

SOUTHERN  
MODERNISMS:  
from A to Z  
and back again

Joana Cunha Leal  
Maria Helena Maia  
Begoña Farré Torras  
Editors



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**Title**

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Joana Cunha Leal, Maria Helena Maia and Begoña Farré Torras

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MODERNISMS:  
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# INTRODUCTION

JOANA CUNHA LEAL,  
MARIA HELENA MAIA AND  
BEGOÑA FARRÉ TORRAS

The book now being published results from a research project entitled *Southern Modernisms* that ran from March 2014 to May 2015 with FCT funding.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the project was to explore the possibility of constructing a more inclusive, plural notion of modernism through the revision of Modernism's prevailing definition – its stylistic focus, its formalist and anti-representative bias, as well as its autonomic assumptions, or, as far as architecture is concerned, its functionalist credo. This critical undertaking was grounded on the hypothesis that southern European modernisms featured a strong entrenchment in popular culture (folk art and vernacular architecture), and that this characteristic could be understood as anticipating some of the premises of, what would later become known as, critical regionalism.<sup>2</sup> It was, therefore, our purpose to explore parallel key claims on modernism's intertwining with bourgeois society and mass

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<sup>1</sup> Southern Modernisms (EXPL/CPC-HAT/0191/2013) was funded by national funds through the Portuguese Science Foundation (FCT) under Project 3599 – Promoting the Research Production, Technological Development and Innovation.

<sup>2</sup> Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, "The grid and the pathway. An introduction to the work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis," in *Architektonika themata. Architecture in Greece*, N. 15, Athens, 1981; *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*, Munich 2003; Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, Seattle, 1993 [1983], 16-30.

culture.<sup>3</sup> This was done by questioning the idea that aesthetically significant regionalism – regionalism that resists the colonization of international styles through its critical awareness – only occurred in the context of postmodernist architecture.<sup>4</sup>

This research was set up on the basis of case studies drawn from Spanish (especially Catalan), Italian and Greek contexts, even though Portuguese modernism of the first thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the focal point for questioning that initial hypothesis. The chosen case studies set the background for discussing not only the artworks, but also the conceptual basis of the project, namely the troublesome definition of the very concepts we were working with: modernism(s), regionalism, folk art, vernacular architecture, etc., as well as those of the tangent notions of the avant-garde, tradition, primitivism, popular or mass culture. In so doing, we were also impelled to ponder the effects of the common art historical assumption of the straightforward divide between center and periphery, or high and low art, and of the limits of national histories. In fact, privileging the meridional *Europeanness* of artistic production resulted in comparative approaches, focused on trans-national dialogues, cultural transfers and artistic exchanges rather than on national specifics.

Moreover, since the discussions we were engaged in apply *a fortiori* to other parts of the globe, particularly to the southern hemisphere, we eventually arrived at a crossroads where our lines of work met with other research experiences. Therefore, we opened a dialogue with scholars working the south beyond the geographical and cultural background of the Mediterranean shared by Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece.

This dialogue was key for two different reasons. Firstly, it contributed significantly to bringing this book into being, in that the discussions we are presenting here

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<sup>3</sup> T. J. Clark, *The painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, New Jersey 1984 and *Farewell to an Idea*, New Haven 1999; see also Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture*, New Haven 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism...”, 16-30.

had their preliminary stage at the project's conference held at Oporto in February 2015. The call for papers for the *Southern Modernisms: critical stances through regional appropriations* conference stressed our interest in modernist eruptions in the southern hemisphere. Thus, we were happy to welcome to Oporto scholars working not only on southern European countries, but also on South America, Tunisia and Egypt,<sup>5</sup> and a significant number of them are now contributing to this volume.

Secondly, and more importantly, the early decision to widen the scope of the conference beyond Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece made us aware that these four European countries are situated in the northern hemisphere. Furthermore, in accordance with the hierarchical distinctions implicit in that northern location, Portugal and Spain maintained colonies for centuries, and Italy strove to possess some, finally succeeding at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the divide between northern and southern Europe is deeply rooted in historical and cultural terms and has deeply negative connotations associated with the latter.<sup>6</sup> Today, this divide has a renewed relevance because large sections of the European population living in these southern countries are threatened by poverty, facing the effects of a severe financial crisis. Therefore, a glaring paradox arises from such a background: south and its symbolic meanings change along with the viewers' geographical and historical position. This paradox in turn illuminated the challenging and productive parallax effect of the very notion of south assimilated into our work. What is more, the fact that there are further 'souths' in the south paralleled our effort to construct a more inclusive, plural, notion of modernism eventually tying the critical double knot linking the revision of Modernism's standard notion with the idea that a central position is always as dependent on a standpoint as is that of the periphery. They are but

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<sup>5</sup> See Joana Cunha Leal, Maria Helena Maia and Begoña Farré Torras, eds., *Southern Modernisms. Critical stances through regional appropriations. Conference Proceedings*, Porto 2015.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Alexandro Mejias-Lopez, *The Inverted Conquest: The Myth of Modernity and the Transatlantic Onset of Modernism*, Nashville 2009.

representations, and only as representations did they become real (they were experienced). Again, they are as dependent on a parallax effect as the moving line that separates north and south.

*Southern Modernisms from A to Z and back again* brings together fifteen texts by Anat Falbel and Gustavo Peixoto, Antoni Remesar Betlloch, Concepción Díez-Pastor, George Epolito, Gerbert Verheij, Iván Yllera, Jorge Palinhos, Maria José de Azevedo Marcondes, Mariana Mata Passos, Mercè Vidal i Jansà, Nikos Daskalothanassis, Nikos Skoutelis, Sérgio Dias Silva and Rui Jorge Garcia Ramos, Sílvia Vieira de Almeida, and Susanne Bauer. As is implied by the title, they reflect, in their writings, on the troublesome condition of southern modernisms, covering in their discussions a wide range of topics addressed from a wide range of perspectives. That these perspectives might challenge our own indeed demonstrates the richness of a subject matter that is definitely worth considering again.

# THE QUEST FOR A BRAZILIAN CHARACTER: DIACHRONIC DIALOGUES

ANAT FALBEL AND  
GUSTAVO PEIXOTO

## 1.

While defending a unique Brazilian architecture expression, the modernists of the era of Getulio Vargas' dictatorship, denounced the neocolonial movement that had spread in the architecture milieu during the 1920s. It was said to be a mistake for its incapacity to apprehend the true features of the traditional architecture, as well as its inability to adapt and make use of these former elements in contemporaneous programs.<sup>1</sup> In the new political and cultural context of the *Estado Novo*, this later argument was quite understandable because, for the modern architects co-opted by the State, it was more than a theoretical or conceptual question. The national argument was embedded in a larger project founded on the binomial nationalism and modernity within which modern architecture became the expression of a teleology.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, architect Lucio Costa, who naturally assumed the intellectual leadership of

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<sup>1</sup> On his involvement with the neo-colonial movement at the beginning of Lucio Costa's career, see Lucio Costa, *Lucio Costa Registro de uma Vivência*, São Paulo 1995, 55-65; 461-462; Lucio Costa "Muita construção, alguma arquitetura e um milagre," in: *Lucio Costa Registro de uma Vivência*, 165.

<sup>2</sup> Sergio Miceli, *Intelectuais a Brasileira*, São Paulo 2001; Otavio Leonidio, *Carradas de Razões, Lucio Costa e a Arquitetura Moderna Brasileira (1924-1951)*, Rio de Janeiro 2007; Lauro Cavalcanti, *Modernistas na Repartição*, Rio de Janeiro 1993; Simon Schwartzman, Helena Maria Bousquet Bomeny, Vanda Maria Ribeiro Costa, *Tempos de Capanema*, Rio de Janeiro 2000.

modern architects, proposed a seminal construction with lasting effects on Brazilian modern architecture and its historiography until the 1980s. Costa established a figural relationship between the colonial past and modern architecture, the latter understood as completing the former. In his *Depoimento* (1948), he extended the argument even further proposing the same relationship between architect sculptor Antonio Francisco Lisboa, known as *Aleijadinho*, and his *figura* Oscar Niemeyer: “...our own national genius that was expressed through the elected personality of this artist, in the same way it has been in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, under very similar circumstances, through the individuality of Antonio Francisco Lisboa, o Aleijadinho...”<sup>3</sup>

Lucio Costa’s figural relationship between past and modern was founded on two main hypotheses. The first was the environmental and functionalist approach which associated the modern program and forms to the vernacular or traditional architecture<sup>4</sup> - understood as the result of exigencies of climate and situation, the nature of the materials and the means of execution at the command of the builder - as revealed by two of Costa’s writings “Documentação necessária” and “Mobiliário luso-brasileiro” in which the author unfold his argument through the evolution of the local architecture and furniture since colonial times.<sup>5</sup> If, in fact, the vernacular architecture had already been observed under a functionalist key by the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s architecture historians and theorizers such as Viollet Le Duc<sup>6</sup> and Horacio Greenough<sup>7</sup> - whose work Costa probably knew as an architecture student – his elaboration was also in tune with the contemporaneous

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<sup>3</sup> Costa, *Lucio Costa Registro de uma Vivência*, 198-199; Anat Falbel, *Arquitetos imigrantes no Brasil uma questão historiográfica*. Anais 6 DOCOMOMO arquitetura e urbanismo (Niteroi, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 1-20. <http://www.docomomo.org.br/seminario%206%20pdfs/Anat%20Falbel.pdf>; Anat Falbel, “Immigrant Architects in Brazil: A Historiographical Issue,” in: *DOCOMOMO Journal* 34, 58-65.

<sup>4</sup> Liane Lefaivre and Alexandre Tzonis, *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization. Peaks and Valleys in the Flat World*, London 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Lucio Costa “Documentação necessária”; “Mobiliário luso-brasileiro,” in: *Lucio Costa Registro de uma Vivência*, 457-462 and 463-471.

<sup>6</sup> Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc, *L’Habitation humaine depuis les temps préhistoriques jusqu’à nos jours*, Paris 1875.

<sup>7</sup> Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function. Remarks on Art*, Oakland 1962.



inquiries carried on by modern architects searching for new possibilities of architectural expression. In fact, during the 1930s while Le Corbusier was using stone and wood to create new contrasts and spatial effects in the Swiss Pavillon, at the Cité Universitaire (1930-1932) and Vila Mandrot (1932), Alvar Aalto was operating new specialities and materials in Finland in the same way that Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra in California, Gropius and Marcel Breuer in New England confront and conform the European modern vocabulary to the American local specificities. In addition, the teleological nature that provides the background for the Brazilian modern architecture narrative proposed by Costa in the 1930s, could also be identified during the interwar period. Other new regimes and diverse political systems had embraced the Modern Movement from Fascism in Italy, with Marcello Piacentini's, Giuseppe Terragni's and Giuseppe Pagano's Italian discourse on *mediterraneità*, to zionism in Israel, then under British Mandate, with the unique elaboration on modern and tradition by Erich Mendelsohn, as well as kemalism in Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

Costa's second hypothesis addressing the manifestation of a national character - later defined as the national soul or spirit<sup>9</sup> - through race and language had its sources in 19<sup>th</sup> century European nationalistic literature. This had identified the people's character with its architecture and traditional dwellings following Jean Phillippe Schmit's expression in the middle of that century, "... *language and architecture are indeed the two representative signals of all nationality...*".<sup>10</sup> If the analysis of an architecture language using the concept of race, similar

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<sup>8</sup> Alona Nitzan-Shifan, "Contested Zionism – Alternative Modernism Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Chug in Mandate Palestine," in: *Architectural History*, 39 (1996), 147-180. Sibel Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation Building. Turkish Architectural Cultural in the Early Republic*. Seattle 2001, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Lucio Costa "O Aleijadinho e a arquitetura tradicional," in: Alberto Xavier (ed.), *Lúcio Costa: Sobre Arquitetura*, Porto Alegre 2007, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Philippe Schmit, *Nouveau manuel complet de l'architecture des monuments religieux*, *Encyclopédie Roret*, Paris 1859, 23.

to that used by Daniel Ramee in his *Histoire générale de l'architecture* (1860),<sup>11</sup> seems in our times to be extremely problematic, Costa's elaboration avoided the expression and contemplated the issue of race considering the Brazilian people as an independent unit: "...our unique, unmistakable, Brazilian way of being..."<sup>12</sup> Thereby, nationalizing - or ethnicizing - the original bedrock made up of Portuguese, Africans, and the indigenous element, Costa suggested the existence of a natural community<sup>13</sup> which maintained its continuity and distinctiveness despite later waves of European and Oriental immigrations.

To address the matter of language, Costa chose to investigate the origins of the national architecture language for the immutable element, the one responsible for the historic coherence.<sup>14</sup> He claimed the emergence of a 'legitimate' Brazilian language during the colonial period in the works of the early Portuguese settlers. Having adopted an ambiguous, but continuously reiterated argument, Costa claimed that the architectural production in the colony could not be

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel Ramee, *Histoire générale de l'architecture*, Paris 1860, vol. 1, 20-21. "...il y a eu et qu'il y a toujours de puissantes et d'indestructibles différences entre les dispositions naturelles des races humaines... Si ces différences sont prouvées para la religion, la politique, les moeurs et les langues, elles le sont enconre davantage par les beaux-arts, et surtout par l'Architecture..."

<sup>12</sup> "Assume and respect the original bedrock – Portuguese, African, indigenous. Recognize the great importance for today's Brazil of the contribution of the European migrations, Mediterranean and Nordic, as well as those from the Near East and Far East. Accept the results of this merging as both legitimate and fruitful, but consider as fundamental to this absorption the contribution of our unique, unmistakable, Brazilian, way of being. Preserve and cultivate those differentiating and unique characteristics. Resist subservience, including cultural, but absorb and assimilate foreign innovation", Lucio Costa, "Recommendations," in: *Lucio Costa Registro de uma Vivência*, 382. On the affinities between Costa's elaborations and writer and literary critic Silvio Romero, see Silvio Romero, "Literatura y nacionalismo," in: *Ensayos Literarios*, ed. Antonio Candido, Caracas 1982, 35-36; Antonio Candido, "Introdução," in: *Silvio Romero Teoria, crítica e história literária*. LTC/EDUSP, 1978, ix-xxx. On the contribution of each ethnic group to the establishment of a Brazilian architecture, Lucio Costa also seems to echo the racial theories of Silvio Romero, which in turn evoke the formulation of Gobineau on "mestizaje": "...not that the works lose their quality or connotation of Portuguese works – the indigenous and African contribution was too fragile in this case to denaturalize it..." See Lucio Costa, "Introdução à um relatório," in: *Lucio Costa Registro de uma Vivência*, 456. Both authors, Costa and Romero pointed out the *Inconfidência Mineira*, the tentative colonial independence gesture aborted in 1789, as the emergence of a national consciousness.

<sup>13</sup> Étienne Balibar, "La forme nation: histoire et idéologie," in: *Race, nation, classe. Les identités ambiguës*, 130.

<sup>14</sup> Margaret Olin, "From Bezal'el to Max Lieberman. Jewish Art in Nineteenth-Century Art-Historical Texts", 21.

considered an imitation of the works of the mother country. On the contrary, it was as legitimate “... as those (works) from there, because the colonist, *par droit de conquête*, was ‘at home’... just as in speaking Portuguese he was not imitating anyone, but speaking, whether with or without an accent, in his own language...”<sup>15</sup> Hence, still before his more systematic studies on the vernacular Portuguese architecture developed during his three journeys to the old continent (1948, 1952, 1962),<sup>16</sup> Lucio Costa identified the Portuguese architectural culture, and particularly the vernacular language including its regional variables, as the first and only source of Brazilian architecture. Accordingly, Costa was echoing the elaborations of the Brazilian intellectuals of the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including historians such as Oliveira Viana,<sup>17</sup> Gilberto Freyre,<sup>18</sup> Sergio Buarque de Holanda,<sup>19</sup> and the writer and critic Silvio Romero on the Portuguese Brazilian dimension of the colonial origins. Not by chance, he observed the emergence of a national character during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Minas Gerais, from where the first political ideas of colonial

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<sup>15</sup> Lucio Costa, “Tradição local,” in: *Lucio Costa Registro de uma Vivência*, 454.

<sup>16</sup> José Pessoa and Maria Elisa Costa, (eds.) *Bloquinhos de Portugal – a arquitetura portuguesa no traço de Lucio Costa*, Rio de Janeiro 2013; Madalena Cunha Matos and Tania Beisl Ramos “Um encontro, um desencontro. Lucio Costa, Raul Lino e Carlos Ramos”, Proceedings of the 7th DOCOMOMO Brasil (Porto Alegre, UFPA, October 22-24, 2007) URL: <http://www.docomomo.org.br/seminario%207%20pdfs/034.pdf> (accessed 27 February 2015).

<sup>17</sup> José Francisco Oliveira Viana *Populações meridionais do Brasil: história, organização, psicologia*, Rio de Janeiro 1952 (1920).

<sup>18</sup> Gilberto de Mello Freyre, *Casa-Grande e Senzala*, Rio de Janeiro 1978. (1933). Freyre associated culture and ethnicity, considering the Brazilian people as an extension of the Iberic population assimilated with indigenous and African elements. However, he also identified the Portuguese psychological profile as shaped by the miscegenation of Arab and Jewish elements. See Elide Rugai Bastos, “Gilberto Freire. Casa – Grande & Senzala,” in: Lourenço Dantas Mota (ed.), *Introdução ao Brasil. Um Banquete no Tropicó*, São Paulo 1999, 225; Maria Lúcia Garcia Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre. Um vitoriano dos trópicos*, São Paulo 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Sergio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*, São Paulo 1995 (1936), 172-173.

independence had spread.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, from within the particular nationalistic cultural conjuncture of the *Estado Novo*, the Brazilian architecture historiography construction revealed itself as mono-national refusing to acknowledge the dialogue common to what could be defined as the interfaces of other cultural planes, represented either by a larger number of cultural sources or, in particular, by the work of foreign professionals and immigrants. Apparently, the only exception admitted by Costa beyond the closed space of his definition of an authentic Brazilian expression was the contemporaneous influence of Le Corbusier whose impact on the Brazilian modern architecture would be also explained using a figural relationship in Costa's *Depoimento* (1948):

“...the pioneering work of our beloved Gregório and the unique personality of Flávio avail us nothing, because what happened here would had happened without altering even one line, even though the former had carried out his work elsewhere, and the latter had spent his time in exile, since newborn, in Paris or in Passárgada. And this is because the achievements following the “coming” of the architect...Oscar Niemeyer ...are directly linked to the original sources of the global renovation movement aim at restoring architecture to its legitimate functional foundations. It was not through second or third hand due to the work of Gregório that the process operated. The authentic seeds planted here at just the right time by Le Corbusier, in 1936, have borne fruit...”<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, a close analysis of Costa's historiographical construction suggests yet another important source. Indeed, despite his criticism toward the

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<sup>20</sup> The reference to Minas Gerais as the cradle of the Brazilian political and cultural independence movement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a consensus in the intellectual milieu during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Regarding the field of architecture, Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira suggested that the hypothesis that considers the Baroque expression in Minas Gerais as the first evidence of a national artistic identity is an anachronism. It shows that the studies on geography of art, especially in Portugal, confirmed that the architectural scene in Minas Gerais during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was related to the emergence of the Rococo. See Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira, *O Rococó Religioso no Brasil e seus antecedentes europeus*, São Paulo 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Lucio Costa, *Lucio Costa Registro de uma Vivência*, 198.

neocolonial ideas, Costa's main arguments were profoundly embedded in their conceptions and particularly in the writings of Ricardo Severo (1869-1940), the Portuguese-born engineer, recognized as the first leader of the neocolonial movement in Brazil. In fact, Costa's involvement with that movement dated back to his formative years because of the initiatives of José Marianno Carneiro da Cunha Filho (1881-1946), the movement's promoter in Rio de Janeiro. It was José Marianno Filho who, as the director of the *Sociedade Brasileira de Belas Artes* (SBBA), funded the survey of Brazilian traditional architecture by commissioning young artists to inventory the colonial buildings of the former gold mining towns in the state of Minas Gerais. Among them Lucio Costa, in 1924 while still a student, was sent to the city of Diamantina. Later on, already an architect, Costa continued to operate the neocolonial until the end of the 1920s.<sup>22</sup> Apparently, Ricardo Severo's thought on Brazilian traditional architecture had a lasting impression on Costa's own developments concerning the Portuguese dimensions of Brazilian architecture, including his rhetorical artifice apropos the national identity of the colonizer - that for the historian was due *par droit de conquête* -, as well as the recognition of the environmental and functionalist character of the colonial architecture that enable its association with modern architecture.

Effectively, in two different lectures (1914, 1917), Ricardo Severo praised the Portuguese colonizer suggesting that his vicissitudes in the new country "nationalized him":

"...the colonizer ...adapted himself to the environment and established the **national tradition** that he had inherited from his ancestors and is characteristic of the race..."<sup>23</sup>

"...(the colonizer) organized the colony and explored it following his resources

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<sup>22</sup> Maria Lucia Bressan Pinheiro, *Neocolonial, Modernismo e Preservação do Patrimônio no Debate Cultural dos anos 1920 no Brasil*, São Paulo 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Ricardo Severo, "A arte tradicional no Brasil. A casa e o templo", lecture given on 20 July 1914, in *Conferências 1914-1915*. Sociedade de Cultura Artística, 1916, 47.

and needs... the cosmovision and the stage of civilization... no one colonized better... occupied the land, populate it... defended it... a population fixed to the ground, in which in a moment the Portuguese blood dominate, in the other it merged into a *mestizaje* of steady adaptation to ambience, one language uniting all the habitants of this colonial country and one tradition that connect them all more intimately under the same sky and ground... the scenario of the Brazil colony is transformed... the colonizer ancestor, unfairly maligned in memoriam, is with full justice reinstated in the real stage of his natural ambience, in the political and historical cycle of his social environment: from a tyrant to a victim, **from a martyr to a national hero...**"<sup>24</sup>

The issue of the essentiality of forms and elements of the colony's architecture as developed by Lucio Costa in order to justify the pre-figuration of the modern architecture vocabulary and ethics in the already-mentioned "Documentação necessaria" and "Mobiliario luso-brasileiro", were also mentioned by Severo in his 1917 conference following the regionalist approach of his:

"...the dwelling was reduced to the home shelter, conforming its forms to the nature of the materials and climate; the population snuggled around the primitive temple, whose protection was for a long period the only guard of the first colony, being distributed according to the layout of the terrain, snaking their alleys in the valleys or surrounding the slopes, achieving this picturesque character, the result of a perfect cohesion between the work of man and nature, the harmony that constitutes the regional character of architecture of a village or town..."<sup>25</sup> And yet, the research carried out in the last twenty years showed that the cultural sources that operated in the colony were way beyond the

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<sup>24</sup> Ricardo Severo, "A arte tradicional no Brasil" (originally published in *Revista do Brasil*, year II, vol. 4, jan-abr, 1917, 394-424), in: *19&20*, Ed. Alessandra Xavier dos Santos; Andressa Amaral Da Silva e Wesley Nunes Dantas, Rio de Janeiro, v. VII, n. 1 jan/mar. 2012. Available on: <[http://www.dezenovevinte.net/txt\\_artistas/rsevero\\_atb.htm](http://www.dezenovevinte.net/txt_artistas/rsevero_atb.htm)>.

<sup>25</sup> Ricardo Severo, "A arte tradicional no Brasil" (originally published in *Revista do Brasil*, year II, vol. 4, Jan-Apr, 1917, 394-424), in *19&20*, Ed. Alessandra Xavier dos Santos; Andressa Amaral da Silva e Wesley Nunes Dantas, vol. VII, 1 Jan/Mar. 2012. Disponível em: <[http://www.dezenovevinte.net/txt\\_artistas/rsevero\\_atb.htm](http://www.dezenovevinte.net/txt_artistas/rsevero_atb.htm)>.

exclusiveness of an alleged Portuguese traditional architecture, in the same way that the settlements founded in the colony were not simply conformed to the topographical, climactic and material conditions to which the colonizer was submitted. They were the result of a European architectural and urban culture matured through transfers and exchanges over centuries, crossing the Atlantic by way of religious orders such as the Jesuits or Franciscans who carried in their luggage the architectural treatises of Serlio, Alberti, Vitruvius or Vredeman de Vries, building manuals and all kinds of iconographic documentation.<sup>26</sup> Even the Portuguese professionals engaged in the colony's royal projects as at the time of the Treaty of Madrid (1750) were followed by a number of Europeans who engrossed demarcation missions in Brazil.<sup>27</sup>

In this context, the mono-national historiographical approach suggested by Costa and Severo is closer than the Brazilian historian would have recognized. Severo's appeal for a traditional art expressing "...the evolutionary history of a social organism and preserving the indelible imprint of its ancestry, the dominant character of his moral being... an art that is not the one of historical monuments in which foreign influences may have predominated..., but an art of more rudimentary expression forms presenting itself in the modest extensions of the popular soul".<sup>28</sup>

Ricardo Severo's elaborations were permeated by the nationalist atmosphere and discourse that covered Europe after the wave of the 1848 uprisings, the 'Spring of Nations'. These led to a redefinition of the concept of regionalism under an array

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<sup>26</sup> See Hanno-Walter Kruff, "The Theory of fortification," in: *A History of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present*, Princeton 1994, 110-117; Nestor Goulart Reis, *Imagens de vilas e cidades do Brasil Colonial*, São Paulo 2000; Beatriz Piccolotto S. Bueno, *Desenho e Desenho. O Brasil dos Engenheiros Militares (1500-1822)*. Ph. D dissertation, Universidade Estadual de São Paulo/FAUSP, São Paulo, 2001; Nestor Goulart Reis, *As Minas de Ouro e a formação das Capitânicas do Sul*, São Paulo 2013; Gauvin Alexander Bailey, "Asia in the Arts of Colonial Latin America," in: Joseph J. Rishel and Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt (eds.), *The Arts in Latin America 1492-1820*, Philadelphia 2006, 57-69; Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America 1542-1773*, Toronto 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Benedito Lima de Toledo, *O Real Corpo de Engenheiros na Capitania de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 1981; Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira, *O Rococó Religioso no Brasil e seus antecedentes europeus*, 298.

<sup>28</sup> Ricardo Severo, "A arte tradicional no Brasil. A casa e o templo", 43.

of contradictory agendas that pervaded the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the interwar period. From Viollet-le-Duc's modern environmental and functionalist approach to the nationalistic and xenophobic "regionalist engagement" of the French architects who followed the leadership of Charles Maurras and Maurice Barrès, in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the German regionalist-nationalist *Heimat* movement, or even the English developments and the vernacular regionalist movement inspired by John Ruskin's writings.<sup>29</sup> In this sense one can also understand his assertion considering the traditional art as ethnographical "... being intimately close to the way of being of peoples, from their origins to their primitive habits and customs..."<sup>30</sup>

Accordingly, using the same argument used by the Brazilian modern architects<sup>31</sup> to criticize their European and American colleagues who had embraced the regionalist approach, Severo described the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its eclectic architecture as the age of fashion and pastiche.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, his assertion of a Brazilian traditional architecture challenged what he called "the damaging effect of this cosmopolitan and de-nationalizing chain",<sup>33</sup> with disastrous consequences "...for its being phony and a lie in the form of a definitive and lasting architecture..."<sup>34</sup> For Severo traditional architecture, that which maintained its Latin character,<sup>35</sup> was a promise of a Rebirth Age, an expression that would be used as well for arts

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<sup>29</sup> Liane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis, *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization. Peaks Valleys in the Flat World*, London 2012, 94.

<sup>30</sup> Ricardo Severo "A arte tradicional no Brasil. A casa e o templo", 44.

<sup>31</sup> Architect Henrique Mindlin (1911-1971) also defined the arrival of the royal family to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 in a very similar way considering it as a disruption to the continuity of the authentic Brazilian architecture: "...An artificial and supervised Europeanization was hurriedly introduced into a provincial capital... But this new and alien movement, completely rootless, boasting a history and a culture very different from the Portuguese, could not help but be a disintegrating force. The art of building in Brazil was split in two. On one side, building of Portuguese origin, but bearing a genuinely 'native' stamp, went on, and on the other, under the regulating and rationalizing French influence, a more erudite and sophisticated architecture appeared..." Henrique E. Mindlin, *Modern Architecture in Brazil* (preface by S. Giedion), Rio de Janeiro/Amsterdam 1956.

<sup>32</sup> Ricardo Severo, "A arte tradicional no Brasil. A casa e o templo", 79.

<sup>33</sup> Ricardo Severo, "A arte tradicional no Brasil. A casa e o templo", 80.

<sup>34</sup> Ricardo Severo, "A arte tradicional no Brasil. A casa e o templo", 79.

<sup>35</sup> Ricardo Severo, "A arte tradicional no Brasil. A casa e o templo", 78.



and literature at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, it should be pointed out that although he was critical of academicism, Severo recognized the importance of the so-called French Mission in the creation of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts as well as the Brazilians attempt to create a new nationality, one that could be "...different for the colony and the metropolis... a new fatherland, with no trace of the ominous times of the Portuguese domain, a unique Brazilian fatherland". Among the French Mission's main protagonists, Severo recognized the importance of Jean-Baptiste Debret and his short study on Brazilian colonial architecture published in *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil* (1834), which he used as an historical source in his own writings.

## 2.

Effectively in April 1831, the first Brazilian Emperor Dom Pedro I<sup>36</sup> abdicated because of a strong anti-Portuguese movement that included serious street riots between Brazilians and Portuguese. Public opinion was armed against the foreigners. The Imperial Academy of Fine Arts was then five years old. The teachers were French artists connected to the Revolution and to Napoleon who arrived in Brazil after the second fall of Napoleon in 1816. As an architect, Grandjean de Montigny was responsible for the architects' formation within the *Academia* and the professor of historic painting was Jean-Baptiste Debret (1768-1848). Other important names were Nicolas-Antoine Taunay and Joachim Lebreton. All of them graduated from the Parisian *Beaux-Arts* at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century involved by the atmosphere of revolutionary classicism, and therefore engaged to an internationalist ideology against the *ancien régime* and the absolute monarchy.

Immediately after the abdication and the return of Dom Pedro to Europe, Debret decided to go back to France. He took with him the young Manuel

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<sup>36</sup> Dom Pedro was born in Portugal in 1798.

de Araújo Porto-alegre (1806-1879)<sup>37</sup>, who had recently graduated from the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts. In Paris, Porto-alegre would follow the lessons of architecture of François Debret, the architect brother of Jean-Baptiste in the *Beaux-Arts*, and the atelier of painter baron de Gros. By this time, Paris was experiencing the early period of Romanticism. Nationalist ideas grew up against the classic international art of Revolutionary and Napoleonic days while Victor Hugo helped to vulgarize the search for French roots in the Middle Ages. In France, Araújo Porto-alegre and his friends Gonçalves de Magalhães and Torres Homem formed a literary circle called *Grupo de Paris*. They developed a strong romantic and patriotic consciousness, which fed on the texts of Porto-alegre and Magalhães. In the theatre, writer Martins Pena operated with the colloquial language of the Brazilian countryside and the prosaic everyday scenes of the small villages.

In 1854, Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen published *História Geral do Brasil*, a seminal work of national self recognition.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, novelists Joaquim Manoel de Macedo and Manoel Antônio de Almeida approached Brazilian themes and scenes. The romantic *indigenismo* treated the native Indians as heroes: *Os Timbiras* by Gonçalves Dias and *O Guarany* by José de Alencar, were both published in 1857. Between 1831 and 1875, the Brazilian painters kept the academic composition rigor, but more and more national themes, types and landscapes, besides tropical fruits, started to come out in their canvases.

Actually, Porto-alegre never openly discussed the issue of a Brazilian expression in arts and architecture, as apparently that was not his main concern. However, a close analysis of his writings uncover his distinctive thoughts on the subject. A review dedicated to an open exhibition at the *Academia* in 1843 suggests the first clue:

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<sup>37</sup> Between 1827 and 1831, he followed the lessons of Debret (historical painting) and Grandjean de Montigny (civil architecture).

<sup>38</sup> Manoel Luiz Salgado Guimarães. “Nação e civilização nos trópicos,” in: *Revista Estudos Históricos* 1 (1988) Rio de Janeiro: CPDOC.

“...Since the academy opened its doors to all artists, exposing their works, art reached a great development, and we hope it will soon sing its independence anthem, like in other nations of Europe after having acquired proper character and mastering all predicaments that constitute a school. To reach that point it is needed that all the elements of civilization rise to a higher level; that industry progresses, that idealists appear, that we become, eventually, a nation with a character of our own...”.<sup>39</sup>

French, British and German Romanticism looked for their character in the mediaeval past and in folk art, but Porto-alegre was convinced that Brazil still had no character of its own. The existence of Brazilian art would depend on the existence of Brazil as a nation, with a character of its own. Hence, it seems to be a project for the future, depending on a gradual public achievement. In 1853, he resumed his concept in the text “Notes on the practical means to develop the taste and the necessity of the Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro”,<sup>40</sup> commissioned by Emperor Pedro II. According to Porto-alegre, there should be a set of three practical actions to be taken by the government: the creation of an art museum, a necropolis and the establishment of an artistic commission.

Unlike the modernist definition of a Brazilian expression based in the analysis and renewal of vernacular architecture from colonial times, Porto-alegre and the Empire faced the task of deconstructing the world inherited from colonization to invent Brazil as an autonomous entity.

In addition, a year before that, in 1841, in the journal of the Brazilian Historic and Geographic Institute (IHGB), he published an article entitled, “The ancient school of painting in Rio de Janeiro” in which he claimed the existence of a native school of painting with a character of its own in Rio de Janeiro during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In a speech made in the *Academia* in 1855, he was even more emphatic assuming a nationalizing discourse based on the recognition of three

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<sup>39</sup> Manuel de Araújo Porto-alegre, “Bellas Artes,” in: *Minerva Brasiliense* 4, (15 December 1843), 118.

<sup>40</sup> Manuel de Araújo Porto-alegre, “Bellas Artes”; “Apontamentos sobre os meios práticos de desenvolver o gosto e a necessidade das Belas-artes no Rio de Janeiro,” in: *Revista do IHGB* 166 (1932), 603-611.

artists who worked before independence:

“...When our concerns will be those of Europe; when we could look at time and extension as two vital preciousities, then art will rise and the value of Brazilian nature, that so highly shined in Valentim, Caldas and José Maurício will glow also in the spirit of a courageous intelligent youth, who more than once has been on the battlefields, the lyceums and in the sublime flights of poetry...”<sup>41</sup>

Porto-alegre understood the building of the nation as a task of the state for which art and architecture should contribute. For him, the *Beaux-Arts* classicism understood the Brazilian architecture as a nation-building tool, as well as an independent expression updated with internationally established practices. Porto-alegre accepted the thesis of the primitive hut set by Laugier in his “Essai sur l’architecture” considering that:

“...We know that the columns and the gable are no more than the form of the primitive hut, we know that the form of Greek architecture is the simplest, as well as the Chinese, which has the character of the primitive tent...”<sup>42</sup>

One should remember that he studied at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* under the strict classicist direction of Quatremère de Quincy. In this sense, architecture should have a universal basis – classic, Greco-Roman. A fixed and indeclinable normative since – if one accepted Laugier – it was given by Nature itself. Ornamentation was due upon that basis as something supplementary – significant, but that could be suppressed, be substituted or evolve.

“...Every architecture stripped of its ornaments is reduced to its simplest expression. And if it preserves a peculiar character, it becomes a new architecture. The lines that give birth to forms are few, but the combination and multiplication of a so small germ gives an immense result. And Nature proves with his infinite variations in the scale of all beings...”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Porto-alegre, Lecture given on 2 June, 1855 at *Academia Imperial de Belas-artes*, manuscript belonging to the IHGB collection.

<sup>42</sup> Porto-alegre, *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> Porto-alegre, *Minerva*, 73.

Anything added to the classical and indeclinable form of architecture was the expression of the nation or people. Since the Greeks – taken as the inventors and theorizers of the classic model – there was something more than the primitive nature in architecture:

“... but what a progression one can observe from the primitive hut to the Parthenon, from the tent to those great pagodas, from the druid’s stone to the Pantheon, and from the catacombs of San Sebastian to the magnificence of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and many other cathedrals!...”<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, Porto-alegre revealed insecurities as a creator. If national expression was important, beauty (which still remains as the essence of art) was more than the former and came first. And for him beauty represented the ideal laws discovered by the Greek:

“...Without ... perception of the Beauty, ... without the revelation of ideal beauty, man couldn’t contemplate the other faces of the work of creation, couldn’t find those laws the Greek found, and from which it is impossible to divert because nature in its continuous renovations, in its order, in its simplicity, only varies in special circumstances...”<sup>45</sup>

In that context what would be the limits between the respect for the universal form and the national character? What would make architecture be Brazilian? The answer must be sought somewhere far behind the primitive framework of Laugier. The academic regulation of classic qualities came along with the theory of the natural origin of architecture that Porto-alegre could not substitute despite his romantic inspiration. For him, perfection in architecture still depended on universal regulation defined by the *Ecole de Beaux-arts* – that Porto-alegre called the *School of Paris*.

In fact, the definition of these limits is somehow deceiving:

“...In the general mass or perimeter there is the gender, and in the details the

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<sup>44</sup> Porto-alegre, *Minerva*, 73.

<sup>45</sup> Manuscript IHGB.

style. The whole expresses mobility or immobility; and the style the ideas and the people it belongs to. These elements comprehend great documents, because they are the book that says a supplement to history...”.<sup>46</sup>

In this sense, if classical was the universal and neutral support through which any valid architecture could find an expression, it would be necessary to overlay the neutral basis with the decorative choices capable of assuring the national character - banish all Hellenizing or European mythological references and use the space with *americanities*. This may explain the decorative use of native vegetable species, Indians, parrots, alligators and other species of the national flora and fauna. Even if Porto-alegre’s architecture works were not numerous, his projects or those directly influenced by his authority, showed copious examples of this kind of Brazilianist ornament.

Porto-alegre’s contribution to our theme was mainly theoretical and political. He helped with defining concepts and was responsible for political injunctions and conspiracies in order to accomplish some examples. His counterpoint Francisco Joaquim Bethencourt da Silva (1831-1911) wrote only a few texts, but was responsible for a florilegium of architecture projects and accomplishments that challenged the quest for a Brazilian architecture expression. Bethencourt da Silva was born in 1831 when J-B. Debret, Porto-alegre and even Dom Pedro I were leaving Brazil for Europe. Coincidentally, he came to this world in the ship in which his family was emigrating from Portugal to Brazil. Enrolled in the *Academia* in 1843, he was among the last disciples of Grandjean de Montigny, and graduated the same year his master died (1850). He also studied under Job Justino de Alcântara and Porto-alegre himself, former students of academy.

He was not a polymorphic humanist like Porto-alegre or a theoretician, but a practical maker with a good soul, who believed in instruction and was committed to human and social promotion. Bethencourt da Silva left a full set of works of different scales varying from furniture design to urban planning.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

Under at least two aspects, Porto-alegre and da Silva's trajectories are complimentary as the latter resumes the issue of a national character in Brazilian architecture operating alternatives to the classicism that so much bothered the *Grupo de Paris*. Some of his buildings were plain and regular following a serial composition of single clusters of elements. However, he also explored new ways of composition and considerably widened the decorative vocabulary searching for innovative space articulations. The historian Paulo Santos considered him as the introducer of architectural eclecticism in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>47</sup> It is within this eclectic key that the issue of a national character in architecture was taken up again.

A soft start to that argument appeared in a speech he gave in 1857 at *Sociedade Propagadora das Bellas-Artes* and dedicated to the artistic teaching to be promoted at the future *Liceu de Artes e Ofícios* (Arts and Crafts Lyceum):

"...what advantages will result from this artistic teaching for the people and the nation! What value will have the works of national industry as the Fine Arts will have enriched the adornments of all our productions, improving their manufacture, harmonizing their lines, **giving them a new form, applying all the resources of Brazilian nature!**... Only then will we know and will we demonstrate to the nations in Europe the superiority of American intelligence so far sacrificed by routine and abandonment".<sup>48</sup>

Even if his call was far from a manifesto for a national style, or a plea for a genuine or essentially Brazilian art, it could be understood as a quiet echo of Porto-alegre's proposals, as well as a reminder that from then on any new form of art in Brazil should express a Brazilian nature.

In her recent PhD thesis, Doralice Duque<sup>49</sup> demonstrated that Bethencourt da Silva pioneered in the research and intensive use of local stone (mainly the beige

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<sup>47</sup> Paulo F. Santos, *Quatro séculos de arquitetura*, Rio de Janeiro 1981, 59.

<sup>48</sup> Francisco Joaquim Bethencourt da Silva, lecture given at *Sociedade Propagadora das Belas-artes November 28, 1856. O Brasil Artístico 2*, Rio de Janeiro: SPBA May 1857.

<sup>49</sup> Doralice Duque Sobral Filha, *Bethencourt da Silva e a cultura arquitetônica do Rio de Janeiro século XIX*. Rio de Janeiro: PROARQ, 2015 (PhD dissertation).

gneiss from the *Serra do Mar*) and Brazilian woods that were left unpainted as a manifestation of regional magnificence. The façades of many of his works showed wide surfaces of elaborately cut stone. Between his most important projects were the parish church of São João Batista da Lagoa, the primary schools of Glória and Harmonia, the former *Caixa Econômica* and the Bourse of Commerce. Bethencourt da Silva not only innovated over the classical models, but also constituted a new, essentially Brazilian, style through shapes and materials using references from the traditional religious architecture of Rio de Janeiro.

The larger and luxuriant expressions of his initiatives were embodied in one of the most significant buildings erected in Brazil by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the third Bourse of Commerce of Rio de Janeiro which he designed in 1880. One technical dispute at the construction site provoked a major and important debate in the architectural milieu concerning the issue of a national expression in buildings. The *Associação Comercial*, the league formed by the local traders, hired the contractor Moraes & Mello to build Bethencourt da Silva's project and commissioned the engineer Luiz Schreiner (1838-1892) to supervise part of the works. The dispute between the architect and the engineer over the composition of a stucco coating ended with the dismissing of Schreiner who, feeling offended in his professional pride, presented four lectures at the *Instituto Polytechnico Brasileiro* between 1883 and 1884.<sup>50</sup> In those sessions he discussed architectural theory and addressed different aspects of Bethencourt da Silva's architectural work, arguing the *Academia Imperial de Bellas-Artes's* teaching. One of his arguments interests us directly. Schreiner began praising Grandjean de Montigny for his teaching and architecture which recognized the *Academia* as a noble foundation. Nevertheless, without mentioning Bethencourt da Silva's name, he inquired:

"...However, how have his successors carried on? Immediately when they reached the Master's chair, they emphasized their individuality; wanted to show

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<sup>50</sup> Luiz Schreiner, *As obras da Praça do Comércio*, Rio de Janeiro 1884.



that they are more artists than him and intended to invent a new **essentially Brazilian** architectural style...”.<sup>51</sup>

The engineer not only denounced the Academy and Bethencourt da Silva, but the architect’s project of a national architecture. Schreiner’s allegation developed through a long historically led discourse including two lines of reasoning: first, it is impossible create a style out of individual will; and, second, our time requires an international style because we live the age of communications between peoples and not of isolation.

“...To better appreciate the absurdity of that pretension we will investigate the origin of the main styles, and through this study it strikes the eye that only the lack of communication among peoples in Antiquity could favor the partial development of a style that one could then consider national; however as communications were wide open, with the contact between people, architecture is so generalized that – mainly from the Christian age on, it ceased presenting the character of nationality, like among people of earlier times, Assyrians, Persians, Egyptians and – to a certain point – Greek. But the Romans, by their cosmocracy and collective acceptance of other architectural forms, had prepared the soil for the cosmopolitan importance of the future reigning styles.

And, if in those epochs already art started to be cosmopolitan, what should we say of today, in this century of steam and telegraph, in which distances that once separated people are shortened day after day? To create an essentially Brazilian architecture is equivalent to isolate Brazil from the whole world through a Chinese wall...”.<sup>52</sup>

This is only a short extract of a much longer speech which went through different ages demonstrating Schreiner’s thesis and showing off his encyclopedic historical knowledge. The passionate dispute that took place during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century testified to the contemporary debate on the pertinence of a national

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<sup>51</sup> Luiz Schreiner, *As obras da Praça do Comércio*, Rio de Janeiro 1884, 78 (author’s emphasis).

<sup>52</sup> Luiz Schreiner, *As obras da Praça do Comércio*, Rio de Janeiro 1884, 90.

architecture, and the actors involved in both sides: the *Academia*, the architects and the artists under Bethencourt da Silva's leadership championing for a national architecture, and the engineers and the *Polytechnica* school representing the counter-force for an international style.

The reception of Schreiner's ideas among his contemporaries can be measure by the edition of the *Novo vinhola brasileiro*<sup>53</sup> (the 'New Brazilian Vignola') published by Alexandre Speltz six years after Schreiner's death. In this, Speltz not only incorporated many of Schreiner's concepts on architecture and stylistics, but also pasted entire pages of the engineer's lectures, with no mention of the author, in order to advocate the absurdity of proposing a national style as the world moved into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.

The search for a Brazilian expression in arts and architecture saw its first awakening in the beginnings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with a small group of professionals debating ideas and a few practices. Porto-alegre recognized the idea of a Brazilian art as a project for the future. Bethencourt da Silva and (one can suppose) some of his partners in the *Academia* and the *Liceu* conceived and practiced an eclectic architecture based on fragments of the Portuguese/Brazilian architectural tradition. Schreiner and (one can suppose) some of his partners in the *Polytechnica* aligned against it. After the First World War, the 'Missions Style' – invented in California – started spreading throughout the Americas. In Brazil, it was converted into a nationalist movement championed by architects Ricardo Severo and Jose Marianno da Cunha Filho around the symbolic year 1922 when the country celebrated the first centenary of its Independence.

The patriotic feelings of the Romantics and the nation-orientated system of political, sociological and historical thinking that spread throughout western

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<sup>53</sup> Alexandre Speltz, *Architectura clássica no Brazil: tratado elementar das 5 ordens da arquitetura classica – ou Novo vinholabrazileiro*, Rio de Janeiro 1898.

civilization from 1848 on the issue of nation, gained the creations of painters, musicians, writers and architects. Those 19<sup>th</sup> century seeds germinated in Brazil during the 1920's and 1930's with vigorous force of thought and through a plain and somehow puerile stylistic manifestation.

While neocolonial plastic options deeply differ from modernist ones, the feeling of love for Brazil and the will to give it an artistic expression seems to have unified theoretical discourses casting a dark shadow over the different world-views and antagonistic political orientations among the protagonists.

Effectively Carlos Kessel<sup>54</sup> quotes the restlessness of Mario de Andrade, one of the main modern intellectuals in 1929:

“...in my view Modernist architecture will not remain, in its present anonymity and internationalism. If it normalizes it will have ... to distinguish itself between ethnic factions and to depreciate its individual function. If so, there is nothing more correct than the search and appropriation of the elements of Brazilian architectural constancy. It is with them that, from within modern architecture, Brazil will give the contribution which it must give...”<sup>55</sup>

And, on the other hand, traditionalist Ricardo Severo had written one decade earlier:

“Traditional art does not mean, thus, literal reproduction of traditional things... of houses made out of mud ... Traditional art is the stylization of former artistic forms that integrate in a particular time the local milieu, the moral character of a people, the imprint of a civilization... [the] rhythmic evolution of successive cycles of art and styles and a collective expression... determinant in peoples of definite tradition in which the aesthetic feeling is stable like the feeling for patriotic nationality...

instead of copying, try to imitate them only by adapting them... to the traditional character of the people... you will have done... traditional art...”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Carlos Kessel, *Arquitetura neocolonial no Brasil entre o pastiche e a modernidade*, Rio de Janeiro 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Mario de Andrade, “Arquitetura colonial,” in: *Diário Nacional* (23 August 1928).

<sup>56</sup> Ricardo Severo, “A arte tradicional no Brasil”.

Among the debates between our main protagonists around the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one can feel the need for national roots acting together with international contemporary expression. Regionalism and universalism are not necessarily opposites, but frequently appear as twin aspects of the anguish to find one's position in the vast globe of our planet.

Under the soil of the main achievements of modern architecture, lie the consistent bed of tradition, as suggested by Lucio Costa's confession concerning his contribution to two other colleagues engaged in the invention of Brasília during the 1950s at the highest peak of the modern consecration:

"...Oscar Ribeiro de Almeida Niemeyer Soares, architect artist: master of plastics, of spaces, and of structural flights... – **the creator**. João da Gama Filgueiras Lima, the architect who brought ... together art and technology – **the builder**. And I, Lucio Marçal Ferreira Ribeiro de Lima e Costa, carrying a bit of both of them ... I am after all the link with our past, the foundation, – **the tradition...**"<sup>57</sup>.

From today's point of view, we must conclude that for them all the deep dive into regional roots was a means to communicate to the world. To radically state local architectural tradition in the new architecture constituted the only possible way for Brazilian architecture to have its voice heard all around the world.

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<sup>57</sup> Costa, Lucio Costa: *Registro de uma Vivência*, 434.

# CATALONIA AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE. AN UNFINISHED TALE

ANTONI REMESAR BETLLOCH

As Sambricio<sup>1</sup> points out, when focusing our analysis on the perspective of the housing problem, we should note that it has to be analyzed in two distinct phases. The first, which began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and is framed in the general European context of providing housing for workers in crowded cities, was to be implemented in Spain through the development of various “Casas Baratas” (1911; 1921) regulations.<sup>2</sup> The second phase of analysis refers to the more general problem of “city organization” derived from the influences of thinking about Municipalism<sup>3</sup> (even during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera) and of territorial planning, a thought that represents the emergence of the role of the state as a regulatory body on urban problems. This line of thought led to planning proposals for Madrid and Barcelona, and to the development of various laws. These not only regulated the problem of providing affordable

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<sup>1</sup> Carlos Sambricio, *Cuando se quiso resucitar la Arquitectura*, Murcia 1983.

<sup>2</sup> *Casas baratas* is a name for low cost dwellings. Both from the perspective of the influence of the legislation of other countries (France, UK ...) on this type of housing, and for the underlying organizational models (Garden City, Lineal City ...).

<sup>3</sup> As is well known, the first phase of the welfare state starts with the transfer to municipal ownership of some urban infrastructure developed since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Public transport and, in part, housing will be some of such ‘municipalized’ infrastructures. To a large extent, the development of modern architecture (especially in Germany) cannot be understood outside the framework of the processes of municipalization.

housing, but also addressed the more general problem of Spain's modernization and reorganization of the production system, especially since the economic crises of the 1930s.

“Our age is characterized by a large universal renewal movement. New social structures appear. Modern societies tend to be governed by the same collective needs for all civilized countries. Factories, Schools, Sports. Housing, Leisure. Transport, Roads. URBANISM”.<sup>4</sup>

In brief, following Flores<sup>5</sup> and Bohigas<sup>6</sup>, I argue that the flourishing Spanish ‘rationalism’ / ‘functionalism’ is articulated in relation to two positions in principle, antagonistic to each other.

On the one hand, in Madrid and Barcelona, architects such as Lacasa, Fernández Shaw, Rubio i Tudurí, without giving up rationalist thought, avoided the mimetic *ism* of a certain stylistic trend or fad that would configure the repertoire of modern architectural language. As Lacasa<sup>7</sup> suggests:

“(...) Now, the issue is just the plastic and aesthetic aspect of architecture, after having witnessed the spectacle of post-expressionists, who consider Cezanne as remote as Amenhotep the IVth. One can but smile seeing a new group that believes they get their hands on the true truth.

As for the list, Oud, Poelzig, Le Corbusier, etc., contain very different qualities, it is not the same Taut, rationalist, Hoffmann, artist and Le Corbusier, journalist and charlatan. (...) However, rationalism is not there in the intellectualized circles but in the work. British architects have absolutely no willingness for the architecture of the cubes, but, instead, have a very solid understanding of what architectural rationalism is.

I believe in the current rationalist architecture as a moment of eternal evolution of ideas, even if you will, a radical change in direction, but later

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<sup>4</sup> GATEPAC, “Editorial”. *AC (Actividades Contemporáneas)* year 1, 1 (1931).

<sup>5</sup> Carlos Flores, *Arquitectura española contemporánea*, Madrid 1961.

<sup>6</sup> Oriol Bohigas, *Arquitectura española la Segunda República*, Barcelona 1970.

<sup>7</sup> Luis Lacasa, “Respuesta a la Encuesta sobre la Nueva Arquitectura confeccionada por Fernando García Mercadal,” in *La Gaceta Literaria* 32 (15 April 1928).

other ideas will displace the present, because the technicians do not have the force of Joshua to stop the race of the sun.”

What degree of acclimatization has modern architecture achieved among us? asked himself Rubió i Tudurí<sup>8</sup> a couple of years later:

“Here is a question - and then an answer - in which we must not waste much time nor deepen. Though I myself cultivate this architecture of Germanic origins, it would be wrong to attribute great importance to it, even less to burn incense in front of its practitioners. No one a better architect because they follow a fad, even if it is a more intellectual one. In fact, as uninteresting is he who copies the Romans as he who mimics Mies Van der Rohe or Le Corbusier, unless he has other qualities other than being a follower and imitator.”

The architects who showed some resistance to uncritically adopting some postulates of modern architecture are those who Bohigas (1970) dubbed “the side-lines rationalists”. This trend also kept alive the flame of the role and value of the “regional / vernacular architecture” as a way of experimentation and modernization of Spanish architecture in order to allow it to jump to the modern rationalism / functionalism postulates.<sup>9</sup>

The other trend would group together architects who assumed the tenets of the CIAM’s New Architecture. In this regard, it is important to clarify that we cannot carry the dichotomy to the extreme. Indeed, two years after the *Literary Gazette* of Madrid developed its survey on the New Architecture, the Barcelona newspaper *Mirador* developed a similar survey. One of those who answered was Josep Lluís Sert, for some, the clearest example of the defence of CIAM principles.

<sup>8</sup> N.M. Rubió i Tudurí, “L’aclimatació de l’arquitectura moderna a Barcelona,” in *Mirador* 93 (1930).

<sup>9</sup> See Mónica Vázquez Astorga, *La arquitectura vernácula como laboratorio de experimentación y vía de modernización para la arquitectura moderna*. Universidad Pablo Olavide, 2005 (on-line [http://www.upo.es/historia\\_arte/export/sites/historia\\_arte/Actividades/Congresos/Publicacion\\_Arquitectura\\_Vernacula\\_Carmona/ComunicacionesEspana/Monica\\_Vazquez\\_Astorga\\_La\\_arquitectura\\_vernacula\\_como\\_laboratorio\\_de\\_experimentacion\\_y\\_via\\_de\\_modernizacion\\_para\\_la\\_arquitectura\\_moderna.pdf](http://www.upo.es/historia_arte/export/sites/historia_arte/Actividades/Congresos/Publicacion_Arquitectura_Vernacula_Carmona/ComunicacionesEspana/Monica_Vazquez_Astorga_La_arquitectura_vernacula_como_laboratorio_de_experimentacion_y_via_de_modernizacion_para_la_arquitectura_moderna.pdf) (accessed 12 April 2014); Carlos Sambricio, “La normalización de la arquitectura vernácula: un debate en la España de los veinte,” in *Revista de Occidente* 235 (2000), 21-44.

Sert<sup>10</sup> acknowledges that the New Architecture is the only one that “can fully meet the current needs (material and spiritual) of the individual” because it is using the building elements that the industry can provide. Meanwhile he recognizes the value of new materials and new construction techniques: “we have to maintain some traditional building systems that tie in perfectly with the modern ones, such as, for example, the admirable flat brick vaults of our land”, since he recognizes, along with his GATEPAC fellows, that although “we are in the presence of a new state of mind that cancels customs and traditions and that tends to be universal, Contemporary Architecture, must agree with these characters”.

Therefore, Sert as leader of the GATEPAC group, emphasizes the role of the vernacular not falling into the mimicry of a badly understood regionalism.

"To adapt a historical system is to fake the system, and deny the times. In regional architectures, resulting from weather conditions, local customs and available materials, only the weather has absolute value. What is essential will stand. What is episodic, accidental, must disappear; a division of universal architecture based on the weather conditions can be expected. **Southern Architecture**, terraces, awnings, flown slabs, filtered light. **Northern Architecture**, large glass surfaces (...) Architecture responds to a utility, to an end. It must satisfy the Reason. Using elements, program, materials, space, light... going from a rational Interior (function) to the exterior (façade) in a simple and constructive way, seeking beauty in proportion, in the order, in balance. Suppressing the superimposed superfluous decoration. Combating the false use of materials, the architecture of imitation. Bring the architecture to its natural environment, i.e., technical, social and economic, from which it is currently separated is the program (accepted by many, but few trying to make), that the GATEPAC Group intends to implement by coordinating

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<sup>10</sup> Josep LL. Sert, “Qué Penseu de l’Arquitectura Moderna?” in *Mirador* 65 (24 April 1930).



efforts and working collectively”.<sup>11</sup>

In this sense and somewhat earlier, Garcia Mercadal,<sup>12</sup> one of the founders of GATEPAC wrote: “The climate, materials and also the social structure of every country, greatly influence the arrangement of the floor-plan and its inner structure, which change from a period of history to another, always due to their immediate dependence on social factors”. Furthermore, with respect to the criticisms raised about excessive mechanization, they, the GATEPAC group, warn:

“these conditions, of a spiritual nature, are indispensable; without them, we just produce something from a mathematical calculation, the ‘machine à vivre’ too strictly interpreted, and as a result, a miserable architecture; we condemn this architecture”.<sup>13</sup>

The introduction of the ‘New Architecture’ into Spain must be framed in an eminently political perspective (as happened in Germany and the USSR). The economic boom following Spanish neutrality during the Great War and the consequences of the economic crisis of 1921, in which, from 1923, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera sought to promote the local power of the bourgeoisie, “induces a cultural change resulting not only in a new way of understanding architecture but also in a new vision of the city”.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, different factions of the bourgeoisie competed in the arena of the modernization of Spain. On the other hand, the popular forces demanded a role as transformers of society, overcoming the approaches of the cooperative tradition of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In between, technicians (architects), opted for one or other of the positions. As Sambricio points out, the historiography of architecture has not helped much in the understanding of the phenomenon of architectural avant-garde in Spain.

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<sup>11</sup> GATEPAC, “Editorial,” in *AC (Actividades Contemporáneas)*, year 1, 1 (1931).

<sup>12</sup> Fernando Garcia Mercadal, *La casa Popular en España*, Madrid 1930.

<sup>13</sup> GATEPAC, “Lo que entendemos por vivienda mínima, in *AC (Actividades Contemporáneas)* 6 (1932).

<sup>14</sup> Sambricio, *Cuando se quiso resucitar la arquitectura*.

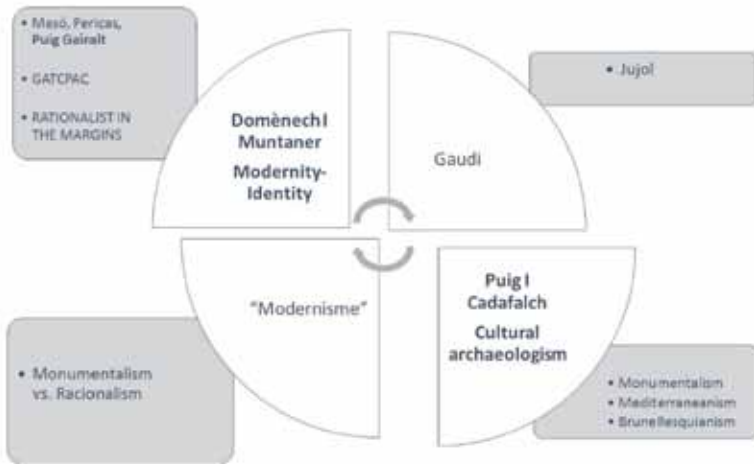


Figure 1. Author's own elaboration. *The roots of Catalan Modern Architecture*

“The maximum desire of these critics and historians - focused on the study of projects that correspond to some European achievements of those years- was to identify this architecture as a reflection of the external phenomenon; they do not analyse if the existence of the Spanish avant-garde gave a specific dimension to the topic or, on the contrary, these avant-gardists were not only isolated characters, with no influence on the overall picture, but also individuals of limited European interest.”<sup>15</sup>

Against the general historiographical opinion about the mediocrity of the Spanish avant-garde architects, Sambricio asks:

“Were architects mediocre because they failed to make quality architecture or because they adopted schemes different from those established? Were they mediocre because their architecture was of no interest, not having understood

<sup>15</sup> Sambricio, *Cuando se quiso resucitar la arquitectura*.

the schemes of their time? Or, was it because they made a mistake in using history as a starting point of conception?”<sup>16</sup>

In the case of Catalonia, the emergence of the New Architecture has generated great controversy,<sup>17</sup> especially in the understanding of what *Noucentisme* means as a possible prelude to the development of the language of the New Architecture. Ignasi de Solà-Morales<sup>18</sup> argues that 20<sup>th</sup> century Catalan architecture takes place in a cultural context of social modernization in which the intellectual elites have taken it as their own and as a matter “around which cultural development must respond to the problems of national identity, criticism and streamlining the process itself”. In a peripheral condition, Catalan culture has alternated revisions and total reviews of the avant-garde with reformist positions, “more enlightened committed to the economic and social transformation and with a sense of availability in the Architecture’s role as professional service”. In this sense, *Noucentisme* and its architecture would be the clearest example of the ability to use different traditions, merging native or foreign experiences “with the practical goal to professionally contribute to one of the most intense periods undertaken by the industrial bourgeoisie from the point of view of consolidation of the modernization of Catalan society”. For Solà-Morales, *Noucentisme*, in its stylistic diversity, has a vocation of moderate modernity; an ability to assimilate into moulds and for purposes born from real needs; a typical mode of producing real architecture in the cultural context of developing societies.

The avant-garde of the 1930s would be the mirror image of this enlightened and bourgeois reformism. “Social change, radical criticism to the conditions of architecture and the proposal for a global alternative model, will be the

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<sup>16</sup> Sambricio, *Cuando se quiso resucitar la arquitectura*.

<sup>17</sup> Francisco Roca Rosell, *Política urbana i pensament econòmic. Barcelona, 1901-1939*. PhD Dissertation at the University of Barcelona, 1977, <http://www.tesiexarxa.net> (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Ignasi Solà-Morales, *Eclecticismo y vanguardia y otros escritos*. Barcelona 1980 (2004 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

	1888- 1909	1909- 1917	1914 -1929	1931 - 1939
Main Facts	In the face of eclecticism, Modernism emerges powerful. It involves the reorganization of urban territory (Annexations) and the need for a new configuration (Jaussely Plan) of a metropolitan scale versus the more urban by Cerdà (1859)	Central Noucentisme period. Eugeni d'Ors. Regionalist League Cultural and Institutional Revolution from the Commonwealth of Catalonia Intervention across the built environment Against <i>Modernisme</i> Workers' housing (Social Museum, Institute of Social Reforms)	Project Universal Exhibition in Barcelona Transformation of the city. Parks System Catalunya - City Own institutions vs Primo de Rivera Municipal Statute <i>Cheap Houses</i> Groups Monumentalism Crisis of 1917 <sup>19</sup>	Second Republic The Commissariat for Workers Housing Institute against Forced unemployment GATEPAC Macia Plan (The New Barcelona) City of Rest Block House
References	The Renaissance. Domènech i Montaner "In Search of a National Architecture" (1878)	Ley de casas baratas (Cheap Houses Act) 1911 La Veu de Catalunya	Ley de casas baratas, 1921 Civitas (Ciudad jardin) La Publicitat Gaseta de les Arts	Salmón's Act, 1935 Mirador Revista AC
Influences	French, German Arts & Crafts	Art Public - Wiener Werkstätte- Österreichischer Werkbund	Deutscher Werkbund Bauhaus Chicago School 1925. Decorative Arts Exhibition	CIAM

Table 1. Own elaboration from the works by Bohigas (1970) and Solà-Morales (1980)

new features of the more obvious representative group of this new attitude framed under the acronym GATCPAC.” Schematically, following Bohigas and Solà-Morales, the issue of the leap from the housing problem to that of the organization of the city, in Catalonia can be organized into four main periods.

<sup>19</sup> Events that took place in the summer of 1917 in Spain, three simultaneous challenges that threatened the government and even the very system of the Restoration: a military movement (the *Juntas de Defensa*), a political movement (the Parliamentary Assembly held in Barcelona organized by the Regionalist League), and a social movement (the revolutionary general strike).

In several works, Oriol Bohigas<sup>20</sup> describes the evolution of Catalan architecture leading to the New Architecture. Schematically, he shows a continuity between the postulates by Domènech i Montaner<sup>21</sup> pivoting between national identity and modernisation of techniques and procedures, and the emergence of Catalan rationalism in the mid-1920s. Figure 1 shows this process of evolution schematically.

In accordance with Rovira,<sup>22</sup> we can find that the theoretical evolution from *Modernisme* to *Noucentisme* relied on the transfer of values and powers between the high landowning classes and the colonialist bourgeoisie of the Restoration and the new industrial bourgeoisie. The modernists took the first steps towards a sociocultural renovation (and, consequently, renewal of economic practice) of Catalan culture by rescuing it from its backwardness and raising it to a European level. For a moment, it seemed that the synthesis between political progress and artistic evolution, personalized by Domènech i Montaner, was about to be achieved. However, traditionalism emerged triumphant and while making such a synthesis impossible, paved the way towards more representative art forms (*Noucentisme*). *Modernisme* was reduced to an art form that no longer agreed with the developing political climate, and was thus marginalized and banned. As Rovira states:

“The new industrial bourgeoisie identified with the Regionalist League programme, favoured the way to other types of architectural or artistic expression. Prevalent now as ordering principles, the order and the rule against fantasy and exuberance. The League continued, somehow, whatever was a genuine quickening process initiated by *Modernisme*, giving it orderly channels of expression adapted to the needs of the Party

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<sup>20</sup> Oriol Bohigas, *Barcelona, entre el Pla Cerdà i el Barraquisme*, Barcelona 1963.

<sup>21</sup> Lluís Domènech i Montaner, “En busca de una arquitectura nacional,” in *La Renaixensa*, year 8, 1, 4 (28 February 1878), 149-160.

<sup>22</sup> Rovira, Josep M., “Raimon Duran i Reynals o la Soledad de un corredor de fondo,” in *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo* 113 (1976), 57-63.

and the class.”

Solà-Morales<sup>23</sup> went deeper into this interpretation, “The break with *Modernisme*, the intolerance with avant-garde attitudes are part of the limits that *Noucentisme* outlines.” In the case of architectural taste, a rupture with *Modernisme* becomes clear, until the 1960s when, finally, Catalan culture breaks away from the *Noucentisme* normativism. Therefore, the evaluation of the modernist period was usually done from the disqualifying perspective of the men of the New Catalonia.

“It is not surprising, therefore, that the Catalan architecture of the moment, the one which had potential, not the one aborted in the utopian socialism of Montoliu or in the machinists images by Alomar and Torres García, differs from the ‘official’ story of Modern Architecture. By ‘official’ I understand that history made official today, precisely thanks to the avant-garde of that time: written by Giedion, Richards, Zevi or Benevolo. However, the phenomenon is not as anomalous as to think that the period is exceptional in Catalonia. The *Novecento* in Italy, national realism in the countries of Northern Europe, American classicism, would be situations, among others, having points in common with the situation in our country and they will help to give a more complex view of the architecture of the twentieth century, beyond the linearist way in which historians so often fall”.

As Solà-Morales points out, the development of rationalist principles in design and building, is intrinsically articulated with the solutions implemented for housing for working and popular classes, especially in the deployment of the various operations under the laws of *Casas Baratas*. The problem of housing goes from being “a subject of municipal politics solved with rules that collect

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<sup>23</sup> Ignasi Solà-Morales, “Sobre Noucentisme y Arquitectura. Notas para una Historia de la Arquitectura Moderna en Cataluña (1909-1917),” in *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo* 113 (1976), 21-34.

suggestions by hygienists”, to defining a comprehensive approach to the problem “as the central question of the organization of the city”.<sup>24</sup>

As shown by Mercè Vidal,<sup>25</sup> the work of some local architects like Ramón Puig Gairalt perfectly exemplifies this ambivalent situation. On the one hand, the housing problem framed in urban development, on the other, the need to act with a new repertoire of language, that of modern architecture. Puig Gairalt<sup>26</sup> suggested that the so-called low cost house cannot exist isolated:

“it is necessary to gather a number of them, and therefore, according to a preconceived plan. These groups of dwellings, be it forming certain alignments, be it appearing isolated, should meet the points outlined above; constituting what without further definition we can point to like real gardens cities.”

Regarding the introduction of contemporary language in the construction of buildings, Puig Gairalt complains:

“I’m tired of designing sophisticated buildings following the most modern hygienic and constructive methods, sparing nothing in their construction, for them to be used as henhouses or breeding farms. And in contrast, it is incalculable the number of hours I have spent talking to try to prevent as many individuals who desired to build housing in the form of real pig sites, in the worse sense of its meaning, without conditions, just to take a little joy seeing the sun. [...]. Are architects in any way to blame for this? There is no doubt! First, it is our duty to enlighten public opinion. We have not acquired our knowledge for private use; we owe ourselves to our neighbours and especially our compatriots”.

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<sup>24</sup> Solà-Morales, “Sobre Noucentisme y Arquitectura”, 27.

<sup>25</sup> Mercè Vidal i Jansà, “Arquitectura y Urbanismo en la Conurbación barcelonesa. Ramón Puig Gairalt arquitecto municipal de Hospitalet del Llobregat (1912 - 1937),” in *On the waterfront* 2, 28 (2013), 4-46. <http://raco.cat/index.php/Waterfront/article/view/276579/364529> (accessed 7 March 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Ramon Puig Gairalt, “Casas baratas y Ciudades Jardín,” in *El Constructor* 15 ( 1925), 40-47.

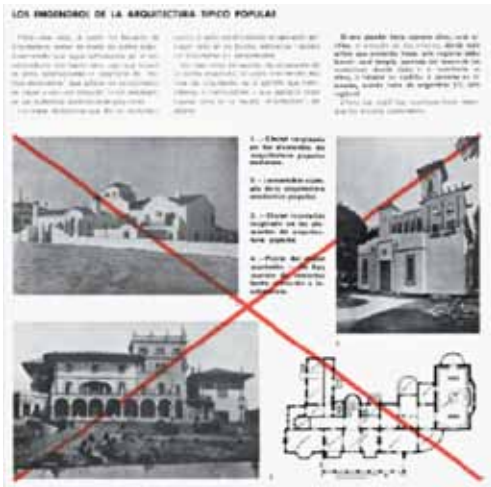


Image 1. GATEPAC, AC 18 *Monstrosities of the typical-popular architecture*

The architects of this period, faced both the consequences of technical changes in construction and their consequences in an urban setting and urban economy. This is evident in two complementary aspects.

“On the one hand the deployment of an effort for the technical rationalization of the problem. The definition of the types, plots and urban layout that could combine, in an adequate and economical way, a number of complex factors, is entrusted to specialists and expands their traditional field of project action.(...)

However, these technical problems are doubled out of a need for representation summarizing its own ideological language of architecture, the content that these operations have in the field of social relations of production and the culture that emerges. It is worth highlighting this figurative effort as one of the most creative moments and of greater connection with the cultural institutions that diffusely we mean by *Noucentisme*. (...) This mystified recovery between petty bourgeois and





Image 2. Sert, J.LL.; Subirana, J.B; Torres-Clavé, J. AC Project Workers Housing (Barcelona) in AC 1933

rural that will be called “popular”, will set the mood for extraordinarily simple elements that address the genuine design of the house for the working classes without having to resort to a reduced, kitsch version, of the more or less *pompier* architecture of public works or of the *haute bourgeoisie*. There is a whole reflection upon the primary elements of the composition - the gate, the door, the window, the roof, the room where you sleep, the living room - which are redesigned with elements borrowed from the traditional pre-industrial architecture of the country - which would be the more nationalist dimension of the matter- with stylized elements of high architecture or imports of foreign experiences”.<sup>27</sup>

In this sense it was assumed during early 1930s within the architectural profession, that the theme of ‘low cost houses’ - or housing for the middle-class powered by

<sup>27</sup> Solà-Morales, “Sobre Noucentisme y Arquitectura”, 23-28.

the Salmon Act of 1935 - would need specific project solutions since, as raised by García Mercadal,<sup>28</sup> a “cheap house” was not a bourgeois house in miniature. Its design, with budgetary limits, required rethinking concepts of design and style. This was not only with regard to the built volume and its implantation - gradually abandoning the concept of a garden city to experiment with the building of large blocks, partly following the experiences of the Viennese *Hoff* or the German *Siedlung* - but also with regard to the objects that they should contain. This way, Basegoda<sup>29</sup> states:

“The tendency to even out civic education to consider the house with garden as a relic of the past. Already, in the Brussels Congress, Walter Gropius<sup>30</sup> has pointed out the benefits of collective dwellings within the city, economic and with minimal room, helping to suppress a number of causes of wastefulness, centralizing services and ensuring light, air and freedom. The domestic problem of large multi-storey linear blocks - that has nothing to do with the psychosis of skyscrapers - is defended fiercely by the architects of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”

In summary, the Spanish architects engaged in urban development and construction of affordable housing for the popular and middle-classes were familiar with the standardized construction elements, while demanding from one relatively undeveloped industry, the manufacturing in large numbers of these standard elements that would allow dry mounting of standardized houses. Likewise, the reaction against *Modernisme* had gradually introduced an important stylistic simplification regarding the construction of affordable housing. At the same time, a good knowledge of what was happening in Europe

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<sup>28</sup> Fernando García Mercadal, *La vivienda en Europa y otras cuestiones* (1926), Zaragoza 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Buenaventura Basegoda, “La casa de los más pobres,” in *La Construcción Moderna* 17, 15 (September 1932), 193-196.

<sup>30</sup> Basegoda refers to the Gropius’ talk, “Flach-, Mittel- oder Hochbau?” (talk to 3rd CIAM conference, Brussels, 27–30 November 1930), published in *Moderne Bauformen* (Stuttgart), 30:7 (1931): 321–328, reprinted in Probst and Schädlich, *Walter Gropius*, vol. 3, 123.

enabled the influence of the avant-garde in a context of respect for traditional techniques and materials. In this regard, they respected that the elements of these buildings, to their smallest details, were mass-produced, and had been refined and perfected over the centuries:

“doors of accurate width and height, windows, cupboards, furniture, ceramics. The same forms, always with slight variations, which are repeated throughout the Mediterranean coasts. These constructions have nothing to do with what, in the schools of architecture is called ‘regional architecture’.”<sup>31</sup>

In Mediterranean popular architecture, the facades at midday are protected from excessive sun by bowers or porches, elements that filter the light without obstructing the view of the outside scenery. The roofs are flat, terraced, or in Arab tiles and always with a very gentle slope, so that the prism that sustains them dominates the set, keeping all its strength and purity.

“The interesting and vital aspects in this Mediterranean architecture are the primary volumes, large smooth surfaces, clear and bright polychromy, the consistency of buildings with the dominant lines of the landscape in which they are located and that compel to create new forms for each place; to invent new solutions. When comparing the examples of Mediterranean architecture with the best creations of modern architecture, we cannot fail to notice some common characteristics, not in detail but in these ‘constants’ that give spirit to the architectural work. Then, why was Modern Architecture called Germanic?”

The GATEPAC group analysis continues to raise the point that this spirit, these constant characteristics, are not typical of Germanic buildings. The

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<sup>31</sup> GATEPAC, “Número dedicado a la Arquitectura Popular,” in *AC (Actividad Contemporánea)* year 5, 18 (1935).

technical means at their disposal as well as the climate, did not favour this kind of construction and forced them to cover the houses with slate roofing and other materials, giving them large slopes. Light colours to lime do not resist the persistent rains; the facades of the Nordic popular constructions are blackened by the permanent moisture.

“Modern architecture is technically a discovery of the Nordic countries, but spiritually it is the unstylish Mediterranean architecture which influences this New Architecture. Modern architecture is a return to pure, traditional forms; the Mediterranean ones. It's a victory for the Latin sea!”<sup>32</sup>

Not only were the architects of the GATEPAC group engaged in the modernization of Spanish society, as seen above, many were also committed to breaking with the tenets of academic and official architecture. They were engaged in constructive rationalization of buildings as well as with the functional reorganization of the city, reworking some of the urban concepts in use, as was the case of the model for garden cities. The housing problem viewed as inseparable from the problem of urban growth pointed to similar solutions to those developed in Northern Europe about the role that large residential blocks could have, in solving both the problem of affordable housing, and that of its impact on the reorganization of the city. However, it becomes apparent that many of these architects, while pragmatic and open to possibilities, even accepting of the structural principles of modern architecture, did not share some of their mechanistic and functionalist postulates.

“Are we in the presence of a simple phenomenon of delay or are we facing a case of racial misunderstanding? Is the new functionalism as understandable to us as the Gothic style was for the Florentines? Would the forms of this architecture –decorative/rational - become acclimatized

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<sup>32</sup> GATEPAC, 1935:1.

in Catalonia, or will they be flower of one day and of caprice? Alternatively, will we finally know how to overcome this phase of 'wanting to make nice things with logic' and know how to go forward towards the architecture of the utility, leading a purely anaesthetic movement?

We cannot answer these questions with words but with deeds. Every architect must consider whether it is fine to continue cultivating hybrid forms of decorative rational plasticism, or whether he tries to stop and jumps to the front lines where the battle is being fought by functional architecture, objective and simply useful. Moreover, every architect should check if, when the time arrives, he has the ability to avoid the aesthetic defect (defect is a virtue when it is exercised out of place), and he has the ability to execute works in which function is the only end and the only concern".<sup>33</sup>

Although, at the beginning of the 1930s, some authors<sup>34</sup> outlined the development achieved by modern architecture in Spain, subsequent historiography practically ignores them, despite some significant achievements, such as the so-called Macià Plan (GATCPAC- Le Corbusier 1934) for Barcelona, or the effective implementation of the construction of affordable housing, such as the Block House. Surely, time worked against possibilities. The social, political and economic tensions which define the Second Spanish Republic and the implementation of self-government in Catalonia, culminated in a bloody civil war and the establishment of a dictatorial and autocratic regime, which prioritized the values of the imperial past of a Spain that never existed. Many

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<sup>33</sup> N.M. Rubió i Tudurí, "L'acimatació de l'arquitectura moderna a Barcelona," in *Mirador* 93 (1930).

<sup>34</sup> Sigfried Giedion, "L'architecture contemporaine en Espagne," in *Cahiers d'Art* 3 (1931), 157-164. The Nautical Club in San Sebastián by Aizpurúa (founder of the Spanish Falange of José Antonio Primo de Rivera) and Labayen appears as the only Spanish case in H-R Hitchcock and Ph. Johnson, *The International Style since 1922*, New York 1932. Oddly, S.Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, Harvard 1941 does not mention any Spanish author, or even refer to the GATEPAC group and, what might be considered more serious, in his account of the evolution of urban thinking, no mention appears to Idefons Cerdà, founder of Contemporary Urbanism.

of the ideals of a country that looked to Europe in all fields and that seemed achievable in the early 1930s, little by little, were blurred through exile. Many architects emigrated; others, in internal exile, were purged. However, the ideas of the modernization of architecture and of urbanism were kept alive until the time when, in the 1950s with economic development and the end of the autarchic period of dictatorship, they gradually emerged again.

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# A CRITICAL INSIGHT INTO MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE IN SPAIN. RUMOURS AND TRUTHS<sup>1</sup>

CONCHA DIEZ-PASTOR E IRIBAS

*[The avant-garde] felt the yearning for the union of life and art.*

Octavio Paz<sup>2</sup>

## "For Monstrification"

In 1975 Lucio Blanco filmed a twelve-minute short<sup>3</sup> as his course theme work at the Faculty of Communication Sciences in Madrid, recently shown to academic colleagues who had the chance to watch a stupefying film.

As a continuation of previous research, this is an opportunity to take a renewed look at 20<sup>th</sup> century Modernist architecture in Spain. The aim being to make sense of people's beliefs and thoughts about their built environment and what it represented, implies to resort to previous research and writings, and concepts

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper "A Critical Approach to Modernist Architecture in Spain. Rumours and Truths." presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAR, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Octavio Paz, *Los hijos del limo*, Madrid 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Lucio Blanco, *Arquitectura para después de una guerra*, Madrid 1975.

derived from them.<sup>4</sup>

Blanco's ground-breaking short aimed at picturing Spain's Francoist oppression through the regime's architectural production. In turn, by mistake, it pictured the architecture produced *before and after* the Spanish Civil War, rather than *during* the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975). Blanco's summary of forty years thus included many avant-garde and Modernist works,<sup>5</sup> not all of which fit within the Francoist tyranny.<sup>6</sup> Some relevant works shown had been built before 1939, even under critical principles – considered degenerate afterwards – which had subsisted thanks to the finest intellectual embroidery of architects to skip post-war censorship.<sup>7</sup>

What Blanco's 1975 film showed was a melange of the previous fifty years' architectural repertory, *all included*, a sort of compendium of the architecture produced in Spain since the mid-1920s. The avant-garde critical regionalism<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> All by C. Diez-Pastor. For the “1925 Generation”, avant-garde and emergence of Modernist architecture, preceding facts and evolution, see *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, y los demás*, Doctorate thesis, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Spain) [Dir. Prof. M.A. Baldellou (summa cum laude).] 2003; and *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la “Generación del 25”*, Madrid 2005. For insight into Modernist landscape, its connection with art and architecture, and the tourist purposes it contributed to, see “Transits into landscape,” in *Cultural Landscape*, Madrid 2008; and the case-study “Albergues de carretera (Highway inns): a key step in the evolution of Spanish tourism and Modernist architecture”, *Journal of Tourism History*, 2: 1 (2010) 1-22, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17551821003777832> (accessed on 4th March, 2015). For another case study on Arniches' contribution to exemplary architecture, see “Carlos Arniches, arquitecto de la Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas,” in: J.M Sánchez Ron and J. García-Velasco (Eds.), *100 JAE: la Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas en su centenario*, Madrid (2010). For core aspects of Modernism and their translation into Spain's reality, see “La vivienda mínima en España: primer paso del debate sobre la vivienda social,” *Scripta Nova. Revista electrónica de geografía y ciencias sociales*, Barcelona. Vol. VII, (2003) 146(023), [http://www.ub.es/geocrit/sn/sn-146\(023\).htm](http://www.ub.es/geocrit/sn/sn-146(023).htm) (accessed on 4th March, 2015). For a deeper insight into the cultural intricacies of Modernist architecture, critical architecture, national-folklorism and folkló-regionalist, appropriation and conflicts generated, see “Architectural *Koinè* and Trans-National Spanish Architecture,” in R. Quek and D. Deane (Eds.), *Nationalism and Architecture*, London 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Oxford Dictionary. *modernism*: “an artistic style or movement that aims to depart significantly from classical and traditional forms”; and “a movement towards modifying traditional beliefs in accordance with modern ideas, (...) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries”; *modern* is anything up to date.

<sup>6</sup> Juan de Zavala, *La arquitectura*, Madrid 1945.

<sup>7</sup> Diez-Pastor, “Architectural *Koinè*”, 255-267.

<sup>8</sup> Liane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis, *Critical Regionalism. Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*, London 2003.



and early Modernist works were all jumbled with the Francoist “aboriginal”<sup>9</sup> and uncritical totalitarian works – as denounced by the end of the Spanish War.<sup>10</sup>

The film was extremely critical of the dying regime, though bearing an unclear idea of the architectural particulars and evolution. All the former posed the question of what might have produced such an ideological muddle where critical architecture was taken for anti-modernist. Blanco’s explanation – that “as somebody nonspecialist in architecture, I was not aware of the architectural truth, I just looked at it from the facts lived”<sup>11</sup> – revealed an intriguing chain of events behind a general misbelief. Blanco had courageously spoken aloud, though he was transmitting what was common knowledge – with the authentic and the fraudulent fused.

Truths and lies, conveniently administered and expanded by the regime had provoked misled knowledge, a fallacy so masterly worked out that even anti-Francoist students believed that the master buildings of the critical Madrilean avant-garde of the 1920s – the “1925 Generation” – were totalitarian. This totalitarianism even reached the architects of the mid-century’s rebellious “1940 Generation”<sup>12</sup> who abhorred the 1953 Alhambra Manifesto.<sup>13</sup>

The regime had used Modernist architecture as a ready-made palimpsest, terming it “degenerate” while appropriating it to build their own totalitarian style. It was only natural that the youngsters of 1970 to infer that any Modernist building must be totalitarian, even beyond chronology. Modernist architecture became ugly and contemptible to them. Unknowingly, they made Ruskin’s<sup>14</sup> words theirs, that Modernist buildings were “ugly things, the expense of which ought

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis Mumford, *Sticks and Stones*, New York 1924. His concept of *regionalism*, with a critical accent shared with Torres Balbás, was of the integrating kind based on perception of place, as opposed to *Heimatsil*. The latter slavishly following impositions from outside, was plainly called by Mumford “aboriginal”, as was Modernism if aligned with pre-set principles. Concepts formerly discussed in Diez-Pastor, “Architectural *Koinè*”; and Zavala, *La arquitectura*.

<sup>10</sup> Zavala, *La arquitectura*.

<sup>11</sup> Discussion with Blanco. 28 October 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Miguel A. Baldellou, *Alejandro de la Sota*, Madrid 1976, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Baldellou, *Alejandro de la Sota*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Orpington 1849, 87.



Figure 1. 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 in the public domain. This view, by the author)

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>15</sup>

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

By 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 1900s tragic Neo-regionalism. As González-Amézqueta<sup>16</sup> 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 characteristic. Undoubtedly such position corresponds to the nationalistic and purist thought of the great majority of the generation of 1898.”<sup>17</sup>

The 1898 architects, with no clear principles or prospects other than to recover the lost identity,<sup>18</sup> and identified with Unamuno's<sup>19</sup> “tragic sense of life”, were to teach those born at the turn of the century – the ground-breaking avant-garde G25. As Baldellou<sup>20</sup> explained, “the thread of the Madrilean architectural

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<sup>15</sup> Hereafter, 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 Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, y los demás, Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la "Generación del 25"*, and “Architectural *Koiné*”, this list modifies Carlos Flores' of 1961.

<sup>16</sup> Adolfo González-Amézqueta, “La arquitectura madrileña del ochocientos,” *Hogar y Arquitectura*, 1968, 75.

<sup>17</sup> A general term, not referring to the “Generation of 1898”, the famous group of authors, poets, thinkers and intellectuals – including Unamuno, Baroja, Azorín, Machado, Arniches (Sr), Gómez-Moreno, etc., a key event in Spain's history and culture.

<sup>18</sup> The identity set by Villanueva's style and works. It had started as Villanueva's own way, yet it rooted as the definer of Spanish identity. By the turn of the century it was reinterpreted by the uncritical Neo-Mudejar thread of Neo-Regionalism, a stain, if compared to the pride Villanueva generated.

<sup>19</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, Madrid 1913.

<sup>20</sup> Miguel A. Baldellou, *Luis Gutiérrez Soto*, Madrid 1973, 8.

tradition ... was to be lost by those early years of the century”, however having partly influenced the avant-garde generation. Interestingly, Baldellou<sup>21</sup> mentions Amós Salvador’s Gal Factory in Madrid (1915), as the last great Neo-Mudejar work. 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. The fact that Palacios taught “Project Design” to some G25 members while at School influenced their need to put an end to an architecture with which they no longer identified. Salvador instead, a renowned open-minded and socially concerned architect and politician, evolved towards deeply critical stances, while Palacios remained the same uncritical “folklo-regionalist”<sup>22</sup> for life.

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 had suggested.<sup>23</sup> Their free revolt of the architectural panorama, starting in Madrid in 1925 came only 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.<sup>24</sup> Later, some of these architects were unfairly called “folklorists”,<sup>25</sup> an idea later softened.<sup>26</sup> Other theorists<sup>27</sup> maintained that the G25’s attitude was inevitably entangled with their progressive attitude, which paradoxically resisted forgetting tradition, ratifying this idea in years to come<sup>28</sup> as the G25 had always

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<sup>21</sup> Baldellou, *Luis Gutiérrez Soto*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Diez-Pastor, “Architectural *Koiné*”, 256-258.

<sup>23</sup> Leopoldo Torres Balbás, “Mientras labran los sillares,” in *Arquitectura*, 1918, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la “Generación del 25”*, 35-39.

<sup>25</sup> Carlos Flores, *Arquitectura española contemporánea*, I. 1880-1950, Madrid 1961, 169-172.

<sup>26</sup> Carlos Flores, “De los regionalismos e historicismos de la generación de 1925,” in *Zodiac*, 15 (1965), 21-24.

<sup>27</sup> Oriol Bohigas, *Arquitectura española de la segunda República*, Barcelona 1970, 132-134.

<sup>28</sup> Oriol Bohigas, *Modernidad en la arquitectura de la España republicana*, Barcelona 1998.



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

defended.<sup>29</sup>

The first G25 works appeared in 1927, soon becoming milestones of a new architecture for the new times - 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). In the same year, Carlos Arniches had been appointed Architect Director at the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios<sup>30</sup> and won with Martín Domínguez, his working partner, the national competition for the Albergues de carretera.<sup>31</sup>

Changes, however, had started earlier when those architects visited the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs* of Paris in 1925 – after which the group were

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<sup>29</sup> Zavala, *La arquitectura*.

<sup>30</sup> Hereafter, JAE – Board of Study and Scientific Research – to which the Instituto Escuela belonged.

<sup>31</sup> For the Highway Inns, built between 1928 and 1930, see Díez-Pastor, "Albergues de carretera".

named.<sup>32</sup> In Paris they were able to see the kind of architecture that their close friend García Mercadal had been reporting from his travels around Europe, which he enjoyed as part of his fellowship at the Academy of Spain in Rome. 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.<sup>33</sup> 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 to 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.

As a result a brand new focus appeared, modern and reflective about the social changes and needs, in line with European currents although critically adapted. Materialization was still the toughest part, all the more when referred to the domestic sphere, since the reasons for the transformations that had metamorphosed Europe in the blink of an eye had escaped Spain due to its First World War neutrality. Having duly followed the European conflict, however, the neutral rigidity<sup>34</sup> had ideologically polarized Spanish society, either providing a way to critical progress or a means of affirmation of the nationalist spirit<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> See Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la "Generación del 25"*, 47-55, for the origins of the G25.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The South in Architecture*, New York 1941.

<sup>34</sup> Manuel Fuentes Codera, *España en la Primera Guerra Mundial: una movilización cultural*, Madrid 2014. See also Julián Casanova, *Europa contra Europa 1914-1945*, Madrid 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Fuentes Codera, *España en la Primera Guerra Mundial*.



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

As Unamuno stated in 1916, “in rigour, there are no neutrals. We are all at war”.<sup>36</sup> That is, the Great War reopened the old 1898 wounds while Spain stayed aside from the beneficial changes experienced internationally. 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 by the G25 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

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<sup>36</sup> Unamuno, *Artículos olvidados sobre España y la Primera Guerra Mundial*, London 1976.

architecture for *Arquitectura*, started to be followed by other colleagues who would soon try to follow his frenetic activity.<sup>37</sup>

Criticism gave these men the social capacity to explain the novelties and transformations required. People of their age soon engaged with their discourse. They 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 to 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 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 family size and suppressing domestic service, Spain's 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 'and' which soon became the G25 target. Social concern remained synonymous with charity work.

Making themselves visible represented for the G25 a chance to educate the whole society on the need for those changes, yet also the challenge. Such was, for instance, Arniches and Domínguez's interest with their weekly column in *El Sol*, where they discussed issues from "Kitchens" to "Built ensembles" – all of which started new interests in their legions of readers.<sup>38</sup> Other colleagues soon followed.

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<sup>37</sup> Fernando García Mercadal, *La vivienda en Europa y otras cuestiones*, Zaragoza 1926/1998. 1926 report of his stay at the Academy of Spain in Rome (1923-1926) published in 1998.

<sup>38</sup> Díez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la "Generación del 25"*, 61-63.



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

The prestige of the G25 grew as their architectural speech was proved to be 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>39</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>40</sup>

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 to Spain.

Shortly after, most of the buildings had become landmarks of Spain's architecture, even praised abroad. They represented a whole new architectural concept built with new means, materials and techniques, often experimental, reflecting the new panorama. The use of reinforced concrete generalized among these architects who often sought the civil engineers' opinion to confirm their calculations even if not required.<sup>41</sup> Some building companies<sup>42</sup> in charge of the works, unexpectedly openminded, were keen to accept new techniques,

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<sup>39</sup> Madrid's Ciudad Universitaria (1927-1943) early works distribution: Lacasa and Sánchez Arcas were responsible for the Clinic Hospital (1928) and Central Power Station (1932); De los Santos, the Faculty of Sciences (1928) and Faculty of Medicine (1928); Bergamín and Blanco Soler, the Sports Fields and Residence Hall Jaime del Amo (1929); and Aguirre, the Faculty of Philosophy (1928). The JAE appointed (1927) Carlos Arniches as architect, who won the *Albergues de Carretera* competition with Martín Domínguez. Meanwhile, García Mercadal and Domínguez worked at Secundino Zuazo's office, and Fernández-Shaw won the Barajas Airport competition (1929). Most G25 architects worked privately and continued public activity – i.e. Aguirre, at the Faculty of Law; De los Santos at the School of Dentistry; or Lacasa and Sánchez Arcas, at the Residence Hall for Teachers and Rectorate.

<sup>40</sup> Figuroa's Apartment Building in José Abascal; Bergamín & Blanco Soler's El Viso housing estate; García Mercadal's Villa Amparo, Díaz-Caneja's House, and Museum of Modern Art; De los Santos' Apartment Building in Alfonso XI; Zavala's Apartment Building by Parque del Oeste; Fernández-Shaw's Apartment Building in Menéndez Pelayo; Lacasa & Sánchez Arcas' Hospital of Toledo; Sánchez Arcas' Algeciras Market; and Arniches & Domínguez's La Zarzuela Racecourse.

<sup>41</sup> Díez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, y los demás*.

<sup>42</sup> Like AGROMÁN, whose founder followed suggestions to acquire patents on new materials and techniques.



Figure 4. Original aspect of the Secondary Education building of the Instituto Escuela – JAE, from the main façade (Madrid), 1932. Carlos Arniches. (Photograph from AGA, use entitled to the author)

materials and means, even acquiring patents abroad.<sup>43</sup> The effort made 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's most genuine contribution materialized in their new concept of architectural space which determined their buildings. Among their strongest influences was 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"<sup>44</sup> as clear outcomes. As a result, their planning started from inside advancing outwards, producing interesting assemblages of volumes never seen

<sup>43</sup> Diez-Pastor, "Carlos Arniches, arquitecto de la Junta", 363.

<sup>44</sup> M. W. Schwarzer, "The Emergence of Architectural Space: August Schmarsow's Theory of 'Raumgestaltung,'" in *Assemblage*, 15, (1991), 48-61, here 57, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3171125>, (accessed 3rd March, 2015).

before. The process, aimed at providing nature with a modernist identity,<sup>45</sup> still did not end outside the building in its façades, but rather went on towards the environment and into the landscape,<sup>46</sup> 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<sup>47</sup> proposed, “based on the perception of ‘place’”.<sup>48</sup> However, even though it was highly critical towards any principles of modernity as voiced by the different currents, it cannot be termed “regionalist”, strictly speaking.<sup>49</sup> 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 and their poor sense of regionalism, the G25 architects were self-critical and reflective. Le Corbusier, Gropius and the leading lights of Modernism who visited and lectured in Madrid during those years were enthusiastic about them.<sup>50</sup>

Renunciation of their culture, time and place, or heritage received was not an option for these men unless the architectural process happened to suggest the opposite – in which case they took up 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”.<sup>51</sup> Only Luis Gutiérrez Soto, a younger colleague of the G25, surrendered to leading trends adopting anyone likely to become popular, rejecting criticism.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> O. Spate, “Geography and national identity in Australia,” in *Geography and national identity*, ed. D. Hooson, Oxford 1994, 277-282.

<sup>46</sup> Diez-Pastor, see “Transits into landscape”.

<sup>47</sup> Mumford, *Sticks and Stones*.

<sup>48</sup> Lefaivre and Tzonis, *Critical Regionalism*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Diez-Pastor, “Architectural *Koinè*”, 258-259.

<sup>50</sup> Diez-Pastor, “Architectural *Koinè*”, 259.

<sup>51</sup> Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la “Generación del 25”*, 33.

<sup>52</sup> Baldellou, *Luis Gutiérrez Soto*, 14. Having graduated with remarkable grades, the following generations thought this was reason enough to award him membership within the noblest generation in Spain’s architecture since Juan de Villanueva.

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 of 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>53</sup> However, demand was still too moderate for the urgency with which most of these young architects had expected the changes to come.

### **Differences between Spanish Modernist and anti-Modernist architecture**

What is required to draw the line between a Modernist and an anti-Modernist building? In other words, how can we tell that Amós Salvador was Modernist while Pedro Muguruza was not, the former being almost fifteen years older than the latter?<sup>54</sup> To be or not to be a Modernist therefore ought to be much more a question of spirit and principles rather than age.

In the first place, Modernist architects were committed to subscribing to any advances available in the fields of science and technology applicable to architecture. They were pledged to progress through the use of new materials – like reinforced concrete, isolation materials, compound materials, steel carpentries, continuous floorings, etc. New techniques like new brick layerings or combinations with the new materials, new dispositions of openings, moving walls and panels for interior partitions, changes of spatial dispositions, adoption of their own canon instead of following that imposed by a general trend, and new ideas. Even ideologies – like the scientific discoveries of deadly diseases like meningitis, then hitting Spain, which suggested restricting children's exposure to direct sunshine when playing in the open, or cross ventilation facilities to renew the air inside buildings. All the former implied significant changes in the

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<sup>53</sup> Paz, *Los hijos del limo*, 148.

<sup>54</sup> Amós Salvador graduated from Madrid School of Architecture in 1902; Pedro Muguruza, in 1916.

architectural solutions offered, if not a complete turnaround.

Secondly, Modernist architects believed that any conflict between the former principles and those of form derived from historic canons should be solved in favour of common sense, if they were not clearly won by the newly stated principles. This meant, for instance, that a wall might not look like any previously known wall, yet it might be technically logical, healthier or more useful, any of which would justify it under common sense principles twice as much as if it were built under previous, historically validated canons.

In the third place, the aim of the Modernist architectural principles was not so much to produce milestones as to serve a social purpose, solving problems previously detected, improving people's lives, modestly and unaffectedly in all respects, thinking collectively rather than individually, offering the architectural solution with a future-oriented focus. In other words, they sought for an easier, more comfortable way of life adapted to a changing world.

Finally, the Modernist relationship with history and the past was that of grandchildren who love their grandparents, rather than children who must obey their parents and keep to their authority. Architects, therefore, were not going to forget who they were or where they came from. In fact, they would pride themselves on their origins and the place they belonged to. This way, following Torres Balbás' advice<sup>55</sup> instead of subsuming any kind of preconceived ideas or inheriting impositions, they would study the facts and propose new ideas and solutions adapted to each new situation. They treated each case anew to find its specific solution, rather than using master formulas, in the belief that there was no authority to obey other than their own.

Anti-Modernists instead believed that any solution offered by the past and historically confirmed need not be changed. They would only accept the new – materials, techniques, etc. – if useful to keep with what had been historically confirmed, in the cases where it did not conflict with the all-time uses and

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<sup>55</sup> Torres Balbás, "Mientras labran los sillares".

means. That is, any progress should fall into the category of “historical progress”. New needs and problems ought to be given a solution drawn from within the classical. Conflicts between the new and the historic ought to be solved by keeping with the latter, using classical language and canons. The aim of those who opposed the Modernist ideas in Spain was set to produce an everlasting architecture full of paradigms which could perpetuate their leadership as figures of architecture; ones whose memory would be praised by the generations to come. If there was a solution keen to transmit grandeur then that would be the preferred one. Their top-to-bottom attitude towards their society reflected a paternal orientation, not always understanding of the real situations and conflicts to which otherwise they would have been of great help. Their attitude towards history and the past was that of obedient children who will never discuss paternal authority, and rather accept it no matter what it should take. Thus their proposals would never be original and authentic. Their walls and roofs were a series of architectural *déjà-vus*, already seen and known. There was no room for innovation or creativeness. Rather than looking for inspiration in history and its models, they sought for pieces to mimic, copy and plagiarise. Vertical windows, thick walls, high ceilings plastered inside, classical language, full of columns, pilasters, with or without an order, following a canon or not, coherent or not, with or without a clear syntax.<sup>56</sup> Summing up, the result may or may not be coherent. In most cases classicism was only apparent, though this fact was by no means a reason to term them Modernist, which they were not. The pre-war tsunami of renovation, which let the influence of Modernism escalate in social acceptance and popularity, was completely annihilated by the one and only idea of the Francoist regime, the one that informed all its policy and decisions – to

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<sup>56</sup> Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Classical Architecture. The Poetics of Order*, Cambridge-Mass. 1986.



Figure 5. La Zarzuela Racecourse (Madrid), 1934. Carlos Arniches and Martín Domínguez. (Photograph from AGA, use entitled to the author)

fight freemasonry, which stood for “fighting *evil* in all its forms”.<sup>57</sup> The idea was coincidental with that defended by the opposers of Modernism.

Therefore, when tough difficult questions appeared drawing the architects on intense discussions and arguments, Modernists would propose solutions while anti-Modernists would reject the very question. The solutions proposed often showed how conflictive certain concepts were, even to those who had not always favoured anti-Modernism. That was the case, for instance, with the minimum

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<sup>57</sup> Franco’s pretension “was not limited by a transcendental ideological vision, as happened in the cases of Hitler or Mussolini ... For reasons not based upon rationality, [Franco] blamed the freemasonry for Spain’s decline and following disgraces”. Paul Preston, *Las tres Españas del 36*, Barcelona 2010, 39. The “evil” to be fought included “separatism, communism and freemasonry. Regardless of the human cost, [Franco] was determined to eradicate them, together with socialism and liberalism. This meant the annihilation of the legacy of the Illustration, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution so as to return to the glories of Medieval Spain,” Preston, *Las tres Españas del 36*, 39. Stanley G. Payne, *Franco*, Madrid 1992, gives more details of the dictator’s inconsistency and lack of a political plan. As an example, Payne refers to an interview with *The Times* on 11 August 1936, where Franco states that “Spain is republican and will remain as such. Neither the regime nor the flag have changed”. Payne, *Franco*, 42.

size dwelling issue.<sup>58</sup> The debate, brought to Spain by Fernando García Mercadal after the 1929 CIAM in Frankfurt, soon took the form of an architectural competition of ideas among the most renowned young architects. The results, however, were discouraging to the convinced Modernist García Mercadal as to the solutions proposed and the winning projects. These, as the jury wrote in their final statement, clearly showed “the evident disorientation of most of the projects presented which lack the first principle of the competition; that is, the need that it be a minimum size dwelling”. The winning project, by José María Rivas Eulate, had been awarded the first prize “due to the reduced size of the rooms”, the jury said. It is worth noting that the project consisted of a four-bedroom type dwelling with a hall, dining room and living room, thus remarking that the problem lay on the very concept of what was meant and understood by “minimum size”.

However, what is most relevant and determining of the Modernist condition must be read from the works. Architects were often faced with diminutive budgets as an added difficulty to the usual ones. The crucible consisted of keeping with Modernist principles while using old materials, techniques, etc., which was solved using what was available in a Modernist way. Such was often the case with public administration buildings. As the most used building material in Spain, and also standardizable, thus the best known, brick was often the cheapest option. However, soon it became Modern due to the new techniques of use and dispositions, the different possibilities it provided to allow both a vertical and a horizontal architecture, or just because it was easily combined with other materials such as steel and concrete. It afforded large, tall, small, wide and narrow spaces, thick and thin walls, endless and finite spaces, arched and lintelled elements; all at the same time, in the same place. It remained a cheap alternative to the then more expensive reinforced concrete.

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<sup>58</sup> Diez-Pastor, “La vivienda mínima en España”, 1-2.



Spain's Modernist architecture, and clearly that of the G25, often used brick as its core material in the same way it used arches, arcades, or tiled roofs. Those were the elements through which architects showed their connection with their time, place and culture and which they never renounced.<sup>59</sup> What made them Modernist was the new sense given to those elements, the functions assigned to them, the richness of spaces thus generated, the way these helped to transform as much the element as the resulting place so conceived. The connection between all the functions taking place within the new buildings, as projected by the G25, was soon translated into connection of spaces specifically conceived for the purpose, each of them different and adapted to a certain function. That is, following a carefully planned concept of the spatial environment to be occupied and used comfortably by people for a meticulously planned function. A relation was then established between the general and the particular by connecting the scales of the smallest and closest with those of the biggest and more general. The result was a spatial richness of places and contexts, simplicity of use, identification of users with background suppressing the need to think about purely practical issues. Such kinds of places left the senses free to enjoy the beauty of simple and unaffected architecture. Colours were often used, starting with those of the materials as a means of being true. However, instead of the 'modest poverty' often reported by public authorities, spaces so conceived distilled newness as they combined a variety of new materials with a clear concept of light, providing users with references to understand their purpose and move about freely. It all seemed familiar, yet new, preparing the perceiver to expect more novelties, even surprises.

Modernist buildings were expected to give an answer suited to their time and place, whereas anti-Modernist buildings stood as if expecting place and time to provide the answer, something that rarely happened. While Modernist

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<sup>59</sup> That was Torres Balbás's advice, who believed architects could be Modernist and future oriented, yet bear their roots in mind. Torres Balbás, "Mientras labran los sillares".



Figure 6. Projected canopy between every two classrooms of the Kindergarten of the Instituto Escuela – JAE (Madrid), 1935. Carlos Arniches. (Photograph by the author)

buildings always included a concept of the outside surroundings, from the closest – the garden – to the furthest – the distant landscape – the anti-Modernists were usually self-centred. Their language worked, in the best of cases, as a set of schemes only occasionally effective due to their limited repertoire disengaged from thought and knowledge.<sup>60</sup> It was not generalizable, and rather disconnected from every coherent structure. There was no concept of culture in it, using Bourdieu's terms “as a system of interiorized fundamental schemes enabling the generation of knowledge, perceptions and actions characteristic of a culture”.<sup>61</sup> In other words, while Modernist architectural language generated “architectural

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<sup>60</sup> See Preston, *Las tres Españas del 36*, and Payne, *Franco*.

<sup>61</sup> In Bourdieu's definition of habitus, “c'est-à-dire le *modus operandi*, capable d'engendrer aussi bien les pensées du théologien que les schémas de l'architecte”, in E. Panofsky, *Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique*, Paris 1967, 152.

*koinè*” that of its opposers did not.<sup>62</sup>

It was not so much a question of ideologies, political beliefs or affiliations, as a question of one’s mental scheme – or rather, of the architect’s structure of thought and principles. Among the most Modern of the G25 members there were communists and sympathizers, socialists, falangists, republicans and monarchists. Their ideological alignment was later endorsed by their post-war drift, when some G25 members were exiled in the USSR, West Germany, France, Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba – while others stayed in Spain, facing their opposers. Meanwhile, the anti-Modernist architects engaged the dictatorship goal of fighting *evil* – that is, Modernism. The architectural censorship came into effect in 1939, at the end of the Civil War, based upon the pattern of anti-Modernism.

### **Rumour has it ...**

The Francoist regime declared Modernist architecture as “degenerate” while using it as the foundations for its regressive infra-style based upon the rawest folklore and religion,<sup>63</sup> termed by Torres Balbás “national-traditionalism”<sup>64</sup> – which included the “Spanish style” and derivatives, based on those principles – or “national-exaltation style”<sup>65</sup>. Its earliest signs had shyly appeared in the late 1920s around Pedro Muguruza and his circle, and had been clearly despised by the Modernists. Muguruza, appointed General Director of Architecture in 1939 by the Francoist regime, institutionalized architectural madness and resentment

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<sup>62</sup> The concept of ‘architectural *koinè*’ has been thoroughly explained in former writings. See, for example, Díez-Pastor, “Architectural *Koinè*”, 257.

<sup>63</sup> Zavala, *La arquitectura*, 158.

<sup>64</sup> L. Torres Balbás, “El tradicionalismo en la arquitectura española,” in *Arquitectura* (1918), 10, 176.

<sup>65</sup> Díez-Pastor, “Architectural *Koinè*”, 260. The “Spanish style” came of age at Seville’s Hispanic-American International Exhibition of 1929, where the Californian buildings were first presented – i.e. Templeton Johnson’s *San Diego Museum of Art*.

against those who had ignored him for so long,<sup>66</sup> establishing the guidelines of the new style and architectural censorship, meant to rule until the end of the Francoist regime.<sup>67</sup>

Very conveniently, the G25 was unified by censors during the dictatorship into what was 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 labels or uniforms.<sup>68</sup>

The G25 members had preserved their own personality and character, traceable throughout their architecture. To classify them under the Rationalist label – which, as is understood worldwide, they seldom followed – is hardly descriptive and is unfair. Perhaps for this reason, when interviewed by García Mercadal on their architecture,<sup>69</sup> Lacasa had said his was “logical” while Arniches and Domínguez had defined theirs as “reasonable” using a much more moderate tone than Blanco Soler’s.<sup>70</sup> Sánchez Arcas and Lacasa were members of the Communist Party, Bergamín and Blanco Soler open communist sympathizers, and Figueroa and Zavala supported Falange. Their affiliations showed in their adoption of more or less radical stances in their practice. For instance, Sánchez Arcas’ and Lacasa’s proximity to the “scientific rationalism” expressed by *ABC*, and their drift parallel to Hannes Meyer’s – as became evident in Lacasa’s contribution to the Spanish Pavillion in the Paris International Expo in 1937. Rationalism could hardly apply to such a heterogeneous group. Still, it helped

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<sup>66</sup> Pedro Muguruza (1893-1952) graduated in 1916 with excellent marks, yet was never considered as good an architect as a draughtsman. He authored the key Francoist Valle de los Caídos Monument, and organized the Architects Purge Process, after which all architects who had held a public position or had ever worked for the administration were severely fined and lost the right to work as architects, forcing them into underground practice or exile.

<sup>67</sup> Muguruza appointed Luis Gutiérrez Soto and Pedro Bidagor – a second line architect who had lived on his draughtmanship at Zuazo’s office until the war – to define the “new style”, choosing two young architects as if to confer some validity and reliability on his rules.

<sup>68</sup> Zavala, *La arquitectura*, 158-159.

<sup>69</sup> Fernando García Mercadal “Encuesta sobre la nueva arquitectura,” in *La Gaceta Literaria* (15 May 1928), 2-4; and Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la “Generación del 25”*, 33-39.

<sup>70</sup> García Mercadal, “Encuesta sobre la nueva arquitectura”, 4.

to depict them as Modernist architects conveniently avoiding rash ideological explanations.

Later misleading criticisms labelled the G25 as “folklorists”<sup>71</sup> due to their opposition to breaking with history and their culture. Instead, they believed that Modernism ought to admit its past and adapt to the circumstances,<sup>72</sup> which to some critics responded to a progressive attitude that refused to reject tradition, “perhaps generating the most refined and progressive image of republican Madrid”.<sup>73</sup>

Their social concern was shared by the younger GATCPAC members, the Catalanian section of the GATEPAC,<sup>74</sup> the Spanish branch of CIRPAC founded by García Mercadal and Zavala in 1930 as a result of CIAM.<sup>75</sup> Constituted by Sert, Illescas and other young Catalanian architects it also defended the need to build a better world. Yet, both the G25 and the GATCPAC approached this goal from different Modernist interpretations. While the G25 were the pioneers of Modernism in Spain, the GATCPAC affirmed Spanish Modernism. The main difference was their relationship to CIAM. Until 1936, all Spanish representatives at the CIAM had been G25 members who practiced Modernism within their own criteria, while the GATCPAC defended an orthodox Modernism, slavish to the CIAM principles, paying great respect to some of the G25 architects – i.e., Carlos Arniches.<sup>76</sup> Francoism dismissed their receptivity to foreign architectural ideas as “the most degenerate of all degenerate art”.<sup>77</sup>

Among the post-war group of the resented ones, architects, engineers and

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<sup>71</sup> Flores, “De los regionalismos e historicismos de la generación de 1925”, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Mumford (1924), in the line of Torres Balbás.

<sup>73</sup> Bohigas, *Arquitectura española de la segunda República*, 132.

<sup>74</sup> The GATEPAC included three groups: Centre – based in Madrid, North – including San Sebastian and Bilbao, and East – based in Barcelona. The East group, or GATCPAC, outnumbered the rest, fed with young students from the Barcelona School of Architecture.

<sup>75</sup> The *Congrès Internacionaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM), and the *Comité International pour la Réalisation des Problèmes de l'Architecture Contemporaine* (CIRPAC). Zavala, *La arquitectura*, 158; and Roberto Ucha, *Cincuenta años de arquitectura española I*, Madrid 1980, 182.

<sup>76</sup> Carlos Arniches *et al.*, “Sección Preparatoria del Instituto Escuela de 2ª enseñanza,” in *A.C.*, 9 (1933), 27.

<sup>77</sup> Díez-Pastor, “Architectural Koinè”, 259.

companies alike sought a chance to collect their *debt*. Though praised by all their collaborators as much for their technical skill as their artistic talent,<sup>78</sup> the fact that the G25 was now out of the way, purged,<sup>79</sup> left a huge void for the resented to jump into and occupy the first line of practice. Hence their chance to tell tales about the past once the previous first line had died or been exiled, or had been deactivated.<sup>80</sup>

A relevant example was Madrid's new La Zarzuela Racecourse whose competition was won by Carlos Arniches and Martín Domínguez in 1934, calling on Eduardo Torroja as technical adviser. As is now known, Félix Candela's cooperation was decisive in the evolution of the project solving the key technical problems of the structure throughout the process.<sup>81</sup> 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 a greater guarantee of success. The building company, AGROMÁN, accepted the construction on condition that Torroja did not intervene as director of the works owing to his full-time supervision of the Ciudad Universitaria works. However, years later Torroja, on the brink of explaining *his idea*, incurred in gross architectural errors among

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<sup>78</sup> Zavala, *La arquitectura*.

<sup>79</sup> The post-war Architects' Purge Process was another of Muguruza's deeds, who conceived it so that architects ought to denounce and accuse their colleagues to continue in practice. For example, Manuel Sánchez Arcas was sentenced to a fine comprising more than all he owned and was banned from continuing in practice, either public or private. His was the most extreme of all G25 purges, though none of them escaped being fined.

<sup>80</sup> Ucha, *Cincuenta años de arquitectura española 1*; and Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la "Generación del 25"*.

<sup>81</sup> Félix Candela (1910-1997) graduated from Madrid School of Architecture in 1935. With a leading profile as expert in reinforced concrete techniques, Lecturer at the 'Materials Resistance' Chair before graduating, the one-year lapse required to validate his diploma by the President of the Republic was not enough to issue it before the outbreak of the Civil War (1936), when he had to flee Spain. He had a known role in the racecourse. Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, y los demás*, and *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la "Generación del 25"*. He was exiled in Mexico where he graduated anew having been unable to produce any evidence of his qualification.

which terming the arcade an artistic licence.<sup>82</sup> The idea as explained in its natural terms by its real authors – Carlos Arniches and Martín Domínguez – was, however, consistent with their previous and subsequent work. Drawing from the vernacular concept of the *plaza mayor*, they organized the whole setting both as a spectacle for people and as 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 purposes – 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.<sup>83</sup>

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 shows and Bohigas explained, “the architectural quality of Torroja's work is so varied that we feel inclined to attribute the most significant spatial and formal decisions to the successive architects with whom he worked”.<sup>84</sup> However, despite the documents, rumour still has it that it was Torroja's work.

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

“The avant-garde is the great rupture, and with it the tradition of rupture closes”, said Octavio Paz<sup>85</sup> in very descriptive terms. That was the aim of G25 buildings offering new possibilities for an improved new way of life aiming 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

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<sup>82</sup> Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, y los demás*, 315-375, and 507-508.

<sup>83</sup> Diez-Pastor, *Carlos Arniches y Martín Domínguez, arquitectos de la “Generación del 25”*, 172-198.

<sup>84</sup> Bohigas, *Arquitectura española de la segunda República*, 34.

<sup>85</sup> Paz, *Los hijos del limo*, 148.

prolific since Juan de Villanueva's time.<sup>86</sup> Once again, architecture took the lead, seeking out the general benefit. The wave involved 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'"<sup>87</sup> currents imposed by the Francoist regime, later confirmed by the Alhambra Manifesto (1953), made it even more difficult to tackle the historical facts.

The truth being that history is told by the winning party, also in charge of the evidence, made Spain's Modernist Movement a tough case. Evidence was often lost, if not conveniently burnt or made to disappear from the archives. The validity and reliability of the [few] remaining direct sources relied on the ideology of both interviewer and interviewee as much as on memory, good will and courage to tell the truth. In such circumstances, deep serious research seldom 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 to try to disentangle rumours and misunderstandings going over the old scars even if theirs was 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<sup>88</sup> 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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<sup>86</sup> Juan de Villanueva (1739-1811) was the leading figure of Spain's Neoclassicism and key intellectual of the Spanish Illustration, among whose buildings were the Royal Astronomic Observatory and Museo del Prado buildings. His style has marked the evolution of Spanish architecture. He is the oldest of the remarkable Neoclassical architects, with Soane and Schinkel.

<sup>87</sup> Mumford, *Sticks and Stones*.

<sup>88</sup> Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 147.



# *MEDITERRANEITÀ* DESIRED AND REALISED: THE IMPOSITION OF THE FASCIST AESTHETIC IDEOLOGY OF MEDITERRANEAN-NESS OVERSEAS FROM 1935 TO 1940<sup>1</sup>

GEORGE EPOLITO

*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 idea 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,

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper "*Mediterraneità oltremare: Assimilation, Appropriation, or Rejection? The Imposition of the Fascist Aesthetic Ideology of Mediterranean-ness Overseas from 1935 to 1940*" presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAP, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

attempts to show in *general* terms 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. Interwoven throughout the essay are recurring polemical themes which confronted the fascists: 1) *unity* versus *diversity* at the scale of the nation and its colonies, political control, aesthetic direction, climate, and races of peoples, etc.; 2) *public image* versus *private reality*; 3) the *desired* versus the *realised*; 4) the *general* versus the *specific*; and 5) *purity* versus *hybridisation/syncretism*, etc.

The terms of *italianità* (Italian-ness), *mediterraneità* (Mediterranean-ness), *romanità* (Roman-ness), and *latinità* (Latin-ness), for instance, were *generally* viewed as interchangeable tools of propaganda by Italian fascist ideologues. They gave a *public image* of *unifying diverse* parts at the regional scale within the nation or at the trans-regional scale extending to the colonies. The *specific* implementation of each term often depended on the context in which the fascist promoters were trying to prove their point or justify their actions to *diverse* peoples such as Italians, leaders of powerful nations, or natives in both her *realised* and *desired* colonies. As scholar Sean Anderson concurs: “Invariably, notions of *italianità* and *mediterraneità* shifted according to colony and region”.<sup>2</sup> The *public image* of the propaganda, which routinely projected the appearance of success and progress, often masked the *private reality* of intentions and actions, where substance and actual achievements were few and far between.

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 may have been. After all, the region did contain Roman ruins and was referred to as the Fourth Shore implying that its coast was an

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<sup>2</sup> Sean Anderson, “The Light and the Line: Florestano Di Fausto and the Politics of ‘*Mediterraneità*,’” in *California Italian Studies*, 1(1) [2010], <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9hm1p6m5> (accessed 9 January 2015).

extension of the Italian one. When applied to East Africa and South America,<sup>3</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 the *desired*, a soft rhetoric was employed, giving a *public image* of gentility. The *private reality* behind the rhetoric, however, was that it was masking the true malevolence of fascism. In the case of *realised* colonies, the strategy was to utilise a harder, more direct rhetoric accompanied by blatantly inhumane actions.<sup>4</sup>

Attempts at implementing any kind of *unified* strategy over such *diverse* lands and the people who inhabited them proved problematic for the fascists. The complexity of the situation led to polemical questions arising in both the *desired* and *realised* colonies. 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 regards to 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 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*

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<sup>3</sup> More specifically, the *desired* colonies, to which I am referring, are Argentina, Uruguay, and (southern) Brazil.

<sup>4</sup> When analysing the terms of *mediterraneità* and *italianità* in relation to the arts and architecture produced during the fascist period, it is important not to merely focus on aesthetic qualities, but also to remember the brutality of the regime's actions.

## Time Frames

In her book, *Moderns Abroad*, scholar Mia Fuller 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; and 3) 1936 to the early 1940s.<sup>5</sup> The first period was characterised by competing approaches to aesthetics - *Futurismo*, *il Novecento*, and *Razionalismo*. Each approach differed in its relationship to the stoic history of the peninsula and also in its link to the Modernism espoused by northern Europeans. Various advocates were fighting for their preferred approach to be designated as the official aesthetic of the fascist state. In spite of their differences, all the approaches commonly held the belief that they were the appropriate aesthetic to help modernise Italy whilst serving to transform her regionally *diverse* cultural identities by *unifying* them on a national level.<sup>6</sup> The second time frame was defined by debates both at home and abroad over the appropriate direction to take aesthetically as the fascist state remained relatively neutral towards promoting any one particular approach. As a result, pluralistic approaches to design continued, much to the chagrin of each approach's particular advocates. Also during this period, the fascist regime increased spending on major public works. The third period was characterized by a tightening of aesthetic expression both at home and abroad, accompanied by an increase in inhumane and authoritarian policies.

This essay is focused roughly on the last period, more precisely from 1935-1940. First, however, key events from the prior two time frames are highlighted in order to contextualise what happened during the latter part of the 1930s.<sup>7</sup>

“This imperial expansionism of Italian culture, which, like a river that never stagnates but is fed by other rivers, gives and takes, universally

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<sup>5</sup> Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad: architecture, cities and Italian imperialism*, London 2007, 88.

<sup>6</sup> Previously, promoters of medieval revivals, Neoclassicism, and the Liberty Style (known more commonly outside of Italy as *Art Nouveau*) dominated similar debates.

<sup>7</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.

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*

### **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; it told ordinary citizens 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 that once fell under the jurisdiction of the former Roman Empire. Italians were asked to relocate to the New Towns constructed on the reclaimed swamplands known as the Agro Pontino in the Lazio region of central Italy, as well as to the *realised* colonies in Africa.

In the case of the latter, fascist propaganda called upon Italians to establish agricultural communities in the 1920s. The initial involvement of the fascist regime at this stage was more indirect, assisting individual entrepreneurs in process.<sup>8</sup> Also during this decade, many of the built works formally reflected a negotiation of revivalisms such as neo-Renaissance or neo-Moorish. Although he would take the opposite stance years later, Roman architect Marcello Piacentini himself was involved in the design of similar eclectic works such as the Teatro Berenice in Benghazi, Libya.

Towards the latter part of the 1920s, various fascist intelligentsia and cultural promoters were campaigning for the implementation of a *specific* form of Italian cultural expression. Filippo Marinetti was continuing to support for his own vision, *Futurismo*; Margherita Sarfatti personally was endorsing *il Novecento*; and Pier Maria Bardi was supporting the principles set forth by *Razionalismo*. Piacentini was arguing that *Razionalismo* was too closely aligned with the

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<sup>8</sup> Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 177.

concepts of northern European Modernism and therefore inappropriate for Italy. Carlo Enrico Rava, one of the founders of *Razionalismo*, attempted to counter Piacentini's argument by trying to contextualise his preferred movement at the trans-regional scale of the Mediterranean or what he called *mediterraneità*. His concept was introduced in a series of essays he published in *Domus* in 1931 where he countered 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".<sup>9</sup> 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.

As the years progressed into the 1930s, the scale of resettling Italians into the *realised* colonies increased, as did the financial commitment of the regime to do so. The *public image* of this propaganda led Italians to believe that fulfilment of this important mission would help to bring prosperity to all of Italy. Of course the fascists had an ulterior motive, one that was masking a more cynical *reality*. The physical displacement of Italians to rural lands abroad was part of a greater social policy that had the general aim of reducing the number of landless, often unemployed labourers. In the case of Libya, scholar Vittoria Capresi elaborates on how this fascist social policy was in fact an attempt to demonstrate the regime's capacity to solve *specific* problems and to gain more *general* support in the process:

"Mass demographic colonization<sup>10</sup> was planned under the Fascist regime precisely because it offered an outlet for the violent political desire to transform the presumed solution to internal social problems into visible work, which was to be displayed in order to increase public support for

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<sup>9</sup> Vittoria Capresi, "Architectural Transfer, Italian Colonial Architecture in Libya: 'Libyan Rationalism' and the Concept of 'Mediterraneity', 1926 – 1942," in *Colonial Architecture and Urbanism in Africa: Intertwined and Contested Histories*, ed. Fassil Demissie Farnham, Surrey 2012, 33 -66, here 59.

<sup>10</sup> Mia Fuller clearly defines demographic colonisation as "the state-sponsored settlement of Italian farmers on a grand scale." See Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 177.

Mussolini's policies".<sup>11</sup>

Concurrently, many designs in the *realised* colonies reflected a Mediterranean spirit by attempting an eclectic negotiation of ancient Mediterranean or local vernacular forms and modern forms. Anderson points out how the works of Florestano di Fausto, one of the most prolific architects in *realised* colonies,<sup>12</sup> had his own interpretation of negotiations: "His numerous government commissions assumed a commanding role, producing an architecture that supplemented *italianità* while masking the rationalist intentions of a bespoke *mediterraneità*".<sup>13</sup> Two particular works of di Fausto that were designed during this period, I would argue, reflected this "bespoke *mediterraneità*" of which Anderson was speaking. First, in the case of the Artisanal Market, *Souk al-Mushbir* he fused modern forms with ancient Mediterranean ones. The project even received the approval of the fascist regime: "Cubist and rational in its conception, the market-place satisfied the claim of Italian authorities both to modernize and support local traditions".<sup>14</sup> In the second case, the Uaddan Hotel and Casino, he syncretised modern forms with various aspects of a local architectural vocabulary.

Were these various eclectic and flexible design approaches simply a matter of aesthetic preference or could they have been veiling a political motive? Had the fascist regime used such *syncretism* as a soft rhetorical means of appeasing indigenous peoples? In the case of North Africa, scholar Krystyna von Henneberg provides the possible answers:

"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

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<sup>11</sup> Vittoria Capresi, "The rural centres of Libya. Reading tools," in *The Built Utopia The Italian rural centres founded in colonial Libya (1934–1940)*, ed. Vittoria Capresi, Bologna 2009, 32.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to his numerous works in North Africa, di Fausto had previously been responsible for many important designs in the *realised* colony of the Aegean Islands.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, "The Light and the Line". Rava did not agree with di Fausto's *bespoke mediterraneità*, feeling that it contained too much Arab picturesque-folklorism.

<sup>14</sup> Krystyna von Henneberg, "Imperial Uncertainties: Architectural Syncretism and Improvisation in Fascist Colonial Libya," in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 31(2) (1996), 373–395, here 386.

and fascist architecture was frequently eclipsed by a more syncretic style that incorporated 'orientalizing' and local elements".<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> Yet, would the implementation of a singular approach abandon or incorporate localisms? The answer, in the opinion of von Henneberg, 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".<sup>18</sup>

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

The fascist regime utilised the *general* concept of *mediterraneità*, more specifically Roman-ness and/or Latin-ness, in both its cultural and political rhetoric pertaining to South America. Contrary to logic, there were significantly more people of Italian decent already living in the *desired* colonies than in the *realised* ones during this period. The tactics that the regime needed to implement, therefore, had shifted in order to reflect this demographic difference between the *desired* and *realised* colonies. First the regime aimed to gain the support of the Italian citizens, who it viewed, *happened to be living abroad*.<sup>19</sup> It then sought

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<sup>15</sup> Von Henneberg, "Imperial Uncertainties," 377.

<sup>16</sup> Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Von Henneberg, "Imperial Uncertainties," 378.

<sup>19</sup> This was the viewpoint of the fascist regime which 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 Argentines or Brazilians.



to convince these expatriates and people of Iberian ancestry that they all shared a common Roman heritage - Roman-ness and/or Latin-ness.<sup>20</sup>

In its quest to accomplish its goal of '*imperial expansionism of Italian culture*' into the region, the fascist regime assumed that the displaced Italian citizenry would act as intermediaries. Private impresarios, cultural institutions, and government agencies sponsored and hosted cultural events in which soft, persuasive rhetoric espoused the virtues of *italianità*. Italian art, architecture, literature, and language<sup>21</sup> were promoted in said events with each containing a varying degree of political propaganda. Some of the key events included: Marinetti's 1926 lecture tour to promote *Futurismo* in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Córdoba, Rosario, Buenos Aires and Montevideo;<sup>22</sup> Sarfatti's 1930 *Novecento Art Exhibition* in Buenos Aires and Montevideo; and Bardi's 1933 *Architettura d'oggi Exhibition* in Buenos Aires which featured the architectural works of *Razionalismo*.

Contemporaneously, the soft rhetorical argument of Roman-ness was advanced *specifically* in Argentina to the point of linking the country historically to Italy. As Argentine scholar Finchelstein states: "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".<sup>23</sup> Their claims that Italians had played key roles in the development of Argentina dating back to even before the time of Garibaldi were accurate, but the fascists wanted to embellish these facts. In addition to offering their own interpretation of Argentine history to the *general* populace, the fascists understood that that they also had to *specifically*

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<sup>20</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 Spanish creoles; the use of the latter would have overtly exposed the fascists' (offensive) belief in Italian superiority.

<sup>21</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 Ciurlantini'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>22</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.

<sup>23</sup> Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*, Durham, NC 2010, 87.

court potentially like-minded politicians. They targeted a group known as the *nacionalistas*. “Throughout the 1930s an Argentine group of politically conservative nacionalistas met with Mussolini personally”.<sup>24</sup> Included in the group was the upcoming politician, Manuel Fresco. Yet why limit the effort solely to the *specific* case of Argentina? In 1934, Mussolini attempted to broaden his sphere of influence in the region. Finchelstein points out that “... Mussolini wrote to his South American embassies that the time was ‘favorable’ to expand fascist propaganda in their respective countries”.<sup>25</sup> In other words, *specificities* pertaining to Argentina could now be applied more *generally* to its neighbouring countries.

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

By the time the aforementioned works of di Fausto were opened for occupancy in 1935, infighting between Italian architects had begun to shift the attitudes away from the *syncretisation* of modern and local traditions. Such design approaches were no longer looked upon favourably.<sup>26</sup>

This shift was part of extensive changes for the Italian people both at home and abroad which were brought on as a consequence of Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia that same year. The fascist regime fought back widespread international condemnation and sanctions by becoming increasingly more repressive.<sup>27</sup> As a result, “(a)ll of Italian political life, architecture included, turned to greater uniformity”.<sup>28</sup> Pluralistic design approaches were now succumbing to the stranglehold of fascism as the regime tightened its grip on the creative process. In other words, the *diversity* exemplified previously by various aesthetic movements

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<sup>24</sup> Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*, 111.

<sup>25</sup> Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*, 94.

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, von Henneberg also pointed out that the fascists and architecture press in Italy ignored di Fausto’s market-place.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Denison, Guang Yu Ren, and Naigzy Gebremedhin, *Asmara: Africa’s Secret Modernist City*, London 2006, 63. 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>28</sup> Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 88.

at home and in *syncretic* designs in the *realised* colonies was now under pressure to yield to an authoritative mandate of *uniformity*, of architectural linguistic *purity*.

This apparent shift also reflected a greater change that started to take place the following year in the *realised* colonies. According to Fuller, "... architects' attention shifted from North to East Africa in 1936" and with it "the question of colonial-architectural syncretism faded out all together..."<sup>29</sup> In part, this was a result of the differences in context between North and East Africa. Syncretisms manifested by Rava's 'Mediterranean spirit' were made possible in the former because of its link back to Roman-ness. In the case of the latter, the preferred *purity* of "militant anti-regionalism of Italian Rationalist architecture" devoid of any contamination of localisms was more possible because, in the eyes of many fascist ideologues, this context represented a cultural tabula rasa. For the Italian colonisers, the nomadic nature of this region's indigenous people rendered them the least civilised and thus their built history contained no localisms or regionalisms worthy of appropriation.

The growing intolerance for *diversity* and *hybridisation/syncretism* in favour of *unity* and *purity* had many influential advocates. Piacentini, arguably the regime's most powerful architect by this time, was one of them. Shortly after the declaration of Empire in 1936, Piacentini volunteered his services to coordinate a design programme for Italian East Africa in an attempt to prevent unacceptable syncretic designs such as the neo-Arab works that had been constructed in North Africa previously. Piacentini conveniently failed to mention his own involvement in such eclectic designs previously in Benghazi.<sup>30</sup> In so doing, he personified the typical fascist agenda of providing a false *public image* to mask his own *private reality*.

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<sup>29</sup> Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 134.

<sup>30</sup> Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 126.

The shift in focus to East Africa, resulted in Asmara experiencing unprecedented growth from 1935–1941 with buildings now characteristic of more humble or simplified versions of *il Novecento* and *Razionalismo*. Over previous decades in Asmara, many neo-revivalist works had been built, but during this period, they were more modern in character, although not necessarily reflecting the *uniformity* that many had espoused.

In the midst of the massive building campaign under way in Asmara, in 1937 Italian attitudes towards urban planning acknowledged the need for flexibility whilst designing for the various conditions related to climate and races of peoples who, as the delegates at the First National Congress of Urban Planning thought, had different habits and levels of civilisation.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the blackness of Asmara and its lack of ancient Roman structures created a context that had to be treated differently, albeit not necessarily with respect for the locals. The need for flexibility, therefore, necessitated a certain degree of *diversity*. Localisms post-rationalised as being derived from Rome in order to relate back to *mediterraneità* were not part of this argument. Instead, Roman-ness in this instance was now to be implemented as a means of civilising the natives.

During this period, restrictive, often harsh, fascist policies such as the ones mandating the separation of ethnicities and/or races influenced the layout of new planning proposals throughout the *realised* colonies. Whilst the attention of most architects turned away from North Africa, the government continued its plans to relocate Italians in massive numbers to populate the region. “From 1938 onwards Libya was expected to accommodate 100,000 Italian farmers distributed in annual transfers of 20,000 settlers for a period of five years”.<sup>32</sup> Proposed *villaggi*, rural agricultural settlements, generally sought a greater separation of the displaced Italian populace from the locals throughout the *realised* colonies. Whilst this may have been easier to accomplish in newly planned towns, dealing

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<sup>31</sup> Von Henneberg, “Imperial Uncertainties,” 382.

<sup>32</sup> Capresi, “The rural centres of Libya. Reading tools,” 32.

with expansion of existing towns and cities meant that such new restrictions changed the already established patterns of social interaction. In the *specific* case of Asmara, Italians had previously intermingled with native Eritreans freely, but the new layout for the planned expansion of the modern city mandated a strict separation of the races.

It is interesting to note that with such a massive programme of building construction in a relatively condensed period of time, none of the major Italian architects of the day had any designs built in Asmara. There were no works credited to Piacentini, Rava, or di Fausto. In the case of di Fausto this may be because he continued to design works in North Africa, such as his *Villaggio Oliveti* in Tripolitania (1935-1938), even though the presence of architects had diminished in this region.

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

In 1935 in South America, renowned Italian architect Alberto Sartoris continued to utilise lecture tours as a soft rhetorical 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”.<sup>33</sup> His lecture titles also clearly linked architecture with fascism: “Architecture and the State, and The Architecture of the State as Inherent to the Fascist Concept of the City”.<sup>34</sup>

The fascist ideologues promoting the transference of Italian cultural capital in the *desired* colonies must have thought their efforts were finally coming to

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<sup>33</sup> Anahi Ballent and Alejandro Crispiani, “Il Razionalismo è Vivo: L’irruzione della Nuova Architettura Italiana nell’Argentina degli Anni Trenta,” in *Metamorfosi – Quaderni di Architettura* – N. 25/26, Argentina, eds. Gabriele De Giorgi, Alessandra Mutoni and Marcello Pazzagli, trans. by author, Rome, 1995, 56–62, here 60.

<sup>34</sup> Jorge Liernur, *Arquitectura en la Argentina del siglo XX – La construcción de la modernidad*, trans. by author, Buenos Aires 2001, 172.

fruition. Mussolini's continuous meetings throughout the 1930s with Argentine *nacionalistas*, his regime's close diplomatic ties with Brazil<sup>35</sup>, his instructions in 1934 to his South American embassies to expand fascist propaganda, 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 aimed at local creole elites *and* soft rhetoric aimed at those of Italian lineage living abroad to embrace the fascist vision. In 1935, in Brazil, Piacentini was starting to benefit from this dual targeting strategy. In the case of the former, he was invited by the Brazilian government to design a public work in Rio de Janeiro; whilst 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, Francisco Salamone, an architect/engineer of Italian origins, to design projects in the province.

During this 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 statement delivered in 1937, Emilio De Bono, a founder of fascism who previously had governed in Libya from 1925–1929, 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 ...

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<sup>35</sup> Brazilian President Vargas was an admirer of il Duce.

Fascist Italy, elevated to the rank of imperial Italy, is sending today her caring and inaugural salute to her sisters of America ...”.<sup>36</sup>

The strategic use of the term *Roman citizenship* implied a shared Mediterranean heritage between those of Spanish, Portuguese, and/or Italian decent. Strikingly omitted from his statement, however, was any reference to those who did not fit precisely within this categorisation, namely those of native or African origins who populated in great numbers these Latin American republics. This genteel statement came out in the same year, 1937, that the delegates at the First National Congress of Urban Planning acknowledged the need to consider various conditions such as the race of people in the colonies and De Bono conveniently skirted the issue of race in his rhetoric. Be that as it may, the question still remained whether such soft rhetoric would succeed in persuading the governments and peoples of Brazil and Argentina to embrace their imperial fascist sisters from Italy.

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. Piacentini was considered for this project because Mussolini had commissioned him to direct the design of a new home campus for the University of Rome in 1932. Piacentini’s designs for the buildings on the Brazilian campus, a process that spanned 1935 to 1938<sup>37</sup>, were formally and spatially reminiscent of those he had previously designed throughout Italy. Interestingly, Piacentini’s proposal for the campus paralleled di Fausto’s design and construction of the *Villaggio Oliveti* in North Africa. Both Piacentini’s proposal and di Fausto’s built works expressed variations of an *italianità* version of Mediterranean-ness. Piacentini’s implementation of his signature stripped-down classicism, *Stile Littorio*, was loaded with symbolic content of Roman superiority, but beyond its formal aesthetic connections to Italy, there was a direct political link, also. As

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<sup>36</sup> Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*, 105-106. Excerpts originally taken from La Rázon (Argentina), 24 May, 1937.

<sup>37</sup> Marcos Tognon, *Arquitetura italiana no Brasil: A obra de Marcello Piacentini*, Campinas 1999, 175.

scholar Zilah Quezado Deckker attests of Piacentini: “His fee was paid by the Italian government, with a nominal sum from the Brazilian government”.<sup>38</sup> His involvement in the project was not that straightforward. Carioca architects, such as Lucio Costa, were not accepting of the Italian architect’s proposal and wanted Le Corbusier’s inclusion in the project.

The controversy surrounding the university project was part of a greater debate in Brazilian architecture that tried to reconcile modernisation, localisms, and national identity, *brasilidade*. Costa acknowledged “that the new architecture was international, but emphasised its Latin roots, which would make it more acceptable for Brazil...”<sup>39</sup> In this case, the *specific* meaning 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 *brasilidade* 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 that 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>40</sup> Piacentini’s design of the Edifício Conde Matarazzo, 1935-1939,<sup>41</sup> was an example of pure “*italianità*, as it appropriated few localisms, and thus appeared more like an Italian building strangely misplaced. Matarazzo retained Piacentini’s services to reconfigure his villa, 1939–1941,<sup>42</sup> and to design the Universidade Commercial Matarazzo which he began in 1938.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Zilah Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built – The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil*, New York 2001, 50.

<sup>39</sup> Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> In Italian, the word for ‘colony’ can also be 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.

<sup>41</sup> Tognon, *Arquitetura italiana no Brasil*, 182.

<sup>42</sup> Tognon, *Arquitetura italiana no Brasil*, 189.

<sup>43</sup> Tognon, *Arquitetura italiana no Brasil*, 193.



Piacentini's initial proposals in Brazil took place whilst he was trying to take command of the regime's design direction in East Africa. During the latter part of the 1930s, he was clearly trying to exercise his architectural authority in Italy as well as in both the *realised* and *desired* colonies. 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. Mediterraneanness 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 Mediterraneanness being seen as an overarching concept connecting creoles of Spanish descent with Italians, this group's preference of identifying with *hispanidad* drew a distinct line separating the two groups. At the same time, this group of creoles was denouncing the *cosmopolitanism* that was being promoted by other European (Italian inclusive) and North American influences in the country.<sup>44</sup>

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, however, would appear on the surface to demonstrate Mussolini's success in cajoling Fresco. This appeared evident in Argentine scholar Ramón Gutiérrez's 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".<sup>45</sup> It is true that many of Salamone's works

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<sup>44</sup> Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*, 145.

<sup>45</sup> Alberto Belluci, "Monumental Deco in the Pampas: The Urban Art of Francisco Salamone," in *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 18: *Argentine Theme*, (1992), 90-121, here 91. Originally taken from Ramón Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura y Urbanismo en Iberoamerica*, (1983), 575.

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 Italy 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 to achieve an imperial expansionism in both her *realised* and *desired* colonies, such as North and East Africa and parts of South America, respectively. Aesthetics, particularly in the form of the arts and architecture, played a key role in the fascist propaganda machine. Yet how did the people in both the *realised* and *desired* colonies receive the constant onslaught of fascists' propagandising of Italian superiority in aesthetics? What is the legacy that resulted in the transference of Italian cultural capital to her *realised* and *desired* colonies?

In the case of the former *realised* colonies of North and East Africa, the legacy depended on the *specific* context. North Africa, which was the inspiration for Rava's concept of *mediterraneità*, for example, experienced a deliberate dismantling and categorical *rejection* of said concept under the four decades of rule of Colonel Gaddafi. For East Africa, however, the legacy left behind from decades of Italian rule is more complex. The atrocities carried out by the ruling fascists have left enduring, painful memories for the generation that experienced them. For others however, the legacy of Italian cultural capital is more positive.

Through the act of *appropriation* by present day *Asmarini*, buildings originally intended only for Italians to use, now give meaning to the locals: “For many Asmarini the cultural capital attached to the Italian past provides them with a claim to a long-standing cosmopolitanism”.<sup>46</sup>

In the *desired* colonies the results were also mixed. The initial attempts at promoting imperial expansionism of Italian cultural capital, *italianità*, into the region masked in the guise of a shared heritage of Roman-ness and/or Latin-ness did not produce the results that the fascist regime had anticipated. The endless lecture tours sponsored by private impresarios, cultural institutions, and government agencies had no transformative effect.

The *Novecento Exhibition* of Sarfatti did have an impact on the aesthetics of painters in the *desired* colonies, but her political agenda did not. According to Argentine scholar, Diana Wechsler, there was an appropriation of the works exhibited, but it came as a result of a rupture between, not an embrace of, fascist politics and aesthetics. With the passage of anti-Semite laws in Italy in 1938, Sarfatti herself experienced a similar rupture as she went into exile in Buenos Aires and Montevideo.<sup>47</sup>

The legacy of the intersection of politics and aesthetics in the form of architecture also varied based on the *specific* context. Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro at the time rejected the proposals of the most powerful architect of the fascist regime, Piacentini. In São Paulo, however, a city where displaced Italians had more political and economic clout, his signature stripped-down classical design for a private commission was built. Despite its odd displacement of *italianità*, the building today has been appropriated by the local government and converted into the *Prefeitura* or city hall. Are contemporary *paulistas* even cognisant of the link of their city hall to Italian fascist ideals?

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<sup>46</sup> Mia Fuller, “Italy’s Colonial Futures: Colonial Inertia and Postcolonial Capital in Asmara,” in *California Italian Studies*, 2(1) [2011], <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/4mb1z7f8> (accessed 16 January 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Sarfatti had converted from Judaism to Catholicism, but feared that this would not matter in the eyes of her former fascist compatriots.

In Argentina, some success seemed to occur in the symbiotic relationship put forth by the political wills of Manuel Fresco and Italian-born/Argentine-raised architect and engineer, Francisco Salamone. The major public works constructed by the two in the Province of Buenos Aires paralleled chronologically those being built by the fascists in Asmara. Some regard these Argentine works to be imbued with fascist meaning, while others claim that they were a result of political shrewdness, but devoid of any true link to *italianità*.

It is interesting to note that the attempts at imperial expansion of Italian cultural capital were viewed at least in two cases as containing the gravitas of Italian *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.<sup>48</sup> Rejection or acceptance of Italian *cosmopolitanism*, it appears, was based on its ability to threaten or enhance one's own modern 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, can be found in a 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. The seemingly limitless appetite for Italian cultural capital in the form of luxury designer products takes place in developing markets such as China. By embracing the contemporary rhetoric of consumerism, said markets ensure that the transference of Italian cultural capital, devoid of political propaganda, will live on into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Italian *cosmopolitanism* lives on today in contemporary *desired* consumer colonies. *Viva italianità!*

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<sup>48</sup> Fuller, "Italy's Colonial Futures," 15.

# URBAN AESTHETICS. ON THE MODERNITY OF VENTURA TERRA, ARCHITECT AND TOWN PLANNER<sup>1</sup>

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The Portuguese architect Miguel Ventura Terra (1866-1919)<sup>2</sup> was a member of a Lisbon town council elected in November 1908 and in this function became heavily involved in town planning.<sup>3</sup> This town council was the first entirely Republican council to manage the city's affairs. Elected almost two years ahead of the Republican revolution of 5 October 1910, and less than a year after the king's murder (1 February 1908), it worked in a predictably hostile political context.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On the architect and his work, see Tereza Xardoné, Rui Costa, and Maria de Lurdes Rufino, eds., *Arquitecto Ventura Terra, 1866-1919*, Lisbon 2009.

<sup>3</sup> I will use the designation 'town planning' throughout this article, as it was the most current British expression at the time. I will use it in Unwin's general sense as the "art of designing cities" (Raymond Unwin, *Town planning in practice: An introduction to the art of designing cities and suburbs*, London 1909), covering the whole spectrum of city-building being cultivated around Europe and the USA during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For an overview see, among others, Wolfgang Sonne, "The entire city shall be planned as a work of art.' Städtebau als Kunst im frühen modernen Urbanismus 1890-1920," in *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 66 (2003), 207-236, and Charles C. Bohl and Jean-François Lejeune, eds., *Sitte, Hegemann and the metropolis: Modern civic art and international exchanges*, London and New York 2009.

<sup>4</sup> See *Lisboa e a República: Centenário da vereação republicana em Lisboa, 1908-2008. Actas do Colóquio Nacional Lisboa e a República, Lisboa, 2008*, Lisbon 2010, and António Reis, ed., *Lisboa republicana: Espaço e memória, 1910-1926*, Lisbon 2010.

Though in a certain way instrumental in the Republican victory in 1910 and notwithstanding much initial enthusiasm, the council grew increasingly disillusioned with the politics and priorities of the new Republican State. After voluntarily resigning, the council was substituted on 1 February 1913 by an Administrative Commission. Officially the council claimed fatigue and the continual postponement of municipal elections, but it was also involved in a series of wearing conflicts.

A painting by Veloso Reis Salgado (*A cidade de Lisboa elege a primeira vereação republicana* [The city of Lisbon elects its first Republican town council], 1913) seems to picture the difficult relationship between the new state and the town council. It was commissioned in 1912 for a newly decorated meeting room destroyed in a 1911 fire. The subject was the victory at the 1908 municipal elections, but only two of the councillors make a modest appearance: its president Braamcamp Freire and Ventura Terra. The other figures are all important national politicians, whose the images of which in a sense hijacked the scene.<sup>5</sup>

Why is Ventura Terra there, but none of his fellow councillors except the president? Perhaps it indicates his public visibility during his years as town councillor. Maybe the friendship between both artists played a role. Possibly it was also a way of the painter acknowledging the architect's services to the cause of the arts. For this short detour through painting introduces a somewhat obscure entity: the Commission of Municipal Aesthetics. This Commission, created by Ventura Terra, was responsible for the commissioning of the painting,<sup>7</sup> and also the main user of the room in which it was hung.<sup>6</sup>

As will be seen, this commission played (or was supposed to play) a relevant role in planning projects and the production of urban space. It is this relationship

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<sup>5</sup> On the painting and its history, as well as the identification of its characters, see *A cidade de Lisboa elege a sua 1.ª vereação republicana. Comemoração do 1.º Centenário 1908-2008*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Lisbon 2008 (published on the site of the Museu da Cidade, <http://www.museudelisboa.pt/>; at the time of writing this publication was not accessible).

<sup>6</sup> For the involvement of this commission in the room's restoration, see *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1912, 53.



Figure 1. The new meeting room in the town hall of Lisbon. Salgado's painting is on the right. The caption calls it the 'Room of the Commission of Aesthetics and others'. Source: "Sala da Comissão de Estetica e outras, na Camara Municipal de Lisboa," in *O Occidente: Revista ilustrada de Portugal e do estrangeiro* 1248 (1913), 257

of planning to arts, and this strange concept of municipal aesthetics, which will structure my discussion of Ventura Terra's municipal activity. With this I hope to offer a new perspective on his work in Lisbon,<sup>7</sup> as yet little studied. Especially, I want to counter the idea that his proposals were strictly utopian. None of his projects were executed in the end and his overall program is difficult to reconstruct. This has facilitated its qualification as one more project in a line of failed urban modernizations.<sup>8</sup> Though there are many arguments for such a reading, this characterization produces an apparently easy legibility of Ventura Terra's projects, which fails to recognize the way they articulate with and work

<sup>7</sup> After his planning activity in Lisbon Ventura Terra also produced an 'improvement plan' for Funchal, capital of the Madeira archipelago. See Teresa Vasconcelos, *O Plano Ventura Terra e a modernização do Funchal (primeira metade do século XX)*, Funchal 2008.

<sup>8</sup> This idea is present in different senses in: A. Vieira da Silva, "A ligação costeira da Baixa com a parte ocidental da cidade", in *Dispersos. Volume I*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Lisbon 1968, 113-134; José Manuel Fernandes, *Arquitectura modernista em Portugal (1890-1940)*, Lisbon 1993, 74; Ana Martins Barata, *Lisboa, 'caes da Europa': Realidades, desejos e ficções para a cidade (1860-1930)*, Lisbon 2010.

within a highly complex context.

### **Culturalists and progressives in Portuguese art history**

In the background is an idea suggested by the art historian Raquel Henriques da Silva in what is, to date, the most informed study on Ventura Terra's planning activity.<sup>9</sup> One of Silva's arguments is that Ventura Terra's town planning is founded on an idea of the city which simultaneously respects history and is open to expansion and modernization. For this reason, she suggests it can be interpreted as a synthesis of Françoise Choay's opposition between "progressive" and "culturalist" attitudes towards planning and urban heritage.<sup>10</sup> This reading of Ventura Terra's work against an international context is especially relevant in light of a persistent historiographical bias towards the insularity of this time and place.<sup>11</sup> But, if Silva's reading is very useful for revisiting Ventura Terra's planning activity and placing it within an international (architectural and planning) culture, this particular hypothesis of a synthesis of Choay's opposition poses some problems.

Before exploring these it may be useful to briefly outline the genealogy of the use of this opposition in Portuguese art history. One of Silva's fundamental references is Pedro Vieira de Almeida's work, particularly his understanding of the transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Portugal, not as a rupture,

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<sup>9</sup> Raquel Henriques da Silva, "Ventura Terra em contexto," in *Miguel Ventura Terra. A arquitectura enquanto Projecto de vida*, ed. Ana Isabel Ribeiro, Esposende 2006, 10-30. The text is reproduced in Xardoné, Costa, and Rufino, *Arquitecto Ventura Terra*, 276-307.

<sup>10</sup> Françoise Choay, ed., *L'urbanisme: Utopies et réalités. Une anthologie*, Paris 1965.

<sup>11</sup> Silva's suggestion was not followed when a Colloquium on the first Republican town council, organized by the Municipality of Lisbon, provided the opportunity for further study. Here Ventura Terra's work was described as "intensely utopian", ahead (and consequently outside) of his time. Jorge Mangorrinha, "À esquina de Lisboa: O perfil dos vereadores da mudança e a política urbanística (1908-1913)," in *Lisboa e a República*, 125-155. Though no interpretative model is explicitly mentioned, Mangorrinha's reading implies the dichotomy between visionary exceptions and a provincial, backward and limiting cultural context which does not allow these exceptions to fructify. For a critique of such models in Portuguese art history, see Mariana Pinto Santos, "'Estou atrasado! Estou atrasado!' Sobre o atraso na arte portuguesa diagnosticado pela historiografia," in *Representações da Portugalidade*, eds. André Barata, António Santos Pereira and José Ricardo Carvalheiro, Alfragide 2011, 231-242.



but as a continuity increasingly questioning its tradition.<sup>12</sup> It was precisely Almeida who first introduced Choay's terminology into Portuguese architectural history.<sup>13</sup> Almeida did so not in the context of planning, but rather in that of architecture, proposing a fresh reading of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a time marked by modernity rather than its absence.

Ventura Terra was the architect he elected to represent, what he called, the progressive model in Portuguese architecture (Raúl Lino exemplified the cultural model). This original appropriation or detour brought to light the complex temporalities of architectural production at that time, providing Almeida with the conceptual instruments to revisit both architects beyond the problem of style in which, until then, their work had often been confined.<sup>14</sup>

If Almeida considers Ventura Terra to be quintessentially progressive, the fact that Silva proposes to consider the architect-planner as having surpassed Choay's opposition, signals a certain discomfort in turning the latter's model back to its original context of town planning and heritage. Hence we come back to the two problems I consider this hypothesis to pose.

Firstly, an important argument Silva makes is that Ventura Terra's understanding of heritage is as something to be preserved, but which should not thwart urban development.<sup>15</sup> Choay herself notes her models are only to be found in their pure form in discourse, as they consider the city as a reproducible object and not as a process or a problem.<sup>16</sup> Both models deny the existing city by calling either on the past or the future, that is, by invoking a normativity based on either tradition or modernity which is their necessary utopian element. Any

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<sup>12</sup> Silva, "Ventura Terra em contexto," 17; Pedro Vieira de Almeida, "A noção de 'passado' na arquitectura das décadas difíceis. O caso de Lisboa," in *Rassegna* 16 (1994), 52-63.

<sup>13</sup> Pedro Vieira de Almeida, "Modelo progressista, modelo culturalista," in *História da arte em Portugal: A arquitectura moderna*, eds. Pedro Vieira de Almeida and José Manuel Fernandes, Lisbon 1986, 72-89.

<sup>14</sup> See Rui Jorge Garcia Ramos, "Disponibilidade moderna na arquitectura doméstica de Raul Lino e Ventura Terra na abertura do século XX," in *Revistas de arquitectura: Arquivo(s) da modernidade*, ed. Marieta Dá Mesquita, Lisbon 2011, 78-111.

<sup>15</sup> Silva, "Ventura Terra em contexto," 17.

<sup>16</sup> Choay, *L'urbanisme*, 26.

concrete planning activity is *necessarily* some kind of compromise or synthesis between both models that are present in varying proportions. They should be understood rather as ideal discursive types, extremes forming a line along which to place actors and ideas. In this sense one could also consider Ventura Terra an ‘enlightened progressive’, for example, for the difference between both models or attitudes reveals itself best when urban heritage *does* obstruct urban development. And Ventura Terra repeatedly states his availability for opening large avenues through historical districts for the sake of “progress”. An example would be an avenue preceding a future bridge over the river Tagus between Príncipe Real and Alto da Catarina, which would raze part of the centenary neighbourhood of Bairro Alto.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, Choay’s problematic of how past and present are articulated in planning views may not be the most pertinent approach to the case of Ventura Terra (as will be noted later, Silva herself suggests other readings). Silva bases her idea of a synthesis on Ventura Terra’s pragmatic attitude towards modernization and urban heritage, which contrasts with the much more radical discourse of his time.<sup>18</sup> Such pragmatism reveals itself in Ventura Terra’s somewhat straightforward attitude towards both the city inherited from the past and the new possibilities, necessities and challenges arising from new technologies.

For the architect, they seem to have been elements to work with rather than conflicting or mutually exclusive demands, i.e. means rather than ends. The co-existence of ‘progress’ with persistences and survivals from the past did not pose, what Ramos calls in another context, the “anguish of choice.”<sup>19</sup> Perhaps, in line

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<sup>17</sup> See “A futura ponte sobre o Tejo,” in *A República*, 16 April 1911; “Lisboa transforma-se... Vão começar as obras do Parque Eduardo VII,” in *A Capital*, 2 June 1911; “Lisboa transforma-se. Quem vai construir a ponte sobre o Tejo?” in *A Capital*, 6 June 1911.

<sup>18</sup> Discourse on the city at this time follows Choay’s model much closer. It argued with few exceptions either for completely razing the historical districts or not to touch them at all. See Joana Cunha Leal, “A individualidade de Lisboa e o tipo de casa portuguesa em Júlio de Castilho,” in *Vinte e Um por Vinte e Um* 2 (2006), 73-85.

<sup>19</sup> Rui Jorge Garcia Ramos, “Raízes e caminhos: Marques da Silva e a arquitectura do século XX,” in *Leituras de Marques da Silva: Reexaminar a modernidade no início do século XXI*, ed. Rui Jorge Garcia Ramos, Porto 2011, 15-27, here 26.

with ideas about the constitutional “porosity” or “impurity” of modernity in Lisbon,<sup>20</sup> it can be argued that for Ventura Terra the past was inevitably present, but not necessarily an obstacle; that past and present co-existed rather than conflicted. This suggests bypassing, rather than surpassing, Choay’s opposition. The basic problems Ventura Terra faced, or thought he faced, may not have been those that Choay’s model helps to make visible. Finally, the idea of a synthesis still implies a reading of history focused on evolution (in the sense of a Hegelian synthesis of an opposition as historical progress). The European context which, according to Almeida and Silva, informed Portuguese architectural culture rather seems to demand exploring the spaces and circulations through which ideas, models and theories on planning were confronted with the specificities of place.<sup>21</sup>

Hence we come back to that strange concept of “municipal aesthetics” or, more generally, “urban aesthetics”. This term, at least in the sense developed below, seems to escape Choay’s models. In what follows, I want to argue that nonetheless it had a constitutive character in Ventura Terra’s planning projects and is one way to discuss its “modernity” and the particular way it articulates the “weight of place”<sup>22</sup> and international context.

### Urban aesthetics

“Municipal aesthetics” is among a series of terms one finds frequently during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in discourse on the city of Lisbon. Expressions such as “aesthetics of the city” (*estética cidadina, estética da cidade*), “urban aesthetics” (*estética urbana*), “aesthetics of the street” (*estética da rua*) or of

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<sup>20</sup> As proposed respectively by Manuel Villaverde, “Rua das Portas de Santo Antão e a singular modernidade lisboeta (1890-1925): Arquitectura e práticas urbanas,” in *Revista de História da Arte* 2 (2006), 142-76; and Ramos, “Raízes e caminhos,” 25.

<sup>21</sup> Silva, “Ventura Terra em contexto,” 15. For the idea that the study of “peripheries” should focus on “space and circulations before constructing evolutions”, see Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “The uses and abuses of peripheries in art history,” in *Art@ Bulletin* 3 (2014), 4-7, here 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ramos, “Raízes e caminhos.”

buildings (*estética das edificações*), etc., appear consistently in texts by historians, writers, architects and other intellectuals. I will use the generic term “urban aesthetics” to cover this constellation.<sup>23</sup> The discussion in which these terms were used was part of a public debate on the aesthetic quality of the city. While having roots in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it gained momentum during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This discussion focused on, but was not limited to, architecture, particularly façades. It was a topic that concerned many intellectuals and pervades their writing as inventories of the debate show.<sup>24</sup> Rute Figueiredo notes how the evident desire of “aesthetization” that this vocabulary articulates is a defining feature of the debate on architecture and the city during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century related to ideas then circulating internationally.<sup>25</sup> At its basis was a critique of the aesthetic insufficiency of the modern city. In this sense, Alessandro Piccinelli’s description of the situation in Milan before the First World War is quite similar to that in Lisbon: journalists, writers and other intellectuals used the concept of *estetica urbana* to react as a common front against what they considered to be purely hygienist approaches which were ruining the city.<sup>26</sup> If this international context and its protagonists are hardly ever mentioned explicitly in Portugal, the discussion around an “urban aesthetic” is best seen against this background. This can be illustrated with an

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<sup>23</sup> I follow Brian Ladd in his use of the term in his discussion of the challenges to planning approaches based on aesthetic grounds, within a wider context of the (tentative) systematic development of the aesthetic dimension of planning. According to Ladd, this came with a new understanding (a “discovery”) of the urban fabric. Brian Ladd, “Urban aesthetics and the discovery of the urban fabric in turn-of-the-century Germany,” in *Planning Perspectives* 2 (1987), 270-86. Much interesting research in this direction has been developed in the wake of the ‘rediscovery’ of Camillo Sitte since Collins’ 1965 translation of Sitte’s seminal 1889 *Der Städte-Bau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen*. See among others George R. Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins, *Camillo Sitte: The birth of modern city planning*, Dover edition, New York 2006. Bohl and Lejeune, *Sitte, Hegemann and the metropolis*. Guido Zucconi, ed., *Camillo Sitte e i suoi interpreti*, Milano 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Ana Martins Barata, “A discussão estética acerca da qualidade arquitectónica das construções da capital nas primeiras décadas do século XX,” in *Arte Teoria* 10 (2007), 128-135. Rute Figueiredo, *Arquitectura e discurso crítico em Portugal (1893-1918)*, Lisbon 2007, 235-253.

<sup>25</sup> Figueiredo, *Arquitectura e discurso crítico em Portugal*, 235-237.

<sup>26</sup> Alessandro Piccinelli, “Monneret de Villard e la versione italiana,” in *Camillo Sitte e i suoi interpreti*, 29-33.

early text on the occasion of the 1900 *Congrès de l'Art Public* held in Paris as part of the International Exhibition.<sup>27</sup> (Curiously, when in 1910 Ventura Terra is compared to an unidentified, but daring “painter of the *Oeuvre*” this seems to refer to Eugène Broerman, promoter of the Belgian *Oeuvre de Art Public* that organized these congresses.)<sup>28</sup> The pseudonymous author advocates an “aesthetic of the street” as the solution for the failure of aesthetic control of public space. Implicit is the claim that the aesthetic quality of public space is a matter of public concern, and that for this reason there was a public right of regulation and intervention. While in Milan, as elsewhere, this reaction developed into an (international) dialogue and systematic theoretical reflection<sup>29</sup> in Portugal it hardly goes beyond a basic consensus on the lack of aesthetic quality of the city. Only during the 1930s does one find a more serious attempt at defining the idea of an “urban aesthetic.”<sup>30</sup>

Although it is quite possible to inventory imaginings and literary fictions of a different city during the 1900s according to Choay’s models, these did not translate into competing urban programmes. They coexisted mostly without major problems, converging in an apparent consensus of what, in fact, were

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<sup>27</sup> “A arte publica,” in *A Construção Moderna* 1:21 (1900). Portal (pseud.), “A esthetica das ruas,” in *A Construção Moderna*, 1:21-22 (1900).

<sup>28</sup> “Ventura Terra é como o ousado pintor da *Oeuvre*, que desejava encher d’alto a baixo as paredes de Paris com os seus trechos sociaes, com as notas rubras da sua phantasia, impondo a grande arte na rua.” “Lisboa futura. A projectada Avenida de Santos ao Caes do Sodré,” in *Ilustração Portuguesa* 213 (1910), 367-372, here 367. On the *Oeuvre de l’Art Public*, Marcel Smets, *Charles Buls: Les principes de l’art urbain*, Liège 1995, 145-148.

<sup>29</sup> Piccinelli, “Monneret de Villard,” and in general Zucconi, *Camillo Sitte e i suoi interpreti*.

<sup>30</sup> See the work of the architect-planner Paulino Montez, especially *A estética de Lisboa: da urbanização da cidade*, Lisbon 1935. Though his work as hardly been studied at all, Montez published the first systematic reflections on planning in Portugal. Previously, one finds a curious definition of “city aesthetics” (*estética cidadina*) as an “art of the city” in a 1923 compilation of articles published between 1911 and 1914. The term was, however, strictly in the sense of an inventory of the artworks of the (preferentially historical and picturesque) city. Ribeiro Christino, *Estética cidadina*, Lisbon 1923.

different interests.<sup>31</sup> For these reasons, in Portugal, I think it makes more sense to talk of “urban aesthetic” not as a real concept, but rather as a *common place* in which distinct actors and interests could converge and build a common front against the then current planning practices. One of these interests was that of architects, recently organized in their own class association (SAP, Society of Portuguese Architects, founded in 1902). They attempted to appropriate the issue as their special domain in order to fortify their weak social and professional status, arguing that architects were the professionals best qualified to deal with the city’s “aesthetic”.<sup>32</sup> The exercise of aesthetic control over the urban environment seemed one way to obtain a larger public relevancy.

This becomes clear in a statement delivered to the Town Council of Lisbon in 1907.<sup>33</sup> Under the title “The aesthetic of the capital” the architects called for a regulation of the “aesthetic of building” to counter the “criminal freedom” of owners and constructors, held to “suffocate” the city with banal constructions “devoid of the most elementary conditions of beauty.”<sup>34</sup> The issue was presented as one of civilization, progress and artistic education:

In all countries, and not only in their capitals but also their most grandiose cities, the embellishing of façades has been law for a long time. In some cities owners have to build in accordance with a type of architecture which gives unity to the square or avenue; in others awards

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<sup>31</sup> I interpret, as such, Figueiredo’s identification of three “layers” representing different visions of the city, but which were in fact articulated and, at times, proposed by the same authors. Figueiredo, *Arquitetura e discurso crítico em Portugal*, 234. The engineer Melo de Matos illustrates this: author of a futuristic vision of Lisbon in the year 2000 and a clear promoter of progressive urban ideas, he was also an enthusiastic defender of the “culturalist” idea of adapting traditional styles for urban residential construction. See, for example, Mello de Mattos, “A casa portuguesa. Outro depoimento”, in *A Construção Moderna* 4:93 (1903), 67-69; “Lisboa no anno 2000”, in *Ilustração Portuguesa* 5-7 (1906), 129-133, 188-192 and 220-223; “Um rasgão atravez do Bairro Alto”, in *A Construção Moderna* 8:247 (1908), 146-147.

<sup>32</sup> See for example José Luís Monteiro, “As novas edificações de Lisboa”, in *Anuario da Sociedade dos Architectos Portuguezes* 2 (1906), 19-21.

<sup>33</sup> Sociedade dos Architectos Portuguezes, “Esthetica da capital: Representação á Camara Municipal de Lisboa”, in *Anuario da Sociedade dos Architectos Portuguezes* 3 (1907), 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> “A liberdade criminosa com que se tem povoado importantes avenidas, bairros inteiros, de construcções banaes, desprovidas das mais elementares condições de belleza [...]”, Sociedade de Architectos Portuguezes, “Esthetica da capital”, 21.

are established for the façades with most beautiful artistic conception. Among us, however, we have not taken care yet of such an important issue, sadly neglecting the triumphal march of civilization.<sup>35</sup>

It must be noted that this account was a little exaggerated, regarding both the esteem the subject was said to receive in other countries and the local neglect: an award for façades had existed since 1902 in Lisbon, fulfilling precisely the desired “civilizing” function.<sup>36</sup> But what is most interesting is the way the aesthetic dimension of the street is understood as a public benefit. The street is defined as public space (*logradouro dos municipes*), and as architectural façades form the vertical limits of this space, the architects argue for the exercise of “artistic censorship.”<sup>37</sup> This justifies the demand for a more prominent place for architects within the modern city, by way of municipal aesthetic regulation, supervision and appreciation exercised by a specialized entity composed of artists.

### **The institutionalization of aesthetic control**

The fundamental question is thus aesthetic control of the built environment. The underlying question was that of city-building as an art, depending on intuition or feeling in response to place, and not just a science, prone to codification. It was the way for architects to promote and differentiate themselves from other urban professionals – especially engineers – by their possession of “artistic feeling”, and to present themselves as capable of saving the city from aesthetic failure. Ventura Terra was an active member of the SAP, being vice-president of

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<sup>35</sup> “Em todos os paizes não só nas suas capitaes, como nas suas cidades mais grandiosas, de ha muito tempo que é lei o embelezamento 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 civilisação, nos tenhamos occupado de tão importante assumpto.”, Sociedade de Architectos Portuguezes, “Esthetica da capital,” 21-22.

<sup>36</sup> Eduardo Martins Bairrada, *Prémio Valmor, 1902-1952*, Lisbon 1980.

<sup>37</sup> Sociedade de Architectos Portuguezes, “Esthetica da capital,” 21. A similar argument on the vertical planes of public space can already be found in Portal, “A esthetica das ruas.”



Figure 2. The river waterfront nearby Cais do Sodré, according to Ventura Terra's plans. Source: "Lisboa futura. A projectada Avenida de Santos ao Caes do Sodré," in *Ilustração Portuguesa* 213 (1910), 367-372

its general meeting board. He was thus well aware of these aspirations and it can be presumed that he took this programme in favour of aesthetic control of public space with him when he was elected town councillor in 1908.

The issue of aesthetics is precisely one of the main points in the general outline of proposals Ventura Terra presented during one of the first municipal sessions.<sup>38</sup> It figures prominently among the study of a general "improvement plan" (*plano de melhoramentos*) of the city focusing on the river and strategic urban projects such as the execution of the Eduardo VII Park, the solution of a traffic bottleneck (Rua do Arsenal) or the creation of a green belt around the city.<sup>39</sup>

The ideas about the waterfront have drawn the most attention, being the most ambitious plans for waterfront development during a period which seems to

<sup>38</sup> *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1908, 398-399.

<sup>39</sup> None of these projects were executed and little of the documentation seems to have survived. The municipal archive preserves approved projects such as those for the Eduardo VII Park, the enlargement of the Rua do Arsenal, or the amplification of the Mercado 24 de Julho, but different sources mention the existence of detailed plans included in a general, vast improvement plan. See for example "Lisboa transforma-se... Vão começar as obras do Parque Eduardo VII"; "A futura ponte sobre o Tejo"; *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1911, 339-340.





Figure 3. Enlargement of the Rua do Arsenal by means of a portico, according to Ventura Terra's plans. Source: "Lisboa futura. A projectada Avenida de Santos ao Caes do Sodré," in *Ilustração Portuguesa* 213 (1910), 367-372

turn its back to the river,<sup>40</sup> and anticipating recent waterfront developments in Lisbon much along the same lines.<sup>41</sup> Ventura Terra, in fact, enthusiastically defended such a "return to the Tagus".<sup>42</sup>

The first of his proposals was precisely to study the means of more municipal control on the "aesthetic" of buildings:

To carry out a study in order to authorize town councils to intervene in the aesthetic of future buildings in their respective municipalities, above all when concerning more important streets, avenues or squares.<sup>43</sup>

The existing legal framework impeded the creation of such legislation,<sup>44</sup> but during the second half of 1909 a Commission of Municipal Aesthetic (*Comissão*

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<sup>40</sup> Barata, *Lisboa, 'caes da Europa'*. Compare with Francisco Moita Flores, "Higiene e saúde pública em Lisboa nos finais do séc. XX" in *Lisboa ambientes*, ed. António José Costa e Silva and José L. Diniz, Lisboa 1994, 29-87. Flores notes that actual population growth does not necessarily follow urbanization patterns and argues that during the First Republic (1910-1926), it continued to concentrate along the river.

<sup>41</sup> See <http://www.cm-lisboa.pt/viver/urbanismo/projetos-e-obras/frente-riberinha> (accessed 28 March 2015).

<sup>42</sup> "Far-se-ha um dia a avenida marginal?" in *A República*, 14 March 1911.

<sup>43</sup> "Que se proceda a um estudo no sentido de obter para as Camaras Municipaes o direito de intervirem na esthetica das futuras edificações nos respectivos concelhos, principalmente quando se trate das ruas, avenidas ou praças mais importantes." *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1908, 398.

<sup>44</sup> *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1910, 10-11.

*de Estética Municipal*) is created on Ventura Terra's proposal. The Commission was composed of 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. As the architects had asked, it was tasked with exercising municipal control over the city's aesthetic and its "artistic comfort", in which there is a significant concern about taking advantage of the "magnificent panoramas" of the city, besides the aesthetic appearance of public spaces (avenues, squares, parks, etc.).<sup>45</sup> Its real functioning is difficult to reconstruct, as the minutes of their meetings have not been located in the Municipal Archive. However, the Commission regularly appears in the municipal minutes as being consulted about or giving opinions on matters relating to aesthetic issues.<sup>46</sup>

### **Aesthetic conflict and the Eduardo VII park**

This general intention of exercising aesthetic control over the built environment is rapidly caught up in the politics of municipal management. I want to follow this entanglement by discussing Ventura Terra's plan for the central park to crown the most important avenue of the city, the Avenida da Liberdade. This park 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 constantly postponed execution was the very image of the city's frustrated desires of modernization. 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

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<sup>45</sup> *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1910, 491.

<sup>46</sup> See for example *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1910, 287, 760; *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1911, 59-60, 99, 246, 328-329, etc.

success). His project was one of the first causes of conflict with the engineer, Diogo Peres, in charge of the municipal Department of Public Works since 1909. Aesthetic arguments were central in this conflict. From the start Diogo Peres is highly critical of Ventura Terra's variant project.<sup>47</sup> He files two reports on the project in which he develops his critiques.<sup>48</sup> In 1912, he states them publicly in the newspaper *A Capital*, for which he is questioned by the town council and officially reprimanded.<sup>49</sup>

The conflicting views on the park, which will be discussed later, were certainly an important reason for Ventura Terra to remove the project's elaboration as much as possible from Peres' control. In June 1911, he has it transferred from the garden section of the municipal Department of Public Works to the architectural section, directed by the architect José Alexandre Soares. His argument was that the project was "a work in which art dominates", especially the "arts of landscape architecture, monumental architecture and urban architecture".<sup>50</sup> 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. He gives as a reason the need to distinguish between the competences and responsibilities of engineering and architecture against the national "routine" of the latter's submission to the former.<sup>51</sup> His reorganization thus had an exemplary intention, backed by international good practices. It was enthusiastically received in artistic and architectural circles (SAP, Council of Art and Archaeology and National Society of the Fine-Arts).<sup>52</sup> Ventura Terra himself

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<sup>47</sup> *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1911, 59.

<sup>48</sup> The first report is discussed 22 July 1909. See *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1909, 425-428. The second report can be found in *Copiador de officios*, 3.<sup>a</sup> Repartição, livro 67, 437-442 (Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/UROB-E/08). For Ventura Terra's discussion of it, *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1910, 577-579.

<sup>49</sup> "O Parque Eduardo VII," in *A Capital*, 17 May 1912. *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1912, 345.

<sup>50</sup> "[...] uma obra onde predomina a arte, e principalmente a arquitetura paisagista, monumental e urbana." *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1911, 353. This indicates that for Ventura Terra planning and urban design were part of architecture.

<sup>51</sup> *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, 449.

<sup>52</sup> *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, 491, 507, 522.

presented his reorganization at the IX International Congress of Architects in Rome (2-10 October 1911) and related it to the congress' conclusions on the separation between architecture and engineering.<sup>53</sup>

The following brief overview<sup>54</sup> of the redistribution of competences clearly shows Ventura Terra wanted to remove aesthetic issues entirely from Peres' influence.

### **Until 1911: Organization of the Department of Public Works (3.<sup>a</sup> *Repartição*)**

- First section
  - Building lines
  - Studies
  - Public space occupancy
- Second section of architecture
- Third section
  - Gardens
  - Water services
  - Lighting and rails
- Fourth section of roads and pavements
- Fifth section
  - Purchases
  - Expropriation
  - General administration

### **After 1911:**

- **Department of Engineering (3.<sup>a</sup> *Repartição*)**
  - Engineering
  - Surveys

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<sup>53</sup> *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, 740-741.

<sup>54</sup> This is based on a report by Diogo Peres on the organization of the Department of Public Works (*Copiador de ofícios*, livro 69, 63-66) and *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, 449-450, 485-487.

Public utilities (sewage, water, gas, electricity)

Pavements and roads

• **Department of Architecture (4.<sup>a</sup> *Repartição*)**

Architecture

Parks and gardens

Cemeteries

General composition of the city plan

Urban furniture (including ornamental pavement)

Public art

Public space occupancy

• **Shared administrative services**

The creation of the Commission on Municipal Aesthetics and the reorganization of the municipal Department of Public Works was to be Ventura Terra's most lasting municipal intervention. From here on architecture would maintain its autonomy within municipal services, though over time it lost many of its ample attributions (gardening, cemeteries, planning, public space...).<sup>55</sup> Against this background it is not surprising to see Diogo Peres appear in 1914, after the town council leaves office in January 1913, as one of the promoters of the Eduardo VII project's suspension and its substitution by the earlier project from 1899 that he had championed.<sup>56</sup>

### **Aesthetics and public space**

Against this background, the Eduardo VII project can be considered as a test case for Ventura Terra's complete improvement plans, as he also announces

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<sup>55</sup> See Aurora Santos, "A Câmara Municipal de Lisboa na transição da República para o Estado Novo: As reorganizações dos serviços municipais (1925-1938)" in *Cadernos do Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa* 9 (2007), 146-162.

<sup>56</sup> "O Parque Eduardo VII" in *O Ocidente* 1269 (1914), 101-102. On the further history of the park, see Ana Tostões, *Monsanto, Parque Eduardo VII, Campo Grande. Keil do Amaral, arquitecto dos espaços verdes de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1992.



Figure 4. Artur Prat's house, Lisbon, rear façade (photograph provided by the author)

when work starts.<sup>57</sup> Presumably, 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. Ventura Terra proposed solving the problem of financing the park's construction - the main reason for its slow execution - by selling a strip of land on its edges as building lots for “artistic” residences. He imagined them somewhat as a high-class garden-city surrounding the park.<sup>58</sup> Two auctions of these lots were held, but failed: only one lot was sold. The buyer was the Paris-based artist Artur Prat (1861-1918), who had Ventura Terra himself design the house. Prat created the sculpture and painting integrated into

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<sup>57</sup> “Lisboa transforma-se...”

<sup>58</sup> “[...] uma série de pequenas casas isoladas, artisticamente dispostas e envolvidas em macissos de verdura [...]” *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1910, 578-579.



Figure 5. Artur Prat's house, Lisbon, sculptural detail representing architecture (centre), sculpture and painting (photograph provided by the author)

the façade of the house facing the future park.<sup>59</sup> This concern with the integration of the arts, represented in the sculpture itself, reinforces the suspicion that this house was to function as a showcase for the architectural possibilities of these lots. This was also the way it was understood in the specialized press.<sup>60</sup>

The project's suspension left the house surrounded by a building site for the following decades. Today, encased in modern iron, concrete and glass, it ironically houses the Order of Engineers, as if it were an involuntary monument to the architect's defeat in this particular instance of the conflict between engineers and

<sup>59</sup> Catarina Oliveira, "Casa situada na Avenida Sidónio Pais e Avenida António Augusto Aguiar, 3-D (casa do Sr. Artur Prat, actualmente sede da Ordem dos Engenheiros)", 2007, <http://www.patrimoniocultural.pt/pt/patrimonio/patrimonio-imovel/pesquisa-do-patrimonio/classificado-ou-em-vias-de-classificacao/geral/view/72352> (accessed 16 February 2015).

<sup>60</sup> E. Nunes, "Casa do Ex.mo Sr. Artur Prat no Parque Eduardo VII com frente para a Avenida Antonio A. de Aguiar. Arquitecto, Sr. Ventura Terra" in *Arquitectura Portuguesa* 7:1 (1914), 1-4; "Casa do Ex.mo Sr. Artur Prat no Parque Eduardo VII, com frente para a Avenida Antonio Augusto d'Aguiar. Arquitecto, Sr. Ventura Terra" in *A Construção Moderna* 14:5 (1914), 34.



Figure 6. Headquarters of the Order of Engineers, Lisbon, rear façade (photograph provided by the author)

architects.

Another mayor change in Ventura Terra's proposal was the location of the Exhibition Palace, perhaps the real breaking point in his conflict with Diogo Peres. The park is located at a spot where a hill with a steep slope blocked the continuity of the Avenida da Liberdade linking it to the city's centre. The palace was originally to be located at the top of that hill. Ventura Terra moved it to a large promenade in front which replaces an original lake.

Peres considered surrounding a park by buildings to be a bad idea in principle and he defended the stylistic unity and "harmonious whole"<sup>61</sup> of the 1899 project. In his arguments, one detects the importance of the visual: scenographic perspectives of the palace were to visually dominate the city, with the park as a picturesque frame. Hence he can not accept Ventura Terra's idea of the

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<sup>61</sup> "[...] conjuncto unido e integro [...]" *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1909, 425.



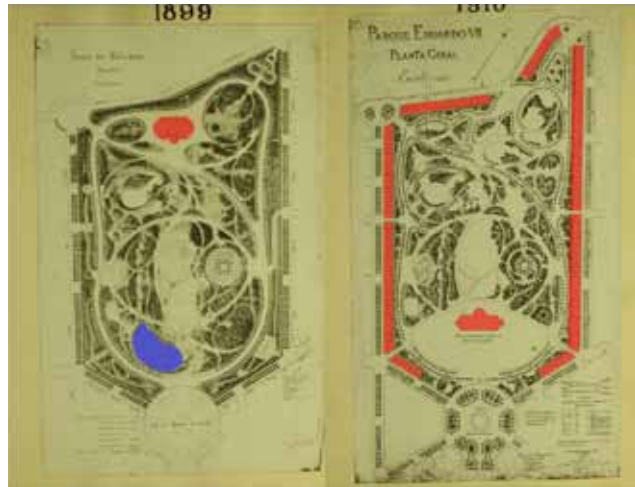


Figure 7. Main changes by Ventura Terra to the original 1899 project of the Eduardo VII Park: in red, the palace and houses; in blue, the lake. Adapted from maps inserted in *Projecto dos arruamentos do Parque Eduardo VII*, Lisbon 1936 (Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/UROB-PU/10/054)

promenade on which the palace would be placed with the park “jammed” behind it. For Peres, the palace should be situated either next to the square, thus ennobled by a “grandiose” and “imposing” monumental façade or, preferably, on the original spot on top of the hill, “one of the most beautiful viewpoints of the city”.<sup>62</sup> However, in this way the palace and park were separated from the city itself. Looking at artistic renderings of the 1899 project, it is easy to see how they imagined 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.

What is absent in Peres’ considerations is the public use of both palace and park.

<sup>62</sup> “O Parque Eduardo VII” in *A Capital*, May 17, 1912.



Figure 8. Fernando Silva, rendering of the Eduardo VII park plan, c. 1900. Photographic reproduction by Estúdio Mário Novais, 1943 (Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, PT/AMLSB/MNV/000135)

It is another architect, Adães Bermudes, who answers Peres' objections.<sup>63</sup> His main arguments can thus be summarized:

1. the palace is to be visited, and the top of the park would hamper access;
2. its function is to exhibit what is inside and not to observe the views, for which a proper construction (such as a watchtower) would be much more suitable;
3. the trees of the park would impede the very view from the top of the park', or else it would have to be a park without trees.

Similarly, Bermudes counters the idea of placing the palace immediately next to the Marquês do Pombal Square, as Peres had considered as an alternative, because of the logistical problem of access and circulation this would create. He

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<sup>63</sup> Adães Bermudes, "Outro sino, outro som. O Parque Eduardo VII" in *A Capital*, 19 May 1912. It was probably because Peres' public critiques coincided with the decease of Ventura Terra's wife that his colleague Bermudes replied instead of Ventura Terra himself.

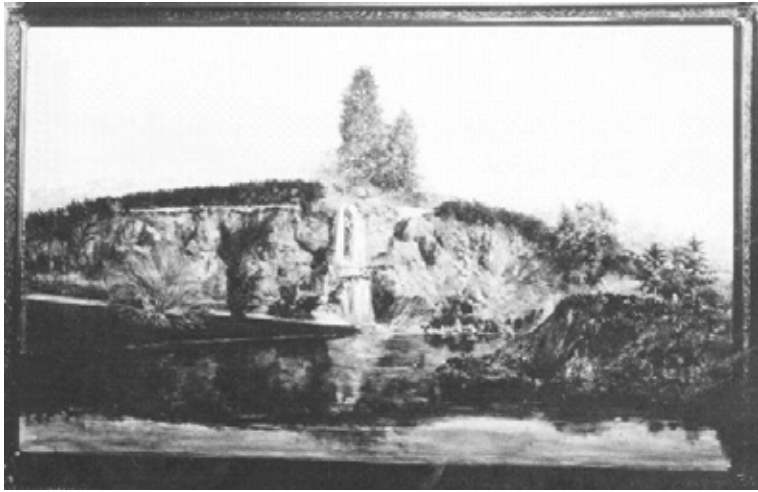


Figure 9. Fernando Silva, rendering of the projected lake and waterfall of the Eduardo VII park, c. 1900. Photographic reproduction by Alberto Carlos Lima, undated (Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, PT/AMLSB/LIM/002465)

thus argues Ventura Terra's idea is the only valid one by prioritizing arguments of functionality over those of imposing scenery, picturesque views, or stylistic integrity. The background to these disagreements seems then to have been Peres' conception of the park as an enclosed artwork against Ventura Terra's priority of use and functionality in the organization of artistic elements. One could say that for the latter, public space should not be sacrificed to an imagined aesthetic harmony or unity. His proposal, by putting the palace near the Marquês de Pombal Square – predictably a future point of convergence – while creating an inviting promenade at the very entrance to the park, would open it up to urban life and thus constitute it as public space.

The building of the palace about 150 metres from the Marquês de Pombal Square is justified by the need to make it easily accessible to the public and because of its more attractive situation. In front of and along the palace a large gardened promenade will be built with lakes, waterfalls,

statues, balustrades, etc., after which the park unfolds with a perfect view over the city, the Tagus, etc.<sup>64</sup>

The palace would function as an entrance rather than a wall. 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.<sup>65</sup> These houses would also help to mediate the considerable height differences along the park's boundaries, up to 8 metres, which the 1899 project solved with slopes. 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.

The conflict between the engineer and architect 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 Ventura Terra the starting point is that the park should be a stage for social interaction and cultural events. Architecture was to mediate public space, an idea similarly present in other projects of his. This shows that while architecture seems to dominate his projects, the real object of intervention is public space.

## Conclusions

The park, as imagined by Ventura Terra, implies the appropriations of both local, place-specific elements and international ideas and ideals. The aesthetic

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<sup>64</sup> “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.” *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1910, 579.

<sup>65</sup> *Actas da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1909, 428.

considerations of architects and other intellectuals were very much related to modernization: for them, the revitalization of public space was to be a motor for urban regeneration, and although this revitalization was primarily aesthetic, this was not understood in a purely formal or aestheticist sense, as Bermudes's words make clear:

This splendid centre of art and beauty [the Eduardo VII park] will be the first marker of modern civilization. It will ennoble the city and place it side by side with other great capitals. It will be our tuning fork to harmonize the aesthetic transformation of our cities. It will educate public taste and irradiate victorious and comforting art.<sup>66</sup>

“Aesthetics” in a certain way mediated oppositions between the values, desires and temporalities that punctuated Lisbon and its architecture at the turn of the century. In this sense “urban aesthetics” can be understood in the light of a “response to place”, in the sense the Italian Monneret de Villard had proposed:

[...] the art of city-building is not a table art, made of rules, maxims and formulas, but instead arises from the close connection of an artistic vision in correspondence to the place it concerns.<sup>67</sup>

To end, I want to come back to another reading of Ventura Terra suggested by Silva. She considers him a representative of the entrance of architecture into the “terrain of non-art”, which she considers the birthplace of modern architecture.<sup>68</sup> I think this “terrain” can be understood as the city itself. In the case of Lisbon, it

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<sup>66</sup> “Esse grandioso fóco de arte e de beleza [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 irradiará a arte vencedora e consoladora.” Bermudes, “Outro sino, outro som.”

<sup>67</sup> “[...] l’arte di elevare la città non è un’arte da tavolino, fatta di regole, di massie e di formule, ma nasce dalla strettissima connessione di una visione artistica in risponzenza al luogo ove essa deve esplicarsi.” Monneret de Villard, *Note sul’arte di costruire le città*, Milan 1907, apud Piccinelli, “Monneret de Villard e la versione italiana,” 33.

<sup>68</sup> Silva, “Ventura Terra em contexto,” 15.

was through a putative “urban aesthetics” that architecture attempted, without losing its identity and relevance, to leave the strict confines of “Art” to enter this reality in which the frontiers separating (monumental) architecture from “non-architecture” were rapidly dissolving. The horizon of this entrance was to take art to the streets, that is, to diffuse artistic rationalities throughout the entire city. Ventura Terra’s activity – however short and apparently lacking in results – thus comes close to what Pedro Brandão called “the cultivation of the urban.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Brandão thus (“cultivo do urbano”) defines urban design. See Pedro Brandão, “Alguns 'flashes' sobre lugares, pássaros, sinos e mesas, ou o 'Outro' como ética, no design urbano” in *Design de espaço público: Deslocação e proximidade*, eds. Pedro Brandão and Antoni Remesar, Lisbon 2003, 5-14.

# FROM THE POPULAR TO THE *SUPER NORMAL*<sup>1</sup>

IVÁN YLLERA

## **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>2</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 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<sup>3</sup>. 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

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper "Iberian Symmetry: Távora and Coderch looking for their own modernity" presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAP, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

<sup>2</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).

<sup>3</sup> M. Risselada & D. van den Heuvel, *Team 10. 1953-81. In search of a utopia of the present*. Rotterdam 2005.



Figure 1. Partial view of the Vila da Feira Municipal Market. Fernando Távora, 1959. (Photograph by the author)

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 (1953-1959) and a holiday home at Ofir (1957-1958). He had also started work on what were to be some of his most emblematic projects: the Quinta da Conceição Municipal Park at Matosinhos (1956-1993), on the northern edge of Oporto, and the Cedro Primary School in Vila Nova de Gaia (1958-1960). 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 coastal environment, the Olano House in Comillas, Santander, completed in 1957.

### **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 through the international gatherings in which they could take part. The opening up of Iberian architecture to the international scene was materialised in initiatives such as that of the *Collegi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya*, which organised a series of lectures in 1950-1951. The cycle was inaugurated

by Bruno Zevi who expressed his defence of organic architecture. Understood as post-functionalist architecture, it was a natural development of the Modern Movement, incorporating irregular forms, greater realism, the search for that which is different and having 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.”<sup>4</sup>

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>5</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>4</sup> B. Zevi, *Towards an Organic Architecture*, London 1950, 76.

<sup>5</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 *Arquitetura Popular em Portugal*.

### **Távora's condition**

From the outset of his career, Fernando Távora was profoundly aware of his Portuguese background, although he was also influenced by the architecture studied during his trips to the United States, Mexico, Japan, Greece and Egypt. There 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",<sup>6</sup> 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 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

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<sup>6</sup> F. Távora, "O problema da Casa Portuguesa", in *Aléo*, nº 9. Lisbon 1945.



Figure 2. Partial view of the East and North facades of the Ofir House, Fao, Esposende. Fernando Távora, 1958. (Photograph by the author)

description, he mentions the prevailing winds: “in summer a maddening north wind, and in winter, a cruel blow from the southwest”;<sup>7</sup> 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 I 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 that he had been championing in his text *O problema da Casa Portuguesa*. His answer for the Ofir House project was a group formed of several parts designed to form a unity. Apart from efficiently resolving the complex functional programme for a

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<sup>7</sup> L. Trigueiros, *Fernando Távora*, Lisbon 1993, 80.

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. This is 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.

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. These were warm objects for use in storing the limited belongings of the vacationer, who for the summer would dispense with all unnecessary accessories of bourgeois life. For a while, there would be the enjoyment of living with little, a return to basics that would 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



Figure 3. Detail of one of the concrete beams of the Ofir House. (Photograph by the author)

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.<sup>8</sup>

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

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<sup>8</sup> J. Frechilla, “Fernando Távora: Conversaciones en Oporto”, in *Arquitectura*, nº 261, Madrid 1986.

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.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Coderch seeking Coderch**

While in his early works Távora 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 form 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

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<sup>9</sup> C. Lichtenstein & T. Schregenberger, *As found. The discovery of the ordinary. British architecture and art of the 1950s*, Baden 2001, 40.

Europe. He 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”.<sup>10</sup>

In the search for certainties on which to go on defining his architectural stand; Coderch resorted to the values and resources offered by traditional Mediterranean architecture.<sup>11</sup> His admiration for this self-built architecture 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>12</sup> in particular the issue dedicated to popular Mediterranean architecture,<sup>13</sup> and that on rural architecture on the island of Ibiza.<sup>14</sup> He travelled with his partner Manuel Valls to study *in situ* the examples published in those issues of the AC.<sup>15</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”.<sup>16</sup>

### **A house far from the Mediterranean**

In the mid-1950s, Francisco Olano commissioned from Coderch a house at

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<sup>10</sup> A. Capitel, “José Antonio Coderch, del mar a la ciudad”, in A. Capitel & J. Ortega, *J.A. Coderch: 1945-1976*, Madrid 1978, 5.

<sup>11</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 Alicante in order to document a team task for the Plan for Housing Improvement in Fishing Villages.

<sup>12</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>13</sup> AA. VV., *A.C. Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea* No 18 (1935), Barcelona: G.A.T.E.P.A.C.

<sup>14</sup> AA. VV., *A.C. Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea* No 21 (1936), Barcelona: G.A.T.E.P.A.C.

<sup>15</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>16</sup> B. Galí, *Correa & Millá. Arquitectura 1950-1997*, Barcelona 1997.



Comillas, Santander, in the north of the Iberian Peninsula. This commission provided Coderch with the opportunity to build his first project outside Catalonia.<sup>17</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 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 from 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

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<sup>17</sup> With the exception of the Casa Ferrer Vidal in Mallorca (1946) and his early jobs in Madrid.



Figure 4. Olano House, Comillas, Santander. José Antonio Coderch and Manuel Valls, 1957. (Photograph by the author)

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.

The interior layout was precisely drawn, with a detailed plan of its partitions, the arrangement of the wooden flooring and the banisters. Taking 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 façade, 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 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. 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 in 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



Figure 5. View of the Rabia estuary from the terrace surrounding the Olano House. (Photograph by the author)

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".<sup>18</sup>

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

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<sup>18</sup> N. Fukusawa & J. Morrison, *Super Normal. Sensations of the Ordinary*, Baden 2007, 16.

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".<sup>19</sup>

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".<sup>20</sup>

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.

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<sup>19</sup> F. Távora, *Diário de "bordo"*, 1960, Guimarães pub. 2012, 231.

<sup>20</sup> Fukasawa & Morrison, *Super Normal*, 29.



# MODERNISM AND THE PORTUGUESE *TEATRO DE REVISTA*<sup>1</sup>

JORGE PALINHOS

## **Introduction**

The avant-garde movements of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had a defining influence upon several artistic and non-artistic areas of life. No longer did art restrict itself to artistic areas, but it tried to influence and have an impact on all areas of living and let itself be influenced by all human endeavours and works. Its foremost pioneers came from the visual arts, at the time feeling the competition and impact of mechanical reproductions in their own work and, at the time, also trying to deal with the shock of Romantic sensibilities facing the rapid industrialization of Europe.

It can be said that Modernism started with an enthusiastic embrace of progress and the rapid transformations that society, culture and technology were facing. Modernist artists were trying to express a new sensibility that included the Romantic tradition, but did not 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.

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper “Modernist Art and the Portuguese *Teatro de Revista*” presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAB, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

The arrival of Modernist ideas in Portugal was surprisingly fast for a small minority of artists, but much slower for the majority of the population and of the artistic landscape of the country, and namely for the artists who depended more on public support or state financing. In fact, the naturalistic taste in arts in Portugal would last until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was more evident in arts more heavily dependent on audience applause or government support as was the case with the performing arts. In fact, the principles of Modernist theatre would take a long time to be well-received in Portugal. There were a few attempts at Modernist theatre in Portugal in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, França notes that the future of the magazine *Orpheu*, the first Modernist magazine in Portugal, also entailed an ambitious programme of conferences and a theatre festival<sup>2</sup> that never took place. One of the protagonists of Portuguese Modernism, José Almada Negreiros (1893-1970), had a deep interest in theatre and was writing, directing and designing for theatre in the 1920s, but the lack of opportunities and interest among audience and artists, at that time, ultimately discouraged him and led him to move abroad for a while. Therefore, for the first 30 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Modernism did not take hold in Portuguese theatre, except in one area: the stage and costume design of one of the most popular and traditional Portuguese theatre forms – *Teatro de Revista*. In fact, several of the most important early Portuguese Modernist artists, like Jorge Barradas, Milly Possoz, José Barbosa, Sarah Affonso, Stuart Carvalhais and even Almada Negreiros, had an important role redefining the stage and costume design of Portuguese *Teatro de Revista* around the 1920s, and, in this paper I will try to document the origins, reasons, evolution and influence of this change.

### ***Teatro de Revista***

*Teatro de Revista*, also called *Revista à Portuguesa*, is a very popular Portuguese form of satirical sociopolitical theatre, which strives to reenact and satirize some

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<sup>2</sup> José-Augusto França, *A Arte e a Sociedade Portuguesa no Século XX (1910-1990)*, Lisboa 1991, 13-14.



of the most popular, well-known and controversial current affairs and events of society. Its influence was so deep that even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, its hold on the Portuguese imagination remains strong. Most of the population, however, still conflate theatre with *Teatro de Revista* and see its old celebrities as examples of theatre performers. Its political and financial support still is a relevant issue,<sup>3</sup> even if *Teatro de Revista* itself is today a dying theatre genre, with most of its practitioners retired and its stages closed or degraded.

The origin of *Teatro de Revista* can be found in France at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Amidst the turmoil of the French economic and social crisis and the subsequent revolution, theatre became a popular tool to inform and reflect about the events then taking place in France. A specific type of theatre started to appear called the *revue de fin d'année*,<sup>4</sup> that was used to tell, show and comment on the main political and social events of the previous year. Combining popular songs, humor and current affairs, *revue de fin d'année* became a massive popular hit because it satisfied the wider audience's need for entertainment and information and it quickly spread across Europe.

The revue arrived in Portugal in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the first one being, according to Luiz Francisco Rebello,<sup>5</sup> “Lisboa em 1850” (“Lisbon in 1850”), which premiered on 11 January 1851, in the *Teatro do Ginásio*. This theatre was already popular for staging vaudeville and *opera bufa*. *Revue de fin d'année* was the next logical step, immediately becoming very popular with the audience, the piece being staged for a full month and repeated during the carnival. This success ensured that the *revue de la année* quickly stopped being just an annual event, but became a commercially successful enterprise, that happened

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<sup>3</sup> In 2001, the mayor of Lisbon, Pedro Santana Lopes, created a casino in the city ostensibly with the sole purpose of supporting the recovery of the degraded area of *Teatro de Revista's* theatres, Parque Mayer. These areas should have been recovered with a project by the architect Frank Gehry, but, although the casino was created and opened, the rebuilding of the theatres never actually took place.

<sup>4</sup> V. Pavão dos Santos, *A revista modernista*, Lisbon 2000, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Luiz Francisco Rebello, *História do Teatro de Revista em Portugal*. Vol. I *Da Regeneração à República*. Lisbon 1984, 55.

multiple times a year, through several productions. Virgílio Ribalta<sup>6</sup> describes Portuguese *Teatro de Revista* as being full of colorful set designs exchanged in quick succession, and a choir of scantily-clad women wearing gaudy costumes, all with a sense of dynamic movement and constant change, which would satisfy the appetite of a popular audience for magnificence and sexual innuendo.

Its popularity also ensured that it was one of the few theatre genres in Portugal that could thrive without government backing, even if the number of performers, set designs and costumes made it an expensive production to stage. When successful, these productions had long runs that demanded a constant search for novelty that could keep the audience's interest and make them return to see a show more than once. Usually, this interest was sustained through popular songs, guest stars, new sketches, etc. Obviously, its satirical addressing of current affairs – for example during the First Portuguese Republic, with its numerous political crises, rebellions and uprisings – also added to the public interest in *Teatro de Revista*.

Dramaturgically, *Teatro de Revista* had a very specific and stable structure. Usually, each piece was divided into two parts, each one with a specific, although broad, theme. The first part would open with an orchestral piece followed by the first song. Then, several different scenes would take place, mixing songs, dance and theatrical scenes inspired by political, social or theatrical events, or scenes combining all these. These scenes could be connected by the character of the *compère* or *comère* – an actor or actress who, in between scenes, would walk to the front of the stage and, while the set was being changed behind the curtain, would have a humorous dialogue with the audience or with another actor, thus creating a thematic bridge between scenes. One of the scenes would include a guest star, usually a well-known *fado* singer. Then, there would be some 'street scenes' about daily life in Lisbon which would end with a festive parade. After that, there would be a second part, with a very similar structure to the first

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<sup>6</sup> In José Carlos Álvarez, *A República Foi ao Teatro*, Lisboa 2010, 25.

part, which would end also with a sort of festive parade, although shorter than the one at the end of the first part, where all the cast would be on stage, in a very hierarchical order, with the choir girls on the side and at the back, and the *compère* and *comère*, and guest stars being on centre stage in the front line.<sup>7</sup>

It was, therefore, a highly festive theatre, involving several dozen performers, and a very detailed, multiple and complex set design, meant to impress the audience with the magnificent and surprising visuals, but also easily changed to allow the quick succession of different musical, dancing and theatrical scenes.

Its popular impact in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was undeniable: between 1910 and 1926 about half of all theatre production in Lisbon and Oporto was composed of pieces of *Teatro de Revista*.<sup>8</sup> Many of its performers were celebrities and several of its songs became popular hits or were inscribed in cultural memory. *Teatro de Revista* even became the model and inspiration for Portuguese comedy films that would be made in the 1940s. It even helped turn *fado* - at the time a despised popular music genre in Portugal and usually connected with sailors, prostitutes and criminals - into a music genre closely related to national identity. It began being used in *Teatro de Revista* from the 1870s onwards to help to illustrate the bohemian side of life in Lisbon at that time. Despite its popularity, and despite the fact that Portuguese audiences mostly rejected Modernist performing arts, as we will see, *Teatro de Revista* was also the first theatrical art form to welcome, search and popularize the first modernist artists in theatre in Portugal.

### **Modernism in Portugal**

Modernism, in Portugal, was at first welcomed by a small clique of artists, usually connected to the magazine *Orpheu*, like Fernando Pessoa, Mário de Sá-Carneiro, Santa-Rita Pintor, and Amadeo de Souza Cardoso, among others.

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<sup>7</sup> Alvarez, *A República Foi ao Teatro*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Alvarez, *A República Foi ao Teatro*, 34.



Figure 1. A caricature in the *De Teatro* magazine, showing how the playwright should show gratitude for the applause after the première. On the lower right, the futurist or modernist author is shown bravely enduring the rain of tomatoes and other vegetables thrown by the enraged audience

Most of them had lived in Paris, and knew and were influenced by the new Modernist ideas coming from there. However, their ideas and works were mostly rejected – or even made fun of - namely in the theatre. It is well-known that the first number of *Orpheu* was regarded as an ‘insanity’ at the time and even became a minor success mostly for scandalous reasons, not for any real appreciation by the audience of the aesthetics it promoted. It is worth noting that the presence of theatre in *Orpheu* was also ambiguous because it included only a theatre play, *O Marinheiro* (The Sailor) by Fernando Pessoa, which was clearly more influenced by the symbolism of Maeterlinck, than any Modernist aesthetics.

In theatre, such rejection also happened among audience and critics. In *Figure 1* we have a caricature published in one of the foremost theatre magazines of the time, joking about the reception of futurist authors in Portugal by hostile audiences.

Such hostility could be felt even against foreign productions, as it happened with the *Ballets Russes*, as I will try to describe.

The *Ballets Russes* was a Russian dance company founded in 1909 and managed by Sergei Diaghilev. It was the foremost and more influential dance company of the time, having distilled classical ballet into a more widely-appealing form, working according to Modernist principles. It partnered some of the most important modernist artists of the time, like Léon Bakst, Henri Matisse, Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, who all created the costumes and scenery for *Parade* (1917) and *Le Tricorne* (1919) for that company. André Derain, Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí, Jean Cocteau, Robert and Sonia Delaunay were also associated with the *Ballets Russes*, as were several of the most important composers and choreographers of the time, like Igor Stravinsky, Claude Debussy, Eric Satie, and Nijinsky, even having costumes designed by Coco Chanel. It was a fortunate mix of clever commercial success, the ability to court the support of rich and powerful sponsors, and attracting a wide audience through acclaim and scandal. Modernist art was fascinated and inspired by dance, namely through the use of movement of the human body. Dance also created art through the use of existing elements, like the human body, like in a collage, its sensual elements, the use of different artistic materials, its mass appeal, the idea of a collective. The absence of spoken language as well gave it a more irrational, subconscious appeal. All of these were, of course, defining traits of modernist aesthetics.

The *Ballets Russes* was able to find a wide audience from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie, and plenty of funding for its extravagant and exotic productions. Through its innovative dance and openness to collaboration with the most avant-garde artists, and its willingness to shock and provoke, *Ballets Russes* became the most acclaimed performing troupe of the time working under modernist principles and it was a magnet for Modernist artists.

Sasportes<sup>9</sup> notes that Portuguese artists living in Paris at the time, like the poet

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<sup>9</sup> José Sasportes, *Trajectória da Dança Teatral em Portugal*, Lisbon 1979, 57.

Mário de Sá Carneiro, the architect and painter José Pacheco, the architect Raul Lino and the painter Amadeo de Souza Cardoso, were fascinated by the performances of the company. And therefore, the Modernist artists were enthusiastic when the *Ballet Russes* came to Portugal at the end of 1917. While the First World War was taking place in Central Europe, the *Ballets Russes* found themselves in a difficult situation, having a hard time finding sponsors and places to perform. Diaghilev tried to resolve the problem by making the company tour South America and then Portugal and Spain.

When the *Ballets* were coming to Portugal, on 14 October 1917, Almada wrote a long article for the first and only edition of *Portugal Futurista*, the new Modernist magazine he directed, where he described the company as one of the “most beautiful landmarks in the civilization of modern Europe”<sup>10</sup> and then, in a very emotional and impressionistic text, described the work of the company, even if he – not having had the opportunity to be in Paris - had never actually seen it in person, but knew it only through the photos published in newspapers and magazines.<sup>11</sup>

However, the presence of *Ballets Russes* in Portugal, despite all the hopes and enthusiasm of the Portuguese modernist artists, was for the most part a fiasco. The company arrived on December 2 to premiere at the *Coliseu dos Recreios* on December 6. However, on December 5, the rebellion of *Junta Militar Revolucionária* began, led by Sidónio Pais against the government of Afonso Costa. It paralyzed Lisbon for three days and forced the company to stay indoors at their hotel, supposedly in the company of some Portuguese modernist artists like Almada Negreiros, the composer Ruy Coelho and the architect Carlos Ramos.

Therefore, the premier could not take place until December 13 in a severely damaged *Coliseu de Lisboa*. The company was unhappy with the working

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<sup>10</sup> My translation.

<sup>11</sup> V. Pavão dos Santos, *O Escaparate de Todas as Artes ou Gil Vicente visto por Almada Negreiros*, Lisbon 1993, 14.

conditions, but nevertheless presented *Les Sylphides* - usually considered to be the first abstract ballet - *Schéhérazade*, a sensuous and exotic piece, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Warrior Dances of Prince Igor*, *Le Soleil de Nuit*, based on Russian folk themes. Among other pieces, Ballets also performed *Le Carnaval* with costumes by Bakst, and based on characters from *Commedia Dell Arte*, which would have a deep impact on Almada Negreiros and become the best received piece of the troupe in Portugal. Other performances were *Thamar*, based on a legend of Georgia and *Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur*, which daringly combined erudite dance, folk dance and conventional gestures of daily life.

There would be eight presentations at the *Coliseu de Lisboa* between December 13-27, 1917, and two more in the equally damaged *Teatro São Carlos* on the January 2 and 3, 1918. Despite the intense promotion and access to the prestigious *Teatro São Carlos*, at the time attended by the cultural and social elites of Lisbon, these performances seemed to have been a failure. Most presentations had half-empty auditoriums, almost no profits, indifferent audiences and hostile reviews. One reviewer, Álvaro de Lima, compared the set design to the “ridiculous blots of ‘futurist’ paintings”<sup>12</sup>. Another reviewer, F. Rodrigues Alves, described *Le Soleil de Nuit* as being “a madhouse fantasy, obviously cartoonish. A sort of futurist ode, created by fakes and danced by crazy people. Worthless set design.”<sup>13</sup> Obviously, the main defenders of the show were Portuguese modernist artists, like the writer and journalist António Ferro and, especially, Almada Negreiros.

The writer and artist Almada Negreiros was already an admirer of *Ballets Russes*, which he knew from the French magazines to which he subscribed and through an intense correspondence with Robert and Sonia Delaunay. These two artists had moved to Portugal, to the northern town of Vila do Conde, in 1915, to escape the First World War. Robert Delaunay was already a famous Modernist

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<sup>12</sup> Santos, *A revista modernista*, 4. (My translation)

<sup>13</sup> Santos, *O Escaparate de Todas as Artes*, 19. (My translation)

painter, and his wife, Sonia Delaunay, was also a painter and costume designer. Both of them would be later involved in the set design of the *Ballets Russes*. It can be said that the Russian artist Sonia Delaunay had a strong influence on Negreiros. Not only did Sonia work for *Ballets Russes*, directly and indirectly inspiring Almada's interest in stage design under modernist principles, but her style can also be seen in later stage designs by Almada and also of the modernist *Revista*, as we will see later.

Almada Negreiros and Sonia Delaunay even developed a dance project, influenced by the *simultané* principles proposed by Robert and Sonia, called *Ballet Veronese et Bleu*, which was never actually performed.<sup>14</sup> But Almada, who was well connected to the Portuguese aristocratic and bourgeois elites, was already directing a series of small dance pieces with young girls of aristocratic families. Obviously, these had been small, intimate affairs, with very restricted audiences, performed during aristocratic parties, later described by one participant as a "little entertainment".<sup>15</sup> However, in 1919, Almada, with the financial support of his patroness Helena Castelo-Melhor, actually staged a dance performance in *Teatro São Carlos*. It was composed of two dance pieces called *Bailado do Encantamento* (*Dance of Enchantment*) and *A Princesa dos Sapatos de Ferro* (*The Princess of the Iron Shoes*), with music composed by Ruy Coelho and set design by Raul Lino with the participation onstage of the always daring Negreiros. These presentations were a minor success, with three repeat performances in the presence of most of the elite of Lisbon and even of the then President of the Republic, Sidónio Pais.

Later, Almada would give up choreography and dance, but would never lose his interest in theatre. He started designing posters for some theatre troupes, like *Companhia Lucília Simões*, and later he would go on doing illustrations and covers for the most important theatre magazine of the time, *De Teatro*.

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<sup>14</sup> Santos, *O Escaparate de Todas as Artes*, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Santos, *O Escaparate de Todas as Artes*, 12.



He was also writing for drama under modernist principles, with plays like *Os Outros* (*The Others*), *Pierrot e Arlequim* (*Pierrot and Arlechino*) where he displays his obsession with the characters of *Commedia Dell Arte*, *Portugal* or *Deseja-se Mulher* (*Wishing for a Woman*). However, in spite of his own efforts and the efforts of others, most of his plays seemed not to have been staged throughout most of his life, and were staged only from the 1960s onwards, therefore beyond the scope of this essay, which is mostly focused on the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As an aside, let me state that António Ferro, who was a theatre critic and later, during Salazar's dictatorship, would be responsible for the *Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional*, the ministry that promoted arts and culture under that dictatorship, was also an admirer of the *Ballets Russes*. When he created the Portuguese dance troupe *Grupo de Bailados Portugueses Verde Gaio* in 1940, he was obviously inspired by *Ballets Russes*, and even called them the Portuguese 'Ballet Russes', according to Castro.<sup>16</sup> As another aside, but of greater significance, the show at the *Coliseu* had a brochure with illustrations by Jorge Barradas, who would become one of the most important set designers of *Teatro de Revista* in Portugal, as we will see later.

### **Modernist set design and *Teatro de Revista***

According to França<sup>17</sup>, *Teatro de Revista* had an important presence in Lisbon. There were at least ten theatres that were devoted solely to *Teatro de Revista*, and most of them were run by the same entrepreneur: António de Macedo. This means that *Teatro de Revista* was a commercial enterprise that demanded large audiences regularly attending the performances. This required employing celebrities, using famous tunes, addressing current affairs and novelties that

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<sup>16</sup> Maria João Castro, (2009) "A influência dos Ballets Russes na criação do Verde Gaio," in [http://www.fundacaoantonioquadros.pt/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=65&Itemid=34&limit=1&limitstart=17](http://www.fundacaoantonioquadros.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=65&Itemid=34&limit=1&limitstart=17) (accessed 24 December 2014).

<sup>17</sup> José Augusto França, *Os anos vinte em Portugal*, Lisboa 1992, 103.

could spark the curiosity of the audiences. One of the most revealing examples of the use of these novelties that could attract the attention of the audience is the *Revista Ó da Guarda*, which, in 1907, used the new technology of cinema in one of its scenes to stage a fictional drama of one of its most famous actresses being kidnapped, and using the moving image to show things happening outside the theatre, supposedly simultaneously and in real time. It is likely that one of the reasons for *Teatro de Revista* being the first theatre genre in Portugal to employ modernist artists for its costumes and scenography is, likewise, the need for novelty that would awe the crowds.

According to Pavão dos Santos,<sup>18</sup> until the 1920s most set designs of *Teatro de Revista* were made by Eduardo Machado and Augusto Pina as well as Luís Salvador, and most of the costumes were made by Manuel Francisco dos Santos. Machado and Pina kept to the style of Portuguese cartoonist and satirist Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro (1846-1905). Francisco dos Santos owed his success largely to the fact that he had a huge wardrobe that he rented, combining the materials he had and were needed, without giving particular thought to artistic styles or aesthetic considerations. However, shortly after the visit of the *Ballets Russes* to Portugal, and even in spite of the bad reception the dance company had received, something new took place.

This change seems in a way to have been promoted by António Ferro. In 1925, Ferro, who at the time was writing theatre reviews, started openly criticizing the conventional set design of most plays in the theatre reviews he wrote for *Diário de Notícias*, clearly promoting a new Modernist aesthetic. This caused great controversy, specially among the set designers of the time who protested in newspapers and even threatened to refuse to help or collaborate with Modernist artists. That same year, Almada Negreiros made the set design for the *Revista Chic-chic*, in what is usually considered to be the first truly modernist set design in Portugal. Change was clearly in the air, as in the same year, Eduardo Malta,

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<sup>18</sup> Santos, *A revista modernista*, 2.

then considered a modernist painter, made the set design for the *Revista Tiroliro*, which was lauded by Ferro.

Almada Negreiros would create several other set designs for theatre, but in 1927 he left for Madrid where he hoped to promote his career as a visual artist and a playwright. Therefore, most modernist aesthetics that found expression in Portugal, mainly taking hold at *Teatro de Revista*, would be the work of other modernist artists. Among these we find Jorge Barradas (1894-1971), the same painter who had drawn the illustrations for the *Ballets Russes's* brochure at the *Coliseu*, who would collaborate with Negreiros in a *Revista* of 1926, *Pomada Amor*, and who would have some important contributions for the set design of the *revista Sete e Meio* in 1927. In 1929, along with Stuart Carvalhais, Barata Feio e Rui Gameiro, Barradas made the set design for *Ricocó*, which was openly praised by António Ferro.<sup>19</sup> He would go on to work even more during the 1930s, creating other set designs and costumes for *Teatro de Revista*, like *Lua Cheia*.

Barradas was drawn into *Teatro de Revista* by his illustration work in several magazines. His ability for satirical drawings and, later, for decorative drawings, made him a perfect fit for *Teatro de Revista*. He also became very much in demand by the *Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional*, led by António Ferro, for his ability to mix modernist techniques with the portrayal of popular themes of national identity and would become famous for decorating several well-known Portuguese landmarks.

Another artist, José Barbosa (1900-1977), son of another set designer of more conventional style, Barbosa Júnior, became also a prolific and renowned set designer and his drawings for *Água Pé* (1927) drew general praise and, supposedly, even made the audience applaud the sets during the shows. *Água Pé* would be on stage for a full year, which was an enormous success at the time,

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<sup>19</sup> França, *Os anos vinte em Portugal*, 104.



Figure 2. Detail of a set design, with actors, by Jorge Barradas, for the play *Lua Cheia* (1934)

and Ferro would commend the modernity of the piece, even if he complained about it being “too Russian”, that is, too clearly inspired by the set design of the *Ballets Russes*<sup>20</sup>. This clearly marks *Água Pé* as the first triumph of Modernist aesthetics on the Portuguese stage and, in particular, in *Teatro de Revista*. From this moment onwards, the Modernist style would become predominant in *Teatro de Revista* and audiences would expect it.

Such success would make José Barbosa draw other sets and costumes for several other pieces of *Teatro de Revista*, like *O Sete e Meio* (1927), in a partnership with the architect, painter and director Leitão de Barros. On a side note, *O Sete e Meio* was also the debut of a Portuguese actress called Beatriz Costa featuring a Louise Brooks hairstyle, which also signalled the changing times in fashion. José Barbosa would work non-stop in the set design and costume design of *Teatro de*

<sup>20</sup> Santos, *A revista modernista*, 6.



Figure 3. Detail of José Barbosa's set and costume design for the play *Chá de Parreira* (1929)

*Revista*, and, from 1927 until 1950, he worked on 21 pieces of *Teatro de Revista*, including *A Rambóia* (1928), *Chá de Parreira*, *Areias de Portugal* (1932) among many others. His success opened for him the doors of the national theatre, so, from the 1930s onwards he would also work on dramas, tragedies, operas, ballet and classical theatre, and was even called to design the sets and costumes for the *Companhia Portuguesa de Bailado Verde Gaió* that Ferro had just created.

Other artists in the same style working in *Teatro de Revista* were Maria Adelaide Lima Cruz (1908-1985), António Amorim (1898-1964), Jorge Herold (1907-1990), Laierte Neves (1914-1981), Pinto de Campos (1908-1975), just to name some of the most famous and with wider experience, although other modernist artists also occasionally had a hand in some plays. These included Alice Rey Colaço (1893-1978), Raul Lino (1879-1974), António Soares (1894-1978), Milly Possoz (1888-1967), Sarah Afonso (1899-1983) and Frederico George

(1915-1994), most of whom would turn the *Teatro de Revista* into a showcase of Modernist visual arts in the 1930s and 1940s. While a detailed overview of individual style and work of these artists is outside the scope of this article, it is possible to detect a strong inspiration in motifs of Portuguese folk lore or tradition, heavily stylized through the geometrical patterns of Modernism with 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 the luxurious and grandiose, with the purpose of making an impression on the audience, through strong contrasts of colors, striking shapes and repetitions of the human body. All this created an art that was instantly appealing to the audience, at the same time looking fresh and familiar, which may explain the growing acceptance this style developed in most plays of *Teatro de Revista* from the end of the 1920s onwards.

### **Regional appropriations**

Although it seems somehow paradoxical 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 ease with which Modernist artists devoted themselves to design and decoration in more industrial settings. This was part of the Modernist ideology of embracing progress and the mechanization of life. Sonia Delaunay was the model for that, employing her technique of *simultané*<sup>21</sup> not only in her art works, but also in the set design for the *Ballets Russes* and in fashion design, and other types of design, that she worked on later in life. This availability of artists allowed many Modernist artists to work in decoration and set design, too, like Almada Negreiros and Jorge Barradas. As Rodrigues<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kathlees Jamie, "Sonia Delaunay: The avant-garde queen of loud, wearable art," in: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/mar/27/sonia-delaunay-avant-garde-queen-art-fashion-vibrant-tate-modern>. (accessed 27 March 2015).

<sup>22</sup> António Rodrigues, *Jorge Barradas*, Lisbon 1995, 30.

notes, most artists of the first Portuguese generation of Modernist artists worked in caricature drawing, illustration, painting, set design, poster design, advertisement, book illustration and even songbooks of popular songs. I would argue that many were drawn to *Teatro de Revista* precisely because they were engaged in this type of work, as was the case with Barradas or António Amorim. Another reason was the constant need of *Teatro de Revista's* entrepreneurs to surprise their audience. This demanded a constant search of novelties that could awe, interest and attract audiences. These novelties could involve celebrities, new scenes, but also new set designs and new costumes, and all could give a new breath to old pieces, and attract new audiences or returning audiences. Modernist art, by embracing the spectacular and the dynamic, and by including new technologies and techniques, was especially able to do that.

A further reason was the predisposition of Modernist Art to present deep contrasts, luxurious settings and awe-inspiring works that could be used to awe the audience of *Teatro de Revista*, most of whom were seeking distraction, entertainment and a break from the monotony of life in Portugal under the Military Dictatorship. In a way, Modernist art served as escapism, a dreamlike art that could seduce and fascinate the audience.

One last reason was the embrace of national motifs that could better beguile an audience looking for a more grandiose reenactment of the traditions and daily life it knew, which the *Teatro de Revista* deftly explored through humorous and musical sketches. One only has to note the example of Jorge Barradas, whose drawings displayed a great interest in presenting the popular types of Lisbon, the same popular types that fuelled so many sketches of *Teatro de Revista*. Barradas created these drawings which would be published in some of the newspapers and magazines of the time, like *ABC*, *Ilustração*, *Diário de Lisboa*, etc.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, it is possible to believe that, following the ideas of its main promoter, António Ferro, and the strong influence of the *Ballets Russes*, *Teatro de Revista*

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<sup>23</sup> Rodrigues, *Jorge Barradas*, 42.

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 attract crowds.

### **Conclusions**

Although the examples presented obviously display the individual tastes and styles of each artist, it is possible to identify some trends and currents in the Modernist set and costume design of *Teatro de Revista* from the 1920s and into the following decades.

Firstly, the use of contrasts in colors and shapes in a way that is very reminiscent of the style of Sonia Delaunay. Comparing the pictures that remain of those sets, we can see a strong preference for primary and contrasting colors to create dynamics and the illusion of movement.

Secondly, a taste for the exotic and a stylized representation of faraway locales and cultures that could make an impression on the audience, all of it displaying some of the influence of the *Ballets Russes*.

Thirdly, and paradoxically, a taste for the local and traditional. Many of the settings and costumes of *Teatro de Revista* had to represent, in a cartoonish or sentimental style, the familiar neighborhoods or scenes of Lisbon and other typical Portugal places. Displaying a more nationalistic trend that was already part of the first waves of Modernism. The Modernist style of *Teatro de Revista* was also able to accommodate that. In fact, it did this in such a persuasive and efficient way that several of the set designers and costume designers of *Teatro de Revista* would later work on some of the propaganda projects of the nationalist and conservative government of António Salazar. Barradas would work on the Portuguese Stand in the Latin-American Exhibition of Seville, Barbosa would work at the National Theatre, Lima Cruz would work on the decoration of public buildings, and so on.

Fourthly, the influence of António Ferro, who, even if he was mostly a marginal figure of the first and second Portuguese movements of Modernism, became



deeply influential as a theatre reviewer and as a politician, enthusiastically promoting a more nationalistic brand of Modernism that could be used as a propaganda tool for Salazar's dictatorship. Although the ability of *Teatro de Revista* to criticize the political *status quo* was also one of the reasons for its popularity, the existence of theatre censorship<sup>24</sup> taking place before the premiere of each show and with the power to cause damage to the financially vulnerable *Teatro de Revista*, ensured that such criticism could only take place through the subtlety of the text and actors and very rarely through set design or costume design.

Fifthly, although Modernist set design and costume design became ubiquitous in *Teatro de Revista*, and although its dance routines were also influenced by the Russian and Modernist dance,<sup>25</sup> the dramaturgical structure of the genre did not change. In fact, the texts and authors of Modernist theatre were notoriously absent from the Portuguese stage well into the 1960s.

However, in a way, this also reflects the fact that Modernist aesthetics seem to have found greater audience acceptance in the visual arts and in architecture than in other areas, namely in literature, playwriting, music and others. That is why Almada Negreiros had to endure the fact that his plays were being ignored or passed on by several theatre troupes for several years, and have some of his plays staged only towards the end of his life. Like, in 1963, *Deseja-se Mulher*, which was staged by Casa da Comédia, under very restrictive conditions and for a very limited audience. Yet it is undeniable that he helped bring the

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<sup>24</sup> There were several layers of theatre censorship in Portugal at that time. The first stage would be the reading and vetting the text for the play. The second stage would be the viewing and vetting of the last dress rehearsal before the première. As the script was already paid for, and the dress rehearsal meant that the production of the play was complete with weeks of rehearsal and all the props, costumes and sets already made, and the play advertised, any play rejected at this stage would be a serious financial blow to the theatre troupe. Finally, it could happen that during the season of the show, censors would come to watch it, and they could close the performance if they felt something went against the moral and political values of the State.

<sup>25</sup> This change happened mostly through the choreographer Francis Graça, who was the choreographer of *Água Pe*, and would become the choreographer of the *Companhia Portuguesa de Bailados Verde Gaio*, but the impact of Modernism in Portuguese dance is outside the scope of this paper.

Modernist revolution to the stage of *Teatro de Revista* while still at a young age, and, therefore, helped to popularize, and allow the Portuguese appropriation of, Modernist ideas that were shaping the aesthetics, thinking and life of Europe at that time.

# MODERNISM IN LATIN AMERICA: THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN AESTHETIC REPERTOIRE<sup>1</sup>

MARIA JOSÉ DE AZEVEDO MARCONDES

## **Introduction**

Given the various nuances of Latin-American modernism, specifically regarding the aesthetic and poetic avant-garde, the debate about internationalism and nationalism has permeated the Latin-American cultural critical historiography and is a constant and complex issue. Art critic Aracy 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 1920s in our continent”.<sup>2</sup> This assertion 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

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper “Modernism in Latin America: between the two sides of the Atlantic” presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAP, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Aracy Amaral, *Artes Plásticas na Semana de 22*, São Paulo 1998, 21-22.

wealth produced in the 1990s in Latin-America, and especially in Brazil. This is according to the vast mapping and critical analysis made by Schwartz<sup>3</sup> on the 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, analysing the conflict between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, considers it to be the most constant and complex controversy in Latin America because of the fact that intellectuals and artists of the continent sought “greater awareness of their alterity in relation to the colonisers, thus emerging the need to assert their specificities”<sup>4</sup>. Bosi considered that this debate had 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”.<sup>5</sup> During recent decades it has been conceived as ‘peripheral modernity’ by Beatriz Sarlo (Argentina); hybrid cultures by Nestor Canclini (Mexico); national and foreign by Sérgio Miceli (Brazil),<sup>6</sup> among other designations in the debate about cultural critique.<sup>7</sup>

The excellent collection of articles organised by Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America: the modern era 1820–1980*, also presents an excellent critical view regarding modernist themes and the pursuit of historical roots and Latin-

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<sup>3</sup> Jorge Schwartz, *Vanguardas Latino-Americanas: Polêmicas, Manifestos e Textos Críticos*, São Paulo 2008, 730.

<sup>4</sup> Schwartz, *Vanguardas Latino-Americanas*, 533.

<sup>5</sup> Alfredo Bosi, “A parábola das vanguardas latino americanas,” in Schwartz, *Vanguardas Latino-Americanas*, 33-44.

<sup>6</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, *Modernidade Periférica – Buenos Aires 1920 – 1930*, São Paulo 2010, 472. Nestor GarcíaCañlini, *Culturas Híbridas - estratégias para entrar e sair da modernidade*, São Paulo 2003, 416. Sérgio Miceli, *Nacional Estrangeiro - História social e cultural do modernismo artístico em São Paulo*. São Paulo 2003, 304.

<sup>7</sup> Geraldo Ferraz, *Warchavchik e a introdução da arquitetura moderna no Brasil: 1925 a 1940*, São Paulo 1965, 277. Maria Lucia Bressan Pinheiro, “Rumo ao Moderno: Uma Historiografia da Arquitetura Moderna em São Paulo até 1945,” in *II Seminário DOCOMoMo Brasil: A Permanência do Moderno*, São Paulo (1999), [www.docomomo.org.br/seminario2003.pdf/subtema\\_A1F\\_Maria\\_bressan](http://www.docomomo.org.br/seminario2003.pdf/subtema_A1F_Maria_bressan) (accessed 14 April 2010). Henrique Mindlin, *Modern Architecture in Brazil*. New York 1956, 256. Yves Bruand, *Arquitetura Contemporânea no Brasil*, São Paulo 2003, 400.

American identity.<sup>8</sup> Concepts of “appropriate modernity” conceived by Cristián Cox,<sup>9</sup> permeated the field of Latin-American architectural critique and critical regionalism conceived by Kenneth Frampton, Alexander Tzonis y Liane Lefaivre<sup>10</sup> and the concept developed by Marina Waissman “divergent regionalism”,<sup>11</sup> in the creation of narratives and a theoretical body, more specifically, of Latin-American architecture over recent decades.

Thus, within the cultural critique of the Post-War 1920s, I have placed the analysis of the initial modernist inquiries in Brazil (São Paulo), Mexico (Mexico City) and Argentina (Buenos Aires and Mar del Plata)<sup>12</sup> 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. Therefore, this article aims to explore the imminence of the images of the aforementioned residences and their modernist gardens in Latin-America; of which, Warchavchic, Juan O’Gorman and Victoria O’Campo, through Pedro Botazzini and Alejandro Bustillo’s designs, undoubtedly sought to implement the so-called ‘new spirit’ in the aesthetic and ideological field and the attempts to create a cultural heritage in Latin-America. In fact, the garden of the Modernist Residence<sup>13</sup> becomes relevant as a record of a dialogue consisting of re-interpretations and adaptations between the Latin-American production centres, resulting from the flow of ideas on the continent in the 1920s and

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<sup>8</sup> Dawn Ades, *Arte en América Latina: A era Moderna: 1820-1980*, São Paulo 1999, 361.

<sup>9</sup> Cristián Cox, “Vigencia Contemporánea del Concepto de Modernidad Apropriadada,” in *Seminario de Arquitectura Latinoamericana (SAL): Haciendo camino al andar - 1985-2011*, dir. ed. Ramón Gutiérrez and María José Azevedo Marcondes, Buenos Aires 2011, 93-100.

<sup>10</sup> K. Frampton, A. Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, “Hacia un regionalismo crítico: seis puntos para una arquitectura da resistência,” in *Nueva Arquitectura en América Latina: presente y futuro*, ed. Antonio Toca Fernández, México 1990, 129-190.

<sup>11</sup> Marina Waissman, “Arquitectura argentina: identidad y modernidad,” in *Nueva Arquitectura en América Latina*, ed. Antonio Toca Fernández, México 1990, 252-262.

<sup>12</sup> 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).

<sup>13</sup> It is called *Casa Modernista*, Santa Cruz Street.

1930s. Mina Klabin's work is contemporary to the garden designed for Juan O'Gorman's modernist 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 and Buenos Aires, by architect Alejandro Bustillo, also in the 1920s. 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 Modernist 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 modernist gardens and residences in these countries and for encouraging a dialogue that includes architecture and gardens. These were characterised as the internationalism or universalism of artistic expression and nationalism with underlying values regarding local cultures, from the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Projects for modernist 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 1920s, providing such projects with a unique importance as the record of modern architectural historiography - vertical and landscape - expanding the complexity of national and international boundaries, as defined by art critic Aracy Amaral.

### **The Modernist Residence on Santa Cruz Street and its gardens: inaugural milestone of modernism**

The Modernist residence on Santa Cruz Street, in São Paulo, built by Gregori Warchavchik (1896-1972) in 1928 and completed in 1929 has been given great critical value by several authors: critic Geraldo Ferraz, in the most emphatic work

about the importance of this immigrant architect;<sup>14</sup> Yves Bruand through the book *Brazil Builds*, with the first references to the Warchavchik's Residence on Santa Cruz Street; the work of Henry Mindlin in 1956, *Modern Architecture in Brazil*, showing the Warchavchik Modernist Residence as the prelude for the arrival of Le Corbusier in Brazil. Additionally, Bressan Pinheiro analysed this pioneering work regarding the difficulties of establishing modern architecture in São Paulo up to 1950.<sup>15</sup>

The most important cultural value attributed to the Modernist 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<sup>16</sup>. 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 Modernist 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 Brazilian-ness in his architectural production<sup>17</sup> (as stated by Geraldo Ferraz regarding the residence on Santa Cruz Street, the architect's own residence). Warchavchik

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<sup>14</sup> Geraldo Ferraz, *Warchavchik e a introdução da arquitetura moderna no Brasil*, 35. Mindlin, *Modern Architecture in Brazil*, 256. Bruand, *Arquitetura Contemporânea no Brasil*, 400.

<sup>15</sup> 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 Marcos Carrilho and later in 2011, the academic area José Lira, Carlos Ferreira Martins, in 2006, and Anat Falbel in 2005. See also : Marcos Carrilho, "Restauração de Obras Modernas e a Casa da Rua Santa Cruz de G. Warchavchik," in *Texto Especial Vitruvius* (2006) 30. [www.vitruvius.com.br](http://www.vitruvius.com.br) (accessed: 15 April 2008). Carlos Ferreira Martins, "Posfácio: Uma leitura crítica," in *Le Corbusier, Precisoões sobre um estado presente da arquitetura e do urbanismo*, São Paulo 2004, 265-287. Carlos Ferreira Martins, "Gregori Warchavchck : combates pelo futuro," in Gregori Warchavchck, *Arquitetura do Século XX e outros escritos*. São Paulo 2006, 11-29. José Lira, *Warchavchik: Fraturas da Vanguarda*, São Paulo 2011, 552. Anat Falbel, "Arquitetos imigrantes no Brasil: uma questão historiográfica," in *VI Seminário DOCOMOMO Brasil: Moderno e Nacional*, Niterói, 2005. [www.docomomo.org.br](http://www.docomomo.org.br) (accessed 14 April 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Based on the author Carrilho, "Restauração de Obras Modernas e a Casa da Rua Santa Cruz de G. Warchavchik," in *Texto Especial Vitruvius* (São Paulo) 30 ( 2006) , [www.vitruvius.com.br](http://www.vitruvius.com.br) (accessed: 15 April 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Gregori Warchavchck Martins, *Arquitetura do Século XX e outros escritos*, 18.

made an effort to show appreciation for the country that had welcomed him and he confirmed, through the use of traditional elements and resources, a symbol of an internationally updated form of architecture that was, at the same time, profoundly Brazilian.<sup>18</sup> There are references to the Residence on Santa Cruz, also to the residence designed by Adolf Loos, the Muller Residence (1928-30) in Prague, and to the Residence of Plaineix (1928) in Paris<sup>19</sup>.

Maria Lucia Bressan Pinheiro, while analysing the particularities of modern architecture in São Paulo, highlighted the importance of this iconic work. According to the author, “the city of São Paulo, between 1930 and 1949, in contrast with the accelerated metropolization process, failed to develop modern architecture” and, in this sense, constitutes a pioneering initiative by Gregori Warchavchik in the 1920s.<sup>20</sup>

The gardens designed by Mina Klabin in the modernist residence designed by Gregori Warchavchik (Santa Cruz Street, São Paulo), built in 1928 and renovated in 1934, is the inaugural work of a modernist garden in Brazil, with the use, above all, of cacti (mandacaru) plants. Of the studies conducted, we found surveys of existing vegetation (Condephaat) working on the possibilities of restoration from photo documentation<sup>21</sup> and the relationship between gardens and residences. The gardens by Mina Klabin, from a formal point of view, presented no ruptures with garden models under the auspices of eclecticism, being configured with the same pattern of a central axis up to the residence. The proposed changes included the selection of representative species of the

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<sup>18</sup> Ferraz, *Warchavchik e a introdução da arquitetura moderna no Brasil*, 136.

<sup>19</sup> Lira, *Warchavchik*, 157-158.

<sup>20</sup> Pinheiro, *Rumo ao Moderno: Uma Historiografia da Arquitetura Moderna em São Paulo até 1945*, 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Maria José Azevedo Marcondes, “Restauro da Paisagem no Brasil: discutindo conceitos e métodos,” in *Anais do VII ENEPEA. Encontro Nacional de Ensino de Paisagismo em Escolas de Arquitetura*, Belo Horizonte 2004. Maria José Azevedo Marcondes, “Modernismo e Preservação: Jardins Históricos e Valor Documental,” in *Jardins Históricos Brasileiros e Mexicanos. Jardines Históricos Brasileños y Mexicanos*, eds. Ana Rita Sá Carneiro and Ramona Berthuy, Recife 2009, 271-292. Maria José Azevedo Marcondes, “Jardins históricos modernistas na cidade de São Paulo: projeto, conservação e restauro entre diálogos latino-americanos,” in eds. Carlos Terra e Jeanne Trindade, *Arqueologia na Paisagem: olhares sobre o jardim histórico*, Rio de Janeiro, 2014, 156-165.



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.

During her education, Mina Klabin had close contact with European culture, especially in Paris – the cultural capital of Europe during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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, I believe, to update 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”,<sup>22</sup> providing 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 modernist movement, gathered in the Salons of São Paulo, including Warchavchik's residence and his family, as well as artists and intellectuals who were part of the modernist anthropophagic manifest. According to historian Sevchenko, 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”.<sup>23</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 Marcelo Piacentini. This collaboration

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<sup>22</sup> Schwartz, *Vanguardas Latino-Americanas*, 24.

<sup>23</sup> Nicolau Sevchenko, *Orfeu extático na metrópole. São Paulo, sociedade e cultura nos frementes anos 20*, São Paulo 1992, 424.

is recorded in the IPHAN<sup>24</sup> file dealing with the Modernist residence being declared a national historic landmark. His contact with Le Corbusier is vaguely attributed to a first meeting at Piacentini's office in Rome in 1922. Lira states that with this background and experience in Odessa and Rome, Warchavchik left Italy and arrived in Brazil in 1923<sup>25</sup>. According to him, there are no historiographic records for the reasons he stayed in Brazil, especially in São Paulo. Mario de Andrade attributed Lasar Segal's arrival in Brazil as a search for a homeland, which has also been attributed to Warchavchik and the rise of Mussolini in Italy. Warchavchik would further write and publish the first modern architecture manifesto in Brazil, with the title *Regarding Modern Architecture*, in which certain authors, such as Ferreira Martin,<sup>26</sup> point out 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).

It is also noteworthy that in 1932 Lucio Costa was chosen to design Alfredo Schwartz's residence in 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 preceding Le Corbusier's work in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Thus, Warchavchik would modernise Brazilian architecture according to international principles while giving "a Brazilian character to building designs", as stated by Ferraz,<sup>27</sup> 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

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<sup>24</sup> *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico Nacional* (National Historical Heritage Institute).

<sup>25</sup> Lira, *Fraturnas da Vanguarda*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> Martins, "Gregori Warchavchick combates pelo futuro", 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ferraz, *Warchavchik e a introdução da arquitetura moderna no Brasil*, 175.



Figure 1. Modernist House Santa Cruz and their garden, São Paulo, Brazil, 1928. Source: *Revue Illustração Brasileira*, 1929

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 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 in 1930 on the modern architecture situation in Brazil and South America.

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. The two trends mentioned (colonial architecture and classical architecture) dominated the event; and with the exception of Uruguay, which presented a more modern spirit, the modern manifestations were isolated and individual. (...) This congress was the

demonstration of a total lack of understanding of the century in which we live”, according to Warchavchik.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Residences of Juan O'Gorman and their gardens: universalism and local traditions in Mexico**

O'Gorman's Residence, designed by Juan O'Gorman in 1929, is considered the first modernist residence in Mexico City, followed by the Residence of Edmund O'Gorman also in 1929, and the studio residences of Diogo Riviera and Frida Kahlo, designed in 1931 and 1932, respectively, all designed by the aforementioned architect and artist. Diego Rivera and Frida Kaho's Studio Residences are contiguous to Cecil's Residence, in San Angel, south of Mexico City.<sup>29</sup> Juan O'Gorman was the youngest member of the Mexican muralist generation, which included Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David A. Siqueros. He graduated in architecture at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma of Mexico in 1925.<sup>30</sup> 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 modernist residences in Mexico and several other works. Among these were 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 characterised 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, built in 1953, and the stone mosaic mural of the Central Library of the University

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<sup>28</sup> Warchavchik, *Arquitetura do Século XX e outros escritos*, 170-171, originally published in *Cahiers d'Art*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Burian, “Modernity and nationalism: Juan O'Gorman and post revolutionary architecture in México 1920-1960,” in *Cruelty and Utopia : cities and landscapes of Latin America*, ed. Jan François Lejeune, New York 2005, 210- 223. Edward Burian, “The architecture of Juan O'Gorman: dichotomy and drift,” in *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico*, ed. Edward Burian, Austin 1997, 127–150.

<sup>30</sup> Carlos González Lobo, *Guía O'Gorman*, Mexico 2008, 96.

City, built in 1949. 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 modernist architecture. González 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”.<sup>31</sup>

The first residence designed by Juan O'Gorman was for his family members, the Cecil O'Gorman's residence, recently restored (completed in 2013) by Víctor Jiménez. 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 were put into practice in his role as Director of Education in the construction of schools with standard building components – for time- and cost-efficiency - 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.<sup>32</sup> The work of Juan O'Gorman has been analysed from the perspective of a dichotomy between the avant-garde traditions and Mexican regionalist identity between the two phases cited earlier.

Cosmopolitanism and nativism in Latin-America, to use Octavio Paz's words,<sup>33</sup> can be seen in the work of Juan O'Gorman, however, from 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 Mexican identity, and simultaneously, artistic expression and universal architectural more precisely European.

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<sup>31</sup> González Lobo, *Guía O'Gorman*, 96.

<sup>32</sup> Burian, “Modernity and nationalism”, 210–223.

<sup>33</sup> Burian, “Modernity and nationalism”, 210–223.

The Studio Residence of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, designed and built between 1929 and 1931 in Mexico City by Juan O’Gorman, enjoyed great prominence as the first modernist building in Mexico. It was seen as the first such construction because the residence previously designed by Cecil O’Gorman for his family had been destroyed, while the Rivera and Kahlo Studios were bought by INBA (National Institute of Fine Arts) and turned into a museum holding art works, personal items and documents of both artists. Consisting of two identical buildings, which formed the couple's studios, Juan O’Gorman’s design introduced, at the end of the 1920s, the rationalist concept with the Corbusier influence and elements of local tradition. The building was conceived with straight lines and no ornamentation, juxtaposing the use of strong colours and light and shadows with this architectural concept and forming an amalgam between universalism and local traditions.

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. Bosi notes, “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”.<sup>34</sup> Schwartz also considers that in the issue of nationalism/cosmopolitanism, Diego Rivera’s image could not be ignored because of his importance in the fine arts. His training was influenced by the avant-garde in Europe, where he lived for fifteen years from 1907 to 1921, with a decade in Paris at the height of Cubism. His production is notoriously Cubist in its initial phase. Upon returning to Mexico, he dedicated himself 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 into his murals.

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<sup>34</sup> Bosi, “A parábola das vanguardas latino americanas,” in Jorge Schwartz, *Vanguardas Latino-Americanas*, 39-40.



Figure 2. Diego Rivera and Frida Kaho's Studio Residences and their gardens, 1932 Mexico, City, Mexico. Source: Photo Noelle Grass, Louise, 2011

Diego Rivera's 1915 work, *Zapatista Landscape - The Guerrilla*,<sup>35</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".<sup>36</sup> 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>37</sup> I have found that O'Gorman himself designed the residence's gardens.

Le Corbusier's presence in Latin America between the 1920s and 1930s and up to the 1950s has been thoroughly researched, therefore, the flow of ideas in

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<sup>35</sup> Modern Art Museum, Mexico City, INBA.

<sup>36</sup> Ades, "O Modernismo e a busca de raízes," in *Arte na América Latina*, 151.

<sup>37</sup> This information was obtained on a visit to the Museum Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera in 2005 from employees of the museum.

modernist architectural projects in the 1920s resonates in the historiography. However, the design of areas outside the building, with the garden configuration using plants of the same botanical family gives new meaning to these modernist 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 common specificities 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 the possibilities for a better understanding of the production process and the completion of projects.

The restoration of this garden and studios took eight years of research by the National Institute of Fine Arts. Work on the studios was completed in 1995 and on the Cecil O'Gorman residence in 2013. In the case of the gardens, cacti were planted according to the original design, the works having been well-documented throughout their history, and a drainage system was developed to keep the soil constantly dry, as it had been.

### **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 and considered to be incipient when compared to the European modern movement, and even in other Latin-American countries. As stated by architect Francisco Lienur 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".<sup>38</sup> Lienur points out certain popular works in the 1930s, the residence designed by Alberto Prebisch,

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<sup>38</sup> Jorge Francisco Lienur, "El discreto encanto de nuestra arquitectura 1930/1960," in *Revista Summa* 223 (1986), 60-79.



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>39</sup> In an article introducing modern architecture in Argentina, author Jorge Ramos<sup>40</sup> considers that in Le Corbusier's view - focused on a valuation of Eurocentric modernity - the modern architecture movement was incipient in this country. However, throughout the article, he extends 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 orthodox rationalism.

Paradoxically, much was made of Le Corbusier's presence in Argentina, the only country in South America having 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 to lecture as a guest of the *Asociación Amigos del Arte, Amigos de la Ciudad* and of Victoria O'Campo, which lectures were later published in the book, *Precisions sur un état presente de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme*.<sup>41</sup>

Le Corbusier designed a residence for Victoria, but the work did not materialise. However, the essayist, a prominent figure in the cultural environment of Buenos Aires at that time, built a modernist 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

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<sup>39</sup> Jorge Francisco Liernur, *Arquitectura en La Argentina del siglo XX. La construcción de la modernidad*. Buenos Aires 2001, 359.

<sup>40</sup> Jorge Ramos de Dios, "Historia, crítica, teoría y producción de arquitectura en Argentina," in dir. eds. Ramón Gutiérrez and María José de Azevedo Marcondes, *Seminario de Arquitectura Latinoamericana*, 2011, 27-44.

<sup>41</sup> Le Corbusier, *Precisions sur un état presente de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme*, Paris 1930, 268.

the precursor to the avant-garde magazines in the city in the 1920s, which assumed an aesthetic cosmopolitanism; Ortega and Gasset suggested the magazine's name.

Berjman<sup>42</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. Berjman mentions Néstor Otero's research on Victoria's cubist residences, in Mar del Plata and in Buenos Aires, highlighting Néstor's analysis:

“These Residences had gardens that were also Cubist. They were residences formed by cubes, but surrounded by green. Not by grandiose parks, but by subtle and minimalistic vegetation, in small, very urban plots that did not resemble the huge French gardens. These cubes, prisms, stairs, were repeated in the election of analogue volumetric species, such as cacti (...). As revolutionary as the residences, were their gardens, undoubtedly the first in the country”<sup>43</sup>.

In Palermo Chico, architect Alejandro Bustillo designed a cubist building with pure volumes. 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”,<sup>44</sup> 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

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<sup>42</sup> Sonia Berjman, *La Victoria de los Jardines: el paisaje en Victoria Ocampo*, Buenos Aires 2007, 366.

<sup>43</sup> Berjman, *La Victoria de los Jardines*, 244, (my translation).

<sup>44</sup> Berjman, *La Victoria de los Jardines*, 244 (my translation).



Figure 3. Residence of Victoria Ocampo, and their garden Palermo Chico, Buenos Aires City, 1928. Source: Photo: The Author, 2014

and explodes in the blooming of colours”.<sup>45</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 a period up to the 1940s by Victoria. The garden was restored based on the initial plan outlined by Victoria O’Campo, documented in the book about Alejandro Bustillo.<sup>46</sup>

### **Final Considerations**

Luis Pérez-Oramas, art critic and curator, wrote in the catalogue of the 30<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Sao Paulo that “Every word has an image as imminence, which

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<sup>45</sup> Frank Waldo, *America Hispana*, Buenos Aires 1950, 135 (my translation).

<sup>46</sup> Martha Levisman, *Bustillo. Un Proyecto de Arquitectura Nacional*, Buenos Aires 2007, 568.

serves as the foundation; every image has a word as imminence, which serves as resonance”.<sup>47</sup> I believe that the images of the first designs of the modernist residences in Latin-America and their gardens, echo the pendulum movement between nationalism and internationalism in Latin-America with all its intensity and complexity, indicating the dialogue between both sides of the Atlantic.

This article has explored the imminence of images in the first modernist residences and their modernist gardens in Latin-America. In these, Warchavchik, 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, in what constituted attempts at ‘cultural rooting’. In fact, the gardens of the Modernist House (Jardim da Casa Modernista) become 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 modernist residence between 1928 and 1931 in Mexico City. It is also contemporary with the gardens designed and executed for Victoria O’Campo’s residences in Argentina; in Mar del Plata by Pedro Botazzini and Palermo Chico and in 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 modernist garden by Mina Klabin in the Modernist residences of Gregori Warchavchik, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera designed by Juan O’Gorman and in Victoria O’Campo’s residences, has a documentary value, for documenting inaugural gardens and residences of modernism in these countries and for fostering a dialogue. This dialogue included architecture and

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<sup>47</sup> Luis Pérez-Oramas, “A eminência das poéticas (ensaio polifônico a três e mais vozes),” in *Catálogo Trigésima Bienal de São Paulo: A eminência das poéticas*, ed. Editorial Bienal, São Paulo 2012, 26-51.

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 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The modernist 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. This gives these projects a unique importance as a record in modern architecture historiography - vertical and landscape - stressing the complexity of the boundary between national/international as defined by the critic Aracy Amaral.

The three modernist architecture works analysed here can be read as attempts to update the Latin American arts and architecture through international aesthetic expressions with a simultaneous search for a national identity. In this endeavour, the utopian painting by Torres-García – *Our North is the South*, 1933 – shows the instability of the limits between nationalism and internationalism in fine arts, architecture and landscape architecture in this cultural context. This highlights the relevance of understanding the links and exchanges between ‘North and South’, ‘Eurocentric modernity’ and ‘peripheral modernity’, through the journeys of architects, artists and intellectuals who open up new horizons and bring about transfers between both sides of the Atlantic.



JOSÉ-AUGUSTO FRANÇA'S  
'QUIET MODERNISM' AND THE  
WORK OF ARCHITECTS CARLOS AND  
GUILHERME REBELO DE ANDRADE.  
INSTANCES OF SURVIVAL AND PER-  
MANENCE IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY  
OF PORTUGUESE ARCHITECTURE<sup>1</sup>

MARIANA MATA PASSOS

*It would be of a prime importance if we could delineate the boundary between light and shadow, between the routine and the conscious decisions. If we could mark this boundary, we could distinguish between things that are to the observer's right or left or, even better, below or above him.*

Fernand Braudel<sup>2</sup>

*Voir est difficile.*  
José-Augusto França<sup>3</sup>

The quotation by Fernand Braudel chosen to open the present text may, at first, seem out of place to the reader. In fact, as the title indicates, I propose to address a notion – Quiet Modernism – elaborated by the Portuguese art historian José-

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper “França’s ‘Quiet Modernism’: acknowledging the maturation of Portuguese regionalist architecture in the interwar period” presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAB, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism*, London 1977, 16.

<sup>3</sup> José- Augusto França, “Le ‘fait artistique’ dans la sociologie de l’art,” in *Colóquio Artes* 17 (1974), 14-16, here 15.

Augusto França.<sup>4</sup> The notion of Quiet Modernism is expressed by the historian in order to categorize, *en passant*, the extension and remodelling of the Counts of Alvor Palace (*Palácio dos Condes de Alvor*), by the architect Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade.<sup>5</sup> The use of the term Quiet Modernism is therefore limited to a single occurrence in the total of over 1500 pages devoted to the history of Portuguese art in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by the historian.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding the apparent accidental nature of the expression, it should be possible, from its problematization, to produce a re-reading of the works in question. The objects referred to by the term are not the only ones to benefit from the problematization that follows. Any work of art, no matter which, stands the test of time as long as we know or can ask questions of it.

The works of José-Augusto França are imperative to the study of the subject

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<sup>4</sup> José Augusto França (1922, Portugal). Scholarship holder of the French Government between 1959 and 1963, at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* (EPHE), where he studied Sociology of Art with Pierre Francastel. Currently, he is a Full Professor at the *Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas* (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities) at the University of Lisbon, and the Honorary President of the AICA (International Association of Art Critics).

<sup>5</sup> Although it is established that both the authorship and the monitoring of this project are attributed to architect Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade, some historiography insists on attributing the work to the “Rebelo de Andrade brothers”. José-Augusto França himself, who attributes the project to Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade, in the onomastic index of the study where he alludes to the subject, marginally refers only to “Rebelo de Andrade”, and does not specify which of the architects he is referring to. The other reference I can find under the same entry, “Rebelo de Andrade”, refers to a project co-authored by both brothers, Carlos and Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade. It seems to be a way of converging some of the questions raised by historiography regarding the opposition between traditionalism and modernism in architecture, relating to a single origin both the multiplicity of its proposals and its later appropriations, by other architects, in a movement that is similar to the attribution of the majority of the “Casa Portuguesa” (Portuguese House) movement to Raul Lino. It seems clear that what is at stake here is a particularly problematic idea of style and author, since the association between these authors’ styles and the supposed regime style seems to imply that these artists were accomplices of the fascist regime.

<sup>6</sup> Namely José-Augusto França, *A arte em Portugal no século XIX*, vol. I, Lisbon 1990 (1966); José-Augusto França, *A arte em Portugal no século XIX*, vol. II, Lisbon 1990 (1966); José-Augusto França, *A arte em Portugal no século XX*. 1911-1961, Lisboa 2009 (1974).



of art history and of art in Portugal.<sup>7</sup> Justifiably considered as the founder of a disciplinary discourse,<sup>8</sup> França is also attributed with the institutionalization of the subject, having created the first master's degree in art history in the country.<sup>9</sup> The historian is the author of in-depth studies such as *Pombaline Lisbon and Illuminism* (1965)<sup>10</sup> (*Lisboa Pombalina e o Iluminismo*); *Romanticism in Portugal, a study of sociocultural facts* (1969) (*O Romantismo em Portugal, estudo de factos socio-culturais*); *Art in Portugal in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (1966) (*A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*) and *Art in Portugal in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (1974) (*A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*), but also of noteworthy monographs,<sup>11</sup> an art critic and an editor.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Ana Rita Salgueiro, "A Arte Em Portugal No Século XX (1911-1961). José-Augusto França e a perspectiva sociológica", master's dissertation at FCSH-Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2012; Catarina Crua, "Revistas Córnio: Modernidade e Discurso Crítico na Cultura Portuguesa da Primeira Metade do Século XX", FCSH - UNL master's dissertation 2011; Mariana Pinto dos Santos, "'Estou atrasado! Estou atrasado!'" - Sobre o atraso da arte portuguesa diagnosticado pela historiografia," in *Representações da Portugalidade*, ed. André Barata et. al., Alfragide 2011, 231-242; Mariana Pinto dos Santos, "A resistência do objecto à história da arte contemporânea - sobre a persistência do legado de José-Augusto França na escrita da história da arte em Portugal", conference proceedings IV Congresso de História da Arte Portuguesa APHA, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. Lisboa 2012; Paulo Pereira, "História da História da Arte Portuguesa" in *Arte portuguesa: da pré-história ao século XX*, ed. Dalila Rodrigues, vol. 14, Vila Nova de Gaia 2009, 32-87, here 63-65; Paulo Pereira, "Antes de Portugal," in *História da Arte Portuguesa*, vol. I, Lisbon 1995, here 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Salgueiro, "A Arte Em Portugal No Século XX (1911-1961)", 5-14 here 5.

<sup>9</sup> Santos, "Estou atrasado! Estou atrasado!", 232.

<sup>10</sup> Doctoral thesis, presented to the EPHE in 1963, entitled *Une ville des Lumières: La Lisbonne de Pombal*, approved and published by decision of Fernand Braduel. See José-Augusto França, "Uma experiência pombalina," in *Monumentos: Revista Semestral de Edifícios e Monumentos* 21 (2004), 18 -21). The Portuguese edition includes the somewhat polemic preface by Pierre Francastel. See Joana Cunha Leal, "Legitimação artística e patrimonial da Baixa Pombalina. Um percurso pela crítica e pela história da arte portuguesas," in *Monumentos: Revista Semestral de Edifícios e Monumentos* 21 (2004), 6-17. Also Salgueiro, "A Arte Em Portugal No Século XX (1911-1961)", 102-103.

<sup>11</sup> I point out the monographs devoted to artists regarded by the historian as exceptions in the Portuguese sociocultural scene, such as: Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso (José-Augusto França, *Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso. O Português à força [The Forcible Portuguese]*, Lisboa 1957), Almada Negreiros (José-Augusto França, *Almada Negreiros. O português sem mestre [The Self-Taught Portuguese]*, Lisboa 1974) e Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro (José-Augusto França, *Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, o português tal e qual [The Portuguese As He Is]* Lisboa 1981). Regarding the monograph devoted to Amadeo de Souza Cardoso see Joana Cunha Leal, "Apropriação, Deslizamento, Deslocação. (sobre a representação na pintura de Amadeo de Souza Cardoso)," in *Revista de História da Arte* 10 (2012), 110 - 127, here 112-113. Also Joana Cunha Leal, "Signs of 'Critical Regionalism': on the 'Decorative-Style' in the painting of Amadeo de Souza Cardoso," in *Arbor*, 190 - 766 (2014), <http://arbor.revistas.csic.es/index.php/arbor/article/view/1915/2161> (accessed 24 March 2015).

<sup>12</sup> See Crua, *Revistas Córnio*, "Surgimento e afirmação das Revistas Córnio", 10-17.

Before proceeding, it is worth quoting Mariana Pinto dos Santos' view, to which I subscribe, in her analysis on the persistence of José-Augusto França's legacy in the writing of the history of art in Portugal:

“It is, however, also necessary to highlight the inertia regarding the innovation of discourses in this discipline, that led to the canonization of that work [that of José-Augusto França]. Regarded as the ultimate reference by the following generations of art historians, the periodizations, concepts and facts enumerated in his most prominent works were the source for later historiographical writings. In this very influential model, a relation with events contemporaneous to each other persists, that leads to the risk of diluting the object in an exhaustive list of sociological and historical facts.”<sup>13</sup>

It is important to highlight that the crystallization of a discourse does not correspond to its total transparency. The studies I shall focus on - *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX* (1966) and *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX* (1974) - were written and published during a pivotal moment of Portuguese history, during the years between the throes of the *Estado Novo*<sup>14</sup> dictatorship and the revolutionary process that led the transition to democracy. Notwithstanding the fact that José-Augusto França states, referencing the dangers of pre-revolution censorship, that he simply “acknowledged, in 1974, that his attitude could not, at the time, bring any police hazard to the book's path”,<sup>15</sup> and that he did not make any substantial changes to its narrative, that does not mean his perspective on the art produced within the context of the dictatorship was innocent, or detached from his anti-

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<sup>13</sup> Santos, “A resistência do objecto à história da arte contemporânea”, 12. All translations into English, in this and further quotations, are my own.

<sup>14</sup> *Estado Novo* [New State] is the official designation of the longest lasting dictatorship in Western Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An authoritarian and corporatist regime in power in Portugal between 1933, following a military coup that ended the First Republic (in 1928) and instituted a dictatorship, and 1974, the year when another military and popular revolution ended the regime.

<sup>15</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, 16.

fascist orientation. By means of “a certain devaluation of the function of the structuring thread, and an overvaluation of ‘concrete facts’”,<sup>16</sup> his works have been followed and understood separately from the problematization established by the historian of their relation with their context. In the words of Paulo Pereira, the following synthesis provides us with information on the general perspective of the interpretation of França's work, in the context of the historiography of art in Portugal:

“More than mere syntheses, these works conduct the survey of all of the essential issues that were - especially with regard to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the transition to modernity - completely removed from historiographical concerns, given the somewhat 18<sup>th</sup> century, ‘academic’ education of the preceding generations, inattentive to the contemporaneity and the methodological circuit introduced by the ‘modernist rupture’ - later by the modernist movement - into the scope of the critical usage of history.”<sup>17</sup>

The same author, Paulo Pereira, would in a later text include José-Augusto França in a somewhat larger movement of art historians that he named as the “transition generation”.<sup>18</sup> Following his argumentation, the focus of this transitional generation will be placed on ‘foreign art’ (as the fundamental element for comparison) that will detach a modern historiography of Portuguese art from a historiography he refers to as “academic”.<sup>19</sup> The knowledge or recognition of ‘foreign art’ is in this way configured as an “absolutely unavoidable factor when the issue is to develop an objective and [...] more dispassionate and de-ideologized view (regarding nationalist intents) of the art that is produced in

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<sup>16</sup> Pedro Vieira de Almeida, “Posicionamento Teórico Genérico,” in *Revista de História da Arte* 10 (2012), 26-43, here 39.

<sup>17</sup> Pereira, “*Antes de Portugal*”, 12. Emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> Pereira, “*História da História da Arte em Portugal*”, 64.

<sup>19</sup> Pereira, “*História da História da Arte em Portugal*”, 64.

Portugal.”<sup>20</sup>

What this analysis of the history of the history of Portuguese art seems to leave out is indeed the reflection about the continuity of the idea of nation as the preferential historical unit of historian José-Augusto França and, broadly, as a normalizing unit of the art history that was generally produced<sup>21</sup>. That is to say, the notion of nation still presides over the circumscription of themes, stylistic organization, chronologies and the selection of research subjects. It is an understandable interpretation, considering the ‘trauma’ resulting from the instrumentalization of some nationalist discourses on art during the *Estado Novo* regime, from which it intends to detach itself, stimulating the creation of a new disciplinary paradigm that naturalizes or de-ideologizes the identity framework of the interpretation of the Portuguese art phenomenon, favouring the construction of a view that is scientific, positivist and in conformity with the ‘modernist rupture’.<sup>22</sup>

In this movement there is the risk of neutralizing a very relevant aspect of França’s narrative (and of history, in general, and that which was produced by or under the influence of the *Ecole des Annales*,<sup>23</sup> in particular). An aspect that, depending

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<sup>20</sup> Pereira, “*História da História da Arte em Portugal*”, 64.

<sup>21</sup> See Keith Moxey, “Impossible Distance: Past and Present in the Study of Dürer and Grünewald,” in *The Art Bulletin* 86, 4 (2004), 750-763, and Keith Moxey, “Motivating History,” in *The Art Bulletin* 77, 3 (1995), 392-401.

<sup>22</sup> As Michael Billing emphasizes: “Analysts must expect to be affected by what should be the object of their study. [...] In established nations, it seems ‘natural’ to suppose that nationalism is an overheated reaction, which typically is the property of others. The assumption enables ‘us’ to forget ‘our’ nationalism. [...] At the same time, nationalism is defined as something dangerously emotional and irrational: [...]. Complex habits of thought naturalize, and thereby overlook, ‘our’ nationalism, whilst projecting nationalism, as an irrational whole, on to others. At the core of this intellectual amnesia lies a restricted concept of ‘nationalism’, which confines ‘nationalism’ to particular social movements rather than to nation-states. Only the passionately waved flags are conventionally considered to be exemplars of nationalism. Routine flags - the flags of ‘our’ environment - slip from the category of ‘nationalism’. And having slipped through the categorical net, they get lost. There is no other theoretical term to rescue them from oblivion.” Michael Billing, *Banal Nationalism*, London 1995, 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> On the history and relevance of the so-called *Ecole des Annales* see Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution. The Annales School, 1929 - 1989*, Cambridge 1990. On the importance of the influence of the *Ecole des Annales* in the formation of the *Sociedade Portuguesa de História da Civilização*, “the first network of Portuguese communist historians”, see José Neves, *Comunismo e Nacionalismo em Portugal*, Lisbon 2011, 303-327, here 309.

on whether it is considered or ignored, does or does not provide meaning to his history of Portuguese art - that of the relation of the past to the present - or the social function of history. Let us recall the ambition expressed by the historian José-Augusto França in the preface of *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, that of making the knowledge of the past useful, and “through its knowledge, correct the life of a society that was generated in it, taking us into (and hoping for) a real dynamism.”<sup>24</sup> But useful to whom, one may ask, and which society is it that needs to be corrected? Certainly the “present” society in 1966.

The historian puts forward:

“One enquires into the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to better understand the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its extension, within a cultural cycle; and one departs, precisely, from a problematic awareness of the present, towards the understanding of that recent past. [...] we require that knowledge for our *governance*.”<sup>25</sup>

Assuming that the knowledge of the western canon serves as an assurance of a greater objectivity towards, or a distancing from, an idea of a national artistic specificity or essence,<sup>26</sup> one attempts to understand the reasons for Portugal's chronological gap with ‘modernity’ as a modernist or avant-garde manifestation. This legitimizes a narrative that aims to ascertain the distance that separates national production from the canonic production of a beacon of ‘originality’, whose construction is never questioned.<sup>27</sup> In the work of José-Augusto França, that delay in Portuguese art can be diagnosed “in regard to French art, that

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<sup>24</sup> França, *A arte em Portugal no século XIX*, vol. I, 8.

<sup>25</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XIX*, vol. I, 7-8, Emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> Regarding this subject, see Nuno Rosmaninho, “Nacionalidade e nacionalismo na historiografia artística portuguesa (1846 - 1935),” in *VÉRTICE* 61 (1994), 17-30 and Nuno Rosmaninho, “Estratégia e metodologia na historiografia artística portuguesa (1846 - 1935),” in *Revista da Universidade de Aveiro - Letras* 14 (1997), 71-92. Also Nuno Rosmaninho, “As múltiplas facetas da arte nacional,” in *Transformações Estruturais do campo cultural português*, eds. António Pedro Pita and Luís Trindade, Coimbra 2008, 311-334.

<sup>27</sup> See Santos, “*A resistência do objecto à história da arte contemporânea*”.

was paradigmatic at the time”.<sup>28</sup> As Mariana Pinto dos Santos points out, José-Augusto França’s discourse “is also a discourse that is designed for the specific audience it is aimed at - the French academy - and that the author seeks recognition as an art historian.”<sup>29</sup> We must recall that in 1959 José-Augusto França left as a scholarship holder the French government, for the *École Pratique des Hautes Etudes* (EPHE), to study with Pierre Francastel.<sup>30</sup> The central role of Mediterranean Studies that drive the research at the EPHE, led by Fernand Braudel, should also lead us to reflect on the general positioning found there by Portuguese historians, towards the history of the Atlantic where Portugal is situated.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, this issue of the relation between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic seems to have some impact on França’s formulations, an impact that is not limited to questions regarding art, defined separately from the sociology of art practised by the historian. As it was made clear by the author in *Postface to the entire work or “de par ma chandelle verte”*, the idea of the Atlantic appears as the “opposite and empty side of Europe”.<sup>32</sup> In a rebuttal to this perspective by the historian, a different dynamic between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic is considered to be pertinent in the interpretation of the history of Portugal:

“If the Mediterranean and the Atlantic are the two great maritime spaces which have had most effect on the history of Europe, if the territory of Portugal is located at the crossing point of these two spaces, and finally the diversity from this is evident in contrasts in terms of physical

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<sup>28</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XIX*, vol. II, 378. On this subject see also Santos, “*Estou atrasado! Estou atrasado!*” and Santos, “*A resistência do objecto à história da arte contemporânea*”.

<sup>29</sup> Santos, “*Estou atrasado! Estou atrasado!*”, 232.

<sup>30</sup> Salgueiro, *A Arte Em Portugal No Século XX* (1911-1961), 11.

<sup>31</sup> A very comprehensive subject in Portuguese historiography (namely that regarding the discoveries period), but that is under-explored in the field of the history of contemporary Portuguese art. We must however highlight, in the field of architecture history and critique, a greater devotion to that dynamic, through the influence of the studies by geographer Orlando Ribeiro in the formulation and interpretation of popular architecture in Portugal, namely in the works of Pedro Vieira de Almeida and João Leal.

<sup>32</sup> José-Augusto França, “Pos-facio a toda a obra ou *de par ma chandelle verte*,” in *Pentacórnio*, apud Crua, *Revistas Córnio*, 81 - 85, here 82.

and human geography, then it is not difficult to consider the complex problem which governs Portugal's relation with the outside world (and such is the case of overseas expansion) as a direct manifestation of this two-headed vocation."<sup>33</sup>

### **Equivocal Modernism**

To José-Augusto França - the author does not conceal it - chronological location "bears a charge of cultural, ideological and aesthetic significance",<sup>34</sup> and, in that sense, the overlapping of chronologies in the final part of *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX* and in the totality of *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, as well as their ambiguity, cannot be unnoticed. In the conclusion of *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, the author expresses his controversial opinion regarding the atemporality that seems to command Portuguese art (and society): "On the one hand, the historian points out the supposed anachronism of much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century production"<sup>35</sup> (which he refers to as "19<sup>th</sup> century Presences"<sup>36</sup>); on the other hand, he identifies a chronic delay towards international modernity. Regarding that delay, José-Augusto França points out that after a period when the avant-garde artists attempted to set Portuguese time according to the clock of European modernity,<sup>37</sup> one can verify that there is "no national possibility"<sup>38</sup> behind those experiments, the reason why, once the exceptions are subtracted, the critic refers

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<sup>33</sup> (Original quote in English). Roughly speaking, the author argues that facing the impossibility of territorial expansion into the west, the Portuguese chose to expand through the Atlantic. Luís Adão da Fonseca, *The discoveries and the formation of the Atlantic Ocean*, Lisboa 1999, here 29.

<sup>34</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Anachronisms convey a particularly perjorative significance in the sociology of art, since the role of art is both proponent and verifying (see Santos, "A resistência do objecto à história da arte contemporânea", 3), and is valued as a 'symptom'. It is perhaps not by chance that Didi-Huberman, a contemporary art historian, trained at the EPHE in Francastel's Sociology of Art course, devotes particular attention to this notion. (Georges Didi-Huberman, *O que nós vemos, o que nos olha*, Porto 2011.)

<sup>36</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, 335.

<sup>37</sup> José-Augusto França, "Pos-facio a toda a obra ou 'de par ma chandelle verte', in *Pentacórnio*" apud Crua, *Revistas Córnio*, 81 - 85, here 84.

<sup>38</sup> José-Augusto França, "Pos-facio a toda a obra ou 'de par ma chandelle verte', in *Pentacórnio*", apud Crua, *Revistas Córnio*, 81 - 85, here 82.

in the subtitle of the conclusion, to the “Equivocations of Modernism”.<sup>39</sup> Stating that, through the course of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “there was a vigilant opposition, implicit or declared, to all that was ‘modern’”,<sup>40</sup> José-Augusto França differentiates between two types of resistance to modernity: that of “Provincials” and that of “Peasants”<sup>41</sup> to which the author also adds the proponent (and also reflexive) role of the cultural policies of the *Estado Novo* regime from the 1930s onwards.

In a clear allusion to the folklorist and ‘decorative’ policies of the National Propaganda Secretariat and, particularly, to the aggregating role of António Ferro (its ideologue and director between 1933 and 1945), França observes the need to differentiate between what he considers to be ‘modern art’ from the propagandistic appropriations of an ‘equivocal modernism’.<sup>42</sup> Clarifying his perspective, the author will differentiate what he considers to be ‘modern’ from what he sees as the official ‘modernism’:

“Modernism is a ‘movement towards (or of) that which is modern, that tends to create an awareness of what is modern or to produce works that translate its existence’. If the conceptual difference between both terms is great, there is another, of a psychological and moral nature, that is sematologically [sic] generated, that is even greater; if the concept of modernity is ambiguous, that of modernism has been equivocal, with questionable choices. And, almost always, modernity has no need for modernism. Personally, the author of these notes, detests modernism, perhaps because he finds that ‘modern’ is something that can only

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<sup>39</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, 335.

<sup>40</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, 335.

<sup>41</sup> The “Provincials” would be those who let themselves be overwhelmed by novelty and trend. The “Peasants”, those who reacted violently against progress in general. The author also recognizes “Urbanites”, those who were qualified for receiving and (re)producing the ongoing modernity. This interpretation finds some parallels in a seminal text by Jürgen Habermas for the critique of modernity and the redefinition of the concepts of modernity, post-modernity and modern. (Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity - an incomplete project,” in *The anti-aesthetic - Essays on postmodern culture*, ed. Hal Foster, Seattle 1983, 3-15.

<sup>42</sup> See Leal, “*Sintomas de Regionalismo Crítico*”.



discreetly be so - or, instead, of a total indiscretion, of a much more metaphysical than physical nature.”<sup>43</sup>

The studies I am focusing on - *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX* and *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, are not chronologically divided in accordance with the current criteria regarding the dates of the beginning or the end of centuries. The volumes devoted to 19<sup>th</sup> century art comprise a very extensive period of time. The narrative begins with the death of king José (1777) and the author contends that it is with his succession that “the Nation will gradually lose the European living”.<sup>44</sup> The end date of the 19<sup>th</sup> century remains, however, undefined. The last quarter of this work is devoted to the narration of the artistic and sociocultural facts that take place after 1910 up to the unlikely date of 1960.<sup>45</sup> The study *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX* has much clearer chronological boundaries.<sup>46</sup> The narrative begins in 1911 with the author’s critique of an exhibition by the ‘free’

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<sup>43</sup> José-Augusto França, “*Il faut être absolument moderne. Rimbaud’ resposta ao Inquérito ‘Para um conceito actual de Modernidade’ in Pentacórnio*” apud Crua, *Revistas Córnio*, 77-88, here 78. The study by Catarina Crua, *Revistas Crónio*, is justifiably considered as the work of reference for the study of the definitions of ‘modern’, ‘modernity’ and ‘modernism’, revealing the relation between their definitions and their contemporaneous historical context. As Joana Cunha Leal explains we can “understand that, as [França] is an enthusiastic advocate of the modern, in the Rimbaudean sense of the term, he declares his hatred of modernism”, since “the defense of the Portuguese version of modernism was the flagship of the Estado Novo cultural policy, by the hand of António Ferro”. (Leal, “Apropriação, Deslizamento, Deslocação” 2012, 117; see also Leal, “Signs of ‘Critical Regionalism’”). Regarding the excerpt quoted here, author Catarina Crua’s interpretation is that “[the] author [José-Augusto França] grafts an oppositional scheme between modern and modernism, suggesting a confrontation between a way of being (manner), where he places the modern, and a way of doing (trend), assigned to the term ‘modernism’. In his references to the latter concept, José-Augusto França identified a fluctuation of criteria, namely from António Ferro, and therefore says ‘it has been equivocal, with questionable choices’” (Crua, *Revistas Córnio*, 2011, 43). This subject was also addressed by Joana Cunha Leal and Mariana Pinto dos Santos (Joana Cunha Leal and Mariana Pinto dos Santos, “As sete cabeças do Modernismo,” in *Arte, Crítica, Política, Colóquio*, IHA FCSH-UNL, Lisboa 2014.)

<sup>44</sup> It was during the reign of king José I (1714-177) that the reconstruction of Lisbon and the Pombaline Lisbon project were undertaken.

<sup>45</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XIX*, vol. II, 352.

<sup>46</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, 366. On the chronological limits of the study *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, see Salgueiro, *A Arte Em Portugal No Século XX (1911-1961)*, 30-39.

artists - “seven young artists studying or residing in Paris”<sup>47</sup> - and ends in the early 1960s with the inception of the changes the recently instituted (1956) *Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation* would prompt in the arts and culture sector in Portugal.<sup>48</sup>

José-Augusto França deals with the developments in painting, sculpture and architecture on different planes, organized according to the generational denominator.<sup>49</sup> In the preface of *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, the author writes that in his view painting is defined “about fifteen years earlier than sculpture or architecture, in the realm of modernity.”<sup>50</sup> On architecture and sculpture, the author states that “they had their hour of glory, which was then monotonously repeated”<sup>51</sup>, and that they were “promptly conducted towards a traditionalist orientation and only in the 50s were they capable of expressing coherence, within the creative freedom that was allowed to a production that was always conditioned”.<sup>52</sup>

According to Rita Salgueiro, in the work of the historian José-Augusto França “[...] modernism in architecture is exclusively associated with what became known as the International Style.”<sup>53</sup> The same author also states that José-Augusto França plays “with simple oppositions, modern taste and old taste”,<sup>54</sup> puts forward/falls into “a binary interpretation that dismisses the architectural production created during the first decades of the century”.<sup>55</sup> This binary interpretation, founded on the antithetical perspective of the great modernist narrative that opposes

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<sup>47</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, 21. The author clarifies what he regards as “free art”; “that is, free from academic “control”, in Lisbon, as in the Paris of official scholarship holders.” (França, *A Arte em Portugal no século XX*, 356).

<sup>48</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, 343-351.

<sup>49</sup> About the “generations” in the structure of *A Arte em Portugal no século XX* see Salgueiro, *A Arte Em Portugal No Século XX (1911-1961)*, 82- 99.

<sup>50</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, 12.

<sup>51</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, 12.

<sup>52</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, 12.

<sup>53</sup> Salgueiro, *A Arte Em Portugal no Século XX (1911-1961)*, 67.

<sup>54</sup> Salgueiro, *A Arte Em Portugal no Século XX (1911-1961)*, 67.

<sup>55</sup> Salgueiro, *A Arte Em Portugal no Século XX (1911-1961)*, 67.

Modernism to Tradition, is, partly, what allows the author to allot a significant part of the architectural production of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the final volume of the work on the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Rita Salgueiro, who highlights the need for a combined re-examination of the works of the author in question, states that “[the] field where a larger and swifter re-examination of historian José-Augusto França’s perspective took place seems to be that of architecture, possibly as a result of the autonomy of that discipline, and because it is a somewhat diminished field in the work of José-Augusto França.”<sup>56</sup> This perspective seems to echo the historian’s own conclusion. According to França, after the 1950s, “a profound interest in the historiography of the modern movement, especially regarding those forgotten early stages: arts and crafts; the Chicago school, etc.”,<sup>57</sup> (which will then lead some of the subsequent historians to question the periodizations established by França<sup>58</sup>), in addition to a “reevaluation of the concept of space”<sup>59</sup> (a notion also forgotten by França’s critique) will result in the formulation, by “young architects”,<sup>60</sup> of an architecture criticism that, due to its specificity, was defined apart from that which occupies itself with other fine arts”.<sup>61</sup>

As I can point out, it is curiously at the exact moment that a revision of the

<sup>56</sup> Salgueiro, *A Arte Em Portugal no Século XX (1911-1961)*, 119.

<sup>57</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, 309.

<sup>58</sup> “[...] José Augusto França makes a different vision clear, regarding the need for defining an initial moment for modernity, when he states “The 19<sup>th</sup> century ended, and did not end, in 1900”. In his work *História da Arte do Século XX [A Arte em Portugal no século XX]* he accepts the overlaying of 19<sup>th</sup> century influence into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, considering 1911 as the starting point.[...] Pedro Vieira de Almeida regards this problem differently, forcing the recognition, in chronological time, of the condition experienced by architecture in Portuguese society at that precise moment: “(...) in architecture it matters to coincide the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the 20<sup>th</sup> century”. See Rui Ramos, *A casa. Arquitectura e projecto doméstico na primeira metade do século XX*, Porto 2010, here 25- 26.

<sup>59</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, 309.

<sup>60</sup> Note that the “young architects” França refers to - Pedro Vieira de Almeida and Nuno Portas - had been profoundly influenced by the new vision of history inaugurated by França with the work *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, published in 1966. See Rui Ramos, “O significado da obra de José -Augusto França na leitura da arquitectura do século XX português”: Rui Ramos, “O significado da obra de José -Augusto França na leitura da arquitectura do século XX português”. Presentation delivered at the *IV Congresso de História da Arte Portuguesa APHA, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* (2012), <http://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/bitstream/10216/67821/2/5205.pdf> (accessed 26 March 2015).

<sup>61</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, 309.

historiography of architecture of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gets underway - one that gives rise to a revision of the established canon of modern architecture - that the historian José-Augusto França affirms the autonomy of architecture criticism from other artistic disciplines. This revision of the modernist discourse and canon that resulted from the crisis in the Modern Movement after the Second World War, exposes not only the ideological investment involved in the interpretation of the phenomenon of architectural avant-gardes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also the relevance of those movements of continuity and tradition, within the Modern Movement itself.

Joana Brites points out the difficulty in reconciling the ongoing revision of the modernist architectural canon with the architecture produced within authoritarian contexts.<sup>62</sup> The author clarifies that “the revision of the concept of ‘modern’ allowed for the recognition of the modernity of proposals that distanced themselves from the tabula rasa and were devoted to the re-utilization of local materials and to reinterpretations of history and tradition (precisely the line of research that would be acclaimed from the 1950s onward).<sup>63</sup> She also argues that “the dichotomy between modern and regional/national was neither a rhetorical exercise generated a posteriori by conservative voices, nor a quarrel exclusive to political regimes where the nationalist component was particularly exacerbated”.<sup>64</sup> Rather, it was “an internal dilemma of the [Modern] Movement itself.<sup>65</sup> In conclusion, the author attempts to ensure that the interpretation of this architectural production should be considered within the parameters of “an alternative path of modernity”.<sup>66</sup>

What José-Augusto França states in between the lines of his distinction between his definition of ‘Modern’ and ‘Equivocal Modernism’ is not quite that they are

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<sup>62</sup> See Joana Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura: Estado Novo, arquitectos e a Caixa Geral de Depósitos. 1929 - 1970*, Lisbon 2014.

<sup>63</sup> Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura*, 205.

<sup>64</sup> Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura*, 206.

<sup>65</sup> Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura*, 206.

<sup>66</sup> Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura*, 206.

not configured as a possible alternative path of (what we call) modernity, but (on the contrary) that those traces of the past are not reconfigurable in the path of the “modernity” the historian idealizes for his country.

The historiography that was created from a modernist perspective of França's work has superimposed his notion of ‘modern art’ over his notion of ‘modernism’. This has facilitated a simplified reading of his project that is interpreted along a simplistic antithetical discourse that does not correspond exactly to what the author proposes. In fact, from my point of view, a term such as Quiet Modernism is unsuited to that interpretative current. The assumption that in the work of França Modernism and Tradition are merely antagonistic, stimulates interpretations that respond to a vision of traditionalist proposals as mere symptoms of the regime's nationalist conservatism (to which dissident architects would attempt to rebel against or accommodate). In the decades that followed the fall of the *Estado Novo* regime, this happens to a great extent as the result of the ‘institutionalization’ of the idea that those traditionalist proposals, inspired by the regionalist proposals of Ricardo Severo, Rocha Peixoto, and Raul Lino,<sup>67</sup> were a mere reflexion of the nationalist policy of that regime, and responded mainly to the regime's need to display, in the present, its imagined relationship with a past.

As Joana Brites elaborates:

In Portuguese historiography, the few fringes of discussion are focused on the interpretation of the transition from ‘modernism’ to ‘regime architecture’, situated in the transition from the 1930s to the 1940s. One

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<sup>67</sup> See João Leal, *Etnografias Portuguesas (1870 -1970): Cultura Popular e Identidade Nacional*, Lisboa 2000, 107-145. The reaction to the exhibition of the work of Raul Lino, in 1970, became a paradigm of this interpretative current. See Pedro Vieira de Almeida and José Manuel Fernandes, “O ‘Arrabalde’ do céu,” in *História da Arte em Portugal*, vol. 14, Lisboa 1986, 110-111; also Maria Helena Maia, “Raul Lino segundo Pedro Vieira de Almeida,” in *Colóquio Nacional Raul Lino em Sintra, Actas do I Congresso*, Lisbon 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/10229561/Raul\\_Lino\\_segundo\\_Pedro\\_Vieira\\_de\\_Almeida](https://www.academia.edu/10229561/Raul_Lino_segundo_Pedro_Vieira_de_Almeida) (accessed 24 March 2015) and Michel Toussaint, *Da Arquitectura à teoria e o universo da Teoria da Arquitectura em Portugal na primeira metade do século XX*, doctoral thesis at Faculdade de Arquitectura, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, 2009, 189-255.

interpretative current defends the existence of a *Estado Novo* architecture whilst another denies it. There is research that holds the regime - that was “castrating” and “dominating” towards architects - responsible for the definition of models, and others who believe the *Estado Novo* regime obtained ‘consensus’ from architects with no imposition, due both to a voluntary adhesion to the regime or an ‘ideological absorption’, and to their weak cultural consciousness and theoretical reflexion.”<sup>68</sup>

The search for a national architectural identity predates the *Estado Novo* regime, as does the invention of the traditions that assist in the construction of the image of that fabricated identity that is the nation.<sup>69</sup> In addition, the instrumentalization of the past is a movement that is not exclusive to Portugal, as we can infer from the narrative that was distorted by the valuation of the modernist canon imported from Paris, and later from New York, that compares itself with a supposed delay of a supposed periphery.<sup>70</sup> Neither are nationalist representations, as Michael Billing reminds us, a prerogative of extremist ideologies that populate the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>71</sup> As assumed by Rancière, it would be convenient if there were a single meaning, if it were possible to establish simple

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<sup>68</sup> Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura*, 189. Joana Brites also synthesises: “The historiographic debate about the period ranging from the Military Dictatorship to the end of the Second World War tended towards stabilization around a consensual thesis. The affirmation of the functionalist language would have been possible, at first (1926-1931), because the Government was ‘indifferent towards the formal characteristics of architecture’”. At a second stage (1932-37), that corresponded already to a period of consolidation of the regime, the majority of authors consider that the production of modern architectural models “is in contradiction, at a formal level, with the ideological framework of the regime itself.”(Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura*, 187-188).

<sup>69</sup> “Invented traditions is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. A striking example is the deliberate choice of a Gothic style for the nineteenth-century rebuilding of the British parliament, and the equally deliberate decision after World War II to rebuild the parliamentary chamber on exactly the same basic plan as before.” E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983, 1-2.

<sup>70</sup> See Partha Mitter, “Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery,” in *The Art Bulletin* 90:4 (2008), 531-548.

<sup>71</sup> See Billing, *Banal Nationalism*.

oppositions between things in order to make the structure of every proposition intelligible. But, as I have attempted to show, the idea of modernity is itself an equivocal notion.<sup>72</sup>

### Quiet Modernism

As pointed out at the beginning of this text, the notion of Quiet Modernism is used only once in the more than 1500 pages constituting the two works by José-Augusto França we have been analyzing. The interpretation of the term Quiet Modernism, or of any other term put forth by the author, is unthinkable without a previous problematization of his project and the on-going revision of the narratives of Portuguese art historiography.<sup>73</sup> This need is partly due to the (un)limitations of the methodology chosen by the historian as an art critic - the sociology of art - but also to the particular historical context upon which an essential part of his work was founded and divulged. It would lead the author to defend the importance of dissent (even if veiled): "What we say is only important when it is known that we may prefer and say something else (unless it is a direct quote)."<sup>74</sup>

As a consequence of the methodology defined by the historian, the concept remains undeveloped and its meaning is not presented. Mariana Pinto dos Santos confirms this:

[...] the words used to judge and arrange the facts are not discussed, since that discussion belongs to an abstract realm. For instance, concepts such as Romanticism, Enlightenment, Modernity, are used according to a model previously identified as the artistic ideal of the time - the spirit of the time, a Hegelian *zeitgeist* - with a geographic focus invariably set in

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<sup>72</sup> See Jacques Rancière, *Estética e Política. A Partilha do Sensível*, Porto 2010, 21-33.

<sup>73</sup> I point out particularly, the works by Catarina Crua, Joana Cunha Leal, Mariana Pinto dos Santos and Rita Salgueiro to which I have resorted with considerable frequency throughout this text. Equally invaluable is the contribution of Pedro Vieira de Almeida in the field of architectural criticism and the lively discussion he maintains regarding the work of José-Augusto França.

<sup>74</sup> José-Augusto França, apud Crua, *Revistas Córnió*, 18.

Paris, to which ‘artistic facts’ correspond more or less, thus assessing their degree of ‘civilization’.”<sup>75</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that Quiet Modernism refers to a project whose conception began around 1911, the re-modelling and extension of the Counts of Alvor Palace (*Palácio dos Condes de Alvor*) which it refers to, was completed only in 1940, configuring itself as a suitable study example for the analysis of hypotheses on the differences between the constructive concerns of the First Portuguese Republic and the modernist constraints of the *Estado Novo* regime. As I have also pointed out and now reinforce, the term Quiet Modernism is presented in the final pages of the work on the 19<sup>th</sup> century and so is displaced from the narrative on ‘Modern’ art and on so-called Modernism in particular. It seems as though, in the urge to interpret ‘Modern Architecture’ in its narrow definition, both similarities and differences between the two distinct political and ideological contexts are left aside from the core of França’s argument, except perhaps in this case.

It must be highlighted that the 17<sup>th</sup> century building did not have a minor purpose: since 1884, it had hosted the collection of the *Museu de Bellas Artes* (Museum of Fine Arts) and from 1911 to the present day, the National Museum of Portuguese Ancient Art (MNAA - *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga portuguesa*).<sup>76</sup> With its institution as a national museum in 1911 and under the direction of José de Figueiredo (a position offered to him by the First Republic as early as 1911), the efforts necessary for its adaptation from civil residence to museological space, its extension and modernization were undertaken.<sup>77</sup> As José-

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<sup>75</sup> Santos, “A resistência do objecto à história da arte contemporânea”, 4-5.

<sup>76</sup> For a short note on the relationship between museology and nationalism, see Donald Preziosi, “Art History and Museology: Rendering the Visible Legible,” in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald, Oxford 2006, 50-62.

<sup>77</sup> See Joana Baião, “A ‘revolução’ de Figueiredo. Museologia e Investigação em Portugal (1911 - 1937),” in *Historia de las colecciones e historia de los museos*, ed. Mikel Asensio et. al., 3, vol.6, Madrid (2012), 55-62. [http://issuu.com/\\_publicacion/docs/vol\\_6\\_historia\\_de\\_las\\_colecciones\\_historia\\_de\\_los](http://issuu.com/_publicacion/docs/vol_6_historia_de_las_colecciones_historia_de_los) (accessed 24 March 2015).



Augusto França points out, “It was from the sidonist government of 1918 that [José de Figueiredo] obtained the credit that allowed him to expand the former facilities”,<sup>78</sup> but only after the analysis of further projects (by Adães Bermudes and José Luís Monteiro), “those by G.[uilherme] Rebelo de Andrade, drafted in 1930 under the new dictatorship, would be executed, beginning in 1933[...]”.<sup>79</sup> Contrary to what the historian seems to indicate by relating the commencement date of Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade’s project to a new political situation, his architect’s appointment results, in the words of José de Figueiredo, solely from the fact that he had “proven capacity regarding his knowledge of the baroque”,<sup>80</sup> and that he had also “especially studied the case of the museum [...] and was already responsible for some projects, already completed and to be completed, graciously conducted by him with the sole patriotic intent of facilitating the task entrusted to this direction”.<sup>81</sup>

In any case, the collaboration between Guilherme and his brother Carlos Rebelo de Andrade and José de Figueiredo dated from the previous situation. The reputation of Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade was, as that of his brother Carlos, already ensured by the projection or, at least, the visibility and favourable reception of, the exhibition pavilions they had designed - the Industries Pavilion for the Brazilian Independence Centenary International Exposition (1922) and the Pavilion for the Ibero-American Exposition of Seville (1929) - in a neo-baroque style viewed by some as appropriate to the representative purpose

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<sup>78</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, vol. II, 353.

<sup>79</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, vol. II, 353.

<sup>80</sup> José de Figueiredo *apud* Sandra Vaz Costa, *O País a Régua e Esquadro. Urbanismo, Arquitectura e Memória na Obra Pública de Duarte Pacheco*, Lisboa 2012, 208.

<sup>81</sup> Costa, *O País a Régua e Esquadro*, 208.

they were conceived for.<sup>82</sup> After the death of José de Figueiredo, in 1937, his successor in the direction of the Museum was João Couto. Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade's project that since 1935 had been the subject of skepticism from Duarte Pacheco (Minister of Public Works and Communications) and the new museum director, but apparently only the museological outline, by José de Figueiredo, was changed.

According to Sandra Vaz Costa,

“[the] political urgency that imposed the fulfilment of the agenda of the centenary celebrations, imposed alongside the construction of the western annexe under the directives outlined during the direction of José de Figueiredo.”<sup>83</sup>

José-Augusto França then lets us know that the works were

“[...] conducted according to a monumentalist taste already justified by the museological functions defined in the 1930s, that are not to be investigated here, and that should be viewed in the scope of a quiet

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<sup>82</sup> Portuguese participation in Universal and International Expositions has been the subject of various studies and largely debated (e.g. Margarida Acciaiuoli, *Exposições do Estado Novo. 1934 - 1940*, Lisboa 1998; Maria Helena Souto, *Portugal nas Exposições Universais. 1851-1900*, Lisboa 2011). However, these studies do not focus on the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the aforementioned expositions took place (1922 and 1929). More recently, anthropologist Vera Marques Alves, in an in-depth study about the folklorist policy in the *Estado Novo* and its framing in the contemporaneous international scene, retrieves António Ferro's opinion about the Pavilions of the *Ibero-American Exposition of Seville* (1929). They highlight the perspective that will later inform the strategic decisions he would take regarding that type of exhibition as the head of the National Propaganda Secretariat (See Vera Marques Alves, *Arte Popular e Nação no Estado Novo. A Política Folclorista do Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional*, Lisboa 2013, 247-253; 262-266). It should be remembered that, at the time, Ferro was a journalist, which facilitated the significant visibility of his words. See Luís Trindade, “Um cartaz espantando a multidão. António Ferro e outras almas do modernismo banal,” in *Comunicação & Cultura* 8 (2009). A clear preference towards a popular style, towards the rural, of folklorist nature, will claim the position of the ‘modernist Portugal’ in those expositions, renouncing the ‘erudition’ that is simply non-modern, and the historicisms that informed the regionalist and nationalist research of Portuguese architecture by Lino and others. Indeed, the work of the architects Rebelo de Andrade (although never openly criticized by António Ferro) was subsequently neglected from 1934 onwards. It is, however, noteworthy, that the architects’ project for the Monument to Prince Henrique, in Sagres (1934) would later be appropriated after it had been publicly refused. See Pedro Vieira de Almeida, *A Arquitectura no Estado Novo. Uma leitura crítica*. Lisboa 2002. This aspect will be discussed at length in my current Master's Degree dissertation.

<sup>83</sup> Costa, *O País a Régua e Esquadro*, 214.

modernism, after formal experiences that were more demanding and unknown among us.”<sup>84</sup>

In a cohesive work such as José-Augusto França's, the distinction between Quiet Modernism and Equivocal Modernism must not be diminished. Nor the fact that again this notion appears in the final pages of the work devoted to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is useful in this case to follow the clues that the methodology used by the author may provide us. On the one hand, one must highlight the autonomy of visual thinking, consecrated by the sociology of art. On the other hand, as Jaime Brihuega states, visual thinking is considered to be

“[...] the result of the technical abilities and the symbolic needs of a certain society[...] equipped with an evolutive capacity whose process, when extended in time, allows for new structures to coexist alongside prior forms of perception and representation, until they take their place[...].”<sup>85</sup>

The discourses about the past, the instrumentalization of history, of art history, of ethnography etc., from which the *Estado Novo* regime dared to legitimize itself politically, were founded, as Luis Trindade points out, on a new world view, and “would present themselves as evident, and, in that sense, would coexist more comfortably with notions of ‘naturalty’ - upon which the salazarist nationalism will be supported - than with ideological and literary constructions - that served as the base for republican positivism.”<sup>86</sup>

The catalogue of references (soon to be used as evidence) that constituted the basis for the image of a *Estado Novo* Portugal, had already been partially compiled

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<sup>84</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, vol. II, 353.

<sup>85</sup> Jaime Brihuega, “Pierre Francastel,” in *Historia de las ideas estéticas y de las teorías artísticas contemporáneas*, vol. II, ed. Valeriano Bozal, Madrid 1999, 346-349, here 347.

<sup>86</sup> Luís Trindade, “*Um cartaz espantando a multidão.*”, 90.

(or proposed) prior to 1933. In this sense, the architectural works discussed here are anachronistic (and atemporal) because they withstand the passage of an equivocal time, thus appearing – in the work of França – as instances of “survival”<sup>87</sup> and “permanencies”<sup>88</sup>. But they were also Quiet since, with greater or lesser awareness of the impact of the enforced transformation, they allow themselves to be appropriated, in relative silence. A silence that the history of art insists on reciprocating by many means.

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<sup>87</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, vol. II, 360.

<sup>88</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, vol. II, 360.

# THE VERNACULAR TRADITION IN THE ART OF *NOUCENTISME*

MERCÈ VIDAL I JANSÀ

*Modern art is the art of now – the ‘now’ recognises the existence of a past and so signifies the strength of union with this past (...) A clearly marked path leads us back, a path that takes us through time — the path of popular art (...) It is to popular art that we must turn (...) The task is there waiting to be undertaken.*<sup>1</sup>

*Nationhood is a prerequisite for internationalism.*<sup>2</sup>

Both assertions, written by Joaquim Folch i Torres in two publications in circulation in 1911 in Catalonia, capture, in part, the role sought for Catalan art in the period known as *noucentisme*. The movement ran from 1906 —with periods of greater or lesser intensity— until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. The name *noucentisme* was coined and popularised by the writer

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<sup>1</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, “El Arte moderno en Catalunya,” in *Cataluña*. (7-14 January 1911).

<sup>2</sup> “De les Arts Industrials a Catalunya,” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística*. (1911) [16 November 1911].

and philosopher, Eugeni d'Ors<sup>3</sup> in order to mark a break with the period that immediately preceded it — that of the *Modernisme*.<sup>4</sup>

*Noucentisme*, therefore, initially and because of its chronology represented, in line with the Italian scheme of periodisation, 'the XX century', and a clear break with the earlier period and the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gradually, d'Ors went about attributing the work of various artists to the movement of *noucentisme* and following the publication of the *Almanac of the Artists of Noucentisme*<sup>5</sup> in 1911, the name became firmly established and has come to be used to refer to this period in the history of Catalan art.

The period coincided in Catalonia with a political and cultural movement whose aspiration was to build a nation. Catalonia wished to recover, from the centralist government of the Spanish state, her autonomy via the creation of the requisite political institutions. Thus, in 1914 the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya*<sup>6</sup> was created and, during the Spanish Second Republic, the Republican *Generalitat* (1931) was set up. These aspirations were linked to the urgent need to build a modern country, with everything that the term **modern** implied. The movement took as its model, as it was at pains to emphasise, "the advanced nations of Europe". *Noucentisme* was therefore a period in which nationalist ideology acquired great vitality and the sentiment was to leave its indelible print on all that was undertaken, be it in the political or the cultural arena. Indeed, these years were marked by a cultural politics that were to have an impact on a wide range of activities. The political party with responsibility for orchestrating this policy was

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<sup>3</sup> The concept was developed and promoted by Eugeni d'Ors (1881-1954) in his *Glosari* — a long series of brief journalistic articles — signed with the pseudonym Xènius. These articles were published in the daily paper *La Veu de Catalunya* between 1906 and 1920. D'Ors also published collections of his notes in book form: *La Ben Plantada* (1912) was one of these, *Oceanografia del tedi* (1916) and *La Vall de Josafat* (1921) were two of several others.

<sup>4</sup> 'Modernisme' has certain parallels with 'Art Nouveau'. Today, outside Catalonia, the term 'Modernisme' is often mistakenly used as if it were simply a translation of 'Modern Style'.

<sup>5</sup> *Almanach dels Noucentistes* was published by d'Ors in 1911. Among contributors were Clarà, Picasso, Torres-Garcia and Gargallo who cannot be said to have a stylistic unity.

<sup>6</sup> Albert Balcells, Enric Pujol and Jordi Sabart, *La Mancomunitat de Catalunya i l'Autonomia*, Barcelona 1996.

the *Lliga Regionalista*<sup>7</sup> whose period of political glory, under the leadership of Prat de la Riba, began following victory in the 1901 general elections. Thus, the movement of *noucentisme* spanned the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which were to be crucial in determining the cultural, political and, to a large extent, social development of Catalonia. It was a period in which many of the aspirations were to be fulfilled, but also a period dominated by a yearning impregnated by a strong utopian idealism.

Thus, there was a manifest desire to turn Barcelona into a great European capital, a cosmopolitan and highly developed city. This was driven by a desire to achieve a cultured and dynamic sense of modernity in keeping with the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to ensure, in short, that the “will of the people” might transform the whole country.<sup>8</sup> Also the term ‘city’ means the metaphorical idea of country.<sup>9</sup> Based on these cultural politics, *noucentisme* aspired to build a modern culture based on the national and civil ideal, combined with the defence of its traditions.

The intellectuals, both those directly affiliated to the *Lliga Regionalista* and those who were not, became one of the key elements in bringing these aspirations to fruition. Their work in the press, in the public bodies that were set up —the importance attached to education from primary schooling all the way up to the Scientific Institutes (*Institut d'Estudis Catalans*) — and their commitment to

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<sup>7</sup> Lliga Regionalista was a political party of the Catalan bourgeoisie. Catalanism gained momentum during the first decade of the new century — that is, during the formative years of *Noucentisme*. In 1901 the Catalanist political party, Lliga Regionalista, won its first parliamentary seats; in 1906 Prat de la Riba published *La Nacionalitat Catalana* proposing a Catalan state within a Spanish federation, and this was made a reality with the formation of the *Mancomunitat* (1914), an autonomous body representing Catalonia with Prat de la Riba as president. See Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *La fàbrica de les idees. Política i cultura a la Catalunya del segle XX*, Catarroja-Barcelona 2009.

<sup>8</sup> The history of *noucentisme* is detailed in Martí Peran, Alicia Suárez and Mercè Vidal, ed., *El Noucentisme, un projecte de modernitat*, exh.cat, Barcelona 1994. Also Martí Peran, Alicia Suárez and Mercè Vidal, “*Noucentisme i Ciutat*,” in *Noucentisme i Ciutat*, Madrid 1994, 9-31. On art in Catalonia, and *Noucentisme* in particular, see *Homage to Barcelona. The City and its Art 1888-1936*, exh.cat., London 1986, and *On Classic Ground. Picasso, Léger, de Chirico and the New Classicism 1910-1930*, exh. cat., London 1990, 324-344, and *Paris-Barcelone de Gaudí a Miró*, exh.cat., Paris 2001, 295-322 and *Barcelona Modernity. Picasso, Gaudí, Miró Dalí*, exh.cat., Cleveland with New Haven and London 2007, 226-301.

<sup>9</sup> See Mercè Vidal i Jansà, “La Catalunya-ciutat en la formulació noucentista, in *Medi Ambient. Tecnologia i Cultura* 51 (2014), 5-13.

the drawing up of an inventory and organising the Patrimony of Historical Art, and the expansion of art collections in the Art Museums of Barcelona, were to prove vital.

One of these intellectuals, with close links to the political party of the *Lliga Regionalista*, and whose work had a profound influence on the aesthetics underpinning *noucentisme* was the art critic, historian and museum director: Joaquim Folch i Torres (1886-1963).<sup>10</sup> In 1909, the newspaper, *La Veu de Catalunya*, began publishing a *Pàgina Artística*,<sup>11</sup> which was one of the main forums through which each week this aesthetic ideal with clear political undertones was expressed. *La Veu de Catalunya* had one of the largest readerships in Catalonia and was taken by a wide sector of the population and was a reference point for the other media.

The arts reviews written by Joaquim Folch, from as early as 1909, but in particular after 1911, were directed towards defending Catalan traditions which had one of their most obvious foundations in Popular Art. His reviews were directed to the artists, the artisans involved in the production of the crafts and the architects, urging them to show an appreciation for Popular Art. Thus, in 1912, he was to write: “Popular art, endowed as it is with a wealth of virtues and basic ingredients, is the source from which will emerge, from which must emerge our future glories”.<sup>12</sup>

Joaquim Folch i Torres was fully convinced of this essential value of Popular Art. He believed Popular Art might guide artistic creativity and become a point of reference, even reaffirming a tradition that could recover the character of its mythical origins: the Latin tradition. “If Catalonia wishes to create art in the

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<sup>10</sup> See Mercè Vidal i Jansà, *Teoria i crítica en el Noucentisme: Joaquim Folch i Torres*, Barcelona 1994; also Mercè Vidal i Jansà, *Enric Prat de la Riba i les Arts. Recull epistolar 1911-1917*, Girona 2014.

<sup>11</sup> The *Pàgina Artística* in *La Veu de Catalunya* was dedicated to exhibitions, cultural activities, the patrimonial subjects, architecture. In this *Pàgina* also wrote: J. Puig i Cadafalch, J. Pijoan, Mn. J. Gudiol, Eugeni d’Ors, Jeroni Martorell, J. Torres-Garcia, and other significant persons.

<sup>12</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres also signed his articles with the pseudonym Flama. Flama, “*El Concurs d’Arquitectura del Centre Excursionista de Catalunya*” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística* (19 December 1912).



midst of the disorientation and indecision of the Latin people, which at this point in the modern era represents the renaissance of the Latin spirit, first she has to rediscover herself; rediscover her personality because only in this way is creativity possible”.<sup>13</sup>

It was therefore from this perspective of tradition that Catalan art enjoyed its ‘rebirth’. If these references allow us to speak of certain mythical origins — the spirit of the classical Mediterranean tradition,<sup>14</sup> with which academicizing could be avoided— clearly these references serve, also, to assert autochthonous, nationalist values. Thus, Joaquim Folch i Torres claimed that: “our path is that of Popular Art; it is here that the wealth of our Latinism lies dormant, in which the pure elements of our nature are to be found, in which the tiny seeds lie from which will bloom the future glory of our Art.”<sup>15</sup>

His theoretical guidelines did not overlook the rural world, where the sources that might nourish the art of the day remained in a pure, uncontaminated state. “While the city had been denaturalized, the rural world preserved the most valuable of all that was ours”.<sup>16</sup> The landscape of our coastlines and our rural buildings scattered throughout with *masies*—the typical stone farmhouses — but also the whole repertoire of domestic elements in the interiors of this rural world, were the ideal references for rediscovering an equilibrium; a determined order and an environmental serenity, a harmony. At its root, this is an extremely classical spirit, or rather one that classicizes, combined with the authenticity of a

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<sup>13</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, “Cap a la glòria dels Oficis,” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística* (1 May 1913).

<sup>14</sup> The classical tradition in art was explored in *On Classic Ground. Picasso, Léger, de Chirico*, 1990, published on the occasion of the exhibition held at the Tate Gallery from 6 June to 2 September. See, in particular, Alcía Suárez “Critical theories of Noucentism, Classicism and the Avantgarde in Catalonia, 1906-1930”, 338-344; also Teresa Camps “Models for the female figure in Catalan Art, 1906-1911”, 333-337. On architecture, see also Mercè Vidal i Jansà, “L’ideal clàssic en l’arquitectura catalana (1912-1930),” in *Diàlegs amb l’Antiguitat. El clàssic com a referent en l’art i la cultura contemporànies*, eds. Cristina Rodríguez Samaniego and Jorge Egea, Barcelona 2013, 109-128.

<sup>15</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, “Art i Nacionalisme,” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística* (13 November 1913).

<sup>16</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, “Notes sobre l’Art Popular,” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística*, (27 March 1913).



Figure 1. Josep Aragay (1889-1973), Public fountain, Place Santa Anna, Barcelona, 1917-1918, detail (photograph provided by the author)

differentiated collective spirit. “We might thus armed — he claimed — resolve the civil element in us, with the natural element of what is popular” to attain the civic ideal to which *noucentisme* aspired through an erudite people.

While Joaquim Folch sought a national style, he was careful to demonstrate that this was different from the nationalist desire of the romantics: “The Catalonia of the romantics was full of the ruins of great endeavours. The Catalonia of the ‘noucentistes’ is full of small living things. This is in essence the nature of the two characters which has regained the Catalan ‘renaissance’”.<sup>17</sup> In this return to the origins, the idea of purity and that of lost identity appear with great frequency, and reveal a primitive, simple and unadulterated art without pretension, with the virtue of innocence.

This view of tradition via an emphasis on Popular Art had a direct projection in

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<sup>17</sup> Folch i Torres, “Notes sobre l’Art Popular”.

architecture, in the world of interior design through the application of various art forms and, at the same time, in landscape paintings full as they are with popular references. The still lives of these paintings are a showcase of the old, simple objects. In the world of sculpture the figure of the country girl became common – whether from Cèret, Rosselló, Mallorca or any other place within Catalonia – and it came to mould and reaffirm the new female figure. A figure now typified by a robustness that, at heart, is that of the Latin, Mediterranean woman, rooted in a given physical space, and above all, a country. The figure is perhaps best exemplified in the sculpture *Girls with ceramic jug* (1925) or *The Grapes Gatherer* (1927) by Pau Gargallo. The exaltation of the woman-fairy, languid and stylised or as a *femme fatale* which had become so widespread during the period of *Modernisme* and which took its inspiration from the mists of northern European countries had become a thing of the past.

Judging by what has been said so far, it might be thought that this iconography of the rural world, which sought a point of reference in the world of Popular Art, could represent a simple copy and become a colourful repertoire, the culture of the bazaar, a phenomenon of the purest *kitsch*. Along similar lines, Joaquim Folch, warned: “We are not seeking wineskins, nor breeches, nor picturesque scenes, but rather forms of constructive necessity (...) in short we are seeking, through the constructive organisms, that inheritance of logic and reason that is to be found among the ruins of the Parthenon”.<sup>18</sup> Joaquim Folch wrote this in 1913, the year in which for six months he was to travel around Europe visiting museums, exhibitions and art schools in order to see what he might learn from those countries in the vanguard of Europe.

Of this journey, recorded in a series of articles that he sent each week for publication in the *Pàgina Artística* of *La Veu de Catalunya*, two articles are of particular interest here. First, there is an article that describes his visit to the

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<sup>18</sup> Folch i Torres, “Notes sobre l’Art Popular”.



Figure 2. Rafel Masó (1880-1935), Dining room at Masó home (sideboard), 1918-1919, walnut, 197 cm x 213 cm x 66 cm. Fundació Rafael Masó, Girona, (photograph provided by the author)

Ideal Home Exhibition<sup>19</sup> in London's Olympia Pavillion and which coincided with a conversation with Robert W. Cable, lecturer at the School of Architecture of the Architectural Association. The conversation with professor Cable centred on the sense of unity which the English lecturer demanded from his students who were only fascinated by the style of the French palaces that they sought to imitate. For Folch the exhibition represented a clear expression of the desire to conserve that unitary character since the simplicity and elegance of the interiors showed and affirmed the sense of English tradition. The other article described the impression that an exhibition entitled *Russian Popular Art in the Image, the toy and cake* held in the Salon d'Automne in Paris had had on him. The

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<sup>19</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, "L'Interior ideal. Al bon amic Josep Pey en record de la visita feta a 'Ideal Home,'" in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística*, (11 December 1913). Articles written during this journey around Europe have been compiled in Mercè Vidal Jansà, ed., *Joaquim Folch i Torres. Llibre de viatge (1913-1914)*, Barcelona (2013), 99-104.

exhibition took a decidedly folkloric perspective of popular art and this was sufficient to confirm in his mind that what he sought from Catalan Popular Art was something quite distinct. He was to write in no uncertain terms: “A great movement has taken hold throughout Europe in recent times in support of popular art. I wish to make it clear that we wish to have nothing to do with this, that we are not subscribers to this movement, nor do we wish to be. (...) No, our Popular Art would be of no interest in itself if we were not to seek in it matters of great substance for our specific problem of the nationalisation of ‘Art’” and he added that what he sought from Popular Art was not “a study that is an end in itself, but rather it should be a humble preparation for a worthy cause, for civil matters, matters of perfection in which are to be found the moulding of the future ‘City’ of an ideal Catalonia.”<sup>20</sup>

As can be seen, the theory of aesthetics upheld by Folch was distinct from that of the popular regionalist movement which, with the nationalist movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, served as the source of inspiration for much artistic production during several decades in Europe. Why was this the case? Perhaps the difference is to be found in the very nature of *noucentisme*. The nationalistic project on which *noucentisme* drew looked to the rural world in search of permanent values and an uncontaminated national essence. And it did not do this only in order to recreate an original world, but rather in an attempt to find basic values which were to orient the construction of the ideal city, the project of the modern nation. This instructional role devised for tradition is especially useful in the world of the arts. Since if art is applied in the correct reading of tradition, because “it is not a matter of copying forms, but rather of studying the reason why these forms are the way they are”, then, solutions are isolated with the same guarantee of permanence as tradition itself. Clearly, such an interpretation can be made from within a discipline – that of Art History – which guarantees its value “it requires

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<sup>20</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, “L’Art Popular i la dignitat nacional,” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística*, (11 December 1913). Also found in the above-mentioned compilation by Mercè Vidal i Jansà, *Llibre de viatge*, 131-136.



Figure 3. Rafael Masó (1880-1935), Masó house, Garden-city La Gavina de S'Agaró, Girona, 1930-1935 (photograph provided by the author)

highly erudite men to work on the materials that we collect”, just as “it needs artists who concentrate their personal energies on these permanent, invariable principles.”<sup>21</sup> Artists who apply their intellect and with clear objectivity might perceive in the essence: “beyond all the formulae that our world has created, a living purity, clarity, brilliance, an indestructible sense of reason, a formula of constructionism raised to the level of beauty, from which Catalan culture, in emphasising it, has to give birth to its Style.”<sup>22</sup>

With the treatment that Folch claimed for Popular Art, he revealed also his stance as an art historian and museum director. Indeed, Folch claimed a similarity of treatment for Popular Art as that received by other studies of Catalan art made from within historiography and which meant, because of their contributions,

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<sup>21</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, “L’Obra de l’Art Popular,” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística*, (11 September 1913).

<sup>22</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, “Cap a l’Estil,” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística*, (5 June 1913).

placing Catalan art – as an element of identity – in the dynamics of international art circles. In this vein he makes two references to the works of the architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch: *L'arquitectura romànica a Catalunya* (Romanesque Architecture in Catalonia)<sup>23</sup> and “La Casa Catalana” (The Catalan House), published in 1909 and 1913, respectively. The first of these studies was a general treatise on Catalan art from its origins to the Middle Ages. As well as providing a periodisation of medieval art, this considered the architecture of the house, as an example of civic architecture, alongside that of the palace. A short time afterwards he took up the subject again in the second of the studies, the paper “La casa catalana” (The Catalan House), which was given at the First Congress of the History of the Crown of Aragon. For Puig i Cadafalch this was the clearest example in which, above and beyond any style, national art could be found, because “In Catalonia, the architecture of its houses is a permanent art form”.<sup>24</sup>

Seen in this light, the discourses and the campaigns mounted by Joaquim Folch i Torres in support of Popular Art acquired the nature of a manifesto through the detailed study that can be applied in the historiography of art. “We have now embarked on the first stage of the journey,” he wrote, “that of patient collection”<sup>25</sup> with the ultimate goal of establishing a Museum of Popular Art. A task, which began with a call for patience and to which everyone could contribute – which is how he expressed himself in the appeals he made from the lines of the *Pàgina Artística de La Veu de Catalunya*, seeking once more that art, as a social product, might form an element of solidarity for all the social classes. The final step was

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<sup>23</sup> Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956) historian, architect and politician. See Josep Puig i Cadafalch, Antoni de Falguera, Josep Goday i Casals, *L'arquitectura romànica a Catalunya*, Barcelona 1983 (first edition 1909-1918). See Enric Jardí, *Puig i Cadafalch: Arquitecte, Polític i Historiador de l'Art*, Barcelona, 1975; Albert Balcells, *Puig i Cadafalch i la Catalunya Contemporània*, Barcelona 2003, and especially in this publication the work by Ramon Grau, “El positivisme historiogràfic de Puig i Cadafalch i l'arquitectura catalana”, 97-197.

<sup>24</sup> Josep Puig i Cadafalch, “La casa catalana,” in *I Congrés d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó. Segona part*, Barcelona, 1908 [1913], 1041-1060. See Judith Rohrer, “Puig i Cadafalch: the Early Work,” in *Jospe Puig i Cadafalch: L'arquitectura entre la casa i la ciutat. Architecture between the House and the City*, exh.cat., Barcelona 1989-1990, 15-35.

<sup>25</sup> Folch i Torres, “L'Obra de l'Art Popular”.

the creation of a Museum of Popular Art, “the museum has to be the National Museum of Catalonia and not solely a place in which folkloric curiosities are gathered, but rather a source of new energy for our art (...) a laboratory (...) a place for conjecture”.<sup>26</sup>

And just when the interest in Popular Art was growing and a line of action was beginning to take shape, the political circumstances in Catalonia added a new dimension to the matter in hand. The year 1914 saw the proclamation and establishment of an autonomous government, the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya*, presided over by Enric Prat de la Riba. This was to give rise to a climate of optimism that led to an intensification of cultural and institutional activity.<sup>27</sup>

The subject of Popular Art had thus acquired a basic value in rediscovering a national essence, a goal shared by the aspirations of the nationalist bourgeoisie, which because of its particular nature had a special interest in the values of tradition. Now, through closely related fields, Popular Art saw itself directly or indirectly institutionalised. Joaquim Folch, in a number of his articles, had campaigned for the safeguarding of typical places and the evaluation of the cultural heritage. This included the founding in 1915 of the Board for the Conservation and Cataloguing of Historic-Artistic Monuments under the directorship of the architect Jeroni Martorell.<sup>28</sup> Three years later the Ethnographic and Folklore Archive of Catalonia under the auspices of the Philosophy and Arts Faculty of the University of Barcelona was set up, with the aim of creating a Museum, though this was not to be created until after the Civil War.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, of fundamental importance was the establishment in 1915 of the *Escola Superior dels Bells Oficis* (School of Fine Crafts) within the Industrial University. Not only

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<sup>26</sup> Joaquim Folch i Torres, “L’Art Popular,” in *La Veu de Catalunya. Pàgina Artística*, (7 March 1912).

<sup>27</sup> See Vidal i Jansà, *Enric Prat de la Riba*, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Raquel Lacuesta, *Servei de Catalogació i Conservació de Monuments de la Diputació de Barcelona. Metodologia, criteris i obres (1915-1981)*, Barcelona 1998 [Ph.D. dissertation].

<sup>29</sup> M. Dolors Llopart, “Presentació,” in *Catàleg del Museu d’Arts, Indústries i Tradicions Populars*, exh. cat., Barcelona 1991, 9-10; Montserrat Iniesta i González, *Els Gabinets del Món. Antropologia, Museus i Museologies*, Lleida 1994, 222.



was it an alternative to the discredited academic teachings of Fine Arts, it was also, as it should have been, instrumental in recovering many of the traditional arts, those of the traditional crafts, but from the perspective of the unification of all the Arts. And in this sense, Folch's knowledge of what the Royal College of Art in London was seeking to establish for the traditional crafts and architecture was crucial in determining its orientation.

The *Escola Superior dels Bells Oficis*<sup>30</sup> (School of Fine Crafts) introduced the following subjects: Arts of the Earth - ceramics, ceramic tiling, glassmaking, etc.; Arts of Wood - carpentry, woodwork in general, carving in wood; Arts of Metal - blacksmithing, foundry work, forging in bronze, silver, engraving, etc.; Arts of Textiles and Leather - tapestry making, upholstery, lace, printing, embossing with leather, etc.; Arts of Gardening and Architectonic Sculpture. All were traditional craft forms in which the autochthonous tradition was sufficiently fertile to ensure that a Catalan school of these artistic craft forms would flourish. The recovery of these crafts — a feature also of the *Modernisme* — now took a different direction involving the learning of traditional techniques that guaranteed the “well-made work”<sup>31</sup>, as was demanded on more than one occasion by the philosopher d'Ors and an abiding feature of the aesthetics of *noucentisme*. However, the proclamation in 1923 of a dictatorship headed by General Primo de Rivera would mark a turning point in the political and cultural progress of the country and the School of Fine Crafts was closed down. The extent of the value acquired by tradition and Popular Art in the world of the arts is evidenced by the number of fronts on which they appeared. In print making, for example, the technique of wood cuts — particularly popular during the Baroque— was to rediscover excellent practitioners, among whom was the artist Josep Obiols (1894-1967). The work *Noia amb dos càntirs* (Girl with two

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<sup>30</sup> Alexandre Galí, *Història de les institucions i del moviment cultural a Catalunya*, Barcelona 1982.

<sup>31</sup> See Mercè Vidal i Jansà, “A la recerca d’una identitat en els productes. Noucentisme i política cultural,” in *La formació del sistema disseny Barcelona (1914-2014), un camí de modernitat. Assaigs d’història local*, Barcelona 2014, 87-104; and Alicia Suárez, “L’Exposició Internacional del Moble de Barcelona (1923) i la bellesa de la llar humil”, 105-116.



Figure 4. Joaquim Sunyer (1874-1956), *Cala Forn*, 1917, oil on canvas, 120 x 140 cm. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (photograph provide by the author)

earthenware jugs) is a woodcut dating from 1917 for the illustrations in Joan Arús' book *Llibre de les donzelles*. As for the traditional crafts employed in interior design and architecture, the same attention was awakened, be it in ceramics, glass work, popular furniture and tapestries. In each of these traditional crafts, in addition to the demands of quality, an explicit authenticity was sought through the recovery of the formal resources of the past. In some cases, emphasis was on the shape, composition, and colours which recalled the 1700s, in others the typical blue colours of Barcelona ceramic work from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. One of the leading artists working in ceramics was Josep Aragay (1889-1973).<sup>32</sup> He was one of the first to undertake a public commission when he designed (1917-1918) the ceramic tiles for one of Barcelona's public fountains in Santa Anna square dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The same artist recovers those typical colourings from the

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<sup>32</sup> See Xavier Castanyer i Angelet, *Josep Aragay, artista i teòric del Noucentisme*, Barcelona 2012, 125-149.

Barcelona ceramics in his work “Gerro del pa” (Bread jug) at the Museum Josep Aragay, Breda. Another important ceramics artist is Xavier Nogués (1873-1941). His ceramics frieze at El Pinell de Brai (Terra Alta), shows characteristic popular-type figures treated with subtle irony (1922). As for furniture, mention should be made of the wooden bench designed by the architect Antoni Puig Gairalt (1888-1935) for the house of Lluís Guarro, in Barcelona, in 1921-1923. It is a seat carved from the wood of the walnut tree which recalls the earlier seats of the Catalan country houses and the wooden trunk or chest holding the possessions of the bride as she entered marriage. The artist and teacher Francesc d’Assís Galí (1880-1965) produced a number of panels that were clearly evocative of the Mediterranean countries. Further obvious examples include the writing desk with feet carved in the shape of birds’ claws, made of wood from the olive tree and mahogany, made by Antoni Badrinas (1882-1969), and with the inlaid work designed by the painter, Marià Espinal (1895-1974), in 1923, and the small nightstand (now in a particular collection). The architect Rafael Masó (1880-1935) expressed his *noucentista* conception of the house: comfortable but austere, full of cultured references under a humble and popular appearance. This sideboard designed in 1918-1919 for the dining room of his home in Girona (located in Ballesteries, 29, now Fundació Rafael Masó) contains the dinner service and other dining room utensils<sup>33</sup>, we can say it is a good example of well-crafted furniture, clearly influenced by traditional ancestral designs.

Popular architecture was an important reflection of the appreciation of Popular Art. The constructional simplicity of the typical *masies* (country houses)<sup>34</sup>— with their arched galleries and open verandas, their whitewashed interiors and their simple framework of beams — was a constant point of reference. Perhaps initially this was no more than a pictorial architecture found in paintings, prints and drawings, but after 1915 actual examples of this architecture were constructed.

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<sup>33</sup> Jordi Falgàs, ed., *Casa Masó. Vida i arquitectura noucentista*, Girona 2012.

<sup>34</sup> See Jeroni Moner and Joaquim M. Puigvert, eds. *Materials per l'estudi de la masia de Josep Danés*, Girona 2010. Josep Danés (1891-1955), architect, analyzed these houses between 1914-1934.

As a model, it was only applied to the construction of suburban family homes which were quickly labelled, and the name stuck, as *'xalets catalanistes'*—the mansions or villas of those in favour of Catalan autonomy. Since it was a model of vernacular architecture that had been stripped of historical references, it allowed a number of architects of *noucentisme* to combine it, at least partially, with the rationalist architecture of the 1930s, finding common ground in Le Corbusier's treatises on the structural value of architecture. Among other works done by Rafael Masó, mention should be made of the house designed for Miquel Cases (1914-1916), in San Feliu de Guixols (Girona),<sup>35</sup> the House Vinyes (1929-31) in Cerdanyola, or his own house in the garden-city of La Gavina de S'Agaró (Girona) in 1930-1935. We can also mention the architect Ramon Puig Gairalt (1886-1937)<sup>36</sup> who built the house for Antoni Solà (1915) in Cardedeu, or the *xalet* designed for Assumpció Tey also in Cardedeu. Other examples are the house Lluís Guarro (1923) in Sarrià (near Barcelona) designed by architect Antoni Puig Gairalt with the collaboration of the landscaper Joan Mirambell (1895-1983) and the artists Josep Obiols and Francesc d'Assís Galí. Other architectural works with popular references include the house that Josep Danés (1891-1955) designed for Josep M. Plana (1927-1929) in Olot,<sup>37</sup> the houses in the garden-city of Terramar (Sitges) and the houses by Josep M. Martino (1891-1957). In those houses the architect was able to give an adequate response, seeking tradition and modernity, to the emerging tourism in Sitges, one of the small seaside towns.

As for the painting and sculpture produced in *noucentisme*, it is clear that there was here too a strong link with popular tradition. Generally speaking, the iconography of these forms portrays all those elements in the rural world

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<sup>35</sup> Raquel Lacuesta et al., *Rafael Masó i Valentí, arquitecte (1880-1935)*, exh. cat., Barcelona 2006; Joan Tarrús and Narcís Comadira, *Rafael Masó. Arquitecte noucentista*, Girona 2007.

<sup>36</sup> See Alicia Suárez and Mercè Vidal, *Els arquitectes Antoni i Ramon Puig Gairalt. Tradició i modernitat*, Barcelona 1993.

<sup>37</sup> See Joaquim M. Puigvert i Solà, *Josep Danés i Torras. Noucentisme i regionalisme arquitectònics*, Barcelona 2008.

that can easily be interpreted by the local community. It is as if this view, a more genuine perspective of the rural world, facilitates a learning of the values on which modern behaviour might be based. The sense of community that is detected in the popular scenes is depicted in settings that are typified by a great sense of serenity, as can be seen in the works of Xavier Nogués. The serenity is evoked within an architectonic frame of arched galleries, lovers releasing a balloon into the air or on a feast day under the bower of vines. Or in the paintings like *Noies catalanes* (Catalan girls, in the MNAC) (1921) by Josep de Togores (1893-1970) of robust canon and dressed with working class simplicity. This sense of community detected in the popular scenes of the rural world revolves around the world of work — modest, constant endeavour, through which man establishes a harmonic relationship with nature in order that it meets his needs. Thus it depicts a natural world that is inhabited and worked in order to make it productive. Moreover it is depicted as being populated with small constructions — as in *Puig del Mas (Paisatge de Banyuls)* (Landscape of Banyuls, in a private collection) (1914) by Joaquim Sunyer (1874-1956) — or in harvest scenes, such as the painting *Ofrena* (Offering, Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno) (1920) by the sculptor Juli González (1876-1942) which was presented in the Exhibition of Latin painters in Toulouse in the same year. Besides, within this humanistic perspective, even the depiction of repose after hours of selfless toil is shown as a scene of joyful civility — take, for example, *Cala Forn* (1917) by Joaquim Sunyer. This same attitude is evident in still lifes, which become showcases of the attributes of the rural world thanks to the type of objects that are depicted there. The figures of *Cala Forn* by Sunyer, highlight the hands of the workers and around them the various farming implements typical of the rural world. Similarly, we have *El porxo* (The porch) (1918), by Enric C. Ricart (1843-1960) and the works *Natura morta* (Still Life) (1916), by Jaume Mercadé (1887-1967) and *Fruits* (Fruit) (1914), by Domènec Carles (1888-1962). In the other perspective and understanding, the Museu d'Art de Catalunya (now MNAC) from the nationalist point of view, the recovery of medieval paintings



Figure 5. Xavier Nogués (1873-1941), Decoration from Celler Galeries Laietanes, 1915, tempera on panel, 209.5 x 272 cms. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, detail (photograph provide by the author)

from small Romanesque churches in the Pyrenees was a point of reference for contemporary artists, as can be seen, for example, in the decoration of *Celler Galeries Laietanes* (1915), by Xavier Nogués.<sup>38</sup> The Galeries Laietanes was a place for exhibitions and meetings of *noucentista* artists and intellectuals. Nogués made an exaltation of the Dionysian festivals, in a very particular and measured way. One of the panels reads “La Carn fa Carn...” (Meat makes meat ...) as in Joan Salvat-Papasseit’s poem XVIII *La rosa als llabis* (The rose in the lips). The rigid symmetry of the compositions, the parade of little people under small arcades, the colours and geometric patterns also refer to the structuring of Romanesque space, while also displaying Baroque and Renaissance elements. Through these compositions the artist represented different social classes.

<sup>38</sup> See Xavier Nogués. *Pintures murals procedents del Celler de les Galeries Laietanes*, exh.cat., Barcelona 1984; also Alicia Suárez and Mercè Vidal, “Xavier Nogués, dionisiac,” in *Serra d’Or* 295 (1984), 49-55.

This idyllic and bucolic atmosphere, while in keeping with the popular tradition, cannot be exclusively interpreted in terms of the precepts formulated from within the discourse of *noucentisme*. In this sense, the emphasis on the rural world needs also to be interpreted in conjunction with the primitivism school that inspired many of the artistic productions of the time, especially in sculpture. See, for example, the works *Dona de Fornalutx* (Girl from Fornalutx, Mallorca, Museum of Tossa de Mar) (1916) and *Pagesa mallorquina* (Peasant girl from Mallorca, MNAC) (1916) sculpted by Enric Casanovas (1882-1948), and *Montserrat* (1922, MNAC), by Juli Gonzàlez. The other example is Pau Gargallo's (1881-1934).<sup>39</sup> His *La Veremadora* (The Grape Gatherer, 1927-1928) formed part of the works — *Man with Flower*, *Women with a Pitcher* and *Shepherd with Flute*— a tribute to the peasants of his beloved hometown Maella and fruit of his honest craftsmanship. Since as the critic Rafael Benet said: “Gargallo knows how to express himself through all materials”, whether it be bronze, stone, clay, iron or brass. Gargallo received a commission to make a series of sculptures, including *The Grape Gatherer* for the Plaça de Catalunya (Barcelona) in 1927; the square had just been built according to a design by the architect Francesc de Paula Nebot. The commission arrived at a moment when Primo de Rivera's dictatorship was drawing to a close.

Gargallo had already achieved success with more avant-garde works consisting of steel sheeting in which he exchanged convex for concave surfaces, and this more conventional sculpture still bears hallmarks of modernity that break with realism. His version of the ‘robust female’ — a proud, well-built farm girl — is reminiscent of the figure of the Mediterranean woman already made familiar by Aristides Maillol. *The Grape Gatherer* presents a simplicity of volume, a formal synthesis and a certain archaic cast to the face that relate it to primitivism that was so highly regarded in 20<sup>th</sup> century art. Finally, it is worth pointing out that

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<sup>39</sup> *Gargallo, 1881-1981*, exh.cat., Barcelona, Lisbon, Zaragoza 1981-1982, 27, 67. Pierrete Gargallo-Anguera, *Pablo Gargallo. Catalogue raisonné*, Paris 1998, 240-241. <http://www.bcn.cat/artpublic> (accessed 4 October 2014).



Figure 6. Pablo Gargallo (1881-1934), *The Grape Gatherer*, Montjuïc stone, 369 x 140 x 140 cm. (total), 270 x 090 x 090 cm. (figure), 115 x 140 x 140cm. (base), 1927-1928, Plaça Miramar, Barcelona (collection the City of Barcelona), (photograph provided by the author)

Gargallo's work follows the *noucentista* ideals that adopted subject matter from the popular world as part of its own tradition, an approach he was never to relinquish even during his explorations of the avant-garde. In this way, finally, the works of the sculptor Manolo Hugué (1872-1945) including such important works as *La Llobera* (The old peasant) (1912) and his *Catalana asseguda* (Seated Catalan Woman, MNAC) (1923) which depicts Céret (a village in Rosselló, in the northern Pyrenees), a monument to the musician Déodat de Séverac, a great friend of Picasso and Manolo from the years they shared the same artistic concerns.

Catalan Popular Art in *noucentisme* was not interpreted ethnographically, or on the basis of folklore. Neither was it a simple recreation of an original world, but rather it was concerned with seeking certain basic values that were to guide the national project in the direction to which it aspired.



# HISTORICAL PRECONDITIONS OF “GREEK MODERNISM”: THE CASE OF VISUAL ARTS

NIKOS DASKALOTHANASSIS

A belief commonly found in the literature on Greek modernism is that Greek modernism constitutes a well-established phenomenon. Thus, scholarly research in this area focuses mostly on identifying its expressive particularities, seldom posing the simple question: “Was there ever a Greek modernism?” and, if so, when did it appear and what was its historical context? Even if we were to accept, however sketchily, that the phenomenon truly existed and was in fact well-established, we would soon discover a conspicuous (and usually unspoken) absence: the fact, that is, that the visual arts – since we will not be dealing with architecture here – are usually nowhere to be found in the array of studies on the subject.

Indeed, the studies of Greek modernism rarely, if ever, make clear or even indicate in their title that they have a limited scope of research, namely, that they are generally about literature and not art in general. As is often the case. For instance, the anthology edited by Dimitris Tziouvas in 1997, characteristically entitled *Greek Modernism and Beyond*<sup>1</sup>, does not include a single text about the visual arts. In this sense it does not fill the blank left by the first volume in

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<sup>1</sup> Dimitris Tziouvas, ed., *Greek Modernism and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Peter Bien*, Lanham (MD) 1997.

English on the subject, entitled *Modernism in Greece?* that appeared in 1990,<sup>2</sup> despite its stated intention to do so.<sup>3</sup> The same goes for both *Monternismos kai ellinikotita*<sup>4</sup> (Modernism and Greekness) and the edition of a series of lectures on the same subject, entitled *Monternismos: i ora tis apotimisis?* (Modernism: Is It Time for an Assessment?),<sup>5</sup> art is essentially absent here too. But what could this absence mean?

In an effort to interpret this absence, the present paper will move in two parallel directions. On the one hand, it will attempt to trace the conditions that have defined modernism both historically and culturally, so that it can be shown how a probable Greek version of modernism could fit into this setting, and on the other hand it will put visual arts within the context of this discussion.

It is true that the term ‘modernism’ comprises more than just ‘modern’ itself, either as a cultural characteristic or as descriptive of a historical phase. In other words, when we use the term modernism, we are not *merely* referring to modern art, modern architecture and modern literature, or to a historical period that begins, say, with the Renaissance and comes down to the present time, the modern times. That is, we are not simply referring to certain innovative elements in a piece (e.g. in Monet’s painting or in Brancusi’s sculptures), or in a text (e.g. in Mallarmé’s poetry or in Joyce’s *Ulysses*), nor are we merely defining a historical phase with a new set of characteristics (e.g. the Age of Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and so on and so forth). The use of the term modernism presupposes the often implicit acceptance of the certainty that we are referring to a distinct historical and cultural current which condenses a “conscious commitment”,<sup>6</sup> a conscious stance towards the world, a stance that is

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<sup>2</sup> Mary N. Layoun, ed., *Modernism in Greece? Essays on the Critical and Literary Margins of a Movement*, New York 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Tziouvas, ed., *Greek Modernism*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Nasos Vagenas et al., *Monternismos kai ellinikotita* [Modernism and Greekness], Rethymno, Crete 1997.

<sup>5</sup> *Monternismos: i ora tis apotimisis? Seira dialexeon* [Modernism: Is It Time for an Assessment? A Series of Lectures], Athens 1996 (among the ten lectures included there is a talk from a painter).

<sup>6</sup> See Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Durham 1987, 86.

clearly formed, theoretically substantiated and describable. This stance includes everything related to a new way of human living within a new environment that is defined by change, rupture, progress, technology, the metropolis, crowds of people, velocity, communication, and everything else that emanates from the foregoing. Thus, while the term modern has a long history in the Western tradition, the term modernism appeared more recently.

Needless to say, however, that the first use of the term *modernus* dates back to the late 5<sup>th</sup> century, derived from the Latin *modo*, which originally meant 'just now', but soon after, in Charlemagne's time, acquired the meaning 'new age' (*saeculum modernum*), in contradistinction to the past, here to the Roman past.<sup>7</sup> The term modern then entered the vocabulary of culture and began to be used widely – passing between the clashing rocks of French classicism through the famous *querelle des anciens et des modernes* (combat between the ancients and the moderns) – in the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as seen in emblematic texts of the era such as Baudelaire's "Le peintre de la vie moderne" ("The Painter of Modern Life") (1863).<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, the term modernism – excepting of course its specific use (as *el modernismo*) in the Spanish-speaking world, made by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867–1916), and the negative connotations attached to it in the context of the reactionary policies of the Roman Catholic Church adopted

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<sup>7</sup> See Hans Robert Jauss, "Modernity and Literary Tradition," in *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005), 329-364, particularly 334 (the essay was first published in German in 1965). Perhaps indicative of the peripheral position occupied by art history in the discussion about the origins of the term is the fact that Jauss does not mention Vasari (1550, 1568) as a literary source, who makes extensive use of the word in his *Vite*, see for instance the definition of "terza maniera che noi vogliamo chiamare la moderna", Giorgio Vasari, *Le opera di Giorgio Vasari con nuove annotazioni e commenti di Gaetano Milanesi*, Florence 1878-1885, (*Le Vite* vol. I-VII), Proemio alla parte terza, vol. IV, 11. Even earlier (in 1517?), the term is used systematically by the author of the famous letter to Pope Leo X, which is attributed to Raphael, see Francesco P. Di Teodoro, *Raffaello, Baldassar Castiglione e la Lettera a Leone X*, Bologna 1994, 63-97, passim.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "Le peintre de la vie moderne" (1863), in *Baudelaire Critique d'art suivi de Critique musicale*, ed. Claude Pichois, Paris 1992, 343-384, English translation by P. E. Charvet, *The Painter of Modern Life*, London 2010, 1-56.

during the period of Pope Pío X<sup>9</sup> – was only established, particularly in English-speaking countries, in the late 1920s<sup>10</sup>. But what are the historical causes of this rather late emergence?

I have the feeling that the late establishment of the term modernism can be associated with its latent ideological content: modernism emerges as a notion that defines, codifies, homogenizes and confines the aggregate of characteristics that distinguish Baudelaire's *modernité*. For this reason, as a term, it became fully functional<sup>11</sup> only after 'modern life' acquired a particular substance. Otherwise, it would be impossible to construct the notion of modernism, since it would rest on an historical *vacuum*. I think that the defence of this argument unavoidably leads us to two categories of questions.

First: what were the historical conditions for the construction of the notion of modernism both as a theory for the modern and as a cultural practice? In other words, what filled this historical *vacuum*, thus allowing a discussion about modernism? Second: what were the driving forces behind it? Why was it necessary to have an all-embracing theory that would codify positions on, views about and attitudes towards modern life, and have at the same time 'global' application?<sup>12</sup> The answer – or perhaps the outline of an answer – to these questions will first of all allow us to delve into the heart of the matter that interests us here, namely, the identification of the historical conditions that allowed the construction and the establishment of modernism both as a notion and as a cultural activity. On the other hand, this will also permit us to put Greece within the context of this construct, particularly as far as visual arts are concerned.

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<sup>9</sup> Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 68-78.

<sup>10</sup> See Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 83 and *Online Etymology Dictionary* <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=modernism>> (accessed on 5/9/2014).

<sup>11</sup> The term *modernism*, as a neologism in the English language, was first recorded in 1755, see Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 69.

<sup>12</sup> A similar ambition can also be seen in more recent, and of more limited scope, cultural notions, such as the "global conceptualism" associated with conceptual art, see the exhibition catalogue Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss, eds., *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin. 1950s-1980s*, exh. cat. New York, Queens Museum of Art, 1999.

Of course, I do not need to repeat here the arguments exchanged by those on the Marxist Left, who, between the wars, were involved in the debate between the pros and cons of modernism with expressionism as their starting point, a debate that mostly hinged on 'aesthetic' and political issues.<sup>13</sup> Could modernism as an *aesthetic* dogma be the proper vehicle for the ideological struggle against fascism, as Ernst Bloch argued, or was exactly the opposite the case, as Lukács argued? The disadvantage in connection with what I am discussing here to this otherwise highly interesting debate that took place during the period when modernism was established as a term, is that it did not allow its broader historical characteristics to be thrown into sharp relief probably because of this very closeness.

But, even in the post-war years, the historiography of modernism, in the area I am interested in here, was more often than not defined by a polemical rhetoric that circumvented its character both as a historical and a cultural phenomenon. A characteristic example is the negative standpoint adopted by Renato Poggioli, for whom modernism is a "parody of modernity ... [which] it cheapens and vulgarizes [by] ... a blind adoration of the idols and fetishes of our time".<sup>14</sup> Perhaps Marshall Berman's position<sup>15</sup> about modernism as an "experience of modernity" could help with drawing more successful conclusions here.

Modernism, in order to constitute itself as a style or current, does presuppose a kind of 'experience' of the world, which is refracted through the constant ebb and flow of the metropolitan crowd that is dazzled by the gleam, the 'phantasmagoria', of the goods displayed in shop windows (as foreseen by Baudelaire and lucidly described by Benjamin). It is a crowd that now begins to move *en masse* with greater and greater speed and to experience in its day-to-day life, often in a mediated fashion, the effects of a rapidly evolving technology. Modernism

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<sup>13</sup> It is of course no accident that the best-known volume available in English is entitled "Aesthetics and Politics", see Rodney Livingstone at al., eds., *Aesthetics and Politics*, London 1995 (1977).

<sup>14</sup> Renato Poggioli, *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia*, Bologna 1962, English translation by Gerald Fitzgerald, *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, Cambridge (MA) 1968, 218.

<sup>15</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London and New York, 1982.

demands the existence of both a prosperous bourgeoisie, or even of a group of people that could directly influence the social body as a whole, which would institutionally and financially support the ‘contradictory’ cultural products with which it was associated. Additionally, a large petty bourgeoisie, or a working class that has undergone a process of micro-bourgeoisification, which would eventually learn, willy-nilly, to admire these products and, as far as possible, consume them. There is no question that this kind of cultural production was connected, right from the outset, with affluent bourgeois patrons (even if its practitioners criticized them) and was shaped within the environment of their dominance, while it soon reached the massive and broader audience of urban dwellers. Finally, modernism seeks one more condition, cultural this time, for its articulation: the familiarization of all parties involved with the tradition of expressive means that its subversive cultural facets – modern art, say, or modern literature – are called to critically re-examine and even dismantle.

Particularly, as far as visual arts are concerned, it is more than obvious that the existence of not only a formal renewal of the artistic vocabulary, but also of a coherent current (i.e. of modernism in the visual arts) that would present a radical critique of traditional forms of expression is dependent upon familiarization with all aspects of the phenomenon that could be termed ‘visual culture’. For, indeed, the visual element was a crucial parameter for the formation of modern Western culture, as was aptly pointed out, even if using morphological terms, by Aloïs Riegl<sup>16</sup> as early as 1901. The prevailing genres of the Western artistic tradition – history painting, portraiture, landscape painting and still life – visualize the world with a directness unknown to other forms of expression. Genres such as drama or literature, which, of course, continue to be produced, albeit while having to compete with this alluring ‘intruder’, the visual arts, which enthrall the eye by reproducing a so verisimilar illusion of reality. The significant

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<sup>16</sup> Aloïs Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunstindustrie*, Otto Bendorff and Robert von Schneider, eds., Vienna 1901, English translation by Rolf Winkes, *Late roman Art Industry*, Rome 1985.

position occupied by painting in the Western tradition during the modern times, a position that it did not occupy in the past, is very suggestive here. The visual representation of the world satisfies the new protagonist of history, the bourgeois, more than anything else, who now embraces with his eye what can be seen at once in the painting: his mythical genealogy, his personal achievements, the boundless estates in his possession and nature at large, which he dominates, and his material possessions, as offered by art with a never-before-seen fullness – and at the same time with an unequivocal superficiality that, at least at first, does not seem to bother him.

Perhaps no other theorist of modernism understood better this aspect of the visual arts tradition than the former Trotskyist and later advocate of the US Cold War policies, Clement Greenberg. Greenberg did try to organize his theoretical construct, not only on the basis of the Western visual tradition – from the Renaissance and after – but also in connection with one of the most important currents of modern thinking: Kant's philosophy. What is interesting here is that Greenberg used Kant to validate, through an authority, his own theory about visuality. This is perhaps why Greenberg's theory was so successful, at least up to the early 1960s – in the period, that is, when American modernism was at its height. This was because it stressed the importance of visual sensation for the development of Western culture, whose acme was, according to Greenberg, modernism, and more specifically American modernism. Of course this construct would have never been built had Greenberg not lived the experience of a metropolis like New York (where he was born in 1909<sup>17</sup>), had he not understood early on, probably because of his earlier Marxist training, the relationship between the "golden umbilical cord" that connects the bourgeoisie, and more specifically its elite, to the artistic avant-garde of modernism,<sup>18</sup> and had

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<sup>17</sup> Clement Greenberg also died in New York in 1994.

<sup>18</sup> See Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," (1939) in: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture. Critical Essays*, Boston 1961, 3-21, particularly 8.

he not been able, despite his “provincialism”,<sup>19</sup> to formulate his views through the communication channels offered by a country which, in the post-war years, was emerging as a superpower.

We have, however, to emphasize again, from the standpoint that interests us here, that the understanding of the visual characteristics of modern European culture cannot but rest on a systematic contact with the Western pictorial tradition. This contact was central to the formation of the theory about modernism in the visual arts, which was a cohesive theory about modern art. In fact, Greenberg attached so much importance to the theoretical documentation of modern art as a cultural phenomenon that he could be considered as responsible for the prevalent tendency to describe it. This is so at least as far as the United States are concerned, and not only on the basis of its innovative characteristics, its formal novelties, so to speak – which, since Baudelaire’s time, have been associated with the historical experience of modern life, a fact that Greenberg often fails to mention – but also on the basis of the theory about modernism that concerns it, namely, on the basis of a ‘modernist’ theory: and this is perhaps why modern art in Europe is still called *modern art*, while in the United States it is called *modernist art*.

After this rather long preamble, let us come to the point at issue: where does Greece belong in this setting? What connects the Greek historical horizon with this tradition and, more specifically, with this visual arts tradition so that it could be included in the discussion about modernism in the visual arts?

In 1903, Georg Simmel was able to describe the metropolitan individual who had frayed nerves and displayed a blasé attitude.<sup>20</sup> In 1907, the number

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<sup>19</sup> See Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch”, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Georg Simmel, “Die Grosstädte und das Geistesleben” (1903), English translation by Kurt Wolff, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. Kurt Wolff, New York 1950, 409-424.



of people living in Athens was barely over 140,000,<sup>21</sup> in a country where the rural population accounted for almost 70 percent of the total population.<sup>22</sup> In 1910, the *Salon des Indépendants* and the *Salon d'Automne* in Paris, hatchingeries of modern styles such as Fauve and Cubist painting, gathered pieces by some 3,000 artists.<sup>23</sup> In 1906, 140 active artists joined forces in the Greek capital by establishing the “Society of Artists”, which between 1907 and 1910 managed, before its breakup, to organize four exhibitions in total, exhibitions that featured academic style paintings.<sup>24</sup>

But what could these slim indications offer? It would be, of course, impossible to analyze here in depth, and in a comparative perspective at that, the historical setting in which visual arts developed in Greece and Europe during the period in question. Such an all-embracing study, which would yield more definite results, remains to be written. I think, however, that even indicative data could serve to demonstrate the status of visual arts in Greece during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first two or three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As far as time and place permitted, artistic activity in the larger urban centres was anything but non-existent, and the same goes for cultural exchange with Western countries. It would, however, be hard to presume that the conditions that might allow the formation of a Greek modernism in the visual arts existed, at least as far as the period before 1930 is concerned. Moreover, visual culture in Greece was far from being a cultural experience.

Greece, a province of the Ottoman Empire until the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after acquiring its independence, found itself in an odd position.

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<sup>21</sup> See Aleka Karadimou-Gerolympou, “Poleis kai poleodomía” [Cities and Town Planning], in *Istoria tis Elladas tou eikostou aiona. 1900-1922: oi aparches* [A History of Greece in the Twentieth Century. 1900-1922: The Beginnings], ed. Christos Hatziosif, Athens n.d., vol. A1, 223-252, particularly the table on 226.

<sup>22</sup> See Sokratis D. Petmezas, “Dimografia” [Demography], in *Istoria tis Elladas tou eikostou aiona*, 41-51, particularly Table 1 on 42.

<sup>23</sup> David Cottington, “The Formation of the Avant-Garde in Paris and London, c. 1880-1915,” in *Art History* 35 (2012), 596-621, particularly 609.

<sup>24</sup> Efthymia E. Mavromichali, “Oi kallitechnikoi syllogoi kai oi stochoi tous (1880-1910)” [Art Societies and their Objectives (1880-1910)] in *Mnimon* 23 (2001), 221-267, particularly 260.

Situated on the edge of Europe, the country was on the fringe of Western cultural developments because it did not have a scholarly or secular art – with the notable exceptions, of course, of Crete under Venetian rule and the Ionian Islands. The visual tradition to which the ‘national body’ had access was mostly connected with a broad-ranging Orient where Byzantine, Ottoman and vernacular elements prevailed. If modernism presupposes the need for a conscious rupture with the scholarly artistic tradition that has now degenerated into sterile academicism as a result of the historical and cultural developments of at least five centuries, this need was, if not completely lacking, since the tradition that spawned it was also lacking, anaemic to say the least in the Athenian art circles of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Greece had just managed to ‘condense’ all Western tradition in the form of history or genre painting cultivated by the Greek artists of the so-called Munich School (most of them had in fact studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Munich (*Münchmer Akademie der Bildenden Künste*), probably owing to the fact that Greece was under the reign of King Otto, son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria). It follows, then, that a scholarly, or even academic, art with only a few decades of existence could hardly trigger a strong reaction from the younger Greek artists, who in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century began to turn to Paris for examples and inspiration. Or, to put it in another way, this reaction could hardly create a Greek modernism in the visual arts, especially when all the aforementioned parameters – intensive industrial development, cutting-edge technology, metropolitan life, and prosperous bourgeoisie – were nowhere to be seen on the Greek historical horizon. In this sense, it is no accident that the term modernism first appeared, and in a negative context at that, in Greece in the late 1920s, mostly in the

areas of poetry and literature.<sup>25</sup> The tradition of the written word was always more prominent in Greece in contrast to the visual arts tradition, and the area of literature was more fully-fledged precisely because, traditionally, the written word was more valid than the image. The image was a rather new vehicle for expression and meaning, particularly the illusory image of the scholarly Western tradition. Thus, the renewal of expressive means in the areas of literature and poetry probably was a more pressing need. This is perhaps why, as mentioned above, in Greece the discussion about Greek modernism still focuses more on poetry and literature than on the visual arts. Nevertheless, attempts to find a new idiom began to appear, few and far between, in the work of some Greek artists who, as seen above, turned to Paris in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Constantinos Maleas<sup>26</sup> (1879-1928), Nikos Lytras (1883-1927) and, of course, Constantinos Parthenis (1878-1967) who subsequently had a long career, are characteristic cases in point. So are we before a Greek modernism, however rudimentary? Did the artists who founded the “Art Group” in 1917 – among whom were the three aforementioned artists – and who shared the same need for artistic renewal represent the first strand of Greek modernism in the visual arts?

A look into the, sadly, scant bibliography of Greek modernism in the visual arts seems to offer a positive answer to this question. Discussing the painting of Nikos Lytras, Antonis Kotidis writes in his *Monternismos kai “Paradosi” stin elliniki techni tou mesopolemou*<sup>27</sup> [Modernism and “Tradition” in Greek Interwar Art], a book which gathers and systematizes quite a few data about the period in

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<sup>25</sup> See the text by Kleon Paraschos entitled “Modernismos” [Modernism] (1927), quoted by Dimitris Tziouvas in *Oi metamorfoseis tou ethnismou kai to ideologima tis ellinikotitas sto mesopolemo* [The Transformations of Patriotism and the Ideology of Greekness in Interwar Greece], Athens 1989, 21. A few years later, Paraschos would use the term modernism, referring to Baudelaire, in a letter to the journal *Nea Estia*, see Kleon Paraschos, “O monternismos tou Baudelaire” [Baudelaire’s Modernism] in *Nea Estia*, 16, July-December 1934, 1094-1095.

<sup>26</sup> Maleas also used the term modernism during the same period, but only in an offhand manner, not in the title, but in the body of his text, to describe artistic activity in the French capital, see C. Maleas, “I synchroni kallitechniki kinisis sto Parisi” [Contemporary artistic activity in Paris], in the newspaper *Kyriaki tou Eleftherou Vimatos*, 9 October 1927, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Antonis Kotidis, *Monternismos kai “Paradosi” stin elliniki techni tou mesopolemou* [Modernism and “Tradition” in Greek Interwar Art], Thessaloniki 1993.

question, that “[in] Greek interwar art, a strain resembling modernism can be seen in the work of quite a few artists. The expressive means of these works ... are included in the vocabulary of modernism. The role played by ... the purely material substance of colour ..., the anti-naturalistic portrayal of the landscape elements ..., the gesture ..., are some of these expressive means”.<sup>28</sup> I believe that what we have here is a characteristic instance of an essential confusion that is commonly seen in the related literature, foreign-language literature not excepted: the confusion between two distinct terms, modern art and modernism, a confusion usually leading to their identification. Modernism is perceived here as just another art style, whose distinctive feature is the use of a special expressive vocabulary. For the author, then, the discovery of certain stylistic innovations in the work of a few Greek artists is enough to attest to the existence of Greek modernism in the visual arts. This is a crucial point, and I would like to labour this point a bit further.

It is not hard for an artist to be influenced by the cultural milieu in which he studies – as Nikos Lytras, for instance, was influenced by the Munich art scene, having lived there from 1907 to 1911 – and to incorporate a few innovative elements into his art. This incorporation, particularly when it is widespread, namely when it concerns more than one artist, could possibly be an indication that modern art did exist in Greece between 1910 and 1920, to keep to the above example; but it by no means suggests the simultaneous presence of a Greek modernism. Modernism, as a historical and cultural phenomenon particular to the area of visual arts, demands, as I have already pointed out, much more than that to exist. It seems to me that a much more constructive discussion about the appearance of Greek modernism could be conducted on the basis of the work by those who formed the ‘pictorial’ branch of a rather literary generation, which, in Greek historiography, goes by the rather problematic name of Generation of the ’30s (that is, the Generation of the 1930s). The relationship between the

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<sup>28</sup> Antonis Kotidis, *Monternismos kai “Paradosi”*, 38.

Generation of the '30s and modernism has, of course, been repeatedly pointed out. More often than not, however, the subject is exhausted, particularly as far as the area of visual arts is concerned, in trite and naïve stereotypes about a "prolific connection between the qualitative roots of Greek culture and the artistic versions of European modernism".<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, a central issue in the related literature is the relationship between these authors and artists and the celebrated 'Greekness', a notion that, although it does not appear here for the first time, now becomes a keyword. There is no need to delve into the exact meaning of the term, as it remains an unresolved issue.<sup>30</sup> However, we have to point out here that the pursuit of Greekness was clearly present in the work of artists belonging to this circle – in the Byzantine-inspired work of Fotis Kontoglou (1895-1965), to be sure, but also in the surrealistically inclined work of Nikos Engonopoulos (1907-1985), or in the post-Cubism-influenced work of Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika (1906-1994). We also have to emphasize that Greekness, as happens with every such ethnocentric retreat, is nothing more than the regional expression of a global phenomenon, a phenomenon that has less to do with the 'national' particularity of a given nation<sup>31</sup> and more to do, in this case, with the emergence of totalitarian regimes in many European countries during the period between the wars.<sup>32</sup> Greekness, in other words, paradoxically connects Greece with Europe, rather than disconnecting it from Europe. Therefore, the pursuit of Greekness is a historical and cultural characteristic which can be associated with an overall

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<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Miltiadis M. Papanikolaou, *Istoria tis technis stin Ellada* [History of Art in Greece], Athens 1999, vol. 1, 88.

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, Dimitris Tziouvas, "Ellinikotita kai Genia tou '30" [Greekness and the Generation of the '30s] in *Cogito* 6 (2007), 6-9, and more recently, Dimitris Tziouvas, *O mythos tis genias tou trianta. Neoterikotita, ellinikotita kai politismiki ideologia* [The Myth of the Generation of the Thirties: Modernity, Greekness and Cultural Ideology], Athens 2011.

<sup>31</sup> For the European dimension of Greekness in the visual arts, see Nicos Hadjinicolaou, "Tesseris Ellines zografoi tou eikostou aiona" [Four Twentieth-century Greek Artists], in Nicos Hadjinicolaou, *Ethniki techniki kai protoporika* [National Art and Avant-Garde], Athens 1982, 27-80.

<sup>32</sup> The dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas was established in Greece in 1936, promoting and fostering such pursuits in the area of visual arts.

stance that sees the realm of culture – in this case art – as an arena for ideological confrontations where issues of identity, history, and social and political change are at stake. The pursuit of Greekness goes beyond the need for a mere formal renewal, echoing issues that often lie at the heart of not only modern art, but also modernism itself as an historical and cultural current. In this sense, the first germs of a Greek modernism in the visual arts may indeed be found in the milieu of the Generation of the '30s and not earlier, given that more conditions<sup>33</sup> seem to exist at that time for the emergence of modernism as an historical and political phenomenon in the area of visual arts.

But who were the standard-bearers of this modernism in the visual arts? Which was, say, their social provenance, and what interventionist leverage did they have on society as a whole? For modernism, in order to be seen as an existing and actual current, must make a greater impact, must enjoy a social recognition that transcends, say, the closed circle of, on the one hand, the intellectuals who codify it as a theory about the modern and, on the other, the authors or artists who, using the terms of this theory, formulate their own innovative idiom.

It is true that a comprehensive study on these issues has not been written yet. Dimitris Tziovas sees liberalism as the element defining the ideological homogeneity of the Generation of the '30s, describing its representatives as well-travelled and “prim and proper” bourgeois.<sup>34</sup> Even if Tziovas's particular references aim at going beyond these generalizations, thus emphasizing what he terms the “cultural ideology” of the Generation of the '30s (a highly problematic position, in my opinion, which is impossible to discuss here), there is no

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<sup>33</sup> The population of Athens stood at less than 300,000 in 1920, exceeding 800,000 in 1928, and finally expanding to 1,200,000 in 1940, see Aleka Karadimou-Gerolympou, “Poleis kai poleodomía” [Cities and Town Planning], in *Istoria tis Elladas tou eikostou aiona*, vol. B1, 62, Table 1. In 1923, the number of new industries was 41, while in 1927 there were 214, see Christos Hatziosif, “To prosfygiko sok, oi statheres kai oi metavoies tis ellinikis oikonomias” [The Refugee Shock, the Constants and Changes in Greek Economy], in *Istoria tis Elladas tou eikostou aiona*, vol. B1, 24, Table 3. After 1928, i.e. after the return to power of the Venizelists, the state machinery was reorganized and the state policy on the visual arts was modernized, see Evgenios D. Mathiopoulos, “Eikastikes Technes” [Visual Arts], in *Istoria tis Elladas tou eikostou aiona*, vol. B2, 401-459, particularly 428-431.

<sup>34</sup> Dimitris Tziovas, *O mythos tis genias tou trianta*, 544-546.

question that liberalism and middle-class or upper middle-class provenance are indeed typical political and social characteristics of most representatives of the Generation of the '30s. In this light, we should not be surprised by the fact that their ability to air their positions and views to the social body was anything but negligible. For instance, as it has rightly been pointed out by Evgenios D. Mathiopoulos, the notion of Greekness "ceased to be an art-critical and theoretical discourse ..., a set of theoretical and ideological trends ..., for the most part confined to intellectual and artistic circles ..., but as a central notion-idea now had the systematic support of the state, passing to organized collective actions on a national scale", influencing through processes described by the author as "the productive activities of the bourgeois, petty bourgeois, proletarian and rural strata".<sup>35</sup> In this way, Greek modernism began to diffuse itself, through Greekness, over society as a whole, acquiring a more concrete foundation a few years before World War II. The articulation of a more systematic discourse on the visual arts, through texts often penned by the artists themselves (a tried and tested strategy of European modernism since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century), contributed to the formulation of more cohesive positions and allowed the emergence of their specific ideological and theoretical choices.

The gamut of these choices included moderate liberal views, traditionalist notions, statements fraught with social concern, as well as ultra-conservative positions. A similar 'variety' can also be seen in their formal idiom. Here, the attempts to revive traditional and vernacular techniques coexisted – sometimes in the work of the same artist – with more or less assimilated borrowings from the vocabulary of Fauves, Surrealism and post-Cubism; a 'mixture' that, in its most felicitous instances, produced an original and interesting result. In this sense, the Greek modernism of the artists belonging to the Generation of the '30s did condense, on a regional scale, most of the (contradictory) aspects of

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<sup>35</sup> See Evgenios D. Mathiopoulos, "Eikastikes Technes," in *Istoria tis Elladas tou eikostou aiona*, vol. B2, 413.

European modernism. It is no accident, then, that most representatives of the Generation of the '30s established their style and discourse after coming into contact – *in situ* – with the European artistic currents of modernism. This greatly contributed to the fostering of a visual conscience which allowed the pursuit of breaking away from a centuries-old visual tradition, a tradition present in Europe since the Renaissance and yet absent, as I have already pointed out, from the Greek historical setting. But what allowed the acquisition, in such a short period of time, of this visual conscience?

This 'condensed' familiarization with the Western visual tradition that facilitated the pursuit of the experience of rupture was a fundamental, and at the same time contradictory, characteristic of modernism. It became possible for the Greek artists of the Generation of the '30s thanks to an equally fundamental element of modern life, an element now experienced in a more conscious manner: the new experience of time which was now perceived in the terms of a continuous acceleration process, since, indeed, "the abstraction, rationalization and quantification of time laid the foundation for the acceleration to be conceived as the dominant character of modernity".<sup>36</sup> To be sure, this process was connected in Greece with the specific historical conditions that suspended or further accelerated it. For instance, the Metaxas Dictatorship (1936-1941), World War II and, above all, the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) curbed the processes of liberal urban modernization and violently interrupted, or at least complicated to a great extent, the development of the unfinished project of Greek modernism. Greek modernism began to re-weave, now at an accelerated pace, the thread of its completion from the 1950s and after, when post-civil war governments turned completely to the Western developmental model, a model that Greece made a struggling attempt to follow and that continues to this day.

It would be impossible to analyze here in detail this 'second moment' of Greek modernism in the visual arts, appraising thus its contribution as a whole. Suffice

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<sup>36</sup> Emily Keightley, ed., *Time, Media and Modernity*, London 2012, 6.



to say that it is hard to share Berman's oversimplifying view which postulates that "[i]t is modernist culture that keeps critical thought and free imagination alive in much of the non-Western world today",<sup>37</sup> a rather paradoxical view for a Marxist like Berman because it seems to idealize the individual freedom enjoyed by Western citizens. In connection with our present topic, however, one could admit something slightly different. Greek modernism in the visual arts, both before and after World War II, did incorporate quite a few modern elements which contributed to fostering critical thinking in Greece during dismal times. This is without disregarding the fact that, at the same time, some of its most significant representatives could serve, *mutatis mutandis*, as a (regional) example of the phenomenon termed by Jeffrey Herf as "reactionary modernism".<sup>38</sup> Moreover, we could argue that, to some extent, and for entirely different reasons, Greek modernism in the visual arts followed the pattern of development of American modernism, rather than that of European modernism. In both cases, in the first three or four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we see rudimentary forms of modern art without a systematic and coherent theory about modernism or a corresponding cultural practice, as is the case, for instance, in Italy or France. It is therefore perhaps not inappropriate to argue that, at least in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in countries such as Greece and the United States, and perhaps to a lesser extent Great Britain,<sup>39</sup> we come across the paradox of modern art without modernism. The all-cohering element in this paradox is connected with a fact I have already mentioned: the countries used as an example above

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<sup>37</sup> Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, 125.

<sup>38</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge 1984. The circle of people who revolved around the Generation of the '30s and, more or less, sided with the Metaxas Dictatorship included Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, contributor of the journal *To Neon Kratos* (1937-1941), an informal instrument of the regime, and, among others, Pantelis Prevelakis and Kostis Bastias, Greek intellectuals appointed to institutional positions. See their laudatory texts in the special edition of the journal *Nea Estia*, issued to commemorate the death of Ioannis Metaxas, in *Nea Estia*, 340, (29), 15 February 1941, 127-129 (Bastias) and 130-131 (Prevelakis). The same issue, which carries a portrait of Metaxas by Parthenis on its cover, features contributions by the composer Manolis Kalomoiris (136-137) and the author M. Karagatsis (153-154).

<sup>39</sup> As rightly pointed out, although in a different context, by Perry Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution" in *New Left Review* 144 (1984), 96-112, particularly 102.

exist on different planes of modernizing development (United States and Great Britain on the highest plane, and Greece on a far lower plane). Yet they share a common characteristic: the absence of a significant tradition in the visual arts, which can be seen, in contrast, in countries like France or Italy. In the end, it seems that the lesser degree of familiarization with this aspect of visual culture had an impact on the ability to establish modernism in the visual arts early on. Furthermore, I think that these observations can help us to reach a broader conclusion. For the considerable ease with which modernism is identified in every single part of the world,<sup>40</sup> eventually eludes its complexity as a historical and cultural phenomenon. At the same time, this ease throws the political need for a cultural homogenization of the planet into sharp relief. This is one of the reasons why the discussion about modernism results, not from a need to understand the phenomena of historical reality, but from an attempt to instrumentalize history itself. It is only then that modernism, which, despite its contradictory aspects, often includes at its heart the project for a liberated humanity, becomes an instrument of domination.

Now, as far as Greece is concerned, and perhaps a number of other regions in Southern Europe, modernism in the visual arts was a historical and cultural phenomenon. A cultural practice that emerged between the wars (acquiring a more consistent substance after World War II) as one of the first, contradictory, manifestations of an intellectual and artistic circle that attempted to deal with the consequences of a Westernizing modernization in the area of culture. In this sense, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin's emblematic motto about Surrealism ("Surrealism: the last snapshot of the European intelligentsia"<sup>41</sup>), Greek

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<sup>40</sup> For instance, for the search for a 'proto-modernist discourse' in China during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Shu-mei Shi, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*, Berkeley 2001, 49-72, particularly 55-56.

<sup>41</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Der Sürrealismus: Die letzte Momentaufnahme der europäischen Intelligenz," in *Die Literarische Welt*, 5 February 1929, 5-7, English translation by Edmund Jephcott, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, New York 1978, 177-192.

modernism was not the last, but one of the first snapshots of a new (bourgeois) intelligentsia that now came vigorously to the fore of the historical scene.



# VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN CRETE: CONTINUITIES IN CONCRETE<sup>1</sup>

NIKOS SKOUTELIS

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 to 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

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper “Vernacular Architecture in Crete: Continuities in Concrete” presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAP, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

‘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 modern European 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. Elements of pastoral life, Veneto-Cretan 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.

### **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



Figure 1. View of the third ramp of the “Great Staircase”, of Knossos in 1910. (Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos*, III, Oxford 1928, 104)

the Knossos restorations, but large-scale application to city buildings followed, especially for internal slabs laid on masonry. After the 1950s, the decade of post-war 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 that 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



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)

traditional structures. In the Cretan countryside until the 1960s, cement plaster and reinforced concrete has been used in each part of the constructions, not only in the load-bearing structural elements, but as a final surface for pavements, in private interiors and public streets. Until this period, all human activities regarding the village environment, built and unbuilt, had been dictated by the real needs of everyday life. Modern ideas regarding the remodelling of economic activities and not just the architectural techniques in this case, were introduced in cities and rural areas, generating great expectations. The small size of the geographical entities, as land properties, the houses themselves, but above all local mores, facilitated the absorption of these ideas as utilitarian innovations. At the same time, these materials and technical knowledge became more intimate,





Figure 3. Extensions of existing houses in the villages of Mochós and Tylissos (Iraklion Prefecture) and Tzermiadon (Lassithi Prefecture) in Crete. (Photographs by the author)

more functional to the current needs.<sup>2</sup>

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 a café, with secondary structures of debatable technical resolution and imaginative use of extremely simple ironwork. In our discipline, as it has been demonstrated in others, for the Greek rural societies

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<sup>2</sup> Stathis Damianakos, *Le paysan grec. Défis et adaptations face à la société moderne*, Paris 1966, and its translation in Greek: *Από τον χωρικό στον αγρότη. Η ελληνική αγροτική κοινωνία απέναντι στην παγκοσμιοποίηση*, Αθήνα, 2002.

modernism should become part of the traditional mores, not more important than them, one more formula, useful for its users to survive as family, as clan, as village.

No urban projects were undertaken in the small centres until the 1960s. For Crete, a first approach was developed 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”<sup>3</sup>, 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”.<sup>4</sup> 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”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Τάκης Ζενέτος και Συνεργάται, Πλακιάς. *Ρυθμιστικών Σχέδιον Τουριστικής Αναπτύξεως*, Υπουργείον Συντονισμού/Υπηρεσία Περιφερειακής Αναπτύξεως Κρήτης, Αθήνα 1967, Περίληψις Ι. Takis Zenetos and Collaborators, *Plakiás. Urbanism Project for the Touristical Development*, Ministry of Coordination/Peripheral Development Service for Crete, Athens 1967, Introduction I.

<sup>4</sup> Zenetos, Plakiás. *Urbanism Project for the Touristical Development*.

<sup>5</sup> Pikionis, 1985.

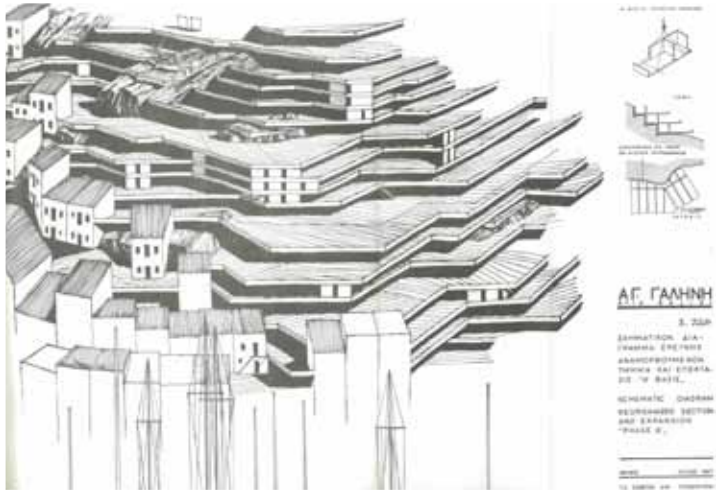


Figure 4. View of Takis Zenetos' projected extension of the Aghia Galini settlement. (Library of the Technical Chamber of Greece / Department of Western Crete - Chania)

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.

In all these applications to modern structures, work 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 1960s, 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 unique Greek feature par excellence as a contribution to the construction of our modern built landscape. After the Second World War until the 1960s, if the general incentive of society was the notion of progress, during the next two decades (1970-1990) it has changed into exuberance. This exuberance had no collaboration with the best architectural culture of the country and this is evident in the urban landscape. Political and economic factors continued with no expectations about the quality of our environment in the last 20 years, when the initial incentive has been transformed into greed.

### **Inspiration**

Though dissimilar, the derivations of the familiar shapes, colours and combinations that 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 expectations 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, tried to contribute to this debate in this laminar field, based on his personal research. In the text of his Aghia Galini project, he introduces the term *Fantastic Architecture*, the “...alternative solution of an Architecture, which creates the atmosphere of a renewed environment by classical means”.<sup>6</sup>

In Greece, during the 1950s and 1960s, 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

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<sup>6</sup> Τάκης Ζενέτος και Συνεργάται, *Αγία Γαλήνη. Ρυθμιστικόν Σχέδιον Τουριστικής Αναπτύξεως*, Υπουργείον Συντονισμού/Υπηρεσία Περιφερειακής Αναπτύξεως Κρήτης, Αθήνα 1967, Περιλήψις Ι. Takis Zenetos and Collaborators, *Aghia Galini. Urbanism Project for the Touristical Development*, Ministry of Coordination / Peripheral Development Service for Crete, Athens 1967, Introduction I.



Figure 5. 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)

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.

While the other arts also attempt to draw themes from the local idiom, painting seems to take the lead in Greek artistic creation. All this enriched body of architectural themes and solutions in the Cretan countryside, between tradition and modernity over the past 20 years, including characteristics and inner messages from each particular place, had been embodied in the work of Greek painters since 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 ground-breaking, in the elaboration of the conditions of this unique land, has come and gone. In this laminar line of designing for the specific place, the *modernism in retreat* of rural societies could become a fertile area to explore. Now resistance is reduced and architectural thought and practice are more open 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 rhythm/spirit of the times, making the work of architecture ever restless, and therefore ground-breaking.

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 Plakiás and the transcription of stone slabs to the hill of Aghia Galini in south Crete, with the residential units set into the mountain.

Working on the form and the rhythms of our land and our societies means



Figure 6. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas, *Large Landscape on Hydra*, 1938, oil on canvas, 114x162. Private Collection, Athens

trying to understand the inner structure of that human thought, which becomes necessary in conditions of crisis. Happiness that accompanies knowledge is a kind of freedom for the artists, for the architects and in this case can lead to the re-inscription of that world in our contemporary conditions. 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.



# HOUSING, NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL CONTROL: THE FIRST YEARS OF THE PORTUGUESE *ESTADO NOVO*'S AFFORDABLE HOUSES PROGRAMME<sup>1</sup>

SÉRGIO DIAS SILVA AND  
RUI JORGE GARCIA RAMOS

In 1933, the dictatorial regime imposed in Portugal after the coup of May 1926<sup>2</sup> lost its military status. The government, since 1932 headed by Oliveira Salazar,<sup>3</sup> wrote a 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 the several social forces to react and propose changes to the legislation before it became official.<sup>4</sup> 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, and built over sixteen thousand houses across the country until the end of the regime in 1974.

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper "House as Ideology in the Affordable Houses Programme of the *Estado Novo*" presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAP, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015

<sup>2</sup> See José Mattoso, *História de Portugal – Vol. VII – O Estado Novo (1926-1974)*, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) was Minister for Finance (1926, 1928-40) and President of the Ministers' Council (from 1932 to 1968).

<sup>4</sup> *Diário de Notícias* 24. 249-24. 254, 5-10 August 1933.



Figure 1. Archts. Raul Lino and Joaquim Madureira, *Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Condominhas*, Porto, 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, <http://www.monumentos.pt/>)

Salazar himself 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 reinvented society. For Salazar, the individual house, the family's own house, was the only solution for "life's intimacy".<sup>5</sup> Even before the decrees were finalised, a speech by the newly vested Undersecretary for Corporations and Social Welfare, Pedro Teotónio Pereira,<sup>6</sup> 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".<sup>7</sup> Housing had already been a concern for the

<sup>5</sup> António de Oliveira Salazar, "Conceitos Económicos da Nova Constituição", in *Discursos*, Vol. I, 1961.

<sup>6</sup> 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 organisation of the *Estado Novo*.

<sup>7</sup> Pedro Teotónio Pereira, "Corporações e Previdência Social: Primeiros Aspectos", in *A Batalha do Futuro: Organização Corporativa*, Livraria Clássica Editora, Lisbon (1937), 62.

previous regime, which had launched a similar initiative in 1918, and the *Estado Novo* used that legislation as reference for the development of its own housing programme. Although actual initiatives of housing construction only started in Portugal then in 1918, the discussion on the subject started as early as 1884, still under a monarchy, when a proposal for a law was presented to the chamber of deputies by Augusto Fuschini (1843-1911) that intended to promote the construction of houses for the poor. That discussion restarted in 1914, already under a republic (after the coup of 1910 that deposed the king), but it was only in 1918 that the government was able to start building.

Of the three neighbourhoods that were begun by the First Republic – the republican regime that would be substituted by the military dictatorship in 1926 - not even one was completed. The initiative was halted in 1922 and, after attempts to sell the houses at the end of the decade, the dictatorial regime took control of the construction, finished it and presented them as works of the new regime – already stating how the National Revolution had come to solve the problems that the previous regime was not able to solve.<sup>8</sup>

The housing initiative of the First Republic was structured according to principles that would serve as bases for the Affordable Houses programme. For the *Estado Novo* there was, however, a need to make its power noticeable in the new communities to be created. The set of decrees that became official on 23 September 1933 is no coincidence as they all relate to the organisation of work forces within the new corporative logic.<sup>9</sup> The Affordable Houses decree established a complex bureaucratic network of institutions that would be responsible for the

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on those neighbourhoods and their appropriation for propaganda purposes, see Maria Júlia Ferreira, “O Bairro Social do Arco do Cego: uma aldeia dentro da cidade de Lisboa,” 1994 in *Análise Social*, vol. XXXIX (127), 1994, 697-709 and Maria da Conceição Tiago, “O Bairro Social da Ajuda-Boa Hora: Um projecto da República Nova e uma realização do *Estado Novo* 1918-1935”, Master Thesis in Contemporary Social History, Instituto Superior do Trabalho e da Empresa, Lisbon 1997.

<sup>9</sup> 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 – *Grêmios*, the Unions of Workers – *Sindicatos Nacionais*, the organisation 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.

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)<sup>10</sup>, 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 the SCE<sup>11</sup>, a section of the national entity in charge of public buildings and monuments, DGEMN.<sup>12</sup> The financial management was centred on the FCE<sup>13</sup>, a fund created at and managed by the public bank, and the houses were distributed by the RCE<sup>14</sup>, a section of the INTP<sup>15</sup>, the institute that was also created in 1933 to regulate work relations. 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 organisation, 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, as many laws created by the *Estado Novo*, is as important for what it says as for what it implies.

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<sup>10</sup> The Portuguese corporative state had many similarities with the Italian fascist structure, particularly in the bureaucratic organisation of work forces. The Portuguese “Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional” (National Work Statute) was coincidental in many points with the Italian “Carta del Lavoro”.

<sup>11</sup> Secção das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Section).

<sup>12</sup> Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais (General Directorate for National Buildings and Monuments).

<sup>13</sup> Fundo das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Fund).

<sup>14</sup> Repartição das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Department).

<sup>15</sup> Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e da Previdência (National Institute for Work and Welfare).

## Ownership and Behaviour

By focusing the Affordable Houses programme on a principle of ‘resoluble’ property - in which a monthly rent included the payment of the house instalments and life and fire insurance - the regime was putting in writing some of its fundamental principles. The term ‘resoluble’ 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 impending threat was an instrument to which the Portuguese regime resorted not only with the Affordable Houses programme, but also can be seen as an example of social control.

Fernando Rosas<sup>16</sup> has recently described the importance of this “preventive violence” as a kind of “silent” pressure which implied the constant surveillance of behaviours. This surveillance was developed by several branches of the regime either through the censorship of information or through the reorganisation of police forces. But what is perhaps more important to the analysis of the Affordable Houses Programme is a secondary kind of preventive violence, one that was not so direct in its actions and yet was able to develop some degree of omnipresence. Rosas notes the role of several institutions “that had as a mission, in the family, in the school, in the workplace (...) to supervise daily life and to inculcate”<sup>17</sup> the new social values that recovered traditional roles for the man and the woman, and their obligation to raise a family accordingly.

The Affordable Houses decree also required the institution of a ‘homestead’ principle (*casal de família*), using a law from 1920<sup>18</sup> aimed mainly at protecting farmers’ properties. This law determined that the family house could not be used as collateral to pay potential debts, and suggested a concern for the stability of the family, seen by the regime as the basis of society.

This is a particular aspect of the programme that must be underlined. The

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<sup>16</sup> Fernando Rosas, *Salazar e o Poder: A Arte de Saber Durar*, Tinta da China, Lisbon 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Rosas, *Salazar e o Poder...*, 199.

<sup>18</sup> Decree 7.033, in *Diário do Governo*, I Série, no. 298, 16 October 1920, 1356-1358.

importance of keeping the house is a reflection not only of political, but also economical beliefs, and in a regime built by scholars (such as the economist Salazar and the mathematician Teotónio Pereira) those two aspects are intertwined and must be read together. The facilitation of private property was certainly read as a strong opposition to the collectivisation trends that had been felt in Europe in the previous years; in a way, it is the antithesis of the revolution<sup>19</sup> that the regime saw as its own hypothetical nemesis. The political war on communism is one of the constants of the Portuguese regime's evolution and one that dictates not only the several periods of hardening of the political persecutions and State laws, but also the evolution of the foreign affairs of the State. It was, in fact, the only thing that could allow for somewhat stable relations between the regime and both Nazism in the 1930s and the USA in the 1950s. Teotonio Pereira was a key figure in this management, serving as the Portuguese ambassador in particularly critical contexts – at the start of Franco's regime in Spain from 1937 to the end of the Second World War and in Washington both from 1947 to 1950 in the early years of the Cold War, and from 1961 to 1963 during John F. Kennedy's presidency. So, a refusal of collectivisation is masked as a social intervention as the regime announced the housing programme as being destined for the very poor.

When the Affordable Houses decree's draft was published in *Diário de Notícias*, that priority was readily advertised: “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”.<sup>20</sup> However, the decree did not mention this goal and in the list of selection criteria, salary came in fifth place. Not only were the priorities the stability of the applicants' jobs and their moral and professional behaviour but the monthly

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Swenarton has described the English case of a similar view of investment in housing as a preventive measure. See “An insurance against revolution”, in Mark Swenarton, *Building the New Jerusalem*, Watford 2008, 41-57.

<sup>20</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, no. 24.248, 5 August 1933, 6.

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.

### **Nationalism and Industrialism**

The creation of the State image of the Estado Novo revolves in the first years of the regime around one name, Antonio Ferro.<sup>21</sup> He was a part of the first generation of modernist Portuguese artists and developed a system of propaganda for popular consumption that used historical figures and anecdotes as well as popular beliefs and traditions and masked under a modern approach to graphical design. These references were shared by the most conservative factions of the regime. Timid initiatives of an industrialist faction were not able to unsettle the strength of a traditionalist belief in a rural mythology as the basis of society. This belief took over the regime's propaganda in the 1930s and was a central factor in the delays that kept Portuguese society, and particularly its industrial sector, largely stagnant during that decade.

Similar to other authoritarian regimes of the time, the Portuguese dictatorship resorted to reinforcing nationalist beliefs, which was achieved by highlighting simultaneously two dimensions of Portuguese history. Those parallel dimensions were represented by an elite – be it military, in a retelling of the historical battles, or governmental, in the person of the Portuguese kings and princes – and by the people, seen as following a stable, quasi-eternal structure that had to be

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<sup>21</sup> António Ferro (1895-1956) was the Director of the *Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional* (Secretariat for National Propaganda) from its creation in 1933 to 1949. The Secretariat was renamed *Secretariado Nacional da Informação* (National Secretariat for Information) in 1945 when it absorbed the censorship services for publications and spectacles. See Jorge Ramos do Ó, *Os Anos de Ferro*, Lisboa 1999.



Figure 2. Arch. Jorge Segurado, *Portuguese World Exhibition – Popular Villages Section*, 1940. (Source: Biblioteca de Arte, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/biblarde/>)

protected from sudden transformations for which it would not be prepared. These parallel ideals formed the two subjects of the celebration of the regime's mythical year of 1940, when combining anniversaries celebrated the crowning of the first king of Portugal, Afonso Henriques, in 1140 and the independence from Spanish rule in 1640. The Portuguese World Exhibition was one of the great works of the regime's propaganda and was supported by those two realities. On the one hand, the stability and homogeneity of popular life, represented in the Popular Villages Section designed by architect Jorge Segurado, on the other hand, the work of the chosen elite that ruled the country through its epic past, represented in temporary buildings with such apt names as the Honour Pavilion, Independence Pavilion, Formation and Conquest Pavilion, etc. Luis Cunha<sup>22</sup> has used the Portuguese World Exhibition, as well as the "Most

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<sup>22</sup> Luís Cunha, *A Nação nas Malhas da Sua Identidade*, Porto 2001.



Portuguese Village” Competition, also in 1940, and the Colonial Exhibition of 1934 to analyze the construction of a State image, noting also how the Portuguese World Exhibition was a reflection of two confronting views inside the regime, of modernity versus tradition.

Daniel Melo<sup>23</sup> has also noted the formation by the regime of a common identity in which popular culture is constructed by resorting to historical references. Traditional building techniques were also seen as a historical reference, as was perceptible in the Popular Villages Section, simulating a bucolic rural life, not at all coincidental to the difficult life of the uneducated and poor agricultural populations.

This opposition between the need for an update of the Portuguese industry is paralleled by a devotion to the belief that the general population should be kept distant from modernisation. That distance would create a stagnant and therefore quiet crowd, ideologically pure and uninterested in the politics that were to be managed by an intellectually superior caste. The rural setting was the model, but there was a faction of the regime that did not see things the same way. Using the “Most Portuguese Village” Competition as an example, in 1945 Ferreira Dias<sup>24</sup> criticised the glorification of backwardness that the competition represented by selecting the fairly isolated village of Monsanto<sup>25</sup>.

Another member of the industrialist faction of the regime was José Araújo Correia, who was 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. From 1929 to 1964 Correia was an administrator of CGDP in charge of the analysis of the state’s yearly finances for more than two decades. He

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel Melo, *Salazarismo e Cultura Popular (1933-1958)*, Lisbon 2001.

<sup>24</sup> José Ferreira Dias (1900-1966) was openly critical of the traditionalist propaganda of the first years of the regime. He was an Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry (1940-1944) and Minister of Economics (1958-62).

<sup>25</sup> Melo, *Salazarismo*, 223-224.

is considered to be one of the pioneers of industrialist beliefs within the regime<sup>26</sup> 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 was used in the title, and “rural culture” - and his role in the first steps of the Affordable Houses Programme, are symbols of the contradictory views inside the regime that, as we shall see, would eventually force a transformation within the state that would be reflected in the Programme.

### **Study Missions and National Solution**

In August 1934, Araújo Correia was commissioned to visit Germany, Austria and Hungary to study methods currently in use in affordable housing. From very early on, the dictatorial regime developed a practice of sending emissaries - mainly architects and engineers - to different parts of Europe on missions to study the various solutions used in the design of public buildings. It is curious that the selection of the destinations was not, in most cases, related either to the proximity between political regimes, or 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

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<sup>26</sup> Mattoso, *História de Portugal*, 265-266.

Duarte Pacheco<sup>27</sup> to see the new university buildings in Rome.<sup>28</sup>

Although at the time of Araújo Correia's visit, those countries were under authoritarian rule, both Germany and Austria had been, until very recently, socialist regimes, and in both cases housing had been a subject of large investment. 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 stabilised authoritarian regime with close similarities to the *Estado Novo*.

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 up across Europe in the previous decade. The choice for the single-family house was informed and a reflection of the regime's core beliefs; Jácome de Castro,<sup>29</sup> 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”<sup>30</sup> as those of an Affordable House.

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

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<sup>27</sup> 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).

<sup>28</sup> See João Pardal Monteiro, *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, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Fernando Galvão Jácome de Castro (1892-1964) was a Civil Engineer, chief engineer of the SCE and member of the Public Works General Council of DGEMN.

<sup>30</sup> Eng. Jácome Castro, “Bairros Económicos”, 26 January 1935, in *Problemas de Urbanização: Conferências Realizadas no Salão Nobre dos Paços do Concelho*, Câmara Municipal, Lisbon 1936.

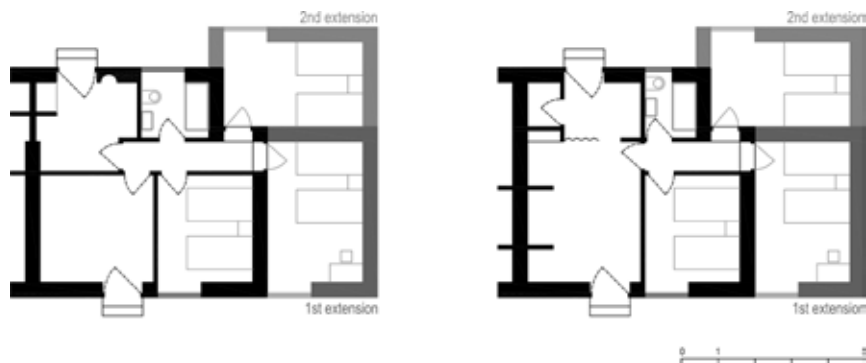


Figure 3. *Affordable Houses “City Type” and “Rural Type”*, developed by Arch. Raul Lino in 1934

metaphor for the priority of family over community and of private over public. The house inevitably had to be Portuguese, even if there was not a consensus on what that meant.

The debate on the Portuguese House starts in the transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>31</sup> and is in tune with similar contemporary discussions born of a Romantic view of nationalism and building tradition. In the Portuguese case, one name stands out, that of Raul Lino<sup>32</sup> as a theoretical leader in that debate, not so much because of his architectural production as for his bibliographical production, as he wrote several books<sup>33</sup> that were, somewhat to his dismay, frequently seen as catalogues of traditional buildings’ elements to be used uncritically.

<sup>31</sup> Rui Jorge Garcia Ramos, Eliseu Gonçalves and Sérgio Dias Silva, “From the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century House Question to Social Housing Programs in the 30s: the Nationalist Regulation of the Picturesque in Portugal”, *DOCOMOMO Journal* 51, 60-67.

<sup>32</sup> On Raul Lino (1879-1974), see Pedro Vieira de Almeida, “Raul Lino, Arquitecto Moderno,” in *Raul Lino: Exposição Retrospectiva da Sua Obra*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon 1970.

<sup>33</sup> *A Casa Portuguesa* (1929), *Casas Portuguesas* (1933) and *L'évolution de l'architecture domestique au Portugal* (1937).

### **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, stating specifically that Lino was considered an expert on 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 Porfirio Pardal Monteiro to develop a type of house to serve as a/the 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, which could even, through conditions to be established, become the tenant's own property".<sup>34</sup> 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.

Lino developed an expandable house, able to be enlarged if the family's needs so required. The basic model was a single-floor house that included the minimal spaces for a small family. The main entrance was through a large family room for the family to get together in during meals. This area was connected, in the 'City Type', to a small corridor that granted access to a small kitchen, one full

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<sup>34</sup> Porfirio Pardal Monteiro, "Carta a Duarte Pacheco sobre Casas Económicas," in Monteiro, *Para o Projecto Global*, vol.2, (1932), 28-30.



Figure 4. Arch. Joaquim Madureira, *Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Braga*, 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, <http://www.monumentos.pt/>)

bathroom and one room. This model could be enlarged by the construction of two more rooms according to the number of children in the family.

This example 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 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 have mentioned before. The “individualist character” of the Portuguese people was, to Lino as to the regime,

enough for them 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 standardisation 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 likely work of Lino is more noticeable – he states that “everything possible was done to disguise the indispensable standardisation”, 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”.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the Affordable House resorts to the archetypes – the pitched roof, the little porch and the small window.

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 publicise. It is not 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 is a design that works around an ideology to create a balanced plan.

The study of minimum spaces and the planning of future expansions are inevitably paralleled to the debate on the standardisation of construction techniques and reduction of the housing areas to a functional minimum that Karel Teige has described.<sup>36</sup>

This constant contradiction between modern design and an obsession with an image that could be understood by the general population as truly Portuguese

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<sup>35</sup> Rui Jorge Garcia Ramos and Marta Rocha, Reconstruction of the lecture “Casas Económicas” given by Raul Lino at Instituto de Engenharia de S. Paulo, Brasil, in June 1935, Marta Rocha Archive [digital document], 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Karel Teige, *The Minimum Dwelling*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2002 (originally 1932); see also Christine Collins and Mark Swenarton, “CIAM, Teige and the *Existenzminimum*,” in Swenarton, *Building the New Jerusalem*, 85-93.

is clearly noticeable in the Affordable Houses Programme as in much of the architecture sponsored by the state during the dictatorship.

### **Stagnation and Sufferance**

As we have seen, if the first intention of the programme was to build houses for those who could not afford one, that intention was swiftly bent 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<sup>37</sup> 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 on the inhabitant, stressing the educational role of the house. That educational role had, inevitably, a social charge. We have stated that the difference between the rural type and the urban type was related to the way the main room was to be used, 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 her 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,

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<sup>37</sup> *Realização de Concurso para o Anteprojecto de um Bairro de Casas Económicas do tipo de Cidade Jardim, a construir em Lisboa pela Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência*, Oliveira Salazar Archive – Torre do Tombo, PT/TT/AOS/D-G/2/1/8.



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.

The investment of the State in the propagation of an ideal way of life for the Portuguese people is reflected in the development of several institutions devoted to that propagation, particularly to the stabilisation of the role of the woman in the family and in the house. Those institutions, such as *Obra das Mães para a Educação Nacional* and *Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina*<sup>38</sup> saw the woman as the ‘mainstay’ of the family and of family life, and educated young women to become, what they believed, were the perfect housewives. The *Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina*’s bulletin even published an article defending the single-family model as the perfect example for the Portuguese way of life and citing the Affordable Houses Programme as the correct option.<sup>39</sup>

### **Commemoration and Transformation**

One of the links between the Affordable Houses programme and the regime’s

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<sup>38</sup> Mothers’ Work for National Education and Portuguese Female Youth; for more on the development of these institutions, see Irene Flunser Pimentel, *A cada um o seu lugar: a política feminina do Estado Novo*, Círculo de Leitores e Temas e Debates, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Francisca de Assis, “Um Problema,” in *Boletim da Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina*, no. 51-52, July-August 1943.



Figure 5. *The Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Belém behind the Monastery of Jeronimos, Lisbon, 1938-39. Construction works for the Portuguese World Exhibition of 1940 are visible on the bottom right. (Source: Biblioteca de Arte, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/biblarde/>)*

view of it as an ideological instrument and propaganda feature is its presence at times 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 express their beliefs in speeches to be featured in official publications and in major newspapers. Also interesting is the effort made to complete neighbourhoods in time to stage those inaugurations on celebratory dates. The 1934 Lisbon competition brief stated that the large neighbourhood was to be inaugurated on the 28 May 1936, the tenth anniversary of the "national revolution"; and, in 1938, a broad-reaching plan was launched by the government to prepare the celebrations of the already-mentioned regime's mythical year of 1940, 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 incomes. What is clear is that at the end of the 1930s a second stage of the Programme was 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.

The Portuguese dictatorship's investment in housing, not only in the Affordable Houses Programme, but also in other initiatives of similar goals, is commonly recognised, but paradoxically, underrated. The true dimension of that investment is, however, unknown as the information of the several institutions responsible for its development is scattered through more or less organised archives. A broad analysis of this information is necessary in order to develop a real understanding, not only of the importance of the housing problem during the dictatorship, but also, and particularly, of the use of housing as an instrument of political pressure and social control and of the effects of this use in architectural design. By broadening the scope of what architectural history considers relevant, in order to encompass such initiatives that could be, and have been, deemed as minor or inferior architecture, it should be possible to create a reinterpretation of several loose ends of the genealogy of modern architecture in peripheral countries. There is a clear perception that there was, as we have stated, a somewhat deep knowledge of the development of what architectural history has reviewed as the canonical architecture of the Modern Movement, and of its ramifications throughout Europe in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both by architects and by senior figures of the regime. This knowledge implies causality, not an uninformed option, in the development of publicly funded architectural design. When the Affordable Houses 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<sup>40</sup> 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 incomes. It could not be a coincidence that this decree was published at the height of the difficulties caused by the rationing brought on by the war economy.

We have seen how the investment in housing by the Portuguese regime was sustained in its first years by the same beliefs that structured the regime's propaganda. The ideal of a traditionalist way of life that could be crystallised in planned and controlled communities adjacent to city centres, took form in small neighbourhoods where modern approaches to housing design developed single-floor houses to which traditional building elements were superimposed. As the war drew to a close, the regime tried to adapt to the victory of democratic regimes and to the start of the transformation of the USA as a world power. The investment in Affordable Houses in that moment and the transformations in the Programme, proved simultaneously that not only was it distancing itself more and more from the small salaries of the working class, but that also 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 have seen, with connections to the development of the Affordable Houses Programme – took control of the economic policy of the regime and moved it towards a long overdue industrialisation. The world was different, society's demands were different and, by 1943, Nationalism was no longer enough.

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<sup>40</sup> Decree 33.278, in *Diário do Governo*, Série I, no. 256, 24 November 1943, 823-827.

# PRIMORDIAL GESTURES, ARCHAIC ROOTS, POPULAR CULTURE – A LOOK AT MODERNISM IN THE SCULPTURE OF SOUTHERN EUROPE<sup>1</sup>

SÍLVIA VIEIRA DE ALMEIDA

## Introduction

The present study explores the idea that in southern countries such as Portugal, Spain, and Italy, a certain facet of modernism was developed with a regional feature generally guided by the desire to reconstruct an identity. In other words, the paper considers the existence of a kind of regional modernism, which does not necessarily result from a cultural delay, nor from a misreading of the Parisian one - a misreading ostensibly linked to the peripheral location of these countries or to the sculptor's inability to understand the essence of the Parisian trends.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, this study intends to re-read the artistic production of four sculptors: the Spanish Manolo Hugué (1872-1945) and Alberto Sánchez (1893-1962), the Portuguese Ernesto Canto da Maia (1890-1981), and the Italian Arturo Martini (1889-1947). These sculptors have been chosen both for their similarities and for their differences. On the one hand, some of them are linked, not only by

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper “The redemption of the vernacular in the understanding of the modern: two cases from the South” presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAP, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, J.-A. França's arguments on the subject. José-Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, Lisboa 1994.

common formal and conceptual options, but also by specific characteristics, unique to each case, that rescue elements of non-erudite culture and of the traditions of their respective countries.

On the other hand, the formal solutions adopted by all four are, in many cases, very dissimilar, more so because some of these artists are from different generations. However, what is worth underlining is that there is, in fact, a common ground which they all shared in their practice, regardless of the plurality of their answers.

### **Finding their own cultural roots**

“...returning to the tradition of the unique art of the Mediterranean lands; escaping French impressionism, the English pre-Raphaelites, 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 1907, in the journal *Empori*, in an article written as a manifesto, entitled *La nostra ordinació i el nostre camí*.<sup>3</sup>

Though at a later stage, in 1917, Torres-García went on to reject everything from the past and advocate the original and the new<sup>4</sup> (thus distancing himself from his previous views), according to the Spanish scholar Jaume Vallcorba he explicitly formulated in that 1907 article the principles of Mediterranean essentiality.<sup>5</sup> There, he pointed the way to finding his own personality<sup>6</sup> - being Mediterranean, being of the South, as opposed to being from the North - finding in his own cultural roots a unique way of being modern, as opposed to the international modernism that was not particularly concerned with nationality or tradition (at least not the Western one). This essentiality coincided with that

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<sup>3</sup> Joaquín Torres-García, “La nostra ordinació i el nostre camí” in *Empori* 4 (1907), 188-191, here 190.

<sup>4</sup> Joaquín Torres-García, *El descubrimiento de sí mismo. Cartas a Julio, que tratan de cosas muy importantes para los artistas*, Girona 1917, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Jaume Vallcorba. *Noucentisme, mediterraneisme i classicisme: apunts per a la història d'una estètica*, Barcelona 1994, 38.

<sup>6</sup> Joaquín Torres-García, *Escritos sobre art*, Barcelona 1986, 37.

of Catalan *noucentisme*,<sup>7</sup> a collective ideological project of modernity, widely informed about the Parisian artistic avant-garde, but that vindicated a position of its own.<sup>8</sup>

The search for cultural identity was not exclusive to *noucentisme*, since it was also alive in other Southern regions, namely in Madrid, where the literary movement known as the Generation of 98, with its nationalist and regenerative spirit, dwelled on the nature or essence of Spain.<sup>9</sup> A discussion in which the sculptor Julio Antonio (1889-1919) took part when attempting to set the fundamental types of the race, through the series of sculptures *Bustos de la Raza*, produced between 1909 and 1914.<sup>10</sup>

Julio Antonio was a Catalan artist from Mora de Ebro who, after a sojourn in Barcelona, went to Madrid in the same year, 1907, in which Torres-García wrote the previously mentioned *La nostra ordinació i el nostre camí*. His stay in Madrid at that time was brief, as he embarked the following year on a journey through Spain, from which resulted the aforementioned busts portraying anonymous figures - figures of the people - representing an ethnic survey of Spain and the diversity which characterizes its people and its cultural heritage.<sup>11</sup> It is important to mention that the Portuguese sculptor Canto da Maia (who will be addressed later on) would consider Julio Antonio, under whose guidance he worked in Madrid, his great master. But this would be only after 1915.

The discussion about the essence of Spain and how this research should be present in art, acquired new meaning in the 1920s and 1930s namely through the sculptor Alberto Sánchez (also to be considered below), the painter Benjamín

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<sup>7</sup> Torres-García's artistic work is often referred to 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 that summarizes the ideology of *noucentisme*. However, Torres-García had his own theoretical elaboration, explicit before the configuration of *noucentisme* around 1910. See Joan Sureda Pons, *Torres-García, Pasión Clásica*, Madrid 1998.

<sup>8</sup> See Martí Peran et al., "Noucentisme y vanguardia" in *El Noucentisme: un projecte de modernitat*. Barcelona 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Jaime Brihuega et al., *Alberto 1895-1962* exh. cat., Madrid 2001, 120.

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this sculptor see Antonio Salcedo Milani et al., *Julio Antonio: 1889-1919*. Madrid 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Antonio Salcedo Miliani, *Julio Antonio 1889-1919 Escultor*, Barcelona 1997.

Palencia (1894-1980) and their Madrid followers.

The two chosen Spanish artists, Manolo Hugué, framed by historiography in the conceptual principles of *noucentisme*, and Alberto Sánchez, usually linked to surrealism and the abstract, though in different ways, can be seen as forming part of this view of modernism that I intend to explore.

Manolo Hugué was born in 1872 in Barcelona. He was a great admirer of Josep Llimona (1864-1934), a sculptor who was affiliated to the Sant Lluc Circle founded in 1893 and which favoured the separation of the South from the North and the return to a Mediterranean spirit.<sup>12</sup> He also was one of Picasso's great friends. They left for Paris in 1900, two years after Rodin's plaster model for the monument to Balzac had been scandalously displayed and rejected; a monument which is considered to represent the birth of modern sculpture by denying any traditional expressive attribute.<sup>13</sup> That same year saw the opening of the Universal Exhibition of Paris that included an extended display of Rodin's works. It was still in that same year that Matisse visited Rodin's studio, starting his *Self* (1900-1908) through which sculpture reasserted its autonomy as an object.<sup>14</sup> It is reasonable to expect that Hugué and Picasso had been aware of all these developments. First of all because one of Picasso's purposes, when he went to Paris in 1900, was to visit the Universal Exhibition, secondly, because he soon became close to the avant-garde circles as is well known. Hugué stayed in Paris for a decade and he also kept close contact with avant-garde artists. However, what seems to have impressed him most was the Mediterranean and archaic sculpture seen during his visits to the Louvre.<sup>15</sup> It is also reasonable to think that he visited the exhibition of ancient Iberian sculptures that the museum hosted in 1905.

In the same year of 1905 the French Catalan Maillol (1861-1944) presented his

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<sup>12</sup> See William Robinson et al., *Barcelona and Modernity: Picasso, Gaudí, Miró, Dalí*, New Haven and London 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Hal Foster et al., *Art Since 1900. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism*, London 2004, 57.

<sup>14</sup> Foster, *Art Since 1900*, 57.

<sup>15</sup> See Cristina Mendonza, ed., *Manolo Hugué*, exh. cat., Barcelona 1990.



famous *La Méditerranée* in the Autumn Salon in Paris, a key piece of modern sculpture that, according to André Gide, “is beautiful. It means nothing, it is a silent work”, meaning that it broke with any kind of traditional descriptive and narrative representation, freeing itself from the subject to concentrate on form. The form is that of a human body, in a reinterpretation of the classical ideal that pre-empted by more than a decade what would become the *return to order* in the period between the wars.

When Hugué moved to Ceret, in French Catalonia, in 1910, he settled into a monastery bought by Burty Haviland, (a Cubist painter, friend and client of Picasso and Braque), and Picasso took over the first floor.<sup>16</sup> That place would become the artistic centre for some of the most important painters of the time. Hugué lived in Ceret surrounded by Cubist artists, whom he befriended and with whom interacted. He had lived in Paris for ten years where he was aware of the avant-garde artistic developments though he never tried to follow Cubist experiences. Therefore, it seems appropriate to conclude that Cubist interrogations clearly did not interest him. It is why I would disagree that the presence of the classical in Hugué’s work is just a formal solution that he adopted to correct his inability to access the theoretical speculations of the new trends, as has been claimed.<sup>17</sup> He was closer to Maillol’s research, not only in solid and monolithic shapes, but also in a pre-classical inspiration and in the search for the primordial values of sculpture. Moreover, Maillol’s sculpture *La Méditerranée* illustrates the *noucentiste* sculptural Mediterranean programme; the southern alternative<sup>18</sup> to which Hugué seems to be closer.

*Noucentisme* believed in a new artistic creation that could be nurtured by the rural and popular culture of a region. Hugué effectively found this creative stimulus in the rural surroundings of Ceret and also in Caldas de Montbui

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<sup>16</sup> Roland Penrose, *Picasso, his life and work*, Berkley 1981, 517.

<sup>17</sup> Arnau Puig, “Dónde debemos situar a Manolo Hugué dentro de la plástica catalana?” in *Artes Plásticas Barcelona*, year 1, 2 (1975), 19-22.

<sup>18</sup> See Carlos d’Ors, *El Noucentisme: presupuestos ideológicos, estéticos y artísticos*, Madrid 2000, 122-128.

in Catalonia, where he resided for long periods of time for health reasons. He kept in regular contact with Barcelona and its intellectual and artistic activity, counting among his friends the painter Joaquim Sunyer and the sculptor Enric Casanovas, two important figures linked to *noucentisme*.

Hugué declared that “sculpture is exclusively form”. He would not concern himself with meaning, but rather would be aware of the basic and primordial gesture of sculpting, using for that purpose the world he chose to live in. As 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>19</sup>

His female figures show an ongoing exploration of the Mediterranean feminine archetype introduced by Maillol, at the same time working in rhythms and geometry translated into the formal synthesis of the bodies they represent. Like Maillol, Hugué also worked from a set point of view and he had a special taste for bas-reliefs, which can be read as an influence of Adolfo Hildebrandt’s (1847-1921) theory of sculpture.<sup>20</sup> He might have also been inspired by pre-classical art which, as noted above, had impressed him in the Louvre, and probably by Iberian sculptures found in many archaeological excavations around Spain, conducted mainly from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which were also very important to Picasso between 1906-1907.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Josep Pla, *Vida de Manolo: contada por él mismo*, Madrid 1930, 215. Maillol stated something close to: “I do not intend to discover in Nature anything else than what it offers me day by day...”, quoted by Diogo de Macedo, *Cinco Escultores franceses: Rodin, Bourdelle, Bernard, Despiau, Maillol*, Lisboa 1940, 52.

<sup>20</sup> The German-American art historian Rudolf Wittkower states that there were only two avenues offered to Matisse’s generation (the same as Hugué’s) by the previous sculpture. One of those avenues was from the German sculptor Hildebrandt (the other came from Rodin). “Hildebrandt held that all sculpture should be disguised relief, made of three planes staggered in depth, whose legibility must be immediately accessible from a set point of view. (...) An actual relief is even better (...) since, in this, the (framed) figures are virtually freed from having to deal with the anxieties of the infinite surrounding space.” Foster, *Art Since 1900*, 60.

<sup>21</sup> James Sweeney in his article, “Picasso and Iberian Sculpture”, develops the argument that the Iberian archeological findings were connected to Picasso’s painting in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, even before the influence of African masks. The author also refers to a large number of publications on archaeological findings in Spain, for instance “Essai sur l’art et l’industrie de l’Espagne primitive” (1903-4), “Un forteresse ibérique à Osuna” (1906), among others. See James Johnson Sweeney, “Picasso and Iberian Sculpture” in *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 23, No. 3 (Sep. 1941), 191-198.



Figure 1. Manolo Hugué, *Toretero*, 1913, Stone, 41,5x31x17,5, MNAC, Barcelona

### **A step outside tradition**

It is relevant to this approach to underline that throughout modernity artistic strategies have resisted and denied the established claims for technical virtuosity, for exceptional skills, and for the conformity with the accepted standards of historical models, as well as denying the aesthetic any privileged status.<sup>22</sup>

Hugué appeared to be quite close to this formulation: his artistic culture was a result of observation. It was not formed by any kind of erudite knowledge, and neither were his artistic skills a result of any kind of academic practice. Whenever he had the chance to express his thoughts in records he knew were to be made public, he presented himself as an uncouth man with no hint of sophistication, provocatively provincial. It is what one gathers from sentences like: “The smell of meat on the grill is better than all the luxury perfumes that they sell in Paris”,

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<sup>22</sup> Foster, *Art Since 1900*, 31.

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>23</sup> It seems to be the defiant tone that stands out when he makes sure to point out his ineptitude and shows himself completely nonchalant about his art - the opposite of the virtuous, academic or established artist (although he was established). In fact from 1912 until 1933 he was supported by one of the premier French art dealers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the owner of an art gallery in Paris, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler.

However, what one can deduce from the statements is something different: “Moréns said about poetry: - La poésie? Ça ne m’interesse 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. Sculpture is simply the most practical way I have (...) to know if I am a brutish beast or an alive beast (...) I make shapes and lines, I see movements and colours, and, if I represent something it is because I am not completely stupid.” Or, even more explicitly: “I am against virtuosity in any and all angles of art and of life”. It is still the idea of underlining his absolute inability that prevails when, in a humorous tone, he states: “every time I tried to make a sculpture of Apollo or Venus I ended up with a frog”.<sup>24</sup>

From another perspective, it is interesting to note that there is a close connection between the work of Hugué (and the other sculptors who will be discussed later) and modernist *primitivism*, whose father was the painter and sculptor Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). This primitivism intended to challenge the European conventions that were felt to be repressive and was based on the imagination of the primitive as an exotic world - a fantasy concerning a return to one’s origins, an escape into nature, and the liberation of instinct. Gauguin believed in the purity of tribal vision, which was also associated with the ingenuity of childhood.

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<sup>23</sup> Pla, *Vida de Manolo*, 219-220.

<sup>24</sup> Pla, *Vida de Manolo*, 214 and 223.



Figure 2. Manolo Hugué, *Dues catalanes assegudes*, 1917, Terracota, 17x10x8,5 cm, MNAC, Barcelona

The path to a step outside tradition was also a strategy for turning to folk art as well (Gauguin with Breton crucifixes, Malevich with Byzantine icons).<sup>25</sup>

What one can see in the Mediterranean sculptors such as Manolo Hugué is, among other aspects, a deep desire to turn back to one's origins, not only willing to reincarnate the ingenuity of childhood (whether this childhood refers to man or to humanity), but also to return to the archaic roots of one's own culture. Hugué did seem to want to get back to his origins, to the beginnings of civilization, retrieving an innocence since lost. He seemed to wish he could have the naivety of one who has learned nothing or seen nothing but, still approaches matter to give it shape. Just like Maillol, he was also interested in working as if nothing existed, as if all he saw in the artistic field did not interest him, to be just a man enclosed in his own world, systematically repeating his primordial

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<sup>25</sup> Foster, *Art Since 1900*, 64-66.

attitude of working matter as if it were for the first time.<sup>26</sup> When one reads the sentence “what people call progress is for me a torment, it is a punishment from God”,<sup>27</sup> one cannot help thinking of Gauguin’s vision of civilization as something corrupt in opposition to the purity of primitive societies.

In this regard, Hugué wanted to present himself as having a good deal of ingenuity. It is what he showed when he stated: “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>28</sup> One can also see a kind of nostalgia from childhood when he stated that it pleased him to be dressed like a child since there was no other way of looking like one.<sup>29</sup> The materials he employed, and the techniques he adopted also show a basic way of approaching sculpture. In his work, the use of terracotta and the direct carving of stone are predominant, thus ensuring a spontaneous and intuitive gesture and allowing no multiples, following part of the Parisian avant-garde in its enthusiasm for Paul Gauguin, who had begun direct carving in 1903.

The other Spanish sculptor under study, Alberto Sánchez, like Hugué, had no formal artistic education, and his sculpture also used a direct approach to the material, intuition and the search for a kind of primordial impulse.

He was born in Toledo and became a baker like his father. In 1907 when he went to Madrid, he started as an apprentice in the studio of a decorative sculptor while working as a baker at night. When he had his first exhibition in Madrid in 1925 - the *Iberian Artists Exhibition* - the press talked about him extensively and

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<sup>26</sup> “Je travaille comme si rien n’existait, comme si je n’avais rien appris. Je suis le premier homme qui fait de la sculpture”. George Waldemar, *Maillol*, Paris 1971, 70. See figure on [http://www.musee-orsay.fr/fr/collections/catalogue-des-oeuvres/notice.html?no\\_cache=1&zoom=1&tx\\_damzoom\\_pi1%5Bzoom%5D=0&tx\\_damzoom\\_pi1%5BxmlId%5D=015413&tx\\_damzoom\\_pi1%5Bback%5D=%2Ffr%2Fcollections%2Fcatalogue-des-oeuvres%2Fnotice.html%3Fno\\_cache%3D1%26zsz%3D5%26lnum%3D2](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/fr/collections/catalogue-des-oeuvres/notice.html?no_cache=1&zoom=1&tx_damzoom_pi1%5Bzoom%5D=0&tx_damzoom_pi1%5BxmlId%5D=015413&tx_damzoom_pi1%5Bback%5D=%2Ffr%2Fcollections%2Fcatalogue-des-oeuvres%2Fnotice.html%3Fno_cache%3D1%26zsz%3D5%26lnum%3D2).

<sup>27</sup> “Frases de Manolo Hugué” in *Quadern [Sabadell]: els Amics* 12 (1980), 27.

<sup>28</sup> “Frases de Manolo Hugué”, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Pla, *Vida de Manolo*, 222.

praised his work. Everyone was surprised: “But, are you a sculptor?” After that he started his career as an artist at the age of thirty.

All of the artists who took part in this *Iberian Artists Exhibition* then left for Paris, except for Alberto Sánchez and painter Benjamín Palencia who decided to remain in Madrid with the express purpose of creating a new national art.<sup>30</sup>

They began taking long walks through the fields of the capital’s surroundings, choosing the South, where the landscape was harsh, as opposed to the North, which had been a source of artistic inspiration since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>31</sup> The meeting with rural, agrarian nature was a way to reunite the Castilian essence as well as returning to his own origins. The descriptions of these walks show that there was something ritualistic in them, something magical and they bring to mind, again, Paul Gauguin and his walks through the Tahitian jungle in search of a tree trunk to sculpt.<sup>32</sup> Gauguin exchanged civilization for an apparently primitive society. Sánchez exchanged city life for the experience of nature.

According to Alberto Sánchez, from these walks in the fields through the region of Vallecas, the idea was born to create a new school, the *Escuela de Vallecas* – allegedly in 1927, but referred to only in 1960 in a memoir.<sup>33</sup> This idea led the two artists who made up the school to begin collecting stones, sticks, sand and any and all objects of plastic quality. The *Monumento a los pájaros*, considered to be a Valleca’s poetic manifesto, was a sculptural construction made of gathered rocks, which Alberto Sánchez abandoned to its fate on Cerro Testigo.

Unfortunately most of Sánchez’s sculptures produced during this period have disappeared. All we have are old photographs, some descriptions, and later works from the 1950s and 1960s (produced during his exile in Moscow) which

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<sup>30</sup> Alberto Sánchez, *Alberto Sánchez: Palabras de un escultor*, Valencia 1975.

<sup>31</sup> Brihuega, *Alberto 1895-1962*, 120.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Gauguin, *Noa Noa: séjour à Tahiti*, Bruxelles 1989. See also Alan Wilkinson, “Rodin, Gauguin et la génération de Picasso et Moore: du romantisme au primitivisme” in *Rodin et la sculpture contemporaine*, Paris 1982, 129. Also quoted by Josefina Alix Trueba and Teresa Camps i Miró, *Un nuevo ideal figurativo: la escultura en España 1900-1936*, exh. cat., Madrid 2001, 27.

<sup>33</sup> See Sánchez, *Alberto Sánchez*.

are thought to be much closer to the first ones. They are a synthesis of animal, vegetable and human forms, frequently textured like ploughed fields, created in recycled materials, in clay and plaster, which capture subjects of rural life and the experience of nature.<sup>34</sup>

As Hugué, Sánchez also let himself be fascinated by archaic sculptures, namely the Iberian ones found at Cerro de los Santos and held by the archaeological museum in Madrid, which he visited whenever he could from 1921.<sup>35</sup> The simplicity of these figures, their unpretentious form, as if they had been shaped by nature itself<sup>36</sup> and the fact that they were of small scale, but seemed such gigantic pieces, impressed him. This impression would be the mark in his works – normally small-scale pieces, but often destined to be monumental sculptures. Sánchez also emphasized his lack of academic training and his contempt for technical dexterity and virtuosity in the composition of sculpture. As he maintained, Iberian sculptures were “sculptural objects (...) from other semi-illiterate people like (him)”. 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 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>37</sup>

Partly following the lesson of those unpretentious Iberian archaic objects, Sánchez exercised a certain innocence in his approach to sculpture. There is a certain naivety, as if what is seen is being looked at for the first time; as if the look

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<sup>34</sup> See figure on <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/coleccion/obra/perdiz-caucaso>.

<sup>35</sup> In the late 20s and early 30s, the primitive cultures were the order of the day. In 1929, there was in Madrid an exhibition about cave paintings in South Africa and a lecture about the Cave of Altamira, and in 1932 *Pre-historic man and the origins of humanity* by Hugo Obermaier was published.

<sup>36</sup> Diogo de Macedo (1889-1959), a Portuguese sculptor and art historian, referred to Maillol's work in quite a similar way. In actual fact, he mentioned that Maillol's first sculptures seemed to have been sculpted by nature, as if they were like tree trunks and capricious rocks. He also compared Maillol's sculptures in pink clay with Tanagra statuettes. (Notice that Tanagra statuettes are also linked to the work of Portuguese sculptor Canto da Maia to whom I will refer in due course). Macedo, *Cinco Escultores franceses: Rodin, Bourdelle, Bernard, Despiau, Maillol*, 45.

<sup>37</sup> Sánchez, *Alberto Sánchez*, 24-25.



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, revealing the mark of the human hand. Clay is the material that he frequently used, as well as other materials traditionally not considered as noble or as definitive.

### **The redemption of the vernacular in the understanding of the modern**

In 1960 when speaking of his path as a sculptor, Alberto Sánchez said that it was his main wish to create an art plastically different from anything produced till then. However, when he observed his first drawings from which he expected to create sculptures, it became clear that they represented fragments of women, animals, hills and the countryside and he clearly understood that he would never be able to create non-existent things. So he reassured himself and stopped resisting his search for his forms in 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 provided. His sculpture is populated by references to the rural and the countryside: birds, bulls, vineyards, wheat fields, rocks eroded by time.<sup>38</sup> He wished his sculpture to be the product of a profound Castilian experience of nature, a sensorial experience of the rural setting and popular culture: “Give form to what you see in the field at five o’clock in the morning...”<sup>39</sup>

Sánchez found his inspiration in the countryside around Madrid; Hugué found his in the rural inhabitants of Ceret. Like Hugué, Sánchez chose for his artistic quest scenes of the world around him, though with a different purpose. Through his sculptures, Sánchez intended to provide a stimulus to the new man giving him a new breath.<sup>40</sup> Simultaneously, some of his sculptures were thought to

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<sup>38</sup> See figure on <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/coleccion/obra/maternidad>.

<sup>39</sup> Enrique Azcoaga, *Alberto*. Madrid 1977, 65.

<sup>40</sup> Alberto’s artistic production increased with the second republic in 1931, when the environment was conducive to cultural-artistic renewal and redemption of popular culture, which was close to Alberto’s desire for regeneration.

work as a kind of landmark, a link between the modern architecture around it and popular and national roots. He had a political agenda. He believed art could change society and start the spectator's consciousness on a journey through human solidarity and personal elevation.<sup>41</sup>

Even though a connection with the abstract can also be seen in Alberto Sánchez's work, the truth is that he kept an evident link to reality, though rejecting illusionistic representation, and never broke with the figurative. His modernism was not a "no" to the traditional, but rather a "yes". Tradition was, more so, a fertile source for his innovative solutions.<sup>42</sup>

In 1929, Sánchez's work was included in the *Exhibition of Spanish Artists Residing in Paris*, although he remained in Spain. This was a very important opportunity for a close contact with what was being done in the famous artistic centre. Another opportunity was his journey to Paris in 1937 in which he made personal contact with some of the most important avant-garde artists at the time.<sup>43</sup> However, there is no significant influence in his sculpture from that contact. He remained connected to his beliefs in art. The monumental sculpture, then presented at the entrance of the Spanish Pavilion in the Universal Exhibition in that same city (*The Spanish people have a path that leads to a star*), remained a reference in his subsequent work.<sup>44</sup>

We now consider the Portuguese case study. Canto da Maia was a sculptor who was born in the Azores. The first date worth mentioning for the purposes of this article, is 1912, which is when Canto da Maia went to Paris and studied under the guidance of the sculptor Bourdelle (1861-1929), who will be addressed later on. What is interesting about 1912 is that this is also the year when Canto da Maia exhibited in the first *Portuguese humourist exhibition*, in

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<sup>41</sup> Azcoaga, *Alberto*, 86.

<sup>42</sup> Azcoaga, *Alberto*, 69.

<sup>43</sup> Fernando Martín, *El Pabellón español en la Exposición Universal de París en 1937*, Sevilla 1982.

<sup>44</sup> See figure on <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/coleccion/obra/pueblo-espanol-tiene-camino-que-conduce-estrella>.

Lisbon, which also featured Almada Negreiros, Jorge Barradas, among other Portuguese modernist artists. Canto da Maia exhibited a series of multi-coloured clay statuettes, portraying scenes of Parisian society in a humorous and critical fashion. According to the Portuguese scholar Lúcia Matos, these terracotta pieces differ from the popular representations because of their cosmopolitan sense.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, this popular root is very present, not only in the dimensions of the figurines, but also in the choice of materials and their finish. They also bring to mind the kind of representations that Canto da Maia started making in his native island: small figurines of people and animals with candle wax and clay from the Lagoa potters.<sup>46</sup> He now changed the subject and his critical eye in tune with the cultural values of the environment in which he now lived. Lúcia Matos goes so far as to say that in the Tanagra figurines, the sculptor would have found antecedents for his own terracotta sculptures which, like their Hellenic precursors, gracefully captured the spirit of the times.<sup>47</sup>

Tanagra is a small village in Greece, famous for the small terracotta statuettes painted in bright colours and produced in the pre-classical era. They were very popular and that is why they were exported and copied all over the Greek world. They portrayed mainly young women and children usually performing daily tasks. Today many of them have no colour, but in fact they were intensely colourful, as some examples still show. They were discovered by chance in 1870 and a considerable number of them is in the Louvre Museum collection, which Canto da Maia might well have visited, especially because Bourdelle, with whom he studied, was interested in archaic Greek sculpture. Bourdelle followed one of the newer tendencies in sculpture, inspired, like Maillol, by the pre-classical sculpture.

In 1915 there was another event that seems key in Canto da Maia's career and that was his stay in Madrid and his contact with sculptor Julio Antonio, whom

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<sup>45</sup> Lúcia Almeida Matos, *Escultura em Portugal no Século XX, 1910-1969*, Lisboa 2007, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Paulo Henriques, *A Insularidade de Canto da Maia*, master's thesis, Lisboa 1989, 13-14.

<sup>47</sup> Matos, *Escultura em Portugal no Século XX, 1910-1969*, 106.

he later considered to be his great master, as mentioned before. In Madrid, Canto da Maia also had important contact with the regenerative and nationalist spirit of the Generation of 98 by participating in the famous Tertulia de la Cripta del Pombo, founded in that very year. The contact with the Spanish artistic environment and with Julio Antonio reinforced his interest in the roots of Mediterranean culture, adding to it a renewed interest in the popular and traditional, as well as the mediaeval (intrinsically connected to the roots of a people). As an immediate consequence, in 1916 he produced *The Courage of Life*, where the archaic root is implied and also small statuettes entitled *Types of People*, thematically quite close to Julio Antonio's *Bustos de la Raza*.

In the following years, he presented *Fish sellers* (1919), three bas-reliefs with popular figures of fish sellers with baskets and peasants with pitchers on their heads and *Types of Portugal* (1920), two bas-reliefs depicting rural scenes of the Portuguese environment. One of them depicted peasant figures leading a cow, and the other showed couples dancing – illustrating the national identity translated to the rural and folk world. These subjects were quite close to Hugué's rural scenes. Again, the work was bas-relief. From the 1920s, Canto da Maia's sculpture revealed a search for a formal synthesis, centred on a quest for the essential values manifested in mythical, timeless and sacred attitudes, which he built with references to the representations of pre-classical sculpture and mediaeval virgins. His sculpture was largely populated by female figures, subtly expressing their inner life. The Portuguese scholar Paulo Henriques, refers to "Canto da Maia's melancholy quest for a primordial world".<sup>48</sup> These sculptures are depictions without time or space, which seem to search for universal truths and, as such, are universally understandable. Inspired by archaic and mediaeval art, through schematic lines and simplified volumes, Canto da Maia shows a world of love and heartbreak, but also a celebration of life.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Henrique, *A Insularidade de Canto da Maia*, 125.

<sup>49</sup> See Paulo Henriques, ed., *Canto da Maia – escultor*, Lisboa 1997.



Figure 3. Ernesto Canto da Maia, *Jogos de crianças*, 1925, 57x57 cm. Coleção Herdeiros de Canto da Maia

Unlike Hugué, Canto da Maia's women are not primitive deities projected through the depiction of Mediterranean women, robust and massive, but rather they are slender mythical figures of the period of Greek archaic sculpture, or elegant mediaeval maidens.

Another look at his work one will also reveal a direct quotation of popular Portuguese motifs, depicting elements of a traditional and formal repertoire. For example, flower elements, textures, birds, which can be found in the Portuguese mediaeval illuminated manuscripts and which have been copied by all manner of artisans, especially in the North of Portugal, in embroideries and tapestries, and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century granite work from Minho, and partly in the motifs of traditional Azorean granite work. They are images that, consistently or not, fit the cultural and visual universe of Canto da Maia's origins, Azorean and Portuguese. Canto da Maia was considered by the Portuguese art historian J.-A. França to be trapped in the art deco taste in his depiction of a "mannered



Figure 4. Ernesto Canto da Maia, *A Dança e a Música*, 1926, painted concrete, 185x150 cm. Coleção Herdeiros de Canto da Maia

decorative shape”.<sup>50</sup> The notion I wish to reinforce is that his modernism, regardless of the international influences it may have presented, represents a quest for primordial gestures, for the essential forms of sculpting, and for a primitive inwardness undetached from his experience on his island. It is also represented by the depictions of Eden-like nature, though not exotic, in which elements of national popular culture are shown.

Like Canto da Maia, Arturo Martini, the Italian case under study here, showed a close connection with his homeland, in this case Tuscany. There, small Romanesque churches and the archaic Gothic played an important role in the region’s visual culture. Furthermore, the local contemporary life was widely affected by the discovery of Etruscan art, namely the Vulci necropolis that, from

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<sup>50</sup> França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*, 264.

1828, gave rise to a great number of archaeological excavations in the territory.<sup>51</sup> Marini's father was a pâtissier and his first sculpting stimulus may have come from arabesques that, his father used to create with butter and a piping bag. At least that is the image he would later recall.<sup>52</sup> In 1908, Martini left to study in Venice feeding off classical culture and spending many hours in museums studying the sculpture of the great masters. One year later he travelled to Munich where he studied under the guidance of Adolf Hildebrand, the sculptor whose theory seems to have been very relevant to some of the sculptors from this period.<sup>53</sup>

In 1912, the very same year that Canto da Maia arrived in Paris, Martini exhibited some pieces in the Parisian Autumn Salon. In this city he came into contact with avant-garde experiences which, as was the case for Hugué with Cubism, proved of little interest, unlike everything connected to his past and especially to his Tuscan roots.

At the beginning of the war, Martini reconsidered his work. This led him on to a unique personal journey through various influences linked to the history of Italy: from Etruscan archaeological findings and Roman references - including the unearthing of the bodies in Pompeii, to the Gothic and the classical Renaissance.<sup>54</sup> His modernism is found deeply anchored to national historical references together with artisan practices like pottery and its wide repertoire of nativity scenes and the imagery linked to legends and traditions.

Martini reinterpreted all of this, in a depiction of pure figures and balanced compositions. He fits the *Novecento* spirit, an heir to the programme proposed by the art journal *Valori Plastici*, which also encouraged a European *return to order* and proposed a return to art as an experience of Italy and its traditions. In that same way, the *Novecento* embodied the traditional values of the Latin spirit

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<sup>51</sup> See George Dennis, *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*, 1848.

<sup>52</sup> See Arturo Martini et al., *Arturo Martini: Opere edite e inedite, 1908-1944*, Milano 1996.

<sup>53</sup> See footnote number 20. A look at the work of the sculptors mentioned in this paper would show how Hildebrandt's theory on sculpture might have inspired their formal options.

<sup>54</sup> See figure on <http://www.archimagazine.com/bmartini.htm>.

against the avant-garde. Like Hugué, who seemed to search for the ingenuity of the first man sculpting, rejecting progress, or, like Sánchez who searched for inspiration in Castilian nature, Martini declared that he wished to be free of his infirmity of having seen the statues of the world, being more enthusiastic about manifestations of nature than about any form of art. He declared that he wished to reproduce only what he had in his mind<sup>55</sup> – producing a work that once more rejected an educated training.

Obviously, from all that has been said, his view of the world left many traces in his sculpture. That is the case in his work of Hellenic reference: *The Stars* (1932) which recalls a group by Phidias, *Aphrodite in her mother Dione's lap*. To these types of references he added those of a popular spirit, the world of fables and religious subjects, like *The Dream or The Annunciation* (1931). These small-scale works bring to mind the traditional Italian terracotta cribs and nativity scenes.<sup>56</sup> Other themes explored were domestic scenes and traditional activities of the Italian people, once more highlighting the single point of view and the combination of planes as advocated by Hildebrandt.

The uniqueness of his sculpture gains particularly original contours when he dwells on legendary and biblical scenes, which have been recurring subjects in artistic representation throughout history, for example, *The Rape of the Sabines or Solomon* (1935), among others.<sup>57</sup> The human body remains the central motif, but with such a freedom in the way scenes are recreated that what one can see is an audacious approach to a traditional subject radically challenging the way it is

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<sup>55</sup> Guido Perocco, *Arturo Martini: Catalogo delle sculture e delle ceramiche*, Roma 1966, 18.

<sup>56</sup> See figure on <http://www.gnam.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/23/gli-artisti-e-le-opere/158/le-stelle-ol-le-sorelle>.

<sup>57</sup> It is really a subversion of the academic nude in line with one of the avant-garde transgressive claims. See Foster, *Art Since 1900*, 67.





Figure 5. Arturo Martini, *Salomon*, 1935, Plaster, 61x21x20,5 cm. Palazzo Thiene. Vicenza. Inv. 14204

now seen.<sup>58</sup> Like Canto da Maia or Manolo Hugué, Martini took to researching form in which the human body prevails but, in depictions that strenuously reject mimicry. Nevertheless, they seem to agree with the concept by Marino Marini, another sculptor of the Italian *Novecento*, who stated that “according to my Mediterranean nature I cannot express myself freely through anything else than the human”.<sup>59</sup> I would add that nature does not prevent their innovative proposals from rescuing the vernacular in the understanding of the modern.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> In 1945, at the end of his artistic path, Arturo Martini seemed to have stopped believing in sculpture, stating his agreement with Charles Baudelaire that sculpture is boring, because there is nothing there which has not been already tried and achieved (See his book *La Scultura Lingua Morta e altri scritti*, Milan 2001). At that point, he seems somehow disappointed with his achievements in the area. Nevertheless, in my opinion, his work keeps testifying to his virtue as one of the most interesting of modernist research in the field of sculpture.

<sup>59</sup> Patrick Waldberg, *Marino Marini: l'oeuvre complet*, Paris 1970, XIV.

<sup>60</sup> I freely quote Eugenio Carmona's expression in regard to Alberto, but I believe that it can be applied to the other cases in this study. Brihuega, *Alberto 1895-1962*, 128.

## Conclusion

It has not been my intention to exhaust the innumerable possible approaches to the work of the sculptors discussed so far, nor to proceed with any stylistic classification or its discussion, which would be unproductive. I have tried to leave a statement regarding the different ways of approaching sculpture in southern Europe, emphasizing that there are essential aspects intrinsically and unavoidably linked to life in this region, the desire to maintain this essence and how these concerns form the way this modernism expresses itself.

It is worth emphasizing that modernism in these Southern sculptors focuses on the common desire to return to the origins, either to archaic roots, popular culture, and the experience of nature, or to the primordial action of sculpting, the ingenuity of the child or of the savage. A modernism that was very well informed about international avant-garde trends that in some cases were appropriated by these artists, though never compromising nor limiting their own quest. All of them still fuel the love for the archaeological past that in Canto da Maia's case is generically Mediterranean (the archaic Greek sculpture), in Hugué and Sánchez's is more specifically inspired by Iberian findings, and in Martini's case in Etruscan ones.

Another common point is the rescuing, through art, of non-educated elements of culture: in Canto da Maia's case through popular art motifs, in Hugué's and Sánchez's case through the rural, the folk, and nature, in Martini's case through fables, myths and popular scenes.

For its part, the return to traditional materials, namely terracotta and wood, follows the search for the essence of civilization and for the first gesture of sculpture (naïve and inexperienced, alienated from history and progress).

I would also like to highlight that the women, the birds, the bulls present in the sculpture of both Spanish artists are, on the other hand, images with tremendous precedence in the History of Spanish Art, which these artists recovered without prejudice. In the same way Martini's popular and mythological subjects are closely linked to Italian Art History.

Paradoxically this latter observation seems to be a kind of attestation of freedom. These artists were effectively freed in their approach to sculpture; they did not establish any kind of rules to obey. They had no pre-conceived ideas about being modern. They were not committed to doing something totally new or shocking as a condition of their modernism.<sup>61</sup> Yet they lived from the experience of rebelling against all that was normative. They were provocative. They used references without prejudice whether they were from popular culture, from the Gothic or any other historical period, as long as they suited their purposes. Manolo Hugué, for instance, stated that “It is nonsense to say about the Goths (...): ‘They were not bad for the time’. The Goths were shrewd, or shrewder than people of today. We just have to look at the way they solved plans. (...) they put three men inside a boat as easily as you put three eggs in a hat.”<sup>62</sup> This is also what one can see in some of his bas-reliefs. He was not concerned with the right proportions, or if the space inside the frame was enough to depict a specific thing, when the space available was not as large as he would like, he just made it fit.

To finish, I would like to allude to marginality and its relation to modernism. Since Baudelaire, the modern and the marginal have been understood as twin concepts and “from its beginnings, the artistic avant-garde has discovered, renewed, or re-invented itself by identifying with the marginal”.<sup>63</sup> Each one of these four sculptors assumed a sort of intentional marginality in relation to the international avant-garde. As I hope to have shown, this was not because of their inability in following it, but because avant-garde quests did not entirely suit their purposes. Sometimes they were even critical of other modernists, condemning

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<sup>61</sup> “Modernism consistently allied itself with ‘the shock of the new’”. Foster, *Art Since 1900*, 90. “The avant-garde understands itself as invading unknown territory, exposing itself to the danger of sudden, shocking encounters, conquering an as yet unoccupied future. The avant-garde must find a direction in a landscape into which no one seems to have yet ventured (...) anticipation of an undefined future and the cult of the new...”. Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity – an incomplete project” in *The anti-aesthetics: essays on postmodern culture*, ed. Hal Foster, Seattle 1993, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Pla, *Vida de Manolo*, 218-219.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Crow, *Modern art in the common culture*, London 1998.

artists that worked in a “delirious and monstrous” way, spending years obsessed with the same subject. Hugué also criticized the competition between them, distancing himself from those “madhouse worries”.<sup>64</sup>

So, what of the margins of the marginal? What to call it? Much more could be said about the subject, but that would be the beginning of another discussion. Concerning these four artists in the margins of the marginal I would merely say that they are four facets of Southern modernist sculpture.

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<sup>64</sup> Pla, *Vida de Manolo*, 215.

# THE DEFAULT MATERIALITY OF WHITENESS IN SOUTHERN MODERNISM AND ITS CONNECTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE<sup>1</sup>

SUSANNE BAUER

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 modern architecture overlaps with the argument about ornament. The elements of modern architecture were inherited by the so-called machine aesthetic as a product of modernisation itself. 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, to make visible its technological elements that make the architecture itself. Ornamentation, like colour, should be swept away by a revolutionary inauguration of transparency. Paradoxically, the sign for

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised and extended version of the paper “Southern Modernisms Default Materiality of Whiteness and its Connection to the International Style” presented at the international conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances Through Regional Appropriations*, ESAP, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

this transparency was 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 a non-ornament (dressing) the protagonist has to deny that white is a colour. White is clearly being used as not only a symbol, but also 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 also one which corresponds to the overall demands of Modernism itself. This alleged ‘default materiality’ of whiteness is at the centre of the discussion on the classification of different Modernisms.

In *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*<sup>2</sup>, Mark Wigley states that the white that “was successfully disseminated to an international audience”<sup>3</sup> was only the surface of the architecture itself, but that this surface similarly defined the architecture of Modernism. “The identity of that architecture had finally been located in its white surfaces, surfaces that assumed an unparalleled force, so much so that they continue to define modern architecture long after architects started to remove the layer of paint in favour of the look of exposed concrete or metal.”<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging that, even after the rise of modernism, the significance of the white wall persists: “While the number of white surfaces may have been dramatically reduced, their definite role remains.”<sup>5</sup> To Wigley, the surface is the creator of architecture and it thus produces the visibility of its objects: “Despite being nothing more than a certain kind of image, its surface raises the question of a physical domain beyond images and,

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses – The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge, MA 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, xiv.

in doing so, defines a new kind of space.”<sup>6</sup> Starting out as praise to the surface itself, the white wall becomes the all-defining element of modern architecture. “We do not have to dig so deep. After all, to explore the white wall is precisely to explore the surface itself.”<sup>7</sup>

First of all that surface - as the defining component of modern architecture - has to be cleansed of all excessive elements hindering its being 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-19<sup>th</sup> century by advocates such as Adolf Loos. According to Wigley, modern architecture is architecture without decoration, which ultimately leads to the ‘naked wall’: “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.”<sup>8</sup>

In his argument, it is precisely the importance of the white surface that allows for a ‘new kind of space’ to be defined. In his own words: “The look of modernity is that of utility perfected, function without excess, the smooth object cleansed of all representational texture.”<sup>9</sup> This ‘cleaning off’ of all excess material and structure becomes a symbolic function of all modernization: “The whitewash is not simply what is left behind after the removal of decoration. It is the active mechanism of erasure. Rather than clean surface, it is a cleaning agent, cleaning the image of the body in order to liberate the eye.”<sup>10</sup> Whitewash becomes a metaphor for the purifying process that did not end with just the removal of ornamentation in architecture. Only when white became the symbol of everything that was hygienically cleansed was the process of modernization complete.

Wigley’s argument of the white wall as the ultimate defining element of modern

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<sup>6</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 8.

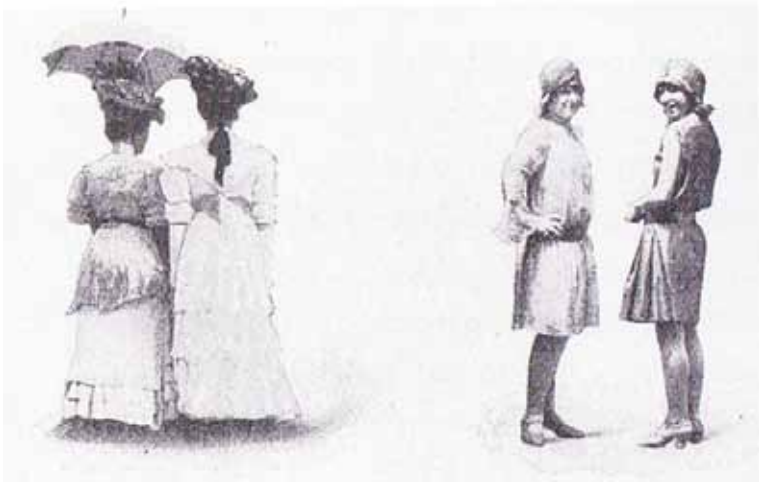


Figure 1. Changing dress code for women

architecture develops out of his argumentation of a connection of architecture to fashion. 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 argues that “modern architecture was explicitly launched against fashion, and its white surfaces played a key role in that attack.”<sup>11</sup> The white surface thus becomes the key element of the attack against fashion and the all-defining anti-fashion look of Modernity.

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 clothing the surface wall

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<sup>11</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 37.





Figure 2. Modern fashion

of a building, but also by its close connection *to* fashion, which Wigley argues derives out of the reform against fashion.<sup>12</sup> “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?”<sup>13</sup>

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 mechanisms 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

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<sup>12</sup> “... if modern architecture is truly a form of clothing reform, it cannot so easily resist fashion. Reforms tend to become fashions.” Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 160. Later he proclaims: “Reform is actually carried out by fashion,” Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 180.

<sup>13</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 161ff.



Figure 3. Le Corbusier, Double house, Weissenhofsiedlung, Stuttgart, Germany, 1927, black-and-white advertising image, 1927

produced by the image, and thus the mass media, itself. She points out that the widespread publication of *The International Style* was 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 states that “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.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity – Modern Architecture as Mass Media*. Cambridge, MA , 1994. 207ff.



Figure 4. Le Corbusier, Double house, Weissenhofsiedlung, Stuttgart, Germany, 1927, colour photo, taken 2013

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. In the public imagination Modernism in architecture matches that image of buildings that are white, have plain simple walls and, most frequently, a flat roof. This canonical image of Modernism in architecture is linked to a language of functionalism and utility at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that becomes embedded in the promise of the good life and regarded as a status symbol of luxury in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By then the modern image had already been successfully disseminated through its radical aesthetic principles. A wave of new Modernism was using this image

to continue in this now internationally acknowledged style. As Reyner Banham states in 1969 in *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment*: “the [American] architects were working *with* the artistic preferences... and not – as was so often the case in the less relaxed intellectual atmosphere of Europe – *against* them.”<sup>15</sup> The white modern image was thus moved from its inception in Europe as an attack *against* fashion to an American audience as a fashion image itself, and, with the use of mass media - book publications and exhibitions to begin with – this image was successfully spread to a general public as the image of the ‘*modern life-style*’ itself. Yet this machine aesthetic, as he further argues, is never in full view as it is hidden under the layer of white paint that constrains the services and mechanics behind the aesthetics of the ‘new machine house’: “The lessons of such a house are... that designing for mechanical services is not merely a matter of finding neat ways to install them... but of setting them to work in partnership with the structure so that the whole is more than the sum of the parts”.<sup>16</sup> Meaning, of course, that the mechanical services were hidden from prime view and merged with the structure to become ‘invisible’. Technology was generally not controlled by its users, but had to be covered up so as not to show a type of mechanism that was not of interest to them in terms of its running of services, but only in its ability to bring a kind of comfort level to the modernized world that would suit its new abilities. This feeds into Mark Wigley’s argument of the controlled modern surface through the overall application of a coat of white paint and its whitewashing and cleansing of all distracting elements. Industrialization as such was never discussed in terms of its mechanization, but rather was only relevant as a design issue in terms of its aesthetic values. Therefore, the Machine Age aesthetic was used rather as an image and the modernisation that had occurred was likewise hidden from view. Banham argues that the modernisation in terms of new mechanisms did not interest the modern

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<sup>15</sup> Reyner Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment*, London 1969, 93.

<sup>16</sup> Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment*, 109.

architect, nor the modern man. The ‘modern’ image has since been attached to this ‘pure’ and ‘honest’ aesthetic and was created at a time that was more defined through what lay behind this image.

To this day, Le Corbusier is still regarded as the founding father of modern architecture, and therefore 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. By analysing Le Corbusier’s colour scheme, 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 and was soon used in countless advertising campaigns promoting the new machine age. Le Corbusier took on standardisation and mass-production as by-products of the Industrial Revolution that he was keen to show in his projects. While his buildings appeared monochrome, Le Corbusier unwillingly became 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, he was keen to show these new technologies in every aspect of his creations. Le Corbusier 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.’”<sup>17</sup> This new style that he was talking about was underlined by his *Five Points of Architecture* that created the new architecture as he envisioned it: the

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<sup>17</sup> Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, London 1995, 5ff.

*pilotis* - the reinforced concrete columns; *the free plan* as a result of the absence of supporting walls as the concrete columns would take on the structural load; *the free façade* as it could be separated from the structure; *the horizontal window*; and *the roof garden*.

What followed from this glorification of the machine was his 1925 book, *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui (The Decorative Art of Today)*, where he once again advocated the white wall. As Le Corbusier wrote: "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."<sup>18</sup>

Whiteness was even further celebrated in his memoirs of his travels through the Mediterranean, which he reflected upon in *When the Cathedrals were White*.<sup>19</sup> It was about a new era of cityscapes, but, as the title suggests, his first chapter, entitled the *Greatness of Things*, was dedicated to the colour white. Le Corbusier proclaimed whiteness as a sign of a new era, "a great expression of liberty of the liberated spirit."<sup>20</sup> He exalted the whiteness as the author, the origin and as the zero-point of architecture, as he writes: "The cathedrals were white because they were new. The cities were new; they were constructed all at once, in an orderly way, regular, geometric, in accordance with plans. The freshly cut stone of France was dazzling in its whiteness, as the Acropolis in Athens had been white and dazzling, as the Pyramids of Egypt had gleamed with polished granite... The new world was beginning. White, limpid, joyous, clean, clear, and without hesitations, the new world was opening up like a flower among the ruins. They left behind them all recognized ways of doing things; they turned their backs on all that. In a hundred years the marvel was accomplished and Europe was

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<sup>18</sup> Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*. London 1987, 188.

<sup>19</sup> Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White*, New York 1947.

<sup>20</sup> Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White*, 5.

changed.”<sup>21</sup>

The architectural characteristics of that white modern image of buildings, that of the white wall and flat roof, were taken up and promoted as “an essential aesthetic significance”<sup>22</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. In the work of this exhibition, “white is transformed into a ‘natural’ colour of a material, an extraordinary move that is slipped in as if nothing has happened. A moralistic tone of truth to materials is credited to white in the very moment that it successfully masks the material that it is added to”,<sup>23</sup> as Mark Wigley notes.

The exhibition came to prominence and widespread recognition through an accompanying book that was jointly written by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson called *The International Style*. This publication aimed at establishing the principles that made up the new style. According to Hitchcock and Johnson 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.”<sup>24</sup> The First Principle of this new style – *Architecture as Volume* – was made possible through the advances in industry. Traditional masonry was replaced by a skeleton construction, which in turn allowed the plan to have a greater freedom than in the past. “The effect of mass, of static solidity, hitherto the prime quality of

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<sup>21</sup> Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> As Hitchcock and Johnson refer to it in the exhibition *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* and in the accompanying book to the exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1932.

<sup>23</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 331.

<sup>24</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, New York 1995, 36.



Figure 5. Modern Architecture: International Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1932

architecture, has all but disappeared; in its place there is an effect of volume, or more accurately, of plane surfaces bounding a volume. The prime architectural symbol is no longer the dense brick but the open box. Indeed, the great majority of buildings are in reality, as well as in effect, mere planes surrounding a volume.”<sup>25</sup> The Second Principle of ‘the style’ was *Concerning Regularity*.

The modern architect, who would use standardized parts as a technological advance in construction and for economic reasons, would have no problem implementing the second principle into an architecture derived from standardized construction units. “Modern standardization gives automatically a high degree of consistency in the parts. Hence modern architects have no need of the discipline of bilateral or axial symmetry to achieve aesthetic order. Asymmetrical schemes of design are actually preferable aesthetically as well

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<sup>25</sup> Hitchcock and Johnson, *The International Style*, 56.





Figure 6. Modern Architecture: International Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1932

as technically. For asymmetry certainly heightens the general interest of the composition. Function in most types of contemporary building is more directly expressed in asymmetrical form.”<sup>26</sup> Regularity in architecture was thus clearly set against a symmetrical architecture, but rather inevitably derived from the new construction solutions of modern architecture. The Third Principle – *The Avoidance of Applied Decoration* – was about the avoidance of cheap and common decoration. “The current style sets a high but not impossible standard for decoration: better none at all unless it be good. The principle is aristocratic rather than puritanical.”<sup>27</sup>

Although white as the chosen colour of modern architecture was not frequently referred to in *The International Style* publication, it was as though it was already

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<sup>26</sup> Hitchcock and Johnson, *The International Style*, 72.

<sup>27</sup> Hitchcock and Johnson, *The International Style*, 87.

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 range of colour. However, when discussing applied decoration, the history of colour in modern architecture and, thus, the justification for the use of whiteness was explained by Hitchcock and Johnson: “In the use of colour the general rule is restraint. In the earliest days of the contemporary style white stucco was ubiquitous. Little thought was given to colour at a time when architects were preoccupied with more essential matters. Then followed a period when the use of colour began to receive considerable attention. In Holland and Germany small areas of bright elementary colours were used; in France, large areas of more neutral colour. Colours were artificially applied and the majority of wall surfaces remained white. At present applied colour is used less. The colour of natural surfacing materials and the natural metal colour 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 colour. The earlier use of bright colour 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.”<sup>28</sup>

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*. The year 1932 and its *International Style* campaign became indeed “the moment that white itself slips into the background, the moment that white can become the default condition of the discourse that never needs to be addressed as such.”<sup>29</sup> This is also the case for many projects built today, yet

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<sup>28</sup> Hitchcock and Johnson, *The International Style*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 330.

it must be questioned if such a generalisation of a classification of style is still applicable to today's architecture and if the whiteness is the means by which to make this visible in the form of the 'modern image.'

In this sense, the architecture of Alvaro Siza becomes a fitting case study for a different kind of Modernism, a Southern Modernism or more precisely, that of Portugal. As Frampton already acknowledges: "from the late sixties onwards, the interest of well-informed critics and architectural culture in general turned increasingly towards Siza. He was seen as the leader of the Portuguese architectural world, one which, thanks to the liveliness and originality of its collective work, has become a privileged reference point in the architectural landscape of the past two decades. Since 1974, when Portugal embraced democracy and embarked upon a period of remarkable social and economic development, Siza's work has become a symbol of the country's rebirth."<sup>30</sup> Frampton further acknowledges that "Siza's early works are inseparable from the larger effort to re-cast the Portuguese tradition in modern terms."<sup>31</sup>

The white wall, however, is embedded into Southern Modernism due to its vernacular style and as such pre-dates a classification of an *International Style* as shown in Le Corbusier's memoirs about the singularity of the white cathedrals of the Mediterranean countries. Siza's architectural style is therefore questioned in terms of its vernacular heritage as much as its influence of an international design language manifested at a time when Siza's architectural influences were established.

In one of his writings about the critical debate of regionalism, Kenneth Frampton emphasizes the problem of a universalization versus a celebration of different cultures. He quotes Paul Ricour in *History and Truth*: "The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, which

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<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Frampton, *Alvaro Siza – Complete Works*, London 2000, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Frampton, *Alvaro Siza – Complete Works*, 27.

might not be an irreparable wrong, but also of what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great cultures, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, what I shall call in advance the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind. The conflict springs up from there. We have the feeling that this single world civilization at the same time exerts a sort of attrition or wearing away at the expense of the cultural resources which have made the great civilizations of the past.”<sup>32</sup> Kenneth Frampton further argues for an understanding of regional culture and its differentiation from general distinction and explains modernization as well as styles such as Art-Nouveau in terms of the ‘progress’ of civilization: “The emergence of the avant-garde is inseparable from the modernization of both society and architecture. Over the past century-and-a-half avant-garde culture has assumed different roles, at times facilitating the process of modernization and thereby acting, in part, as a progressive, liberative form, at times being virulently opposed to the positivism of bourgeois culture. By and large, avant-garde architecture has played a positive role with regard to the progressive trajectory of the Enlightenment.”<sup>33</sup> But he further acknowledges the critical position of the role of the avant-garde against traditional values: “This is the first concerted reaction on the part of ‘tradition’ to the process of modernization as the Gothic Revival and the Arts-and-Crafts movements take up a categorically negative attitude towards both utilitarianism and the division of labour. Despite the critique, modernization continues unabated...”<sup>34</sup> This critical position of the avant-garde a “nostalgic past” as he calls it, is further made visible through his acclaim of a rejection of all traditional values in favour of the zero-point that is required for modernism to have its origin. “Critical Regionalism necessarily involves a more directly dialectical relation with nature than the more abstract, formal traditions of modern avant-garde architecture

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Ricour in Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance” in Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Seattle 1983, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism”, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism”, 18.

allow. It is self-evident that the tabula rasa tendency of modernization favours the optimum use of earth-moving equipment inasmuch as a totally flat datum is regarded as the most economic matrix upon which to predicate the rationalization of construction. Here again, one touches in concrete terms this fundamental opposition between universal civilization and autochthonous culture. The bulldozing of an irregular topography into a flat site is clearly a technocratic gesture which aspires to a condition of absolute placelessness, whereas the terracing of the same site to receive the stepped form of a building is an engagement in the act of ‘cultivating’ the site.”<sup>35</sup>

Alvaro Siza, educated in the decades immediately succeeding early Modernism, followed a modernist design language due to his education, but also included traditional principles in his architecture due to his heritage. His use of whiteness however, cannot only be credited to an international style classification, but might likewise result from an attachment to the Mediterranean vernacular. To him changes in architecture are constant and, as such, there is an evolution in architectural design.<sup>36</sup> His use of whiteness is thus not a continuation of an international design language, but rather a reaction to different architectural projects in different locations and at different times. His attempt to create something outside of the realm of that generalised International Style is inherent in his description of his work: “An architectural study that seeks to take its place within existing innovative trends, among the conflicts and tensions that characterize reality – a study that tries to be more than a purely passive transcription of reality, refusing to place limits on that reality, and analysing each of its aspects, one by one – cannot be based on static images, it cannot follow a linear evolution. For the same reason, such a study cannot be ambiguous, it cannot be reduced to a disciplinary discourse, however correct it might seem to

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<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism”, 26.

<sup>36</sup> As Alvaro Siza stated in an interview with the author conducted with him on 6 September 2012 at Alvaro Siza Offices in Porto, Portugal.



Figure 7. Alvaro Siza, Ocean Swimming Pool, Leça de Palmeira, Portugal, 1961-1966

be.<sup>37</sup> He thus sets his work outside of the category of modernism, although influenced by it, but seeking a non-classification of his work.

One of his first projects, the swimming pool in Leça Da Palmeira in 1963, was built in concrete because of its location in the middle of a rocky shore. It also had to be maintained as inexpensively as possible and was therefore not painted because the paint would have been washed off by the sea. In other projects he used traditional tiles as in the Bragança Terraces in Lisbon, or brick as in the Library for the University of Aveiro, or the Dutch Social Housing of Schilderswijk in The Hague, as a material of easy maintenance.<sup>38</sup> Referring to this project he stated: “The critics hated me for using brick. In Holland in the 1980s there was

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<sup>37</sup> Alvaro Siza in Kenneth Frampton, *Alvaro Siza – Complete Works*, 71.

<sup>38</sup> As Alvaro Siza stated in an interview the author conducted with him on 6 September 2012 at Alvaro Siza Offices in Porto, Portugal.



Figure 8. Alvaro Siza, Braganca Terraces, Lisbon, Portugal, 1992-2004

some division between architects. Some considered white the modern colour and 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>39</sup>

Siza thus acknowledges that “there are many-pre-conceptions about colour but at the end it is not a problem of taste. There are many problems behind the decision of colour.”<sup>40</sup> He defends the whiteness mainly used in his interiors as being used most often for economic reasons, but points out that the use of material also depends on the context as well as the climate. As the white

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<sup>39</sup> Siza, interview 6 September 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Siza, interview 6 September 2012.



Figure 9. Alvaro Siza, Library, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal, 1988-1995

colour protects buildings in hot weather, from the harsh climate conditions, this vernacular tradition is one of the main reasons for the use of whiteness 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 1977 Bouça Social Housing, he introduced a bright red wall on the exterior façades of the four parallel four-storey high blocks comprising over a hundred apartments. Leoni refers to the whole scheme as: “More evident references to Dutch and German social buildings of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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





Figure 10. Alvaro Siza, Schilderwijk Housing, The Hague, Holland, 1989-1993

abstract form here”.<sup>41</sup> This abstract form is made visible through the bright red wall, which is inspired by another modernist architect known for his polychrome design rather than his white walls. Siza explained the red wall as a homage to Bruno Taut, who had been a strong influence on him. This was especially so as Taut had undertaken many social housing projects in Berlin and had worked together with the users, just as Siza did in Bouça, and red was the colour that Bruno Taut had used throughout his projects.<sup>42</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

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<sup>41</sup> Giovanni Leoni, *Alvaro Siza*, Milan 2009, 43.

<sup>42</sup> Alvaro Siza, interview 6 September 2012.



Figure 11. Alvaro Siza, Ibere Camargo Foundation, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 1998-2008

cannot be only one style describing his architectural work as well as those of his contemporaries. As he said: “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 18<sup>th</sup> 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>43</sup> He further acknowledges the difficult position of his work, set between an architecture of culture and that of a modern generalized world as succumbing to an international design language, but taking influences from both vernacular and

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<sup>43</sup> Alvaro Siza, interview 6 September 2012.



Figure 12. Alvaro Siza, Faculty of Architecture, University of Oporto, Porto, Portugal, 1986-1996

modern architecture: “It is said that my works, both recent and those made some years ago, are based on the traditional architecture of the region. Yet even with these works I encountered the resistance of workmen and the anger of passers-by. Tradition is a challenge to innovation. It consists of successive inserts. I am a conservative and a traditionalist – that is to say, I move between conflicts, compromises, hybridization, transformation. They tell me that I do not have a supporting theory or method. That nothing I do points the way... A sort of boat at the mercy of the waves which inexplicably does not always get wrecked... I do not expose the boards of our boats too much, at least not on the high seas. Excesses tend to smash them to bits. I study the currents, eddies, I make sure I know where the inlets are before taking a risk. I can be seen alone, walking the deck. All the crew and the equipment is there, the captain is a ghost. I dare not put my hand on the helm, when the pole star is barely visible. And I do



Figure 13. Alvaro Siza, SAAL Housing Estate Bouca, Porto, Portugal, 1975-1977 and 2001-2006

not point out a clear way. The ways are never clear.”<sup>44</sup> It is in this quotation perhaps, that the problematic of the similarity of the vernacular aesthetics of a Southern Modernism with that of a generalised international design language become inherent. The architecture of Southern Modernism must therefore be analysed in its traditional context and its architects must not be assumed to have succumbed to an international style language.

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 in Europe at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas in Europe the modern aesthetic had itself established from a move away from the Arts-and-Crafts Movement, as well

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<sup>44</sup> Alvaro Siza, in Kenneth Frampton, *Alvaro Siza – Complete Works*, 71ff.



Figure 14. Alvaro Siza, SAAL Housing Estate Bouca, Porto, Portugal, 1975-1977 and 2001-2006

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.

The use of white has therefore been disconnected from an international style in Southern Modernism. Modern influences are integral to the architecture of Southern Modernism, as in the work of Alvaro Siza, however, the *international design language* cannot be defined among many different cultures. 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’s critique on the modern image finds its validation: “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 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.”<sup>45</sup>

As much as this was true in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the internationalization of the modern image becomes even more evident as it is still attached to different design styles and cultures, and thus, prevents the visibility and analysis of different Modernisms. It is no coincidence that the International Style also derived from the fascination of the vernacular style of the Mediterranean; yet, the regional architecture of these places is now classified under this international style.

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<sup>45</sup> Reyner Banham, *Guide to Modern Architecture*, London 1962, 18.

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(Athens, ASFA, 2006), *Art history: the birth of a new discipline* (Athens, Agra Publications, 2013). He is today professor of the History of modern and contemporary art at the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA) and editor of the Greek academic journal *Istoria tis Technis* (Art History) (Athens, futura publications).

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# ABSTRACTS

## **THE QUEST FOR A BRAZILIAN CHARACTER: DIACHRONIC DIALOGUES** *Anat Falbel and Gustavo Peixoto*

Research carried out during recent decades has proved that the modern movement was indeed not the 'rupture with the past' or the 'transgressive and engaged feature' propagated by its official historiography, but the continuity of the harbingers announced since the 19<sup>th</sup> century by more or less well-known personalities from César Daly (1811-1894), to Horatio Greenough (1805-1852) and Henri Provensal (1868-1934). This text aims to confront the claims for a Brazilian architectural expression, or a Brazilian character in architecture, in a diachronic approach considering three different cultural conjunctures and their intersections. The first claim to be scrutinized is that expressed in architect and historian Lucio Costa's (1902-1911) elaborations on architecture and tradition between the 1930s and 1940s from within the nationalist and authoritarian atmosphere of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship. The second moment in our analysis is the National Renaissance claimed by the preachers of the Neocolonial movement during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the third cultural conjuncture to be analyzed is identified during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the work of artist, architect, writer and diplomat Manuel Jose de Araujo Portogalega (1806-1879) and that of architect Francisco Joaquim Bethencourt da Silva (1831-1911).

## **CATALONIA AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE. AN UNFINISHED TALE** *Antoni Remesar Betllloch*

The introduction of modern architecture into Spain, specifically Catalonia, followed a series of stages. If you stick (If one adheres) to the dominant literature, it would be that of the GATEPAC group who introduced it in the early 1930s in a hesitant, weak and partly in an almost magical way. However, it is possible to draw another interpretation of this evolution based on the analysis of the problem of housing in Spain and the way in which the solutions adopted had an impact on buildings using the formal repertoire of modern architecture.

## **A CRITICAL INSIGHT INTO MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE IN SPAIN. RUMOURS AND TRUTHS** *Concha Díez-Pastor e Iribas*

By the outbreak of Spain's Civil War (1936), Modernist architecture had changed the architectural panorama, starting with Madrid's "1925 Generation" Reasonabilism, its deeply critical interpretation – often generalized as "Madrilean Rationalism". The G25 produced outstanding works, like Madrid's La Zarzuela Racecourse (Arniches & Domínguez, 1934; collaborating engineer, Torroja), along with most pre-war paradigms – Madrid University,

Instituto Escuela, Clinical Hospital. In the early 1930s, a new Modernist group had emerged from CIAM, the GATCPAC derived from the Spanish branch of CIRPAC, GATEPAC. These architects, a slavish current of the Modern Movement, promoted the strictest and most orthodox of Modernist principles.

Rumours and truths regarding this period intertwine having produced a number of historical fallacies hard to overcome nowadays. Questions such as whether to call it Modern Movement, Madrilean Rationalism, avant-garde or International Style; that the author of Madrid's Hippodrome was Eduardo Torroja, as Wright once said and Torroja stated, or that the University was built by the early Francoist dictatorship, are just some of the common misbeliefs usually shared both by lay and specialized people with regard to 20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish architecture to this day.

This paper attempts to clarify the roots of Spain's Modernist architecture and its principles to bring some light into its development throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**MEDITERRANEITÀ DESIRED AND REALISED: THE POSITION OF THE FASCIST AESTHETIC IDEOLOGY OF MEDITERRANEAN-NESS OVERSEAS FROM 1935 TO 1940**

*George Epolito*

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 as a propaganda tool. Later it was 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 descent were conveniently ignored in the equation.

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

**URBAN AESTHETICS. ON THE MODERNITY OF VENTURA TERRA, ARCHITECT AND TOWN PLANNER**

*Gerbert Verbeij*

The architect Ventura Terra first became involved in town planning as town councillor of Lisbon (1908-1913). In this article I want to discuss the relevance of aesthetic considerations in his planning activity, arguing that they were both constitutive and marks of his modernity. "Urban aesthetics" and public space, concerns circulating both locally and internationally, are used to approach one of his projects, the Eduardo VII park, in order to uncover the importance of aesthetic motivations in the production of urban space in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Lisbon.

**FROM THE POPULAR TO THE SUPER NORMAL**

*Iván Yllera*

During the 1950s, a new generation of architects arose in the Iberian Peninsula that proposed to regain lost time, reconnecting with current international architectural trends, to become modern once again.

The Portuguese Fernando Távora (1923-2005), from the 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 the 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.

#### **MODERNISM AND THE PORTUGUESE TEATRO DE REVISTA**

*Jorge Palinhos*

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 by 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 Diaghilev, 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 into *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.

#### **MODERNISM IN LATIN AMERICA: THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN AESTHETIC REPertoire**

*Maria José de Azevedo Marcondes*

This text analyses the first modernist houses designed and built during the late 1920s in Brazil, in Mexico and in Argentina. 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 evidence and iconographic registries, I revisit the discussion of internationalism versus nationalism in the arts and in modernist architecture in Latin America. The analysis of these three examples is part of the debate about the updating of arts and architecture with international aesthetical expressions and the search for a national identity, demonstrating the complexity of the boundaries between national and international. Thus, I have tried to analyse the value of the connections and articulations existing between north and south.

#### **JOSÉ-AUGUSTO FRANÇA'S 'QUIET MODERNISM' AND THE WORK OF ARCHITECTS CARLOS AND GUILHERME REBELO DE ANDRADE. INSTANCES OF SURVIVAL AND PERMANENCE IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF PORTUGUESE ARCHITECTURE**

*Mariana Mata Passos*

This article discusses the term 'Quiet Modernism', coined by José-Augusto França (arguably the most relevant Portuguese art historian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) in relation to the work of two Portuguese architects from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Carlos and Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade, to whom the term originally related. Although the historian used the term only once in a major

study about 19<sup>th</sup> century art, here it is discussed in relation to his broader notions of 'Modernism', 'Modernity', 'Modern' and 'Equivocal Modernism', implying that the term 'Quiet Modernism' seems to jeopardize the perceived reading of his interpretation of traditionalism, regionalisms and nationalist references in architecture as pejorative. Also, I focus my analysis on the relationship between Nationalism and history, in the context of Portuguese history of art and architecture, and the broader frame of the antithetical discourse of Modernism master narrative. I do this in order to highlight the relevance the term 'Quiet Modernism' seems to have, at the dawn of the authoritarian regime of the Salazar dictatorship, as a notion that might serve to draw a distinction between a propagandist use of Modernist architecture and a broader notion of Modernism.

#### THE VERNACULAR TRADITION IN THE ART OF NOUCENTISME

*Mercè Vidal i Jansà*

The term *noucentisme* refers to the period when Catalonia achieved some kind of autonomy from the Spanish centralist government: first through the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya* (1914) and later, during the Spanish Republic, with the *Generalitat republicana* (1931). The term *noucentisme* was invented and defined by Eugeni d'Ors. The concept was developed and promoted by d'Ors with the aim of reflecting the "pulse of the times". It focused on a wide variety of contemporary issues, which evolved into a cultural programme closely linked to a particular political line, that of the Catalan bourgeoisie. The appreciation of popular art was one of campaigns especially in the period 1909-1914, when Joaquim Folch i Torres, another highly significant *noucentista* critic, wrote for the pages of the newspaper *La Veu de Catalunya*. This campaign had a twofold bearing: on architecture and on crafts. But also the other arts reflected the appreciation of popular art. Folch i Torres was concerned to make clear that his search for a national style and for the authenticity of a distinct collective spirit by a return to origins was not the same as that of the Romantics.

As a critic in *La Veu*, Folch i Torres championed with d'Ors, the *noucentista* programme, but he placed particular emphasis on national and

popular arts and crafts, which he believed fulfilled the social role of art. The call to a vernacular tradition made to artists and craftsmen was not closely linked to a simple ethnographic or folkloric recreation, because it was felt as an essential issue of this distinct collective spirit. It coincided with the ambition to build a modern Catalonia. The idea of the return to origins was accompanied by that of the purity of a primitive, simple, unadulterated, unaffected art, and also reflected the yearning of artists for effective participation in the kind of collective endeavour rarely offered by modern society. With its autochthonous character the primitivism of the *Noucentistes* paralleled that of most avant-garde movements.

#### HISTORICAL PRECONDITIONS OF "GREEK MODERNISM": THE CASE OF VISUAL ARTS

*Nikos Daskalothanassis*

This paper will focus, to begin with, on the analysis of the main historical features of the Modern Movement in continental Europe and in the US. Then, the paper will turn to the historical condition of Greek society during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and will attempt to examine the "particularities" of Greek modern art as a distinct peripheral phenomenon in the European context. The main argument of the paper will be that the absence of a rich visual tradition in Greece did not facilitate, in morphological terms, the overcoming of a realistic representation of the world, a main target of aggression of the artistic avant-garde in many European countries. Moreover, in Greece, the absence of a strong middle class, serving as the bearer of a visual culture, did not allow modern artistic expression to gain a substantial cultural hegemony. Modernism in the Greek visual arts eventually gained more importance when the so called Generation of the Thirties, (1930) a group of artists, who mostly had bourgeois affiliations and contradicting political views, came rapidly to the fore of the cultural landscape. At this time, "modernism" seemed to emerge for the first time in Greece as a, more or less, structured phenomenon. As a result, Greek modernism in the visual arts was, to paraphrase Benjamin, not "the last" but one of the first "snapshots" of a Greek "intelligentsia" with a new visual conscience.

**VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN CRETE: CONTINUITIES IN CONCRETE**

*Nikos Skoutelis*

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.

**HOUSING, NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL CONTROL: THE FIRST YEARS OF THE PORTUGUESE *ESTADO NOVO*'S AFFORDABLE HOUSES PROGRAMME**

*Sérgio Dias Silva and Rui Jorge Garcia Ramos*

In April 1933, a new constitution was adopted in Portugal establishing the *Estado Novo* (New State) regime. 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' through a housing programme that was based on the single-family house. The small house was selected as a symbol of a Portuguese way of life, inspired in a mythical rural setting that never existed outside of

the nationalist imaginary.

The Affordable House represented the ultimate goal of the regime: setting an apolitical community comfortable with its place in society. The house and housing design were key factors in the creation of a state image in the first years of the regime, in a state that wished to be simultaneously new and conservative.

**PRIMORDIAL GESTURES, ARCHAIC ROOTS, POPULAR CULTURE – A LOOK AT MODERNISM IN THE SCULPTURE OF SOUTHERN EUROPE**

*Silvia Vieira de Almeida*

The present study explores the idea that in southern countries such as Portugal, Spain, and Italy, a certain facet of modernism was developed with a regional feature generally guided by the desire to reconstruct an identity. In other words, the paper considers the existence of a kind of regional modernism, which does not necessarily result from a cultural delay, nor from a misreading of the Parisian one - a misreading ostensibly linked to the peripheral location of these countries or to the sculptor's inability to understand the essence of the Parisian trends. Therefore, this study intends to re-read the artistic production of four sculptors: the Spanish Manolo Hugué (1872-1945) and Alberto Sánchez (1893-1962), the Portuguese Ernesto Canto da Maia (1890-1981), and the Italian Arturo Martini (1889-1947).

**THE DEFAULT MATERIALITY OF WHITENESS IN SOUTHERN MODERNISM AND ITS CONNECTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE**

*Susanne Bauer*

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 at 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 from 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 through his diverse projects along with his many influences and his relation to continuity and change.









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