



Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia and Sebastião Formosinho Sanches. Escuelas Neighbourhood, Lisbon, Portugal, 1949-1958. © Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa.

## Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia. A Modern Architect in the Garden-city

BY RICARDO CARVALHO

In the 1950s, when the social, aesthetic and technological assumptions of the Modern Movement seemed to be consolidated, there was hesitation in Portugal. Two possibilities were open to what could be viewed as post-war understanding of modernity. Some architects focused on the possible confrontation between the heritage of tradition and avant-garde proposals, in tune with the international movement. Others assimilated the universal appeal of the Modern Movement and aimed to operate within those contexts, facing the shortage of technological tools and of scarce theoretical production. Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia (1917–2006), an important Portuguese architect, belonged to the latter.

The project for Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (1959–1969) in Lisbon, which Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia designed with Pedro Cid (1925–1983) and Alberto Pessoa (1919–1985), is the work that best portrays the desire to belong to a universal legacy, a modern work in line with the international context. This project was constructed at a time when the concept of modernity was not fully established. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation was designed in opposition to the “cultural turn”, which focused on vernacular architecture and on the land — an approach based on surveys, geography and anthropology.

However, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation aimed to transform the city through architecture and landscape architecture using an old quarry. Architecture and landscape became one and a new place was born in the city whose space assumptions were a novelty. Part of the program is underneath the park and is invisible, where vegetation, museum, administration and the large auditorium are placed. The auditorium has a direct link to a lake. This is an architectural work of reference in view of its design, program and resources which slowly has found its place in European architecture and which has a parallel structure in the Louisiana Museum, in Humlebæk, Denmark.

The time this project took to be designed and be built, together with its relevance and impact, may help to justify the relative obscurity of other projects by the same architect. There were several precision-designed works produced both in terms of housing and of equipment. Although in the past decade, several Portuguese architects and researchers have made this work known (Ana Tostões, Ricardo Carvalho and Joana Vilhena, Eduardo Souto de Moura and Graça Correia, among others), there is still much to be done. The work of Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia is one which deserves dissemination due to its accuracy, precision, spatial research and ability to use form as a means of expression.

Let us go back to 1945 Lisbon. This is the year that the urbanization plan for the area later known as the *Alvalade* Neighborhood was established (*Plano de Urbanização da Zona Sul da Avenida Alfredo Malheiro*). The plan was designed in Lisbon City Hall by architect João Guilherme Faria da Costa (1906–1971), who had studied in Paris under Alfred Donat Agache (1875–1959) and Étienne de Gröer (1882–?) and would become crucial for post-war architecture in Portugal.

The area of the future neighborhood was 93 ha, it would house 45,000 people and was to include sports centers, open spaces and industrial areas. The design followed the French model of the Garden-City and introduced the concept of the Neighbourhood Unit, defined by American author Clarence Perry (1872–1944), into Portugal. 8 cells were designed in an open block quarter strategy. Access included footways, lanes and a traffic route to the parkway.

Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia and Sebastião Formosinho Sanches (1922–2004) designed a housing project in one of those cells, cell number 8, next to the railway. *Estacas* Neighborhood (1949–1958) was the first neighborhood project to reject the open quarter logic proposed by Faria da Costa. The project included 4 blocks of buildings on pilotis. Under the blocks there was a garden. In the periphery of the plan the architects opted to relate the buildings to the ground and thus emphasize the limits to their intervention. However, they created exterior covered spaces indicated by the use of pilotis.

The interior of the flats also created the feeling of continuity between interior and exterior space by means of balconies on both sides of the buildings which could produce shade on the inside. The concept of the duplex apartment was introduced on the upper floors. Eastern and western light was thus controlled, as was typical in modernist Brazilian architecture. The garden in the *Estacas* Neighbourhood was one of the first proposals of modern public space in the city.



The design and construction of *Estacas* Neighbourhood coincided with early debates in Portugal on the radiant city by Le Corbusier, and the dissemination of the Athens Charter. The Charter was translated into Portuguese in 1944 by architects Nuno Teotónio Pereira (1922–2016) and Costa Martins. This text fostered public debate in Portugal on habitat, on urban living and collective housing on new and different assumptions. Several meetings took place and books were published on this matter, which evidenced the importance of the Charter leading up to the first architecture conference in Portugal in 1948.

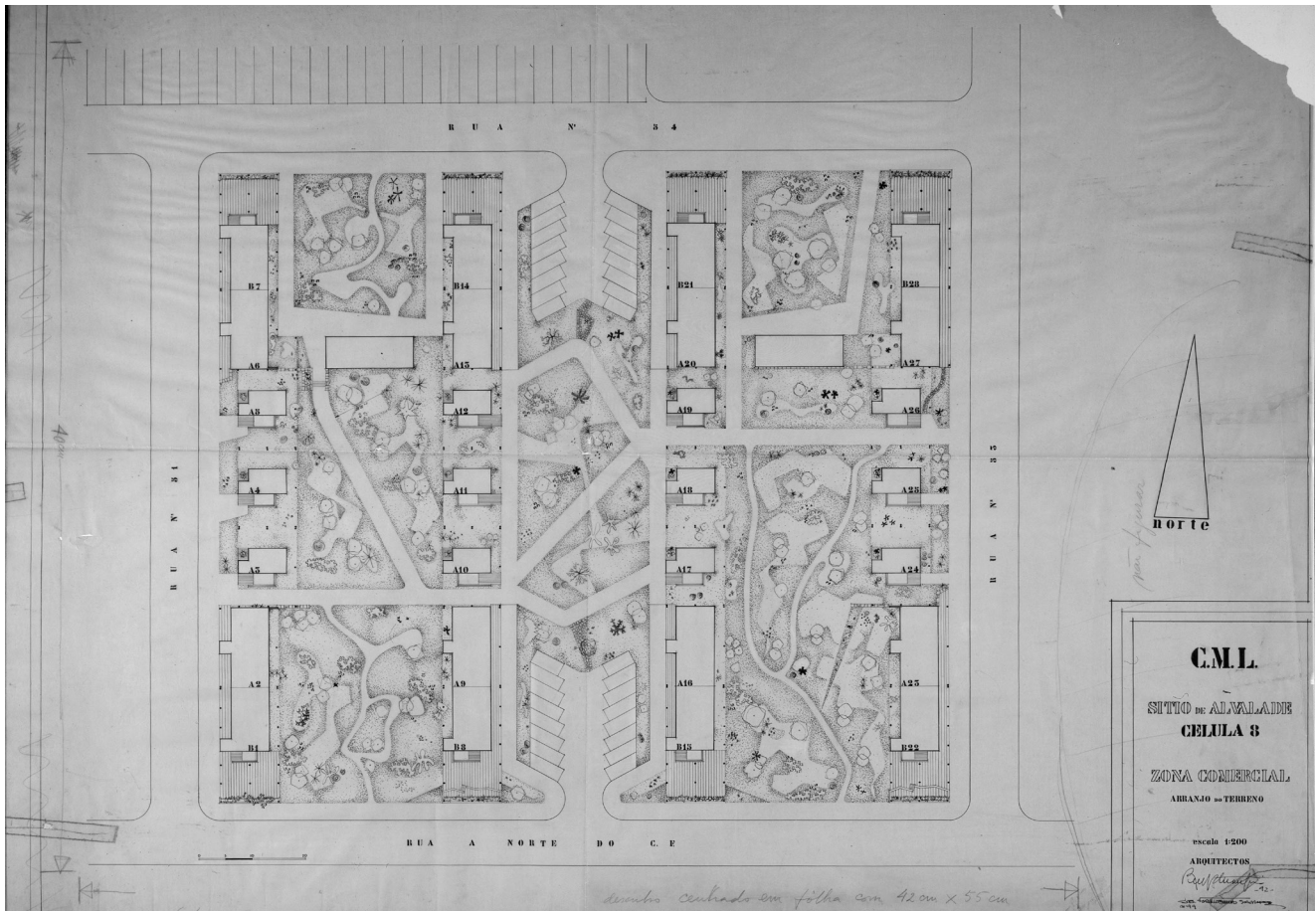
This *Estacas* Neighbourhood project is the best example of the era and bridges the gap with modern Brazilian architecture, whose importance for modern Portuguese architecture was to vary with time. The project was included in the Portuguese representation at the *International Architecture Exhibition at II Biennale of the S. Paulo Modern Art Museum* in 1954.

The plan for the *Alvalade* Neighborhood previewed that, at the center of each cell, a primary or middle school would be built, as per the Clarence Perry model. A community center was also planned for the intersection of two of the

main arteries, which, in the 1970s, were converted into shopping and office centers under projects by architects Fernando Silva (1914–1983) and Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia. Yet, the main legacy by Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia in the *Alvalade* Neighborhood, besides the *Estacas* Neighbourhood, are the schools he built in the 1940s and 1960s.

The school was a special research item in architecture. As a program and a theme, it entails establishing a humanized, optimistic, legacy enhancing the environment. The school implies the construction of a potential common good and that is the primary meaning of architecture. To build a school offered the opportunity to consider construction scales (adult/child, building/city), types, materials and processes. The school was at the core of the most engaged research in architecture in terms of the creation of space. This includes the 1930s “opens air schools” as iconic modern buildings. The opportunity was fully grasped by several generations of architects.

Important examples are the primary school *Asilo Sant' Elia* (1936–1937) in Como, by Giuseppe Terragni (1904–1943), the *Munkegaard* school (1948–1957) in Gentofte, Denmark, by



Arne Jacobsen (1902–1971), and Amsterdam Kindergarten (1955–1960), by Aldo van Eyck (1918–1999). The first example is relevant due to the scale variations and the emphasis given to the exterior; the second, for its room-yard relations; and the third for its urban feel — a city within the city. All these will resonate in the projects by Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia.

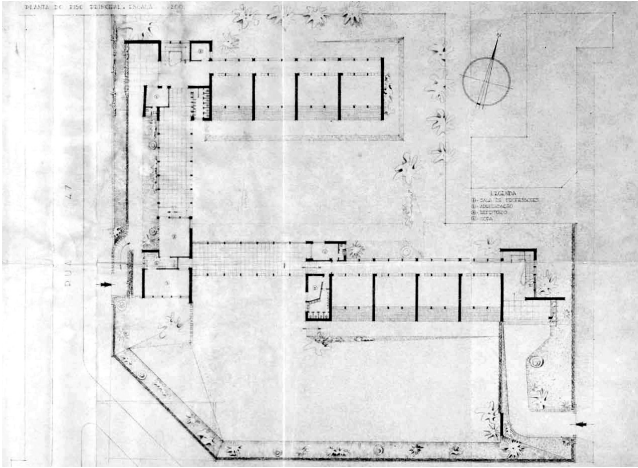
The schools designed by Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia were crucial for the Portuguese modern idea of the school. The architect's projects were influenced by Alfred Roth's (1903–1998) *Das Neue Schulhaus*, published in 1950, especially in terms of thinking outside the paradigm of building-prototype. His work responded to more than the issue of number of students and of place. Public and private dimensions are intertwined, which is probably why some projects adopted both introspective types, such as the patio, and public types, such as the square or the lane. Introspection is visible in the classroom and the square, the public dimension in the outer schoolyard, thus making the city and building part of city heritage. The three schools Athouguia built were structured around a roofed playground, balcony, patio, yard or lane.

Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia designed his first school for cell 7 (1949–1953). Therefore, the school in the *S. Miguel* Neighbourhood represents the first consequence of the architect's rethinking of the school: a 2-story building structured around roofed playgrounds; the school using topography to create the playground and vertical access; classrooms face south, protected from the sun by means of shades and have access to a balcony; and permeability, an experience already conducted in *Bairro das Estacas*, is here also included by means of the balconies.

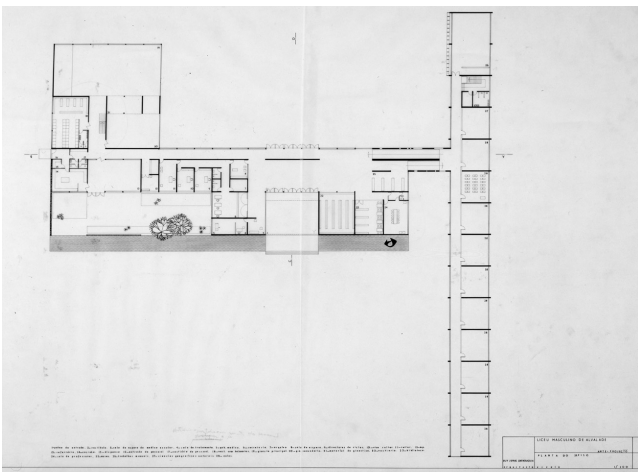
Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia's, *Teixeira de Pascoaes* School, Lisbon, 1956–1961, is completely different in terms of its basic concepts. His first school focused on continuity, whereas this one focuses on unity and introspection. This project is very similar, in terms of typology, to that of the *Munkegaard* school by Arne Jacobsen.

The school is structured around a common yard and canteen, which acts as a joint. From there, the school is divided into the boys' and girls' wings. Each wing has its own classrooms and each classroom a patio. Each patio has a tree and eye contact with the open playground by means

03 Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia, School in *S. Miguel* Neighborhood, Lisbon, Portugal, 1949–1953. © Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia archive.



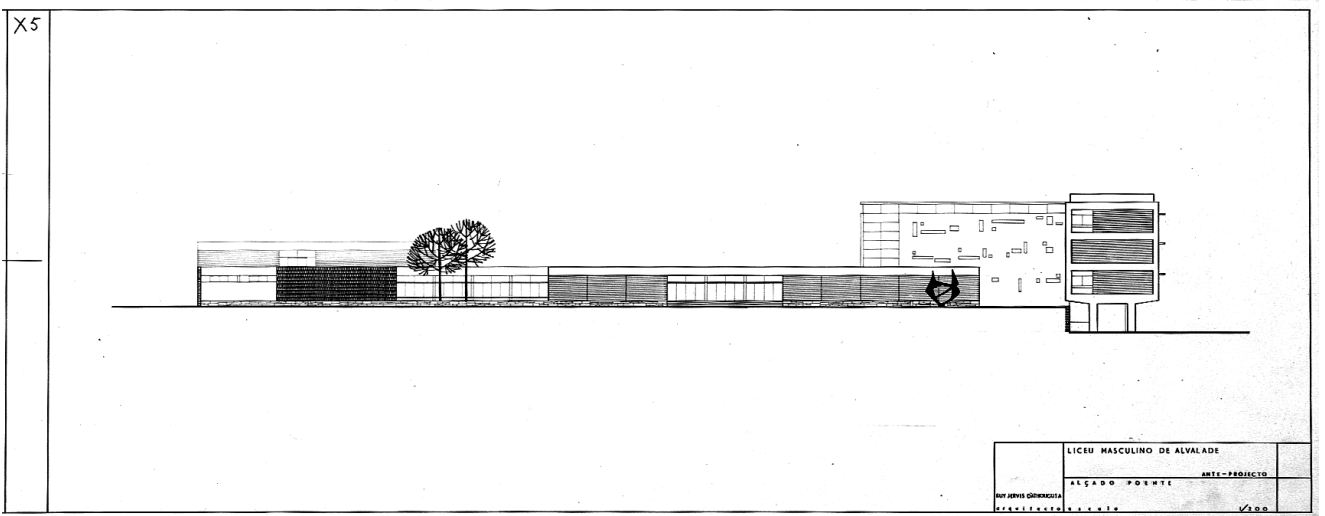
04 Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia, School in *S. Miguel* Neighborhood, Lisbon, Portugal, 1949–1953. © Ana Tostões archive.



05 Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia, *Padre António Vieira* high school, Lisbon, Portugal, 1959–1964. © Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia archive.

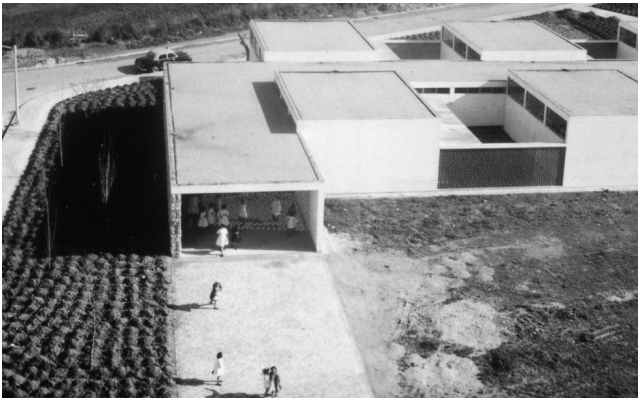


06 Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia, *Padre António Vieira* high school, Lisbon, Portugal, 1959–1964. © Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia archive.

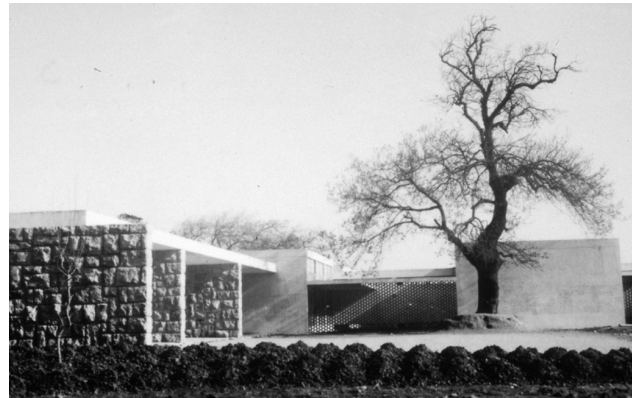


07 Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia, *Padre António Vieira* high school, Lisbon, Portugal, 1959–1964. © Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia archive.

08 Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia, *Teixeira de Pascoaes* School, Lisbon, Portugal, 1956–1961. © Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia archive.



09 Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia, *Teixeira de Pascoaes* School, Lisbon, Portugal, 1956–1961. © Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia archive.



of a *brise-soleil*. From the outside, the school is a repetition of volumes which do not reveal their purpose. Horizontal movement is achieved through long corridors leading to the introspective space of each classroom.

For cell 6, Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia designed a high school, *Padre Antônio Vieira* Highschool (1959–1964). The structure of the high school is that of two volumes, a horizontal and a vertical one, which intersect in a yard. Classrooms are in one, community spaces in the other. Scale has a different impact here, an urban impact and the project focuses on the specificities of school spaces. We are taken from public space to the inside of the school through an avenue defined by means of the pilotis of the classrooms.

Inside, the vertical movement is expressed by means of a concrete ramp, which is dimly lit, and which allows one to have access to the different floors. The materials used are very different in this school, when compared to the others. They are eventually a preview of the solution used in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Brick and concrete are used, revealing the construction system, which was not a typical option of this architect.

His house designs evidence a different approach to the garden-neighborhood. He designed several houses in Cascais, near Lisbon, where he lived. There, he could experiment with permeability and the relationship with the landscape that are typical of his public buildings.

The *Sande e Castro* House is extreme in terms of spatial possibility — pavement, roof and wall. This house is built on an urban area inside a pine forest and evidences no hierarchical relation with its environment. This project defines its references in different planes of stone masonry that extend beyond the roof slab. The walls are both on the exterior and the interior and the living spaces defy the inside-outside relationship.

This project is in line with those by avant-garde architects, such as Marcel Breuer (1902–1981) and Mies van der

Rohe (1886–1969). In this house, Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia experiments with informality of domestic space and space elusiveness as had very rarely been attempted in Portugal until the 1950s.

We may conclude that the work by Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia is defined by his research on design, the option for long paths (ramps, corridor, lane), horizontal spatial flow (space over compression), exposure of concrete construction elements, or elements that filter natural light. His buildings were unique results in a peripheral cultural environment struggling to stand on its own in modern architecture. Ruy Jervis d'Athouguia proved that was possible.

#### Ricardo Carvalho

(b. 1974, Lisbon, Portugal). PhD in architecture (2012), *Instituto Superior Técnico* – University of Lisbon. Ricardo Carvalho is an architect, a professor and a curator. In 1999 he founded the architecture office *Ricardo Carvalho + Joana Vilhena Arquitectos*. His office has been responsible for both public and private design work and has been shown in international exhibitions, having been nominated for the Mies van der Rohe 2015 Award. Since 2013, he has been Head and Professor of the Architecture Department at *Autónoma* University of Lisbon. He taught at the international Master program *Achitektur Studium Generale* at Brandenburg University BTU Cottbus, Germany (2009–2013). He was Visiting Professor at University of Navarra, Spain, (2013) and at Carleton University, Canada (2016). He published the book *A Cidade Social* (The Social City) in 2016.