

# Portugal Year Zero:

Photobooks as a Space of Intervention and Resistance

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Throughout the four decades of António Oliveira Salazar's dictatorial regime (1933-1974), freedom of expression in Portugal was heavily regulated and limited. Although photographic books were regularly published, the content of those titles could not deviate from the regime's ideological principles and the idealized image of Portugal as an imperialist country.

The military coup that occurred on 25 April 1974 - commonly known as the Carnation Revolution - inevitably produced a radical shift in the discourse found in photobook making. The books, pamphlets, and postcards presented in the different sections of this exhibition expose a practice focused on documenting and preserving the essence of the revolution's initial years while also revealing a complex and turbulent transition into democracy - a period marked by celebration, protest, counter-revolution, idealism and a gradual adjustment to the shortcomings of the revolution and realities of democracy.

Divided into 5 sections, this exhibition looks at the impact of censorship in Portuguese photobook-making, the intense publishing activity that commemorated and documented the events and activities linked to the revolutionary period and lastly, various photobooks that began to highlight the failings of that same revolutionary process.

## 1- CENSORSHIP

Censorship services were established by Salazar in 1933 and immediately began a four-decade control over all publishing activity in the country. All newspaper and magazine articles required prior approval to be disseminated. Surprisingly, books were not subjected to this heavy regulation. Instead, the regime's security agency instructed post offices to control the circulation of books and issued warrants to seize 'subversive' literature in bookstores. The three photobooks included in this section are examples of photographic titles that were immediately apprehended by the regime's police due to their rebellious nature and could only circulate as clandestine editions.

### *Cantares / Songs*

Photographs: Ricardo Rangel

Text: José Afonso

Lisboa, Portugal: AAEE / A.E.I.S.T., No Date [c. 1968] - Clandestine Edition

### *Fotos-Grafiyas / Fotos-Grafiyas*

Photographs: Nuno Calvet

Text: Ary dos Santos

Lisboa, Portugal: Quadrante, 1971 (copy on display reprinted in 2014 with reproduction of censorship report)

### *Raízes da Nossa Força / The Roots of Our Strength*

Photographs: Alfredo Cunha

Text: Orlando Gonçalves (Introduction) & Helena Neves

Buraca, Portugal: N.A. \*Orion, 1973

## 2- THERE IS REVOLUTION IN THE AIR

The attempts to document and crystalize the history of the revolutionary process was almost instantaneous. The photobooks presented in this section of the exhibition deal predominantly with the first year of the military overthrow and provide similar accounts about the political manoeuvres that led to the Carnation Revolution, a description of the events linked to the red carnations offered by the population to soldiers during the first days of the coup. These titles are also critical visual documents to understand how some of the ideological excesses of the early revolutionary period rapidly led to social unrest and a precarious political situation.

*Portugal Livre: 20 Fotógrafos da Imprensa Contam Tudo Sobre a Revolução das Flores / A Free Portugal: 20 Press Photographers Tell Everything About the Flower Revolution*

Photographs: Various Authors

Lisboa, Portugal: Editorial O Século, 1974

*Portugal: Um Ano de Revolução / Portugal: One Year of Revolution*

Photographs: José Tavares, Álvaro Tavares & José Teixeira

Lisboa, Portugal: Edições Dêagã, 1975

*Portugal: A Blaze of Freedom...*

Photographs: Supplied by Lotta Continua (Italy) and Politique-Hebdo (France)

Birmingham, UK: Big Flame Publications, 1975

*Da Resistência à Libertação / from Resistance to Liberation*

Photographs: Various Authors

Lisboa, Portugal: Mil Dias Editora, 1977

### 3- STREET POETRY

The 1974 military coup was promptly supported by the people and converted into a thriving Popular Revolution. One of the most prominent symbols of the democratic nature of the political overthrow was the explosion of graffiti and mural painting that covered Portugal's walls during that period. The built environment immediately became a canvas for political intervention and activism, showcasing the astonishing diversity of ideological positions that determined the country's complex and, at times, chaotic first steps towards democracy.

*As Paredes em Liberdade / Walls of Freedom*

Photographs: José Marques

Lisboa, Portugal: Editorial Teorema, 1974

*O Livrinho Vermelho do Galo de Barcelos / The Little Red Book of the Barcelo's Rooster*

Photographer: Various Authors

Amadora, Portugal: Gratel, 1975

*As Paredes na Revolução (Graffiti) / Walls during the Revolution (Graffiti)*

Photographs: Unknown Author

Lisboa, Portugal: Mil Dias Editora, 1978

### 4- AGRARIAN REFORM

One of the immediate consequences of the revolution was the occupation of land and farms, especially in southern Portugal. This practice was upheld by the approval of the Agrarian Reform Law in July 1975 and catalysed an unparalleled rupture in farm ownership, which until then was in the hands of only a few landowners. Rural workers organised cooperatives or Unidades de Produção Colectiva (Collective Production Units) and took over vast expanses of land used for agricultural production. Members of these cooperatives had equal access to land, work and wages. The Agrarian Reform was interrupted in 1977 with the Barreto Law, a piece of legislation that demanded cooperatives to gradually return large areas of seized land to their original owners. Throughout the subsequent years, the Portuguese Communist Party produced a diverse set of photographic publications that criticised this bill and challenged the systematic destruction of the Agrarian Reform process initiated in 1974.

*New Life in Portugal. Impressions and Pictures of a Newly Born Cooperative Farm*

Photographs: Cyril Pustan

London, UK: Community Press, 1976

*Uma Certa Maneira de Cantar. Reforma Agrária: Unir, Construir, Vencer / A Certain Way of Singing. Agrarian Reform: Unit, Build, Succeed*

Photographs: Costa Martins & Avante! Archives

Portugal: Edições Avante!, 1979

Limited Box Edition. Original book published in 1977

*Punição dos Responsáveis dos Crimes de Montemor / Punish Those Responsible for the Montemor Crimes*

Photographs: Unknown Author

Alentejo, Portugal: Direcção da Organização Regional do Alentejo do Partido Comunista Português, 1980

## 5- AFTERMATH

As shown in some of the previous sections of this exhibition, the first two years of the Carnation Revolution were steeped in complex and delicate political and ideological tensions. By 1976, the radical right versus left-wing disputes that marked the initial stages of democracy began to fade. A new constitution was created, opening the door for a democratic state based on socialist principles and advancing a non-military political system made by the people for the people. The photobooks shown in this final section attempt to dissect the volatile political and social process described in the books presented so far in the exhibition. They investigate the revolution's achievements and shortcomings, but more importantly, raise questions about those left on the margins of the revolutionary process.

*Grândola: Reportagen aus Portugal / Grândola: Report from Portugal*

Photographs: Jochen Moll

Text: Günter Karau

Halle (Saale), Germany: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1976

*Revolução e Mulheres / Women and the Revolution*

Photographs: Lisa Chaves Ferreira (Collage)

Text: Maria Velho da Costa

Lisboa, Portugal: Plátano Editora, 1976

*As Mulheres Portuguesas e o 25 de Abril / Portuguese Women and the 25th of April*

Photographs: Alain Mingam & Sylvain Julienne

Text: Beatrice D'Arthuys

Porto, Portugal: Afrontamento, 1977

*Orgulhosamente Muitos ... / Proudly We are Many..*

Photographs: F. Gonçalves (Unipress)

Portugal: Edições do Templo, 1977

*Bewustwording in Portugal / Portugal's Awakening*

Photographs: Arno Hammacher

Text: J. Rentes de Carvalho

Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1978

*Portugal 1974-1975: Regards sur une Tentative de Pouvoir Populaire / Portugal 1974-1975: Looking at an Attempt of Popular Power*

Photographs: Various Authors

France: Hier et Demain, 1979