

**An investigation into the astrological symbols present in two decorative paintings
of José de Almada Negreiros (1893 – 1970).**

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation presents an investigation of the astrological symbols used in two mural paintings by the twentieth century Portuguese artist José Sobral de Almada Negreiros (1893–1970), known as Almada. Dating from 1939, the paintings are situated in the public hall of the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper building in Lisbon. One painting, *Planisfério*, represents a world map surrounded by the four elements and the twelve zodiac signs, while the second, the Hours' Cycle, represents the stages of producing a newspaper in twenty-four hours of a day. Almada is a widely studied artist but these two paintings are less explored and deserve a fuller investigation, particularly considering the astrological symbols used. Almada's interest in astrology is shown in his paintings as well as in some of his writings. His understanding of astrology likely came from his friend Fernando Pessoa, a writer and astrologer who was knowledgeable about the astrological teachings of the time. At the same time, Almada was also influenced by Greek philosophy, mythology and culture, particularly Plato's ideas and definition of the four elements. The analyses of these paintings showed that Almada followed some medieval traditions: the *mappa mundi* and celestial maps in *Planisfério* and the labours of the months in the Hours' Cycle, revealing his interest in ancient knowledge although reworked within the context of contemporary modernist culture, thought and art. It can be assumed that Almada considered there to be a relationship between earth and sky, as demonstrated in his paintings, although he saw each realm differently – the earth as objective and the sky, subjective. Likewise, time and space are depicted in these paintings in both ancient and modern ways, and can be related to Almada's interest in astrology and geometry, although he ended up pursuing the latter more deeply. Therefore, this investigation has tried to enrich the knowledge of these paintings, focusing on the astrological symbolism, to develop an understanding of Almada's relationship with astrology and the presence of astrology in Portuguese society in the 1930s and 1940s.

Notes: All the translations are from the author unless otherwise stated.

Since there are authors with the same surname –Rita Almada Negreiros and Maria José Almada Negreiros, and Porfírio Pardal Monteiro and João Pardal Monteiro – the capital letter of the first name will be kept in further references, to make it easier for the reader.

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the astrological symbols present in two mural paintings dating from 1939 by the Portuguese painter José Sobral de Almada Negreiros (1893–1970), known as Almada. The paintings, *Planisfério* (Planisphere) (Figure 25) and the Hours' Cycle (Figure 72), are situated in the public hall of the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper building in Lisbon, which was designed by the architect Porfírio Pardal Monteiro (1897–1957). Commissioned at the same time the building was being constructed, they are still in their original place as they are integrated artistic heritage. None of the paintings was named by Almada but *Planisfério* was commonly entitled in that way by scholars. The other painting, with no consensual title, will be referred to as Hours' Cycle. Almada used astrological symbols in other art works, and although these works are not the focus of this dissertation, they will be referred to when appropriate.

The building for the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* designed by P. Monteiro was, according to João Pardal Monteiro (b. 1954), the first in Portugal to be built from scratch to accommodate the production of a newspaper, 'from the preparation and management of the journal up to its impression and distribution'.¹ Almada was commissioned, probably by P. Monteiro, with four mural paintings, of which three are in the main hall that was open to the public, as can be seen in Figure 1; two of these paintings are the subject of this study. The building was sold in 2016 to a private investor who converted it into a residential building and the main hall now belong to a private insurance company. Fortunately, being a protected building due to its classification as a property of public interest in 1986, the works carried out respected the original building in many aspects and especially the mural paintings by Almada, as can be seen in Figure 2.²

¹ 'desde a preparação e gestão do jornal até à sua impressão e distribuição'. João Pardal Monteiro, 'Para o Projecto Global: Nove Décadas de Obra: Arte, Design e Técnica na Arquitectura do Atelier Pardal Monteiro', (unpublished Doctor Thesis, Faculdade de Arquitectura, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, 2012), p. 404.

² João Silva, Edifício do Diário de Notícias, SIPA: Sistema de informação para o Património Arquitectónico, SIPA: Sistema de informação para o Património Arquitectónico,

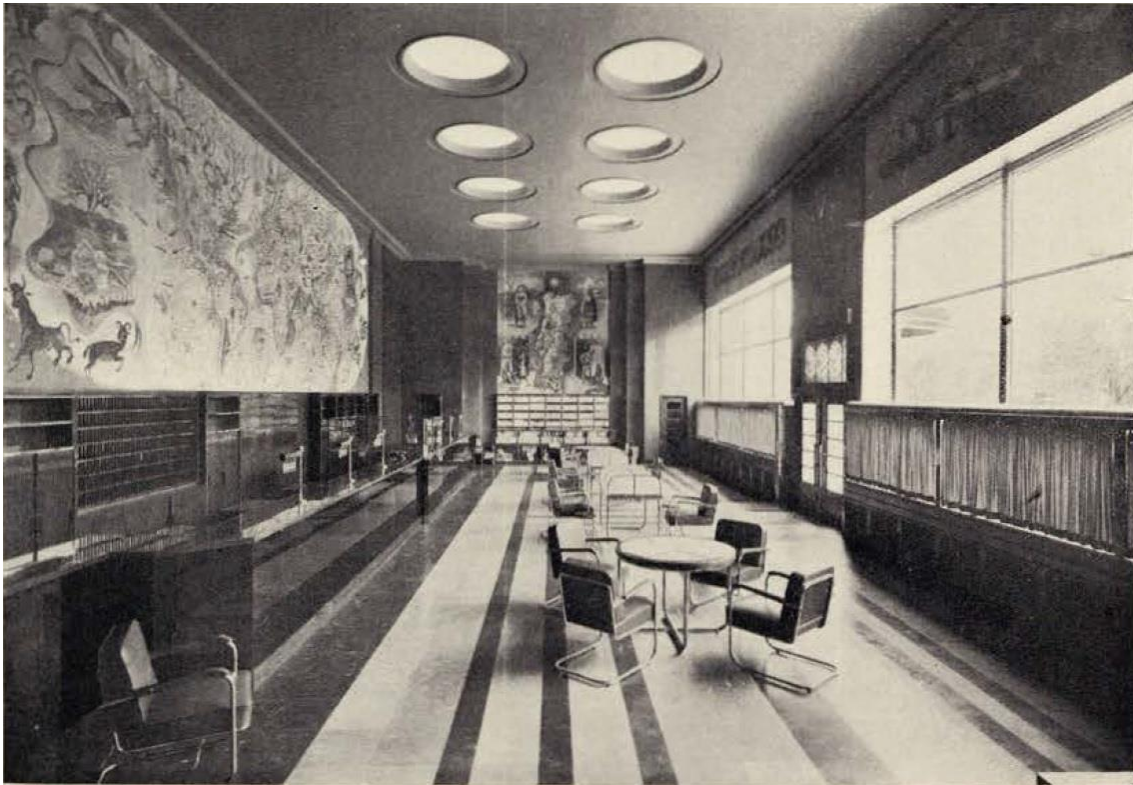


Figure 1. Hall of the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* with the three mural paintings: *Planisfério* on the left wall, *Mapa de Portugal* on the far wall, and the Hours' Cycle above the door. Image: Freire, João Paulo, ed., *Diário de Notícias: Da sua Fundação às suas Bodas de Diamante*, Vol. 2 (Lisboa: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade), p. 25.



Figure 2. Current appearance of the newspaper building hall after the restoration. Image: Margarida Manarte.

http://www.monumentos.gov.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=3982, [accessed 13 January 2022].

In the time period when the building was designed, architecture was privileged in relation to other forms of art. For P. Monteiro, architecture was ‘of all the most immediately necessary to man’.³ Yet, for Almada, a building with no artistic decoration was ‘like an open book with no story for the people read and fix’, an indication of how his paintings would be a means of communication.⁴ P. Monteiro considered that sculpture and painting should be subordinated to architecture and ‘adapted to their respective place and function’, indicating that the artistic program would have to serve the building itself.⁵ The privilege given to architecture can be also understood in the documents about the building project available in the municipality archive where the architecture plan was registered in detail, where few or no references to the decorative program exist. The descriptive memory includes a chapter ‘of the aesthetic problem’.⁶ However, it relates only to the exterior of the building, indicating that the ground floor has big windows ‘through which one can see, day and night, what is happening in the hall’, hence Almada’s *Planisfério* would also be always visible.⁷ Only in a magazine article from 1940 did P. Monteiro write that Almada was responsible for the decorative mural paintings, praising ‘the painter’s undeniable talent as a decorator’.⁸

The two paintings were produced in a period with a particular social, political and thus artistic context. A dictatorial political system was installed in 1933 by the prime minister elected in 1932, António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), which only ended through a military revolution in 1974. During that time period, some limitations were imposed, especially in regard to positions divergent to the current political system. The field of the arts was also influenced by politics above all because the majority of artworks were commissioned by the government, who would use those artistic creations as a vehicle to transmit governmental propaganda. According to the art historian José Augusto França (1922–2021), the public commissions would have to be done ‘within a

³ ‘de todas a mais imediatamente necessária ao homem’. *Sudoeste*, (Lisboa: Contexto Editora, 1982), p. 38.

⁴ ‘como um livro aberto sem nenhuma história para o povo ler e fixar’. José de Almada Negreiros, ‘Duas Palavras de um Colaborador’, in *Obras Completas 6 - Textos de Intervenção*, (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1972), p. 168.

⁵ ‘adaptadas ao seu respectivo lugar e a função que lhes compete’. *Sudoeste*, p. 170.

⁶ ‘do problema estético’. Obra nº 50576 Edifício Diário de Notícias na Av. da Liberdade 266. Procº/0468, '36, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Folha 15.

⁷ ‘através das quais se vê, dia e noite, o que se passa no hall’. Obra nº 50576 Edifício Diário de Notícias na Av. da Liberdade 266. Procº/0468, '36, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa. Folha 15.

⁸ ‘o incontestável talento de decorador do pintor’. Pardo Monteiro, ‘O Novo Edifício do Jornal "Diário de Notícias"’, *Revista Oficial do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos*, 13, (1940), p. 23.

more conventional taste'.⁹ However, private commissions would also have to be concordant with government ideas. Artur Portela (1937–2020) considered that two moments can be identified in that period, a first carried out by António Ferro (1895–1956), director of *Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional* SPN (National Propaganda Secretariat), who was interested in 'cosmopolitan modernism' and the 'futurist provocation', which lasted until 1949.¹⁰ The second movement was imposed by Salazar, and described by Portela as 'national historicism', evoking the Portuguese empire, both the sixteenth century expansion and the colonial territories held in the twentieth century.¹¹ The paintings in this study belong to the first period when Ferro was active in the arts, and thus Almada's paintings are vivid and dynamic, still showing the modernism inherent in Almada's work and concordant with the practises of that period. However, a shift to the second movement could be seen already in 1940 with the inauguration of the big *Exposição do Mundo Português* (Portuguese World Exposition) that was created as a double celebration of the Portuguese nation: its foundation in 1140 and its independence restoration in 1640.¹² Focused mainly on sixteenth century maritime discoveries and extant Portuguese colonies spread around the globe, the exhibition showed that Salazar's ideas were getting stronger and more evidenced. As Ellen Sapega noted, while using 'avant-garde artistic techniques' the message transmitted in the exposition 'was undoubtedly conservative'.¹³ During the dictatorship, everything that was to be publicly published, both newspaper articles and books, had to be reviewed by a censorship commission. Even artworks were censored if they were against government ideas. Thus, although there are no records about the government's opinion, the existence of Almada's paintings prove that they had been accepted. According to Sapega due to his talent and renown, P. Monteiro 'was to a large extent

⁹ 'dentro de um gosto mais convencional'. José Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX: 1911-1961*, 4 edn (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2009), p. 157.

¹⁰ 'Modernismo cosmopolita'; 'provocação futurista'. Artur Portela, *Salazarismo e Artes Plásticas*, 2 edn (Lisboa: Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1987), p. 52.

¹¹ 'nacional historicismo'. Artur Portela, pp. 71, 136.

¹² João Paulo Martins, 'A Exposição do Mundo Português Lisboa 1940', in *Exposição do Mundo Português: Explicação de um Lugar*, ed. by Margarida de Magalhães Ramalho and Margarida da Cunha Belém (Lisboa: Fundação Centro Cultural de Belém, 2016), p. 59.

¹³ Ellen W. Sapega, 'Between Modernity and Tradition: José de Almada Negreiros's visual commentaries on popular experience', in *Consensus and Debate in Salazar's Portugal: visual and literary negotiations of the national text, 1933-1948*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), p. 49.

exempt from the new restrictions’, which might have contributed to Almada having more freedom in his paintings.¹⁴

Astrology in 1930s Portugal might not have been widely disseminated but its presence in Portuguese society was found in different mediums of communications. First, the almanacs sold during that period informed their readers about the moon cycle, eclipses, the ingress of the sun in each sign, and the dates when the planets would be visible in the sky. Some, such as *O Verdadeiro Almanaque Borda d’agua* of 1938 and *Reportorio Saragoçano do Borda d’agua* of 1939, presented small symbols for each zodiac sign.¹⁵ Also, some books were published relating to astrology, even though they were not about astrological interpretations of a chart but instead investigations into astrological references in literary works by Portuguese writers such as Gil Vicente (1465–1536) and Luís de Camões (c. 1524–1580).¹⁶ In addition, Mário Sá, a writer interested in astrology (1893–1971), Augusta Gersão Ventura, a high school teacher of Mathematical Sciences, and others discussed their opinions, in several newspaper articles, and those were clearly revised according to the sentence on the front page of the journal: ‘this issue was endorsed by the censorship committee’.¹⁷ A considerable number of these newspaper articles were published in 1938, a year before Almada painted the mural paintings.¹⁸

Artistic works with astrological symbols were also found in the *Exposição do Mundo Português*, composed of several buildings and structures, inaugurated a few months after Almada’s mural paintings in the newspaper building. Unfortunately, it was an ephemeral work, and the majority of the buildings were destroyed after the exhibition; the remaining records of it can only be found in photographs and films from that

¹⁴ Ellen W. Sapega, in *Consensus and Debate in Salazar's Portugal: visual and literary negotiations of the national text, 1933-1948*, p. 62.

¹⁵ Manuel Rodrigues, *O Verdadeiro Almanaque Borda d’Água. Reportório útil a toda a gente*, (Lisboa: Manoel Rodrigues - Livraria Minerva, 1938). Bento Serrano, *Reportório Saragoçano do Borda d’Água*, (Porto: Livraria Joaquim Maria da Costa, 1939).

¹⁶ Augusta Faria Gersão Ventura, *Estudos Vicentinos I - Astrologia e Astronomia*, (Coimbra: Edições de Biblos, 1937). Augusta Faria Gersão Ventura, *A Máquina do Mundo*, 1 edn (Porto: Portucalense Editora, 1944). Mário Saa, *Memórias Astrológicas de Camões*, (Lisboa: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, 1940).

¹⁷ Elisabete J. Santos Pereira, 'Mário Saa (1893-1971) Um Intelectual Português na Sociedade do Século XX', (Unpublished Master Dissertation. Universidade de Évora, 2010), p. 59. Sónia Coelho, Susana Fontes, 'Virgínia Faria Gersão (1896-1974) a Portuguese teacher, grammarian and member of the National Assembly', *Arenal: Revista de historia de las mujeres*, 28, 2, (2021), p. 506. 'este número foi visado pela comissão de censura'. 'Front Page', *Diário de Lisboa*, 20 January, p. 1.

¹⁸ The exchange of opinions was made in the newspaper *Diário de Lisboa* on the year 1938 on the following days: 20 January, 27 January, 8 March, 16 March, 24 March, 31 March, 07 April, 14 April, 21 April, 12 May, 19 May, 16 May. One article was published in the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* on the date 16 February 1938.

period.¹⁹ One was an armillary sphere decorated with the twelve zodiac signs in the ecliptic, as can be seen in Figure 3; however, the author was not found. The second was the *Esfera dos Descobriemntos* (Discoveries Sphere), shown in Figure 4, a pavilion constructed in the form of a sphere and decorated with the first six signs of the zodiac, as can be seen in Figure 5 and Figure 6. According to Margarida Acciaiuoli (b. 1948), this building was at the end of the Discoveries Pavilion. Inside, maritime routes discovered during the sixteenth century were displayed on a globe under a dark sky filled with stars.²⁰ The building seems to have been a project by P. Monteiro, although the author of the decoration was not referred to, leaving doubt whether it was P. Monteiro or another artist.²¹ The images used for the zodiac signs representations are similar to those found in the *Chronographia ou Reportorio dos Tempos* from André de Avelar, who copied the *Chronographia o Reportorio de los tiempos* from Hieronymo de Chaves, as can be seen in the examples shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8.²²



Figure 3. Armillary sphere with the zodiac signs created for the *Exposição do Mundo Português*. Image: Ribeiro, António Lopes, 'A Grande Exposição do Mundo Português' (Portugal: 1940). Minute 32'.

¹⁹ João Paulo Martins, in *Exposição do Mundo Português: Explicação de um Lugar*, p. 60.

²⁰ Margarida Acciaiuoli, 'Os Anos 40 em Portugal - O País, o Regime e as Arte «restauração» e «celebração»', (Unpublished Doctor Thesis Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas - Universidade Nova de Lisboa 1991), p. 193.

²¹ Augusto de Castro, 'Guia da Exposição do Mundo Português', (1940).

²² André do Avelar, *Chronographia ou eportorio dos Tempos: O mais copioso que te agora sayo a luz*, (Lisboa: Jorge Rodriguez e Estevão Lopez, 1602), p. 71.; Hieronymo de Chaves, *Chronographia o reportorio de los tiempos, el mas copioso y preciso que hasta ahora he salido a luz*, (1576), p. 79.

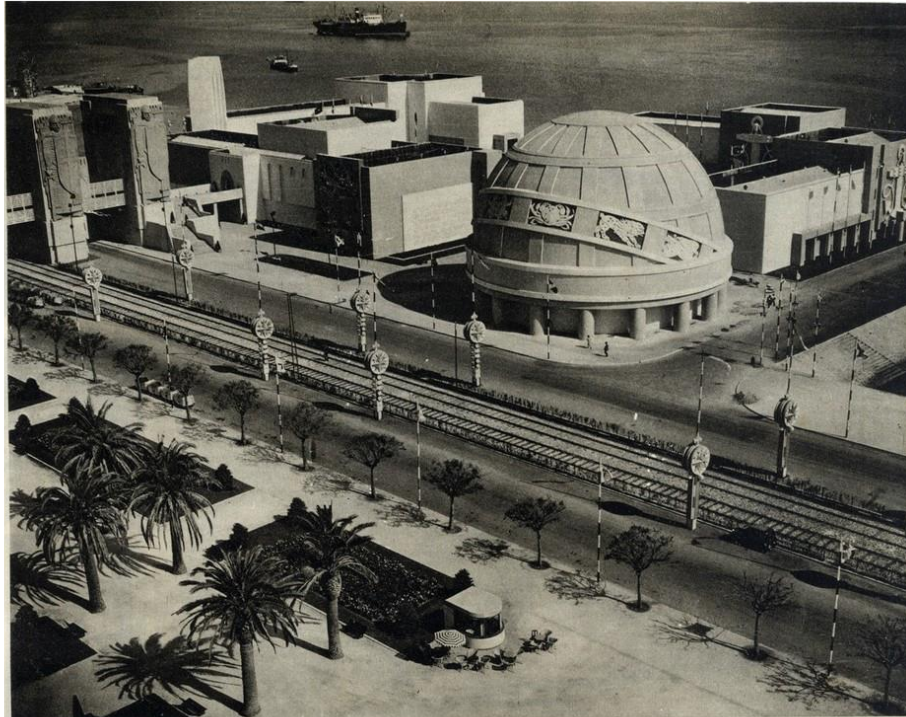


Figure 4. Part of the complex of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World where the *Esfera dos Descobrimentos* can be seen. Image: unsigned, 'O Mundo Português', *O Século – número extraordinário comemorativo do duplo centenário da fundação e restauração de Portugal*, Junho 1940, p. 365.



Figure 5 and Figure 6. Zodiac signs represented on the outside of *Esfera dos Descobrimentos*, from left to right, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo and Virgo. Image: Art Library Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.



Figure 7 and Figure 8. Representation of the signs of Gemini (left) and Virgo (right) taken from Avelar's book. Image: Avelar, André Do, *Chronographia ou eportorio dos Tempos: O mais copioso que te agora sayo a luz* (Lisboa: Jorge Rodriguez e Estevão Lopez, 1602), pp. 76, 78.

According to França, Almada painted mural paintings for the 1940 exhibition as part of the group of artists who contributed to it.²³ Prime minister Salazar announced the exhibition in 1938 and preparations began at that point.²⁴ Thus, while doing the newspaper mural paintings, Almada already was aware of the 1940 exhibition and, considering his friendship with Monteiro, he might have been also aware of his intentions for the *Esfera dos Descobrimentos*. However, as will be seen, Almada represented the zodiacal signs in a different way.

The following chapter will focus on the methodology followed for this investigation as well as the necessary reflexive considerations. A brief presentation of Almada will follow, as well as some considerations about the artist's relationship with astrology. Next will be the literature review that will summarize what was already written about the paintings under study. After, an analysis and discussion of the paintings will be presented in order to explicate the choice of the astrological symbols, including the particular building and epoch where they were produced, as well as Almada's perceptions about the discipline of astrology. Finally, the conclusion will consolidate the results of the investigation and what might be advanced about these paintings and their meaning.

²³ José Augusto França, p. 222.

²⁴ João Paulo Martins, in *Exposição do Mundo Português: Explicação de um Lugar*, p. 59.

Methodology

The methodology followed was based in on-site observation of the primary sources, proceeded by text, library and archival research. First, I carried out a detailed examination of the images as a way of gaining an understanding of what the paintings entail. To undertake a deep analysis of the two paintings, which are the fundamental sources for this investigation, I visited the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* building to see and sense the impact of these monumental paintings in situ, as well as to photographically record the images. The newspaper building was sold a few years ago with the current owner of the hall being the insurance company, Fidelidade – Companhia de Seguros, S. A., and upon contacting them I was given permission to visit and photograph the paintings. Due to the size of the paintings, and because their location was poorly illuminated, I asked a professional photographer, Telmo Domigues, to record those images in order to obtain quality images. The camera used was $\alpha 7$ III with a wide angle lens Tamron 17-28mm F/2.8 Di III RXD (Sony) for the global views and a telephoto lens Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM for the details.

My research followed with library and archival research. From a detailed study focused on the astrological symbols used, they appeared to have similarities to the traditions of mappaemundi and Labours of the Months, and thus I situated the images within these two traditions. Alongside this detailed work I also researched the painter's connections with astrology and, possibly, his cosmology, to situate his work within the wider field of astrology in Portugal in the early-to-mid twentieth century. Due to the dispersion of documentation I had to contact several archives, many of which had information about the architectural project without referring to the decorative program; the most relevant archives were the online archive *Modernismo!* and the archive of the municipality of Lisbon. Since Almada had not leave any written information about his ideas on the paintings, all that can be done is present hypothesis.

Reflexive considerations

I am Portuguese with the same national culture as the painter, although experiencing a very different historical time. To this investigation I bring my background as an art conservator, with a Bachelor's degree from *Universidade Nova de Lisboa* and a Masters from the *Instituto Politecnico de Tomar*, approaching artworks as evidence of the

history and culture of their time. In regards to astrology, I have an insider's perspective as a practitioner astrologer studying since 2014, having finished in 2017 the course on Traditional Astrology at the Academia de Estudos Astrológicos in Lisbon.

Almada

José Sobral de Almada Negreiros was born on the 7th of April of 1893 in São Tomé, an island in the African continent which until 1975 was a Portuguese colony. His father was from Portugal and his mother, from São Tomé, died when Almada was three years old. In 1900, already in Portugal, Almada attended the Jesuit intern school in Campolide, Lisbon, which in França's words was 'imprisoned in the strict discipline of the Jesuits', characterizing his childhood as somewhat restricted, limited and closed.²⁵ Added to the loss of his mother, Almada's father was also absent from his childhood and education. Almada once wrote that having been 'born Portuguese weighed heavily on my person and art' and António Ambrósio observed that he never dedicated a work to his parents or referred 'to the African people', so it appears that he ignored or tried to forget his origins.²⁶

Almada was a multifaceted artist who experienced different mediums and expressed his ideas in multiple forms. Considering his extensive work, only the major features, with a few examples, will be presented in order to give a brief overview of the artist's capabilities and experiences. Almada's first public work was an illustrated anecdote, shown in Figure 9, when the artist was eighteen years old, that shows the satire in his work that he presented for several years in many journals and magazines.²⁷ Early in 1913 he was commissioned to create paintings in oil on canvas. Some of his most famous paintings were commissioned in 1923 for *A Brasileira*, a café where artists and writers gathered, as exemplified in Figure 10.²⁸

²⁵ 'presa na disciplina rigorosa dos jesuítas'. José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, (Lisboa: Estúdios Cor, 1974), p. 16.

²⁶ 'ter nascido português pesou totalmente na minha pessoa e arte'. José de Almada Negreiros, *Orpheu 1915-1965*, (Lisboa: Ática, 1993), p. 14. 'aos africanos'. António Ambrósio, *Almada Negreiros Africano*, (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1979), p. 159.

²⁷ José Sobral de Almada Negreiros, 'Razão Ponderosa', *A Sátira*, 4, 1 Jun (1911), p. 45. <http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/Periodicos/ASatira/1911/N04/N04_master/ASatiraN4.pdf>, [accessed 18 February 2022]; José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 17.

²⁸ Rui Mário Gonçalves, *Almada Negreiros*, (Lisboa: Editorial Caminho, 2005), p. 5. José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 81.

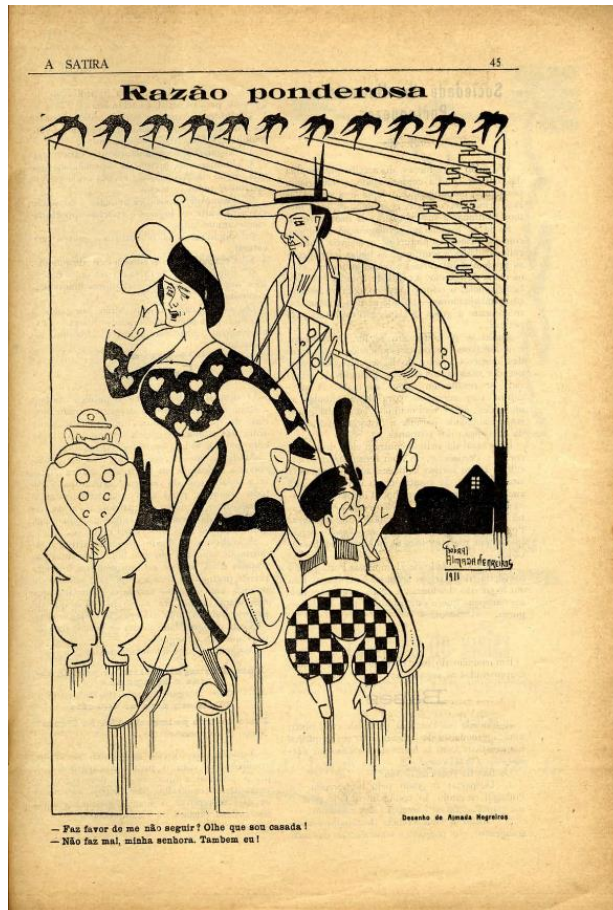


Figure 9. Almada, untitled, 1911, journal *A Sátira*. Image: Hemeroteca Digital.



Figure 10. Almada, *Auto-retrato num grupo*, 1925, coffee shop A Brasileira. Image: Fundação Caloust Gulbenkian.

When he was in his early twenties, Almada expressed his feelings about his homeland and the artistic environment, which he considered conservative, in three manifestos using an affirmative and sometimes aggressive tone.²⁹ Defining himself as a futurist, Almada followed Fillipo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944), the ideologist of the Futurist Movement in Italy. Almada’s first manifesto was published in 1915 in the magazine *Orpheu*, a magazine composed by artists and writers that according to António Quadros (1923–1993) brought modernism to the Portuguese culture, breaking with the previous artistic currents.³⁰ Almada considered that Portugal was stagnating and needed ‘to be born into the century in which the earth lives’.³¹ He condemned the nostalgia that held people in the past, reinforcing his position that Portugal must wake up and follow Europe’s development.³² Almada wrote manifestos, short stories and a novel as well as presenting conferences throughout his career; for Mariana Pinto dos Santos (1975), he had ‘performative writing, in the sense that the written words are in themselves the action they enunciate’.³³

Almada’s first experience abroad was in Paris between 1919 and 1920, where he found a post-World War I Paris that did not have the brightest opportunities.³⁴ During this period Almada developed his signature, exemplified in Figure 11.³⁵ Mário Gonçalves (1934–2014) suggested that, upon his return from Paris, Almada ‘abandoned his previous aggressiveness, to concentrate in the constructive attitude’; however, his ideas had not changed, and in 1926 he proclaimed the same criticism that Portugal needed to evolve.³⁶ Almada’s second experience in a foreign country was in Madrid

²⁹ José de Almada Negreiros, 'Manifesto Anti-Dantas', in *Textos de Intervenção - Obras Completas Vol. 6*, (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1972). José de Almada Negreiros, 'Manifesto da Exposição de Amadeo de Souza Cardoso', in *Textos de Intervenção - Obras Completas Vol. 6*. José de Almada Negreiros, 'Ultimatum Futurista às gerações portuguesas do século XX', in *Portugal Futurista*, (Lisboa: Contexto, 1984).

³⁰ António Quadros, *O Primeiro Modernismo Português - Vanguarda e Tradição*, (Lisboa: Publicações Europa-América, 1989), p. 20.

³¹ ‘precisa é de nascer pró século em que vive a terra’. José de Almada Negreiros, 'Manifesto da Exposição de Amadeo de Souza Cardoso', in *Textos de Intervenção - Obras Completas Vol. 6*, p. 22.

³² José de Almada Negreiros, 'Ultimatum Futurista às gerações portuguesas do século XX', in *Portugal Futurista*, p. 37.

³³ ‘escrita performativa, no sentido em que as palavras escritas são em si mesmas a acção que enunciam’. Mariana Pinto dos Santos, 'Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno', in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2017), p. 12.

³⁴ ‘A segunda geração de Paris’, Flório de Vasconcelos, *História da Arte em Portugal*, (Lisboa: Editorial Verbo, 1972), p. 124. Mariana Pinto dos Santos, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 14.

³⁵ José Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX: 1911-1961*, p. 95.

³⁶ abandonou a sua agressividade anterior, para se concentrar na atitude construtiva’. Rui Mário Gonçalves, *Almada Negreiros*, (Lisboa: Editorial Caminho, 2005), p. 11. José de Almada Negreiros, 'Modernismo', in *Textos de Intervenção - Obras Completas Vol. 6*, p. 54.

from 1927 to 1932. Soon after he arrived, he began to collaborate with local magazines and to exhibit his works; in França's opinion, this was 'the first time Almada met success'.³⁷ M. Negreiros concluded that Almada only returned to Portugal because of the Spanish civil war.³⁸ Although dissatisfied with Portugal and enchanted with the Spanish recognition for Gonçalves, it was during his stays abroad that Almada 'acquired the conviction that an artist should not be outside his homeland'.³⁹ However, Gustavo Rubim regarded Almada as a European who inscribed 'any theory of nationality in a space larger than the nation'.⁴⁰ In 1934 Almada married with the painter Sarah Affonso (1899–1983) with whom he had two children.⁴¹



Figure 11. Example of Almada's signature in the façade of the rectory of the University of Lisbon. Photo: Telmo Domingues.

Throughout his life Almada experienced remarkable moments in Portuguese politics, including the establishment of the republic in 1910 and the implantation of a dictatorial regime in 1933. However, his personal positions were never clear as he worked for all parties. He contributed to monarchic magazines as well as republican and he also criticized the dictatorial government but worked for it and its propaganda. Almada

³⁷ 'pela primeira vez Almada conheceu o sucesso'. José Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX: 1911-1961*, p. 99.

³⁸ Maria José Almada Negreiros, *Identificar Almada*, (Porto: Assírio e Alvim, 2015), p. 57.

³⁹ 'adquiriu a convicção de que um artista não deve estar for a da sua pátria'. Rui Mário Gonçalves, p. 11.

⁴⁰ 'Qualquer teoria da nacionalidade num espaço maior do que o da nação'. Gustavo Rubim, 'A Promessa da Europa', in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, (Lisboa, 2017), p. 57.

⁴¹ Maria José Almada Negreiros, *Conversas com Sarah Affonso*, (Lisboa: Arcádia, 1982), p. 74.

wrote, in an unpublished manuscript dated from 1936 by Santos, that ‘the arts and the state do not see each other’ – assuming they are separated although they both serve the people.⁴² However, Almada drew a state propaganda poster in 1933, calling for the change in the constitution, as shown in Figure 12 (We want a strong State!).⁴³ During the 1930s Almada did not take part in the exhibitions organized by the state and his attitude changed in 1941, when he began to participate, for reasons that are not evident.⁴⁴ Santos suggested the change was a result of either the need for money or his desire to exhibit and be recognized, noting the fact that, in that period, the commissions were mainly from the state.⁴⁵ Perhaps, while working for the state, Almada might have incorporated a double message within his works to suit both government propaganda and his personal ideas.



Figure 12. Almada, *Apologia à Constituição*, 1933, private collection, poster. Image: Acciaioli, Margarida (ed.), *Almada* (1984: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Centro de Arte Moderna), diversos, nº5.

⁴² Mariana Pinto dos Santos, *Almada Negreiros Confronta António Ferro: um Documento Inédito*, (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2015), p. 20.

⁴³ Margarida Acciaioli (ed), *Almada*, (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. Centro de Arte Moderna, 1984).;

⁴⁴ José Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX: 1911-1961*, p. 222.

⁴⁵ Mariana Pinto dos Santos, 'Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno', in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 17.

The year of 1935 is considered by França as the point in Almada's career that 'will take a new direction, within the public recognition'.⁴⁶ Through the hand of the architect P. Monteiro, Almada started creating public works and experiencing new mediums and techniques. In 1935 Almada created the stained glass for the church *Igreja de Nossa Senhora de Fátima* in Lisbon, exemplified in Figure 13.⁴⁷ Right after, he experienced a new technique, fresco painting, in the paintings under study, followed by his famous decorations in two maritime stations, Alcântara (1942-1944) and Rocha do Conde Óbidos (1946-1949), exemplified in Figure 14 and Figure 15, respectively.⁴⁸ The second set, in a more realistic style, clearly showing the social situation of the country caused some consternation.⁴⁹



Figure 13. Almada, 1938, Capela Mortuária Igreja Nossa Senhora de Fátima, Lisbon. Image: Mariana Pinto dos Santos (Ed.), *Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 249.

⁴⁶ 'terá um novo rumo, dentro de um reconhecimento público'. José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 122.

⁴⁷ José Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX: 1911-1961*, p. 221.

⁴⁸ Rita Almada Negreiros (ed), *Almada Negreiros Um Percurso Possível* (Lisboa: IPPAR - Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico e Arqueológico: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2017), pp. 73, 83.

⁴⁹ Maria José Almada Negreiros, *Conversas com Sarah Affonso*, p. 89.

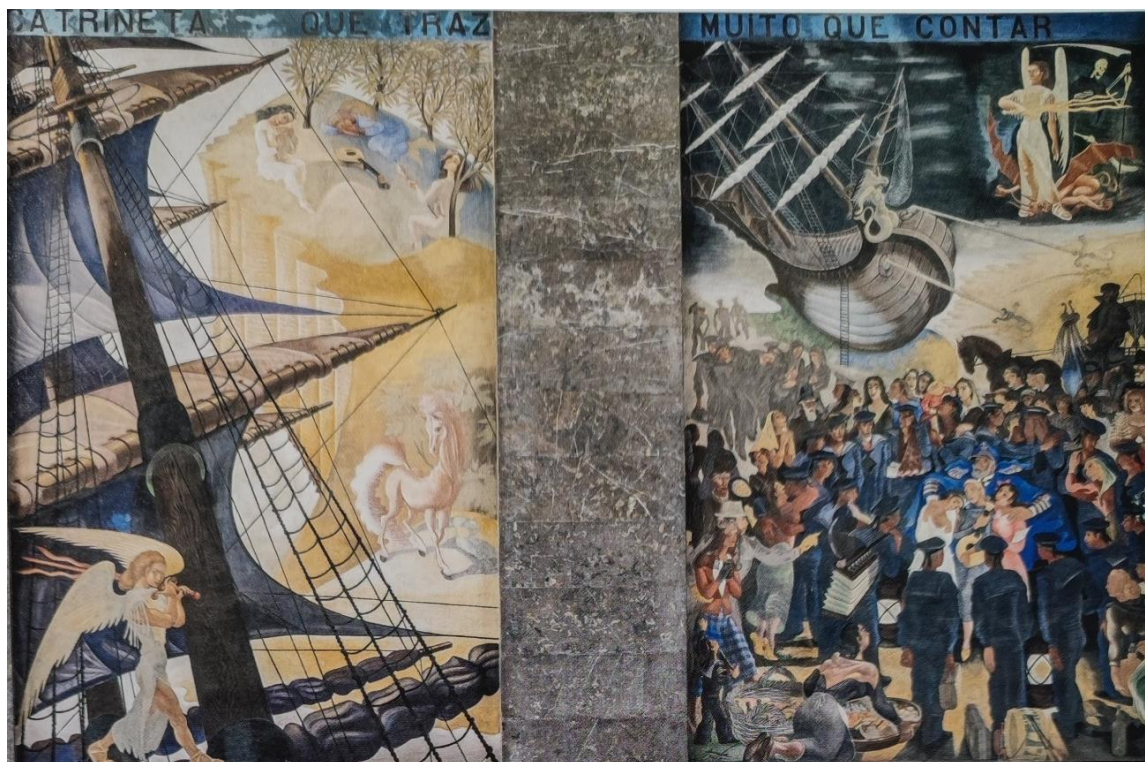


Figure 14. Almada, 1945, Gare Marítima de Alcântara, Lisboa. Image: Mariana Pinto dos Santos (Ed.), *Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 331.



Figure 15. Almada, 1949, Gare Marítima da Rocha do Conde de Óbidos, Lisboa. Image: Mariana Pinto dos Santos (Ed.), *Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 335.

Among his works dating from the 1940s are some unpublished manuscripts with an esoteric tone which Lima de Freitas (1927–1998) compiled in 1982 in the book *Ver*.⁵⁰ One part was published in the pamphlet *Mito Alegoria Simbolo*, from 1948, where Almada explored his understanding about number and geometry.⁵¹ Almada's quest was to find the canon showing the rules, such as the golden number and the relation 9/10, that the masters from each epoch would have learned to create their artworks.⁵² As Almada said, 'the new is perpetually in the ancient', showing that modernity would never be constructed without ancient knowledge.⁵³ His studies resulted in the publication *A Chave Diz* in 1950 and the interviews entitled *Assim fala geometria* which were published in the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* by Antonio Valdemar, who interviewed Almada, and also in a series of geometric paintings.⁵⁴ One of those paintings was related to the Point of Bauhüte, shown in Figure 16; França considered that Almada was aware of the 'esoteric tradition of medieval Germanic masonry'.⁵⁵ His study of geometry occupied a great part of his life, being more evident and consistent when he was older. As Luiza Nobrega wrote, there were two Almadas: the young futurist and the old man that speculated on the 'secrets of ancient civilizations and corporations'.⁵⁶



Figure 16. Almada, *O Ponto da Bauhüte*, 1957, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. Image: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

⁵⁰ José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, 1 edn (Lisboa: Arcádia, 1982), p. 136.

⁵¹ José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, pp. 155, 157.

⁵² Simão Palmeirim Costa, Pedro Freitas, *Almada Negreiros e o Mosteiro da Batalha: Quinze Pinturas Primitivas, num Retábulo*, 1 edn (Batalha: Mosteiro da Batalha: Documenta, 2021), p. 95.

⁵³ 'O novo está perpetuamente no antigo'. António Valdemar, José Manuel Santos, *Almada: Os Painéis, a Geometria e Tudo*, 1 edn (Lisboa: Assírio e Alvim, 2015), p. 65.

⁵⁴ António Valdemar, José Manuel Santos, p. 44.

⁵⁵ 'conhecimento na tradição esotérica da maçonaria medieval germânica'. José Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX: 1911-1961*, p. 339.

⁵⁶ 'segredos de ancestrais civilizações e corporações'. Luíza Nobrega, 'O Homem Imediato - A Dimensão Arquetípica do Humano em Almada Negreiros', in *Almada Negreiros: A Descoberta como Necessidade*, ed. by Celina Silva (Porto: Fundação Eugénio de Almeida, 1996), p. 597.

In 1952 Almada took on another challenge – designing building decorations in tiles, both patterned and figurative, as exemplified in Figure 17 and Figure 18.⁵⁷ In the late 1950s Almada produced drawings for tapestries. Figure 19 shows one, entitled *O Número*. For Luís Trabucho de Campos, this ‘consists of a chronology of number’ in which Almada mentions different personalities relevant to the study of geometry and arithmetic, looking for the origin of the information.⁵⁸ In 1961 Almada was commissioned by P. Monteiro to decorate the façades of the rectory and the Faculties of Law and Letters of the University of Lisbon. Almada’s last public work was a stone panel with geometric constructions produced in 1968 and 1969 for the building of the *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian*, presented in Figure 20. This last work, which encapsulates his whole life and is devoted to geometric study and practise, was called *Começar* (Begin). Almada died in 1970. The name given to his final work might express Almada’s feeling that he was only beginning.

⁵⁷ Rita Almada Negreiros, pp. 109, 113.

⁵⁸ ‘consiste numa cronologia do número’. Luís Trabucho de Campos, *O Número: A Emblemática Tapeçaria que Almada Negreiros Concebeu para o Tribunal de Contas*, 1 edn (Lisboa: Tribunal de Contas, 2019), pp. 26, 13.



Figure 17. Almada, 1952, state owned building, tiles. Image: Rita Almada Negreiros, ed., *Almada Negreiros Um Percurso Possível* (Lisboa: IPPAR - Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico e Arqueológico: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2017), p. 111.

Figure 18. Almada, 1952, private house, tiles. Image: Rita Almada Negreiros, ed., *Almada Negreiros Um Percurso Possível* (Lisboa: IPPAR - Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico e Arqueológico: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2017), p. 115.

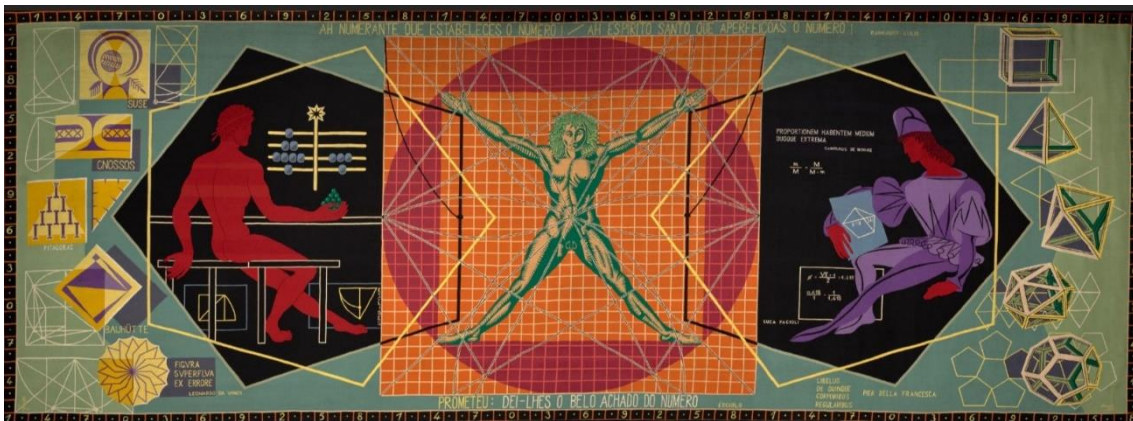


Figure 19. Almada, *O número*, 1956, Tribunal de Contas, Tapestry. Image: Tribunal de Contas.



Figure 20. Almada, *Começar*, 1969, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Incised painting on limestone. Image: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

online database constructed by the foundation *Casa Fernando Pessoa*, with a considerable number of authors linked to the theosophical society, such as Alan Leo (1860–1917), Raphael (1850–1923) and Sepharial (1864–1929), with Leo’s writings being the most present.⁶¹ Therefore, the astrological knowledge published by Leo will be considered within the analyses of Almada’s astrological representations.

In 1921, in a text from his book *A Invenção do Dia Claro*, Almada referred to the relationship between earth and sky, citing the hermetic law ‘as above so below’, although with no explanation of his interpretation of it. Possibly Almada considered the existence of a relationship between earth and heaven that is actually in accord with Patrick Curry’s (b. 1951) definition of astrology, which was ‘any practise or belief that centred on interpreting the human or terrestrial meaning of the stars’.⁶² In his novel *Nome de Guerra*, written in 1925 although published in 1938, Almada referred to astrology. Assuming that the stars existed since the beginning of the world, he wrote that ‘sometimes the most important ones met and that was reflected down here on earth’.⁶³ Also, considering the exact birth hour, ‘each human was the reflection of one of those encounters’, assuming a link between man’s life and the sky.⁶⁴ Almada also wrote in *A Invenção do Dia Claro* that when a man was born, ‘on the same day a place was born for you, down on the Earth’, establishing a link between the sky, man, and place.⁶⁵ Therefore, *Planisfério*, in how it brings together astrology and the world map, might reflect Almada’s thinking on the connection between earth and sky, and may cast light on how he interpreted the Hermetic law, ‘as above so below’.

In one of the texts from the 1940s compiled by Freitas, he mentioned astronomy as one of the two primary sciences of humankind along with geometry because, as he wrote ‘the first visible to Man was the Sky and himself on earth’.⁶⁶ Observing the sky, its stars and their positions, man would have started his development of knowledge and

⁶¹ Biblioteca Particular Fernando Pessoa, <<https://bibliotecaparticular.casafernandopessoa.pt/index/index.htm>>, [Accessed 17 October 2022].<https://bibliotecaparticular.casafernandopessoa.pt/index/index.htm>. [accessed 17 October 2022].

⁶² Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern Age*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 4.

⁶³ ‘As vezes encontravam-se os mais importantes e isso reflectia-se cá em baixo na terra’. José de Almada Negreiros, *Nome de Guerra*, (Porto: Assírio e Alvim, 2020), p. 142.

⁶⁴ ‘Cada humano era o reflexo de um determinado desses encontros’. José de Almada Negreiros, *Nome de Guerra*, p. 142.

⁶⁵ ‘nasceu no mesmo dia um lugar para ti, lá em baixo na terra’. José de Almada Negreiros, *A Invenção do dia Claro*, Facsimile edn (Porto: Assírio e Alvim, 2017), p. 23.

⁶⁶ ‘o primeiro visível para o Homem foi o Céu e ele próprio na terra’. José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 123.

science.⁶⁷ However, Almada did not fail to criticize society, affirming that ‘more was known about the relationship between Heaven and Earth, between stars, Man and lines, than after the treatises had come. More was understandable before knowing’.⁶⁸ Almada appears to have thought that, even after centuries had passed and studies made and published, man had lost some important knowledge about his relationship with the heavens and the earth. In fact, in 1932, Almada affirmed, about the earth cycle around the sun and the moon cycle around the earth, that ‘we have no choice but to go and learn technically how these very natural things work’.⁶⁹ This could explain Almada’s interest in ancient knowledge, as will be seen throughout the analyses of these paintings. As he wrote, modernists would ‘go back to antiquity to meet current modernity’.⁷⁰

In another text from the book *Ver*, Almada referred to the four elements, writing that ‘the Earth is where Man first arrives, then the water that connects the continents and finally the Air where Fate hovers invisible’, and that Fire is what connects man to the sacred and is present along with each the other three elements.⁷¹ These four elements were presented by Plato (c. 428–347 BCE) in the *Timaeus* as part of both the earth and the heavens and Almada actually cited that book in one of the 1940s texts, when writing about the time cycles established by the stars, which as will be seen are central in the paintings under study.⁷² Campos referred to the platonic solids represented in the tapestry *O Número*, in Figure 19, which Plato associated with the four elements in the *Timaeus*.⁷³ Almada also wrote about the topic in one of the 1940s texts, saying that ‘the earth is represented by the cube, as it is the most stable of the elements, and from the cube to the sphere, the reproduction of each element goes through the series of intermediate geometric solids between the cube and the sphere. Earth the cube; water the tetrahedron, Air the...’, considering that the sphere was the universe.⁷⁴ Almada’s

⁶⁷ José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 124.

⁶⁸ ‘Conhecia mais das relações entre Ceu e Terra, entres astros, Homem e linhas do que depois de viram os tratados. Conhecia mais antes de saber’. José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 124.

⁶⁹ ‘não temos mais remédio do que ir aprender tecnicamente como funcionam estas coisas tão naturais’. José de Almada Negreiros, ‘Direcção Única’, in *Textos de Intervenção - Obras Completas Vol. 6*, p. 88.

⁷⁰ ‘Irmos à antiguidade para o encontro da modernidade actual’. José de Almada Negreiros, *Orpheu 1915-1965*, p. 18.

⁷¹ ‘A Terra é onde o Homem chega primeiro, depois à agua que liga os continentes e por fim o Ar onde paira invisível o Destino’. José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 136.

⁷² Plato, *Timaeus*. trans. R. G. Bury, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 61.D32 D. José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 57.

⁷³ Luís Trabucho de Campos, p. 119.

⁷⁴ ‘A terra é representada pelo cubo, por ser o mais estável dos elementos, e do cubo até à esfera, a reprodução de cada elemento vai pela série dos sólidos geométricos intermédios entre o cubo e a esfera. Terra o cubo; água o tetraedro, Ar o...’ José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 106.

sentence was incomplete showing that he was still formulating his ideas; his link between water and the tetrahedron did not coincide with Plato's attribution, which was earth to cube, water to icosahedron, air to octahedron and fire to tetrahedron.⁷⁵ Although he studied the subject it cannot be certain about his understanding of it. Almada referenced a fifth element, the ether, which was introduced by Aristotle (c. 384–322 BCE), an author that Almada also read, defining it as 'the substance of the heaven and the stars'; being different from the four elements it was 'pure and divine'.⁷⁶ In a preface from 1944 Almada referred again to the elements, writing that 'The universal so well distributed among the four elements, or among the five if we add the Ether, cannot fail to be distributed in this way also by humanity', regarding them both as part of the celestial and terrestrial in a way following Plato's thought.⁷⁷ In regard to the four or five elements, Almada in his paintings seems to be closer to Plato's four elements theory, as will be seen later.

Almada knew more than just these two Greek authors and he developed a theoretical link, published in 1948, between the three elements – earth, water and air – with the three Greek orders as well as the three poems of Homer (*Iliad*, *Odyssey* and the lost *Margites*), showing that he was involved with ancient Greek knowledge.⁷⁸ Luís Castro considered that Almada constructed his theoretical thinking based on Pythagoreanism and Platonism having been 'pouring into modernity the ancient thought'.⁷⁹ Freitas discussed a possible connection of Almada with the *Compagnonnage*, a group that had its roots in brotherhoods related with building of temples, similar to the Germanic masonry referred to above by França, that had knowledge of numerous disciplines, including astrology.⁸⁰ According to Freitas, Almada could be identified as a *compagnon* by his multiple artistic abilities and qualities but also by his study of number and geometry.

⁷⁵ Plato, pp. 127-137.E-56C

⁷⁶ José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 107; Aristotle, *On the Cosmos*. trans. E. S. Forster and D. J. Furley, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 349, 351.A392 A.

⁷⁷ 'O universal tão bem repartido pelos quatro Elementos, ou pelos cinco se lhes juntar o Éter, não pode deixar de estar assim repartido também pela humanidade'. Manuel de Lima, José de Almada Negreiros, *Um Homem de Barbas*, (Lisboa: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, 1994), p. 6.

⁷⁸ José de Almada Negreiros, *Mito-Alegoria-Símbolo: Monólogo autodidata na oficina de pintura*, (Lisboa: Livraria Sá da Costa, 1948), p. 11.

⁷⁹ Luís F N A Castro, 'Almada Negreiros: Herança Grega e Teoria das Proporções Harmónicas 1ºV', (Unpublished Master Dissertation. Faculdade de Belas Artes - Universidade de Lisboa, 2003), p. 179.

⁸⁰ José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 34.

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on what has been written regarding the astrological symbols present in the two decorative paintings from Almada. Although much has been said about Almada and his art, not all his pieces have been studied in the same depth, and, in the case of the paintings chosen, little attempt has been made to analyse the astrological symbolism. The key authors who have considered the astrological symbols in the paintings under study are presented next.

João Paulo Freire (1885–1953), a journalist, in 1939 coordinated and wrote a commemorative book in two volumes on the 75th anniversary of the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*.⁸¹ An unsigned newspaper piece described the inauguration of the newspaper building in 1940. França, an art historian, was the first to write about Almada's life and work in 1974. In 2012, J. Monteiro presented his doctoral thesis about the architectural work of the atelier *Pardal Monteiro*. Begonã Farré Torras, an art historian, referred to the paintings in a text for a book about Almada in 2017. Ana Vasconcelos, an historian, wrote another text for the same book. Rita Almada Negreiros, an architect and granddaughter of Almada, in 2017, along with other authors, edited a second enlarged and revised edition of a book from 1993. This book does not individuate each author, so for the sake of clarity any citations will be as from R. Negreiros. From the material available, the following about each painting can be summarised as per below.

Planisfério

The painting *Planisfério* (Figure 25) is a representation of a world map surrounded by the four elements and the twelve zodiac signs. It is located on the ground floor hall of the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, in front of the main door, catching the viewer's eye when entering the room.

⁸¹ João Paulo Freire (ed), *Diário de Notícias: Da sua Fundação às suas Bodas de Diamante, Vol. 2*, (Lisboa: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade), pp. 113, 114. The first volume was dated from 1939 however in the second volume there is no date. Since the second volume references a newspaper piece about the building inauguration that took place on the 24th of April of 1940, it might be deduced that the second volume was edited in 1940.

Freire associated this painting with the ‘ancient mural with stylizations from the twentieth century’, although he did not clarify what he meant by ancient.⁸² He also observed that frescoes of such magnitude – fifty-four square metres – ‘hadn’t been done in Portugal for more than a century’.⁸³ Enumerating some of the figures present in *Planisfério*, Freire included the four elements and the twelve zodiac signs, although without developing any ideas about them.⁸⁴

In the 1940 newspaper piece reporting the inauguration day of the newspaper building, likewise Freire considered *Planisfério* ‘the biggest fresco composition ever made in Portugal’, measuring thirteen metres long and four and a half meters high, showing the magnitude of that mural and the impact it might have had.⁸⁵ Again the four elements and the twelve zodiac signs were mentioned but with no further information.⁸⁶

França referred to this painting as a world map, drawn with the ‘conventional fantasy of the ancient cartography’ but again with no reference to what the word ‘ancient’ meant.⁸⁷ França was the only one that described the astrological symbols. The water element he identified as a mermaid; the air element ‘a flying man with his wing stretched out along a body launched like an arrow’; the earth element ‘a woman lying on an island, under a tree, with her naked body covered by a transparent veil’; and the fire element ‘a sun man with an incandescent body with live fire close to his feet’.⁸⁸ As regards the zodiac signs, França considered Gemini and Aquarius the more creative and linked the first with another drawing from Almada, shown in Figure 22, where he had represented the same couple, considering it as a study for the mural painting.⁸⁹

⁸² ‘mural antigo em estilizações do século XX’, João Paulo Freire, pp. 113, 114.

⁸³ ‘não se faziam em Portugal há mais de um século’, João Paulo Freire, p. 113.

⁸⁴ João Paulo Freire, p. 114.

⁸⁵ ‘o maior fresco de composição que até hoje se fez em Portugal’, João Paulo Freire, p. 312.

⁸⁶ João Paulo Freire, p. 312.

⁸⁷ ‘fantasia convencional da cartografia antiga’, José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 131.

⁸⁸ ‘Um homem que voa, as asas esticadas ao longo dum corpo lançado como uma flecha, por uma mulher deitada numa ilha, sob uma árvore, o corpo nu coberto por um véu transparente, e por um homem sol de corpo incandescente tendo aos pés um fogo acceso’, José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 131.

⁸⁹ José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 131.



Figure 22. Almada, *Gêmeos*, 1937, drawing, private collection. Image: José Augusto França, Almada, O Português Sem Mestre (Lisboa: Estúdios Cor, 1974), p. 27.

J. Monteiro referred to this painting as a big planisphere and mentioned the twelve zodiac signs and the ‘four elements of life’.⁹⁰

Vasconcelos referred to the presence of the zodiac signs and the four elements and identified the human and plant figures, as well as the telegraph poles spread around the world that would ‘allow a quick transmission of news’.⁹¹ She also associated *Planisfério* with spatial positioning, as pointed out by Rubim, that Almada had written about in the magazine *Sudoeste*, where the artist developed his Europeanist ideas.⁹²

Torras referred to the ‘medieval cartography memory’ re-introduced by Almada, who characterized different parts of the world through figures, animals and landscapes.⁹³ Torras also mentioned the link between past and present in the ‘pseudo historical events’ that Almada represented, as the presence in every continent of the telegraph poles.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ ‘quatro elementos da vida’, João Pardal Monteiro, p. 406.

⁹¹ ‘permitem a rápida circulação das notícias’. Ana Vasconcelos, ‘A pintura como um teatro - Almada e a encomenda artística’, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, (Lisboa, 2017), p. 54.

⁹² Ana Vasconcelos, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 54; Gustavo Rubim, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 57.

⁹³ ‘memória da cartografia medieval’. Begoña Farré Torras, ‘Espaço Público, Espaço Privado’, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, (Lisboa, 2017), p. 222.

⁹⁴ ‘eventos pseudo-históricos’, Begoña Farré Torras, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 222.

According to R. Negreiros, the world map resembles ‘the cartography of the XV and XVI centuries’ with representations of fauna, flora and people, as well as the zodiac signs and the four elements. R. Negreiros also referenced the Sun Man, considering it a representation of the desire for wisdom.⁹⁵

Planisfério was considered a monumental mural painting that had no equivalents in size and, although the four elements and the twelve zodiac signs were identified by all authors, only França described the elements. França, Torras and R. Negreiros associated this painting with an ancient and Medieval tradition.

Hours’ Cycle

On the opposite wall to *Planisfério* is the painting Hours’ Cycle (Figure 72), located on the top of the wall and divided in two rectangular bands, and set under the big windows that flanks the door. Each rectangular band has twelve circles that correspond to the hours of the day and in each circle a step of a newspaper’s production is represented. Although Freire described the newspaper building he did not reference this painting, nor did J. Monteiro in his study of the building.

The newspaper piece that covered the inauguration of the building described this painting as ‘the 12 diurnal hours and the 12 nocturnal hours of a journal’s life’, covering the event and its interpretation, the composition, the recording and print, right up to the boy selling newspapers (the *ardina*).⁹⁶ For França this painting was an ‘allegory of the works of the press’, referring to the chained circles representing the production of newspapers, from the beginning through to the *ardina*.⁹⁷ Vasconcelos likewise referred to the production cycle of a newspaper through to the *ardina*. Moreover, she also indicated that the paintings were done in horizontal bands, representing day and night. Vasconcelos also made a note that this painting and *Planisfério* communicate with each other, evoking ‘the admirable new world of telecommunications’, through the telegraph poles represented.⁹⁸ Torras also linked the two paintings in the building and noticed that the telegraph poles in the Hours’ Cycle painting were similar to the ones in the

⁹⁵ ‘a cartografia dos séculos XV e XVI’, Rita Almada Negreiros, p. 63.

⁹⁶ ‘12 horas diurnas e as 12 horas nocturnas da vida de um jornal’, João Paulo Freire, p. 312.

⁹⁷ ‘alegoria aos trabalhos da imprensa’, José Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX: 1911-1961*, p. 222.; José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 132.

⁹⁸ ‘o admirável mundo novo das telecomunicações’, Ana Vasconcelos, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 53.

Planisfério. Moreover, for Torras, Almada had returned to the medieval tradition that ‘represented time through man’s work’, although Almada had done it by showing the accelerated pace of modern daily life.⁹⁹ Torras referred the clock pointer marking the hours and noted the presence of the sun and the moon.¹⁰⁰ The rhythm imposed in the artistic composition was also linked to the quick transmission of news that this new building was built for.¹⁰¹ R. Negreiros also referred the *ardina* and she considered the other figures as anonymous workers.¹⁰²

The Hours’ Cycle was referred to, by most authors, as the representation of journal’s production cycle, from the news to the *ardina*. While Vasconcelos referred to day and night, only Torras mentioned the sun and the moon. Torras also pointed out how Almada’s use of a clock pointer marking the hours was in the style of the medieval tradition of representing time through man’s work.

Following the statements that both *Planisfério* and the Hours’ Cycle resemble medieval traditions, those traditions will be studied in order to understand the accuracy of that link.

⁹⁹ ‘representava o tempo através do trabalho do homem’, Begoña Farré Torras, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 222.

¹⁰⁰ ‘sobre o fundo do sol e da lua’, Begoña Farré Torras, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 222.

¹⁰¹ Begoña Farré Torras, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 222.

¹⁰² Rita Almada Negreiros, p. 63.

Mappa Mundi and Labours of the Months

The paintings belonging to the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* building were correlated with antique artistic traditions. Among the authors that linked *Planisfério* with an older tradition, only Torras presented a source, a book by Peter Whitfield (b. 1947), 'The Image of the World' from 1994, which described the evolution of world maps from 150 A.D. to 1900.¹⁰³ In regard to the 'Hours' Cycle' painting, Torras suggested that Almada followed a medieval tradition, referencing page 117 of the book from Aires Augusto Nascimento, 'A Imagem to Tempo: Livros Manuscritos Ocidentais' from 2000.

Mappa Mundi

A mappa mundi, as described by Evelyn Edson, presented the world 'in a spatial format, incorporating history, geography, botany, zoology, ethnology, and theology into one harmonious and dazzling whole'.¹⁰⁴ In some maps the terrestrial depiction was symbolic with no correspondence to the real geography, as in the case of the Hereford Cathedral Mappa Mundi, shown in Figure 23, whose emphasis was to transmit a religious message. Other maps, like Fra Mauro's world map in Figure 24, were conceived with a more realistic idea of terrestrial delineation although also maintaining a strong presence of iconographic figures and representations. Medieval world maps, according to Edson, were frequently found in books, nevertheless, Woodward also stated that 'larger and detailed mappaemundi' existed, although most of them have disappeared.¹⁰⁵ Edson considered that the purpose of world maps, of any time, 'is not so much to portray the physical world as to make a statement about it', although she admitted that some attention was given to geographical aspects, referencing the work of G. R. Crone.¹⁰⁶ Crone studied the Hereford map and concluded that 'considerable use

¹⁰³ Peter Whitfield, *The Image of the World - 20 centuries of world maps*, (London: The British Library, 1994).

¹⁰⁴ Evelyn Edson, *The World Map 1300-1492. The Persistence of Tradition and Transformation*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Evelyn Edson, 'The Medieval World View: Contemplating the Mappamundi', *History Compass* 8, 6, (2010), p. 509; Evelyn Edson, 'World Maps and Easter Tables: Medieval Maps in Context', *Imago Mundi*, 48, (1996), pp. 37, 39. David Woodward, 'Medieval Mappaemundi', in *History of Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, ed. by J. B. Harley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 286.

¹⁰⁶ Evelyn Edson 'The Medieval World View: Contemplating the Mappamundi', pp. 504, 505, 509.

was made of itineraries' identifying trade routes and the pilgrim's road to Santiago.¹⁰⁷ This can be related to the telegraph poles that Almada depicted in the *Planisfério* as an itinerary of news and communication.



Figure 23. Hereford Mappa Mundi, c. 1300, 1,59 x 1,34 m, Hereford Cathedral. Image: Factum Foundation.



Figure 24. Fra Mauro's World Map, mid fifteenth century, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. Image: Museo Galileo.

¹⁰⁷ G. R. Crone, 'New Light on the Hereford Map', *The Geographical Journal*, 131. No. 4, 4, (1965), p. 455.

The focus on cultural or geographical aspects changed throughout history. According to Whitfield, in the classical period geometric studies and the measurement of the world were significantly pursued in the creation of world maps, but in the medieval period the major concern was the iconographical characterization of the world map through ‘religious imagination’.¹⁰⁸ Yet, in late medieval times the interest in accurate geography gained relevance in world map production, and the mappaemundi underwent some transformations as a more realistic depiction of the geographical terrain, a change in iconography and a new shape of the map.¹⁰⁹ The accuracy in the geographical depiction was an influence from the sea charts which were, as defined by Whitfield, local maps representing only small parts of the world, but ‘precocious with their accuracy’, since they were used to navigate.¹¹⁰ Due to their navigational use, sea charts were oriented north and early sixteenth century mappaemundi copied that, discarding the eastern orientation frequently used in medieval period.¹¹¹ The iconographic representations suffered a secularization that distanced them from their earlier religious scope.¹¹² Medieval mappa mundi were normally in a round shape, as the examples shown in Figure 23 and Figure 24, but the round format started to change in late fifteenth century into oval and rectangular formats.¹¹³ The oval format, following Woodward, might be called a planisphere, since he considered that it developed ‘from a spherical to a flat surface’, having been primarily used in astronomical charts.¹¹⁴ Thus, the planisphere would have had a different form and was more concerned with coordinates and geographical information.

Labours of the months

The labours of the months were illustrations that brought together time cycles and the man’s work and, in the view of art historian James Carson Webster (1905–1989), were constructed based both in science, through astronomy, and in humanity, ‘reflecting

¹⁰⁸ Peter Whitfield, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Whitfield, p. 36.

¹¹⁰ Peter Whitfield, p. 36.

¹¹¹ Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewd Their World*, (London: The British Library, 1997), pp. 4-7.

¹¹² Peter Whitfield, p. 39.

¹¹³ Evelyn Edson, *The World Map 1300-1492. The Persistence of Tradition and Transformation*, p. 230.

¹¹⁴ David Woodward, in *History of Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, p. 287.

man's life upon earth'.¹¹⁵ In the medieval period, as Nascimento wrote, the months received great attention and the 'representation of agricultural activities was accentuated. However, he concluded that other symbols could be found, such as the zodiac signs or the sun and the moon.¹¹⁶ Those symbols will be found in Almada's paintings. By the twelfth century, Webster noted that the illustrations underwent some changes as the drawings gained dynamism and, 'from the antique passive mode', the focus moved to the action of man in nature.¹¹⁷ The labours of the months could be represented in circles or squares and, according to Olga Koseleff Gordon, the representation of the figures inside roundels was 'an old tradition'.¹¹⁸

Following Webster, the labours of months were representations that would adapt to different cultures and countries – due to their secular motifs they 'could react more freely to the influence of contemporary life'.¹¹⁹ Although considered as secular they were also used alongside religious scenes, and Johnathan Alexander stated that the labours of the months were to serve the clerics, since the religious scenes were 'given priority, whether as sacred biblical narrative or as doctrinal or moral truth'.¹²⁰ In the study of the Perugia Fountain, Darrelyn Gunzburg found that, although the fountain was not commissioned by the church, it included religious representations along with the labours of the months and the zodiac signs.¹²¹ Commissioned by the Perugia commune, the Fontana Maggiore was a 'functional civic monument' serving the Perugian community.¹²² That thinking may be transported to Almada's paintings in the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* building that served the journal.

From these reflections about medieval world maps and labours of the month's representations, the discussion about the relationship between those and Almada's paintings, *Planisfério* and 'Hours' Cycle', both in the newspaper building *Diário de Notícias*, will follow.

¹¹⁵ James Carson Webster, *The labours of the months*, (New York: AMS Press, 1938), p. 93.

¹¹⁶ 'acentua a representação das actividades agrícolas'. Aires Augusto Nascimento, *A Imagem do Tempo: Livros Manuscritos Ocidentais*, (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2000), p. 117.

¹¹⁷ James Carson Webster, p. 102.

¹¹⁸ Olga Koseleff Gordon, 'Two Unusual Calender Cycles of the Fourteenth Century', *The Art Bulletin*, 45, no. 3, (1963), p. 247.

¹¹⁹ James Carson Webster, pp. 1, 99.

¹²⁰ Johnathan Alexander, 'Labeur and Paresse: Ideological Representations of Medieval Peasant Labor', *Art Bulletin*, 72, 3, (1990), p. 437.

¹²¹ Darrelyn Gunzburg, 'The Perugia Fountain: An Encyclopedia os Sky, Culture and Society', in *Sky and Symbol*, ed. by Liz Greene Nicholas Campion (Ceredigion: Sophia Centre Press, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2013), p. 112.

¹²² Darrelyn Gunzburg, in *Sky and Symbol*, p. 106.

Analyses and Discussion

The analyses of the paintings will begin by examining the possible reasons for the choice of the artist to produce these paintings as well as his motives in using astrological symbols. Then each painting will be analysed individually, starting with the possible traditions lying behind the paintings and following on with how the astrological symbols were represented and their possible meaning. The astrological elements were noticed by other authors, as cited in the literature review. However, apart from França who described the four elements representation and considered the signs of Gemini and Aquarius the more creative, no more was stated.¹²³ Bearing in mind that Almada would be interested in the architecture of the cosmos as well as the relationship between the earth and the heavens, the analyses of the four elements and the zodiac signs may reveal how Almada would have seen it and what was he trying to express.

Artistic Choice

There is no information available about the reasons why Almada was chosen to create the mural paintings, aside from a letter written by the artist to his wife Affonso, saying that the architect told him, 'I have several jobs for you in the *Diário de Notícias*'.¹²⁴ As far as evidence can tell it was P. Monteiro who invited Almada. The collaboration between the painter and the architect was a long one, and in the words of J. Monteiro, Almada was 'a great friend and *compagnon de route*' of P. Monteiro.¹²⁵ In 1938, after their first collaboration, Almada publicly thanked the architect, in his words, 'the greatest and best collaboration of my life as an artist, and I hope I never miss the opportunity to constantly show my recognition, admiration and lifelong friendship'.¹²⁶ After that collaboration many more followed until P. Monteiro's death in 1957.

¹²³ José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 131.

¹²⁴ 'tenho vários trabalhos para si para o Diário de Notícias'. ANSA-COR-550, Modern!smo – Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu, Modern!smo – Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu, <<https://modernismo.pt/index.php/arquivo-almada-negreiros>>, [accessed 12 August 2022].

¹²⁵ João Pardal Monteiro, p. 287.

¹²⁶ 'a maior e a melhor colaboração da minha vida de artista, e espero que não me falte nunca a ocasião para lhe demonstrar constantemente o meu reconhecimento, admiração e amizade vitalícias'. José de Almada Negreiros, 'Duas Palavras de um Colaborador', in *Obras Completas 6 - Textos de Intervenção*, p. 168.

The choice of themes

Regarding the themes chosen for the paintings, in the same letter, referred to above, Almada wrote to his wife that P. Monteiro told him ‘for me to do what I want’.¹²⁷ From this letter it appears that Almada had total freedom in the choice of themes for the paintings. Yet considering the political and social environment of the epoch they should not conflict with government ideals. The government wanted to glorify the Portuguese nation and it may be that Almada chose a world map that would relate to the Portuguese expansion in the sixteenth century. However, instead of the focussing on the discovery of maritime routes, Almada characterized each region according to its own culture. While following the regime propaganda he may well have followed his own ideas and positions of independence rather than colonization. It is unknown whether Almada’s drawings were subject to approval by the newspaper’s owners. However, their existence indicates that they were accepted.

To help understand Almada’s thinking and choices, it might be relevant to consider the building and the epoch of his paintings. In that period, newspapers were important sources of information, being a bridge that connected people to other realities. Understanding that a journal was a way of knowing other societies through its daily happenings, Almada mirrored it into *Planisfério*, which is full of details that would show the world to the newspaper readers. Also, the Hours’ Cycle alludes to the purpose of the building, which was the first in the country to gather together all phases of newspaper production, as stated by J. Monteiro.¹²⁸ It is likely that Almada followed P. Monteiro’s opinion that the decorative arts should serve architecture.¹²⁹ Considering that Almada was given total liberty for the newspaper mural paintings, it is interesting to note the relevance Almada gave to the astrological symbols, especially the zodiac signs and the four elements in *Planisfério*, which in their huge dimensions would never pass unnoticed. Perhaps Almada was trying to bring attention on the subject, if not from the standpoint of astrological interpretation, but rather from the astronomical or cosmological perspective of pursuing the understanding of the architecture of the cosmos.

¹²⁷ ‘para eu fazer o que me der na gana’. ANSA-COR-550, Modern!smo – Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu.

¹²⁸ João Pardal Monteiro, p. 404.

¹²⁹ Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, ‘Espírito Clássico’, *Sudoeste*, 3, (1982), p. 170.

Planisfério

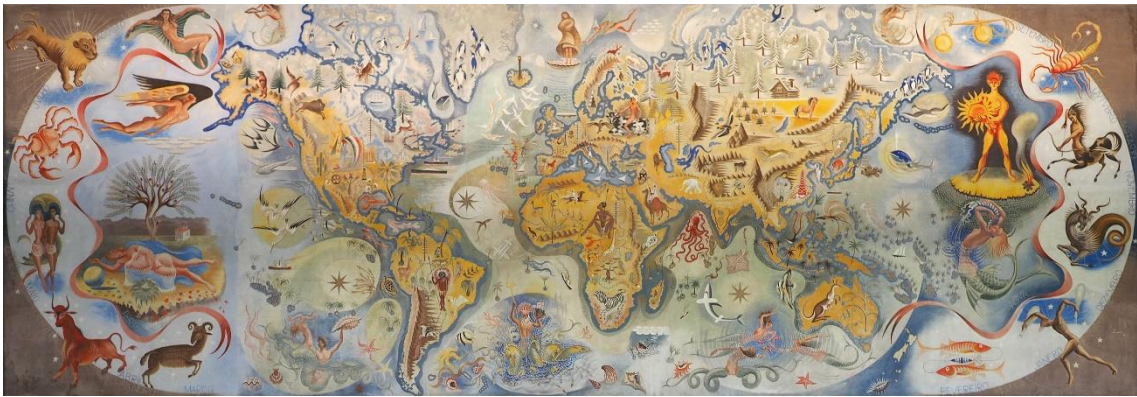


Figure 25. Almada, *Planisfério*, 1939, fresco, 13x4,5 m, *Diário de Notícias* building, Lisbon. Image: Telmo Domingues.

Planisfério, as seen in Figure 25, is a representation of the world map with the European Continent in its centre, flanked on both sides by the four elements and the twelve zodiac signs. The world map is the central figure and is encircled by Air and Earth elements on the left and Fire and Water on the right. Surrounding it are the twelve zodiac signs. On the left side are Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo and Virgo, starting from the bottom to the top in a clockwise sequence. On the right side are Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces, starting from the top to bottom in a clockwise sequence. Close to each sign its name is written in Portuguese, on the brown background, and between each sign the correspondent month is also written in Portuguese, on the blue background, as exemplified in Figure 26. Almada used antique lettering, replacing the letter ‘U’ by the letter ‘V’ and the letter ‘E’ for an ‘I’ in the sign of Leo, writing ‘Lião’ instead of ‘Leão’.



Figure 26. Detail of *Planisfério* where can be seen the names of the zodiac signs and the months written in Portuguese.

Medieval Mappaemundi

Torras correlated the painting *Planisfério* with medieval cartography while R. Negreiros linked it to fifteenth and sixteenth century cartography.¹³⁰ Following the study about medieval traditions previously presented, the painting *Planisfério*, as a representation of the world through geographical depiction and iconographical representations, can be related to mappaemundi. However, its oval shape and orientation to the north puts it in the late fifteenth century, the time when the medieval map changed its common form and orientation, as already noted.¹³¹ Also in the late medieval period, the accuracy of the geographical forms gained importance through the influence of sea charts, giving an exact geographical depiction, yet, Almada's *Planisfério* did not provide the accuracy of sea charts. Moreover, although some religious symbols are still present, as in the representation of the crib in Jerusalem, as can be seen in Figure 27, Almada decorated the world map mostly with secular motifs, showing again a proximity to late medieval practises instead of the initial practise commonly fulfilled in religious iconography.¹³² Almada spread throughout the world map telegraph poles, signalled in Figure 28, that Vasconcelos related with the transmission of the news that can be linked to the itineraries found by Crone in the Hereford map.¹³³ Thus Torras was correct when alluding to the medieval tradition, but considering the proximity to late medieval practises, R. Negreiros might have been more accurate in alluding to the fifteenth century.



Figure 27. *Planisfério* detail of the crib's representation.

¹³⁰ José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 131.; Begoña Farré Torras, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 222.; Rita Almada Negreiros, p. 63.

¹³¹ Evelyn Edson, *The World Map 1300-1492. The Persistence of Tradition and Transformation*, p. 230.

¹³² Peter Whitfield, p. 39.

¹³³ Ana Vasconcelos, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 54.



Figure 28. World map detail with the telegraph poles signalled.

Edson observed, as already pointed out, that a world map serves to demonstrate one's view and opinion about the world. Taking this into consideration, *Planisfério* appears to be Almada's statement about the world, and so he transforms this world map into a visual source where one can learn about each place's culture and history.¹³⁴ Almada used world maps as a way of communication, as in the medieval period, particularly considering that the illiteracy rate in Portugal in 1940 was 55%, but his message was different: by emphasizing history and culture, he tried to show the contemporary world of the first half of the twentieth century what could be found in other regions of the globe.¹³⁵ In some way Almada painted what, in his mind, a newspaper meant – a window to the world – but communicating with an image that would be understood by more people than a text.

¹³⁴ Evelyn Edson 'The Medieval World View: Contemplating the Mappamundi', pp. 504, 505, 509.

¹³⁵ Joel Serrão, 'Os anos 40. Condicionlismos gerais. Um testemunho. Uma aproximação', in *A Cultura nos Anos 40. Os anos 40 na Arte Portuguesa Vol. VI*, (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1982), p. 22.

Contemporary maps

Within the same time period, across the Atlantic Ocean a map of the United States of America was painted by the Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias (1905–1957) and published in *Esquire Magazine* in 1943, see Figure 29.¹³⁶ The map is similar to Almada's *Planisfério* – the country's geography is depicted and filled with figures native to each region, and there are similar cultural representations of animals, human activities, buildings and also transportation. In addition to this map, published a few years after Almada's world map, Covarrubias created a set of six maps called the Pageant of the Pacific which are comparable to *Planisfério*. These were made for the exhibition *The Golden Gate International Exposition of San Francisco*, which opened in February 1939.¹³⁷ Some representations are strongly analogous between Covarrubias's maps and Almada's *Planisfério*, in particular the hammer shark drawing, shown in Figure 30, and some figures of the economy of the Pacific map, in Figure 31, as the movie tape, the lama and the ships evidenced in Figure 32. According to Nancy C. Lutkehaus, Covarrubias's murals 'were an effective medium for mass education', showing that both artists used their paintings 'without the constraint of language' to inform and communicate with people.¹³⁸

As the artists worked in the same period – Almada's *Planisfério* was inaugurated two months after Covarrubias's maps – it is difficult to establish if one of them saw the other's work. Portugal participated in the San Francisco exhibition with its own pavilion, and although Almada did not work there, it is possible his colleagues could have shared with him what they had seen.¹³⁹ Another suggestion is that both might have been influenced by the same source. Either way, Covarrubias's maps showed that Almada was not the only one using this type of map, which followed some medieval

¹³⁶ Miguel Covarrubias, 'Pictorial Map of America', *Esquire Magazine*, XIX, n°1, (January 1943), pp. 47-48. <<https://classic.esquire.com/issue/19430101>>, [accessed 03 October 2022].

¹³⁷ Nancy C. Lutkehaus, 'Miguel Covarrubias and the Pageant of the Pacific: The Golden Gate International Exposition and the Idea of the Transpacific, 1939-1940', in *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field*, ed. by Janet Hoskins and Viet Thanh Nguyen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), p. 120.

¹³⁸ Nancy C. Lutkehaus, in *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field*, p. 122.

¹³⁹ Margarida Magalhães Ramalho, 'Da República à Ditadura Portugal dos Anos 40', in *Exposição do Mundo Português: Explicação de um lugar*, ed. by Margarida de Magalhães Ramalho and Margarida da Cunha Belém (Lisboa: Fundação Centro Cultural de Belém, 2016), p. 38. Jorge Segurado, 'Comentários e considerações de Jorge Segurado, arquitecto dos Pavilhões naquelas Exposições', *Revista Oficial do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos*, 11, (1939), p. 312.

features but within a contemporary context. However, Almada differs from Covarrubias in that he included astrological symbols resembling another tradition, the celestial maps.



Figure 29. Miguel Covarrubias, *United States*, 1943, print on paper, 35 x 45 cm, Digital Collection – Persuasive Cartography. Image: Cornell University Library – Persuasive Cartography.



Figure 30. Comparison of the drawing of a hammer shark between Covarrubias America's map (left), Covarrubias's *Fauna and Flora* mural (centre) and Almada's *Planisfério* (right).



Figure 31. Covarrubias, *Economy of the Pacific – Pageant of the Pacific*, 1939, c. 4,5 x 7 m, lacquer with nitrocellulose under Masonite panels. Image: Barry Lawrence Ruderman – Rare Maps.



Figure 32. Comparison of some figures between Covarrubias's *Economy of the Pacific* (left) and Almada's *Planisfério* (right).

Celestial Maps

As seen before, Woodward associated planispheres with astronomical charts.¹⁴⁰ Almada might have been influenced by these celestial maps, considering the elongated oval form chosen and the astrological elements around the world map. Celestial maps represented the heavens through the stars and constellations visible in the sky, including the twelve constellations related to the zodiacal signs represented in *Planisfério*. The ceiling of the Sala Bologna in the Vatican Palace, painted in 1575 for Pope Gregory XIII and shown in Figure 33, is one example that Emily Urban considered as a cartographically accurate depiction of the heavens.¹⁴¹ The twelve zodiac signs are represented in the middle of the painting on the ecliptic line as can be understood in Figure 34. A similar example is the ceiling of the Sala del Mapamondo, painted in 1574 for Alessandro Farnese, as visible in Figure 35.



Figure 33. Ceiling of Sala Bologna, 1575, fresco, Vatican Palace, Vatican City. Image: Factum Foundation.

¹⁴⁰ David Woodward, in *History of Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, p. 287.

¹⁴¹ Emily Urban, 'Mapping the Heavens: The Ceiling of the Sala Bologna in the Vatican Palace', in *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Darrelyn Gunzburg (London: Equinox Publishing, 2016), p. 151.



Figure 34. Ceiling of Sala Bologna with the ecliptic and the twelve constellations marked by the white line.



Figure 35. Ceiling of Sala del Mapamondo with the ecliptic and the twelve constellations marked by the white line. 1574, fresco, Farnese Palace. Caprarola. Image: Progetto Storia Dell'Arte.

Almada did not depict an accurate celestial map as in the two ceilings presented in Figures 33, 34 and 35, but Urban considered other types of sky maps as encyclopaedic – maps that ‘contain all the signs of the zodiac or planets in groupings that do not form a cartographically accurate representation of the sky’, pointing to the Sala dei Mesi in Palazzo Schifanoia, painted in 1468-1470 for Duke Borso d’Este, as an example.¹⁴² The

¹⁴² Emily Urban, in *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*, p. 144.

zodiacal signs were drawn in a blue row following the zodiacal order, as can be seen in Figure 36, that shows the signs of Aries, Taurus and Gemini from right to left. This integration of the zodiacal signs amongst other representations without accurately depicting the constellations and the sky can be related with Almada's *Planisfério*, where he also drew the twelve zodiacal signs around the world map without considering the constellations and their exact spatial location.



Figure 36. Wall of the Sala dei Mesi, with the representation of the zodiac signs of Gemini, Taurus and Aries, from left to right, 1468-1470, Schifanoia Palace. Caprarola. Image: Kilrov-Ewbank, Smart History

The three examples presented have in common that they bring together both celestial and terrestrial maps. The two ceilings were painted in rooms with walls decorated with geographical maps, as was the map of the city of Bologna in the *Sala Bologna* and the world map in the wall of *Sala del Mapamondo*, shown in Figure 37. The *Sala dei Mesi* decoration entails representations of terrestrial life on earth related to each planetary rulership. Almada also linked sky and earth in *Planisfério*, joining the celestial sky with a world map as in *Sala del Mapamundo*, but in the same painting on the wall following the *Sala dei Mesi* example. However, although he accurately depicted the world, he did not do so for the celestial heavens, revealing a different approach between heaven and earth.



Figure 37. Walls of the Sala del Mapamondo decorated with the world map, 1574, Farnese Palace, Caprarola. Image: Progetto Storia Dell'Arte.

Almada might have been influenced by medieval traditions like the *mappaemundi* referred by Torras in the world map, but also by celestial maps which represented the celestial sky. Almada's world map was not unique, considering its similarities with Covarrubias's contemporary work; however, the Portuguese artist mixed earth and sky. This relationship between the geographical map and the celestial representation demonstrates the possibility that Almada was interested in the relationship between heaven and earth. Yet, the earth is represented accurately while the sky in an abstract and symbolic way, perhaps indicating that, for Almada, the earth was real and concrete, but that his relationship with the sky and the cosmos would be abstract and symbolic.

Drafts

In the online archive *Modernismo!* there are three drawings from Almada that probably were drafts for the painting *Planisfério* and which demonstrate that the artist changed his thinking. The drafts will be presented based on the progressive similarities with the final painting since their dates do not clarify their chronological order. The first draft, undated, shows that Almada did not always include astrological figures, as visible in Figure 38, and surrounded the world map with four figures representing the four seasons and agriculture activities. Almada probably transferred this idea to the third painting in the hall, *Mapa de Portugal*, shown in Figure 39, where four figures were drawn around the country, as one of those figures is very similar to the draft, as Figure 40 shows. The second and third drafts, in Figure 41 and Figure 42, and dated 1939 as is the final painting, already featured astrological symbols. However, in the second draft the four elements appear to have been all represented through female figures which Almada changed in the third draft and final painting. Almada's use of astrological symbols was not always his idea but in the end used them to associate terrestrial and celestial worlds.

França pointed towards a drawing from Almada, dated 1937, as a study for the representation of the sign of Gemini, already seen in Figure 22, without clarifying if that was his own assumption. In considering *Planisfério* drafts, França's assumption can be questioned because those were dated from 1939 and in one of them the sign of Gemini is represented differently, as identical twins instead of a couple.

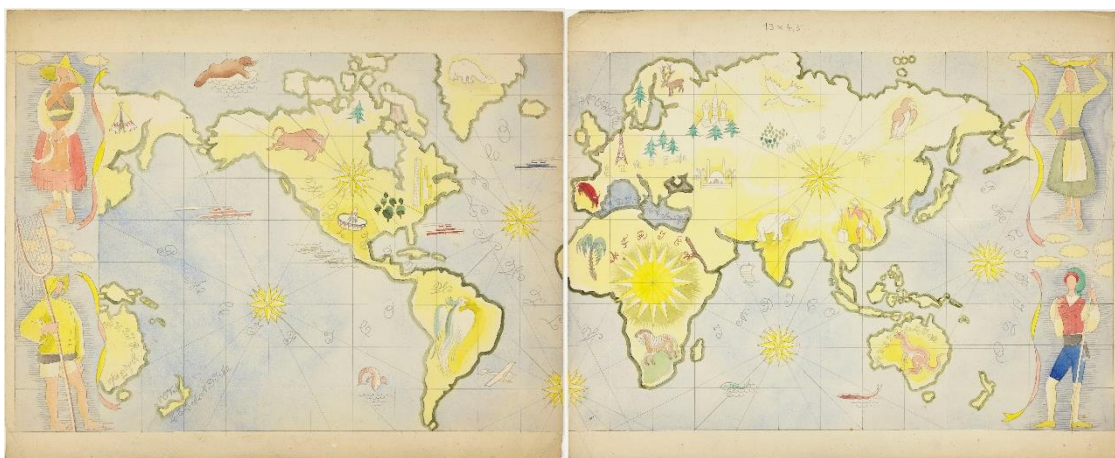


Figure 38. Almada, Possible draft for the painting *Planisfério*, pencil and watercolour under paper, 53,5 x 66 cm. Image: ANSA-A-339 e ANSA-A-340, Modern!sno – Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu.



Figure 39. Almada, Mapa de Portugal, 1939, fresco, *Diário de Notícias* building, Lisbon. Image: Telmo Domingues.



Figure 40. Comparison between a figure present in a draft for *Planisfério* and the final painting in the newspaper hall.

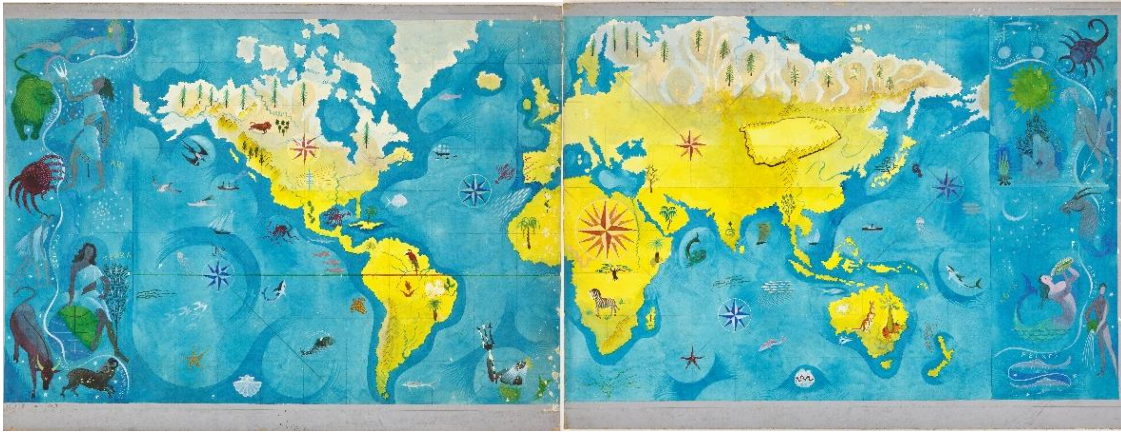


Figure 41. Almada, possibly a draft for the painting *Planisfério*, 1939, pencil and gouache under paper glued to cardboard, 70,1 x 100 cm. Image: ANSA-A-471 e ANSA-A-470, Modernismo – Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu.

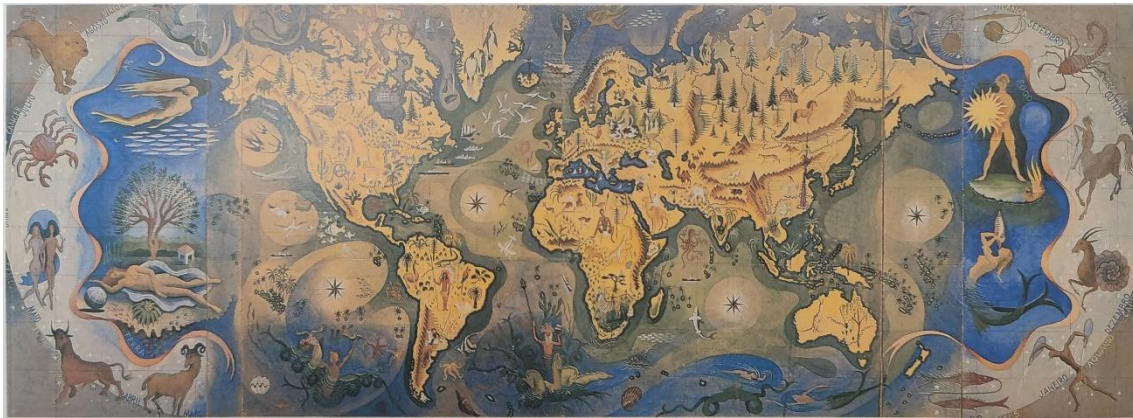


Figure 42. Almada, draft for the painting *Planisfério*, 1939, gouache under cardboard glued to kappa line, 139,5 x 100 cm. Image: MB_AN_67, Modernismo – Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu.

Astrological symbols

The four elements

The four elements are placed around the world map, two on each side. On the left are the air and earth elements and on the right the fire and water elements, as demonstrated in Figure 43. Close to each figure the name of the element is written in Portuguese, as can be seen in Figure 44. Air and fire elements are represented by men, with strong muscular bodies, and earth and water elements are represented by a woman and a female mermaid, both showing flexible and gentle bodies. This can be associated with the characterization of the elements by Leo, who wrote that air and fire are masculine and earth and water are feminine.¹⁴³ Almada wrote that humanity is composed of two halves, the masculine and the feminine, and those two halves ‘cease, each one, to be a half if there is no other half’.¹⁴⁴ Almada knew about the two poles, masculine and feminine, and applied those in the final drawing, including both men and women instead of only women as appeared in the second draft, in Figure 41, showing a dualistic approach where the two energies would be part of a whole, both being necessary. As Almada wrote, ‘the path of knowledge is binary’.¹⁴⁵ As seen previously, Almada also referenced a fifth element, ether, but it seems that he did not depict it in this painting, rather, as will be seen, followed closely Plato’s description of the elements.¹⁴⁶

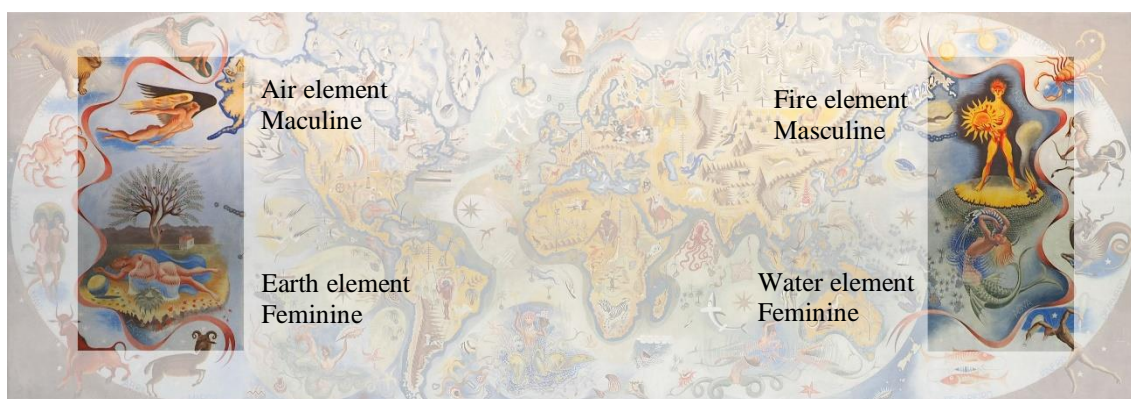


Figure 43. Location of the four elements in the *Planisfério*.

¹⁴³ Alan Leo, *How to Judge a Nativity*, (London: Modern Astrology Office, 1912), p. 16. Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*. trans. F. E. Robbins. Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), pp. 83-87. Book I-18.

¹⁴⁴ ‘deixam, cada uma, de ser uma metade se não houver outra metade’. José de Almada Negreiros, *A Invenção do dia Claro*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁵ ‘toda a via de conhecimento é binária’. José de Almada Negreiros, *Orpheu 1915-1965*, p. 25.

¹⁴⁶ Plato, pp. 83, 85.B 40A.



Figure 44. Elements written names in Portuguese, from left to right, Air, Fire, Earth, Water.

Earth element

The figure of the earth element, shown in Figure 45, was represented by a female figure lying on the floor asleep under a blue blanket and covered with a transparent veil, representing what Plato described as ‘that which goes on foot on dry land’.¹⁴⁷ Next to the figure there is a sphere that might represent the terrestrial globe and in the background there are mountains and a white house and a tree with red fruits that could be apples or pomegranates. Almada figured a tree with red fruits in the Faculty of Letters façade to

¹⁴⁷ Plato, pp. 83, 85.B 40A.

represent the expulsion from Paradise, as can be seen in Figure 46.¹⁴⁸ The presence of the same tree that condemned Adam and Eve in the earth element might show that Almada regarded the earth as the place where sins are rife. Also, following the episode of the expulsion from Paradise, which attributed primal sin to Eve, there is an association between the earth element and sins to women. This idea follows Plato's teaching that divided souls into those that come from the ground 'covered in filth and dust' and those that come from the sky 'purified'.¹⁴⁹

Unlike the figures of the other elements, represented in very active positions, the lying woman is sleeping: she is disconnected from the real world. This might be a representation of Plato's cave allegory, that men on earth only live in the shadows, without seeing real things. Plato described the coming out of the cave towards light through a process of adaptation, coming from the earth, seeing the shadows first then the water reflections, following the night sky with the moon and the stars and finally the sun 'by itself alone in its proper place'.¹⁵⁰ Watching the sun, men would see 'that this is what provides the seasons, and the years, and governs everything in the visible world'.¹⁵¹ This path of coming out of the shadows can be related to the four elements, coming from the earth through to the Fire, which Almada actually depicted as a man holding the sun.

¹⁴⁸ Ana Mehnert Pascoal, 'A cidade do saber: estudo do património artístico integrado nos edifícios projectados pelo arquitecto Porfírio Pardal Monteiro para a Cidade Universitária de Lisboa, (1934-1961)', (unpublished Master Dissertation, Universidade de Lisboa, 2011), p. 176.

¹⁴⁹ Plato, *Republic*. trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 467. Book X 614D-E; Plato, *Republic*, p. 481. Book X 619D

¹⁵⁰ Plato, *Republic*, p. 113. Book VII 516a-b.

¹⁵¹ Plato, *Republic*, p. 113. Book VII 516c.



Figure 45. Earth element.



Figure 46. Almada, *Expulsion from Paradise*, 1961, Faculty of Letter façade, Lisbon. Image: Margarida Manarte.

Water element

The water element is represented by a mermaid with her torso out of the water and bending backwards, fitting Plato's definition of 'the class which inhabits the waters'.¹⁵² In her hands, and resting on her right shoulder, she is holding a large conch that is pouring water into the sea, as can be seen in Figure 47. The figure's pose of back bending denotes her body flexibility, an illustration of the 'plasticity and mobility' that according to Leo characterizes the Water element.¹⁵³ The mermaid is represented with her buttocks uncovered and with two fins resembling two legs, a representation that Almada used in all the mermaids, female and male, throughout *Planisfério* and also in other paintings, for example a drawing from 1941, shown in Figure 48, and the detail of the mural painting in the maritime station of Alcântara from 1945, shown in Figure 49. Almada's first use of this particular way of representing a mermaid was found in a theatre play written between 1927 and 1932 but only published in 1959. The play ends with a scene with a mermaid with two 'fish fins' who gave birth, in Almada's words, 'holding a small human being with two fish tails'.¹⁵⁴ Besides the resemblance of the fins to two human legs, this way of representing the mermaid might reflect Almada's idea of dualism, which he considered as complementary and part of a whole, as already seen in his presentation of the masculine and feminine division of the elements and which can also be seen in the light and darkness present in the Hours' Cycle painting.

¹⁵² Plato, *Timaeus*, pp. 83, 85. B 40A.

¹⁵³ Alan Leo, p. 14.

¹⁵⁴ 'trazendo ao colo um serzinho humano com duas caudas de peixe'. José de Almada Negreiros, *Deseja-se Mulher*, (Lisboa: Verbo, 1959), pp. 75, 76.

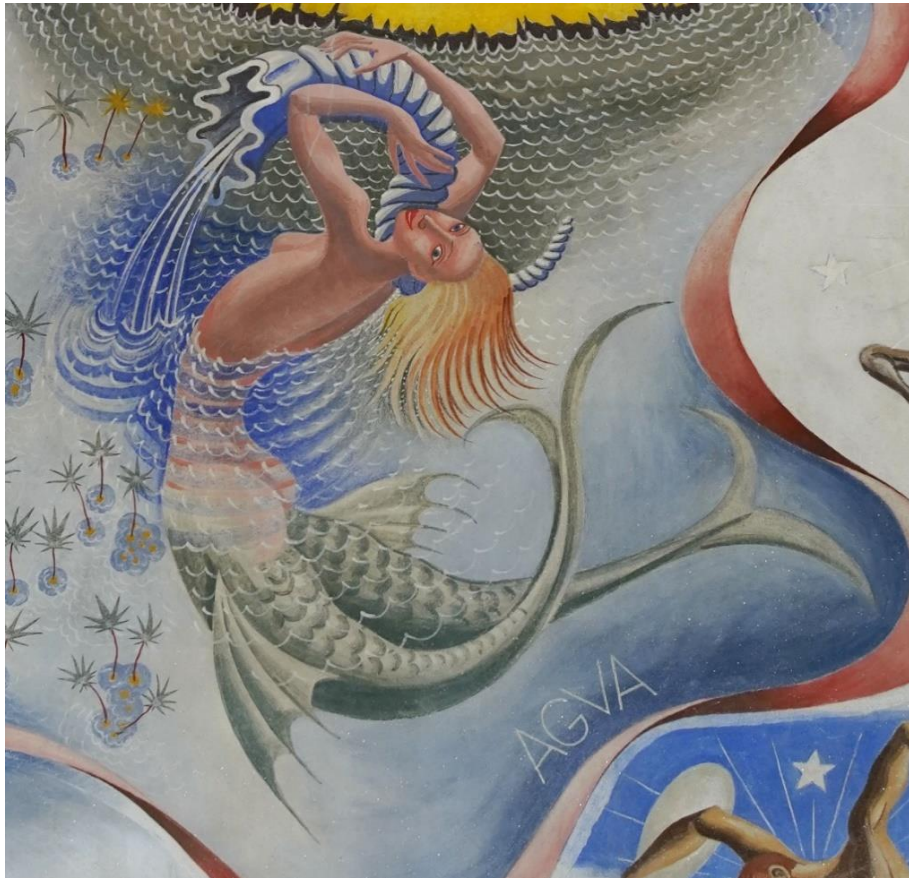


Figure 47. Water element.



Figure 48. Almada, Sereia, 1941, China ink and pencil, 25x20 cm. Image: Acciaiuoli, Margarida, ed., Almada (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. Centro de Arte Moderna, 1984), fig. 271.



Figure 49. Detail of Almada's mural painting in the maritime station of Alcântara. Image: Mariana Pinto dos Santos (Ed.), Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno, p. 331.

Air element

The Air element is represented by a naked male figure with gold wings flying from left to right above clouds and looking up, shown in Figure 50. Almada incorporated the natural capacity of a bird to fly in a man, following Plato's definition of the 'winged kind', but mixing reality and imagination which can be related to the artistic characteristic that Leo associated with the air element.¹⁵⁵ Also, Almada wrote, 'Air is thinking', following Leo's association of the air element with the intellect and mind, which is man's vehicle for imagination.¹⁵⁶ Probably alluding to the intellectual characteristic of the air element, Almada arranged ten clouds under the man to resemble the Tetractys, a Pythagorean mathematical discovery that he also represented in the tapestry *O Número*, detailed in Figure 51. Detail of the tapestry *O Número*, showing the Tetractys symbol. Almada studied that symbol which he called the sacred quaternary, defining it as 'the symmetry that four units of the Decade have among themselves'.¹⁵⁷ Having used this disposition only in the final painting, Almada might have done it purposely.



Figure 50. Air element.

¹⁵⁵ Alan Leo, *Astrology for All*, (New York: Cosimo, 2006), p. 54.

¹⁵⁶ Alan Leo, *Astrology for All*, p. 54.

¹⁵⁷ 'simetria quem têm entre si quatro unidades da Década'. José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 207.



Figure 51. Detail of the tapestry *O Número*, showing the Tetractys symbol.

Fire element

The Fire element, shown in Figure 52, is represented by a naked male figure, coloured in yellow and with red hair or what resembles a sunburst, holding the sun in his hands. He is standing on a partially depicted globe, probably the planet earth, with a camp fire at his feet on his left side (the viewer's right) with a smoke cloud above it; around the figure there is a black shadow. The human figure holding the sun might be viewed as a man trying to grab the sun or a man carrying the sun – which was Almada's intention cannot be stated. Considering that the sun is being carried by the figure, it resembles Helios, the god who drove the sun in his chariot around the world, fitting Plato's definition of the fire element as 'the heavenly kind of gods'.¹⁵⁸ Considering Helios's representation by the German painter Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1590), shown in Figure 53, the figure's corporal posture, naked and standing and showing his strength, and also the sunburst around the head, are similar to Almada's painting. For Almada the fire element was a link between man and the sacred, and follows Plato's idea that the gods were the intermediate creators of mortal beings, being asked by God to imitate 'the power shown by me in my generating of you', because if they were to be created by God himself, 'they would be made equal unto god'.¹⁵⁹ Following this, Almada might have had the intention to draw the fire element figuring a god, the intermediary between man and God, the sacred, as well as resembling his description as Plato's generator of mortal beings. If this is the case then, by representing a Greek God, Almada reveals his interest and knowledge not only about Greek philosophy but also mythology.

¹⁵⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, pp. 83, 85.B 40A.

¹⁵⁹ Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 89. B 41C.



Figure 52. Fire element.



Figure 53. Goltzius, *Helios*, 1588-1590, paper, 351 mm × w 26 8mm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Image: Rijksmuseum.

Almada's representations of the four elements are deeply linked to Plato's description in the *Timaeus* but also with other ideas from Plato and with the work of other Greek philosophers. Plato's cave allegory can be also linked to the entire composition, with the earth in the centre followed by the elements and then the celestial sky, coming from the shadowed earth to the illuminated heavens. Hence *Planisfério* might be seen as a three levelled composition.

Zodiac signs

The zodiac signs are drawn around the elements following the zodiacal order already used by Ptolemy, from Aries to Pisces (Figure 25).¹⁶⁰ The figures are on a blue background filled with white stars resembling the constellations that gave their names to the zodiac signs, making a link with the celestial sky. Although it might be apparent that Almada was aware of the sequence of the zodiac signs, it is unknown what was Almada thinking when positioning the figures, whether they were carefully chosen or a random choice.

Almada used zodiac signs representations in two other paintings, giving an insight into how the artist developed his drawings. The first representation, shown in Figure 54, is dated 1938 and thus is before *Planisfério*, was for a book illustration, where the zodiac symbols are simpler with only their delineation painted in white.¹⁶¹ Some were different to those in *Planisfério* – the sign of Gemini is depicted as two identical twins rather than a couple, the sign of Capricorn represented by a goat instead of the mythological figure of a goat with a fish tail, and the sign of Aquarius that leaves some doubts because in the upper body it appears to be a man pouring water from a vessel, but the lower part appears to be an animal instead of a complete human figure. In 1961 Almada returned to the representation of the zodiac signs in the rectory's façade of the University of Lisbon, as can be seen in Figure 55 and Figure 56. In this painting the symbols are closer to those in *Planisfério*. However, Capricorn appears to have returned to the representation of only a goat and Aquarius has only one vessel.

These small differences show that Almada had more than one solution to represent the same sign and also his versatility and adaptability to different spaces and contexts. Almada's sources for the zodiac signs could have been from the almanacs already referred to, but Almada recreated the symbols differently. Also considering that the representations made for the 1940 exhibition were similar to Avelar's book, Almada distanced himself from those figures related to sixteenth century drawings and instead shaped modernist figures.¹⁶²

In all three paintings the zodiacal order is the same but the starting point is different; the reasons for each choice are unknown. In the illustration, the first sign was Pisces,

¹⁶⁰ Ptolemy, p. 47. Book I9, 23.

¹⁶¹ Joaquim Manso, *Primavera da Lenda*, (Lisboa: Ática, 1938), p. 27.

¹⁶² André do Avelar, pp. 76, 78.

which is Almada's rising sign, considering the natal chart calculated by Pessoa in Figure 21, and it can be asked if the painter wanted to make the drawing more personal. Following this thought, it might be hypothesized that, in *Planisfério*, Almada's choice relates to his sun and rising signs, Aries and Pisces respectively, which flank the world map in the bottom.



Figure 54. Almada, ilustração para o livro *Primavera Mansa* de Joaquim Manso, 1938. Image: Joaquim Manso, *Primavera da Lenda*, p. 27.

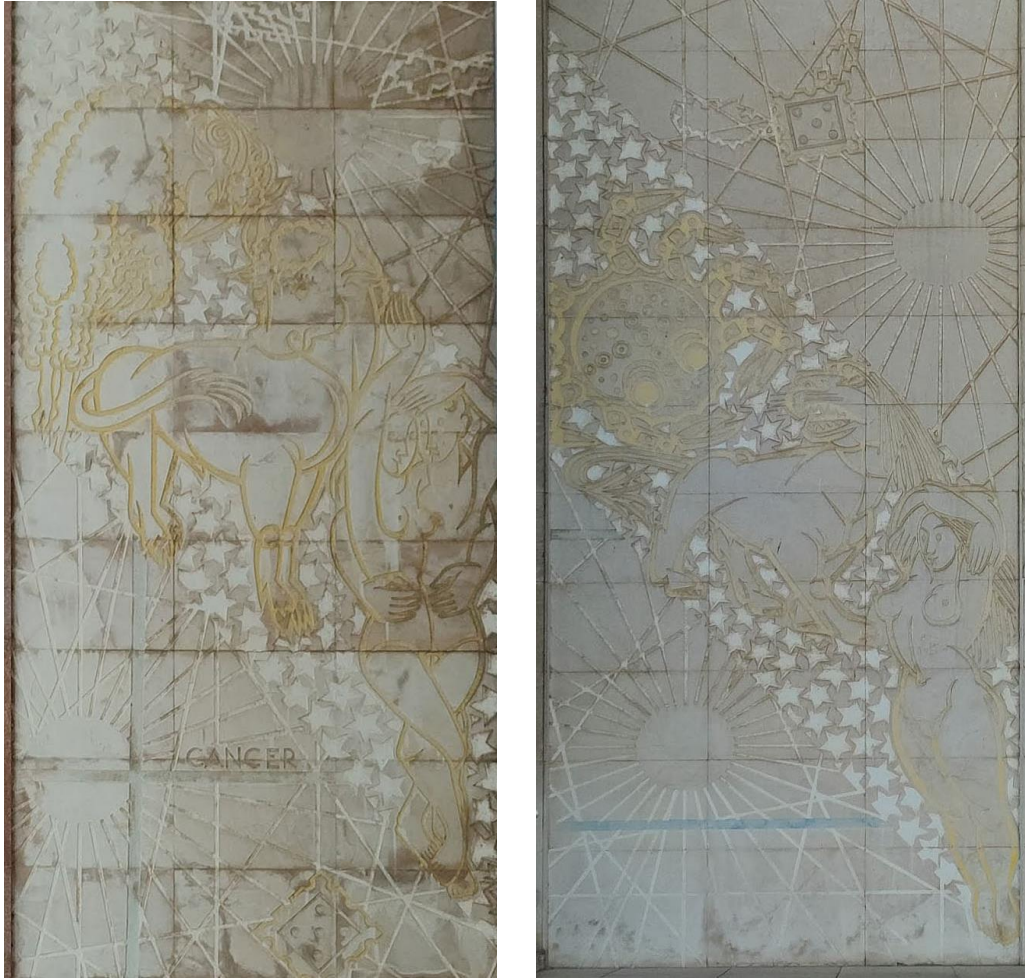


Figure 55. Almada, zodiac signs on the rectory's façade, from left to right: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo and Virgo. Image: Telmo Domingues.



Figure 56. Almada, zodiac sign on the rectory's façade, from left to right: Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces. Image: Telmo Domingues.

The zodiac signs of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn and Pisces are represented by the animals and mythological figures associated with them, as can be seen in Figure 57 to Figure 64. The sign of Taurus in Figure 58 is the only one turning outward from the centre of the painting, which might be related to Leo's characterization of the sign as 'exceedingly obstinate'.¹⁶³ In the representation of the sign of Pisces, Almada added a fishhook in the middle of the line that links the two fishes, linking it to a human activity.

¹⁶³ Alan Leo, *Astrology for All*, p. 16.



Figure 57. Sign of Aries.



Figure 58. Sign of Taurus.



Figure 59. Sign of Cancer.



Figure 60. Sign of Leo.



Figure 61. Sign of Scorpio.



Figure 62. Sign of Sagittarius.



Figure 63. Sign of Capricorn.



Figure 64. Sign of Pisces.

The zodiac signs represented as human figures might appear to be the most striking, as França noticed; he considered the signs of Gemini and Aquarius the more creative.¹⁶⁴ However, although Almada might have figured those in uncommon representations they are not unique. The sign of Gemini, shown in Figure 65, was represented by a couple instead of identical twins, probably linking it to the idea of a soulmate or twin soul. However, it was not innovative since, in the *Zodiac Man* from the fifteenth century manuscript *Très Riches Heurs du duc de Berry*, this zodiac sign was already painted as a couple, as can be seen in Figure 66. Considering that this was not the first choice of Almada, as seen in the second draft, Figure 41, he knew the identical twin representation, but chose to follow this version.

¹⁶⁴ José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 131.



Figure 65. Sign of Gemini.

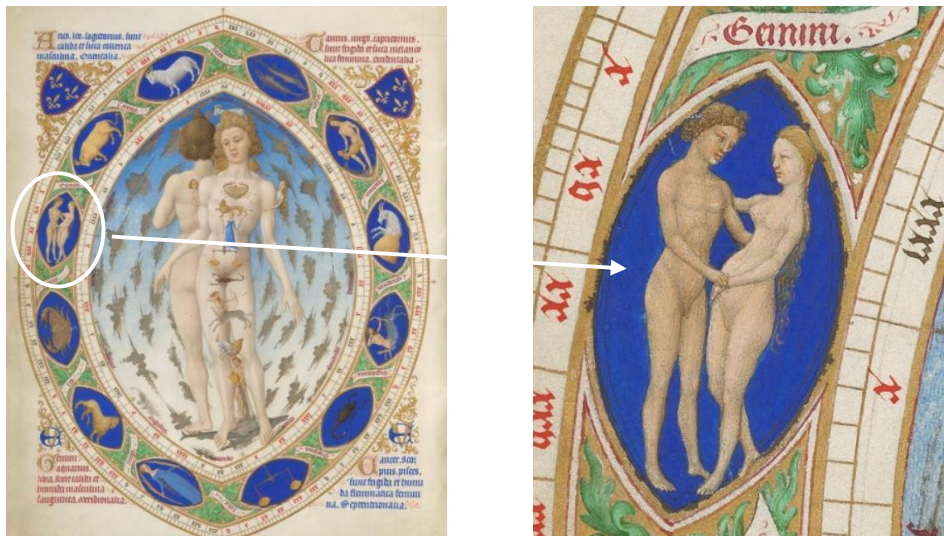


Figure 66. Zodiac Man, 15th century, Château de Chantilly, Oise, France. Image: Château de Chantilly.

The sign of Aquarius, shown in Figure 67, was represented by a naked male figure, running with his head facing down and both arms up with bent elbows, with a vessel in each hand, pouring water. Likewise, the movement given to the figure might be uncommon but it was not the first time this sign was represented by a man in a hurry to pour water from two vessels. Another painting was found that, although in a different style, gives the figure a similar movement, as can be seen in Figure 68, part of an illuminated manuscript dating from 1450-1460.



Figure 67. Sign of Aquarius.



Figure 68. Master of the Harley Froissart, *Zodiac Sign: Aquarius*, 1450-1460, manuscript, Princeton University. Image: Artstor.

For Virgo, the third zodiac sign represented by a human figure, shown in Figure 69, Almada also opted for an uncommon version of its representation. Instead of a woman in a modest and prudish representation, as depicted in his draft in Figure 41, wearing a dress and in a body posture evolving the body, in the final painting the figure is completely different. Besides being nude, the woman is lying belly up with her arms stretched open to the sides. Although her legs are bent and close to each other, the upper part of the body shows some openness, which is an unusual characteristic for the sign of Virgo.



Figure 69. Sign of Virgo.

The sign of Libra is the only one being represented by an inanimate object, yet it is depicted full of movement. Once more, although this might be an uncommon representation for the sign of Libra, this was not the first time that this movement was used in the representation of this zodiac sign. Johann Bayer draw a similar representation in his work *Uranometria* from 1603, as can be seen in Figure 71.



Figure 70. Sign of Libra.

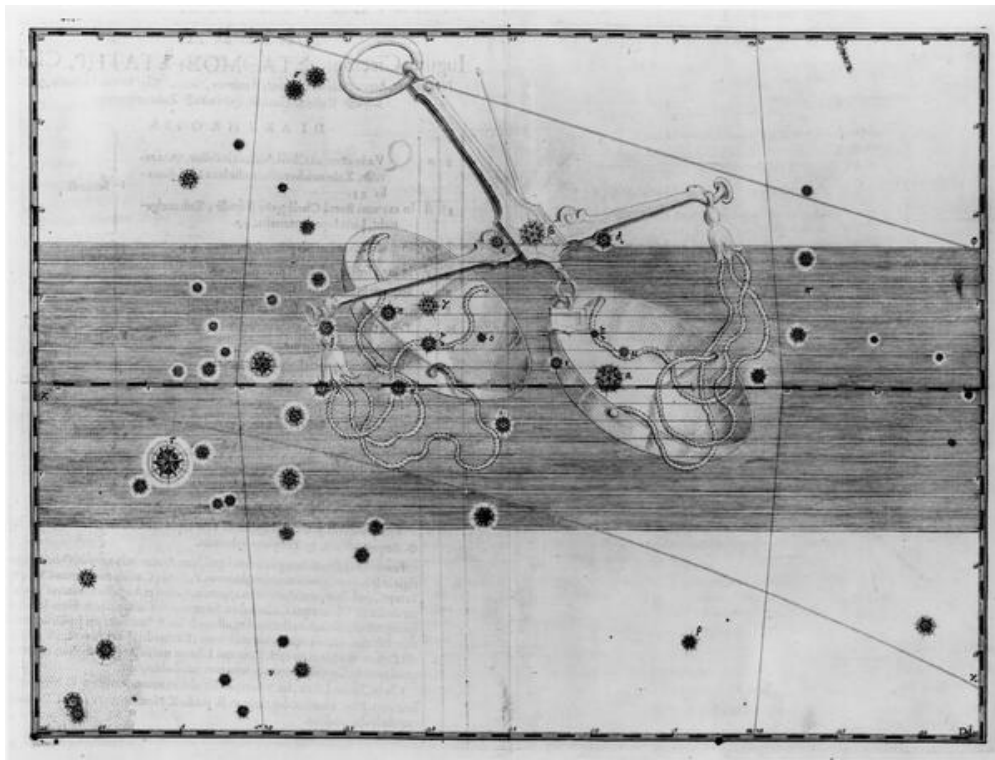


Figure 71. Johann Bayer, *Uranometria*, 1603, print. Image: Artstor.

Almada represented the zodiac signs in more than one work, showing his interest in them, but without any reference to them in his written work, in contrast with the four elements. His knowledge of them might be linked to popular knowledge that could have been found in almanacs, and he may have simply reproduced the symbols albeit through his modernist and provocative eye, using sometimes uncommon versions of the symbols.

The four elements appeared to have been more thoughtful and elaborate in their representations, as Almada's studies of Greek philosophers in particular Plato's ideas showed. However, some connections were found to Leo's writings, indicating that Almada was close to the astrological knowledge of this time. Considering that Almada did not refer to the zodiac signs as he did to the four elements might reveal that he was not interested in astrology in its interpretative and perhaps predictive sense, but only in its practical relation to the natural cycles, and that his focus was on trying to understand its functions and relationship with the earth. *Planisfério* shows that Almada was interested in acknowledging the conception of the cosmos and the place of man in it. In addition, he did not depict any planets in this painting, perhaps following the medieval astronomical charts that focused on the fixed stars, representing the map but not the figures that will interact with it.

As already seen, Almada differentiates the terrestrial plane represented through the world map from the heavens occupied by the four elements and the zodiac signs. But, assuming *Planisfério* is Almada's vision of the cosmos, he would have also considered it a three levelled composition – the world, the four elements and the zodiac signs. While the human figures represented in the world map are dressed as per their culture, the human figures of the four elements and the three zodiac signs are naked as they would be in different planes where they would not need terrestrial things like clothes. Almada wrote in 1917, 'trying to divinize man is the first symptom of amnesia. Man is the contrast of the divine'.¹⁶⁵ And here that contrast is revealed by this separation between the earthly figures and the heavenly figures that could be considered closer to the divine. Although he did humanize the mermaid in the water element with two fins resembling two legs and added a hook between the two fishes in the sign of Pisces, he did not divinise the earthly figures, yet he did so in the elements, giving wings to the air element figure and putting the sun in the hands of the fire element figure.

¹⁶⁵ 'tentar divinizar o homem é o primeiro sintoma de amnesia. O homem é o contraste do divino'. José de Almada Negreiros, *K4 O Quadrado Azul*, (Lisboa: A Bela e o Monstro Edições, 2011), p. 23.

Hours' Cycle



Figure 72. Disposition of the two parts of the painting Hours' Cycle. Image: Telmo Domingues

The Hours' Cycle is a representation of the twenty four hour cycle of newspaper, as presented in Figure 72. The production is divided in two parts and is situated above the door across from the painting *Planisfério*, with the daily hours to the left side of the door and the night hours to the right side of the door, as shown in Figure 73 and Figure 74. These paintings are rectangular with twelve overlapping circles, from left to right in the day hours and from right to left in the night hours, and each circle has a single red pointer that indicates only the hour of the day. The painting representing the day hours has a yellow background with the representation of the sun cycle, and for the night hours the background is blue and shows the moon cycle. The two paintings together represent the creation of a journal in twenty-four hours, and within each circle a part of that process is represented, demonstrating what this new building was built for – to accommodate all the steps for the production of a newspaper. Only one draft was found in the online archive *Modernismo*, shown in Figure 75, but apart from the realism given by developing the drawings' perspective, there were no changes. The first circle in each painting marks seven o'clock. M. Negreiros wrote that Affonso referred to a number of coincidences with the number seven related with Almada's life, as his day and year of birth as well his age and year of death, stating that for Almada seven was a very present number.¹⁶⁶ Without any other information, the starting hour could have been a personal choice of the artist.

¹⁶⁶ Maria José Almada Negreiros, *Identificar Almada*, p. 74.



Figure 73. Almada, Hours' Cycle – left side, day hours, 1939, fresco, Diário de Notícias, Lisbon. Image: Telmo Domingues.



Figure 74. Almada, Hours' Cycle – right side, night hours, 1939, fresco, Diário de Notícias, Lisbon. Image: Telmo Domingues.



Figure 75. Almada, draft for the painting 'Hours' Cycle', graphite and watercolour under paper, 21 x 98 cm. Image: ANSA-A-1363, Modernismo – Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu.

Labour of the months

Considering that the medieval Labours of the Months linked together time cycles and man's work, the Hours' Cycle painting fits that tradition, representing the day cycle and man's production of a newspaper. Almada's painting is very dynamic, fitting the active mode used in the twelfth century and he used circles that, as seen, according to Gordon was an antique practise.¹⁶⁷ The main difference between the medieval tradition and the Hours' Cycle is that, instead of representing months, Almada represented hours, but even though the time scale is different, the denominator is the same: twelve. However, when considering the whole set of three paintings in the newspaper hall, shown in Figure 2, the months are represented written in *Planisfério*, as shown in Figure 26, and the four seasons, along with a few agriculture activities, are drawn in the *Mapa de Portugal*, as already seen in Figure 39, making the set of the three paintings interlinked by the medieval tradition of representing the months cycle. Actually the three paintings represent time and space each in its own scale, but the Hours' Cycle represents the smallest period of time – the twenty-four hours of a day in a newspaper building – while the *Mapa de Portugal* shows the four seasons related to a country, and *Planisfério* represents the twelve months of a year and also the twelve zodiac signs, related to celestial bodies that never cease their movement, around the world map.

Although the Hours' Cycle does not figure agriculture works as in the medieval period, it clearly represents men's actions as the main focus of the painting. The different theme used by Almada suits Webster's idea, already presented, that the Labours of the Months would be adaptable to different cultures and costumes.¹⁶⁸ In the medieval tripartite society described by Alexander, cited in the literature review, agriculture was a dominant activity in men's life, and the labour classes in Almada's time would be different, evidencing the evolution of man's activities from the medieval period to the twentieth century.¹⁶⁹ As a non-religious commission, it does not follow the example of the Perugia Fountain studied by Gunzburg, as presented above, that included religious representations.¹⁷⁰ Thus, Almada's painting is clearly secular, with no religious symbols, contradicting Alexander's idea that the labours of the months would

¹⁶⁷ James Carson Webster, p. 102. Olga Koseleff Gordon, p. 247.

¹⁶⁸ James Carson Webster, pp. 1, 99.

¹⁶⁹ Johnathan Alexander, p. 437.

¹⁷⁰ Darrelyn Gunzburg, in *Sky and Symbol*, p. 106

serve the clerics.¹⁷¹ Almada distanced himself from religion, both in *Planisfério* and in the Hours' Cycle.

¹⁷¹ Johnathan Alexander, p. 437.

Astrological Symbols

The astrological symbols present in the Hours' Cycle are the sun and the moon represented in the background of each corresponding mural, the sun in the day hours and the moon in the night hours. In his texts from the 1940s, Almada associated the sun with light and the moon with darkness considering the time period when they illuminate the earth – the sun during the day, the moon during the night and for him 'darkness is not less than light, they are two complete and equal halves from a whole'.¹⁷² According to Leo, 'the sun rules by day and the moon by night' and, in very similar words to those of Almada, Leo wrote that, 'in the truest sense they represent but two halves of one whole'.¹⁷³ Here is present the dualism already referred to in the water element.

Moreover, considering light as luminous and darkness illuminated, Almada wrote: 'luminous and active in the masculine, illuminated and passive in the feminine', attributing to the sun the masculine and to the moon the feminine, although he stated that this has nothing to do with sexual gender, since both woman and man have the two qualities.¹⁷⁴ In his text, Almada related the sun with Apollo and the moon with Diana, being both sons of Light and Darkness, 'inheriting from the father the Light and from the mother the Darkness'.¹⁷⁵ Leo also associated the luminaries with parental figures, writing that the father would be related to both the Sun and the planet Saturn while the mother would be related to the Moon and Venus.¹⁷⁶ The similarities between Almada and Leo's writings continue to suggest that Almada was close to the astrological knowledge shared in that period.

Almada also used these symbols, the sun and moon, in the façade of the auditorium *Aula Magna* in the Rectory building of the University of Lisbon in 1961, along with two mythological figures as shown in Figure 76. The figures flank the main entrance in the same disposition as in the Hours' Cycle: the sun is on the left side and the moon on the right side, and the luminaries symbology is reinforced by the introduction of the 'solar rooster' in front of the sun and an owl, the night bird, close to the moon, as mentioned

¹⁷² 'a Escuridão não é menos do que a luz, são duas metades inteiras e iguais de um todo'. José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 105.

¹⁷³ Alan Leo, *Astrology for All*, p. 63.

¹⁷⁴ 'luminosa e activa no masculino, iluminada e passiva no feminino'. José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 104.

¹⁷⁵ 'herdando ambos do pai a Luz e da mãe a Escuridão'. José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 104.

¹⁷⁶ Alan Leo, *How to Judge a Nativity*, pp. 169, 170.

by Ana Mehnert Pascoal.¹⁷⁷ However, instead of the pair Apollo and Diana referred to in his text, Almada depicted Apollo and Athena. Diana is a Roman goddess associated with the Greek Artemis, who was Apollo's sister and associated with the moon and the goddess of hunt and fertility. Athena was the Greek goddess of war and intellect associated with the Roman goddess Minerva. Thus, if Almada's intention was to represent symbols related to the sun and the moon, as the presence of the luminaries and the associated animals suggested, the choice of the goddess Athena might not have been the most correct one. Yet, as Pascoal wrote, these representations would have 'required careful investigation and a deep prior knowledge on the part of Almada' and, considering Almada's interest in Greek culture, it is difficult to assume that Almada confused the two goddesses.¹⁷⁸ Perhaps, Almada's intention was to relate his decorations with the building itself and to emphasize the academic context and environment using the goddess linked to the intellect.



Figure 76 and Figure 77. Decoration of the *Aula Magna* façade with the representation of Apollo (left) and Athena (right). Image: Margarida Manarte.

Almada attributed to the sun and moon numerous significances that would always be opposed and complementary, demonstrating his view of a dualistic world, as already

¹⁷⁷ 'galo solar'. Ana Mehnert Pascoal, 'As figuras greco-romanas de Almada Negreiros na Cidade Universitária de Lisboa', *Boletim de Estudos Clássicos*, 55, (2011), p. 127.

¹⁷⁸ 'terá exigido uma investigação cuidada e um profundo conhecimento prévio por parte de Almada Negreiros'. Ana Mehnert Pascoal 'As figuras greco-romanas de Almada Negreiros na Cidade Universitária de Lisboa', p. 129.

seen in *Planisfério*. Almada again showed some links with Leo's writings but his interest in Greek knowledge was also evident as he associated the sun and moon with Greek mythology. Almada appears to have used the sun and moon symbols to focus on their link with the natural cycles of the days, months and years, which are all illustrated in the three paintings in the newspaper hall. From the evidence it appears that Almada's interest in astrology would have probably been about the cosmos, its construction and composition, as well as its motion and consequent influence on terrestrial conditions.

Conclusion

The aim of this investigation was to study the use of astrological symbols in two mural paintings by the Portuguese artist José Sobral de Almada Negreiros, known as Almada. The paintings, *Planisfério* and the Hours' Cycle, dating from 1939, are situated in the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper building, in Lisbon, designed by the architect P. Monteiro. Although Almada was widely studied, not all his works received the same attention and these paintings were not analysed in depth, particularly the significance of their astrological symbols. Therefore, this investigation has tried to enrich the knowledge of these paintings, focusing on the astrological symbolism, to develop an understanding of Almada's relationship with astrology and the presence of astrology in Portuguese society in the 1930s and 1940s.

The introduction covered a contextualization of the social and political environment in which the paintings were produced and how astrology was present within Portuguese society. The methodology followed was library and archival research in addition to the analyses of the paintings which were the primary sources for this investigation. Almada's life was briefly described in order to give an idea of the artist's career and social and political positions, followed by his possible connection with astrology. The Literature Review revealed that not much was written about the astrological symbols and their possible significance in Almada's work. The symbols were noticed but with no further analyses, apart from França, who described the four elements and considered the signs of Gemini and Aquarius as the more creative.¹⁷⁹ Aside from this, both paintings were linked by Torras and R. Negreiros to medieval traditions. However, the authors did not present any arguments that led to that conclusion and thus, in my research, I have investigated those two traditions in order to understand how the paintings were related to it.¹⁸⁰

I began my analyses of the paintings by trying to understand the reasons for the choice of the artist and then the possible reasons for his choice of the astrological symbols. Following that, I analysed each painting separately, starting with the medieval tradition upon which Almada might have relied to produce his paintings and then

¹⁷⁹ José Augusto França, *Almada, O Português sem Mestre*, p. 131.

¹⁸⁰ Begoña Farré Torras, in *José de Almada Negreiros, Uma Maneira de Ser Moderno*, p. 222.

focusing on the astrological symbols, their possible meaning through Almada's eyes, and what the artist tried to show to those who would see his work.

The greatest link between Almada and astrology were the paintings where the artist drew astrological symbols, as in the two paintings under study, since in his written works astrology was only referenced in a novel. Yet Almada referred to astronomy and his ideas suggest that he considered the relationship between earth and sky, of which the paintings studied are an expression, and that relates to Curry's definition of astrology.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, Almada mentioned ancient knowledge, related to the relationship between earth and sky, that has been lost through time and this may explain Almada's interest in seeking old teachings. Almada's interest in astrology possibly came from his friend Pessoa, who was a poet and astrologer aware of the astrological knowledge of the late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, in particular the work of the astrologer Leo. However, Almada's studies went deeper, pursuing the ancient knowledge of Greek philosophy and culture, particularly through Plato's ideas, as has been seen, but also through Aristotle, Pythagoras, and Homer.

Almada was probably commissioned by the architect P. Monteiro who, according to J. Monteiro was his friend and, as the artist wrote to his wife, he was given total liberty to create the paintings.¹⁸² Considering that they were located in a public hall with big windows that made the interior of the room clearly seen from the outside, particularly the mural *Planisfério*, the relevance the artist gave to the astrological symbols is worth noting. Possibly Almada wanted to make astrology visible, returning to people the ancient knowledge he considered lost, but perhaps from an astronomical or cosmological perspective dedicated to cosmic architecture rather than interpretative astrology, as his texts and the analyses of these paintings show.

The mural paintings were produced in the time of the dictatorial regime installed by the prime minister Salazar, and although they were not public commissions they could not express ideas contrary to the political propaganda of that period. Considering that Salazar wanted to create a national image based on the great conquests and discoveries of the sixteenth century, which was the purpose of the exposition in 1940, Almada might have tried to follow that thinking, representing in *Planisfério* the world but also the zodiac signs that correspond to the stars and constellations which were the

¹⁸¹ José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 123; Patrick Curry, p. 4.

¹⁸² ANSA-COR-550, Modern!smo – Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu.

navigator's guides.¹⁸³ Nonetheless, he did not emphasize Portuguese maritime routes and colonies, rather he decorated each geographical area according to their own characteristics. Thus, without a clear position in relation to the government, while creating an image in line with government propaganda, he might have implanted his own ideas while also appearing to be entirely concordant with the regime. It is possible that Almada might have tried to create images that, according to P. Monteiro's view, would serve the building itself and thus, *Planisfério* would be a window to the world and the Hours' Cycle an allusion to the purpose of the entire building.¹⁸⁴

Planisfério fits the style of late medieval mappaemundi, as noted by Torras, but Almada's message was contextualized in his own time period, as he painted the contemporary world, informing viewers of its history and characteristics. However, he might have also been influenced by celestial maps, close to what Urban considered the encyclopaedic type of map, which mixed astrological symbolism with other representations without an accurate depiction of the night sky.¹⁸⁵ Thus, *Planisfério* drew together terrestrial and celestial maps, thus demonstrating a relationship between sky and earth. Yet, Almada would relate differently to these two distinct realms, since the earth was depicted accurately while the sky symbolically. Perhaps for Almada the earth would be concrete and real while the sky would be subjective and personal. The work of the Mexican artist Covarrubias showed that Almada's world map was not unique; however, the Portuguese artist included astrological symbolism, hence the celestial sky.

The Hours' Cycle painting was linked to the medieval tradition of labours of the months although Almada adapted it to a different time measurement, the hours of a day, and a contemporary work done by man, the production of a newspaper.¹⁸⁶ Regarding the presence of months, they can be found in the painting *Planisfério* and in the third painting in the newspaper hall, *Mapa de Portugal*, where the four seasons are represented; all three paintings' themes are related to time cycles and a particular place. Working as a set of time and space representations, each painting has its own scale: the Hours' Cycle represents the smallest period of time – the hour – in the most particular space, a newspaper building; the *Mapa de Portugal* shows the four seasons related with the country of Portugal; and *Planisfério* represents the twelve months of a year but also

¹⁸³ João Paulo Martins, in *Exposição do Mundo Português: Explicação de um Lugar*, p. 59.

¹⁸⁴ 'adaptadas ao seu respectivo lugar e a função que lhes compete'. *Sudoeste*, p. 170.

¹⁸⁵ Emily Urban, in *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*, p. 144.

¹⁸⁶ James Carson Webster, p. 93.

the twelve zodiac signs, related to celestial bodies that never cease their movement, around the world map, the most encompassing time and space scale.

That Almada's paintings can be related to medieval traditions shows how Almada was engaged and interested in ancient techniques, using them as the structure of his work, although within a contemporary context and along modernist lines. Almada, as seen, actually judged that modernity would develop under the old traditions and techniques.¹⁸⁷

Astrological symbols

In addition to drawing the four elements, Almada wrote about them, demonstrating that he had some knowledge on the subject. Considering that he read the *Timaeus*, it is possible that he knew of Plato's description, as he actually depicted the four elements in a way close to the Greek philosopher.¹⁸⁸ Besides this, other ideas from Plato as well as other Greek scholars can be discerned in Almada's figures, evidencing his interest in and the influence of those teachings. Also, Leo's writings are found in these representations, linking Almada's drawings to the astrological knowledge of that time, known to his friend Pessoa. The disposition of the elements followed the division, as considered by Leo, into masculine and feminine elements, although there is no evidence whether this was Almada's thinking or randomly figured. Almada showed Platonist thinking in the earth element and a dualistic approach to life in the water element, while the air element reinforced the idea of learning and thinking through Pythagorean studies, and the fire element assumed a mythological knowledge demonstrating the existence of gods, intermediaries of the creator, to which mortal humans would resemble without being equal to them.

There is no reference in Almada's written work to the twelve zodiac signs but *Planisfério* was not the only painting where Almada drew the zodiac signs. In the three representations found he used the zodiacal order presented by Ptolemy, showing that he was aware of it, probably through Pessoa but he could also have seen it in the almanacs that were sold during that period.¹⁸⁹ However, it is unsure how Almada chose the first sign of the sequence in the paintings. It was hypothesized as to whether Almada

¹⁸⁷ António Valdemar, José Manuel Santos, p. 65.

¹⁸⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, pp. 83, 85.B 40A

¹⁸⁹ Ptolemy, p. 47. Book I9, 23

considered his personal natal chart in choosing the position of the zodiac signs but there is no evidence to support this. França considered that both Gemini and Aquarius were the most innovative however, even though they were uncommon representations, as was seen, they were not unique. A deeper analysis of each particular symbol of the zodiac signs, which would not fit the length of this dissertation, would enrich the understanding on Almada's sources and influences.

Almada's *Planisfério* presents a composition in three levels that may show how he understood the cosmos. At the centre is the world map, the terrestrial and concrete level, surrounded by the elemental composition of the world represented by the four elements, ending in the zodiac signs which relate to the star constellations of the ecliptic. This could indicate that, for Almada, a link between the earth and heavens exists but also that there are different parts of it, with the earth perhaps the most limited, surrounded by the other two. Considering that Almada depicted three different levels it is interesting to note that human figures are present in all three. However, the human figures in the four elements and in the zodiac signs are naked while in the world map they are dressed according to each culture, showing a relationship between the three levels and perhaps a possibility that humans could reach each level, although in different forms and with different needs. Although Almada humanized the elements and a few signs he did not divinize the earthly humans.

The sun and the moon are represented both in *Planisfério* and in the Hours' Cycle. In the latter they are related with the cycle of daily hours, reinforcing the idea that Almada's interest was in the mechanics of the cosmos – its cycles and movements and their possible consequences on life on earth. Almada wrote about the two luminaries, attributing them several meanings which would all be dualistic and complementary in accordance with what has already been referred to, as light and darkness.¹⁹⁰ Besides the sun and moon there were no references to the other planets that are a part of astrological thinking; whether this was for lack of interest or knowledge cannot be known. Almada's symbolism of the sun and moon can be linked with Leo's writings but also with Greek mythology, again showing his interest both in antiquity as well as modernity.

¹⁹⁰ José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 105.

Final thoughts

In Portugal astrology was divulged through almanacs, books and newspaper articles as well as ephemeral decorations, with the zodiac signs, for the 1940 exposition. However, those would have been less visible than the great murals painted by Almada. In 1939 Almada was already a recognized artist and his paintings were appreciated by their positive impact on the building's decoration. Nowadays Almada continues to be a recognized artist widely studied and, because of that, and the importance of the building itself, the paintings under study were preserved. Yet, the references to the astrological symbols were occasional, and even rarer their significance. Possible reasons for this, in 1939 as now, is the reliance on the paintings' importance in terms of their quality and creator, and not in the themes depicted. However, considering the paintings' size and visibility, as well as Almada's consistent intention given to everything he painted, it can be thought that they should have impacted the presence and development of astrology in Portugal. The silence around its significance might have been to not accord astrology much space – or perhaps Almada was not completely understood. Almada's work in the newspaper hall might show that Almada tried to share astrology with people, and perhaps the ancient knowledge he sought, through images that could easily reach more people, even the illiterate. Throughout Almada's texts some references to the relation between man's life and the stars were found but those ideas would need a separate investigation.

These paintings reveal that Almada assumed a relationship between earth and sky and had an awareness of astrology and its symbols, but, perhaps, he may have been attracted to it in order to understand the earth/sky connection and not so much to interpret astrological charts. It seems possible that Pessoa shared with Almada his knowledge of astrology but the paintings show a deeper study of the four elements than the zodiac signs. The elements show Almada's profound knowledge about Greek philosophy and culture, especially of Plato. Thus, Almada showed an intention to study astrology's foundations and not only what contemporary astrologers were writing. This can also be related to Freitas's idea that Almada was instructed in the tradition taught by the *Compagnonnage*, also an old teaching, although few were able to understand the artist's thinking.¹⁹¹ Almada himself, when talking about his studies in geometry, stated that he made his way alone, hoping to find someone who could accompany him in his

¹⁹¹ José de Almada Negreiros, *Ver*, p. 34.

studies.¹⁹² Considering the extensive work of Almada in the discipline of geometry, seeking its origins, it might be the case that the artist intended to do the same with astrology but at some point clearly focused in the pursue of geometry, as his interest in astrology was not so evident as in geometry. Time and space, that can be associated to astrology and geometry respectively, which are fundamental to an understanding of the cosmos, are consistently present in these paintings but further in his life Almada deepened his interest more on space and thus, geometry. The paintings studied are testimony to Almada's thinking about the cosmos and man's relation with it, providing proof of the presence of astrology in the Portuguese society of the 1930s and 1940s, and their study is a contribution to the history of astrology in Portugal.

¹⁹² António Valdemar, José Manuel Santos, p. 65.

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