings for the people, not hurting '*their ethnic sensitivity*' with exotic elements of a "rationalism" forced, despising the tradition. Moreover, it is believed that such "rationality" well understood, it takes local elements, combining them with the new construction features.

On the next page are established three main conditions for the design of plants:

1st - with the plan of a school for a place school-unit, solve the plants from other schools;

2nd - design those plants to be able to take advantage of all the land whatever exposure to North;

3rd - standardization of the construction of schools, for groups, even though these groups are formed by schools of different numbers of places.

The mainland is divided into six regions through the affinities in building materials resources, manpower, construction processes and climate: Algarve;

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<sup>7</sup> *Ante-projecto do Plano Geral de Tipos-Regionaes de Escolas Primarias Officiais a Construir em Série – Memória*. Lisbon, 14 December 1933. Ass. The Architect Chief of Section Guilherme Rebello de Andrade. Process *Expediente-Geral*, the DGEMN - DGCE Archive.

Alentejo; Extremadura; Beira-Litoral; Beira Baixa, South; Beira Baixa, North, Beira-Alta, Minho and Trás-os-Montes.

While the projects for the South districts are delivered to Raul Lino, the districts of North and Central are the responsibility of Rogério de Azevedo.

Based on the designed project in 1930 for the School of Lourosa, he chooses to simplify it starting from the classroom idea as a space cell, an idea already present previously and consequently used in the projects of primary schools which had meanwhile realized. Following a functional orientation presents a number of variations of the same basic type of building in the composition by adding cells/rooms that are repeated, and setting the maximum standardization. The school's central space is the classroom.

However some schools are built in response to requests met in each case. The special project of the School-Canteen Salazar (1938) is one of seeing authorized its completion. The school is built in a peri-urban area, set the hillside, adapting to the morphology of the terrain that has a steep slope. Built in granite and featuring a rectangular, composed and irregular, and a horizontal arrangement of the masses, consists of volumes and cover different roofs, arches in the covered playground and a relative absence of decorative elements, offering however two faces . While the main elevation reflects, in continuity, projects of regional-type schools, since the rear elevation, with some distance and creative freedom from this image, and taking advantage of the slope, the recreational space and the arrangement of rooms class, has an almost organic composition, strong and deeply expressive in the relationship between mass and openings.



**Figure 3.** School-Canteen Salazar. Vimieiro, Santa Comba Dão. Current photo. Archive DGEMN: SIPA, IPA nº PT021814080009, FOTO.4051935.

Rogério de Azevedo had created throughout his work, and from various elements base, '*types whose adaptability and flexibility solutions are best expressed in the special project of the School-Canteen Salazar*', '*work that synthesizes the values set in projects- type regionalised that are prior*', not also failing to refer to the project Primary School of Lourosa (Pimentel, 2014, p. 55).

With the regionalised standard projects was initiated to a purification process of the constituent areas of the school buildings. By the late 60s the evolution of these buildings will be seamless. Although technical and functional alterations projects always present the same concept space-school, diluting the language expresses them through a progressive impoverishment of the implemented solutions.

On the other hand the program of the Regional Inns of 1938-39, not a project-type program, had as preconditions regionalism and the idea of a building

model. One option already clearly political and corollary of a path statement values consistent with the spirit of the Centenary Commemorations 1940<sup>8</sup>.

In order to convey an image of progress and renewal and simultaneously combat penetration in the country of any solvents and disturbing ideas of unity and national interest, the Estado Novo creates in 1933 the National Propaganda Secretariat (SPN)<sup>9</sup>.

Led by Antonio Ferro, and in order to mobilize the arts and letters for viewing system, contributes to the affirmation of artists and modernists during the thirties. However, the most innovative were already connected to important interventions whose design predated the creation of the SPN.

With the '*great mission*' to '*raise the spirit of the Portuguese in knowledge than it really is and it*' - words of Salazar in the inaugural speech (Acciaiuoli, 1998, p. 14) - the *policy of the spirit* then created by Antonio Ferro, develops a structurally holistic and integrative mode (Portela, 1982, p. 59). Looking cover various areas in a multidisciplinary way and in order to reveal the country in its cultural and popular aspects, tourism will be used by the Estado Novo to launch the country's image abroad.

In October 1933 opens the traveling exhibition of "Hotel Modelo", constituted by the report of eight architectural projects of regional hotels prepared by eight young architects invited, culmination of a campaign on national tourism issues launched by the magazine *O Notícias Ilustrado*, directed by Leitão de Barros, and with the support of the National Tourism Council and the CP (Portuguese Railways) and a program-regulation prepared by Raul Lino. Having shall be intended to provide guidance models to the private sector for the construction of hotel facilities that have the character of large family inns, very comfortable, but devoid of all the false luxury, according to the regionalist principle, both the formal level and in experience of the buildings in an attempt to establish a pedagogy for new developments in the sector, bucking the trend for performing

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<sup>8</sup> Celebrations of the Double Centenary of the Foundation (1140) and Restoration (1640) of Portugal in 1940.

<sup>9</sup> Refurbished in 1944, is now calling itself the National Secretariat of Information, Popular Culture and Tourism (SNI).

'false and pretentious "Palaces"' (Ferro, 1949, p. 48) built outside major urban centers.

Above all

Above all matter look for architectural reasons in the tradition or regional character, giving preference to the locality materials employment in order to ensure respect for the landscape elements, the regional tradition, the picturesque (Martins, 1999, p. 125).

These concerns and the influence of their underlying programming model as well as the *Pouzadas*<sup>10</sup> thesis presented at the First National Tourism Congress in 1936, will be accompanied by António Ferro, with its constant presence in politics for tourism developed by him.

In 1938, the sector project of António Ferro begins to gain expression. In addition to the historicist and popular tourist circuits other networks are regarded as essential: that of the tourist offices and inns. It is designed to plan a network of Regional Inns distributed throughout the country,

within a design to innovative time that combined a patent modernized dynamism – through the new comfort and systemic character/national initiative – with a conservative and regionalist sense which called for a "return to traditionalism" (Fernandes 1999, p. 159).

The a necessary standardization of tourism, expression of a country's tourist point of view '*designed as a grand drawing*', against '*the demon of individualism*' and the action of '*amateur architects and painters*' (Ferro, 1949, pp. 40 -41), António Ferro associates the concept of difference, a country in parallel and different from others, emphasizing the popular character of resources, looking

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<sup>10</sup> *Pouzadas*. Thesis by Francisco de Lima. I National Tourism Congress, Section IV, Lisbon, 1936. It involved the study for the creation of a new type of tourist equipment, simpler and economic thought to the great mass, which is neither the 'Palace' or the 'Hotel' and should always have the national and regionalist nature, either in its construction or in your furniture. It is a close approach expressed in *O Notícias Ilustrado* and exposure of "Hotel Modelo" or on aspects such as location, either in design or in the premises or at the furniture, the type of meal and exploitation. The inspiration for the concept and the new equipment program comes from the *Parador* counterparts and especially the Spanish *Albergue de Carretera* – small hotels targeted refuge for travelers and their cars, strategically distributed throughout the Spanish territory divided in several steps routes between major cities.



instill them in their interlocutors - Commissions and Tourism Joints tutored by local councils.

These different aspects are summarized in *reaportuguesamento* campaign of Portugal inspired on 'fundamentalist ideas in the mythical rurality, late of peasant origins, and which was applied by the regionalist staging the Estado Novo' (Melo, 2001, p. 252), a process of the country's image transmutation, giving

unity to all these different countries within the same country, a purely national life, with a picturesque high, in strong, solid colors, and above all, an admirable people, aristocrat by instinct, which sometimes can't read but that feel and understand as few (Ferro, 1949, p. 36).

Salazar had given the tone as refers Paulo Pina (1988, p. 151):

I do not know where the *reaportuguesamento* work of our social and political institutions, and the cult of good, healthy, fruitful national traditions, so own to give the originality and character, they will raise major difficulties and not be preferred to slavish copying how to think and do in a foreign country, inspiring much of our activity for a long time. Moreover, this effort is homage to the creative spirit of the Lusitano breed and its power of initiative, which will be fruitful if the persistent work of *inner* discovery not give way to lazy imitation of strange creations.

It definitely broke with the apparent *spirit* of openness of the early years of the SPN in which the need to work had enabled experiences in the languages used.

The projects of the inns to be built by DGEMN in 1939 and 1940, are still delivered in 1938 to three of the architects of the modernist generation who had already demonstrated the ability to dialogue with traditionalist values: Miguel Jacobetty Rosa<sup>11</sup> are ordered the South of the country inns (Santa Luzia in Elvas; Santiago in Santiago de Cacém, São Brás in São Brás de Alportel); Rogério de Azevedo are delivered the North inns (São Gonçalo in the Serra do

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<sup>11</sup> Miguel Simões Jacobetty Rosa (1901-1970) was one of the closest collaborators of Duarte Pacheco.

Marão, Santo António in Serém, Vouga Valley, São Lorenço in the Serra da Estrela)<sup>12</sup>. The inn from the center of the country (São Martinho in Alfeizerão, S. Martinho do Porto) is delivered to Veloso Reis Camelo<sup>13</sup>.

Their locations are thought of as an intervention strategy in the territory. They aim to provide the country with modern hotel facilities and are responsive to the needs objectively acting on the national territory, '*building a coherent and rational structure*' (Lobo, 2006, p.44).

Rogério de Azevedo could have had an important role in the choice of the exact locations of the inns by he designed and clearly assumes the use of extracted materials from construction sites themselves<sup>14</sup>.

With a program and guidance attached to DGEMN by the Government, ie by Duarte Pacheco, the plan to build seven Regional Tourism Inns will be materializing over nine years with the successive conclusions of the construction and subsequent delivery to the authority of the SPN , the entity responsible for the exploitation, inspection and award to private dealers.

In 1942 was inaugurated the first of seven inns built from scratch: the Santa Luzia in Elvas<sup>15</sup>. The first of seven small hotels that do not should look like hotels, with the interiors arranged by the Tourist Office and SPN technicians, and where guests should feel '*constantly*' in the region where they are without breaking the '*continuity between inside and outside, between the house and the field*' (Ferro, 1949, pp. 68-69). And the openings will be happening until 1948<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Januário Godinho have collaborated with Rogério de Azevedo in the development of these projects, according to the corrected version, and signed by Januário Godinho to 07.15.1988, the academic work done by students in FAUP Antonio Neves, Fernando Lisboa, Paul Cortez and Vítor Seabra, which contains a chronology of the life and work of architect Rogério de Azevedo. Estate of Januário Godinho, Maria de Fatima Alves Sales file.

<sup>13</sup> Antonio Maria Veloso Reis Camel (1899-1985). Author of several projects of buildings in Lisbon awarded the Valmor Prize (1931, 1942, 1945) among others.

<sup>14</sup> See in this regard *Pousada para Serra do Marão. Memória*. Rogério de Azevedo. Porto, 15 February 1939. *Pousadas. Processo Geral*. IHRU: SIPA.

<sup>15</sup> The first state inn, the Inn of Lidador (Óbidos), inaugurated on August 16, 1940, was an old converted pension.

<sup>16</sup> Pousada de Santa Luzia, Elvas - Jacobetty Miguel Rosa project, 1939, Vera Leroi and Ane-Marie Jauss decoration, inaug. April 19, 1942; Pousada de São Gonçalo, Serra do Marão / Amarante - Rogério de Azevedo project, 1939, José Luís Brandão de Carvalho decoration, inaug. August 29, 1942; Pousada de Santo António, Serém (Vale do Vouga) - Rogério de Azevedo project, 1939, Carlos Botelho decoration, inaug. September 24, 1942; Pousada de São Martinho, Alfeizerão / São

Of the seven hostels, all designed the same time and with construction started at the same time, with the exception of Santiago de Cacém, the penultimate being opened, we can highlight the group of buildings of the Elvas and Marão. Are buildings that have a clear idea that draws them from the simple house, domestic housing scale either by the way the program was interpreted them, both for its formal compositions, either by the way they were attached to the land.

In Marão, as in the Serra da Estrela, along with a more compact organization of space there is a skillful use of the full capacity of the building, common value to Rogério de Azevedo projects that '*lets do without a monumentalization small-scale*' (Becker, 1997, p. 192) and simultaneously reinforces the opening of the interior spaces of the landscape.



**Figure 4.** São Gonçalo Inn, Serra do Marão. Image file.  
<http://restosdecoleccion.blogspot.pt/2012/01/primeiras-pousadas-de-portugal.html>, May 21, 2012, 18:00.

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Martinho do Porto - Veloso Reis Camelo project, 1939, Veloso Reis Camelo decoration, inaug. August 25, 1943; Pousada de São Brás, São Brás / Loulé - Jacobetty Miguel Rosa project, 1939, Vera Leroi and Ane-Marie Jauss decoration, inaug. April 11, 1944; Pousada de São Tiago, Santiago do Cacém - Jacobetty Miguel Rosa project, 1939, Vera Leroi and Ane-Marie Jauss decoration, inaug. February 10, 1945; Pousada de São Lourenço, Serra da Estrela / Manteigas - Rogério de Azevedo project, 1939, Maria Keil decoration, inaug. March 14, 1948.

The remaining buildings it appears that the Santo António of Serém and S. Brás of Alportel Inns are those that come closest to the idea of a type in common, near the domestic environment. But the building of the São Lourenço Inn, by their appearance debugged, compact and with a strong foundation, breaks this possible identity and the Santiago do Cacém Inn that, while setting a foundation, is marked by a strong axialidade. The building of the São Martinho do Porto Inn is what is closest to the idea of a housing block unrelated to the ground.



**Figure 5.** São Lourenço Inn, Serra da Estrela, Manteigas.  
Imagem file. <http://restosdecoleccion.blogspot.pt/2012/01/Primeiras-pousadas-de-portugal.html>, May 21, 2012, 18:00.

Regionalism is fulfilled the program through seven small buildings formally very different, which show '*conceptual schemes prior to formal parties*' (Tavares, 2012, p. 49), in particular the recognition/choice of place as the starting point for the definition a strategy, with the scale of a particular house or a small hotel, playing with the '*programmatic distribution of the floors*' (Lobo, 2004, p. 89) and the panoramic dining room, consisting of articulated pure volumetrics, cylindricals and prismatic, of Modernism, concealed under the weight of roofs and eaves, the arcades, porches and pergolas, covered in stone or whitewashed

plaster, the flavour of the regions, in an ordered and coherent synthesis of building systems and formal suggestions from many sources.

With the publication by SNI the book *Turismo, Fonte de Riqueza e de Poesia* (Ferro, 1949), António Ferro speeches collection conducted between 19 November 1939 and 11 October 1948, and the book/guide *Pousadas do S.N.I.* in 1949, with photographs of João Martins (Tavares, 2002, p. 52) - true storefronts done, its underlying ideas and the future preview - closes a cycle of *policy of the spirit* related to tourism in Portugal.

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**TRADITION AND MODERNITY INTERTWINING IN THE RE-  
PRESENTATION OF PORTUGUESE MODERN ARCHITECTURE:  
The case of the Survey on 20th Century Architecture in Portugal**  
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**Abstract**

*The nexus between tradition and modernity is long-rooted in the intellectual and political discourses about a Portuguese architecture identity, either as a dialogue construed as a national specificity, or as a dichotomy that stresses different actors' distinct and even opposing cultural understandings and political uses of categories of culture and time. Recently, however, the history and critique of modernism in architecture has overcome the mainstream readings of its corpus, mitigating its orthodoxy, and disclosing long-standing relationships between modern architecture proposals and vernacular settlements. Such rereading has triggered a revision of Portuguese history of architecture, in particular regarding the gate-keeping conceptions of Portugal as an isolated and peripheral country, and the political stances of particular architectural productions. This paper aims to discuss the extent of the tradition-modernity bindings in the specialisation of a Portuguese identity in architectural discourses. In this scope, it will look into the survey on the 20th century Portuguese architecture conducted by the Portuguese architects between 2003 and 2006, as an expression of how Portuguese modern architecture is being emically construed. Taking into account its process and outcomes, and its authors' purposes and reasoning, the paper will examine its modes and hues, evaluating the dynamics beyond the production of a history of architecture and its relating to broader processes of imagining the past and culture in Portugal.*

**Keywords:** Survey, History of Architecture, Heritage, National Identity.

The relation between modernity and tradition is a concern long rooted in Portuguese discourses about an architectural history and identity often related to erudite-vernacular and urban-rural correlations. It has been reasoned as a dialogue that construes a national fundamental and a dichotomy that emphasises opposing interests and powers in the social production of space. The argument rests on the idea that international models have been sensitively interpreted by spatial practices in-between erudition and vernacularism, both in the production of *historic* (e.g. Costa, 1995) and *modern* architecture (e.g. Ollero, 2001)<sup>1</sup>. Regarding the latter, the history of Portuguese architecture evinces some hues. Following on its

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of clearer reading, the paper follows the terms globally used by IAP20's authors, using Modern to refer to the Modern Movement production, using Modernist to address previous aesthetics inspired by modernity, and using modern when reporting indifferently to the contemporary time, set roughly on the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

pioneers (e.g. Portas, 1978), the arguments of a geo-economic periphery and ideological resistance have stressed tradition and modernity as opposing narratives of distinct reasonings by conservative and progressive ideals. A key moment was set on the fifties, between architects' first national congress (1948) and their de-objectification of tradition in the Survey on Portuguese Regional Architecture (IARP) (SNA, 1961). Its understanding of vernacular was considered to have disciplined the revision of a conservative Modernism and grounded tradition-modernity bindings as a fundamental of Portuguese Modern architecture (Tostões, 1997).

Such orthodox history of Portuguese modern architecture has been challenged by critical analyses that question the grounds of the periphery and resistance arguments (e.g. Almeida 2008)<sup>2</sup>. Its place in the mainstream narrative of Portuguese architecture seems, however, to have been on hold until recently, when the international history and critique of modernism reviewed its relation to regional vernacularisms beyond the Anglo-Saxon hegemonic emphasis on universal rationality (e.g. Lejeune and Sabatino, 2010). New research in Portugal appears to be following up developments, deconstructing tenets by unveiling Portuguese architects' interactions with the outside world and the meanders of their ideological and political alignments. The 20<sup>th</sup> century seems nowadays to represent a maturation process of Portuguese architecture (e.g. Tostões, 2002). In an effort to understand the extent of these tradition-modernity bindings in today's *spacialisation* of a Portuguese identity in architecture, this paper presents a preliminary analysis of the latest *emic* construction of an idea of Portuguese architecture – the Survey on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture in Portugal (IAP20).

### **The Survey on 20th Century Architecture in Portugal (IAP20)**

In 2003, the Portuguese Order of Architects in consortium with the Ministry of Culture and the Fundació Mies van der Rohe was granted European funds to conduct a nationwide inquiry on architecture built during the last century.

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<sup>2</sup> The work of Pedro Vieira de Almeida is groundbreaking in this respect. The reference to *Apontamentos para uma Teoria da Arquitectura* (2008) is to be understood as illustrative, since it gathers essays from different dates.



Celebrating the IARP's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the new inquiry focused on the erudite production, aiming to promote the social and political recognition of modern architecture's values. Inspired by its predecessor and carried out until 2006, IAP20 was methodologically built upon fieldwork, assembling six teams of architects to operate in six different regions of Portugal<sup>3</sup>. Sign of the times, teams set off equipped with georeference devices and computers to build a digital database according to a record-sheet previously designed<sup>4</sup>. Also differently, they counted on a list of reference buildings to organise itineraries, assembled by research in journals and monographs, and added suggestions of the municipalities' technicians. Alike their predecessors, teams could adapt preparatory guidelines according to regional specificities. Nevertheless, a balance between times, spaces, functional and aesthetic types of 20<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese architecture should be accounted for.

Three seminars scheduled the works of the Survey. The first gathered coordinators and international experts to discuss concepts and methodologies; the second reunited the whole team to present and test instruments; and the third was open to the public, presenting partial results<sup>5</sup>. The collective work was afterwards released in an on-line database and published in print (Afonso, 2006) and CD-Rom (OA-CDN, 2006) formats, in April 2006<sup>6</sup>. These translate the 120 thousand kilometres

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<sup>3</sup> Scientific coordinator: Ana Tostões; North Region: Sérgio Fernandez (coord.), Inês Calor, José Manuel Capela, José Miguel Brás Rodrigues, Paulo Monteiro and Pedro Araújo; Centre Region: José Bandeirinha (coord.), Gonçalo Canto Moniz, Isabel Bolas, José Manuel Oliveira and Susana Lobo; Lisbon and Tagus Valley Region: João Vieira Caldas and José Silva Carvalho (coord.), Conceição Corte-Real, João Santa-Rita, João Alves da Cunha, Miguel Judas, Pedro Garcia da Fonseca and Sofia Curto; South Region: Michel Toussaint and Ricardo Carvalho (coord.), José Manuel Rodrigues, Patrícia Bento d'Almeida, Rui Mendes and Vítor Mestre; Azores Region: João Maia Macedo (coord.), Manuela Braga and Mafalda Vicente; Madeira Region: Luís Vilhena (coord.) and Pilar Luz.

<sup>4</sup> The record sheet includes fields such as: location, authorship, dates, transformations, conservation status, urban setting, functional type, contemporary function, legal protection, bibliographic references, and a space for observations on its technical, social, contextual, historical and cultural features. Its digital form also included the possibility of attaching pictures and drawings, besides the processual data (numeration, region and author of survey). Database is available at: <http://www.iap20.pt>.

<sup>5</sup> The first seminar was held in Lisbon on February 2004 with the participation of Maurizio Pla, António Pizza, Luís Hornet, Nuno Grande, Xavier Costa, Wilfried Wang and Vittorio Lampugnani. The second seminar took place in Abrantes on July 2005. The final seminar occurred in Coimbra on November 2005. Also, to promote IAP20 results, there was an exhibition held in Istanbul during the UIA Congress (2005).

<sup>6</sup> There are significant differences between database, CD-Rom and book. The first two include more complete records, while the last presents a selection of buildings with simple data; the last two include supplementary information like thematic routs, architects'

trodden, the 299 counties visited, the 82 thousand pictures taken, and the six thousand records created. Teams acknowledge some inaccuracies and gaps, considering it to be an open work, a basis for future research and updates. Indeed, IAP20 is not presented, not represented as history. It is mostly seen as a database which the authors regret not having been given the time to reflectively analyse before the release of results<sup>7</sup>.

Nevertheless, IAP20's results objectify Portuguese architecture built during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, enunciating an architectural landscape of the past. As the postmodern epistemology of sciences brought the material and social worlds together, the objective-subjective dichotomy was reviewed and the history-memory distance was narrowed. The past was reasoned as a social and intellectual construct, meaning that heritage was no longer a matter of truth, but of interpretation and proposition. In the study of architecture, this development meant an acceptance of its meanings to be the entanglement of different histories (e.g. Whyte, 2006), written by looking at architecture as representation, as praxis, as product, and as a space for performance (e.g. Lees, 2001). Within this theoretical framework, IAP20 can be considered *one* expression of a "historical culture" (cf. Rösen 1994). It is *one* means through which *one* group produces and disseminates *one* past, putting into practice an emic narrative that informs and is informed by society's collective historical conscience. Given the form and contents of the published results, IAP20 furthermore approaches a "landscape of memory" that leaves out the cultural processes that build space as place, to take it as an inscribed surface in time (cf. Küchler 1993). What this paper proposes is therefore a reading of this landscape as a construct of the past, looking into IAP20's outputs and its authors' reasonings<sup>8</sup>. It will focus on three chief ideas repeatedly stressed: (1) the open work status; (2) the pursuit of time-space-type representativeness; and (3) the promotion of public awareness of the values of modern heritage. This reading must

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biographies, a 20<sup>th</sup> century chronology (CD-Rom) or essays about Portuguese modern architecture (book), but they are only a sample of 516 buildings of the total number of records in the database.

<sup>7</sup> The publication of results was speeded up to meet the European funding conditions.

<sup>8</sup> These include the database, the published materials and work papers, as well as interview with ten members of the teams, and the analysis of their individual researches and publications. The research has suffered some setbacks as, to date, there are no materials published other than the outputs, the original database is inaccessible, the on-line search works poorly, and access to the archive still awaits approval.

nevertheless be understood as a preliminary construction, on the one hand resulting from a still ongoing research, on the other hand because structured over the partial landscapes produced by the IAP20 published materials<sup>9</sup>.

### **The pen work status**

All over, IAP20 is stated more as a starting point than as a finished product. The idea was that researchers would continue to update the Survey under supervision of a scientific committee<sup>10</sup>. This exculpates shortcomings, but mainly borrows a sense of humility to a work in the process of being intellectually *democraticised*. Whether or not the plan will materialise remains a question. But regardless of the future, a particular landscape was already produced due to the symbolic power of its enunciation. Two aspects must be stressed here. First, a survey is a methodological instrument appropriated from positivist fields of knowledge that lend a sense of objectivity to research (cf. Dehaene 2002). Not entering epistemological debates, IAP20 is scientifically confirmed because it *is* a survey. Plus, its unremitting association with IARP, however symbolic and affective it may be<sup>11</sup>, guarantees a line of continuity with an enterprise that is strongly and long rooted in Portuguese architects' history and identity as a class (e.g. Portas 1978). Not by chance, IAP20 was launched simultaneously to IARP's 3<sup>rd</sup> reprint and its authors' attribution of honorary membership by the Order. This was the National Year of Architecture, at the eve of the homologation of architects' exclusivity to practice architecture. There is some sort of corporative subtext in IAP20 that its promoters do not forget to recall (cf. Afonso, 2006b).

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<sup>9</sup> Namely, the book, the CD-Rom, the brochures, the outdoors, and the news on *Boletim Arquitectos*.

<sup>10</sup> After 2006, the Order made some initial efforts to complete records, normalise fields, and solve flaws. Now, arrangements are being made in order to continue the database in articulation with Docomomo Iberia.

<sup>11</sup> According to interviewed authors and published materials, IARP is an inspiration and a source of pride, IAP20 being considered complementary and the continuity of a romantic tour of discovery.

A second aspect concerns the authorship of IAP20. On the one hand, there is the formal and institutional frame. IAP20 was promoted by the official representatives of the Portuguese architects, and supported by a major international institution of architecture, the national government and the European community. There are no doubts about their symbolic power to conduct this survey. On the other hand, IAP20 summons a professional and intellectual authority on architecture. From the start, the scientific head of the survey is a renowned name in the historiography of the 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Portugal. Further, when assembling the teams, she invited architectural scholars settled and with acknowledged work on the different regions of inquiry to coordinate them. Each of these, in turn, selected a team mainly from their professional acquaintances, both in the academia and practice. And a significant part of these fieldwork members were either developing, or came to develop, doctorate researches mostly related to the Portuguese Modern Movement. Their authority to speak of modern architecture in Portugal is hardly contestable in a world where expertise and specialisation organise labour and science.

### **The representativeness argument**

Asserted the legitimacy of IAP20's actors to propose an architectural landscape, one may try to understand what this landscape is. Documents, published materials and authors stressed IAP20's methodology to be based on the fundamental criterion of representativeness, regarding time, geographies, authorships, functional types and aesthetics. The subjective and tricky criterion of quality would mediate such plurality<sup>12</sup>. This methodology intended to prevent teams from following personal biases. Furthermore, by introducing a weighting factor that favoured peripheral times, spaces and types, IAP20 expected to override history's attention to the "usual suspects" and provide a more democratic landscape. However, two outcomes defy the purposes. On the one hand, the produced landscape put on a par architectures with distinct roles in time and space. Despite some records including small descriptions, they do not provide a relational

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<sup>12</sup> Deliberately, the "quality" factor was left out of this argument because of its complexity of analysis and the paper's focus on the enunciation of history.

context. Along with the prevailing visual presentation of items, this brings IAP20 closer to a catalogue of buildings that objectifies, if not aestheticises, architecture. On the other hand, in order to establish an overall coherency, series of inquiry were defined a priori by a correspondence between seven periods of time and its architectural types and aesthetics. This set the team's pace and, though it was not to be followed to the letter, still suggests the survey's proximity with the Portuguese orthodox history of architecture. In this sense, IAP20 outputs resemble a confirming statement<sup>13</sup>.

Notwithstanding, teams availed the given freedom of action. Their partial inquiries manifest regional differences and particular interests. Such subjectivity was neither a surprise nor a problem, as the IARP's experience had shown architects that it was an inherent drawback that simultaneously favoured the plurality of insights. Yet, the partial landscapes selected to publicise the work dilute the regional subjectivities. For instance, summaries on regional findings highlight that: the North is heavily built in line with the Oporto School; Lisbon concentrates modernity's different experiences; the Centre echoes its marginal place in-between poles; the South is divided between a traditionally structured inland and an urban, developed coastline; and the archipelagos stand out by its original architectures, despite or because of its marginality (cf. Afonso, 2006a; Tostões, 2006)<sup>14</sup>. These formulations also tell a story; but one whose timeline is measured by the core centres and the mainstream narratives of history.

A comparative analysis of the on-line and published records provides additional insights. For example, the prevalence of the North, Centre and Lisbon regions in the book can be explained by their area and population; just like the proportionally higher presence of the archipelagos might be attributed to the representativeness criterion. Still, the second-place of Madeira's capital county in a most-quoted ranking is surprising. In an effort to highlight marginal settings, Funchal rises above its representativeness in

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<sup>13</sup> Emphasis should be put on the *outputs*, as interviews with the authors revealed insights and reflections not expressed by the IAP20's published results.

<sup>14</sup> Synthesis also grounded on the regional coordinators' presentation in the Coimbra Seminar.

the country<sup>15</sup>. On the contrary, Sintra's county is highly underrepresented in the publication despite its significant present in the database<sup>16</sup>. Representativeness does not seem to have worked equally among the different regions.

Another observations can be made out of a comparative analysis of times and spaces. The preponderance of records for the early century in Lisbon, followed by the North and Centre records rising between the twenties and the sixties, when the South records gain weight, right before Madeira standing out in the seventies, designs some sort of Portuguese urbanisation timeline that is confirmed by the more nationally distributed entries in the last two decades. Indeed, urban planning was taken into account, though it represents a small part of IAP20's records. Examining the functional types of the listed buildings, it is possible to infer the State's preponderant intervention in the countryside from the predominance of public equipments in the survey's records. Housing is mostly expressive in urban areas and less represented decades. But, despite this reflecting an overall view, some authors underlined how this generated a misrepresentation of the regions' a-synchrony, namely because these buildings were centrally produced and thus aligned with the mainstream production.

Two other findings may be pulled out of this line of analysis. The first addresses aesthetics. The history of Portuguese spatial planning may explain the preponderance of the nineties, sixties and fifties in IAP20's published book, even balancing the representativeness criterion. But the fact that its formal aesthetic evokes the most valued tradition-modernity bindings in the Portuguese history of architecture should be noticed. On the contrary, the Portuguese House that for so long generated controversy among the Portuguese architects is given poor visibility compared to its contemporary eclecticism and Modernisms. More notorious, the Emigrant House that equally called architects' attention is almost absent, despite its acknowledged presence. In fact, authorship beyond architects was

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<sup>15</sup> The book selection included around half of Portuguese counties, but Madeira region is represented by 4/5 of its counties. Funchal is the 7<sup>th</sup> biggest city in the country, but its county occupies the 24<sup>th</sup> place in terms of population.

<sup>16</sup> Sintra has one single record in the book, out of the 53 records in the database. Other counties, like Aveiro, present a 2/3 ratio.

comprised by IAP20, but anonymous architecture is mainly accepted in the South region<sup>17</sup>. The second finding concerns the idea of architecture as building. Although several of the IAP20's authors find such definition to curtail architecture's reasoning as the construction of territory, fabrics like belvederes deserve residual records and bridges, for instance, enter the category of "work of art".

Overall, the partial landscapes produced by IAP20 did not split from the hegemonic history of Portuguese architecture, focused on objects, authorships and the main centres of production. Even when its authors evoke IARP to parallel a romantic discovery, they seem less interested in challenging the mainstream narrative than in discovering its hidden pearls<sup>18</sup>.

### **The modern heritage**

One last chief idea is stressed by IAP20's authors and documental materials. The purpose was to record the 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Portugal on a public database to raise awareness of its values and urge its protection. Thus the regard for one last criterion of inquiry: the state of conservation. For the heads of the survey, modern heritage is a development resource that operates materially in spatial planning, economically in tourism, and symbolically in cultural policies (cf. Roseta, 2006). They also highlight the sense of collectiveness and endangerment implied in the concept of heritage (cf. Lowenthal, 1985). The first is built on the acknowledgement that history lasts until yesterday, thence heritage remits to a continuous time, not antiquity. The second refers to the risks of disaffection, as the secularity and perishable materiality of modern architecture are indicted of misinforming society on its value as heritage. What the existence of IAP20 seems also to confirm is that architects are not

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<sup>17</sup> Half of IAP20's records with no authorship refer to the South region. The participation of Victor Mestre in this team should be underlined as his work is known to have substantially contributed to the study of vernacular architecture in Portugal.

<sup>18</sup> The "discovery" of the work of architects like José Dias Pires Branco, around Fundão county, or Gomes da Costa in the Algarve conforms enthusiastic memories of the survey's authors.

only aware of their power in enunciating architectural heritage, as they have realised its effectiveness to depend on a social and political resonance. This explains why IAP20 set out to sensitise public opinion, local powers and economic agents.

It would be an overstatement to speak of IAP20 as the first effort to treasure the 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Portugal. In the mid-century, Portas (1961) had already pleaded in favour of a modern historiography that would help prevent its destruction; and after the Architects Association was created (1978), its journals resumed the claim, publishing articles on the early-century eclecticism and Modernisms that originated a "Heritage in Danger" section<sup>19</sup>. What is distinct in IAP20 is its formal and institutional investment, though by 2003 legislation had already broadened the concept of monument to include quotidian built space, and international dispositions had already extended heritage from history to memory, from nation to community basis<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, Docomomo International had been created (1988) to disseminate knowledge and promote protection of the Modern Movement heritage, opening Chapters worldwide, including the Docomomo Iberia (1993). Its relation with the IAP20 is unsurprisingly close: most buildings enrolled in Docomomo's inventory are listed in the IAP20; the latter's general coordinator is now the chair of Docomomo International; and a member of Lisbon's team is now the Iberia Chapter's vice-president.

But to be clear, the role IAP20 takes on in the protection of the 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture falls into the category of pedagogy, not conservation. It aimed the education of non-architects on the value of modern architecture to prevent its degeneracy. This purpose is particularly explicit in the intended articulations with the city councils. Indeed, scrutinising the records of the Directorate-General of Cultural Heritage database, the relations became manifest. In Lisbon region, for instance, around 1/5 of the processes for heritage protection regard the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though homologated cases are

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<sup>19</sup> Particularly expressive are the first years of *Jornal Arquitectos* (1981-1987) and the series of articles "For the Study of Modernist Architecture in Portugal" by José Manuel Fernandes in *Arquitectura*, 132 (1979) to 138 (1980).

<sup>20</sup> In this respect, the Portuguese Law on Cultural Heritage (1985) and the Charter of Cracow (2000) are important documents.



scarcer, and most of them are enrolled in the IAP20 inventory. Half of these processes were initiated or reanimated after the survey started. In less central regions, the number of processes diminishes, but its simultaneity with IAP20 inquiry is higher, in Algarve reaching  $\frac{3}{4}$ . Significant is the fact that, overall, legal protection of the Modern Movement and its critical alternatives' buildings was exclusively initiated after the launch of IAP20. Until then, processes referred to the early-century eclecticism. So, IAP20 might be considered a step forward.

Still, away from the main urban centres, investments in the Modern Movement heritage fell somewhat short. In fact, official agencies revoked motions for protection on the basis of degeneracy and lack of national value, sometimes suggesting a municipal classification. Tensions around what is and is not heritage thus require further research that takes into account the social resonance of its values in local communities.

### **Final comment**

Considering the form, the content and the purpose of IAP20, but keeping in mind that the paper presents a partial reading of a still ongoing research, an overview observation could be made. The 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Portugal seems to be under a new process of "periodisation", understood as the formal patterns that structure history's narrative (cf. Zerubavel, 2003). The survey's methods, criteria and outputs introduce the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a new historical time by putting on par its distinct dates, geographies, functional types and aesthetics. Because ruptures, repetitions or declines are hardly stated, the architectural landscape of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is put forward in a historical continuum. The lack of discontinuities formally homogenises the 20<sup>th</sup> century by a process of assimilation. It is not that Modernism and the Modern Movement became synonyms, as IAP20's authors are quite assertive in distinguishing them. But one and all now fall under a broader category of *modern* that stands for the architecture produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (or most of it).

Not being history, as repeatedly stated, IAP20 does not debate on the tradition-modernity bindings within this architectural landscape, but that does not mean the fundamental dialogue is absent. Looking into the buildings chosen to celebrate the end of IAP20 in *Boletim Arquitectos*, n.159, for instance, the space-type representativeness does not match a time-aesthetics representativeness. Emphasis is put on architectures which the database describes as expressive of the Modern Movement principles but deeply rooted in place and plastically eloquent of vernacular and erudite art. Its authorships include the "discovered" architects, but not the star-system, implicitly suggesting the tradition-modernity dialogue to be a cross-cutting way of doing architecture in Portugal. Quite differently, however, the buildings chosen to publicise IAP20 in nationally spread outdoors included the Portuguese House, Art Deco, Modernist and Modern architectures, and even contemporaneity. Mostly signed by well known architects, including the Pritzker Siza and the Brazilian Niemeyer, these buildings are closer to the orthodox history of Portuguese architecture, perhaps because aiming at a wider social resonance. Architecture's landscape of memory thus seems to depend not only on who produces it, but also on whom it is being produced for. It is in this entanglement that heritage can be examined as a social and intellectual construct.

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**LUCIO COSTA AND THE VERANDA:  
Strategies between Brazilian modernism and Portuguese tradition  
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**Abstract**

*Brazilian modern architecture has always been faced as an extraordinary result according to different historiography approaches. Sometimes it was emphasized as a beautiful group of buildings and spaces beyond technological gap, and other times it was faced just as a formal extravaganza and a kind of anomaly. Even considering the multiple interest related to magazines, reports, books and the international exhibition at MoMA, the final cut of this battle was Brasilia, conducted by the most preeminent architects: Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer. Lucio Costa argumentation for the renewal of Brazilian architectural in the 30's has a clear nexus relating our Portuguese matrix and our singular vernacular references. On the other hand it relates direct to theory and projecting of Le Corbusier's matrix. After the first rupture moment between old and modern architecture Lucio Costa could finally travel along so many cities of Portugal visiting, studying and checking vernacular and traditional references, as well symbolical buildings and the landscape relations he had argued for a modern Brazilian architecture. Once some nexus just did not fit Lucio Costa had to realize some misunderstood and the real contributions of colonial architecture as well a modern one. A new level of autonomy had already been defined with Brasilia project whose architecture could point out new directions and new references to think about our on perspectives including the historical background we earned. So from that moment on it was possible to establish new approaches to Brazilian tradition to explore and point out to an extraordinary historical and spatial nexus we have along centuries: veranda. Veranda has become the most important nexus of Brazilian architecture and still can play an important device related to our contemporary production.*

**Keywords:** Lucio Costa, veranda, modern architecture, tradition.

Brazilian modern architecture has always been faced as an extraordinary result according to different historiography approaches. Sometimes it was emphasized as a beautiful group of buildings and spaces despite technological gap, other times it was taken just as a formal extravaganza and a kind of anomaly. Even considering the multiple interest (magazines, reports, books and the international exhibition at MoMA) the final cut of this architectural process was Brasilia, conducted by the most preeminent architects: Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer. Lucio Costa is someone responsible to conduct the renovation debate and to consolidate Brazilian architectural field autonomy.

Brazilian historiography has overcome narratives that still connect our modern architecture to a linear process of direct influence from a center to a periphery without any critical judgment. This modernization does not exclude tradition and did not devote its interest in only one theory or reference. There is no doubt that the matters of tradition was discussed in many countries according to vanguard engagement to justify and contribute to create a modern work of art. Among Mario de Andrade, Tarsila do Amaral, Victor Brecheret, Villa-Lobos, Manuel Bandeira and many others, Lucio Costa work out a personal contribution to argue about a modern architecture. His professional trajectory comes cross the neocolonial debate and beyond its limits he will rebuilt the basis about tradition to justify a modern architecture. The matter of tradition related to a Portuguese matrix will be the main subject of a personal research into historical a process that officially started with his travel to Diamantina (1922) extended to his travel to Portugal, 1948 and 1952.

The travel to Diamantina is a remarkable opportunity to Lucio Costa get experienced to a truly Brazilian colonial architecture. From that moment on he will say that facing Diamantina was just like a revelation about our history. Lucio Costa explains the city of Diamantina reveals a building scale, technical proceedings, technical acknowledgment, the originality of a vocabulary and the meanings of constructions solutions, specially the capability to open windows as large as possible, and the multiple using of trellis-work. This travel became a revelation about the contradictions on neocolonial superficial speculations of style and how fake it was to support the construction of national identity. From that moment on Lucio Costa will develop an argumentation for architectural renovation relating vernacular nexus to modern architectonic references, including not only Le Corbusier but also Walter Gropius, Bauhaus and Mies van der Rohe. He also will play the role of mediator of Brazilian modernity.

In 1937 he points out that colonial architecture was not studied properly. He also express it is necessary to face supposed facts about our historical process to think it over. Our colonial architecture should be studied beyond the supposed earning bastard references operated by the worst workmanship despite correct materials. Lucio Costa proposes that colonial past should be used as a repertoire

of our memory to conceive modern architectures into a legitimated process to appropriate this ballast just like authentic references to research and conceive a Brazilian modern architecture. So our complex Portuguese matrix was updated and upgraded officially by him. Much more than a battle between styles and the neocolonial architects Lucio Costa was concerned about the technical gap we had to face to achieve a serious Brazilian modern architecture despite an incomplete historical process.

***“Quanto do teu sal são lágrimas de Portugal”***

In 1937 Lucio Costa begins to work as one coordinator of the National Heritage Service. So he was immediately involved into a new agenda studying, identifying and facing a sort of constructions in order to build national values of our past. So the Portuguese matrix returns as a problem that should be carefully considered in his new job routine. Unfortunately only in 1948 and 1952 he could travel do Portugal to study and check-up its architecture. The travel of 1948 had a familiar motivation but the travel of 1952 had an institutional background to research Portuguese architecture as someone trying to find the roots and the basis that could reveal and support Brazilian colonial architecture.

Driving his own car, Lucio Costa travels along the country visiting several cities, villages and isolated buildings. This travel across Portugal becomes a fundamental opportunity to verify and compare the possible correlations between the architecture of Portugal and the colonial architecture of Brazil. His strategy is making appointments and registrations drawing all over in sketchbooks to identify aspects of interest. Among civil building, churches, houses, altars, altarpieces, columns, arcades, parapets, windows, stairways, sculpture elements, trellis-worked and jalousies, textures, colors, glazed tiles and all kinds of architectural vocabulary devices Lucio Costa's drawings reveals a personal repertoire of Portuguese architectural universe after 1500 he was interested to register and he was able to realize at that moment.

It seems curious or it sounds absurd that all this extraordinary work about possible the origins of native architecture in Brazil has been done after the Brazilian modern architecture success once the argument of tradition was on its basis. It seems that Lucio Costa could only study more deeply the former aspects of the argument of renovation after all. It seems much more dramatic or ironic that the results of this travel along Portugal five decades ago were published just recently because the sketchbooks supposed lost were found a few years ago. So the studies about Portugal/Brazil nexus based on his experience can get a critical approach just right now. In the same way all the theory and history about the Brazil colonial period, the tensions of copy and invention, the limits of dependency and independency between the colony and the metropolis, the role of architecture books and treaties, workmanship and slavery, the geographical matters, the actions of religious orders, social transformations and many other aspects that could help Lucio Costa to review and even reconsider his arguments were standing by to be faced nowadays.

One of the most rhetoric conclusions he achieves deals about the autonomy on the both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Such conclusion means in fact a singular circumstance he says, that throughout the colonial period (1500-1822) there is no logical nexus related to a vocabulary or architectural system that could link Portuguese and Brazilian architecture directly. So instead of coherent articulations between model and diffusion he concludes these nexuses are not direct or logical and sometimes they just do not exist. In the middle of 50's this conclusion could dismantle the argument of tradition that supported Brazilian modern architecture but Oscar Niemeyer was still driving all attentions about new possibilities the concrete could achieve under his design and the vernacular aspects and traditional values were not strong in the debate anymore.

The absence of a critical approach on Lucio Costa's research about Portugal/Brazil relationship may not remain untouched and it can bring another possibility concerning new theories and historical studies. It explains and justifies the interests about Lucio Costa, about Portugal/Brazil and Brazil/Portugal architecture diffusions in a dynamic and complex process recognizing the autonomy between us. So it will be possible to improve new



comparative studies and documentations researching to reflect about these exchanges deeply.

### **Veranda: the constant of Brazilian architecture**

Despite all artistic and constructive aspects concerning buildings in Brazil along centuries studied by architects, historians and a sort of intellectuals there are historic values that are not represented just according to a physical support. The presence of the veranda in the meaning of Brazilian way of habitat is so ancestral that its Oriental origin landed in Brazil together with the Portuguese language. The veranda is related to cultural habits and familiar or public sociability since its typological configuration on several rural housing architectures. Veranda is a constructive device able to perform multiple spatial solutions. It was already emphasized as a covered pleasant place to be with family, relatives or visitors. Besides regional particularities veranda have become part of a quotidian reference and a traditional space of our houses.

Veranda is an ambience where one can contemplate the landscape from a privilege view as well it separates or articulates inside and outside. So veranda also plays an important role between the building and the place or between the building and the city. The covered device of veranda provides singular comfort creating shades and protection against the sun or the rain. Beyond the housing architecture veranda has being used in the most diverse typological programs achieving the functions of a singular architectural problem to solve. So veranda remains as an extraordinary space where it is possible to exercise habits related to a Brazilian way of life combining exchanges, acquaintanceship and landscape.

The diffusion of using veranda along centuries all over the country and in all kinds of architecture —rural, religious, urban, monumental— defines it as a kind of permanent spatial reference, a constant. So it is possible to accept that veranda has become Brazilian with no doubt. Veranda is considered completely part of us explaining why Lucio Costa explored several possibilities on designing

them beyond his discourse about tradition. So thinking about veranda may become a new approach to Lucio Costa's architecture.

### **Verandas of Lucio Costa**

Lucio Costa professional trajectory was always paved also designing architecture. All his lifelong the institutional activities were not a problem for developing projects of houses, public buildings, national pavilions, monuments or urban plans including the Pilot Plan of Brasilia. All these buildings and projects define an extraordinary group of characteristics and an architectural vocabulary in current process of transformation. According to spatial and artistic solutions it is possible to establish relations between modern architecture and vernacular values of traditional architecture.

On the early 30's he designed a group of "*non-owner-houses*", the **Ernesto Fontes' house** (1930) and the **Monlevade workman villa** (1934), followed by the **Baron of Saavedra's house** (1942), the **Park Hotel São Clemente** (1944-45) and the **Park Guinle building apartments** (1948-54). All of these projects represent a common aspect relating modern architecture to tradition that is not only associated to artistic aspects: the presence of the veranda. Veranda also remains a reference after the experience of Brasilia, when he design a national pavilion for Milan Triennial in 1964, also known as **RIPOSATEVI**, or at **Thiago de Mello's house** (1978) and **Costa e Moreira Penna's house** (1980) for example.

The current historiography about the architecture of Lucio Costa work of architecture holding back artistic and constructive aspects —such as window, glazed tiles, wooden floor, etc— in order to explain a clear relation of his modern architecture to traditional values related to our cultural process. Then Lucio Costa becomes the only one who knows how to deal with tradition properly. To look forward it is necessary to change the way we face his architecture recognizing this immaterial character that veranda embody. Veranda represents a strong spatial nexus popular known that is operated by Lucio Costa to solve

different problems of architecture. The using of veranda means a strategy to face anything and the possibility to create a modern space adapted to a Brazilian way of life at once.

The transformation from artisanal world to an industrial dynamic demanded an extraordinary debate from the first modernists debate and Lucio Costa attempted to this. At the same time his strategies to conceived architectural solutions work out far from the conceptual problem of the form attempted to the problem of the program: how architecture may work. Lucio Costa would be able to think about a "*way of being*" modern that does not depends on the formal result. Then veranda is the perfect place and the most important spatial device to express his comprehension of a "*way of being*" modern and Brazilian.

The case study houses known as "***non-owner-houses***" configure a special opportunity to test a modern language into a standard terrain for housing dimensioned on 12x36m. If on one side at first sight these houses have an obvious credit to Le Corbusier, Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, being able to figure out as examples of *International Style*, on the other side the way to use its spaces and provide ambience reveals particularities. The drawing number one is so surprising. The matrix from Le Corbusier is clearly noticed on the frame including narrow pilotis to support a heavy volume. There is a clear volumetric solution as well the formal composition. The floor is precisely defined by the parts of the pavement recalling the precision of Mies' lessons even if we pay attention to a license on the point the pilotis contacts the ground.

This would not be the only subversion of its structural existence once they are used to structure the hammocks usurping its pure meanings with such informal proceeding. Last but not least the pilotis becomes a support for a parasite plant able to climb spreading all over the rationality of the building. It seems to be a Le Corbusier's chair protected by the shadow of the veranda where vases casually displayed bring an intimate ambience with a certain level without control once the chair could be removed to the other side near the palm trees and savage species his drawings suggests. The intimate instance can be measured by the presence of a glass and bottle on the table just like that

famous drawing of Villa Savoye where a cup of tea lays on the table at the patio. Here the power of the nature is side by side the veranda and the house instead of being kept out in a safety distance like Villa Savoye ideal solution. Somehow at this small house points out the constructive solutions can not face the power of the nature forever and the technique has limits facing the place to build a space. The drawing presents a pleasant place to remain and to live together, just like any veranda.

Verandas' solutions work out in different scales, places and territories. The **Baron of Saavedra's** country house takes the suggestion of the theme of rural ambience to explore the veranda. The solution of this veranda demonstrates how creative Lucio Costa was to build transparency and defines a place between the rooms and the landscape. The typical vernacular roof covers a space that links the inside to outside throughout a delicate wooden white frame limiting the veranda. Vernacular material of wooden solutions and transparency are put together to perform the perceptions of the landscape of a veranda that connects the house to the ground bellow according to functional needs. The same problem was faced on an urban situation when Lucio Costa is invited to design the **Park Guinle building apartments** in Rio de Janeiro. Here he adopted the coexistence of two verandas, a social one opened to the rooms and a service veranda opened to the kitchen. As strategy to get closer to the rich clients that could change their way of life from houses to a modern apartment Lucio Costa conceived a kind of suspended house to solve the apartment. So the double veranda solutions could bring more open areas than usually. Opening each apartment to the both sides improves the air-fresh and beyond functional results. These verandas also solve the artistic solutions for the volumetric once they are solved exploring textures and colors of vertical brises-soleil and surfaces of a hollowed block, known as "*cobogó*". A modern apartment is solved with a traditional device of two verandas which artistic solutions perform a modern composition with traditional and modern devices together.

A sort of architectures from Lucio Costa takes advantage of veranda in order to propose a modern space. If we pay attention at **Brasilia Radio and TV Tower** we may agree he inserts an intermediary level just like a platform to stay above

the floor, not in the top but higher enough to realize the formal and urban dynamic of his own pilot Plan. With a great continuous glass window he elevates the observer to a comfortable place to admire the modern city and its landscape as a reference that may last forever. Right after that Lucio Costa has to face an opposite problem to solve a temporary architecture once he was commissioned to create the Brazilian pavilion for Milan Triennial in 1964, also known as ***RIPOSATEVI***. He organizes a space to represent Brazil and surprise the public using hammocks displayed among colorful panels and black & white pictures of Brasilia, forests and beaches. With such delicate and powerful strength he put together the most modern product we built —the city of Brasilia— with the most ancient one: the hammocks registered by the Portuguese navigators in the very first time they met indians. Transparency, lightness, color and emotional appeals do stimulate permanence and acquaintance in such surprising ambience evoking an authentic veranda to be experienced for everyone.

### ***Conclusions or temporary results of a research in progress***

The current debates about the limits and the aims of modernism have being upgraded in the last twenty years. In a critical context like this Brazilian architectural field sometimes still faces old questions instead of dealing with fundamental subjects concerned to our basis. Along his trajectory Lucio Costa developed a comprehension about the tradition and its relation to a modern architecture to propose a way out of the dilemma he understand the Brazilian field was into. Today it is possible to reconsider and review this personal conception in order to keep it as an official version of our history. Besides his culture and his clear and logical argumentation it is necessary to question and to study carefully the parameters he established to overcome his results. In the last two decades each international expositions or each national pavilion Brazilian architectural field came across the dilemma of identity, the dilemma of the form and a few others.

Beyond the discussion of current definitions of modernism, Brazilian modern architecture has achieved a singular place that cannot be ignored. If Oscar

Niemeyer had become the main reference and left the problem of the form to be faced by us, on the other hand an extraordinary modern production was built facing not only the dichotomies such center versus periphery but exploring a sort of challenges that just another historic narratives is able to understand and reveal. So it seems it is time to establish another agenda updating and realizing our own challenges. As preliminary strategy veranda could be taken as a constant nexus to enjoy and explore Brazilian architecture beyond the matter of style. As a matter of fact it would be possible to think about the revival of neocolonial architecture in the 70's during the dictatorship making a critical review against the official Brutalism reference with its ideological challenges to solve the industrialization and the social place of architects. The post modern debate that Brazil did not enjoy could be replaced in other parameters too. Looking at the contemporary productions of Brazilian architecture it easy to notice several verandas related to open spaces designed to acquaintance proving that veranda is not a lost nexus of us even if the current critics do not recognize it yet.

Expanding the critical perspective beyond style, formal vocabulary or artistic quality levels it seems that veranda nexus could be another safe aspect to articulate Brazil and Portugal. Veranda also means a sort of strategies to project end rethink between Brazilian architecture and Portuguese tradition. The current historiography has already studied the colonial cities and the occupation of the territory with contemporary proceedings so it is necessary to do the same on the scale of the buildings itself exploring rural, religious, military or civil architecture. If there are several studies related to the National Heritage Service it time to explore these archives and research documents including diversity and contradictions to rebuilt a historic fabric instead of maintaining a great narrative about Brazilian architecture. Without dogma it will be possible to measure new values and new aspects for consolidate the idea of identity contemporarily. This process could be a platform to new historic perspectives including Portuguese matrix and many other different ones.

The tension center/periphery may not impose a logical to establish a new researching field as well. So the process including in the same level the colonial

dynamic and the metropolis deserves to attempt to the autonomy but also attempt to new strategies to study the buildings establishing a common universe of interest under multiple focuses. The contemporary researches and academic debates may expand the modernist agenda. Veranda as a common nexus can help paving new nexus. Furthermore, veranda means a sort of strategies to project end rethink *beyond* Brazilian modernism and Portuguese tradition nowadays.

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## SHIFTING SOUTHS

### Architecture history following geopolitics

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#### Abstract

*This essay aims to present the shifting relations between North America and the South — South America and the South of Europe — through the work of George Kubler, the art and architecture historian.*

*In 1939, at the beginning of his career as a scholar, Kubler was invited by the Department of State to participate in a conference on inter-American relations. This conference aimed at the construction of a Pan-American cultural image, where the United States [US] would have a central role. The goal of pan-Americanism in the 1930s was to create links between South and North America. Ultimately this would help the US to overcome the economic depression by removing trade barriers with less industrially developed South American countries.*

*Later, with the positioning of the United States in World War II and its role in the European Economic Recovery Program or Marshall Plan, the transatlantic relationship between the US and Europe became more prominent than the Pan-American.*

*Kubler's research interests followed this shift. In the 1930s and 1940s Kubler worked on the architecture of Mexico and Peru, and in the 1950s his interests shifted towards the Iberian Peninsula, and specifically on Portuguese Architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.*

*Kubler's research movement from South America to South Europe reflect the availability of funding that is related to the geopolitical the interests of his country. Simultaneously, artists and other scholars have praised Kubler's vast work regarding the art and architecture of different 'Souths,' as a symptom of a 'non-aligned' position and attention to the condition of peripheral countries.*

**Keywords:** George Kubler, Pan-Americanism, South America, South of Europe

#### Introduction

George Kubler, the architectural historian, is known for his interest to consider art history's multiple patterns, either formal or conceptual. If we venture a *Kublerian* exercise such as looking at historiography of art in relation to its context we also find the traces of circumstantial influences within this scholarly field. In this case, the trajectory of George Kubler's career and research interests offer a layout of the political, social and academic context of part of the



twentieth century United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

As already noted by Thomas Reese (1985: xvii) the Great Depression was an event that marked the beginning of Kubler's life as a college student, if not financially at least contextually, and this event changed the pursuits of art scholarship. In an interview that Thomas Reese and Richard Candida Smith held with Kubler, he mentions several times that during the Great Depression there was a concentration of medieval studies within art history (Reese & Smith 1991). Kubler's interest about the frugal and the peripheral might have its origin in this contextual circumstance.

While studying at Yale, Kubler was greatly influence by his supervisor, the medievalist Henri Focillon.<sup>2</sup> Focillon shared with Jurgis Baltrusaitis — his former pupil, son in law and also colleague at Yale — a fondness for popular or folk art in Northern Europe. In Kubler's notes about Focillon's text "Art Populaire" (1931), he notes that "Romanticism [worked] as agent in the 19th discovery of popular art by means of 'people' or 'folk' in opposition to élite, tending to display human *fond commun*, in a new historiography." He also notes the "Apparent contradiction: popular art as reinforcement of nationalism." And that the emergence of the appreciation of folk works as a "protest against machinism." (Kubler n.d.)

Following his supervisor's essential standpoint, Kubler decided to research the architecture of New Mexico of the sixteenth century. He found that this architecture bore a character that he would later find in different places, such as in in Portuguese architecture of the sixteenth century: "The striking quality of New Mexican folk art is its intense and austere religious expression, achieved with the minimum technical and formal means, within a rich and intricate system of traditional meanings." (Kubler 1944, 758) If the interest with folk art took Kubler to New Mexico in the 1930s, later the international policies of the US

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<sup>1</sup> The work of the art historian Robert Chester Smith follows a similar pattern. Although he divided his studies between Portuguese and Brazilian art history, he produced more books about Brazil in the decades of 1940 and 1950, and later until the 1970s was more concerned with Portuguese art and architecture (Pimentel et al 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Kubler translated to english Focillon's work *La Vie des Formes* (1934) and manifested his appreciation to the work by expanding its arguments in *The Shape of Time* (1962).

government took him further to South America.

### **Visiting Peru as a 'good neighbour'**

In 1933, in his first inaugural address the president Franklin Delano Roosevelt [FDR] promoted his will to strengthen ties with South American nations as a strategic action of US development, this was to be called the 'good neighbour policy.'

In the field of world policy I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbour—the neighbour who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others—the neighbour who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbours. (Roosevelt 1933)

During this period, the cultural exchange between the US and South American countries grew and was clearly visible in popular culture. Among many signals of this cultural cooperation one might recall the Hollywood presence of the starlet Carmen Miranda, the international career of composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (Hess 2013), the production of Orson Welles film *It's all true* (1946) in Brazil, and even Disney's vision of Latin America in *Saludos Amigos* (1942). Less prominent, but still important is the work of art historians as Robert C. Smith and George Kubler who also responded to a call from the Department of Intra-American Affairs to further their studies in South American regions.

In 1939 both Smith and Kubler were invited by the United States Department of State to participate in the conference 'Inter-American Relations on the Field of Art.'<sup>3</sup> This conference was an effect of the work of the division of Cultural Relations of the Department of State, created in 1938 to "encourage and strengthen cultural relations and intellectual cooperation between the United States and other countries. Although the work of the Division embraces all nations with which the United States maintains relations, the principal activities during the initial period are concerned with the other American republics"

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<sup>3</sup> The conference was held on October 11-12, 1939 in the Department of State in Washington D.C.

(Department of State 1939).

The conference sessions covered several topics including: resources for Inter-American exchange in the field of art; possible exhibitions held in the US about South American States; opportunities for students and professor exchange between countries; the role of motion pictures as a medium of art exchange. Participants in the conference, among Kubler and many others, were: René d'Harnoncourt director of the Museum of Modern Art; Walter S. Cook, Director of the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University (who suggested Kubler's participation); Everett Meeks, Dean of the School of Fine Arts at Yale University; and Robert C. Smith, who at the time was part of the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress. Both Kubler and Cook were supposed to attend and participate in the session regarding the student and professor exchange between Pan-American countries.

Kubler's participation in the conference was fruitful, since in 1949 Kubler was stationed by the Smithsonian Institute to conduct research in Lima, Peru. The result of his research is the short report *Cuzco: Reconstruction of the Town and Restoration of its Monuments* (1952), although we must recognize that most of Kubler's work concerning pre-Columbian art developed with from this early experience. Moreover, Kubler's idea of historical time, later developed in his most well known book *The Shape of Time* (1962) might have originated on certain observations he made in Peru. In a letter to Carroll Meeks, professor of art history at Yale, Kubler mentions the relativity of geography and historical time:

"We worked with a crew of ethnologists in one place, where the life of the villagers is the perfect facsimile of what we have always supposed medieval rural life would be like. We made a photograph of one man and gave him a print; it was the first photograph he had seen. (...) But none of this life is inaccessible - on the contrary, it's a day's easy run by automobile from here, and illustrates rather how tradition and economics may isolate people far more effectively than geography" (Kubler 1949).

Kubler was, up to a point, following the steps of another Yale scholar turned

anthropologist, Hiram Bingham who was, for some time, credited to have discovered 'Machu-Picchu' in 1911, during a previous wave of pan Americanism. Kubler was hired as an anthropologist, although his education and previous work were centred in art history (Kubler 1948). Later he admitted that he did not have any kind of formal training in anthropology. In an oral history interview, when asked about his anthropology training, he replied: "Well, I picked it [anthropology] up on the way. I don't think I ever took a course. I picked it up. I read anthropology and I had friends with whom I talked anthropology. But I never studied it separately." (Reese & Smith 1991)

At the time of his brief term as an anthropologist Kubler exchanged correspondence with Erwin Panofsky regarding his change of course. Panofsky jokingly noted that he "hope[d] that your anthropological affiliation will not entirely deprave your good art historical heart" (Panofsky 1949), to which Kubler replied "The anthropological connection is one that still surprises me when I come to think of it, but it is only natural in America, where archaeology (and therefore the history of art) have long been the handmaidens of "social Science" more than of philology." (Kubler 1949a) In the essay "History: or Anthropology: of Art?" Kubler refers the exchanges between the history of art and anthropology, which were, according to this text, relatively new endeavours in American academia (Kubler 1975, 766). This allowed Kubler to work between the two fields at the beginning of his career.

### **From South America to the South of Europe**

Even before Kubler went to Peru, the US policies of international relations were changing. By 1949, the president Harry S. Truman gave his Inaugural Address expanding the policies of FDR from South America to the rest of the world stating that "we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching

misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people (Truman 1949).

The anthropologist George M. Foster exchanged opinions about this with Kubler reflecting future opportunities do research possibly funded by the US government: "There is great activity in the Interdepartmental Committee because of President Truman's Point 4 in his Inaugural Message. Everybody is trying to figure out ways of thinking up projects to save the world. We are not submitting a program, though we have suggested that anthropologists attached to agricultural missions and such things would undoubtedly be very worthwhile" (Foster 1949)

However in the previous year the economic cooperation between the United States and Europe through the Marshall Plan had already started, and Kubler had already been invited by Nikolaus Pevsner to participate in the publication project Pelican History of Art. In the beginning Pevsner asked Kubler to choose between one of two projects: "Once again let me have your decision soon. So much hinges on it. As you realize, it goes between two things: the pre-Columbian high cultures and Architecture of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Spain, Portugal and their dominions. (...) For each of them I can give you five years. I expect you will not accept both..." (Pevsner 1947) But Kubler accepted both, recommending Martin Soria to collaborate with him in the Spain and Portugal volume.

Kubler's research on each volume extended for more than a decade, despite several letters from Pevsner trying unsuccessfully to rush their completion. During this timeframe Kubler travelled extensively to Portugal, and started other projects that would last even longer. Following *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and their American Dominion: 1500-1800* (1959), Kubler published two other books directly related to Portugal: the facsimile and English translation of Felix da Costa *The Antiquity of the Art of Painting* (1967) and *Portuguese Plain Architecture: Between Spices and Diamonds, 1521-1706* (1972). These

undertakings came to be long term projects allowing Kubler to spend long periods of time and travel considerably in Portugal and in other European countries.

### **Coda: The unaligned South**

The political context in the US during the 1930s and 1940s, and its policies regarding international affairs were pervasive in academic and even in popular culture; this influenced in part Kubler's career path and its deviation from South America to the South of Europe.

Nevertheless, the decentred character of the cultures in question — South America in relation to North America, the Southern Europe in relation to Northern Europe — pointed the historian's attention toward the peripheral, the minor and the incidental.

Such as medieval studies were focusing on lesser subjects at the time of the great depression, Kubler also found the same essence in other cultures — in the walls of Cusco, Peru; as well as in the cellular walls in Jerónimos, Portugal. This interest with the particular, the small and the peripheral came to be perceived by historians and artists alike, to show an ideological inclination to radical positions. The artist Juan Downey, who produced video essays about relevant historical and political moments, was inspired to create a film manifesting the nature of Kubler's *Portuguese Plain Architecture* (1972) (Sousa-Santos 2014). The Portuguese historian of architecture Paulo Varela Gomes defined Kubler's Portuguese Plain Architecture book to be a symptom of a non-aligned position (2001), placing Kubler's research interests within the sphere of the nations against globalizing policies of the US. However, Kubler's attention toward the 'other', in this case the southern cultures, might have been prompted by a genuine interest about the peripheral, that emerged in the 1930s, but it was certainly encouraged by the policies of the US government.

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## ON BEING MODERN:

### Primitivism and ingenuity in Ernesto de Sousa and Almada Negreiros

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#### Abstract

*This paper aims to contrast the particular uses of the modern categories of ingenuity and primitivism both in Almada Negreiros and Ernesto de Sousa within their broader presence in XXth century art. It will analyze the singularity and interdependence of that usage and the way Ernesto de Sousa reinterpreted an idea of modernity which he presented in continuity with Almada Negreiros' modern experience. Ernesto de Sousa changed his ideas about art throughout his life and appropriating the notion of "voluntary ingenuity" by Almada Negreiros was one of the key-reasons for that change. The idea of "voluntary ingenuity" was developed by Almada after the 1920's but it had its roots in the futurist proposals he embraced — in his own particular way — in the first decades of the XXth century; he later related "voluntary ingenuity" with a primitive and universal language of painting. I will analyze how primitivism and ingenuity were fundamental terms for Almada Negreiros and Ernesto de Sousa for the process of reinventing themselves as well as modernity.*

In Portugal, from late thirties on, a cultural movement was formed, based on the interpretation of the soviet directions for realism formulated on the I Soviet Writers Congress in 1934, which was, in several cases, a softer, distorted and fortunately misunderstood version of it, called neo-realism. It was so called firstly in 1938<sup>1</sup> to avoid the censorship from the fascist regime (which endured in Portugal from 1926 until 1974) which the words «soviet realism» or «socialist realism» would inevitably provoke.

In 1946, one of the figures of the neo-realist anti-regime cultural context, Ernesto de Sousa, organized an exhibition to compare african art with modern art, the *Black Art Week* in Escola Superior Colonial, with the aid of the then director of the Contemporary Art National Museum, Diogo de Macedo, and of José de Almada Negreiros, pioneer of portuguese modernism. Much later, in 1984, in an experimental, post-conceptual and post-revolutionary context, the same Ernesto de Sousa showed for the first time the mixed-media experimental work *Almada, nome de Guerra*, which included footage of Almada Negreiros shot in 1969, shortly before his death.

The *Black Art Week* in 1946 was a modest exhibition, but nonetheless important, for it was the first time something of the kind was done in Portugal. It had african sculptures that belonged to the collection of the Geography Society. The sculptures were original from Benim, an african country whose port was controlled by the portuguese until 1892, for purposes of slave trade. It also had painting reproductions

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<sup>1</sup> Joaquim Namorado, «Do neo-realismo. Armando Fontes», *O Diabo*, 31.12.1938.

from Picasso, Matisse and originals by Amadeo Modigliani, by the portuguese painter Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso and a drawing by Almada Negreiros himself<sup>2</sup>.

The mixed-media called *Almada, a War Name*, which Ernesto started in 1969 but only exhibited in 1983/4, showed multiple screenings, one with filmed sequences, and two others with slides, wich featured footage of the 76 year old Almada and footage of women fishsellers, *varinas*, text slides with words written and spoken by Almada Negreiros and also footage of previous works and events by Ernesto de Sousa himself, that is, previous mixed-media<sup>3</sup>. Ernesto de Sousa understood mixed-media as an artistic performance which implied the idea that the distinction between, music, poetry, cinema, painting, etc. did not made sense as a revolutionary kind of art. Also it was something that promoted the experimental linking of different means of expression, not with the intention of illustrating each other but with the intention of activating a new kind of expression which was multiple and complex and which demanded attention but also action and choices from the public. Chance was also something to take into account and embrace in these performances.<sup>4</sup>

Between these two events Ernesto de Sousa went through some changes, which can be understood as a permanent search for an art which could translate a revolutionary need. Although he always harboured an interest in painting, from the outset Ernesto sought new forms of artistic communication with the public, because he foresaw an inadequacy of classical languages for achieving both education and aesthetic and political mobilization, of segments of the population which where illiterate, semiliterate or had few studies. He was interested in cinema and photography (he was an art critic, a movie director, a promotor of film societies, director of a cinema magazine and a photography technical magazine). Also, as much of the neo-realists, he was interested in portuguese folk art. Ernesto's approach to folk art wanted to appropriate its creative, naïve and uncontrolled elements to find an universal language for art. Since the late fifties, Ernesto closely read an author, amongst

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<sup>2</sup> Ernesto de Sousa, «Chegar depois de todos com Almada Negreiros» in *Colóquio: revista de Artes e Letras*, nº 60, Outubro 1970. It was Almada, in fact, who had borrowed the Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso painting.

<sup>3</sup> Namely *Nós Não Estamos Algures*, Clube 1º Acto, Algés, 1969, with posters with phrases by Almada Negreiros (from *A Invenção do Dia Claro*, 1921), music by Jorge Peixinho, poetry readings (of the poets Almada Negreiros, Mário Cesariny, Herberto Helder, Luiza Neto Jorge) and slide projection; and also *Luiz Vaz 73*, 1974, which had slide projections and music by Jorge Peixinho about the epic poem *Os Lusíadas*, by Luiz Vaz de Camões, signaling the date when was Camões read the poem to the king, 400 years before, in 1573.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. «Ernesto de Sousa fala ao *Diário Popular* dos Mixed-Média e do festival de Gand», *Diário Popular*, 6th May 1975, interview in *Revolution my Body*, exhibition catalogue (curated by Maria Helena de Freitas and Miguel Wandschneider), FCG-CAMJAP, 1998).

others, which he found could sustain this point of view. It was Bertolt Brecht. As an important figure of realism who suggested that one should use folk techniques and strategies to provoke the spectator in order to question him directly and to include him in the theatrical performance, Brecht was particularly consonant with Ernesto's own ideas. Ernesto directed two plays in Porto's Experimental Theatre in 1966 particularly influenced by Bertolt Brecht's "distancing effect" or "strangeness effect"<sup>5</sup>. It was then he first met and collaborated with the contemporary portuguese composer Jorge Peixinho, who had studied in Italy with Luigi Nono and later with Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen or Koenig.

In the sixties, Ernesto encounters one particular folk artist in the northern coast of Portugal (Esposende), Franklin Vilas-Boas Neto. Franklin was regarded by his family of artisans as unfit to work as a stonemason because he failed to adapt to the rigid formulae of artisanal production. Franklin's infidelity to the folk canon of representation was manifested in his sculptural production that he made only for pleasure, since he earned a living as a shoemaker. He used to find roots on the beach or dried tree trunks on land and extracted strange beings from them, inspired by their more or less twisted branch forms, whether intact or filled with holes. Wood with a certain rythm was the one in which he found animals or fantastic creatures already embedded within the material, which was chosen in function of the monsters that dwelled therein. Ernesto de Sousa decided to maintain an exclusive agreement with Franklin during virtually a year (1964), paying him a small retainer to produce works exclusively for him. This retainer allowed Franklin to earn a living from his art over this period of time, thus postponing a process of acculturation that Ernesto believed was inevitable and which he suspected would lead Franklin to adapt his work to the expectations of potential buyers. However, Ernesto de Sousa didn't try to maintain Franklin in a state of innocence. Instead, he aimed to find through Franklin a path of creative liberation, a path for art that was truly related to the aesthetic and political goals espoused by him from the outset of his career. He says: «Without any sense of pity we must foresee Folk Art's end: what we should desire is that it persists until it is

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<sup>5</sup> The play *Desperta e Canta* by Clifford Odets (December 1965-February 1966) and *O Gebo e a Sombra* by Raul Brandão, February 1966. Cf. Ernesto de Sousa, *Espólio D6*, Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Caixa 45.

possible to recover it in other cultural terms.»<sup>6</sup> While studying popular art<sup>7</sup>, in 1966 or 1967 Ernesto de Sousa had his first contact with the Fluxus artists such as George Maciunas and George Brecht, or Ben Vautier and Robert Filliou, amongst others, through some mail art. He also saw experimental movies in London in 1968<sup>8</sup>. By then Jorge Peixinho had already presented two happenings in Portugal<sup>9</sup> and Ernesto, as an art teacher since 1967<sup>10</sup>, was himself experimenting events, happenings and experimental filmmaking. He eventually rejected cinema as a revolutionary and meaningful art form, saying, for instance «Cinema makes the spectator a passive one», it does not promote action<sup>11</sup>.

So when he meets again Almada Negreiros, more than twenty years after their first encounter, he had a different way of seeing him. He reread him as someone he could identify with, someone whom, like himself, was a multitasker, not satisfied with just one way of expressing himself. He had been in several different moments a dancer, choreographer, poet, novelist, painter, performer, playwright, actor. Ernesto associated this with his own non-specialist experience and current ideas of art-as-mixed-media, and also with a new concept he borrowed from Italian graphic designer Bruno Munari: «aesthetic operator»<sup>12</sup>. No longer the word «artist» should be used for those who wanted a truly new art for a new society, they should be called «aesthetic operators» so that everything they made, even eating or meeting at a party — brief, life itself — could count as art. «Almada Negreiros was necessary to me»<sup>13</sup>, says Ernesto de Sousa, and also «I couldn't have chosen a random past, I had to choose Almada»: so Ernesto made Almada significant and made himself significant by appropriating Almada Negreiros. Ernesto was quite aware, once again, as he had been with Franklin, that tradition was not something that was just standing there, remaining pure, untouched, but rather something that could be invented — to

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<sup>6</sup> Ernesto de Sousa, «Para uma introdução ao conhecimento da arte popular», *Jornal de Letras e Artes*, 3.06.1964; repeated in «Conhecimento da Arte Moderna e Arte Popular», *Arquitectura*, nº 83, September 1964.

<sup>7</sup> With a Gulbenkian Foundation scholarship between 1966 and 1968.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mariana Pinto dos Santos, *Vanguarda & Outras Loas. Percurso Teórico de Ernesto de Sousa*, Assírio & Alvim, 2007; and *Revolution my Body*, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> In 1965 (Galeria Divulgação, Lisboa) and 1967, Galeria Quadrante, Lisboa (Cf. <http://www.gmcl.pt/jorgepeixinho/chronology.htm>)

<sup>10</sup> In the CFA, Artistic Formation Course, taught in the National Society of Fine Arts, in Lisbon.

<sup>11</sup> «Ernesto de Sousa: a procura inquieta», interview by Artur Fino, in *Litoral*, nº 784, 15th November 1969 (in *Revolution my Body*, op. cit.)

<sup>12</sup> Ernesto attended the Undici Giorni di Arte Colletiva (Eleven Days of Colletive Art) in Pejo, Italy, 1969. Cf. Mariana Pinto dos Santos, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ernesto de Sousa, «Chegar depois de todos com Almada Negreiros» in *Colóquio: revista de Artes e Letras*, nº 60, Outubro 1970.

paraphrase the famous book edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger<sup>14</sup> — recreated, reused. So he chose and created his own tradition. He actually states that «The avant-garde work should manipulate tradition».<sup>15</sup>

One concept that was particularly important for Ernesto that he found in Almada Negreiros was that of «voluntary ingenuity», a deliberate naïve attitude before the world. Ingenuity was for Almada the freedom of embracing the world without prejudices, of imagining and creating without restraints<sup>16</sup>. Ernesto related this with what he had seen in Franklin (in whom he saw an «involuntary ingenuity») but also with the experimental art forms he was engaged to and their commitment in the intertwining of life and art. «Voluntary ingenuity» helped to create a theoretical framing for appropriating, recycling, recreating and presenting his own artistic intervention with whatever he could absorb from the world, using it with voluntary naïveté, as if it was raw new material.

But how had the «voluntary ingenuity» of Almada Negreiros been forged? Almada lived all through the Portuguese XXth century and had a major artistic intervention in its first decades. He created Portuguese futurism and promoted it through performance and persuasive manifestos, preserving on later works that performative oral character that was also present in international Dada and Futurism and would later be recovered by the international neo-avantgarde for its own use. In 1917 he made the Futurist Conference reading his *Futurist Ultimatum* in a clownish worker's suit (Ernesto could have said that it was the costume of an aesthetic operator from the beginning of the century), The *Ultimatum* was inspired by Marinetti's manifesto, defending war as maximum hygiene, proposing the destruction of the past, of the museums, etc. Later he told a mystified story about how he and his futurist friends shaved every hair on their bodies in front of the primitive Portuguese painting *Ecce Homo* in the National Art Museum<sup>17</sup>. All are clear symptoms of the zero degree sought by futurism in the early XXth century in order to operate a rebirth in art consonant with modern technology and velocity. But futurism in Almada Negreiros was from the very beginning pretty much related with playfulness and youthful joy, rather than

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<sup>14</sup> *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

<sup>15</sup> Ernesto de Sousa, «Passado e Passadismo», *Vida Mundial*, nº 1850, 27th February 1975

<sup>16</sup> José de Almada Negreiros, "Ingenuidade Voluntária ou as Desventuras da Esperteza Saloia" (1937) in *Manifestos e Conferências* (ed. Fernando Cabral Martins, Luis Manuel Gaspar, Mariana Pinto dos Santos, Sara Afonso Ferreira), Assírio & Alvim, Lisboa, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> The friends were Amadeo de Souza Cardoso and Guilherme de Santa-Rita, both killed in 1918 by the pandemic flu, known as «Spanish flu». Cf. Almada Negreiros, *Orpheu 1915-1965*, Ática, 1965.

technology. He did not produce hardly any painting in these first years (but he did produce some of the most powerful manifestos, poems and short stories ever seen, which are themselves very pictorial in their writing). What he did do was in a private realm in which he worked with word and image, entertaining a few girls from aristocracy for whom he wrote ballet pieces, choreographing, dancing and designing costumes (struck as he was by the myth of the Ballets Russes, which performed Lisbon in 1917).

One example are these little cardboards from 1918, N.C. 5, the initials for «Our Club 5» — five being the number of members, four girls plus Almada, each given one colour and one nickname (Zu was Almada, with the colour green) with which he made several imaginative colour combinations by breaking the syllables and recombining them. This was in fact a very personal and intuitive and, above all, free interpretation of the simultaneous colour contrasts of his friends Robert and Sonia Delaunay, who had stayed in Portugal in 1915 and 1916 and with whom he corresponded and planned international exhibitions (with Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso), which never happened. His idea of futurism combined both the ideas of international futurism and this particular and circumscribed interpretation of the Delaunay's orphism which was both and indistinctly written and plastic, and also visually and bodily performative, through dance and costume designing (he writes to Sonia Delaunay about producing with her «ballets simultanéistes»<sup>18</sup>). He also focuses on his own eyes in his narratives and selfportraits, which were in fact abnormally big, calling them «lighthouses» to embrace the world, or saying they were giant eyes in a small boy<sup>19</sup>, referring to his own vision as an interface to devour the whole world. From the forties on, he started a pursuit of an essential language in painting, searching for an ancient geometrical language through which he sought to obtain the initial, primitive and, in his understanding, universal art form. That is why his last work was named *Começar, Starting*: because for him all art merged from that geometrical universal language.

Ernesto's search for new languages for art in folk culture, experimental art and in Almada Negreiros also has affinities with the modern quest for the myth of returning to origin that shaped, albeit in different ways, various practices and theories in XXth

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Paulo Ferreira, *Correspondance de Quatre Artistes Portugais avec Sonia et Robert Delaunay*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1972. Cf. also Mariana Pinto dos Santos, «“Já sou o galope”: cor, palavra, imaginação, espectáculo» in *almada nada — manual de leitura*, Teatro Nacional de S. João, Porto, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> *K4 O Quadrado Azul*, 1918; *O Menino de Olhos de Gigante*, 1921, etc.

century art. Something Hal Foster has diagnosed as the XXth century *primitivist fantasy and realist assumption*<sup>20</sup>.

Patricia Leighton and Mark Antliff have made an important analysis of the concept of primitive, relating it with conceptions of time/space, gender issues, race issues and class issues, emphasizing its political character, either when used admiringly or pejoratively. The roots of both positive and negative understanding of the primitive have a common ground that prevails throughout XXth century art, and it is that ground that makes artists try to search, for instance (to exemplify with the first opposition made) the time and space conceptions that allows them to evade «civilization».<sup>21</sup>

T.J. Clark writes in his most recent book that retrogression is the most persistent note in the XXth century (he specifies between 1905 and 1956). He also calls it «primitivism, nostalgia, regressiveness, cult of purity, creation of private worlds» — he asks: «What is modern art but a long refusal, a long avoidance of catastrophe, a set of spells against an intolerable present?»<sup>22</sup> Summing up, he writes that retrogression was an understandable reaction to the horrors of XXth century, and it was a way, indeed, of disbelief and rejection of the idea of modern progress, seen in its most dark consequences. Actually both Almada and Ernesto could be seen confirming this view: they both lived in a dictatorship, Almada witnessed the consequences of two world wars (although he defended the first one as an aesthetic experience), and was devastated by the Spanish Civil War (he had lived in Madrid just before the war started) and was rather isolated as an artist after 1935. Ernesto lived the Second World War as a young adult, and also the colonial war; he was arrested and tortured by the political police more than once. He compares the concept of «aesthetic operator» with the way ancient cathedrals were built, anonymously and collectively, and he says, in a 1972 interview, justifying his options for using antiart to achieve revolution: «people with almost no money struggle to survive; people with

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Hal Foster, «The Artist as Ethnographer?», *The Return of the Real*, MIT Press, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Patricia Leighton and Mark Antliff, «Primitivism» in *Critical Terms for Art History*, The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

<sup>22</sup> T.J. Clark, «Introduction», *Picasso and Truth. From Cubism to Guernica*, Princeton University Press, 2013.

some money want to buy refrigerators; people with a lot of money want to buy works of art. It's a suffocating panorama». <sup>23</sup>

Although we can relate the Ernesto de Sousa case and the Almada Negreiros case and the way they intersect by a deliberate appropriation of the later by the former, to the more general views on modernity, avant-garde and primitivism, one can also see that the way the information is received and absorbed and reinvented in these two examples — a process which no doubt has an *anthropophagic* resonance — produces singular artistic experiences and creations. This singularity resists to being part of a larger paradigm. It does not eliminate the paradigm, but rather exists in a dialectical tension with it, showing that paradigms are always discursive constructions, which are useful thinking tools, but that they nonetheless tend to eliminate nuances and flatten regional differences. A closer look to practices in their contexts threatens to shatter the idea of an uniform paradigm. And it is in the tension between singularity and plurality that lies art history's writing practice about modernisms.

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<sup>23</sup> «Três anos à espera de Almada: Ernesto de Sousa no banco dos réus» (interview by Lourdes Féria), *R&T*, n° 880, 20th May 1972



## HOUSE AS IDEOLOGY IN THE AFFORDABLE HOUSES PROGRAMME OF THE ESTADO NOVO [1]

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### Abstract

*In April 1933 a new constitution was adopted in Portugal, establishing the Estado Novo (New State) regime, following the military dictatorship imposed in 1926. In September of the same year, a set of decrees was published, setting the foundations of the corporative state. One of those decrees determined the criteria to be adopted in the construction of Affordable Houses by the central government or with its support. That was the start of a housing programme that lasted until the end of the regime in 1974 and that was based on the single-family house.*

*Although it was in tune with similar laws from the Primeira República (First Republic, established in 1910), the choice for the single-family house reveals a conscious choice and an ideological statement by the regime. Several representatives were sent throughout Europe, even to "communist Russia", to study housing programmes, and the small house was selected as a symbol of a Portuguese way of life, inspired in a mythical rural setting and in an obsession with a past that never existed outside of the nationalist imaginary.*

*The house represented in that Programme an ideal family and an ideal individual; it represented, in fact, the ultimate goal of the regime: setting an apolitical community, without further aspirations and comfortable with its place in society. In the first years of the Estado Novo, the architectural design of the affordable house is charged with the ideology of the state. This paper will focus on an analysis of the first years of the Affordable Houses Programme, revealing how the House and housing design were key factors in the creation of a state image, in a State that wished to be simultaneously New and conservative.*

**Keywords:** Housing Programmes, Single-Family House, Nationalism, Estado Novo

In 1933 the dictatorial regime imposed in Portugal after the coup of May 1926 [2] lost its military status. The government, since 1932 headed by Oliveira Salazar [3], wrote the new constitution, which was published in April 1933, and in the following months prepared a set of legislative orders that became the fundamental decrees of the new corporative state, the Estado Novo (New State). The drafts of those decrees were published in the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, to allow for the several social forces to react and propose changes to the legislation before it became official [4]. One of those decrees established the principles of the construction of affordable houses by corporative or public institutions, with the support of the State. The Affordable Houses Programme was, from the start of the Estado Novo

(New State), seen by the government as a central initiative in the framing of a new social order. Salazar himself had highlighted the main purposes of the Programme in March 1933, in a speech about the economical principles of the new constitution, placing family and private property in the centre of a new social order. For Salazar, the individual house, the family's own house, was the only solution for "life's intimacy" [5]. Even before the decrees were finalised, a speech by the newly vested Undersecretary for Corporations and Social Welfare, Pedro Teotónio Pereira [6], listed the housing issue as one of the priorities of the government: "as much as possibilities allow it, it will be sought to fill with sun, air and light the home of those who work" [7]. Housing had already been a concern for the previous regime, which had launched a similar programme in 1918, and the Estado Novo used that legislation as reference for the development of its own housing programme. For the Estado Novo there was, however, a need to make its power be noticeable in the new communities to be created.

The set of decrees that became official in September 23 1933 is no coincidence, as they all relate to the organization of work forces within the new corporative logic [8]. The Affordable Houses decree established a complex bureaucratic network of institutions that would be responsible for the programme. The promoter would be the government itself, with the support of or supporting initiatives by city councils or corporative institutions (such as the Guilds or Unions), and for each group of houses the cost was to be divided in half by the government and the respective institution. The projects were designed by a section (SCE [9]) - of the national entity in charge of public buildings and monuments, DGEMN [10]; the financial management was centred in a fund (FCE [11]) created at and managed by the public bank; and the houses were distributed by a section (RCE [12]) of the institute created also in 1933 to regulate work relations (INTP [13]). The SCE reported to the Ministry of Public Works and Communications, which had to approve every project, and the FCE and RCE reported to the Undersecretary for Corporations and Welfare. It is interesting that, through this organization, several national powers – the administrative, the economical and the *de facto* legislative power, the

cabinet of Salazar – influenced the development of the Affordable Houses Programme. What could be seen as an overlapping set of responsibilities was, in fact, a steep bureaucratic pyramid that was headed by Oliveira Salazar, who had a say in almost every aspect of the programme's organisation.

The decree created two types of houses, A and B, to be distributed according to the income of each family, and each type had three versions, with varying sizes according to the number of children in each household. Although the decree established a minimum number of 25 houses and a maximum of 100 per neighbourhood, those limits were never taken into account in the development of the programme. The Affordable Houses decree is, as many laws created by the Estado Novo, as important for what is said as for what is implied.

### **Ownership and Behaviour**

By focusing the Affordable Houses programme on a principle of resolvable property, in which a monthly rent included the payment of the house instalments and life and fire insurance, the regime was placing in writing some of its fundamental principles. The term "resolvable" is self-explanatory: the property is permitted by the state under some conditions that, if not strictly followed, could imply the loss of that property, and in several cases it did. This notion of pending threat was an instrument to which the Portuguese regime resorted not only on the Affordable Houses programme, and can be seen as an example of the management of "preventive violence" [14].

Simultaneously, the decree required the institution of a "homestead" principle ("casal de família"), using a law from 1920 [15] aimed mainly at protecting farmers' properties. This law determined that the family house could not be used as pawn to pay eventual debts, and suggested a concern for the stability of the family, seen by the regime as the basis of society. When the Affordable Houses decree's draft was published in *Diário de*

*Notícias*, a priority was readily announced: “the first experience to be carried out under this decree intends mostly, as it would be logical to suppose, to favour the working class, not just devoid of comfort, but of normal living conditions” [16]. However, the decree does not mention this goal and when the selection criteria are listed, the salary comes in 5<sup>th</sup> place. The priorities are the stability of the applicants’ jobs and their moral and professional behaviour and the monthly rents established were too high for most of the working class. The target seems to be an educated middle class, of higher income, that the regime had to keep satisfied.

When the bureaucratic network that was to be responsible for the Affordable Houses Programme was set, it was time to create the house that fitted the programme and the beliefs of the regime. This implied the selection of an image for the programme, which had to be a reflection of how the regime saw itself.

### **Study Missions and National Solution**

From very early on the dictatorial regime developed a practice of sending emissaries, - mainly architects and engineers - to different parts of Europe in missions to study the different solutions used in the design of public buildings. It is curious that the selection of the destinations was not, in most cases, related neither to the proximity between political regimes nor to similar conditions in which the buildings were created. It is, instead, a very wide selection of locations. For example, Porfirio Pardal Monteiro (1897-1957) visited Spain, France, Belgium, Holland and Italy to study current developments in maritime station design, as he was developing the projects for the stations of Alcântara and Conde d’Óbidos in Lisbon, and Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade (1891-1969) visited Spain, France, Belgium and Holland to study the design of theatres and museums. It must be stressed that Pardal Monteiro, a key figure in the construction of a state image in the Estado Novo, had visited Russia in 1932 as the Portuguese correspondent of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* and would visit Italy in 1937, with Duarte Pacheco [17], to see the new university buildings in Rome [18].

In August 1934, José Araújo Correia, administrator of the public bank, CGDP, was commissioned to visit Germany, Austria and Hungary, to study methods currently in use in affordable housing. Although at the time those countries were under authoritarian rule, both Germany and Austria had until very recently socialist regimes, and in both cases housing had been a subject of large investments. Arriving only close to one year after those regimes had been deposed, Araújo Correia had nothing to see but the results of socialist housing policies. In December of that same year, the assistant director of the SCE, Francisco Almeida Garrett, was in Italy for nearly a month to visit affordable housing examples – in this case, the products of a stabilized authoritarian regime with close proximities to the Estado Novo.

The fact that Araújo Correia was selected as a representative of the regime for the subject of affordable housing must be highlighted, even if the reasons for that selection are not clear. He had been a Minister for Commerce and Communications in the military dictatorship's cabinet of Vicente de Freitas in 1928, the first to include Salazar as Minister for Finances and Duarte Pacheco as Minister for National Instruction, and from 1929 to 1964 he was an administrator of CGDP, in charge of the analysis of the state's yearly finances for more than two decades. He is considered one of the pioneers of industrialist beliefs within the regime [19] and proposed in 1935 a law to improve the education of rural populations. That proposal, in which Daniel Melo has noted the confusion between "popular culture", the expression that titled it, and "rural culture" [20], and his role in the first steps of the Affordable Houses Programme, are symbols of the contradictory views inside the regime that, as we will see, will eventually force a transformation within the state that will be reflected in the Programme.

The timid initiatives of the industrialist faction of the regime were not able to unsettle the strength of a traditionalist belief in a rural mythology as the basis of society. This belief took over most of the regime's propaganda in the thirties and was a central factor in the delays that kept the Portuguese society, and particularly its industrial sector, mostly stagnant during that decade.

What must be stressed is that, when preparing and developing the Affordable Houses programme, the Portuguese regime had knowledge of the latest developments in housing and was certainly aware of the debates it had stirred across Europe in the previous decade. The choice for the single-family house was informed and a reflection of the regime's core beliefs; Jacome de Castro [21], head of the SCE, said it best in a 1935 lecture, stating that it seemed "complicated, that a machine, as some want it so strongly to be, could satisfy such demands" [22] as those of an Affordable House.



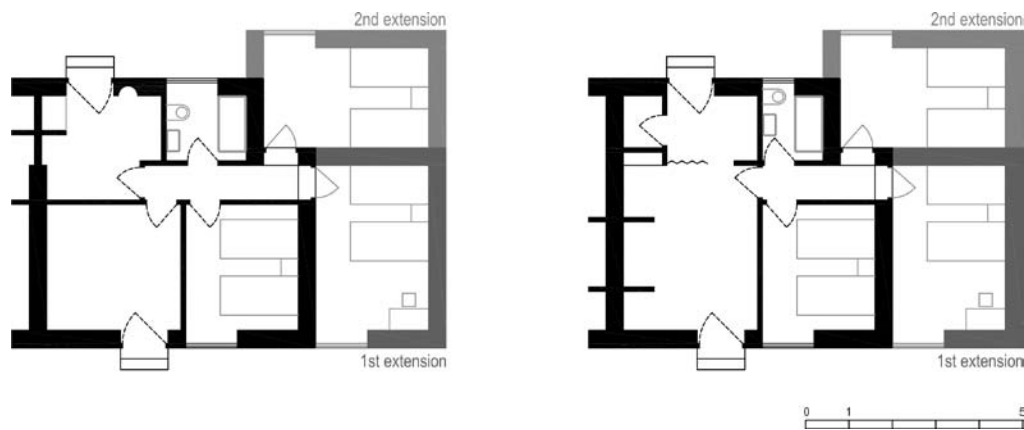
**Figure 1.** Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Condominhas, Porto, by Raul Lino and Joaquim Madureira, 1934-36. The archetypes of the small Portuguese house and of the rural village are the basis to the neighbourhood design. (source: Sistema de Informação do Património Arquitectónico)

That rural mythology is reflected in the choice for the independent house with a kitchen garden that was the core of the Affordable Houses Programme. The most conservative wing of the regime's nationalism resorted to the model of the rural village, the small house and the small yard where the family could grow its own food. The independent house, or at least the semi-detached house, was a metaphor for the priority of family

over community and of private over public. The House had to be inevitably Portuguese, even if there was not a consensus on what that meant.

### **The First Affordable Houses**

In 1934 Jácome de Castro proposed to Duarte Pacheco, Minister for Public Works and Communications since 1932, the name of Raul Lino [23], stating specifically that Lino was considered an expert in the subject of the Portuguese House. This was, naturally, not a casual choice. Lino was seen as an intellectual, educated abroad in romantic Germany, and his commissions by the state at the time included the refurbishment of national palaces, one of the first investments of the Portuguese dictatorship in the forging of a nationalist “self-respect”. Before, in 1932, Duarte Pacheco had asked Porfírio Pardal Monteiro to develop a type of House to serve as model for the government’s initiative. A letter from Pardal Monteiro to Duarte Pacheco reveals that study’s goal, proving the principles of the programme were established long before the decree was published: “a kind of cheap dwelling, independent home, susceptible even of, through conditions to be established, become the tenant’s own property” [24]. Pardal Monteiro had been the regime’s choice to establish an official image of the State, and by 1934 he had already completed the designs for the Instituto Nacional de Estatística (National Institute for Statistics) and the Instituto Superior Técnico (National Technical Institute, a public college mainly focused on engineering). When it was time to create an image for the Affordable Houses programme, the modernist practice of Pardal Monteiro was perhaps not what the regime was hoping for, and it was Lino’s work, or at least a superficial reading of it, that matched the regime’s vision.



**Figure 2.** Affordable Houses “City Type” and “Rural Type” developed by Raul Lino in 1934.

Lino developed an expandable house, able to be enlarged if the family needs demanded so. The basic model included one large family room, a small area for preparing meals, one room and a full bathroom. This model was repeated in the first neighbourhoods through all the continental territory, either in Vila Viçosa or Bragança; it had, however, small variations according to its location. Lino developed a “city type” and a “rural type”, and the difference was in the size of the family room, which in the rural type was slightly bigger and had a large fireplace. Following a similar logic, the neighbourhood of Olhão was the only one where there was not a pitched roof but a terrace, not only mimicking the traditional building techniques of the Portuguese South but also adapting to a mass construction plan a pragmatic use of the only way the locals knew how to build.

When presenting the Affordable Houses Programme in lectures across Brazil, Lino quoted Salazar and his speech of 1933 that we’ve mentioned before. The “individualist character” of the Portuguese people was, to Lino as to the regime, enough to decline collective housing.

When Lino describes the process of designing the Affordable House, he notes the steps taken to allow, as much as possible, for the standardization of construction elements in order to reduce construction costs. Simultaneously, he notes the studies developed to reduce the areas to a comfortable minimum. These studies are perfectly in line with the



development of modern housing in the previous decade, even if Lino himself would not acknowledge it. When describing the exterior – where the probable work of Lino is more noticeable – he states that “everything possible was done to deceive from the indispensable standardization”, as the worker arriving home “should certainly cherish not seeing around him industrial aspects that remind him of the mechanical processes and taylorism he must be sick of” [25]. So, the Affordable House resorts to the archetypes – the pitched roof, the little porch and the small window.



**Figure 3.** Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Braga, Joaquim Madureira, 1935-39. The model developed by Raul Lino was repeated in neighbourhoods across the country until the end of 1930s. (source: Sistema de Informação do Património Arquitectónico)

Even with those archetypes, the Affordable House design has certainly more elements of modernity in it than the programme’s developers would be able to publicize. It isn’t clear if the plan is the result of Raul Lino’s work or the product the first study by Pardal Monteiro. The latter is apparently more likely, but nonetheless this it is a design that works around an ideology to create a balanced plan, and the study of minimum spaces and the planning of future expansions are inevitably paralleled to debate on

*Existenzminimum* [26]. This constant contradiction is perhaps more noticeable in the Affordable Houses Programme than in much of the architecture sponsored by the state.

### **Stagnation and Sufferance**

As we've seen, if the first intention of the programme was to build houses for those who couldn't afford one, that intention was swiftly bended as the Affordable Houses decree itself prioritised job stability and moral behaviour.

In 1934, when the programme was barely starting, an architectural competition was prepared, but not launched, to create a large neighbourhood of 1050 houses in a part of Lisbon that corresponds roughly to the area that was, more than a decade later, subject to Faria da Costa's plan of Alvalade. The competition brief [27] is a statement on the regime's view of the Affordable House as an instrument, and particularly of the reflection of ideology in architectural practice.

The brief states the importance of the backyard as a kitchen garden to "stop the waste of free time from work in places of pernicious activities for intellectual life"; not that intellect was something to be developed, as the "new inhabitant [would] be saved from the effort of thinking where the domestic activities will take place". The way of life would be imposed to the inhabitant, stressing the educational role of the house. That educational role had, inevitably, a social charge. We've stated that the difference between the rural type and the urban type was related to the way to use the main room, that is, the way the family lives. This implied clearly a stagnation of a way of life: to each its place in society, and each should accept the sufferance his or hers place in society demanded.

There is a constant contradiction in the development of the Programme that is no stranger to the contradiction in the distribution of the houses; one must wonder if the full bathroom and the large family room implied, as advertised, the educational role of the house for the less educated classes - supposedly the target of the programme - or if they existed, instead,

because the growing middle class would not accept less than those “luxuries”, as those who criticised the programme called them.

It is clear, however, that for at least a sector of the state responsible for the Programme’s development, the educational and moral factors were fundamental elements of the design of the Affordable Houses. The regime feels the need to create the post of Neighbourhood Controller (“Fiscal”), to serve as a representative of the regime inside the community to control the behaviour of the other inhabitants. The Affordable Houses neighbourhoods would be simultaneously apolitical, as discussing politics was forbidden, and symbols of the regime and of the regime’s beliefs. The social role of the Programme was developed and clearly advertised.

### **Commemoration and Transformation**

One of the links between the Affordable Houses programme and the regime’s view of it as an ideological instrument and propaganda feature is its presence in moments of commemoration. The inaugurations of newly built neighbourhoods were used as celebrations of the regime’s work and, particularly in the first decade, presented stages in which prominent figures of the regime could expose their beliefs in speeches to be featured in official publications and in major newspapers.



**Figure 4.** The Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Belém behind the Monastery of Jeronimos, Lisbon, in 1938-39. Construction works for the Portuguese World Exhibition of 1940 are visible on the bottom right (source: Biblioteca de Arte, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian).

Also interesting is the effort made to conclude neighbourhoods in time to stage those inaugurations in celebratory dates. The 1934 Lisbon competition brief stated that the large neighbourhood was to be inaugurated on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 1936, the tenth anniversary of the “national revolution”; and, in 1938, a large plan was launched by the government to prepare the celebrations of the regime’s mythical year, 1940 [28], and again the importance of the Affordable Houses Programme is noted. In the same year of 1938 a decree by Duarte Pacheco forbade the construction of single-floor houses, basically eliminating the model developed by Raul Lino. That model represented poverty, it was now believed, and the Affordable Houses Programme had to stand for dignity and quality of life. Again, it is unclear if this was meant as a moral factor or as a way to make the programme more attractive for families of higher income. What is clear is

that in the end of the thirties a second stage of the Programme is launched which announced a transformation, as neighbourhoods were expanded with two-floor houses (the B type house had practically not been used until then), new neighbourhoods were planned, and new types of Affordable Houses were designed.

When the Programme entered its second decade, the world was different, and the regime was forced to adapt. The allies' victory in the Second World War was likely, and as the Portuguese government realised its inevitability the Affordable Houses Programme itself was transformed. In 1943 the decree 33.278 [29] ordered the construction of 4000 new Affordable Houses and established two new types of houses, C and D, of larger areas and for families with bigger income. It could not be a coincidence that this decree is published at the height of the difficulties caused by the rationing brought by the "economy of war".

The investment in Affordable Houses in that moment and the transformations in the Programme proved simultaneously that not only it was distancing itself more and more from the small salaries of the working class, but also that the new middle class was going to be a harder class to tame than was initially supposed. The modernising forces within the regime – which had representatives, as we've seen, with connections to the development of the Affordable Houses Programme – took control of the economical options of the regime and moved it towards a long due industrialization. The world was different, the society's demands were different and, by 1943, Nationalism was no longer enough.

[1] This paper is based in a PhD Thesis under development on the Affordable Houses Programme of the Estado Novo. In this text we will not consider the neighbourhoods that were started by the First Republic and inaugurated by the Estado Novo under that Programme. For more information on those neighbourhoods and their appropriation for propaganda purposes, see FERREIRA, Maria Júlia (1994), "O Bairro Social do Arco do Cego: uma aldeia dentro da cidade de Lisboa", in *Análise Social*,

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[2] See MATTOSO, José (1994), *História de Portugal – Vol. VII – O Estado Novo (1926-1974)*.

[3] António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) was Minister for Finances (1926, 1928-40) and President of the Ministers' Council from 1932 to 1968.

[4] *Diário de Notícias*, no. 24.249-24.254, August 5-10 1933.

[5] SALAZAR, António de Oliveira (1961), "Conceitos Económicos da Nova Constituição", in *Discursos*, Vol. I.

[6] Pedro Teotónio Pereira (1902-1972) was Undersecretary for Corporations and Social Welfare (1933-36), Minister for Commerce and Industry (1936-37) and Minister for the Presidency (1958-61), and was the Portuguese Ambassador in Madrid, London and Washington. He is considered one of the main developers of the corporative organization of the Estado Novo.

[7] PEREIRA, Pedro Teotónio (1937), "Corporações e Previdência Social: Primeiros Aspectos", in *A Batalha do Futuro: Organização Corporativa*, Lisboa: Livraria Clássica Editora, p. 62.

[8] Decrees 23.048, 23.049, 23.050, 23.051 and 23.052, *Diário do Governo*, Série I, no. 217/33. The decrees 23.048 to 23.052 establish, respectively, the general laws of work –*Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional* -, the guilds of employers – *Grémios* -, the Unions of Workers – *Sindicatos Nacionais* -, the organization of rural and agricultural workers – *Casas do Povo* – and a programme to build houses for public employees or unionised workers – *Casas Económicas*, or as we will call them, Affordable Houses.

[9] Secção das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Section).

[10] Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais (General Directorate for National Buildings and Monuments).

[11] Fundo das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Fund).

[12] Repartição das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Department).

[13] Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e da Previdência (National Institute for Work and Welfare).

[14] On the notion of preventive violence, and also on corporatism as an instrument of social control, see ROSAS, Fernando (2012), *Salazar e o Poder: A Arte de Saber Durar*, Lisboa: Tinta da China.

[15] Decree 7.033, in *Diário do Governo*, I Série, no. 298, October 16 1920, pp. 1356-1358.

[16] *Diário de Notícias*, no. 24.248, August 5 1933, p.6.

[17] Duarte Pacheco (1900-1943) was Minister for National Instruction (1928) and Minister for Public Works and Communications (1928-36 and 1938-43) and Mayor of Lisbon (1938-43).

[18] See MONTEIRO, João Pardal (2012), *Para o Projecto Global - Nove Décadas de Obra: Arte, Design e Técnica na Arquitectura do atelier Pardal Monteiro*, PhD Dissertation on Design, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade Técnica de Lisboa.

[19] MATTOSO, José, op. cit., p.265-266.

[20] MELO, Daniel (2001), *Salazarismo e Cultura Popular (1933-1958)*, Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais.

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[28] 1940 marked the anniversary of the crowing of the first King of Portugal, Afonso Henriques (1140) and of the independence from Spanish rule (1640).

[29] Decree 33.278, in *Diário do Govêrno*, Série I, no. 256, November 24 1943, pp. 823-827.

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## **VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN CRETE:**

### **Continuities in Concrete**

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### **Abstract**

*On 1 March 1900, the English archaeologist Arthur Evans began digging at Knossos. A few years later he introduced the use of reinforced concrete in the restoration of the Minoan ruins. The new material was increasingly introduced, not only in city construction but even in rural settlements, as the only material capable of replacing the traditional terraces of rammed earth. Nowadays, the new material has found a more or less correct usage in the restoration or extension of rural buildings under personal programs (pensée sauvage), which usually succeed in giving a kind of continuity to vernacular landscapes.*

*Between 1899 - 1912, Crete gained semi-autonomy before being incorporated in the modern Greek state. The new member needed to demonstrate its different culture, between its Minoan prehistory and its Venetian inheritance. At the same time, in popular music, arts and crafts, local expression assumed a definitive form according to the principles and productive methods of Modernism.*

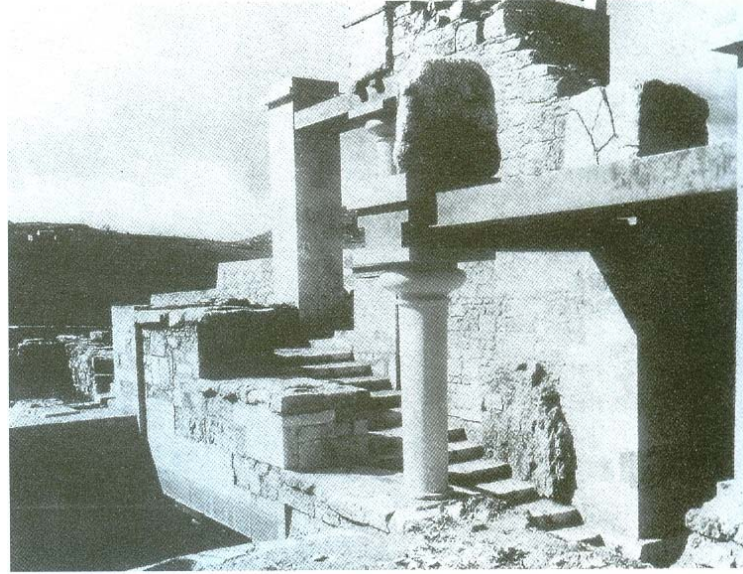
*The prehistoric past came to light at the same time as Modernist interventions, which provided its inner support. The combination of past and future created new expressions of local culture, as a natural phenomenon. Modernism demonstrated the capacity to join into a coherent system all the local languages, expressive of Renaissance, Baroque, Ottoman and pastoral life.*

**Keywords:** *tradition, modernity, savage mind, syncretism.*

On 1 March 1900, the multi-talented English archaeologist Arthur Evans began digging at Knossos. The fragile, four-thousand-year-old materials needed protection, but more than this, they needed to be interpreted, in order to provide evidence for and recreate the mythical Minoan world. Between 1910 and 1928 the use of reinforced concrete was introduced to the restoration of the Minoan ruins. In just a few years' time, the hill of Knossos had become an inexhaustible source of architectural forms, decorative motifs and colours. Redesigned, depending on the technical idiosyncrasies of the raw materials and the treatment method, these new elements came to stand beside those handed down through Cretan tradition. In Crete, the exploration of that lost mythical age coincides with the creation of modernism through mutual exchanges.

**Syncretism.** Antiquity, or rather prehistory, only began to play an active part as a glossary and an available cultural resource in the past hundred years, when the buried “palaces” of the Minoans and the cities of the Dorians started to come to light; it is worth noting that this coincided with the dawn of the modern era. Apart from the archaeological discoveries, the first 12 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the most fertile period of modern times for Crete, when the imminent union with the Greek state required, as a cultural strategy, the application of a different stamp, one closer to European, modern events. The new contents of this different culture were required to highlight the difference between them and the Neoclassicism of the status quo. Throughout the 12-year period of autonomy and at ever-increasing speed over the subsequent decades until 1940, a peripheral culture, recognisable as authentically Cretan, took permanent shape across the island. This folk culture was required to interweave figures and motifs clearly, into a unified narrative, with the aim of demonstrating an uninterrupted flow and cohesion from prehistory to the present.

The preceding phase, that of the Ottoman occupation, had been a period of fermentation in the arts, where elements of pastoral life, Venetocretan culture in the cities, and the newly introduced Ottoman culture, later combined with purely European stimuli, were blended in an intermixture that forms the basis, the leaven of every physical object or expressive idiom that we now know as “Cretan”. “Cretan” songs and dances can have as many correspondences as we wish to find with similar expressions in antiquity or the Venetian East, but it is demonstrably proven that their greatest development is due not so much to the event of Union with Greece in itself, as to the overall dynamics that arose alongside the spirit of modernism. The differentiation between Crete and the other Greek peripheries was organised and evolved through the dynamics of the modern.



**Figure 1.** View of the third ramp of the "Great Staircase", of Knossos in 1910. Arthur Evans book *The Palace of Minos*, III, Oxford 1928, p.104.

**Horizontalities.** Reinforced concrete is the most reliable harbinger of the modernist spirit in Greece, the one that comes, directly and easily, to solve chronic problems, capable of assuming any form, using stable and readily available raw materials from the mineral-rich geological substructure of the Mediterranean. It was first used in the Knossos restorations, but large-scale application to city buildings followed, specially for internal slabs laid on masonry. After the 1950s, the decade of postwar reconstruction, reinforced concrete had become the only conceivable construction method. Greek cities grew along the model of small housing blocks, with long narrow balconies for each flat. The urban landscape, made up of individual houses in the Neoclassical inspiration, local simplicity and independent parallelepipeds, gradually became a continuum of cement slabs.

In rural settlements, the new material was increasingly introduced as the only solution capable of replacing the traditional terraces of rammed earth. In order to prevent water entering the old masonry, the slabs protrude from the main volume, introducing even in the countryside that horizontality which prevails in front of the small cubic units of the local rural tradition. Cement applications are also used to add annexes to small, one- or two-room houses. A small bathroom, a short staircase, at least a new room on top of the new slab, comes to complete the traditional structures.

New provincial roads were built during the first twelve years of the century, during the period of autonomy (1900-1912), and this road-building increased again in the 1950s, separating the old settlements from possible new developments. Each settlement had kept its historical core, usually abandoned, as the size of the properties and the traditional building materials and techniques did not permit modernization. The new roads, the new materials, the use of vehicles in rural activities, all needed a larger space. The new image of the villages developed as a sequence of single room stores and café, with secondary structures of dispute technical resolutions and imaginative use of extremely simple ironwork.



**Figure 2.** Typical buildings on the main streets of the villages of Aghios Georgios (Lassithi Prefecture) and Mourtzaná (Rethymno Prefecture) in Crete. Photographs by the author.

No urban projects were undertaken in the small centers until the 1960s. For Crete, a first approach was studied by the American studio Basil, regarding the territorial organization of tourism. That was to become the basis for future planning both in cities and in rural settlements. Between 1964 and 1967, the architect Takis Zenetos worked on the transformation of the villages of Plakiás and Aghia Galini into tourist destinations. In his technical reports on these two projects, Zenetos repeatedly refers to the necessity of preserving the existing local character, at a time when the negative examples of Italy and Spain were already appearing. "*Due to the singular beauty of its coasts... and the special character of the wild and untouched landscape, which is becoming an ever-rarer element*", (Zenetos, 1967) he attempts, through his architectural proposal, to capture the existing image and project it into the future. It was on this theoretical foundation that Takis Zenetos stood when, working on the evolution of Aghia Galini from a fishing village into a

settlement of 6,000 inhabitants, he attempted to discover "a structural system of building, which is responsive to the natural environment and the topography of the area" (Zenetos, 1967) This phrase expresses a powerful morphological programme and carrier of functional unities.

Emulating nature as a fixed background and history as a place to extract crumbs of ideas and forms which he then develops, Zenetos follows to the letter the teachings of Pikionis, whereby "...the forms - in contrast or in similarity to the shapes of the landscape - the synthesis of stability and mobility appropriate to a work of architecture should harmonise with the construction of the landscape" (Pikionis, 1985). The morphology of the spaces in rural settlements is here translated into an economy of nature, while for the larger configurations, the cities, technological culture leads to similar forms, creating a bidirectional landscape. The limestone slabs of the Cretan land fulfil their role not just as a building material but also as morphology, and are understood as a simulation of the land, another land, utopian due to the impossibility of reshaping the properties, actual as regards siting and construction method.



**Figure 3.** View of Takis Zenetos' projected extension of the Aghia Galini settlement. Library of the Technical Chamber of Greece / Department of Western Crete - Chaniá.

In all these applications to modern structures, works was undertaken without any project planning or the intervention of the specialist, engineer or architect. Personal projects guided by the spirit of *pensée sauvage* usually

succeeded in giving a kind of continuity to vernacular landscapes, because they corresponded to real needs, as is always the case in spontaneous expressions, resulting in small-scale interventions. Later, in the Sixties, the new material would find a more or less correct use in the restoration or extension of rural buildings, but the scale would be totally different.

For other reasons, in Zenetos, horizontality has been the method used to make landscape collaborate with the human installation. However, there has never again been such a free recomposition of the givens of local tradition and landscape after Zenetos. The role of the horizontal stone slab in Greek architectural mores remained a tool in the hands of contractors and mediocrities. We can conclude that the horizontal slab, small or large, whether as the solution to the users' immediate needs or as a planned proposal, is probably the Greek unique feature par excellence, as a contribution to the construction of our modern built landscape.

**Inspiration.** Though dissimilar, the derivations of the familiar shapes, colours and combinations which make up the vocabulary of tradition in the case of Crete are almost always drawn from the vocabulary of a comprehensive and scholarly artistic expression. This was the case during the Venetian period, at the dawn of the modern era and again in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the world of the folk artisan, these elements are easily reduced to the level of popular expressiveness, are assimilated, become the culture of the many, cut off from their original frame of reference, more digestible and available for multiple uses. In Crete, the prehistoric past came to light at the same time as Modernist interventions, which provided its inner support. The combination of past and future created new expressions of local culture, as a natural phenomenon. Modernism demonstrated the capacity to join into a coherent system all the local techniques and modes of artistic expression, rich in elements of the Italian Renaissance, the Ottoman Baroque and local pastoral life.

Local tradition has always contributed to modern Greek culture, a contemporary culture, on the borderline between the romantic and the rational spirit. Both the theoretical and the constructed work of the two undisputed teachers of architectural culture in Greece, Dimitris Pikionis and

Aris Konstantinides, move the whole of modern expressiveness through the management of tradition as part of the culture of the modern. No other architect can show that skill and freshness in the transformation of those givens and their incorporation into our modern environment. Even Takis Zenetos, the most innovative of the Greek architects in this field, tried to contribute to this debate. He introduces the term *Fantastic Architecture*, the "... *alternative solution of an Architecture, which creates the atmosphere of a renewed environment by classical means*" (Zenetos, 1967).

During the 1950s and 1960s in Greece, signature architectural creation attempts to approach the truths of its traditional counterpart, while innumerable imperfect imitations preserve an adherence to a thematology that proves to be severely limited. This occurs because thought is first given to past times, theoretically innocent and genuine, limiting the action of modern messages. The wide variety of intermediate methods of composition and forms with which the body of tradition is enriched, would only begin to concern Greek architects after the 1990s, when younger generations who had studied in other European countries came to work with the material of their own country. This trend was also assisted by the revision of the unfortunately self-evident, classical morphological themes used by the postmodern interlude of the 1980s.

Spontaneous expression in structures, from the point of view of bioclimate solutions and the forms of the ephemeral that are aesthetically acceptable today, was only highlighted very late. Its first official presentation was at an exhibition at the Byzantine Museum of Athens in 2010, entitled *Archetypes. From Huts and Sheepfolds to Contemporary Art and Architecture*. The curator Giorgos Triantafyllou tried to present an alternative tradition, simultaneously Greek and universal.



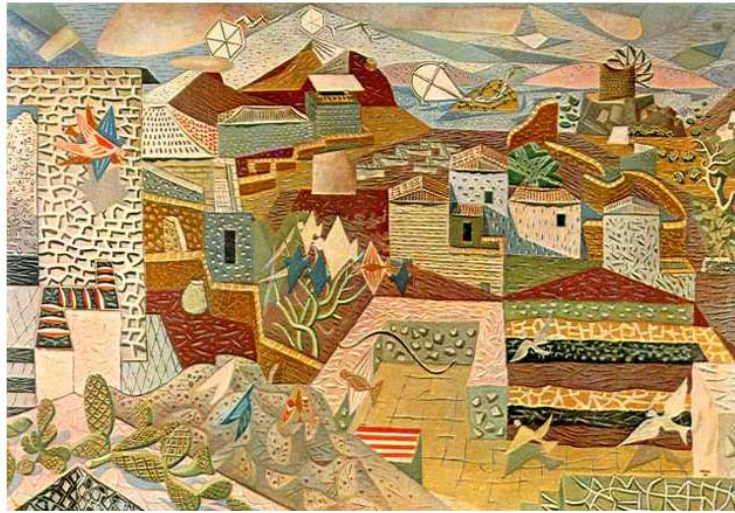
**Figure 4.** Small additions to houses in the villages of Pikris (Rethymnon Prefecture) and Aghios Konstantinos (Lassithi Prefecture). The author's house in Iraklion, addition on top of an older construction (1995-96).

While the other arts also attempt to draw thematics from the local idiom, painting seems to take the lead in Greek artistic creation. What we have seen giving a new direction to the thematics of tradition / modernity over the past twenty years, with the participation of all the messages from the immediate environment of each place, had already been embodied in painting from the 1950s. The most important expressor of a synthetic proposal that could lead to architectural innovation was Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas. His work combines an artistic rendition of open space with an architectural mood. Movements and forms leap out of his paintings. Natural materials are ever present, but in such a way as to emerge through new combinations and uses, impressing the amazed eye. So, unexpectedly, a landscape familiar to the Greek viewer seems to have arisen from dreams or come from the future. Familiar shapes of houses evolve into modern associations with their surroundings, the courtyards, the stone walls, reaching an approach, open to further elaboration, to a residential area following in the footsteps of an urban planning proposal. The artist proposes a restatement of the chaos of accumulated elements that is only dissolved through elaboration and restatement, through a modern prism.

In the case of Greek architects today, this interest in turning the local into the international, the familiar and banal into the new and groundbreaking, in the elaboration of the conditions of this unique land, has been and gone. The danger is due to reduced resistance to the periodic incursions of foreign trends, at first easily digestible to seekers of innovation in Greek architecture. These trends, however, are either applied as they are, without adaptation to local circumstances, or do not come to fruition in this



particular place, in order to become, through restatement, part of the culture of this land. With the new technological methods and means of expression available, the whole of Greek tradition, ancient and modern, scholarly and popular, is capable of transmitting the beat of the times, making the work of architecture ever restless, and therefore groundbreaking.



**Figure 5.** N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas, *Large Landscape on Hydra* (1938), oil on canvas, 114x162, Private Collection, Athens.

When talking about architecture, therefore, we can return to the existence of a realistic field, one of at least experimental implementation of visions, through the representation of the actual and sensible, but mainly through its reformulation, as subjectively ideal. It was this field that Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas conquered, giving us the labyrinthine outlines of his dream-like landscapes on Santorini and Hydra. It was here that Takis Zenetos dared to visualise with freedom, the realisation of a helical development for the village of Plakias and the transcription of stone slabs to the hill of Aghia Galini in south Crete, with the residential units set into the mountain. For “freedom” is the possibility for everyone to experience their own constant challenge and be able, through their own reality, to recognise their personal and inner responsibility towards a place.

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## **ANTROPOFAGIA:**

### **A Highly Critical Arrière-Garde Modernism in 1920s Brazil**

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#### **Abstract**

*This paper investigates from an interdisciplinary perspective Antropofagia's entrenchment in autochthonous culture and its comprehension of the ontological dimension of Tupi cannibalism. Tarsila do Amaral and Oswald de Andrade's interaction with Parisian cubists and surrealists is seen as driven by equalising intellectual affinities and a collaborative cosmopolitanism – rather than as motivated by the wish to obliterate perceived hegemonic-subaltern cultural power asymmetries. If their cannibalism-engendered agenda had something to 'devour' it was the local aesthetic-literary establishment and its discourse, based on distinctions between white-Brazilian high culture and native, Afro-Brazilian and mixed-ethnicity popular culture.*

*By juxtaposing Antropofagia to Paul Rincœur's paradox (namely, how to reanimate an ancient civilisation whilst taking part in a universal one), the paper shows that this Brazilian modernist movement mitigated the tension between the universal and the particular through a specific rationale: to adopt the philosophical ethos of local civilisation against the homogenising traits of modernism, and, by doing so, to also reject the Eurocentric approach to the so-called 'primitive'. Equally, the paper proves that certain aspects of Kenneth Frampton's Critical Regionalism are recognisable in the ways in which Antropofagia consciously criticised the western root of dominant Brazilian culture. Here a main difference between Antropofagia and Frampton's category surfaces: whilst Frampton's Arrière-Garde is more preoccupied with cultural colonisation from without, the anthropophagic one focuses on producing hybrid aesthetic-literary forms in order to reconfigure a local cultural field crippled by issues from within, that is, by coloniality.*

**Keywords:** *Antropofagia, Brazilian Modernism, Critical Regionalism, Arrière-garde*

#### **Between the Universal and the Particular**

According to Paul Rincœur, the following paradox must be addressed if a raising nation wishes to undertake modernisation. This nation *'has to root itself in the soil of its past, forge a national spirit and unfurl this spiritual and cultural revendication before the colonialist's personality'* (1955, p. 277). Yet, modern civilisation cannot be joined unless *'the pure and simple abandon of a whole cultural past'* takes place (ibid). Here, the major contradiction such a nation must overcome is *'how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization'* (ibid).

Rincœur's words were reawakened by Kenneth Frampton so to conceptualise *Arrière-Garde* architecture. The latter represented the rebirth, within the arts from the 1950s onwards, of a critical, oppositional and liberative stance, that *'distance[d] itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from a*

reactionary, universalistic impulse to return to the [...] preindustrial past' (Frampton, 1983, p. 20). The Arrière-Garde would thus generate forms of *Critical Regionalism*, that is, it would both produce expressions of resistance that consciously drew on particularisms without succumbing to hegemonic, romanticised and exoticist visions of the so-called 'rudimentary', and partake of the modern project by mediating its impact.

Frampton's categories outline a type of cultural practise that mitigates the polarity present in Rincœur's paradox for being deliberately analytical of, and equidistant from, the global and the local, the past and the present. This paper shows that Frampton's cultural hybridity is recognisable beyond the field of architecture and as early as the 1920s, in *Antropofagia*, a Brazilian aesthetic-literary movement. Analysing *Antropofagia's* engagement with the ontology of a pre-colonial autochthonous group, namely, the *Tupi* cannibals, we shall see the ways in which the movement joined the cultural agenda springing from Paris, and antagonised the status quo of the Brazilian cultural establishment. We maintain that, by means of approaching the cannibal from a non-Eurocentric perspective, *Antropofagia* outlined a formula with which to produce original modernist aesthetic-literary expressions; that (by borrowing Rincœur's words) *Antropofagia* 'unfurled' these expressions before the 'colonialist's personality' enrooted in the socio-cultural structure of Brazil itself.

### **The Cannibal's Alterity**

It is undeniable that *Antropofagia* resulted from the restless stirrings brought about by the young intellectual Brazilian arena that in 1922 organised the São Paulo Modern Art Week. Equally, *Antropofagia* would not have set its path without the years that Tarsila do Amaral and Oswald de Andrade spent living between São Paulo and Paris. Indeed, *Antropofagia* resulted from productive phases defined by migrations from Amaral's *Paulista* studio to her apartment in Place Clichy, and from Paris to Amaral and Andrade's marital property in the rural area of the State of São Paulo. *Antropofagia* was both a reaction to those national discourses of artistic and literary transition from academicism to modernism, and a consequence of the cubist and surrealist circles experienced by the couple in Paris in 1923 and 1925/26.

Amaral's *A Negra* (1923) {fig.1} set the pace of an enquiry that would reach its apex with Andrade's notorious manifesto of 1928. The latter actualised the growing awareness with which the couple drew on autochthonous cannibalism to radically revise the colonialist approach to the so-called 'primitive' societies, and to effectively re-formulate the questioning articulated by the Brazilian avant-garde of 1922 against the academies. Operating on two distinct fronts, Andrade's manifesto wanted Brazilian culture to originally contribute to the global spread of modernism whilst reproaching the white-Brazilian cultural elite's inability to supplant those hierarchies and dynamics inherited from Brazil's colonial era.



**Figure 1.** Tarsila do Amaral, *A Negra* (1923), oil on canvass, 100 x 81,3 cm. MAC-USP, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo. Courtesy of Tarsila do Amaral.

By analysing Leclercq (2006) and Belting's (2011) studies on primitivist appropriations in Paris during the years surrounding Amaral and Andrade's stays in the French capital, it becomes clear that the couple did not comply with their contemporary mentality and trends. Instead of reiterating the Parisian infatuation with 'primitive fetishes', they set their own parameters of recognition and appreciation of the cannibal. Contrarily to what was generally happening in Europe, *Antropofagia* neither expropriated the Brazilian native of its habitat and resemblance, nor approached it as a figurative subject to be explored and

deconstructed pictorially. The voice speaking in the *Manifesto Antropófago* advocates that '[t]he only things that interest me are those that are not mine', thus it reveals how the anthropophagic approach towards the cannibal relied on the *Tupi* 'self/other' relationship (Andrade, 1928, p. 312). Andrade clearly points to the cannibal's receptiveness in relation to the 'other' – or to what Castro (2002) calls the cannibal's radical alterity. What Andrade was putting at the core of the anthropophagic programme was the ontological predation symbolised by cannibalism's literal dimension.

For the pre-colonial cannibal, to eat a captured man was not a form of subsistence for the physical body; the act of man-eating stood for the tribe's collective identity and its constant renovation by means of incorporating those ideals and values that did not belong to the social group. As Andrade (1945, p. 104) himself stated, '*the Indian did not devour [the enemy] for greed, but for a symbolic and magic act in which resided all his comprehension of life and man*'.<sup>1</sup> Therefore *Antropofagia* did not nurture a '*primitivism of the external form*'; a quest within the instinctual realm and formal simplicity of 'primitive' cultures and their visual expressions (Goldwater, 1967, p. 255). It did not rely on cannibalism as a material practise. In order to represent the foundations of Brazil's cultural anthropophagy, *Tupi* cannibalism needed to be approached from a cosmological, ontological and symbolic perspective.

### **The Jungle-Paris Connection**

Although much has been written on the ways in which *Antropofagia* drew on cannibalism, very little effort has been spent, to our knowledge, on looking beyond the metabolic metaphor: eating, digesting, absorbing what is good, excreting the waste. This is somehow surprising, especially if one considers the character of Andrade's protracted investigation on the theme over several decades. Keeping this in mind, it can be said that the importance of cannibalist society's central creed, or, in other words, of what has been recognised to be

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<sup>1</sup> '[O] índio não devorava [o inimigo] por gula e sim num ato simbólico e mágico onde está e reside toda a sua compreensão da vida e do homem'.

part of *Amerindian Perspectivism*, has been overlooked.<sup>2</sup> This casts a shadow over the pivotal ways in which cannibalism's ideological dimension shaped Andrade and Amaral's liaison with the European 'other'.

The cannibal's alterity functioned as a paradigm for *Antropofagia's* interaction with its contemporary Parisian art production. From this perspective, it becomes clear that Amaral's work from *A Negra* to *Antropofagia* and Andrade's anthropophagic manifesto epitomise the fact that cannibalistic societies '*did not exist outside an immanent relationship with alterity, [given that Tupi religion,...] enrooted in the warrior's exo-cannibalism, projected a way of being where the socius was constituted by means of its relation to the 'other'*' (Castro, 2002, p. 220).<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, we interpret the posture taken by the anthropophagous to deal with the European modernists working in Paris as a process '*where the incorporation of the other depended on a coming out oneself – the exterior was in an unceasing process of internalisation; the interior was nothing but an outward movement*' (Ibid).<sup>4</sup> By analysing the ways in which Brazilians going back and forth to Paris and Parisians visiting Brazil worked and interacted, this type of identity communion is nothing but apparent.

Having returned to Brazil from Paris in 1924, Amaral would join the *Caravana Paulista*.<sup>5</sup> From this procession and cultural discovery across Brazil, Amaral's

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<sup>2</sup> Amerindian Perspectivism is an ethnological strand consolidated by the anthropologists Eduardo Viveiro de Castro and Philippe Descola. Its main characteristic is the absence, within the cosmologies of Amerindian societies, of dichotomic thinking, such as nature/culture, object/subject, 'self/other', animal/human, and so forth. From Castro's viewpoint, Amerindian Perspectivism entails a cosmological stance which cannot conceive (as is the case from the Eurocentric point of view) of a psychic discontinuity between all things and beings that inhabit the cosmos. This implies a lack of boundaries between the human species, animals and spirits (deities, gods etc.), therefore it also denies a separate domain between the 'self' and the 'other'. Humans see themselves as animals and spirits and vice-versa, as much as humans see themselves from the perspective of other humans. For an Amerindian society, not only do all the species-specific differences appear as modalities of the human, but also all the cultural-specific differences coming from external cultural backgrounds and epistemologies appear as modalities of the Amerindian society itself.

<sup>3</sup> '*[N]ão existia fora de uma relação imanente com a alteridade, [já que a religião Tupi,...] radicada no complexo do exocanibalismo guerreiro, projetava uma forma onde o socius constituía-se na relação ao outro*'.

<sup>4</sup> '*[O]nde a incorporação do outro dependia de um sair de si – o exterior estava em um processo incessante de interiorização; o interior não era mais que movimento para fora*'.

<sup>5</sup> The *Caravana Paulista* (1924), was an itinerant journey across the variegated cultural, architectural and folkloric landscape of Brazil, which was composed by Andrade, Amaral, René Thiollier, Olívia Guedes Penteado, Paulo Prado, Gofredo Silva Telles and, occasionally, by Mário de Andrade. The group partook of events which were paramount to Brazilian popular culture, such as the Rio de Janeiro Carnival and the Eastern festivities in the rural areas of the State of Minas

work would allow Légerian purism to merge with those bright blues, pinks, greens and yellows belonging to countryside craftsmanship, to vernacular renderings of Brazil's luscious vegetation and forest without dismissing the formal achievements of *A Negra* – painted just a few months earlier in the French capital. This blending of local folklore and popular culture with the universal is evident in *A Feira II* (1925) {fig. 2}.



**Figure 2:** Tarsila do Amaral, *A Feira II* (1925), oil on canvass, 45,3 x 54,5 cm. Private collection, São Paulo. Courtesy of Tarsila do Amaral.

Here *A Negra's* formal monumetalisation and simplification is transposed to representations of plants and fruits – whose colours scrutinise the *Brasil caipira* (Brazilian bumpkin). Amaral's theme digresses from the recognition of the socio-cultural agency of the Afro-Brazilian, crucial to the making of *A Negra*, for it focuses on the emancipation, within the high culture realm, of the day-to-day life of the people.

Further development of Amaral's hybridisation of cubist approaches and signifiers of 'Brazilianness' (her childhood spent in the countryside, a non-urban existence and the archaic) would appear in *Abaporu* (1928) {fig. 3}. Here, Amaral's choice

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Gerais. It travelled across Brazil's inner land, visiting *fazendas* and the work of colonial Brazilian sculptor and architect *Aleijadinho*.



of the subject, who is 'that man that eats man', deals with surrealism from an oneiric and psychological angle; it complements cubist constructivism whilst managing to propel the viewer into the nature of human condition at its primordial stage, enrooted in hearth and the instinctual world. Like *A Negra*, *Apaporu's* body is distorted and threatens to escape the canvass's borders; it is set in a bucolic landscape, this time explicitly organic and phallic, rather than geometric and disguised as in the case of the black woman of 1923.



**Figure 3.** Tarsila do Amaral, *Abaporu* (1928), oil on canvass, 85 x 73 cm. MALBA, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires. Courtesy of Tarsila do Amaral.

The success of these works is staked on how they lie on the threshold of Rincœur's paradox; they do so through a synthesis between leading modernist trends and the condition of being and living in the historical-sociological landscape of Brazil. The analytical acumen with which the universal is approached here finds its impetus in the '*auto-determination for the other*' peculiar to the cannibal, to produce a type of art that saw negotiation, rather than definite identity, at the core of the 'self-other' relationship (Cocco, 2009, p. 230).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> '[A]utodeterminação pelo outro'.

The couple's creative ventures during their European seasons and the hospitality offered in Brazil to foreign artists, authors and intellectuals also mirror the cannibal's alterity. From a list of collaborations and mutual influences, we may highlight that Amaral illustrated Blaise Cendrars' *Feuilles De Route*, and Cendrars dedicated his publication to his Brazilian "modernist friends" (Waldman, 2011, p. 9).<sup>7</sup> Further, and by taking into consideration the planning of one of Cendrars' ballets similar to his *The Creation of the World* – which although never executed was a collaborative project that included Andrade's plot, Amaral's costume design and Heitor Villa-Lobos's music – it can be said that Brazilians in Paris subdued the hegemonic traits of early 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism.<sup>8</sup>

Thanks to the couple, many Europeans had the opportunity to form views on Brazilian cultural production, and to process them within their work. From 1924 onwards, Cendrars visited Brazil a few times, travelling with the couple to the State of Minas Gerais to explore the national baroque and vernacular. Without these trips and the exchanges they implied, Cendrars would not have gathered the experiences that led him to produce several works.<sup>9</sup> In São Paulo, Cendrars participated in the exhibition/conference *Tendências da Estética Contemporânea*, and Benjamin Péret to the conference *L'Ésprit Moderne: du Symbolisme au Réalisme*. Hospitality and networking support were also offered to Hermann Keyserling, Josephine Baker and Le Corbusier (1929).<sup>10</sup>

Indeed Amaral and Andrade's socio-cultural fabric seem to have been woven in ways which are unpreoccupied with issues of peripheral cultural dependency from the centre. To devour the European here is far more related to the symbolic act of communion with a valuable 'other', than to a bellicose attitude against an

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<sup>7</sup> "[A]migos modernistas".

<sup>8</sup> Aracy Amaral's (2003) study discusses this project, and is perhaps the most valuable example of a bibliography on Tarsila do Amaral and Andrade's collaborations and interactions with other modernists working in the French capital.

<sup>9</sup> According to Waldman (2011), Cendrars' stays in Brazil resulted in the writings of *Moravagine*, *Éloge de la Vie Dangereuse*, of poems for *Sud-Américaines* (all in 1926), and of a chapter of *Les Confessions de Dan Yack* (1929). Sources of inspiration and an intense and convivial integration with the Brazilian intellectual and aesthetic-literary elite occurred owing also to Cendrars participation in the *Caravana Paulista* (1924).

<sup>10</sup> Le Corbusier was introduced to Brazilian coffee baron, industrialist and literary modernist Paulo Prado as a consequence of the friendship and intellectual affinities between Amaral, Andrade and Cendrars. Prado sponsored the architect's trip to Brazil, having Le Corbusier as a guest at his own residence, and introducing him to his brother, Antônio Prado Júnior, who at the time was the mayor of Rio de Janeiro. The connection allowed Le Corbusier to work for Antônio on projects involving the restyling of the city. Further, both Cendrars and Le Corbusier were remunerated for the series of lectures they gave in Brazil – all of which fostered intense and productive exchanges.

enemy. Yet *Antropofagia* retained the combativeness of cannibalism's literal dimension, releasing it by means of attacking the local cultural arena rather than the global one.

### Devouring the Academies

The anthropophagic conflictual stance was mainly directed towards the local aesthetic-literary environment. If supremacy was to be overturned, then it had to be the one held by the Brazilian academies – and in relation to this particular issue, *Antropofagia* was the definitive battle within a war that began in the mid-1910s.<sup>11</sup> The diatribe was still vitriolic shortly before the modern art week of February 1922, as in September 1921 Monteiro Lobato refused to publish *Paulicéia Desvairada*, the book in which Mário de Andrade announced the directives of Brazil's literary modernism.<sup>12</sup>

Lobato's stance is a typical example of what the Brazilian academies thought of the young, local avant-garde abroad. The foreign experience, he claimed:

'instead of refining the nationalism of vocations, [...] makes them Francophile, because for the sake of national imbecility, France is still the world. It pulls the State out of the youngster, eradicating him/her from the native land to throw him/her into the Quartier Latin, with the tips of his/her roots broken' (Camargos, 2003, p. 139).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The Landmark of such war has been attributed to Anita Malfatti's first major Brazilian exhibition (1917) upon her return from a training period in Europe and the USA. The academic reply to Malfatti's initiative harshly stated that 'modernism [...] was merely a movement that caricatured colour and form without committing to rendering a comic idea, aiming only at "bewildering and fooling the spectator"'. '[M]odernismo [...] era apenas um movimento caricatural da cor e da forma, sem o compromisso de ressaltar uma idéia cômica mas visando, unicamente, "desnortear e aparvalhar o espectador"' (Luz, 2010, p. 79).

<sup>12</sup> Monteiro Lobato was a strong exponent of 1920s Brazil's aesthetic-literary establishment. He was an internationally distinguished author at the time, an authoritative art critic and he also ran an editing house. By 1922 his literary career was sufficiently outstanding for him to run for chair no. 11 of The Brazilian Academy of Literature, subsequent to the death of Pedro Lessa. Moreover, in the same year, the North American, Isaac Goldberg dedicated a chapter of his book *Brazilian Literature* to Lobato's oeuvre.

<sup>13</sup> "[A]o invés de apurar o nacionalismo das vocações, [...] afrancesa-as, porque, para a imbecilidade nacional, o mundo é ainda a França. Pega o Estado no rapaz, arranca-o da terra natal e dá com ele no Quartier Latin, com o peão da raiz arrebetado".

This witnesses the xenophobic nationalism with which the dominant strand of Brazil's cultural elite was trying to outline the idea and the image of modern Brazilian artistic-literary production.

Paradoxically to this anti-Europeanism, Lobato's regionalism heavily relied on colonial exoticism. This was apparent in his descriptions of mixed-ethnicity people such as the *Caboclo*, which claimed that this minority was deprived of will and aesthetic sense, ugly and grotesque; the '*priest of the Great Law of the Minimum Effort*', the one who lives with what nature gives him, without wasting energy to achieve any goal in life (Lobato, 1914, p.?).<sup>14</sup> Further, his characters *Jeca Tatú* and *Saci-Pererê* were not elevated to valuable symbols of popular culture; seen through the Eurocentric eye, they were merely treated as despicable tokens of indolence resulting from a lower racial and genetic nature – worsened by the lack of hygiene and health. Judging by Lobato's endeavours, the academies were unwilling to realise that, as opposed to *Antropofagia*, they were depicting the native and the popular as uncivilised and backwards due to the untied knot with which the white-Brazilian elite was still fastened to the country's colonial past – and therefore inexorably bounded to that French matrix it so vehemently abhorred.

With its valorisation of the fundamental value system of the native, and its emancipation of popular culture, *Antropofagia* antagonised the academies' xenophobic approach to the European 'other'; their lack of self-criticism towards the fact that their depictions of Brazil heavily relied on those Eurocentric structures of socio-cultural discrimination inherited from colonialism. If Andrade (1928, p. 312) advocated: '*down with all the importers of canned conscience*', this was because, by 1928, 'canned conscience' was no longer a prerogative of the European settled in the Brazilian colony, as it had already been transformed into Brazil's own white-elite mentality. By shifting the blame away from the 'exporters', therefore from the Europeans, *Antropofagia* was attacking the segments of Brazil's ideological heritage brought from Europe but nevertheless turned into 'Brazilianness' within the post-colony. Hence, Andrade's statement

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<sup>14</sup> '[S]acerdote da Grande Lei do Menor Esforço.'

must be interpreted as a key insight on the movement's intention to supplant academia and its parroting the European canon.

As an attack on '*a burdensome colonial baggage, [...] patriarchal society [and]...intellectual rhetoric that mimicked the metropolis and succumbed to foreign ways*', *Antropofagia* implied an inward critique of that parcel of Brazilian society unable to overcome the reproduction of the colonial discourse within the Republican reality (Nunes, 2004, p. 85). Both envisioning and tackling the issue of coloniality, the *Manifesto Antropófago*, advocated: '*Down with antagonical sublimations. Brought into caravels. But them who came were not crusaders. They were fugitives from a civilisation that we are now devouring*' (Andrade, 1928, p. 312).<sup>15</sup> It was the post-colony's heritage, brought to Brazil in caravels a few centuries earlier, that needed to be questioned; what Andrade's contemporary Brazil needed to devour were the traces of its own dark past. *Antropofagia* wanted to ravage – as in the case of cannibalism in its physical and aggressive sense – the European in the Brazilian, not the European in Europe.

### **Anthropophagic Foresight**

*Antropofagia* represents a form of Critical Regionalism for standing, under its own terms, at the crossroad between the roots of a particular place, and the impact of universal civilisation. The most distinctive anthropophagic trait is that the movement neither represented a stylistic appropriation of the 'primitive', nor an idealised return to a preindustrial past. This is one of the conclusions that surfaced from our concern with revising the anthropophagic ethos. Another is that the movement represented a take on the 'primitive' equidistant from that of both periphery and centre.

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<sup>15</sup> The notion of coloniality is articulated by Peruvian sociologist and political theorist Anibal Quijano. It entails the reproduction of the colonial system of domination and power within post-colonial realities and their geo-cultural identities. Such a system was historically constructed on the grounds of race discrimination, serfdom and unwaged work, and forced the colonised to learn the rules and discourse of the coloniser. Coloniality therefore is generated by the colonisation of cognitive perspectives, modes of producing and attributing meaning, material existence, the imaginary and the sphere of intersubjective relations within the *socius* and its unceasing activity even after the colony has finally achieved its political and economic independence.

The anthropophagic treatment of the cannibal entailed a new approach to international networks and intellectual migrations, and a stop to the continuity with which Brazilian aesthetic-literary production, given its historic sense of subaltern dependency, had until it then related to the European one. Indeed *Antropofagia* propelled the core values of an ancient local society into Brazil's modernising reality, as much as it transformed those values in a formula with which it was possible to consciously hybridise the arts of the centre, and thus question the homogenising character of universalist expansion.

*Antropofagia*, from our viewpoint, managed to be a form of collaborative cosmopolitanism within the global aesthetic-literary cluster that emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for thinking, like the cannibal in the anthropophagic act, about seeing the 'self' like the 'other'; 'a point of view that represents the best corner from which to see oneself' (Castro, 2002, p. 281).<sup>16</sup> It joined international trends in ways that, although not confrontational, antagonised the hegemonic traits of European modernism and the modern emancipative project by inscribing the ideological voice of Brazil's autochthonous people into the colonial discourse.

We also show that the level of critical awareness of Amaral and Andrade surfaces from the measure in which they fought the tenets of Brazil's white-European high culture, rejecting the latter's colonialism-engendered categorisation of the native, Afro-Brazilian and mixed-ethnicities' cultural practises as 'less advanced, primitive, or, at the very best, exotically interesting at a safe distance' (Frampton, 1983, p. 22). This is indeed another perspective from which *Antropofagia* anticipates Frampton's *Arrière-Garde* - although the latter seems mainly preoccupied with universal civilisation from without (i.e. neo-colonialism), whereas the former shifts the attention to universal civilisation from within (i.e. coloniality). Cannibalism, intended as material, rather than a symbolic practice, was a bellicose local affair.

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<sup>16</sup> '[U]m ponto de vista que representa o ângulo melhor de visão de si mesmo'.

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## **OWNING THE UNFAMILIAR:**

### **Modern architecture between internationalism and nationalism in Brazil in the 1920s and 1930s**

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#### **Abstract**

*The progressive expansion of geographical reach as well as the impact of ideas and models of modern architecture since its European origin determined the questioning of the alleged internationalism of this architecture and its relevance to crops and materials, technological and adverse climatic conditions and even complete unfamiliar to its original context. The definitive proof test for an architecture that in its early development did not hesitate to invoking its international nature in clashes with representatives of the architecture of Blut und Boden (blood and soil); of the outcome of this confrontation depending the very legitimacy of the modern universalistic matrix. In Brazil, the emergence of modern architecture in the 1920s and 1930s coincided with the cooling of nationalist feelings, translated into the cultural sphere in initiatives aimed at fixing a peculiarly Brazilian feature in both arts and architecture. In such a situation, the development of modern architecture meant a broadening of terms of the complexity of architectural debate, on this occasion polarized by the coexistence and competition of historicist, nationalist and regionalist guidelines. Based on these settings, this paper firstly focuses on the reception and criticism of modern architecture in contrast to the already existing architectural orientations. Then, it investigates the discursive and formal strategies advanced by modern architecture towards gaining legitimacy and professional prestige, particularly, in the search for adequate responses of an internationalist, abstract and modern architecture for a tropical reality, i.e., a situation that at first appeared to cast doubt on the validity of the rationalist formal codes defined for its original European situation.*

**Keywords:** Modern Brazilian architecture, internationalism, nationalism, tropical architecture.

#### **Introduction**

'In modern architecture the objectification of the personal and the national is clearly recognizable. A uniformity of the character of modern buildings across natural borders, to which peoples and individuals remain bound, caused by world trade and technology is invading all cultured nations. Architecture is always national, also always individual, but of the three concentric circles — individual, people, humanity — the last and greatest encompasses the other two. Therefore the title: INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE'

Walter Gropius, *International Architecture* (1925)

The historiography of the modern architecture, which has configured since the 1930s, did not hesitate to affirm the commitment of the vanguard with the *zeitgeist* of *civilization machiniste*, belittling and eliminating from its narrative situations in which this architecture was brought to answer guidelines both geographically and culturally located. Obviously, guidelines these that were in stark contrast with the internationalist content that since the beginning has adhered to the image and the discourse of the architectural modernity (Tournikiotis, 1999)

However, contrary to what historiography has defended such for a long time, largely shaped by the interpretations by authors such as Siegfried Giedion and Nikolaus Pevsner, the cross-fertilization between the international and the national, among universal, local and regional was intense, passing and enriching the process of affirmation and expansion of this architecture. One of the results of this process was a more complex and plural modernity, articulated from the consideration of linkages and specific demands— local, regional, national — and also a participant of the values and aspirations of an international nature, with characteristics at the same time individual and generic, singular and universal (Curtis, 1996, p.372).

Verified since the 1920s even in the center-European context, tensions and intersections among the local, regional, national and international levels would not be an exception, but a constant rule whereas the modern architecture expanded its geographic reach virtually covering the entire world in the first half of the twentieth century. The more intense and fruitful were the tensions and crosses as the more complex were the historical, social, technological, material and environmental circumstances faced by the modern architecture.

Among stays, innovations, dropouts and practices coexistence in the course of its spread throughout the world, passing by several national and regional realities, the modern architecture would establish multiple forms of articulation with the existing local specificities, transcending the simplistic shallow vaunted slate into the most fervent avant-garde discourses.

Sometimes the new simply collided with the old; sometimes there was mutual transformations. Modern forms made a break with what had gone immediately before, but they also allowed the substructures of national or regional cultures to be understood in new ways (Curtis, 1996, p. 372)

As a mediation device, these joints seem to have worked as the main underlying resource to the rapid spread of modern architecture from the mid-1920s. Firstly to the fringes of Europe, to countries such as Spain, Italy, Romania, Greece and Turkey and then to such diverse places as Palestine, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and South Africa, etc., always driving it increasingly to the South.

Concerning the land below the equatorial line, considering both tropical and subtropical contexts, strange and increasingly distant from the central European horizon of origin contexts, it was in the South that modern architecture would find the true proving ground to test its supposed universal validity. However, it was also there, where new and peculiar circumstances would arise strategies for environmental acclimation and cultural accommodation that have been requested, imposed or negotiated in order to produce forms of mediation able to resolve the exogenous condition that was often associated with modern architecture.

Similarly to other countries, Brazil started the twentieth century with an unfinished and in an open dispute national identity. In this context, the main question around which concrete ideas and initiatives of the cultural field and art, including architecture, were developed, was how to take part of the achievements and possibilities created by modernity and Western modernization of the universal matrix and, at the same time, define a cohesive values core, ideas and images to serve as the nation's identity sediment. How to reconcile the belonging to a world where internationalization has progressed inexorably, ignoring any kind of borders and, having defensive geographic, historical and cultural divisions anchored just on the border concept, being intrinsic to the historical process of nation building? In other words, how to be both universal and local? (Bresciani, 2001; Manrique, 1974)

From different implications in the Brazilian culture of the twentieth century, this concerning would not only anticipate any reflection on modern architecture, but would also directly affect the perception and judgment of it in the 1920s and 1930s.

### **Between tradition and modernity**

'Will it be a good or bad thing if we work for a national architecture style nowadays?' reflected the modernist intellectual and writer Mário de Andrade in the first of a four-article series published in the *Diário Nacional* during the month of August 1928, under the title *Arquitetura Colonial* (Colonial Architecture) (Andrade, 1928). An updated knower of both on-going arts and avant-garde architecture for reading magazines such as *Deutsch Kunst und Dekoration* and *L'Esprit Nouveau* as well as books such as *Die Baukunst der neusten Zeit* (1927), by Gustav Adolf Platz, when asking this question Mário de Andrade summed up the crux of the problem of the architectural field in Brazil in the mid-1920s, when modern architecture stepped in to fight for space, clientele and prestige as well. After all, what kind of action to take: embarking on the architecture of modernity, in the time of "now", of internationalization, or engaging in the campaign for Brazilian architecture of national character?

The development of the modern architecture in the Brazilian architecture scenery coincided with both the resurgence of the nationalist agenda and the strengthening of the commitments of the arts and architecture with the particular, the local, with the peculiar note through which Brazil would give its specific contribution to civilization Western. Initially presented in discursive terms through the text-manifesto *Acerca da arquitetura moderna* (On modern architecture), by Gregori Warchavchik, a Russian-Ukrainian born architect, published in the *Correio da Manhã* journal in 1925, three years later the modern architecture would acquire full visibility with the first works built by this architect, such as his own house on Santa Cruz Street, in São Paulo city (Lira, 2011; Souza, 2004).

As a true cultural movement with implications in all artistic production fronts since the late nineteenth century, the investigation of a Brazilian identity has been being systematically put into training in architecture since the 1910s, especially by Portuguese architect Ricardo Severo, reaching its peak at about the same time the modern architecture loomed in the country.



**Figure 1.** *Neo-colonial* version of a Brazilian architecture style for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Lusa House (1917/24), in São Paulo, by Ricardo Severo (Source: Mello, 2007).

In such a way at the dissemination of internationalist matrix ideas by Warchavchik, the defense of a national architectural identity was so hegemonic that imposed strong resistance to any modernizing proposal that disregard the question of Brazilianness. Faced with this situation, the emergence of modern architecture could not happen in less favorable conditions (Leonídio, 2005).

The development of the modern architecture in such an adverse horizon stressed the complexity of the terms of the current architectural debate, polarized at that time by supporters and detractors of the idea of a national style of architecture. On one hand, the signatories of the traditionalist movement, *Neo-colonial*, who advocated the creation of a Brazilian architecture founded in the architectural

legacy of the Portuguese colonizers when settling in the tropics. On the other hand, the champions of academic discipline, practitioners of a severe eclecticism *beaux-arts* and critics of traditional pretensions of forming a Brazilian style of architecture. Inserted in this context, the modern architecture was soon the subject of sharp criticism coming from different trends in dispute.

For a partisan of the *beaux-art* architecture such as the architect Christiano Stockler das Neves, the modern architecture 'futuristic' would be only the expression of snob individualism of ignorant in art values and believers in the 'utilitarianism', which in the quest for originality move away from the classical tradition and the time-honored models. And in the face of the Futurism's aberrations no condescension is possible:

Futuristic architects say that a machine age is born and we are in the afterglow of machinery (*Esprit Nouveau*). But what does architecture have to do with the machines? What is the influence of the automobile, the airplane and the radio in architectural forms? (Neves, 1930, p. 3)

Practitioners of the '*mere art of building*', which may '*exist even among the less civilized people*', different from architecture, '*the result of the highest civilization*', signatories of architectural modernity, faithful to utilitarianism, standardization and originality, would be walking in false, blind to tradition and false prophets followers:

We deny, therefore, any originality to these art industry products, according to the type advocated by Le Corbusier for such "machines of living", which have already been rising among us, and must be opposed by all those who estimate art. They do not belong to any style. They cannot be considered architecture (Neves, 1930, p. 5)

Equally critical to modern innovation is the architect Dácio de Moraes. In a series of articles published in the late 1920s a fierce controversy with Warchavchik waged in the pages of the daily press, Dácio de Moraes neither identifies himself with the defenders of the past, nor sees himself composing the '*legions of ultra-red architects*', led by Le Corbusier (Moraes, 1930, p. 4).

In defense of architecture as an art, Dácio de Moraes is scathing in his condemnation of dogma of modern utilitarianism, which he sees penetrating in the Brazilian architecture through the works by Warchavchik.

Otherwise, but not less strong, the objections raised by the proponents of a nationalist cause in architecture reacted not only to the exogenous character of the new architecture, without compromising with the search for a Brazilian-style architecture and unlinked to the national reality, but also to its intrinsic universalism.

*Maecenas* and the main enthusiast of the neocolonial enterprise, José Marianno Filho would strongly oppose the internationalist values of the modern architecture in defense of a "mesological architecture", rooted in the national soil, in the history, in the environment and climate.

Seen by these terms, the modern architecture would soon be treated by him as eclecticism in the category of a foreign object to the nation. Exogenous cultural demonstration, uprooted in Brazilian soil and offset from our reality, the modern architecture, as well as the stylistic standards of eclecticism, provide, according to Marianno, a disservice to nationality.

Besides being a product of cultural import the modern architecture, alien to the Brazilian reality and in violation of the mesological conditions of the country, might represent a real risk to the fixing of an indigenous character of architecture in Brazil. This mainly for its tendency to internationalization of architectural standards, alongside the range of technological achievements for construction offered by industry and suppression of local singularities in favor of an indistinct and leveling universalization, anonymous and strange to the nationality.

According to Marianno Filho, even if time is the internationalization of life considering all its spheres of intense cultural exchanges whose Architecture is not free of, a standardization of the technical construction processes aimed at mixing, leveling threat of cultural, geographical, racial and national differences

contained in this process, particularities of the place an insurmountable barrier would be found:

While people share the world; while the great human family is ethnically divided into races and sub-races, distinct from each other; while there is the noble zeal of tradition and the pride of racial equity among the people, the individual feeling of each nation will oppose, as an invincible barrier, to any idea of architectural universality (Marianno Filho, 1931, p. 320)

At the turn of the 1930s, in a context of the modern architecture booming in Brazil, Marianno Filho kept the focus on concentrated power in the sense of nationalism:

Pressed by temporary circumstances, people may withstand without apparent reaction, the expansion of architectural forms strange to their own feeling of nationalism, but sooner or later they will be supplanted by other forms, more lined with the national feeling (Marianno Filho, 1931 p. 321)

Similarly to what happened with the transplanted models from Portugal to Brazil during colonization, Marianno Filho believed that this eccentric modern architecture to the nation would soon submit to local requests, settling and abandoning anonymity to acquire its own distinguishable feature, definitely marking the Brazilian style.

### **On how to be modern in the tropics**

Right and recurrent target of the criticisms and objections to the new architecture due to its pioneering spirit, Gregori Warchavchik stood for several occasions on the inclusion of architectural modernity-breaking, of an internationalist feature, inside an intellectual and professional environment guided by the criterion of Brazilianness as an evaluation parameter of the cultural production.



In *Arquitetura brasileira* (Brazilian Architecture), text published in 1926, therefore, a year after *On modern architecture*, Warchavchik stated the intent of combining the forefront contemporary research and investigating the ideas about the most appropriate construction to Brazil; a clear trade-off between the national and the international.

Without abandoning the belief that architecture should be lined with the times and with the technique and material available, Warchavchik related among the problems to be solved by the architect promoting the architectural adaptation to both climate and customs contingencies of the place. For him, this adaptation should be based on a close relationship between architecture and the nature of the tropics, however, without appealing to either cultural or regionalist elements.

In Brazil there are countless reasons to adopt the pure lines without useless props, already due to lack of slaughter stone because the flora provides us (we refer to villas set in gardens) enough resource to avoid the reprehensible use of 'stucco' ornamentation. It is unfortunate that so far this splendid element has not been mentioned despite the endless variety of vines and bushes to be found at the orchards in São Paulo (Warchavchik, 1926)

If in 1926 he had imposed the need to consider the architecture in relation to place, in 1928 he revealed his debt to the Brazilian landscape in the design of his house on Santa Cruz Street.

For Warchavchik, considering the local circumstances would inevitably lead him to the formalization of a Brazilian home. Work to be done, however, without damage to the rationalist aesthetic and without formal concessions in architecture to the 'ancient traditions of this land', despite the deliberate exposure of colonial tiles at the porch of his residence.

In fact, either in discourse or in the built works, the central question that runs through the work by Warchavchik and not only his, at the turn of the 1920s to the 1930s, is how to proceed adaptation of modern architecture to the Brazilian

reality, keeping the commitment with modern abstract aesthetic while working towards producing joints and dialogues with local circumstances.



**Figure 2 and 3.** Tropical nature and the abstract geometry of modern architecture in the modernist house by Gregori Warchavchik on Santa Cruz Street, São Paulo, 1927-28 (Source: Collection of FAU-USP Library).

Although the observation of his subsequent projects put in doubt his intention to idealize 'a very Brazilian home', Warchavchik kept steady in order to promote the adaptation of the internationalism inherent to his architecture to the proper conditions of life in the tropics, particularly the climate. The main challenge was therefore how to conduct such an adaptation of modern forms against climate, "one of the great modifiers of the language of international modern architecture in the 1930s" (Curtis, 1996, p. 377).

According to Warchavchik's view, without giving up the modern language, the architect should take into account both cultural and environmental particularities of each people, region and nationality. Considering these peculiarities, regional and national variants of modern architecture would be risen from a common set of principles of universalistic nature, eliminating, with the same operation, the risk of indiscriminate uniform of 'houses in the world'. Writing in 1928, for Warchavchik,

(...) with the same universal principles, adapted to every region, every people and every nationality, there would certainly be some differences, which are impossible to be predicted now, but which, no doubt, will drive unity of style of the twentieth century in its essence (Warchavchik, 1928b)

Unified by technical basis, drawing on the same principles and making use of new material and technological possibilities of the machine age, modern architects will create

(...) a unique modern style, with its differences, coming from both the climate and customs. We may have an European architecture, another South American and another one American. Finally, all of them together will form a unique world style, created either by the same demands of life or by the same material used for construction, such as concrete, iron and glass (Warchavchik, 1928a)

*'A unique world style'* with multiple variants of a modern architecture that would also be *'the most possible regional because its first and main requirement will be adapting to the region, to the climate and to people's customs'*. (Warchavchik, 1928a).

Concerning Warchavchik it is not difficult to recognize many of his design strategies in the international production of the 1920s and 1930s. In general, these strategies searched same aim: adapting the modern architecture to circumstances, which seems strange at the first sight, due to its abstract formal nature, and invariably operating in terms of adjusting the modern form to climatic characteristics and, in some cases, local and cultural too. Paralellaly watching either Michel Écochard working in French colonial possessions, or Dimitris Pikionis, in Greece, or even Rex Martienssen, in South Africa, it has been noticed that they intend to assert as modern wherever they are, committed to international modern trade-offs with the singularities of their own realities without, however, assigning the regionalist or historicist formal appeals.

In Brazil, a first generation of all modern architects in the 1930s would trail the path announced in the first works by Warchavchik, making use of similar designing strategies in order to build mediations with both the weather and the local culture what might set a version to sound less "foreign" of modern architecture.

An effort in this direction was the Salão de Arquitetura Tropical (Tropical Architecture Hall), organized in 1933 by the Association of Brazilian Artists. Although the "tropical architecture" should bring an implied regionalist accent, the works exhibited in the hall completely clashed this sense, before indicating the accommodation attempts of modern language to the climatic conditions of the tropics. Thus, what we see in the hall does not differ, in aesthetic terms, the formal rationalism present in the work of Warchavchik, slowed in its rigor by the care with natural ventilation, the design and distribution of openings and the use of mitigation devices insolation. Among the architects who exhibited in the hall were, beyond Warchavchik, Lúcio Costa, Luiz Nunes, Marcelo Roberto, Alexander Altberg and Affonso Eduardo Reidy, co-author, along with Gerson Pinheiro, the *Albergue da Boa Vontade* (Hostel of Good Will), one of the few built works presented in event.

### **National and international, modern and Brazilian architecture**

Despite all efforts to the contrary, the fact is that in the mid-1930s modern architecture, its image and speech, was still to be seen as a foreign body, another foreignness without ties and commitments with the Brazilian reality.

In this context, overcoming the estrangement in relation to the modern architecture demanded more than the response in terms of climate adaptation. It implied responding appropriately to the issue of national identity that marked, almost absolutely, cultural production then. That is, imbue the modern architecture of a sense of belonging to the country, its history, its culture. In short, modern architecture should be rooted in the historical process of nation-building. And it is to this task that clings Lúcio Costa throughout the 1930s.

Former principal at the *Escola Nacional de Belas Artes* (National Fine Arts School), where a frustrated tentative modernization of teaching methods was sent by him, disillusioned with the neo-colonial orientation, which would later find a mistake in the early 1930s, Lúcio Costa enthusiastically adhered to the ideas of Le Corbusier, whose book *Vers une architecture* came as the "Holy Bible" of architecture.

In two fundamental texts of modern architectural culture in Brazil, *Razões da Nova Arquitetura* (Reasons for the new architecture) (1934-35) and *Documentação Necessária* (Necessary Documentation) (1937), Lúcio Costa defined the theoretical and conceptual basis of what would be internationally recognized, after *Brazil Builds* (1943), exhibition held by the New York MoMA, as modern Brazilian architecture.

If in *Reasons for the new architecture* he justifies the choice for Le Corbusier, 'the Brunelleschi of the twentieth century', among other modern masters, recognizing between the French-Swiss architect and Brazilian architecture a shared Latin and Mediterranean origin, is, however, in *Necessary Documentation* that the link with the Le Corbusier consolidated indeed.

Concerning its general aspect, *Necessary Documentation* operates a revaluation, in the modern point of view, of the architectural tradition established in Brazil since the colonial period from the introduction of Portuguese constructive models softened in the tropics and processed in their interaction with the technical, material, climatic, social and local contingencies. What Costa intended in this non-historicist return to the past, was not copying forms, but recovering the fine tradition of Brazilian architecture, supposedly lost at some time in the nineteenth century, and resuming the 'train of thought' of this 'good tradition'.

To this end Costa's analysis part of civil architecture brought by the Portuguese and, especially, of the house, because in it resides the greatest interest, both for the understanding of our architectural past and the teaching to the modern practice. 'Our house', says Costa, which,

(...) appears almost always unadorned and poor compared to the opulence of Italian palazzi and castles of France, or English "mansions" of the same period; or to the rich and vain appearance of many Hispano-American manor houses; or even to the palatial and coquettish aspect of certain noble Portuguese residences. (Costa, 1937, p. 32)

Costa believes the smaller houses '*three, four, up to five balconies*', the single-storey houses, not to mention, finally, *the colonist's 'minimum' house*, exponent of a more rough popular architecture and the '*only one that continues to be "alive" throughout the country despite having so fragile an aspect*' (Costa, idem, p. 34). The *colonist's 'minimum' house* to which,

And nobody pays attention, so common has this become, because "that" is as much a part of the earth as an anthill, a wild fig tree, and a corn stalk- as an extension of the ground itself... but it is precisely because they are an intrinsic part of the ground that such houses have for us architects a certain respectability and dignity (Costa, idem, p. 34)

And '*precisely because it is an intrinsic part of the ground*' is that it should become more important to look modern architects who, understanding its principles, should avoid any purely formal appropriation or imitation.

Devoid of prejudices against the rudiment that the colonist's house represent, Lúcio Costa recognizes an intimate communion principles of colonial architecture with modern architecture of Le Corbusier. Already presented in their projective consequences in projects such as Monlevade (1934), after developed in works such as the Park-Hotel São Clemente (1944/45), that aspect deepens the identification between the modern and the traditional, but not any tradition, the '*good tradition*', made by colonist's rude hand with what nature around offered. Made with *barro armado* (mud reinforced with wood), the colonist's house '*has something of our reinforced concrete*' (Costa, idem, p. 34)

Either in colonial tradition or in Le Corbusier's architecture, sincerity, truth and simplicity are expressed, and each part of the building finds its place, its *raison d'être*. This corroborates the recognition by Lúcio Costa, a fundamental

homology of constructive principles between what is the most advanced in terms of technology and what is the most elemental. Homology that reveals an intimate link between the most refined theoretical and architectural design conception of the European avant-garde, Le Corbusier, in the view of Costa, and the most primitive expressions of traditional Brazilian architecture.

Thus organized, the narrative constructed by Costa drew a line of continuity between past and present, between tradition and modernity whose contemporary corresponding converged in the architecture of Le Corbusier villages 1920s More than a Latin Mediterranean ancestral link to Le Corbusier's architecture and Brazilian architecture would keep a deep and essential connection, already present in the very colonial building tradition.



**Figure 4.** Park-Hotel São Clemente, by Lúcio Costa, express his ideas about the synthesis between modernity and tradition, the main feature of the Brazilian modern architecture (Source: Wisnik, 2001)

At no other time of Required Documentation this narrative is more evident than in evolutionary reading mapping Lucio Costa, when establishing through a sequence of drawings of residential facades a journey of transformation of

Brazilian architecture, starting with the simple house seventeenth century leads, with apparent ease - so he would have us believe - the modern home of Le Corbusier feature with its free facade and continuous window 1930.

With this refined intellectual construction, Costa not only historically justified the choice of Le Corbusier but also rooted modern architecture inside the nation's formative process in Brazil, causing no longer be viewed as a strange manifestation to the Brazilian reality. Far from being a foreignness, modern architecture would be a natural option to the history, culture and Brazilian formation, therefore, a legitimate source to think an architectural culture at the same time modern and national. The train of thought of our architecture was resumed and 'condemned to the modern' in the version of Le Corbusier.

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## **INTERTWINING HEGEMONIES BETWEEN CENTRE AND PERIPHERY: The Case-Study of Greek Modern Architecture**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aim to focus, in terms of hegemony, on the dialectics that take place, within modern architecture, between centre and periphery and specifically, between western-European centre on the one hand and the Greek periphery on the other.*

*If we agree that there are influences that move from periphery to the centre (and the work of Le Corbusier, De Chirico, Gio Ponti and Bernard Rudofsky, among others, testifies that), we also have to agree that there are weak modernisms, or better, strong desires, from the side of periphery, to be-in-modernity (M. Heidegger). The result is the necessity to come to terms with what we can generally define pre-modernity.*

*The Greek one is one of these modernisms, a place that influenced the Modern Movement, being influenced by it in its turn. This influence of the centre on periphery can be described in terms of both hegemony and dominion (A. Gramsci). The case-studies of both the Italian colonies of the Dodecanese Island, where the State (another State, an external dominator) dominates by being Mediterranean, and to the post II World War Greek architecture, where the State (the local state, the internal dominator) dominates by being Modern (American Embassy and Saarinen Airport in Athens) testify this strategy. This strategy that can be further analyzed in regard to the public and private architecture of the 50ies and 60ies, where the relationship between consensus and force within power, can determine a research on Modern architecture, uncovering its de-ideologized and sweetened features aimed at strengthening the bourgeois class domination by creating it ab nihilo.*

*At the same time, the research of Dimitris Pikionis and A. Konstantinidis demonstrates that another way to think both modernity and the past is possible.*

**Keywords:** Modern Movement, Pre-modernity, Post-colonialism, Hegemony, Mediterraneità

We are used to consider European Modern as Enlightenment-derived, but modernity is a complex realm where Enlightenment and Romanticism do coexist overlapping themselves. It is though necessary to bring to light the intrinsically contradictory dialectics between the two cultural souls of modern revolution, since Enlightenment has continuously matched modernity, while, even if the subterranean karstic river of Romanticism has matched modernity with less intensity, it nevertheless resurfaces from time to time.

The post-colonialist frame shows, today, that modernity is not a one-way

destiny, a destiny without residues (Genovese, 1995, p.14) and this is why it is necessary to analyze all the aspects of a broader modernity, a modernity unable to control the whole reality, being forced, this way, to come to terms with it.

Being unable to cancel specificity, locality and tradition, modernity is forced to negotiate, coexisting with pre-modernity both in the *centre* and in *periphery*, while *periphery* is able to negotiate the terms of its *adhesion* to modernity.

This reciprocal hybridization sets up a syncretic hegemonic system that triggers conflicts between *selfness* and *otherness*, *hegemony* and *subordination* (Chambers, 2006). Through these categories it is possible to read and comprehend both pre-modernity and modernity from interchangeable points of view from time to time *hegemonic* or *subordinate*, setting up new interpretations that could produce a critical reflection on the western hegemonic discourse, somehow denying it.

This double-sided complexity confirms both the modern desire for control over reality and the impossibility of this achievement, proving at the same time modernity's need for hybridization as well as pre-modernity's need for re-definition by incorporating modernity and making it cohabit with its deep core.

In this frame, postcolonial studies can determine a new kind of comparison between cultures in relation of subordination, as the *designation* through which the West defines the *self* as a *contraposition* to the *other*, makes this *other* an *invention* of the West, becoming its *alter ego*.

*Selfness* and *otherness* seem to be, this way, the twin sides of a single mediterranean coin where a collision takes place between Europe and the Mediterranean, between *centre* and *periphery*. The use of the *other* in order to define the *self* allows, within an orientalist frame (Said, 1977), to develop a stable description of the *self* by defining the narrative of the counterpart, freezing its historical development for the sake of a sort of romantic sentimentalism, while the *other* accepts its condition as a destiny or reacts to it with violence. On the contrary, within a post-orientalist frame (Bhabha, 1994;

Chambers, 1996), this use of the *other* makes it independent and autonomous allowing the possibility of a new *displacement of the point of view* with the result of the interchangeability of the terms involved.

These conflicts are clearly embodied in the compositional palindromes of the church and mosque in Cordoba and Damascus (Tzompanakis, 2012, p.28), where the elements of novelty influence but are also influenced, as well as the residual elements accept their subordination, being able, anyway, to influence, as they are not the weak link *tout court*.

In these parallel examples the real question is not *what are the elements of permanence or impermanence*, but *who is really hegemonic and who is really subordinate*.

Is really hegemonic, culturally speaking, the Castilian kingdom of Ferdinand and Isabella when they pushed away the Arabs and the Jews, those who made culturally rich the Iberian Peninsula in Medieval times? Maybe no, or maybe yes, as they founded Spain as a Nation-State. Or is it really subordinate, culturally speaking, the Byzantine Empire, when it loses Damascus? maybe no, or maybe yes, as the freshness of the Arab impulse was able to overwhelm the geo-political *status quo* of the Mediterranean.

E. Said comes to help us, with his essay on Freud and the Non european (Said, 2003), where he describes the categories of *interchangeability* and *hybridization* in centre-periphery relationship, demonstrating that *identity* cannot be easily elaborated remaining within it, for it is, in this post-postmodern condition, the outcome of instability; it is always something fluctuating, and this fluctuation allows us to re-describe modernity itself through the pretext of the idea of the Mediterranean (Mediterraneità)<sup>1</sup> (Sabatino, 2010).

## The idea of the Mediterranean

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<sup>1</sup> The anti-academic response to classicism advanced by those architects who defined their approach in the first issue of «Quadrante», the review directed by M. Bontempelli and P. M. Bardi.

This idea is, today more than ever, an uncertain notion, (what is, exactly, or better, what is, more or less, the Mediterranean, where does it start or and where does it end).

It would be easy to talk about a Mediterranean as the place of the heroic phenomenology of light (Le Corbusier, 1989, p. 218).

It would be easy to talk about the Mediterranean as the manifestation of matter, whether rough or smooth, or about the manifestation of earthy or bright colors.

It would also be easy to talk about the Mediterranean as the root of archetype figures, as the Greek *stoa*, as the Roman *court*, the Arab *patio* or as the most ancient of all of them, the *labyrinth*, but these are epiphenomena and superstructures.

The Mediterranean is at the same time all these and even more, revealing the presence of a deep substrate traversed by lacerating conflicts deeply rooted in the dense and bloody matter of myth.

The Mediterranean has always, if not settled, at least exorcised, these conflicts:

Syncretism is a Mediterranean concept whose manifestation is myth. The myth of Theseus and Ariadne tells the story of the submission of the Greek continent to the king of Crete. Theseus, sent by the Greeks, kills the Minotaur, becoming the first king of Athens as a unified free city.

Antigone represents the unresolved conflict between the city and the family (the tribe), between the *polis* (the city) and the *oikos* (the family, the tribe, the chthonic world), that is to say between the laws enacted by the polis and those enacted by the gods.

Medea represents the conflict between the chthonic deities and the gods of the mount Olympus. Jason's rationalism wins at the end, but it is only a battle of the continuous war between the deities of the dark and the Olympic gods that will characterize a Greek spirit based on dualities.

The idea of the Mediterranean is one of those specificities that innervate European identity; an unstable, ambiguous and disorienting specificity that, while enriching contemporary culture's fertility, can help in re-reading the past in the light of this disorienting richness.

Since disorienting is, for example, the reading of the Arab shahada "There is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet" or other Arabic or pseudo-Arabic inscriptions on textiles or leather belts on the Giotto frescoes at the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua (1306), or on Masaccio's *Trittico di S. Giovenale* (1422), or on the *Adoration of the Magi and the Madonna of Humility* by Gentile da Fabriano (1420-23). These seem to be crossings, incursions that remind us the necessity of dealing with instability and that this deal is a fertile condition that can help in enriching modern culture's fertility.

What I am arguing here is that the Mediterranean is a reference not only in regard to *modern* brightness, smoothness and transparency, but also to pre-modern darkness, roughness, opacity, terms that set up the continuous dialectic between *high* and *low*.

We do have now some key-words that can propose, more than a modern dialectic opposition, a postmodern intertwining to work on (some of them were mentioned, other can be easily deduced):

Modernity-Pre-modernity  
Impermanence-Permanence  
Centre-Periphery  
Gesellschaft-Gemeinschaft (Society-Community)  
Impermanence-Permanence (Novelty-Rootedness)  
High culture-Low culture (Formal-Informal)<sup>2</sup>  
Selfness-Otherness.

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<sup>2</sup> The formal has in the informal its *alter ego*; quoting G. Bataille, the *informe* ("formless") defines a declassification (Bataille, 1985), as in history of art the *form* is a value. The connection between *informal spaces* and the *Mediterranean* is firstly realized by those masters of the Modern who used the *low* languages of Mediterranean architecture as a catalogue able to destroy the formal and *high* languages of architecture. These *informal* Mediterranean spaces represent, in a way, the *dark* side of History, the other side of *form*. It's not that *low* architecture does not have a form, but it has one that absorbs the complexity of the urban tissues; in fact, as noted B. Rudofsky (1965), vernacular architecture is always built following serial modes, being based on the repetition and random aggregation of a cell-based diagram, the result is a complex urban figure where the type is serialised. It is through this spontaneous seriality that neither the *type* nor the signature of the *subject* but the spontaneous aggregation of a collective diffuse artwork reaches a sort of aura (Benjamin, 1972) testifying the *kunstwollen* of the masses.

## **Hegemony: power as consensus**

All these dialectic dualities have to be referred to the concept of *cultural hegemony* as expressed by the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci, 1996), for whom power is based on the coexistence of *force* and *consensus*. When the first prevails, the result is *dominion*, while when the second prevails, the result is *hegemony*.

Thus, *hegemony* is the expression of a power based on *consensus*, namely the ability to gain, through persuasion, the support of society on a cultural (and thus political) project, through the cultural hegemony over the intellectuals.

The counterpoint between *selfness* and *otherness* is a key relationship in determining the *degree of hegemony* within a particular frame: it depends on *who* is the observer as well as on *what* is the object of the observation, with the result of intertwining *consensus* and *dominion*.

Thus, Mediterranean instability can be read from the sides of both the *centre* and *periphery*. If we analyze this instability from the side of the *centre* we may agree that the game of gazes on the mediterranean that started with K. F. Schinkel has continued influencing modern architecture (Le Corbusier, Gio Ponti, Bernard Rudofsky, Luigi Cosenza, Lina Bo Bardi, are some among many others) in order to define an architecture at the same time *weak* (De Solà Morales, 1989) and based on *consensus* rather than *dominion*. But this is not our topic here today. Here we will analyze *how* and *why* something similar happens from the side of *periphery*, setting up a phenomenology of the *object-and-background* relationship as developed in Greek architecture during the 20th cent.

## **The dialectics between literary and physical place**

This dialectics between centre and periphery is clearer if it is read as the dialectics between the *literary place* (the place as background) and the *physical place* (the place as real environment, as place *tout-court*).

The Mediterranean is a *literary place* when it becomes the hunting reserve for someone else, to whom the Mediterranean is a mythical place, a repertoire of forms and signs to elaborate somewhere else, while it is a *physical place* when it elaborates autonomously the characters of its specificity.

In the first case, that of the Mediterranean as a *literary place*, the centre elaborates the Mediterranean codes in order to **make Mediterranean the modern architecture**, setting up the widening of the mass basis of the modern Movement through the inclusion of the turbulent peripheries

This first case has two outcomes:

-A regressive one, where the modern character is enriched by morphological elements belonging to the local tradition, whose selection is based on forms rather than principles.

This research has led to paternalistic and regressive attempts to insert the lexicon of Modern Architecture within a figural repertoire referred to an idea of the Mediterranean synthesized *in vitro* in the *centre* and then exported and imposed in periphery in order to describe the values of a power based on dominion.

This is the case of the Italian overseas colonies established in the Dodecanese Islands -Colonie d'Oltremare) (Kolonas, 2002), where we see urban transformations based on design and management tools unrelated to Mediterranean urban history and where both the *figure-ground* relationship and the mass values of the public buildings overcome both the scale and the organic qualities of pre-modern urban structures.

-A progressive one, where the Mediterranean spatiality becomes a realm of spatial values detected in the Mediterranean, elaborated in the center and then exported again in the Mediterranean, determining a chain of influences and references that hold together centre and periphery, modernity and pre-modernity.



This research has turned the Mediterranean into a place of space/matter/color/light values and characters detected in periphery, elaborated in the centre and then spread in periphery again.

Modern architecture in Greece during the 50s and the 60s is a tool towards *dominion* and *self-representation* by those social groups which, passing through the World War II, had imposed their cultural and political *dominion* during the civil war, with the exile of political opponents if not with the use of the execution squads against them.

This modern *explosion* has its references in both International Style and Brutalism, but these are purely lexical and de-ideologized references with the aim of reaching a Mediterranean modernity without coming to terms, from an ideological point of view, with its pre-modern character, with the result of a Mediterranean modernity both uranic and chthonic, with both light and shadow, smooth and rough surfaces, transparence and opacity.

For example, the use of the brise-soleil and the consequent depth of the façade surface contributes to the monumental isolation of the building. When the Team X's research develops the possibilities of the *grid*, in Greece the Modern has reached the pick of its monumentality and it didn't happen, as we will see, by chance.

The second case, that of the Mediterranean as a *physical place*, is referred to a cultural horizon that elaborates

-on the one hand the Modern Movement lexicon and

-on the other the characters of specificity, locality, and tradition, in order to make **modern the Mediterranean**, setting up a peripheral way towards modernity (Frampton, 1983, 1998)

-In regard to the elaboration of the lexicon of the modern Movement, it must be underlined that the Greek architectural research of the 30s on residential architecture, based on the elaboration of the Bauhaus references

(Giakoumakatos, 2001), took place in a politically aseptic environment where the relations of production within the urban space remained unchanged. Indeed, the invention of the poly-katoikia confirmed both the structure and the features of the XIX cent. city along with the violent and heterogeneous features of modernity. For instance, the *beton armé* is applied in a broad scale as modern *technique*, confirming the closed urban lot of the XIX cent. on the one hand and accepting the discontinuity of the *façade* and the roofline that derives from the pre-modern property structure on the other. This lack of assimilation of the Modern as a spatial (and thus political) revolution is an *a-political* assimilation based on *forms* rather than *principles* that demonstrates both the inability to manage problems and the *de facto* excuse for not managing them as well.

The architects of the 30s were in fact an avant-garde of profession rather than an avant-garde of culture (Giakoumakatos, 2001), they were more technicians than intellectuals, they couldn't produce *consensus* because they operated in a sort of cultural *void*, while, at the same time, they didn't intend to support *dominion*. They were in fact supported by isolated members of a small bourgeoisie unable to interfere on the immature social dynamics in order to propose an idea of the city able to reach *consensus*.<sup>3</sup>

The *consensus* came with the 50s, when the poly-katoikia determined a new, mass- production mode for the cityscape; a real political tool for *consensus*, through the pre-modern procedure of *antiparohi*. A consensus that created formally but not substantially a consistent bourgeois class able to define a critical mass, even if *ab nihilo* and with the least possible money circulation. A consensus based on speculation and market's *laissez faire*.

In fact, economy's informality, auto-construction, lack of planning and spontaneous multifunctionality, have reinforced consensus around the Greek *poly-katoikia*: a modern container with a pre-modern content, where the vertical

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<sup>3</sup> A very different strategy was adopted by the Israeli architects in order to build Tel Aviv «The White City» (Boness 2012). Even if the references are quite the same as for the Greek architects, there are many deep differences. The Greek architects couldn't play a hegemonic role, whereas the Israeli ones played a double one: they used power as *consensus* in order to define the form of a modern city of the East connecting the Narrative of Israeli people with that of modernity, while they used power as *dominion* in order to underline the difference of the *self* in its relationship with the *other* (being moderns in the Palestine Desert).

layering of the building section reproduced the horizontal layering and the family relationships of the town houses left during the post-World War II urbanization.

-In regard to the elaboration of the characters of specificity, locality and tradition, we can find various attempts for a peripheral way towards modernity.

Many of these attempts are referred to a research on the national values and its forms in architecture, attempts which one can not but look with suspicion, as they flow into localism through the use of a purified dialect, a sweetened version of *dominion*, since it aimed to define and confirm the roots of the nation-state. It is the case of the so called folk current (Filippidis, 1984, p. 236), a sort of Sezession scenario enriched by Balkan or byzantine elements.

On the contrary, the researches of D. Pikionis, A. Konstantinidis and, more recently, by the Atelier 66 (D. and S. Antonakakis) are on the edge between modernity and tradition, to the extent that they seem to seek the instable shelter of the roots, questioning the idea of the monolithicity of the Nation-State by putting together the continuity with popular culture and the question of the origin (Kotionis, 1998). Both D. Pikionis and A. Konstantinidis are modern in regard to the procedures used (Surrealism for D. Pikionis, scientific typological survey for A. Konstantinidis), while seeking a way of being in modernity from the side of periphery, coming to terms with periphery itself and its seriality by the use of modern tools rather than imposing modernity or locality as forms *tout-court*. This is a clear position of resistance with the aim of broadening the mass basis of modernity by the inclusion of the turbulent peripheries (Frampton, 1983, 1998).

Within the frame of a culture incapable to reach a real consensus we can inscribe the exchange of gazes between the *subject* (i.e. the architect of the *centre*, the power he is supposed to have as designer and the power he is supposed to serve) and the *object* (the environment where he imposes, through design, the *dominion* of power). Our *subjects* are W. Gropius with his realized project for the American Embassy and Eero Saarinen, with his unrealized project for the Athens

Airport. Ancient Greek architecture seems to be, for both these architects, a *consensus* lever, while it seems to be a *dominion* lever for the peripheral political power that commissioned the buildings.

The Modern lexicon is once again de-ideologized and thus harmless. It is pure *form*, a *form* that, referring to ancient architecture, asks the Greeks to be what the world is expecting from them to be, along with helping power in determining what is the notion of Greekness after the II World war and (why not?) after Yalta. No more questions, everything is solved in the most simplistic way, ensuring a stable frame. In this frame, Greece is the mirror of a modern architecture that becomes lifestyle. As registered B. Colomina, '*1949 -or in any case, the immediate postwar years- coincide with the beginning of an American Architectural avant-garde. Or perhaps, it is the beginning and the end*' [...]. It was '*no longer America looking at Europe, but the other way around*' (Colomina, 2007, p.24-25). In other words, when the diaspora of the modern avant-garde from Europe to the USA it feeds the American avant-garde, becoming the mirror of a new world order where *hegemony* is based on *consensus*. But it is not the *consensus* of an enlightened middle class on the principles of the modern revolution (including the social ones) expressed by the architect as a modern hero, but the consensus of a middle class that has been taught to accept the Modern Movement in its everyday life as a product of the market, nonetheless a political product, even if sweetened and harmless, to be spread as *icon*, as pure *signifier* rather than signified connected to *form*.

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## **AUGUST HERBORTH IN BRAZIL**

### **Between "indigenous" decoration and cosmopolitan architecture**

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#### **Abstract**

*In 1920, the German-born ceramicist and teacher Karl-August Herborth (1878-1968) arrived in Rio de Janeiro, following an invitation to work in the local ceramic industry. During the next seven years, Herborth directed the Manufatura Nacional de Porcelanas in Rio de Janeiro and founded the Companhia Brasileira de Porcelana in Minas Gerais, where he worked as technical director. In 1926 and 1927, Herborth also assumed the role of art theorist, writing for the newspaper O Jornal, edited in Rio de Janeiro, a series of articles featuring the main ideas that guided his work in Brazil. 'The role of indigenous culture in Brazilian art;' 'The primitive art of Brazil and its significance for modern art;' 'The popular and religious influences in the decorative arts;' 'Traditionalism in art': these are just a few of the titles of Herborth's articles published in O Jornal, which eloquently express his aesthetic concerns. As an immigrant artist working in a country that was striving to create a form of art distinguished by its national character but at the same time eagerly absorbed European artistic trends, Herborth seemed to be very sensitive to the tension between nationalism and internationalism that characterized much of Brazilian art of the 1920s. Notably, he advocated the creation of a decorative vocabulary inspired by the material culture of the Brazilian native peoples, whose decorative motifs he compiled and of which he proposed new interpretations. For Herborth, only through its 'indigenous' decoration could a building display a Brazilian character in a world where, he was convinced, the practical and rational aspects of modern techniques imposed standardized forms to architecture. Our intention in the present paper is to discuss Herborth's main propositions and his contribution to the debates concerning Brazilian artistic identity in the 1920s.*

**Keywords:** Brazilian Modern Art; Brazilian Identity in Visual Arts; Nativism; Karl-August Herborth (1878-1968)

As it is well known, recent art historiography has undertaken an intensive process of critical revision of modernist narratives that not only structured the interpretation of the relation between past, present and future in the arts, but also the methodology of study of this relationship. Challenging the assumptions of Modernism in the fields of visual arts and architecture, this revision has done much to expand the canon of twentieth-century art. In Brazilian art historiography, for example, research has been devoted to the appropriation of

Modernist tendencies promoted in the early twentieth century, which often drew on examples of native cultures, popular art and vernacular architecture.

In the present paper, in an attempt to expand this revision, we will analyse the production of the German-born ceramicist and teacher Karl-August Herborth (1878-1968), who worked in Brazil in the 1920s. During the years of his sojourn in Brazil, Herborth produced works in various techniques, but the main subject of our discussion will be some of the articles that he published in 1926 and 1927 in the periodical *O Jornal (The Newspaper)*, based in Rio de Janeiro. In these texts, the main idea proposed by Herborth was the use of the repertoires of decorative motifs produced by the native cultures of Brazil as a source of inspiration for the creation of an 'authentically' Brazilian modern art. As we will try to demonstrate, Herborth's intervention in the field of Brazilian art of the 1920s was an important catalyst for debates on the potential of native cultures as a means of creating a Brazilian national identity in the visual arts.

Herborth's career still requires a thorough investigation; the broadest effort made in this sense is probably a paper by Arthur Mehlstäubler (2009) published in the German journal *Keramos*. According to Mehlstäubler, Herborth was born on February 15, 1878, in the German city of Paderborn; he began his artistic education in Bremen and Karlsruhe and, after working in the ceramic industry in Germany and France, he received an invitation to teach at the School of Applied Arts in Straßburg, where he worked from 1906 to 1920. Between 1920 and 1927, Herborth settled in Brazil (he was even naturalized as a Brazilian citizen in 1923). After his return to Europe, he pursued his activities taking part in exhibitions and publishing numerous papers on ceramics in specialized journals. Herborth died on July 11, 1968, in Oberkirch, at the age of 90 years.

In one of the first articles featuring Herborth in the Brazilian press, Jorge Miranda Fisch (1923) stated that he was invited to Brazil by the directors of the *Manufatura Nacional de Porcelanas* (National Porcelain Factory), located in Bonsucesso de Inhaúma, Rio de Janeiro. An anonymous article published in *O Jornal* on March 21, 1926 (Anonymous, 1926a) confirmed Herborth's connection with the *Manufatura Nacional de Porcelanas*, adding that he was also the founder



and technical director of another industrial establishment, the *Companhia Brasileira de Porcelana* (Brazilian Porcelain Company), located in Santa Maria de Carangola, Minas Gerais.

Although several details of Herborth's sojourn in Brazil are still unclear, it seems that even before arriving in the country he was recognized as someone who was capable of contributing to the development of the local ceramic industry. In another anonymous article in *O Jornal*, Herborth's dedication to this cause was emphasized: '*currently [Herborth's] main concerns are the development of the Brazilian ceramic industry and especially the manufacture of porcelain using exclusively Brazilian raw materials*' (Anonymous, 1926b, p.19). During his nearly seven years stay in Brazil, Herborth effectively strove to reverse the country's dependency on imports of manufactured pottery.

According to Herborth, this dependency was clear in aesthetic terms. One of his articles in *O Jornal*, entitled *Cosmopolitan tendencies in art*, is dedicated in part to this topic and shows how the artist was aware of the tension between nationalism and internationalism that characterized much of the Brazilian art in the 1920s. In this text, Herborth asserted that the practical and rational aspects of modern industrial techniques required the global adoption of standardized forms in the arts, particularly architecture, in which '*the victory of "reinforced concrete" in all public and commercial buildings*' (Herborth, 1926c) imposed the predominance of '*purely technical and utilitarian forms*' (Herborth, 1926c). Again, according to Herborth, '*in general, modern architectural constructions are purely self-seeking speculations*' (Herborth, 1926c); he also asserted that '*in this aesthetic culture of technical products, still today the hegemonic countries are Germany, England and [the United States of] America*' (Herborth, 1926c).

However, although Herborth seemed to accept that technical modernity imposed the global adoption of standardized forms dictated by a few hegemonic countries, at the same time he proposed an alternative to the others:

It should be made clear that, even in this situation, regional artistic trends are not completely dormant because they can bloom in ornamentation

and decoration, which are peculiar to each country and vary from land to land.

[...] within the rigidity of the dominant tendencies, the decoration appears as a necessary complement: it pleases our eyes and aesthetic sense and it can be used to mould the soul of a country and the artistic sensibility of a people. (Herborth, 1926c)

Herborth seemed to believe that an affirmation of '*regional artistic trends*' in the arts was a necessary complement to a potentially degrading adoption of forms imposed by foreign countries. For Herborth, the submission to foreign models also had harmful consequences that transcended artistic production and were reflected in the economy. As he asserted: '*By copying foreign models, the national industry becomes too slow to compete in the international market; new products constantly appear, delaying its development even more. It is the foreign country that retains all the advantage and profit*' (Herborth, 1926a).

A first step in the development of '*regional artistic trends*' would be to abandon the '*misguided imports of foreign artistic models [...] Our generation must unlearn the habit of copying Europe*' (Herborth, 1926a). At a time when the Brazilian economy still depended mainly on exports of raw materials, Herborth prophesied a future in which industrialized commodities would weigh decisively in the country's commercial balance. The artistic industry would then gain a fundamental importance:

I am sure that a country that has its own artistic industry can overcome the crises that so often hinder international trade.[...]

And the time is near when Brazilian artifacts, as do those of Asia today, will find a warm welcome in all European markets. Therefore, to develop Brazilian art is not only necessary for the manufacturer and the consumer, but especially for the country's own benefit. A country's exports must not solely depend on raw materials but also on the manufactured goods from which they are made. (Herborth, 1926b)

But how to develop a '*Brazilian art*'? Herborth's answer to this question included action on different fronts. For him, Brazil's autonomy should be expressed, for example, in the production of ceramic using new methods. In 1923, Jorge Fisch de Miranda already pointed out that Herborth had produced ceramic objects '*exclusively with Brazilian raw materials; soon, the country will not need to import tableware or other similar articles*' (Miranda, 1923, p.10). A few years later, Herborth would summarize his advances in the field of porcelain manufacturing techniques: '*In Europe, the production of porcelain involves three to eight elements. However, here in Brazil, I have managed to produce a very thin and transparent porcelain, first using five elements, then three and finally only two elements of Brazilian raw material*' (Herborth, 1926b).

However, the question of Brazilian art had also an aesthetic aspect and Herborth's response to this topic began to be publicly divulged only in 1926. The aforementioned anonymous article in *O Jornal* of March 21 was illustrated with photographs of Herborth's works produced in the laboratories of the *Companhia Brasileira de Porcelana*: a seated female figure and - what interests us here above all - a series of six vases (**Figure 1**), whose strictly geometric decorations were derived, according to the caption, from the '*artistic inspiration of our aboriginal people*' (Anonymous, 1926a). In divulging his aesthetic ideas, Herborth's decisive step was undoubtedly his participation in the *Exposição Geral de Belas Artes* (General Exhibition of Fine Arts), which opened on August 12, 1926: organized annually by the National School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro, the *Exposição Geral* was the most important Brazilian art exhibition of the time, having much in common with contemporary Parisian *Salons*. The submission to this exhibition fully involved Herborth in the debate on the issue of how 'authentic' Brazilian art should be; and as we analyse it we can better understand what the 'aboriginal' inspiration referred to in the article in *O Jornal* of March 21 precisely was.



**Figure 1.** Ceramic vases produced by Karl-August Herboth in the *Companhia Porcelana Brasileira* (Anonymous, 1926a)

Herboth's submission to the *Exposição Geral*, exhibited as no. 386 in the Applied Arts section, was designated in the catalogue as a '*decorative composition in three panels (consisting of an alphabet, vocabulary, drawings and applied decoration), inspired by the decorative patterns of Brazilian Indians of the lower Amazon (Marajo)*' (Levy, 1990, p. 698). This submission was highlighted in the Rio de Janeiro press: for example, the anonymous writer of the newspaper *O Imparcial* (The Impartial) described it as '*admirable [and] inspired by one of the most authentic sources of Brazilian art*' (Anonymous, 1926c); in *O Jornal*, a writer signing himself A. C. considered '*exceptionally valuable the submission of the renowned prof. Dr. August Herboth, whose works of decorative composition were inspired by the drawings and inscriptions of our Indians, marking the beginning of a new era in Brazilian art*' (A. C., 1926). But certainly the greatest honour received by Herboth's submission was a Gold Medal, confirming that its reception by the jury of the *Exposição Geral* was very positive.

Just over a month after the opening of the *Exposição Geral* of 1926, Herboth began to publish his articles in *O Jornal*. It does not seem coincidental that in the first two articles of the series, published on 19 and 26 September and

entitled *The role of indigenous culture in Brazilian art* and *The primitive art of Brazil and its significance for modern art*, respectively, Herborth deliberately reaffirmed the central proposition of his submission to the *Exposição Geral*, i. e., 'the use of aesthetic forms from Brazilian aboriginal art [...] which may be employed in a powerful manner to create a national art' (Herborth, 1926a). This proposition was a *leitmotiv* that appeared throughout almost all of Herborth's texts published in *O Jornal*. Its basic assumption was Herborth's belief that the diverse Brazilian native peoples had developed in complete isolation. As their material culture had not been 'contaminated' by foreign influences, they were the perfect source for the creation of an 'authentic' Brazilian art. In this regard, he asserted: 'having no contact with any other country or race, the [Brazilian] Indians were directly impressed by their environment and depicted in their art only what they naturally saw and felt. Their art was therefore purely autochthonous, like the art of all primitive peoples' (Herborth, 1926a).

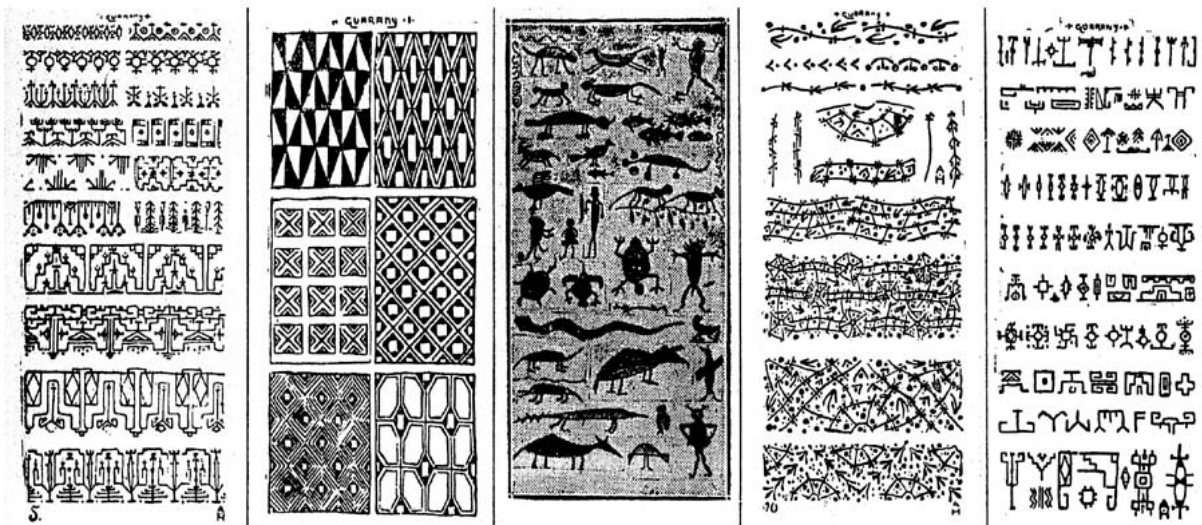
Moreover, Herborth argued that the use of 'indigenous' art constituted 'the foundation of modern art, not only in Brazil but also in other countries' (Herborth, 1926a). However, Herborth's appreciation of Brazilian forms of native art was highly ambivalent: on the one hand, he considered them admirable, especially when one remembered the precarious conditions in which they were produced; on the other, these forms of art were 'simplistic and even rude' (Herborth, 1926a), not completely adequate in regard to modern needs. It was necessary to adapt and reform them; it was also necessary to establish the connection between 'primitive art and modern scientific achievements' (Herborth, 1926a). Herborth suggested ways of doing so in several articles, perhaps the most comprehensive being the aforementioned *The primitive art of Brazil and its significance for modern art*, in which he described the creation process of the works that he submitted to the *Exposição Geral* of 1926.

Herboth acquired his knowledge of the material culture of Brazilian native peoples in visits to institutions like the *Museu Nacional* (National Museum) in Rio de Janeiro (Herborth 1927a), which had a long tradition in archaeological and ethnological studies. However, although Herborth was not unaware of the variety of the natives' production, he was not concerned with scientific accuracy

and did not consider the distinctions between the Brazilian native traditions. On the contrary, Herborth's practice was based on the synthesis, recombination and reinterpretation of elements from diverse native cultures, which he used as a kind of 'visual raw material' available for moulding into new forms – in exactly the same way he used to create porcelain from Brazilian raw materials. For example, concerning the panels that he exhibited in the *Exposição Geral*, he explained:

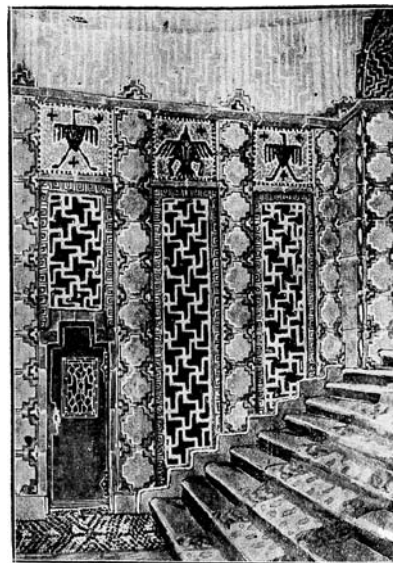
In the composition of these art alphabets I took into account all branches of art, including those applied to architecture. To create the basis of this formula I used all the materials that could be found locally and employed them in decorative art. To create the elements of Brazilian art I did not consider the work of the diverse tribes in isolation: on the contrary, I considered the art of all the tribes beforehand to prevent the fragmentation of national art. [...] I combined decorative motifs from one tribe with motifs from another; I merged ornaments originated from the art of Southern Brazil with ornaments from the north of the country to create a frieze or to embellish an object. (Herborth, 1926b)

In order to verify how much this description corresponds to Herborth's practice, it is worth examining more closely the illustrations in *The primitive art of Brazil and its significance for modern art*, which, as stated in one of the captions of the article, reproduced works that Herborth submitted to the *Exposição Geral* of 1926. The entire article occupies almost half a page of *O Jornal* and contains five black and white illustrations in various styles (**Figure 2**). The fifth illustration, for example, reinterprets the geometrical designs that decorate the ceramics produced by the so-called *marajoara* culture, which flourished in the second half of the first millennium of our era and in the beginning of the second (Prous, 2007; Schann, 1996). The third illustration is the less abstract, showing stylized depictions of various animals and human figures, which are very similar to the rock paintings of the so-called *Tradição Planalto* (literally, Plateau Tradition), which can be found between the Brazilian States of Paraná and Tocantins. As Andre Prous summarized (2007, p. 29), *Planalto* paintings are usually monochrome and evenly filled in, just as in Herborth's plate.



**Figure 2.** Reproductions of works submitted by Karl-August Herborth to the *Exposição Geral de Belas Artes* of 1926 (Herborth, 1926b)

An appreciation of other works published by Herborth in *O Jornal* confirms that he effectively merged motifs from diverse cultures. An example is the interior decoration proposed by the artist in his article entitled *The Urban Aesthetics* (Herborth, 1926d) (**Figure 3**), in which depictions of birds similar to those of the *Tradição Planalto* are combined with abstract motifs that are found more commonly in the material culture of Northern Brazil native peoples, as the *Asurini* or the *Kaxinawa* (Lagrou, 2009).



**Figure 3.** Project for an interior decoration proposed by Karl-August Herborth (Herborth, 1926d)

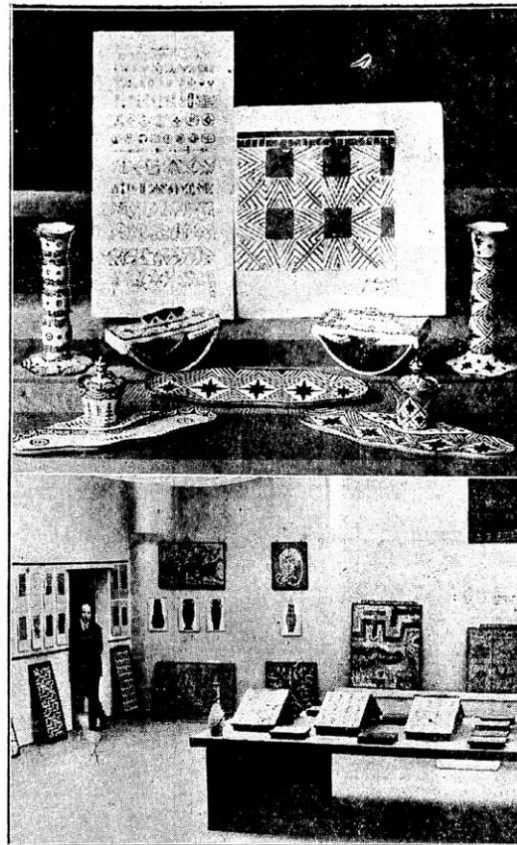
This practice, which disregarded the particularities of Brazilian native cultures, can be related to the terminology used by Herborth, who usually employed generic terms such as *'barbaric,' 'primitive'* or *'savage'* to designate these cultures. Clearly offensive to most modern readers, Herborth's terminology seems to reveal, above all, his prejudices as a western 'civilized' man, which presumably may have been accentuated by his condition as a foreign artist established in Brazil. It was only when referring to his own production that Herborth employed a seemingly more accurate term: 'guarany.' However, for Herborth, 'guarany' did not designate a specific culture: it was simply a name for the hybrid and eclectic style he sought to create, using motifs from a variety of native sources. This can be inferred, for example, in the aforementioned illustrations in *The primitive art of Brazil and its significance for modern art*, where 'GUARANY' is employed as a title, clearly merging the diverse origins of the decorative motifs.

Herborth employed the term 'guarany' in several other articles and works. Particularly noteworthy is a series of albums in which the artist *'developed a repertoire of ca. 470 drawings in gouache, watercolour and ink. They present various uses of indigenous motifs applied to furniture design, vases, fabrics and even architecture'* (Roiter, 2012, p. 87) - it is worth noting that several of these drawings were used as illustrations in his articles in *O Jornal*. The dating of the "Guarany" albums – some of which belong today to the Portuguese art collector José Manuel Rodrigues Berardo - is also significant: it begins in 1921 and lasts until 1930, indicating that the development of the series continued even after Herborth's return to Europe.

Herborth continued to publish his articles in *O Jornal* until mid-1927. Curiously, the last of these articles, published on June 3 and entitled *The Artistic Alsace* (Herborth, 1927d), makes no reference to the ideal of creating a Brazilian art that had been the hallmark of Herborth's campaign in the Rio de Janeiro press. At this point, Herborth might have left Brazil. For this reason, an article published in *O Jornal* on August 24, 1927, was revealing: it reported that the artist had organized, in July of that year, an exhibition of works derived from his research in Brazil in the *Vereinigten Staatsschule* in Berlin. The photos that illustrate this



article (**Figure 4**) show a view of the exhibition's installation, where Herborth can be seen, with some of his works, including a plate with decorative motifs which are very similar to the ones he submitted to the *Exposição Geral* of 1926. The exhibition in Berlin was featured in the German press and on that occasion Herborth expressed his intention to make a new submission to the *Exposição Geral* of 1927, which unfortunately never happened.



**Figure 4.** Views of the exhibition organized by Karl-August Herborth in the *Vereinigten Staatschule* in Berlin, July 1927. (Anonymous, 1927)

The reasons behind Herborth's return to Europe are unclear and deserve deeper research, as do other aspects of his production in Brazil - for example, it is particularly interesting his blending of "indigenous" motifs and some artistic techniques often associated with Luso-Brazilian tradition, as mosaic pavements and ceramic tiles (Herborth 1927b; Herborth, 1927c) (**Figure 5**). This article is therefore just an initial effort in this direction. Nevertheless, it is possible from now on to state that Herborth's work in Brazil, especially as a collaborator in *O*

*Jornal*, was highly significant. Although he was not the first to make use of the art of the Brazilian native peoples - as he sometimes claimed (Herborth, 1926b) -, his contribution was important to the debates on the creation of a Brazilian identity in the visual arts, which intensified in the late 1920s and also marked Brazilian art in the following decade. For its quality as well as its inherent contradictions, Herborth's contribution is highly relevant to Brazilian art historiography as it can help us to understand better the various appropriations of Modernism made in Brazil in the early decades of the twentieth century.



**Figure 5.** Projects for mosaic pavements proposed by August Herborth (Herborth, 1927b)

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## VENTURA TERRA, MODERN TOWN PLANNER?

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### Abstract

*In 1980 Vieira de Almeida introduced Choay's famous distinction between a progressive and a culturalist model in town planning in Portuguese architectural history. He did so with a twist: instead of using it to characterize attitudes towards the planning of cities and their relation with the past, he proposes this distinction for architectural production in the early 20th century. Since then, this distinction has been frequently adopted in Portuguese historiography, especially when discussing the two architects which Vieira de Almeida elected as representatives of the progressive and culturalist models: Miguel Ventura Terra and Raúl Lino.*

*While in architectural historiography this freely appropriated distinction has proven very fruitful, providing, for example, the conceptual instruments to revisit both architects beyond the problem of ornamental style their work until then often had been confined to, it is more problematic when turning it back to its original planning context. To argue this I will discuss Ventura Terra's short but important activity in town planning in Lisbon, as member of the first Republican town council (1908-1913). It will be argued that the complex relationships and many factors which condition and form Ventura Terra's planning projects cannot be adequately grasped by terms such as culturalist or progressive. The modernity of his projects and proposals for the town of Lisbon imply a coexistence of distinct values and multiple motivations, and appropriations of both local, place-specific elements and international planning models.*

**Keywords** Miguel Ventura Terra, urban aesthetic, town planning, Parque Eduardo VII

### Ventura Terra's planning activity and art history

One of the less-known aspects of the production of the architect Miguel Ventura Terra (1866-1919) is that of town planning and urban design (Xardoné, Costa, & Rufino, 2009). Terra was one of the Republican representatives elected for Lisbon during the municipal elections of 1908, two years before the overthrow of the Monarchy. In this function he became heavily involved in planning projects.<sup>1</sup> Raquel Henriques da Silva (2006) has emphasized the relevance of his work and argued it is founded on an idea of the city which both respects history and is

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<sup>1</sup> On this election and town council, see Câmara Municipal de Lisboa (2010) and Reis (2010). The Republican Party would continue its series of political gains until the revolution of 5 October 1910 abolished monarchy. Terra continued town councillor until 31 January 1913. Afterwards (1913-1915) he would produce an urban improvement plan (*plano de melhoramentos*) for the city of Funchal, capital of the Madeira archipelago (Vasconcelos 2008).

open to expansion and modernization. Thus she suggested it could be interpreted as a synthesis of Françoise Choay's opposition between 'progressive' and 'culturalist' attitudes towards planning and urban heritage (Choay, 1965),<sup>2</sup>

Choay's terminology was first introduced in Portuguese architectural history by Pedro Vieira de Almeida (1986), who elected Terra and Raul Lino as representatives of respectively the progressive and culturalist model. This highly original appropriation, focusing on *architecture's* relationship to the past, provided for conceptual instruments to revisit both architects beyond the problem of ornamental style their work until then often had been confined to (Ramos, 2011a). Almeida would continue to work on this topic, proposing an idea of modernity founded as much on (increasingly critical) continuity as rupture (Almeida, 1994), on which Silva relies to formulate her hypothesis. That Silva proposes to consider Terra as having surpassed Choay's opposition thus at least signalizes a certain discomfort in turning her model back to its original context of town planning and heritage.

An important argument of Silva is Terra's attitude towards urban heritage: he considers it as a legacy to be preserved as long as it doesn't obstruct development. However, Choay herself had noted her models are only to be found in its pure form in discourse, as they consider the city as a reproducible object and not as a process or a problem (Choay, 1965, p. 26). Both models refuse the actually existing city by calling either on the past or on the future, that is, by invoking a normativity based on history or modernity which is their necessary utopian element. Any concrete intervention into the city would always include elements of both models in varying proportions, and can only be considered *relatively* progressive or culturalist.

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<sup>2</sup> Further study of Terra's planning activity did not follow Silva's hypothesis. On the contrary, a study (Mangorrinha, 2010) in the context of a Colloquium on the first Republican town council, extolling the 'intensely utopian' character of Terra's work, re-inscribes it in the very narratives of decadence, periphery and delayed transmission from which Silva had attempted to uncover it. For a critique of such models of progress and delay, see Santos 2011. In Mangorrinha's account, though he doesn't mention Choay's or any other interpretative model, Terra becomes an extreme case of (frustrated, visionary) progressive utopianism, imprisoned in the confining limits of a local, backward culture.

This is an important counter-argument to Silva's hypothesis, as the *practice* of town planning or urban design cannot but be some sort of synthesis or compromise between both extremes. In this sense one could as well propose some sort of 'enlightened progressivism' regarding Terra's attitude towards heritage, more in line with Almeida's view. There is however something discomfoting with this idea, what I think lead Silva to her proposal of a synthesis. In Terra's planning practice the relation between heritage and modernization does not really seem to constitute a dilemma between mutually exclusive terms. The coexistence of 'progress' with persistences and survivals of the past didn't pose what Ramos (2011b, p. 26) calls in another context the anguish of choice. Perhaps, in line with ideas about the constitutional *porosity* (Cabral, 2007, p. 15) or *impurity* (Ramos, 2011b, p. 25) of modernity in Portugal, it could be argued that for Terra the past was inevitably present but not necessarily an obstacle.

It is in this sense that I will propose here that the basic problems Terra faced may have been others than those which Choay's models help to make visible. To do so, I will place Terra's work as town councillor against a background composed both of local concerns and ideas circulating internationally trough the late 'formative phase' of town planning.<sup>3</sup>

### **Urban aesthetics**

If during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 'progress' was much discussed in Portugal, this was not exclusively social, economic or political progress. Architects and other intellectuals also discussed the 'artistic progress' they felt Lisbon was in need of. These discussions are an important background for Terra's proposals for the city and can be organized around what I will call an 'urban aesthetic,' and which covers the frequent but not very consistent

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<sup>3</sup> I will use the designation 'town planning' as it is the most current British expression at the time (for example, Unwin, 1909, or Geddis, 1915), but take it to cover the whole spectre of city-building varieties being cultivated around Europe and the USA at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For an overview, Sonne (2003) and Bohl and Lejeune (2009).

appearance of terms as *estética cidadina*, *estética da cidade*, *estética urbana*, *estética municipal* or also *estética da rua*, *das edificações*, etc.<sup>4</sup> As was happening around Europe at the basis of this idea was a critique of the aesthetic insufficiency of the modern city (Collins & Crasemann Collins, 2006; Zucconi, 1992; Bohl & Lejeune, 2009). Though this international context and its protagonists are hardly ever mentioned in Portugal the discussion around an 'urban aesthetic' is best seen against this background.<sup>5</sup> The situation in Lisbon is in this sense quite similar to the one Piccinelli (1992) describes in Milan before the first World War: journalist, writers and other intellectuals used the concept of *estetica urbana* to react in a common front against what they considered purely hygienist approaches ruining the city.

While in Milan, as elsewhere, this reaction developed into an (international) dialogue and systematic theoretical reflection in Portugal it hardly goes beyond a basic consensus on the lack of aesthetic quality of the city. The above-mentioned terms forming this constellation of an 'urban aesthetic' are never defined nor differentiated from each other. Though it is quite possible to inventory imaginations and literary fictions of a different city according to Choay's models these didn't translate into competing programs. They mostly coexisted without major problems, converging in an apparent consensus of different interests.<sup>6</sup> In this sense in Portugal I think it makes more sense to talk of 'urban aesthetic' as a common place than a real concept.

One of these converging interests was that of architects, who'd constituted a class association in 1902 (SAP, Society of Portuguese Architects) and attempted to appropriate the issue as their special domain in order to fortify their weak social and professional status (Monteiro, 1906). They argued that architects

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4 These discussions have already been discussed by Barata (2007) as a movement in favour of the aesthetic quality of the city's architecture, and more exhaustively by Figueiredo (2007), who defines it as a campaign in favour of the city's 'aesthetization.' On 'urban aesthetics' see also Ladd (1987) and Remesar (forthcoming).

5 However, one of the first texts on the matter starts precisely with a brief notice on the 1900 *Congrès d'Art Public*, held in Paris during the International Exhibition (Portal, 1900).

6 Thus, Melo de Matos, a clear promoter of progressive urban ideas (Mattos, 1906, 1908), was also an enthusiastic defender of the idea of adapting traditional styles for urban residential construction (Mattos, 1903).



were the professionals qualified to deal with the city's 'aesthetic', that is, to exercise aesthetic control over the urban environment, and thus claimed their right at a more relevant public role.

This becomes very clear in a statement they delivered to the Town Council of Lisbon in 1907 (Sociedade de Architectos Portuguezes, 1907). Under the title 'The aesthetic of the capital' (*A esthetica da capital*) the architects called for a 'regulation of the aesthetic of building' (*a esthetica da edificação*) to combat the 'criminal freedom' of those suffocating the city with banal constructions 'devoid of the most elementary conditions of beauty' (*desprovidas das mais elementares condições de belleza*). The 'heartbreaking appearance' (*aspecto desolador*) of the modern city due the absence of legislation was a 'sad testimony to the lack of artistic education of the country' (*triste testemunho da falta de educação artistica do paiz*) and of 'progress of art and civilization', in contrast to practices of 'cultured countries' (*paizes civilisados*).<sup>7</sup>

It is especially interesting to see how they assert public right at intervention over (private) architectural façades by defining the street as public space (*logradouro dos municipes*), thus justifying the exercise of 'artistic censorship' (*censura artistica*).<sup>8</sup> The last paragraphs define the place of architects within this panorama and ask for municipal regulation over the city's aesthetic, introduction of aesthetic appreciation of future buildings and the creation of a specialized body composed by artists for its supervision.

The fundamental question is thus aesthetic control of the built environment. Only architects could save the city from aesthetic failure, as city-building was not merely a science, susceptible of codification, but also an art depending on intuition or feeling in response to place.

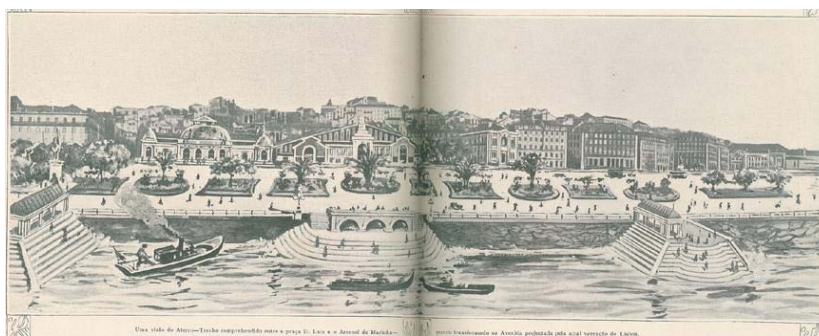
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<sup>7</sup> A little further: '*Em todos os paizes não só nas suas capitães, como nas suas cidades mais grandiosas, de ha muito tempo que é lei o embellezamento das fachadas, havendo alguns onde os proprietarios têm que construir subordinados a um typo de architectura que dê unidade á praça ou avenida, e outros em que se estabelecem premios para as fachadas da mais bella concepção artistica, sem que todavia entre nós até hoje, n'um triste dexleixo pela marcha triumphal da civilização, nos tenhamos occupado de tão importante assumpto.*' (Sociedade de Architectos Portuguezes, 1907)

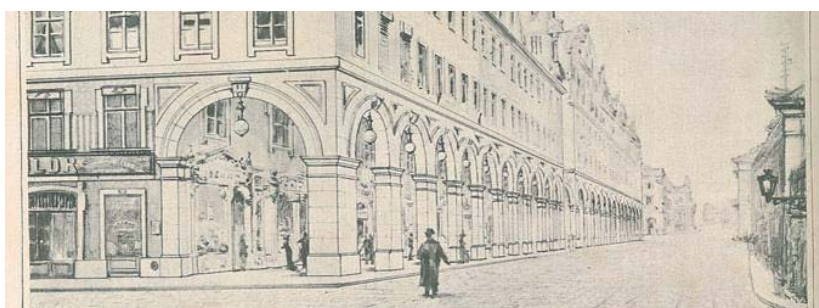
<sup>8</sup> This idea of a public right over the aesthetic appearance of public space, and thus over its vertical planes constituted by architecture, had already been stated in 1900 (Portal, 1900).

## Ventura Terra as town planner

When in 1908 Ventura Terra – an active member and former president of the SAP – is elected town councillor he consequently takes with him a program in favour of aesthetic control of public space. This is precisely one of the main points in his outline of study proposals presented during one of the first municipal sessions, together with the study of a general 'improvement plan' of the city focusing on the riverside and strategic urban projects such as the execution of the Eduardo VII park, the solution of a traffic bottle-neck (Rua do Arsenal) or the creation of a green belt around the city (Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1908, p. 398-399).



**Figure 1.** Graphic rendering of Terra's proposal for the riverside. On the left, the enlarged fish market. ("Lisboa futura," 1910).



**Figure 2.** Graphic rendering of Terra's proposal for the Rua do Arsenal, to be enlarged through an arcade for pedestrians. ("Lisboa futura," 1910).

None of his projects were executed and little of the documentation on his larger improvement plan seems to have survived.<sup>9</sup> Here I want to focus on the role played by the idea of an 'urban aesthetic' in Terra's activity and trace its presence in his project for the Eduardo VII park.<sup>10</sup>

This project was in fact a variant of an 1899 project already in (slow) execution, which was itself a re-elaboration by the municipal Department of Public Works of an original 1895 project by the French entrepreneur Henri Lusseau. The revision of this project was for the town council a priority, as its ever-postponed execution was the very image of the city's frustrated desires of modernization and the 1910 revolution invested the site with additional symbolism (the Marquês de Pombal square and the lower part of the park were strategic to the revolution's success). Terra's re-elaboration of the project was one of the first causes of conflict with the engineer since 1909 responsible for the Department of Public Works, Diogo Peres. Aesthetic factors seem to have played a major role in this conflict and were an important motive for Terra's reorganization of the municipal machinery.

From the start aesthetic considerations played a significant role in the town council's decisions (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1909, p. 58, 104, 116, 147, etc.) though legislation in defence of 'aesthetic control' proved more difficult (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1910, p. 10-11). During the second half of 1909 a Commission of Municipal Aesthetic (*Comissão de Estética Municipal*) was created on Terra's proposal (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1909, p. 491) in order to – as the architects had asked for – supervise municipal control over the city's aesthetic and 'artistic comfort' (*conforto artistico*), in which there is a significant concern with taking advantage of the 'magnificent panoramas' of the city,

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9 Different sources mention the existence of detailed plans included in a general, vast improvement plan ("Lisboa transforma-se... Vão começar as obras do Parque Eduardo VII," 1911; "A futura ponte sobre o Tejo," 1911; Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1911, p. 339-340), though the municipal archive doesn't seem to preserve any of it but approved partial projects such as those for the Eduardo VII park, the enlargement of the Rua do Arsenal or the amplification of the fish market (Mercado 24 de Julho).

10 "Variante do projecto do parque Eduardo VII, aprovado em janeiro de 1900, elaborada segundo a proposta apresentada pelo Ex.mo Snr. Vereador Miguel Ventura Terra em sessão da Camara Municipal de 3 de dezembro de 1908," 1910, at the Municipal Archive of Lisbon.

besides the aesthetic appearance of public spaces (avenues, squares, parks, etc.).<sup>11</sup>

This commission will be an important organism backing up Terra's plans for the Eduardo VII park later on (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1911, p. 59), when it causes increasing conflict between Terra and Peres. Peres files two highly critical reports on Terra's variant project and later states his critiques publicly ("O Parque Eduardo VII," 1912), for which he is officially reprimanded.<sup>12</sup>

Surely for this reason Terra attempted to remove the project's elaboration as much as possible from Peres' control. In June 1911 he has it transited from the garden section to the architectural section, directed by José Alexandre Soares, a follow architect, with the argument it was 'a work in which art dominates' (*uma obra onde predomina a arte*), especially the arts of landscape architecture (*arquitectura paisagista*), monumental architecture and 'urban architecture', which I think could be interpreted as urban design (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1911, p. 353). In July he further proposes to reorganize the entire Department of Public Works, dividing it into two new Departments, one of Architecture and another of Engineering, in an attempt to remove aesthetic issues entirely from Peres' influence (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1911, p. 449).

He gives as a reason the need to distinguish between the distinct competences and responsibilities of engineering and architecture, thus ending their confusing and the long-standing subordination of the latter to the first in municipal (and national) institutions (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1911, p. 449). His reorganization thus had an exemplary intention, backed by international good

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11 The Commission was composed by the municipal President, the directors of the Department of Public Works and of its subsection of Architecture; from outside the municipality, an architect, painter, sculptor and art critic elected by the Royal Association of the Fine-Arts, and members of the Council of National Monuments, the National Society of Fine-Arts and the architect's Society. (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1909, p. 491) The Commission isn't completely organized until next year (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1909, p. 542, 820). Its real functioning is difficult to reconstruct, as the minutes of their meetings either do not exist or are not yet located in the Municipal Archive, though they regularly appear in the municipal minutes as being consulted or giving opinions on matters relating to aesthetic issues.

12 This process can be followed throughout the municipal minutes (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1908-1913) as well as the copies of departmental notices (*Copiadores de ofícios*) kept at the Municipal Archive of Lisbon.

practices.<sup>13</sup> The Department of Architecture would, besides architecture, be responsible for Parks, Gardens and Cemeteries as well as those sections related to the 'embellishing' (*aformoseamento*) and 'comfort' of the city (general composition of the city plan, urban furniture, including ornamental pavement, public art, occupation of public space). The Department of Engineering for works of its speciality, surveys, public amenities (sewage, water, gas, electricity), pavement and roads. The creation of the Commission on Municipal Aesthetics and the reorganization of the municipal Department of Public Work will be Terra's most lasting interventions; they are only reviewed during the municipal reform by the *Estado Novo* during the 1930s, in which some key points remain.

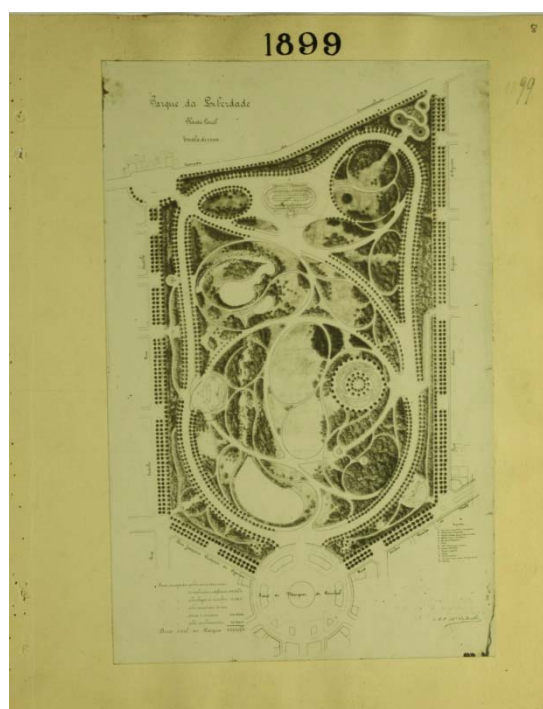
Having this in mind, the Eduardo VII project can be considered as a showcase for Terra's complete improvement plans, first step towards his riverside regeneration, as he states when work starts ("Lisboa transforma-se... Vão começar as obras do Parque Eduardo VII," 1911). It had to show the advantages of an 'aesthetic', architectural approach, as both more efficient and with better results than the 'old' engineer-based approach. In this sense it doesn't surprise to see Diogo Peres appear in 1914, after the town council leaves office in January 1913, as one of the promoters of the project's suspension and substitution for the earlier project from 1899 he championed ("O Parque Eduardo VII," 1914). The only trace left of Terra's proposal is the house built on the one lot sold in two failed auctions, and by then finished.<sup>14</sup> However, this substitution didn't solve the financial problem Peres correctly had assessed ("O Parque Eduardo VII," 1912), causing a *de facto* impasse in the park's construction only solved during the 1940s (Tostões, 1992).

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13 Thus, the architects' Society, Council of Art and Archaeology and National Society of the Fine-Arts celebrate the decision (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1911, p. 491, 507, 522). Terra himself presents his reorganization at the IX International Congress of Architects in Rome (2-10 October 1911) and relates it to the congress' conclusions on the separation between architecture and engineering (p. 740-741).

14 Terra himself was the architect, and it was certainly fruit of a deal between him and the owner, the Paris-based artist Artur Prat, to function as a showcase. With the project's suspension, instead of an idyllic setting between artistic houses and greenery, Prat's house remained for some 20 years surrounded by a building site. Today it is cased into a glass and iron structure ironically housing the Order of Engineers, almost as an involuntary monument to the engineer's victory in this particular instance of the engineer-architect conflict.

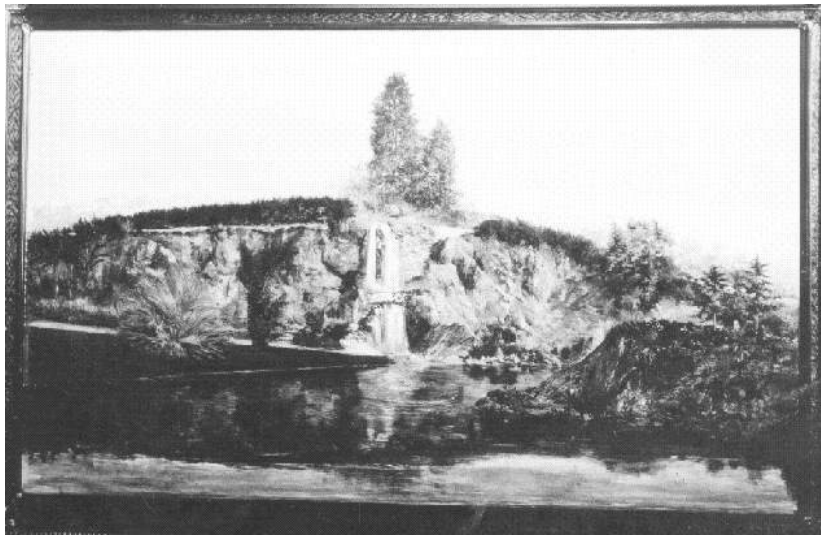
It is in this sense instructive to explore the 'aesthetic' points of conflict on the park. Terra's proposal aimed at solving the problem of financing the park's construction by selling small lots on the parks' fringes for 'artistic' residences. Another fundamental change was the location of a future Exhibition Palace. Peres considered surrounding a park by buildings an *a priori* bad idea and defends the stylistic unity and 'harmonious whole' of the 1899 project. He in fact insists on visual arguments regarding the palace's location,<sup>15</sup> on the scenographic perspective of the palace, dominating the city and picturesquely framed by the park but otherwise separated from the city itself. Looking at artistic renderings of the 1899 project (figure 4) it is easy to see how they imagine the park as an enclosed area of nature, as a refuge of small waterfalls, soothing water and meandering paths in which to forget the horrors of urban civilization.



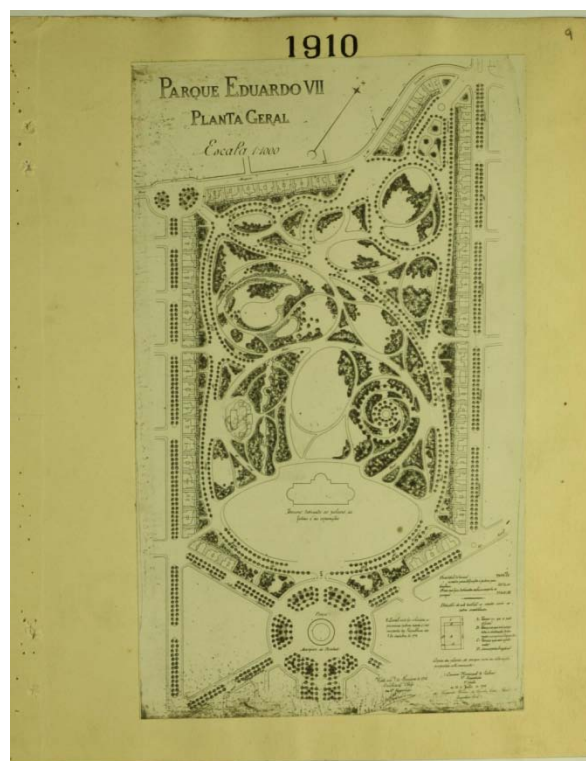
**Figure 3.** 1899 Project for the Eduardo VII Park. The palace is located North. Nearby the circular square below is an artificial lake. (Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1936).

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15 For example: '*Uma fachada monumental sobre a Rotunda [the Marquês de Pombal square], ennobreceria a praça, tornando-a grandiosa e imponente,*' or '*um dos pontos de vista mais bellos da cidade, que é o alto do parque d'onde os olhos estendendo-se ao longo da Avenida vão repousar sobre as aguas espelhejantes do rio e os fundos verdejantes dos montes da Outra Banda.*' ('O Parque Eduardo VII,' 1912)



**Figure 4.** Photographic reproduction of an oil painting with artistic rendering of the lake and waterfall of the Eduardo VII Park. The oil painting was probably produced for the 1900 Paris exhibition. (Lima, n.d.).



**Figure 5.** Miguel Ventura Terra's project for the Eduardo VII Park. The palace has moved to a vast promenade nearby the square below and the park is surrounded by small lots for housing. (Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1936).

Terra's fellow architect Adães Bermudes (1912) answers Peres' objections and correctly diagnoses the problem. He notes the arguments of functionality which Peres doesn't consider at all in his preference for a placement on the park's top:

1. the palace is to be visited, and the top of the park would hamper access;
2. its function it is to exhibit what is inside and not to watch the views, for which a proper construction (such as a watchtower) would be much fitter;
3. the trees of the park would impede the very view from the park's top, or else it would have to be park without trees.

Similarly he counters the idea of placing it immediately nearby the Marquês do Pombal square, as Peres had considered in alternative, for the logistic problem of access and circulation it would create. He thus argues Terra's idea is the only valid one.

The background to these divergences seems to have been Peres' conception of the park as an enclosed artwork against Terra's approach which considers it as a public space. For Terra artistic elements are to be organized according to criteria of usability and functionality which should not be sacrificed to an imagined aesthetic harmony or unity. His proposal, by putting the palace right in front of the Marquês de Pombal square (predictably a future point of convergence), and by creating an inviting promenade at the very start of the park, would open up the park to urban life and thus constitute it as urban public space.

The same reasoning can be noted in his defence of the residential belt around the park. A series of isolated and artistically distributed houses surrounded by greenery would be much more attractive than the original fencing he elsewhere defined as chicken wire (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1909, p. 428). They would also help to mediate the considerable height differences along the park's limits, up to 8 meters, which the 1899 project solved by slopes. Terra thus uses architecture as transition space. While the slopes and fences would set the park apart from the city, isolate it, architecture could mediate the heights and



integrate the park into urban space. Similarly, the palace could function as an entrance rather than a wall.<sup>16</sup> Architecture was to mediate public space, an idea similarly present in other projects of his (figures 1 and 2). This shows that while architecture seems to dominate his projects, the real object of intervention is public space.

The conflict between Peres and Terra thus shows different perspectives on what the park's design should aim at: in Peres' case, the park and palace should be designed in order to aesthetically frame the city, to create impacting visual *images*, while for Terra the starting point is that the park should be a stage for social interaction and cultural events. In this sense, the aesthetic considerations of Terra, his fellow architects and other intellectuals are very much related to modernization: for them, the revitalization of public space was to be a motor for urban regeneration, and though this revitalization was primarily aesthetic, this was not understood in a purely formal or aestheticist sense.<sup>17</sup>

### **Place and paradigms in Ventura Terra's planning activity**

In a discussion of what the idea of a city as a work of art could mean Brandão (2003) proposes two possibilities: either it is the manifestation of individual aesthetic impulses reproducing a culture of authorship or it must be an 'open work' in constant process. On my account, Terra can not really be identified with the first, though it might go too far to consider the second option. His activity is however close to Brandão's definition of urban design as being in close relation

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16 'A construção do palacio a uns 150 metros de distancia da Praça do Marquez de Pombal, justifica-se pela necessidade de o tornar facilmente acessivel ao publico e de ser assim sem duvida, mais bella a sua situação. Entre a rotunda da Liberdade e o palacio e aos lados d'este, seria construida uma ampla esplanada ajardinada com lagos, quedas de agua, estatuas e balaustradas etc., seguindo-se depois o Parque do qual (...) a vista ficaria perfeitamente desafogada sobre a cidade, Tejo, etc.' (Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 1910, p. 579)

17 'Esse grandioso fóco de arte e de belleza [the Eduardo VII park] será o primeiro marco de moderna civilização, que enobrecerá a cidade e que a collocará ao lado das grandes capitaes. Esse fóco será o diapasão por onde se afinará a transformação esthetica dos nossos burgos. Elle será o educador do gosto publico e d'elle irrardiará a arte vencedora e consoladora.' (Bermudes, 1912)

to the problem of public space and as the 'cultivation of the urban' (Brandão, 2005, p. 117)

Terra's planning activity in Lisbon – however short and apparently without result – implies the coexistence of multiple values and motivations, and appropriations of both local, place-specific elements and international ideas and ideals. It is perhaps better understood without the horizon of historicist normativity implied by Choay's model (Brandão, 2005, p. 198), and instead should start from the confrontation of contemporary ideas, models and theories on planning and the specificities of place. As argues Joyeux-Prunel (2014, p. 7), the study of 'peripheries' should focus on '*space and circulations before constructing evolutions.*'

I want therefore to end with the need for Portuguese art history to revisit this period, and that such re-visitation should start by considering the modern as an 'impure, polyphonic process', as Ramos (2011b) has provocatively argued. For this task, labels such as Choay's or others need to be used critically and at times may be obstacles rather than aids, for they can hide in plain sight some of the places to be visited. 'Urban aesthetic' is just an example: the abundance in sources of such terms has never been taken serious beyond the status of epochal curiosities or misplaced ideas of 'aestheticization.' I hope I have shown it can be useful to have a closer look to them.

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## IBERIAN SYMMETRY

### Távora and Coderch looking for their own modernity

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#### Abstract

*During the 1950s, a new generation of architects arose in the Iberian Peninsula that proposed to regain lost time, reconnecting with current international architecture trends, to become modern once again.*

*The Portuguese Fernando Távora (1923-2005), from his Atlantic side, would be a prominent member of that generation, expressing with examples such as the Ofir House (1958), and his first works at the Quinta da Conceição in Matosinhos (1956), the road to his own modernity that, based on the achievements of the heroic generation of the Modern Movement, also reflected the local particularities of each location and elements of traditional construction.*

*While Távora was trying to define his own modernity with his first projects around Oporto, on the opposite coast of the Peninsula, in Barcelona, looking to the Mediterranean, José Antonio Coderch (1913-1984) also became a major figure proposing a modernity that was critical of the rigidity of orthodox modernism of the early Modern Movement, naturally accepting the influence of the characteristics of each site and its pre-existing qualities. On a trip to Ibiza, Coderch discovered in the anonymous popular architecture an inspiration to develop, with limited material and technological resources, an architecture sensitive to the daily life of those who would inhabit it, to its daily use, without sacrificing the abstraction and rationality of the Modern Movement.*

*As well as participating in the international architectural debate as peripheral members of CIAM, and later as part of the southern group of architects invited to various meetings of Team 10, both Coderch and Távora found in the vernacular architecture around them, arguments that would facilitate the introduction of the Modern Movement into Portugal and Spain adapted to its own special form of modern architecture that aimed to be universal while reflecting its local identity.*

**Keywords:** Távora, Coderch, Popular, South, Pre-existence.

#### Otterlo 1959

The CIAM '59 was held from 7 to 15 September 1959 at the Kröler-Müller Museum in Otterlo, Netherlands. Considered to have been the last CIAM<sup>1</sup>, it was organised by Sandy van Ginkel and Jaap Bakema, together with members of Team 10, representatives of the new generation of architects who had already

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<sup>1</sup> The CIAM (*Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne*) were international congresses organised under the leadership of Le Corbusier and Sigfried Giedion to debate the architectural principles of the Modern Movement and possible architectural solutions for the economic and social situation of the time. They were held from 1928 (CIAM I in La Sarraz, France) until 1959 (CIAM XI in Otterlo, Netherlands).

organised the previous CIAM held in Dubrovnik in 1956 (CIAM X). Although they retained the CIAM acronym for the Otterlo congress, they had already made changes to its format and content (Risselada & van den Heuvel, 2005). This new generation of architects, taking up the baton of the Modern Movement pioneers, considered that following the profound social and economic changes after the end of the Second World War, certain dogma and principles needed to be challenged and revised to meet the demand of the complex reality of the time in a more appropriate manner.

The list of those invited to participate at the Otterlo congress included 43 architects of 20 nationalities. Among the participants from southern Europe were two young Iberian architects who were given the opportunity to present their recent work. They had already gained certain fame and recognition as a result of some of their projects built during the decade that was coming to an end. One was Fernando Távora (1923-2005) from Portugal, who by the age of 36 had built projects in the area around Oporto such as the Vila da Feira Municipal Market (1953-59) and a holiday home at Ofir (1957-58). He had also started work on what were to be some of his most emblematic projects, the Quinta da Conceição Municipal Park at Matosinhos (1956-93), on the northern edge of Oporto, and the Cedro Primary School in Vila Nova de Gaia (1958-60). These projects became a point of reference for subsequent Portuguese architecture. At the Otterlo Congress, Távora presented the Vila da Feira Municipal Market as a work that represented what he was proposing at that time.

The other Iberian architect to distinguish himself at that Otterlo meeting was Spain's José Antonio Coderch de Sentmenat (1913-1984). He went to the CIAM from Barcelona at the proposal of Josep Lluís Sert to present a major project he was working on at the time (and which would unfortunately never be built): the Torre Valentina urban development (1959), a group of homes and a hotel carefully integrated within a pine forest on the Costa Brava. As well as this project, Coderch included on the panels he used to present his work to his colleagues a few black and white photographs taken by his friend, the well-known photographer Francesc Català-Roca, of single-family holiday homes such as the famous Ugalde House (1951) and the Catasús House (1956). As well as

the houses he presented, Coderch included photographs of a very realistic mock-up of a project recently built far from his natural Catalan coast environment, the Olano House in Comillas, Santander, completed in 1957.



**Figure 1.** Partial view of the Vila da Feira Municipal Market. Fernando Távora, 1959. The author.

### **A little light in the shade**

In the decade between 1950 and 1960 the air became a little more breathable in the Iberian Peninsula. Although there was still no full freedom or democracy, there were the first signs of an international opening-up with the aim of encouraging economic growth. In Spain, these were the years that saw the beginning of the end of the autarchy, with a partial breaking of the post-war cultural, economic and social isolation.

Despite the lack of freedom, intellectual, artistic and architectural activity remained alive thanks to a few leading figures who were able to follow what was happening internationally through the limited publications to which they had access and the international gatherings at which they could take part. The opening up of Iberian architecture to the international scene was materialised in



initiatives such as that of the *Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya*, which organised a series of lectures in 1950-51. The cycle was inaugurated by Bruno Zevi, who expressed his defence of organic architecture understood as post-functional architecture, a natural development of the Modern Movement, incorporating irregular forms, greater realism, the search for that which is different and a closer contact with nature.

*Architecture is organic when the spatial arrangement of room, house and city is planned for human happiness, material, psychological and spiritual. The organic is based therefore on a social idea and not on a figurative idea. We can only call architecture organic when it aims at being human before it is humanist. (Zevi, 1950, p. 76)*

At the same time as this outward look was taking place, official entities in the two countries promoted initiatives to identify and catalogue the indigenous features of popular, traditional architecture that set Spain and Portugal apart from the rest of the world<sup>2</sup>.

Without making much noise, from within the system, some of the most noted architects in Spain and Portugal were capable of producing modern, contemporary works. To do so, bearing in mind that the technology and economic resources available to them did not encourage the type of architecture to which they aspired, they relied on the existing workforce, which with its artisanal knowledge was trained to carry out construction with details similar to those that they came across when studying popular, self-built architecture, without architects.

Fernando Távora and José Antonio Coderch were among the few architects who tried to recover modernity in the Iberian Peninsula so as to once again become part of the international architectural movement.

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<sup>2</sup> In Portugal, between 1955 and 1960 the National Union of Architects (*Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos - SNA*), headed by Francisco Keil do Amaral, promoted a project for "Research into Portuguese Regional Architecture" carried out by various teams of architects, including Fernando Távora, which covered all the country's various regions. The results of this study were published in 1961 as *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*.

### **Távora's condition**

From the outset of his career, Fernando Távora was profoundly aware of his Portuguese condition, although he was also influenced by the architecture studied during his trips to the United States, Mexico, Japan, Greece and Egypt, where he paused to draw details of the constructions he visited, which were apparently alien to his Portuguese reality, although he never ceased to evaluate them, making critical comparisons of the virtues and defects of the buildings he visited. In one of his first published texts, *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa*, published in 1945, he made an attempt to put into writing his critical position at that time. In a concise manner he gave notice of his interest in raising the value of popular architecture: "*Popular housing teaches us important lessons because it is the truest, most functional and least fanciful*" (Távora, 1945), although without abandoning research and inclusion of the progress taking place in international architecture of the time, an intermediate path which according to Távora should not mean any loss of character by Portuguese architecture. The problem of concern to Távora was more social than aesthetic. Instead of taking note of the picturesque resources of Portuguese architecture, he considered it was of more relevance to try to determine the social needs of Portuguese dwellings.

### **A solution for the Portuguese house**

Two years before the Otterlo gathering, Fernando Távora received an apparently minor commission for a holiday home in a pine grove located in an intermediate area between the Atlantic coast north of Oporto and the marshlands at the mouth of the Cávado River separating Ofir from Esposende. On one side, beaches and dunes facing the ocean. On the other, the stillness of the flooded land, rising and falling with the tide, where sweet water meets salt. In between, pines on a sandy beach, an ideal site for camping. From the outset, the architect sought to build more than just a house to meet the needs of a specific family on a specific site. In his description, he mentions the prevailing winds: 'in summer a maddening north wind, and in winter, a cruel blow from the southwest'

(Trigueiros, 1993, p. 80); he also made reference to the characteristics of the architecture that existed on the other side of the river, at Esposende; he furthermore synthesised his previous training, distinguishing between the artistic and architectural currents with which he was familiar (and which we consider he approved of): organic architecture, functionalism, neo-empiricism, cubism.

He took this commission as an opportunity to create a synthesis of what he had been aiming at since he was a very young man, that third way he had been championing in his text *O problema da Casa Portuguesa*. His answer for the Ofir House project was a group formed by several parts designed to form a unity. Apart from efficiently resolving the complex functional programme for a small-scale holiday home for a large family in three skilfully-articulated blocks (night, day and service), the Ofir House is integrated within the pines, creating a new condition around it, a protected area from which to enjoy the pine forest in which it is situated.

In a certain manner, Fernando Távora camps in the pine forest, linking the protected interior to the exterior in a direct manner, as Frank Lloyd Wright had done at Ocatillo (1929), his camp in the Arizona desert, taking care to define a perimeter articulated by different pieces protecting an enclosed exterior space, gained for the interior, and around which the construction takes place.



**Figure 2.** Partial view of the East and North facades of the Ofir House, Fao, Esposende. Fernando Távora, 1958. The author.

The materials used for the Ofir House are natural and local. They reflect their natural state, without any camouflaging of their appearance or texture. Woodwork is pine, in its natural colour, so that one can appreciate the grain of the trunk of the tree to which it belonged. Wood is also used for the roof, and more subtly in the reinforced concrete beams because of the texture left behind by the boards used for the forms that were in contact with the liquid concrete before it dried. In what one can imagine must have been a celebration of the execution of the project, small pieces of coloured ceramic, a seashell and inscriptions inlaid in the beams were included before the concrete dried into its definitive petrified state. Just as in the case of the woodwork and the ceiling, Távora used wood in its natural state, without concealing it, for the furniture he designed especially for the house. Warm objects for use in storing the limited belongings of the vacationer, who for the summer will dispense with all unnecessary accessories of bourgeois life. For a while, there will be the enjoyment of living with little, a return to basics that will provide pleasure in the common, the ordinary.

Wood, clay (ceramics), and as a third natural material, stone in different finishes and proportions for the floor of the living-room as a transition from the constructed floors and the sand of the pine grove, and for the chimney, harking back to the ancestral hearth. Távora thus reflected the naturalness and immediacy communicated by traditional constructions, a narrative architecture from which it is possible to read the manner in which it has been built, incorporating only those materials strictly necessary for each function, displaying with clarity those elements that have gone to make up the building. At Ofir, Távora attempted to make modern architecture with simple materials (Frechilla, 1986).



**Figure 3.** Detail of one of the concrete beams of the Ofir House. The author.

This celebration of *in situ* construction, of the way in which things are built, was not present only in popular architecture, but would also be one of the characteristics of the new Modern Movement generation that arose following the Second World War. There was to be a recovery of the focus on the materiality of architecture, a fundamental part of the discourse of certain English architects and artists during those years, defined subsequently as members of the *New Brutalism*, notable among whom were Alison and Peter Smithson with their first *as found* works in which materials were shown in their natural state, in the rough: *‘We were concerned with the seeing of materials for what they were: the woodness of wood, the sandiness of sand. With this came a distaste of the simulated, such as the new plastics of the period – printed, coloured to imitate a previous product in “natural” materials’.* (Lichtenstein & Schregenberger, 2001, p. 40)

## Coderch seeking Coderch

While Távora in his early works attempted to follow an intermediate course towards modernity that valued tradition, on the opposite shores of the Iberian Peninsula, in the Mediterranean, José Antonio Coderch also aspired to travel a personal path towards a revised modernity, sharing some of the concerns expressed at the international forums at which he took part. After graduating as an architect from the *Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona* in 1940, Coderch moved to Madrid to work at the *Dirección General de Arquitectura* together with Francisco de Asís Cabrero, Rafael Aburto and Ricardo Abaurre, and in Alejandro de la Sota he found a kindred spirit as regards his proposals and intentions. During that period in Madrid he also collaborated with the firm of Secundino Zuazo, someone he would always recognise as one of his teachers. Working in Madrid, he had access to the *Architettura*, *Lo Stile* and *Domus* magazines.

He soon returned to Barcelona to set up his own firm together with his study companion Manuel Valls in 1942. His first commissions were single-family dwellings, mainly holiday homes, for a middle class that was once again thinking of holidaying and enjoying the Mediterranean scenery, before the arrival of mass tourism in search of sun and beaches that would completely alter the Catalan coast and the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. Like Távora, Coderch backed the critical revision of the Modern Movement that was taking place in Europe, and decided to detach himself from his first jobs carried out in Madrid, as well as from the historicist environment encouraged by the regime, taking on the challenge of embarking on a path of his own. In the words of Antón Capitel, *‘Coderch chose to marginalise himself, to withdraw to a world that was of necessity personal’*. (Capitel & Ortega, 1978, p. 5).

In the search for certainties on which to go defining his architectural stand; Coderch resorted to the values and resources offered by traditional Mediterranean architecture<sup>3</sup>. His admiration for this self-built architecture

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<sup>3</sup> During his first period in Madrid, when working for the *Dirección General de Arquitectura*, José Antonio Coderch travelled along the Catalan and eastern coasts of Spain from Cadaqués to

without architects was also in harmony with the path chosen by Gio Ponti and Bernard Rudofsky expressed in the Italian *Domus* magazine. Another reference he would very much bear in mind was the magazine *A.C. Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea*, published between 1931 and 1937 by the G.A.T.E.P.A.C.<sup>4</sup>, in particular the issue dedicated to popular Mediterranean architecture (AA. VV., 1935) and the one on rural architecture on the island of Ibiza (AA. VV., 1936), where he travelled with his partner Manuel Valls to study *in situ* the examples published in those issues of the AC<sup>5</sup>. As Federico Correa would recall: `He was fascinated by the architecture of Ibiza, by its severity. This was of great help to him in achieving a certain purity in his own architecture´ (Galí, 1997, p.30)

### **A house far from the Mediterranean**

In the mid-1950s, Francisco Olano commissioned from Coderch a house at Comillas, Santander, in the north of the Iberian Peninsula.

This commission provided Coderch with the opportunity to build his first project outside Catalonia<sup>6</sup>. The Catalan architect must have felt he was very far from the Mediterranean. The blinding light of Cadaqués or Sitges to which he was accustomed was nothing like the sunny intervals between the clouds and storm fronts of the Cantabrian. Suddenly, after so many years of becoming familiarised with the climate of the Costa Brava, he found himself out of place, unfamiliar with the humid and melancholic environment of Comillas.

The site on which the house was to be built was a long field bordering lengthwise on the Rabia estuary, with a sharp slope running down to the shore. Coderch decided to locate the house almost at the end of the property in a clear area

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Alicante, in order to document a team task for the Plan for Housing Improvement in Fishing Villages.

<sup>4</sup> (Group of Spanish Architects and Technicians for the progress of Contemporary Architecture). *Grupo de Arquitectos y Técnicos Españoles para el Progreso de la Arquitectura Contemporánea*

<sup>5</sup> The magazine *A.C. Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea* was published by the Catalan chapter of the G.A.T.E.P.A.C., known as G.A.T.C.P.A.C., and had as its principal writer Josep Torres Clavé, together with Josep Lluís Sert.

<sup>6</sup> With the exception of the Casa Ferrer Vidal in Mallorca (1946) and his early jobs in Madrid.

with a view of the end of the estuary, the beach at Oyambre, and on a clear day, even the Picos de Europa. Once again he was faced with a site from which to enjoy distant views in several directions, as had been the case when designing the Ugalde House and the house he planned for his family, the Coderch House (1955) at Caldetas, Barcelona. The initial plan was based on the experience acquired with those projects; so as not to have to give up any of the views, this house would also have a radial organisation, and it was decided to raise it above the natural level of the land to increase the sense of observation from a horizontal platform in which the perception of the place changed according to its orientation.

The Olano House continued with the oblique geometry developed somewhat uninhibitedly for the Ugalde House and subsequently at the Coderch House in Caldetas, as well as for the housing in Barceloneta, Barcelona (1951). This time, however, although the proposed geometry was complex, the design of the house was developed on a plan occupying two pentagons, controlled geometric shapes that shared one of their sides. One of the pentagons housed the entrance, three bedrooms, two bathrooms and the service area (kitchen, laundry, two bedrooms and one bathroom); the common living-room and dining-room were located in the other pentagon, an open space from which to enjoy the views in four directions, surrounded by a covered terrace. The two pentagons are reflected in the roof, formed by inclined planes of Arab tiles. Unlike the Ugalde House, where the perimeter is blurred by walls that run following the shape of the site, in the case of the Olano House the perimeter has been rigorously defined. The relationship between interior and exterior is clearly marked by its nature as a house in a rainy environment, unlike the Ugalde house, exposed to the Mediterranean sun and wind.





**Figure 4.** Olano House, Comillas, Santander. José Antonio Coderch and Manuel Valls, 1957. The author.

The interior layout was precisely drawn, with a detail of its partitions, the arrangement of the wooden flooring and the banisters, paying special care in planning the house, as if designing an object by defining each of its parts so that it might be manufactured on an industrial scale, an effort that Coderch had already made, as he had just finished designing the successful *Disa* lamp (1957) made up of strips of wood.

This geometric control of each element was the ripening of an idea that he had been developing over the years. His particular way of planning, carefully designing each interior parameter, each opening in the facade, staircase or chimney is taken to extremes in the Olano House because of what at that time was an unusual element conditioning his activity. As the building would take place away from his Mediterranean environment, far from Barcelona, Coderch was aware that he would not be able to supervise the job in person, and that therefore the outcome of the work to be built could not depend on decisions taken *in situ* during the execution process, as had happened on previous jobs. This circumstance could have led him to define the project with a greater level of

exigency, so that the project's drawings became the definitive proposal, in addition to needing to be easily understood at the execution stage.

The techniques and materials employed in the construction of the Olano House are very similar to those of the Ofir House, and were close to those of popular tradition; however, just as Távora incorporates to the Ofir House elements of a certain sophistication, Coderch includes elements alien to traditional popular architecture, such as the slim steel structure that supports the perimeter terrace of the Olano House, the chimney, also metallic, in the sitting-room, the large windowpanes that intensify the presence of the scenery and enable enjoyment of fabulous views in all directions, or the detail of the white painting of the woodwork in the search for greater abstraction. Unlike Távora, who normally retained the natural colour of materials, Coderch allowed a certain dematerialisation, harmonising the various horizontal and vertical planes with the same white colour. Colour is not missed in the photographs taken by Català-Roca of Coderch's works; on the contrary, the black-and-white images stress the purity, austerity and abstraction pursued by the Catalan architect.

### **From the Popular to the *Super Normal***

During the 1950s, Fernando Távora and José Antonio Coderch were capable of reinterpreting modernity with a look that was very closely linked to their origins and the austere and realistic traditions of popular architecture, while avoiding both the rhetoric of popular folklore and that of forced modernity, understood by some solely as a style. They succeeded in becoming modern with a certain degree of naturalness and spontaneity, in a manner similar to that indicated many years later by Jasper Morrison when analysing an object, Naoto Fukusawa's 'Small Chair' (2005): *'It's modern enough not to be concerned with being modern'*. (Fukasawa & Morrison, 2007, p. 16).

In the case of the two holiday homes analysed, as well as in the other early works of Távora and Coderch, it is possible to appreciate the influence of the admired American architectural style in the flexibility of the interior layout, released from the middle-class constraints of a permanent dwelling, as well as the integration of the houses in the landscape of which they would become a part. Sensitivity to the pre-existing situation of the site and concern for the way in which the planned building modifies the landscape once it has been built was to be a constant in the work of these two Iberian architects. In his first visit to Taliesin East, Távora was interested in Wright's capacity to "make" landscape: *'Taliesin is a landscape; Taliesin is an ensemble where it is perhaps difficult to distinguish between the work of God and the work of Man'* (Távora, 1960, p. 231).

Everyday aspects are valued as something sublime, proposing an austerity in the belongings of the summer vacationer similar to that of Nordic summer refuges, small and containing only essential items, with the house being understood as a place strictly necessary for shelter after spending most of the day outdoors enjoying the surroundings. Such houses could be included among the objects identified by Jasper Morrison as Super Normal, items that appear to be normal but which through use and the passing of time transcend such apparent normality:

*The Super Normal object is the result of a long tradition of evolutionary advancement in the shape of everyday things, not attempting to break with the history of form but rather trying to summarise it, knowing its place in the society of things. Super Normal is the artificial replacement for normal, which with time and understanding may become grafted to everyday life.* (Fukasawa & Morrison, p. 29)

Taking advantage of the freedom offered by the commissioning of a minor project, both Távora and Coderch proposed exquisitely austere homes, which stripped of all extras and based on the achievements of traditional architecture over generations, together with other contemporary works, marked the beginning of a possible path towards their own form of revised modernity.



**Figure 5.** View of the Rabia estuary from the terrace surrounding the Olano House. The author.

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## MODERN ART AND THE CULTURE OF ABSTRACTION AS “WESTERN CULTURE”; THE CASE OF YANNIS MORALIS IN POST-CIVIL WAR GREEK ART FIELD

Annie Malama

Ιστορικός της τέχνης, Επιμελήτρια, Εθνική Πινακοθήκη-Μουσείο Αλεξάνδρου Σούτζου / Art historian, Curator, National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum

### Abstract

*This paper aspires to comment on the ways abstraction achieved a special status in post-civil war Greek art in the historical context of broader political readjustments. In attempting to do so, it is going to explore the definition of modernism as abstraction in the 50s along with the emergence of notions like “individualism” and “spiritual”. Furthermore, the paper aims to highlight the shift in point of reference for a peripheral country like Greece from Paris to New York and its implications to the dominant liberal ideology. Yannis Moralis (1916-2009), the artist who concerns us here as a case study, was a professor of painting in the Athens School of Fine Arts for more than three decades. His work, which has been associated with the ideals of “greekness” in the critical discourse of his time, contributed to the construction of a Modern Greek identity on the level of image making and introduced a certain modernistic approach in the retour à l'ordre artistic atmosphere without actually ever abandoning the reassuring connotations of figurative art. Moralis, an acclaimed artist, was assigned to represent Greece in international events several times throughout his career. Our focus will be on the transformation of his work during the 50s, when he actually tried to invent a kind of personal “figurative abstraction”. More specifically, the paper is going to highlight the path of the artist's works from the 1952 National Art Fair and the Armos group exhibition at the Zappeion Megaron the same year, to his 1958 Venice Biennale participation (along with Yannis Tsarouchis), followed by his first solo exhibition in 1959. What I am going to discuss is how and what made inevitable, even for an artist with a solid background in figurative art and strong connections with the modernist tradition plus a well-established presence in the Greek art world, to adjust to the dominant trend of abstraction.*

**Keywords:** Greek art, post-civil war Greek art, Moralis, modern, abstraction.

An artist's becoming acceded in the Pantheon of artists of his country is an honour and at the same time an obstacle. For, how feasible can it be to approach with a clear mind, without the charge of a symbol, the work of an artist whose name has been identified with 20<sup>th</sup>-century Greek painting, an artist who managed to convey in visual terms, within the confines of a dominant narrative, the meaning of being Greek? How carefully could comments of praise and vague laudatory appraisals

approach the work and its creator; to what extent do they grasp, follow and respect his concerns; how interested are they and how much do they take into consideration the *inner-subjective processes* as well as the *external-objective circumstances* in which the facts unfold? Finally, to what extent do they promote a meaningful discussion concerning the national self-awareness<sup>1</sup>, rather than merely carrying out an "obligation", when arguments are limited to a sometimes conceited and always unproductive collective narcissism, or an often complex-ridden Greek-centric (self-)admiration?

That happens to be the case of Yannis Moralis and these just mentioned above only some of my concerns during the preparation, the research and the documentation phases of the exhibition *A Tribute to Yannis Moralis*, which took place in the National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum, in Athens, Greece, in 2011 (11 May-29 August), two years after the artist had passed away.

In recent years though, monographic studies in Greek art history<sup>2</sup> happens to suggest a different approach to and evaluation of the facts; they actually develop a concept that opens up

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<sup>1</sup> In line with the view presented by Angelos Delivorrias in response to the recent retrospective of another leading 20<sup>th</sup>-century Greek artist, see "Ο Γιάννης Τσαρούχης και η σημασία του έργου του," *Γιάννης Τσαρούχης 1910-1989*, Νίκη Γρυπάρη, Μαρίνα Γερούλάνου, Τάσος Σακελλαρόπουλος (eds.), Athens, Benaki Museum, 2009, p. 9. The "pedagogy of the gaze" practised by Moralis is also discussed by Marina Lambraki-Plaka in her foreword to the exhibition catalogue *Τιμή στον Γιάννη Μόραλη [A Tribute to Yannis Moralis]*, Άννυ Μάλαμα (ed.), Athens, National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> I refer primarily to the studies by Evgenios D. Matthiopoulos on Y. Mitarakis, K. Parthenis, and Y. Tsarouchis. See in particular, J. Mita. *Η ζωή και το έργο του Γιάννη Μηταράκη (1897-1963)*, Athens, Benaki Museum, 2006, C. Parthénis. *Η ζωή και το έργο του Κωστή Παρθένη*, Athens, K. Adam Publishing, 2008, and "Προσεγγίζοντας με σεμνή αναιδεια τη ζωή και το έργο του Γιάννη Τσαρούχη" in *Γιάννης Τσαρούχης 1910-1989*, (2009), pp. 17-60. Also, for the publications by Nikos Hadjinicolaou on Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika and the questions raised by "Greek surrealism" see "Το θεσμικό πλαίσιο και η κοινωνική θέση του καλλιτέχνη: Η περίπτωση του Γκίκα", in Νίκος Δασκαλοθανάσης (ed.), *Β' Συνέδριο Ιστορίας της Τέχνης. Προσεγγίσεις της καλλιτεχνικής δημιουργίας από την Αναγέννηση έως τις μέρες μας (25-27 November 2005)*, Athens, Nefeli, 2008, pp. 23-65, and "Ο γαλλικός υπερρεαλισμός υπήρξε ανάπηρος; Σκέψεις για τον ελληνικό υπερρεαλισμό", in Μάρθα Ιωαννίδου (ed.), *Η τέχνη του 20<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα: Ιστορία-Θεωρία-Εμπειρία. Γ' Συνέδριο Ιστορίας της τέχνης (2-4/11/2007)*, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Department of Art History, 2009, pp. 629-651. Also interesting is the way in which Antonis Kotidis approaches the work of Theofrastos Triantafyllidis in *Τριανταφυλλίδης. Ένα άλλο τριάντα στη ζωγραφική*, Thessaloniki, University Studio Press, 2002.

the dipole artist-work [...] to the much more dialectical consideration of it as an artist-work-audience relationship, and the successive cyclic feedback and transubstantiation of the promises and expectations, of the messages-stimuli, of the rewards and devaluations, as well as of the material values which they exchange. (Ματθιόπουλος, 2006, p. 44)

In short, the ideas produced tend to lift the obstacles to considering the artistic process, the creators and their products in their historical dimension, seeking to historicise precisely those fixed ideas that perpetrated a specific practice of handling the debate about artists and their work, which trapped artists into a space that is distinct and vague, hermetic and inaccessible at the same time, only accessible by the few, select, "initiated" ones, into a realm often beyond the control of rationality and criticism.

In this context seemed to me to be rather unfair to Yannis Moralis, the master who shaped as much as few others did the choices made and directions taken by the visual arts in Greece, to examine him –in the exhibition I curated– through questions that, more or less, determine the answers.

The result of successive implications in the formative process of the modern social identities, the creation of the art subject in Greece was inevitably determined by the overall convergence of a country in a remote European region with the central point(s) of reference<sup>3</sup>, and of course the rates of development and consolidation of the terms of the art field (Bourdieu, 2006) as an autonomous realm and also as an area of production and distribution of symbolic goods in a free market. Nevertheless, another National Gallery exhibition *Metamorphoses of the Modern - the Greek Experience* (14 May-13 Sept. 1992), curated by Anna

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<sup>3</sup> For a similarly regional example, Bulgarian art, see article Irina Genova, "Μοντερνισμοί και εικόνες νεωτερικότητας. Μεταβαλλόμενες αφηγήσεις", in exhibition catalogue *Πρόσωπα του Μοντερνισμού: Βουλγαρία, Ελλάδα, Ρουμανία. Ζωγραφική 1910-1940*, Mariana Vida, Irina Genova, Τάκης Μαυρωτάς (eds.), Athens, B & M Theodorakis Foundation (12/3-9/5) 2010, pp. 15-25.



Kafetsi, attempted to address questions of this kind some years ago. The exhibition should be credited actually with initiating, as far as exhibitions are concerned, the debate regarding the modern in Greece, on a different basis, pointing out that,

Beyond any convergences and similarities in the morphological area, what links Greek art to contemporary European standards of different periods, in an intimate, essential manner, is the replication of roughly the same production and reception conditions. (Καφέτση, 1992, p. 18)

It is in this context, that of a free market, but a small-scale one, of limited potential and newly-established cultural structures, that Yannis Moralis, still a young student, attracted the interest of the *Nea Estia* newspaper art critic, who singled him out amongst the students of Umvertos Argyros's workshop and, insisting on calling him 'Voralis' throughout his article, wrote about him:

[...] The workshop of Mr Umvertos Argyros excels in variety and richness. [...] There is, of course, a homogeneous atmosphere in the works produced in this workshop, yet only here does one see more freedom and personality. A nude study of the same adolescent boy is a common starting point for everyone to demonstrate their merit<sup>4</sup>. Yet, alongside that, the students also exhibit other works, which they have made outdoors, or in their studios – heads, landscapes and still-life paintings. Mr Y. Voralis [sic] commands most of the attention with his bold work. The powerful horse and the carriage driver, both struggling to pull the carriage, make for a composition with unity, an art work with soul, freely made by an artist who already demonstrates a sure hand. Two self-portraits, along with a few caricatures and landscapes, make up a series of works that speak of a future artist. And Mr Voralis [sic] is still but a child. (Δ. Α. Κόκκινος, 1932, pp. 831-832)

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<sup>4</sup> This is perhaps the nude study now in the Athens School of Fine Arts collection. See Νίκος Δασκαλοθανάσης (ed.), *Διδάσκοντας την τέχνη. Η ιστορία της ΑΣΚΤ μέσα από το έργο των δασκάλων της 1840-1974*, Athens, School of Fine Arts, 2004, p. 146.

This, in broad terms, is how exposure to the public realm begins for an artist who was to become acclaimed, to associate his name with the teaching of art in the most ancient official entity that represents Modern Greek Art, the Athens School of Fine Arts, for more than three decades (from 1948 until 1983), to be assigned to represent Greece in international events, to be awarded, decorated, to invest with images the Modern Greek identity for national and international use (Τζιόβας, 2012), to contribute to matching social groups and aesthetic demands<sup>5</sup>, without ever abandoning the reassuring connotations of figurative art.

The pictorial world of Yannis Moralis does not '*seek out the extremes*' (Ξύδης, 1976, p. 76); it neatly arranges images, thoughts and feelings his art, '*a bourgeois art, in all senses, the etymological (urban), the sociological (class), and predominantly "urbane"*' (Ξύδης, p. 76), a '*bourgeois anti-académique*' excludes time in its historical aspect<sup>6</sup> and treats personal moments, remaining in the safety of a sterilised private realm, without climaxes, where everything is under control<sup>7</sup>. A finding that applies to his work from the interwar years to his works of abstract affinities dating from the late 1950s, with his participation in the Venice Biennale, in 1958, as the starting point of his related experiments. His essays in this direction continued, multiplied and arriving at a new,

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<sup>5</sup> See the argument of Antonis Kotidis regarding the '*closed collectivity [...] of an elite of intellectuals and bourgeois*', which constitutes the horizon of reception of the Greekness worldview during the inter-war period, the expansion of its social impact and the transition to '*the open collectivity*' of the post-war lower social strata in general, and finally the '*autobiographical*' collectivity from the 1980s onwards, to use the term coined by Kotidis. Αντώνης Κωτίδης, "Τι απέγινε ο μύθος της ελληνικότητας; Μεταλλαγές ενός κοσμοειδώλου", *Egnatia*, Scientific Annals of Philosophy, v. Department of History and Archaeology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, v. 13, 2009, pp. 165-184.

<sup>6</sup> Discussing the first solo exhibition of the artist's work, D.E. Evangelidis spoke of '*a rarefied atmosphere of artistic game out of place and time*'. See *Νέα Εστία*, v. 65, No. 764, 1/5/1959, p. 620.

<sup>7</sup> '*Moralis is primarily a man of moderation and order, a standard of classical temperament*', wrote about him, a few years after Xidis, Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika in *Νέα Εστία*, 15/5/1979, p. 716, remarks N. Hadjinicolaou (2008) in footnote 27, p. 61, while the term '*discipline*' is already present in the critical note by Eleni Vakalo on the artist's first solo exhibition, in 1959: '*The artist does not merely express the moments of his personal life, or moments of inspiration and emotions, but constructs his work through these moments, this life, his experience, his reflection, his discipline, the soul and spirit*'. See "Οι εκθέσεις του μηνός", *Ζυγός*, No. 41, April 1959, p. 32.

personal style, with the celebration of the geometric nature of the figure as its key characteristic.

The overall assessment of the presence of Moralis in Modern Greek art and its projection in the broader European horizon constitute a challenge that goes beyond this essay. Moreover, in the research process relating to the documentation of the artist's works in the National Gallery collections, I consulted only the relevant literature<sup>8</sup>, as well as the then-contemporary and more recent media coverage. Yet, the organisation and publication of the artist's personal archive, which was donated to the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, and the systematic study of the archives of the Athens School of Fine Arts<sup>9</sup>, will certainly give a new push and a different perspective to research in the near future.

The body of works that comprises the artist's donation to the National Gallery in 1988, the year when the museum organised his retrospective exhibition, represents the artist's most authentic, if I may say so, version. A set of drawings and paintings that unravels the thread of his personal narrative in relation to his professional development. Moralis proposes the Moralis that he would like the public to know and remember, the one that will remain in the *'treasury of Greek artistic production from the post-Byzantine period until today'*<sup>10</sup>. It establishes precisely the artist that the artist himself acknowledges in his work, a strictly figurative painter. This

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<sup>8</sup> Amongst the publications on Yannis Moralis I would single out as key reference for the documentation of his work and activity primarily these two: the tribute that came out on the occasion of his retrospective at the National Gallery, in 1988 (Emporiki Bank of Greece Group of Companies), overseen by the artist himself, curated by Vassilis Fotopoulos and with a foreword by Dimitris Papastamou; the second is *I. Μόραλης. Άγγελιοι, Μουσική, Ποίηση*, published by the Benaki Museum, which includes an extensive and interesting conversation of the artist with Fani-Maria Tsingakou (see *I. Μόραλης. Άγγελιοι, Μουσική, Ποίηση*, Φανή-Μαρία Τσιγκάκου (ed.), Athens, Benaki Museum, 2001). Similarly, of interest is the conversation of Yannis Moralis with Marina Lambraki-Plaka reprinted in the *A Tribute to Yannis Moralis* (2011) exhibition catalogue. Also memorable for documentation is the exhibition catalogue *I. Μόραλης. Μια ανίχνευση*, Κυριάκος Κουτσομάλλης (ed.), documentation: Νίκος Π. Παΐσιος), Museum of Contemporary Art, Basil & Elise Goulandris Foundation, Andros, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> *'The Athens School of Fine Arts archives from the post-war period and beyond have not actually been studied. The history of the school appears to date in the form of a chronicle, based on fragmentary evidence and personal memories'*. See Νίκος Δασκαλοθανάσης (2004), p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> See "The National Gallery today" on the National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum website ([www.nationalgallery.gr](http://www.nationalgallery.gr))

is how he wants to go down in the history of Modern Greek art, although in the late 1980s he worked exclusively in the more abstract style that he had fully embraced for more than two decades. Or, to be more specific, he compiled a leaner, in terms of expressive means, version of figuration.

Proposing, as his own curator, in a way, the concept of an exhibition that might concern him in the future, he donated to the National Gallery works that trace the evolution of his personal experimentation with figuration, echoing his teaching at the Athens School of Fine Arts, first, side by side to a conventional, conservative professor, such as Umvertos Argyros was, as well as close to the '*realist [...] cosmopolitan*' Kefallinos, whose workshop would open up for his students the channel of communication with Paris, '*the technique and spirit of Galanis*'<sup>11</sup>. Kefallinos's workshop, in conjunction with the "filter" of Galanis's art, and, consequently, that of André Derain, would also determine the impact of the stimuli that Moralis received, grasped and managed to assimilate, when he ultimately found himself in Paris, in 1937.

We arrived in Paris in early October 1937. I enrolled in the *École des Beaux-Arts* as an *élève libre* in Charles Guerain's workshop. I also attended the *École des Arts et Métiers* at the same time, the mosaic workshop taught by Magne (his grandfather, who was an architect, must have designed the church of Aghios Sostis). A year later, I moved to the mural lab of Ducos de l'Haille. He was an amazing person, who loved me. He was tall, with huge arms and reminded me of Holbein's portraits. He really liked the frescoes that I made back then. It all seems to me unreal now that I remember it: I had a worker's overalls on and pushed a cart with sand and lime, and I prepared these two-metre high walls with plaster before painting. I wonder how I did it! When I went back to Paris, in 1955, after the war, I planned to take a sabbatical and take it from there. It seems that I had made a good reputation for myself, as I was told by several Greeks who lived there.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Angelos Prokopiou; see "Τεχνοκριτικά σημειώματα. Τα Νεώτερα Ρεύματα εις την Πανελλήνιον του Ζαππείου", *Καθημερινή* 4/11/1948.

I was lucky because when I went to Paris with Nikolaou<sup>12</sup>, the 1937 Art Fair had not yet closed. Unlike the Russian and the German pavilions, which were pompous and tasteless, there was the amazing Spanish pavilion, which was so modern that it could have been made today. It was there that we saw the *Guernica*, its paint still fresh, which made a great impression on us. (Τσιγκάκου, 2001, pp. 34-35)

Indeed, the elegant, dandy figure of Yannis Moralis and the artist's identity for which he stands will be far removed from the "worker" that he might have been when he attended Ducos de l'Haille's workshop. Equally distant were to remain the impressions of modernism in the Spanish pavilion and the *Guernica*. Surprisingly (?) enough, the renewal of the visual language would come to Greece through examples that sought to reduce the dizzying speed of the innovative experimentation exploding in Europe. "Return to order", the famous *retour à l'ordre* of the European interwar period, would have on Moralis, as on most Greek artists of the era<sup>13</sup>, an effect as '*an escape from academic painting and conservatism to a visually related modernism that sought to renew the neoclassical visual art codes*', without challenging their '*empirical rationality*'. (Μαθιόπουλος, 2003, pp. 449-450)

The mark of this innovative approach to academic figuration, which the artist learned and pursued during his years of study at the Athens School of Fine Arts, was already evident in the works made in Paris and in his development towards high-quality painting, in a more personal style now, in the works that he showed at the 1940 National Art Fair in Zappeion, and in the first post-war National Art Fair, in 1948. In other words, the

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<sup>12</sup> This story is quite well known. Moralis and Nikolaou went in Paris, with only an interim stop in Rome, despite the fact that the scholarship that Moralis had earned at an Athens Academy competition and which the two of them shared, was for mosaic studies in Italy. Hariklia Glafki-Gotsi proposes a different reading of their joint portrait made by Moralis while they were still in Rome; see "Προσωπογραφίες των καλλιτεχνών στην ελληνική τέχνη του μεσοπολέμου: Μοντέρνες εκδοχές του υποκειμένου και της καλλιτεχνικής ταυτότητας", in Μάρθα Ιωαννίδου (ed.), pp. 163-175, specifically pp. 170-171.

<sup>13</sup> The Greek artists were not the only ones to show this preference. See Irina Genova (2010), pp. 22-25.

body of work that was to secure his election to the post of professor of the preliminary year at the Athens School of Fine Arts, in late 1947.

The main aim of the tests, and possibly the limit for the exhaustion of his experiments with figuration, is reflected in the way he describes to Fani-Maria Tsingakou the *Nude of Paris*, as he characteristically calls it:

When I worked also as an art conservator during the Occupation, I happened to clean up a work from the Ionian Islands which looked like it. Yet, when I looked at it closely, mine appeared totally two-dimensional compared to the volume of the old one. (Τσιγκάκου, 2001, pp. 105-106)



**Figure 1.** *Female Nude*, 1939 (signed)  
Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 144.5 cm  
Donated by the artist  
National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum  
[Inv. No Π.7687]

Indeed, his works faithfully follow the tradition of academic painting and renew it in a prudent and measured way: rather, they negotiate it anew, as even the questioning arises as a natural continuation, in a way, rather than a full shift or rupture.

His studies, conversations, travel adventures and fermentation with fellow artists and friends –

Once, Angelos Prokopiou asked me whom I considered to be my teachers, and when I gave him an endless list of friends' names, such as Errikos Frantzeskakis, Tsarouchis, Nikolaou, Pappas, Kapralos, Kontoglou and more, he was left speechless! What I mean to say is that there is give and take [...] You see, by teachers

I mean those who gave me something through their work -  
(Τσιγκάκου, pp. 105-106)

never made his personal stance waver, a stance that imposed true commitment to the real, the concrete, the stimuli received by vision, the security of a defined, protected individuality.

In a perceptive and penetrating critical note on the 1948 National Art Fair in Zappeion, Angelos Prokopiou wrote:

They preserved Parthenis's scientific chromatology, the aesthetic secrets of the monumental works of the classical and medieval Greece, yet they did not remain faithful to his vision. [...] Galanis was for them the liaison between Byzantine and Parisian art, and they moved towards him.

He continues:

Most notable among these young artists were Moralis and Tsarouchis. Relieving their colour from chiaroscuro and impasto, they went for simple, monochromatic surfaces. [...] Tsarouchis being more sensual and restless, and Moralis more meticulous technically, they both sought to once again offer the public the excitement of viewing, which had been neglected by the abstract school. [...] We are more demanding in Moralis's case because he has greater possibilities than those currently realised in his works. He is perhaps weak of will and is sometimes lured by Italian elegance, which concerns a snobbish public, but does not contribute to the serious business of art. I write my thoughts on him sincerely, as I am very fond of his talent. (Προκοπίου, *Καθημερινή*, 4/11/1948)



**Figure 2.** *Pregnant Woman*, 1948 (signed)  
Oil on canvas, 102 x 65 cm  
Donated by the artist  
National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum  
[Inv. No Π.7694]

Maybe we should stress here that Prokopiou was the art historian and critic who, more than anybody else, attempted after the War to link the Athenian art scene with New York instead of Paris (*via* Paris though) and also the one who basically constructed the narrative of modern art as abstract art in Greece during the 1950s, taking into account the change in the attitude toward the arts of the American State in the 1950's and 1960's as well as the promotion of abstract forms of art during the McCarthy period (Guilbaut, 1983). The definition of modernism as abstraction in the 50s came along with the emergence of notions like "individualism" and "spiritual" and their implications to the dominant liberal ideology.

These years Hellas '*was being transformed into a vehicle of Western ideology and an economic force in the emerging world markets for national cultures*', while American and Greek cultures systematically intersected for the first time. (Lalaki, 2012, p. 2)

In spite of the fact that the memories of Parthenis's teaching would re-emerge in Moralis's work, sometimes very explicitly expressed and used to good effect – as was the case, for instance, in the design and execution of the reliefs on the facades of the Athens Hilton Hotel (Προκοπίου, 1966,



p. 348) the ambiance of the master's work and his spirituality remain completely inaccessible. This was in fact a different world, demanding the immaterial and unfeasible, as opposed to an empirical, pragmatic approach to life<sup>14</sup>.

It was precisely the bourgeois audience, which embraced the latter view, that Moralis would seduce in the late 1940s and in the 1950s by producing '*positive art*', to quote the novelist M. Karagatsis. (Καραγάτσης, *Η Βραδυνή*, 4/11/1948)

The only time that Moralis's work may have appealed by seeming fragile and vulnerable, fearless of its own imperfections, experimenting precisely through its "flaws", was at the Armos group exhibition, in 1952<sup>15</sup>.

Criticism was taken by surprise at the time – it had already identified the '*transitional period*'<sup>16</sup> which the artist's work was going through at the National Art Fair in spring 1952, and in its most pervasive manifestations it seemed to understand '*the continued division of Moralis between realism and modern art*'<sup>17</sup> and to identify "the stability of an artist who combines technical knowledge with a delicate lyricism – not unrelated to

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<sup>14</sup> For taste in conjunction with living standards and lifestyles see E.H. Gombrich, "Styles of Art and Styles of Life", in *The Uses of Images. Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication*, London, Phaidon Press, 2006 (1999), pp. 240-261.

<sup>15</sup> Founded in 1949, the group comprised artists such as Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika (chairman), Yannis Tsarouchis and Yannis Moralis (vice chairmen), Lily Arlioti (secretary), Nikos Nikolaou (treasurer), Nelly Andrikopoulou, Katy Antypa, Marilena Aravantinou, Minos Argyrakis, Elli Voila, Andreas Vourloumis, Nikos Georgiadis, Georgios Georgiou, Nikos Engonopoulos, Bouba (Aglaia) Lymberaki-Morali (Moralis's second wife, mother of Konstantinos), Margarita Lymberaki, Georgios Manoussakis, George Mavroides, Natalia Mela-Konstantinidi, Klearchos Loukopoulos, Manolis Noukakis, Kosmas Xenakis, Eleni Stathopoulou, Panayiotis Tetsis, Vassos Falireas. Of particular interest, with respect to the group's ideological-aesthetic objectives, is the participation in the same exhibition of the shadow play artist and folk painter Eugenios Spatharis, in 1952. For a placement of the group in political, ideological, aesthetic and spatial terms, see Ευγένιος Δ. Μαθιόπουλος, "Εικαστικές τέχνες", *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα: Ο Μεσοπόλεμος 1922-1940*, Χρήστος Χατζιωσήφ (ed.), v. 2, part 2, Athens, Vivliorama, 2003, pp. 227-229 and also Σπύρος Μοσχονάς, *Καλλιτεχνικά σωματεία και ομάδες τέχνης στην Ελλάδα κατά το α' μισό του 20ού αιώνα: η σημασία και η προσφορά τους*, (unpublished doctoral thesis), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of History and Archaeology, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Χ. Δ. Λαμπράκης, "Στις εκθέσεις. Η Β' Πανελλήνιος", *Τα Νέα*, 17/4/1952. Along the same lines, the piece of criticism by G. Miliadis: "I always honour the explorations of Professor Moralis, even if they fluctuate between anxiety, doubt and experimentation." See "Δ' Πανελλήνια Έκθεση. Σύγχρονη ζωγραφική", *Φιλελεύθερος*, 28/6/1952.

<sup>17</sup> Α. Γ. Προκοπίου, "Τεχνοκριτικά σημειώματα. Η Πανελλήνιος Έκθεσις", *Καθημερινή*, 9/5/1952. By modern art Prokopiou meant abstract art.

an idealised sensuality<sup>18</sup>. The expectations, however, of the fans of conservative aesthetic choices, who expected Moralis to continue to replicate the successful solutions that had ensured his acceptance in the 1940s, did not materialise. '*Y. Moralis, of whom we had high expectations, and who revealed an amazing talent at the previous National Art Fair with that masterful Woman with apple, shows work that is below our expectations.*' (Μάτσας, *Εθνικός Κήρυξ*, 23/4/1952).

In a similar vein was the note by Pan. V. Koussoulakos, writing about the Armos exhibition a few months later:

However, we have very high expectations from Moralis, because he has greater possibilities than those demonstrated by his works today. Perhaps he is carried away by a world that is not for him and which in no way contributes to the serious business of Art. He should get rid of it as soon as possible if he is to create something that will endure in Modern Greek painting. These lines were written because I sincerely believe that Y. M. is a strong talent and should not be lost merely in supporting the lost cause of "modernism."  
(Κουσουλάκος, *Ελληνική Ημέρα*, 30/12/1952).

Accordingly, while reviews in the Press point out that, '*Y. Moralis enters a denial of colour*' (Γιοφύλλης, *Πνευματική Ζωή*, 15/6/1952) or that, '*After the first surprise, what is of interest in these remarkable paintings may be the qualities of draughtsmanship and composition mainly, rather than colour*' (Μηλιάδης, *Φιλελεύθερος*, 28/6/1952), the artist himself explained, in December 1952, how he saw what he did and supplied his own coordinates for his creative itinerary:

I am of the opinion that good art, in whatever style it may be, is essentially the same and has human beings as its starting point. Personally, I love Hellenistic and Byzantine painting. Fayum

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<sup>18</sup> Μ. Χατζηδάκης, "Κόσμος της τέχνης. Ζωγραφικά έργα στην Πανελλήνιο. Πίνακες, σχολές, τεχνοτροπίες», *Ελευθερία*, 5/6/1952. In the same note, referring to (expressionist) Bouzianis's participation, Hatzidakis wrote: '*The public is bewildered by the paintings, because only from a distance can a rudimentary subject be discerned*'.

portraits, the fresco paintings of Pompeii and Byzantine mosaics, which all have share their roots in realism, have offered many lessons to my work. (Μόραλης, *Βραδυνή*, 17/12/1952)



**Figure 3.** *Figure*, 1952 (signed)  
Oil on canvas, 160 x 86 cm  
Donated by the artist  
National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum  
[Inv. No Π.7690]

The invocation and combination of visual paradigms from traditional and contemporary art at the same time managed to reveal the orientation of the 'quest for Greekness' (Καλλιγιάς, *Το Βήμα*, 20/4/1952, Καλλιγιάς, 2003, p. 239), in the way that this was perceived by the Armos group members and acted as one of the key points of convergence for them. Eugenios Spatharis, the pre-eminent Greek shadow play artist, was invited to participate in the Armos exhibition. During the same year, he had '*participated for the first time as a painter in the National Art Fair*'. (Βακαλό, *Τα Νέα*, 3/1/1953) All this would be further clarified by Marinós Kalligás, Director of the National Gallery at the time, when, excited, he characterised the Armos exhibition as '*the first exhibition of Modern Greek Art [...] in which the Greek element is so consolidated and expressed with*

*such knowledge of developments in the international arena'. (Καλλιγιάς, Το Βήμα, 11/1/1953, Καλλιγιάς, 2003, p. 256)*

No matter if Moralis avoided talking about the Greekness of his work – nevertheless regarding it as an integral part of his identity, a natural and self-evident condition – the way in which he handled the evolution of artistic form in his work, his very speaking, ultimately, (Τσιγκάκου, 2001, pp. 106-107) contribute directly to (and are derived from) an attempt to reconcile identity and awareness, aesthetics and history, invention and experience. (Τζιόβας, 2012)

In the lecture by Kalligas, besides, who at the time represented the bourgeois intelligentsia, with which Moralis had sided, one can further deduce the causes that made the artist handle his means in a different approach and become removed from the realism of his earlier work:

The quality that makes creativity to be perceived literally, that is, as the production of something new, is what creativity is all about, and this is what makes everything flourish, and the rest is mere technical excellence,

explained Kalligas, and went on to say,

Because to make something to look like the original is a matter of practice, not of intellectual background. Makers of pleasing works are a class of painters that needs to be distinguished, at least nowadays, from the class of artists. (Καλλιγιάς, *Το Βήμα*, 11/1/1953, Καλλιγιάς, 2003, pp. 255-256)

A shaken realism, however, was not the only reason why Moralis was praised, or asked to "apologise", in late 1952 and early in the following year. The fact that marked this exhibition more than anything else and which put to the test the cohesiveness of the group and the true limits of the collectivity of each member, was this: the removal '*after police intervention*' of a work by Tsarouchis, which was deemed obscene, as it depicted '*a naked man in bed and a sailor seated opposite him*'. (Μαμάκης, *Έθνος*, 4/12/1952)

Tsarouchis appears not to have enjoyed the unanimous support of the Armos group members (Μαθιόπουλος, 2009, pp. 45-49) – for a significant period of time, press articles focused upon the absence of a direct, official reaction, and, in some cases, almost tried to elicit one<sup>19</sup>. In the broader ideologically charged post-civil war context, the ensuing debate and overall atmosphere also affected the work of Moralis, who, incidentally, was among those who did not remain aloof, but attempted to deal with the crisis and sought a solution to release the tension. (Μαμάκης, *Έθνος*, 4/12/1952)

The photo of his own large female nudes, published by the left-wing newspaper *Allagi*, as illustration for the art review by Mina Zografou-Meranaïou on 18/12/1952, caused a district attorney's inquiry in response to a complaint by the security agency. The witnesses for the prosecution testified that the newspaper article went against 'the interests of public decency because readers hail from the lower classes, aesthetically speaking, and are not in a position to objectively judge the images'<sup>20</sup>. The debate was rekindled, the newspaper published the views of artists and intellectuals, the media in general followed the topic. Moralis himself handled the situation seeking consensus, compromise, avoiding giving an explicitly political reply; nevertheless, he did not leave the newspaper and its staff without his moral support<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> See the letter signed under the pen name "Νομικός Φιλότεχνος", published in *Ta Nea*, 6/1/1953.

<sup>20</sup> "The 'Nude' persecuted again! The prosecutor pressed charges against *Αλλαγί* newspaper for publishing reproductions of art works", *Αλλαγί*, 11/1/1953.

<sup>21</sup> *The Professor of the Athens School of Fine Arts Yannis Moralis expressed his surprise for the fact that charges were pressed for the publication of photos of his works. Thousands of visitors, he said, come to Zappeion every day, and it did not occur to any of them that the exhibits are obscene. In every museum, in every exhibition "nude" works are regularly shown, and nobody ever thought of forbidding entry to minors, who allegedly have no understanding of art. The artist went on to extend his thanks to the newspaper, "because the critic paid him the honour of allocating a large section of his review to his work and to accompany his article with the disputed photos, for the appreciation of those who were not able to visit the exhibition". He also pointed out that by publishing the photos the newspaper appeared consistent and aware of its obligation towards readers, especially those in the provinces. [Moralis] believed, he concluded, that the publication of certain works should be banned – substandard works, which debase the aesthetic standards of the public. Unless, he added, it was in this sense that charges were pressed against the newspaper'. See *Αλλαγί*, 11/1/1953.*

It is in fact interesting that, triggered by the prosecution and subsequent debate, views were expressed which revealed the broader ideological views regarding the limits of free expression, the role of antiquity as a kind of a pool of Siloam, the definitions of art and a work of art, as well as of the public, to which the products of artistic creativity are addressed and with which the artists interact.

The path from the artist's works of the 1952 National Art Fair and the Armos exhibition at Zappeion to the 1958 Biennale and the artist's first solo exhibition, in 1959, this time at Armos Art Gallery<sup>22</sup>, was, in a way, predetermined and predictable, in the sense that the artist still had the same aspirations, pursued the same concept. Remaining anthropocentric and always concerned about the integrity of the results obtained, Moralis's painting insisted on experimenting in a fertile, and sometimes enchanting, manner, with the terms of the encounter between the attempted references to the past and recent artistic achievements – at least those that interested the artist, and which he was able to grasp and assimilate.

The human-centric nature of their work, which attracted Ponti's attention (Ponti, *Domus*, 1958, pp. 33-35), in an international arena in which abstraction prevailed, resulted in highlighting those figurative elements that contained abstraction, irrespective, in essence, of the new formal explorations, but inherent in the timeless quest '*to express the ineffable mystic experience of the absolute*'<sup>23</sup>.

The artist's contribution to the Biennale, and that of Tsarouchis, indeed garnered favourable reviews. And the enthusiasm shown by both for Gio

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<sup>22</sup> 'In Armos (21, Iraklitou Street, Dexameni, Kolonaki) the painter, professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts, Mr Y. Moralis, shows 16 paintings, four lithographs and eight drawings. These include the works that the distinguished artist showed, with extraordinary success, at the Venice Biennale last year'. See "Καλλιτεχνικά. Η έκθεση του καθηγητού κ. Ιωάννου Μόραλη", *Καθημερινή*, 21/3/1959.

<sup>23</sup> J.P. Hodin also discussed Moralis in particular, characterising his work as a '*pleasing Neo-Classicism à la Braque*', but classifying him in the same category with artists from other countries (namely the Dutchman Gerrit Benner, the Frenchman Édouard Pignon, the Belgian Roger Dudant and the Finn Unto Koistinen) who, although they interested him, he felt that they did not offer anything new to the investigation of figurative painting. See J.P. Hodin, "Venice reflects the urge for figuration", *The Studio. The Leading Magazine of Contemporary Art*, September 1958, p. 74.

Ponti's extensive reference to their work in *Domus* magazine is touching and surely indicative of how hard it was for a Greek artist to attract international attention: '*Three pages, with plenty of photos and an article full of praise*', as Tsarouchis wrote to a letter to Moralis. (Μαθιόπουλος, 2009, p. 27)



**Figure 4.** *Funeral Composition*, 1958 (signed)  
Oil on canvas, 204 x 223 cm  
Donated by the artist  
National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum  
[Inv. No Π.2432]

'*There is a secret cult*', wrote Ponti,

the cult of those who know how to depict the human figure [...] And feel passionate bliss when savouring with an animal pleasure the ability to represent this figure in all actions and fleeting, hard to capture expressions, and to render its unique individuality and specific features in precise outlines [...] To depict it, regarding this depiction as an extreme level of human expression, of human history, as well as of the history of ourselves, which is evoked at the same time. The two Greek painters, Yannis Moralis and Yannis Tsarouchis, belong to this "secret society". When I saw their works in Venice, I rejoiced, as I belong to the same cult. (Ponti, *Domus*, 1958, pp. 33-35)

In their subsequent development, it seems that both artists remained, more or less – depending on the background and main lines of interest in the work of each – loyal to Ponti's *secret cult*.

In the room where my class was held, I had placed to the right of the entrance a quite large display of various art reproductions, for instance an archaic work side by side with a Mondrian, several Bonnard's and Cézanne's, which is readable painting, especially Cézanne, whereas a Van Gogh, for instance, only teaches its passion; one cannot use that for a lesson. Also, a Fayum, a fresco from Pompeii, and more, [...]

Moralis reminisced to Tsingakou, speaking about his years as a professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts. (Τσιγκάκου, 2001, p. 52)



**Figure 5.** *Funerary Composition*, 1963 (signed)  
Vinavyl glue on canvas, 79 x 73 cm  
Donated by the artist  
National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum  
[Inv. No Π.7701]

With specific, clear shifts, from his *Nude*, of 1939, to the *Pregnant woman*, of 1948, the *Nudes* of the Armos exhibition, only a few years later in the early 1950s, until the girls of his *Funerary Compositions*, produced at the end of the decade and the early years of the following one, we can follow the gradual careful, studied, meticulous distancing of the painter from the lessons of Academic painting and the gradual



formation of an unmistakably personal, authentic, realistic in its essence writing, '*with seriousness and morality*'. (Ευαγγελίδης, *Νέα Εστία*, 1/5/1959, pp. 619-621)



**Figure 6.** *Dialogue*, 1974 (signed)  
Oil on canvas, 97.8 x 165.7 cm  
National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum  
[Inv. No Π.5111]

It is for this reason perhaps that the body of the more abstract works<sup>24</sup> is absent from the artist's donation to the National Gallery. In a way he was obliged to follow or even experiment with abstraction. With his second solo exhibition, this time at the Hilton Art Gallery in 1963 (Καλλιγάς, *Το Βήμα*, 18/5/1963, Καλλιγάς, 2003, pp. 500-501), Moralis may have felt that a major phase in his work had been completed, that he had reached some early key conclusions after a long journey. For a man who seemed to be very strict and demanding on himself, and probably fragile and insecure deep down, behind that perfect equipoise of his visual art writing, what came after that had not yet – according to his own standards of course – come full circle so as to merit addition, in 1988, as a new chapter in the narrative that concerned him, proposed by the works he donated to the National Gallery of his country.

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<sup>24</sup> A first complete series of work in this vein went on display at the artist's third solo exhibition at Zoumboulakis Art Galleries, in 1972, which marked the beginning of a long association.

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