

COLLAGES AND PHOTOMONTAGES IN ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION. THE PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKS OF TEÓFILO REGO

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Abstract

Graphically manipulated photographs were frequently used to illustrate the impact of the projected building on the existing cityscape or landscape, in particular, in those cases, where the projects had a monumental scale.

We discovered two sorts of documents at Teófilo Rego Archive: on the one hand, the collages and photomontages made by architects and photographed by Teófilo Rego; on the other hand, collages and photomontages made by Teófilo Rego at the commission of architects, a work whose depth seems to indicate the collaboration, a free, curious and imaginative spirit of research and the deepening of the formal and expressive hypothesis proportionated by the commission.

In the second group are included the photographs of four projects of the International Competition for the monument to the Infante D. Henrique in Sagres, 1954/1957. The photomontages and collages contained in the specification and in the draft's process submitted by João Andresen, and the photomontages of the projects by Nadir Afonso and Manuel da Silva Passos Junior must have been a form of project impact statement from their authors, and certainly represent a period of great creativity as concerns Teófilo Rego.

All photomontages by Teófilo Rego are constructed images, the result of a rational being, but are also emotional. As his gaze approaches the models, the images become abstract, and deviate from a possible illusion of reality. Whereas the compositions on the territory and the monument demanded a certain expressive naturalism more than realism, it is the geometric abstraction of architectural form that prevails in the close-ups.

Keywords: Photography, Architectural Photography, Photomontage, Collage

A photomontage by Architect Viana da Lima was the only photomontage I knew from the first half the 20th century in Portugal, at the time I found the negatives of this sort of works at the archive of the photographer Teófilo Rego. The intention of this photomontage was to present an idea of the general volumetrics in perspective of the project for an *immeuble-villas* at the Rua Sá da Bandeira, in Oporto, through the montage of a sketch on a photograph dated from 1943, and fostering a maximum of visual integration of the project in its scenic and urban context, as we had already observed in the photomontages by Mies van der Rohe referring to the skyscrapers' project to Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, dated

1921. The production of this photomontage was probably due to the wish to present the project to the client, within the context of a kind of informal competition.

This project by Viana de Lima, that was destined to housing, shops and offices, presented a '*vanguard, modern building opened to the outside, and denoted a Corbusian language: duplex houses with terraces, windows, secluded ground floor, terrace-garden on the roof, distribution in galleries, horizontal reading of the façade, and a metallic structure*', as mentioned by Maria do Carmo Pires at the webpage of the Fundação Marques da Silva. Viana de Lima may have even copied some elements of Corbusier's project for *immeuble-villas*, such as the double door with canopy and balancing mast that emphasizes the axial composition of the building. I am not aware of further tangible features of the project that was excluded either by the client or by the city's Aesthetic Commission, in favour of the project by the architects David Moreira da Silva and Maria José Marques da Silva Martins.

We can infer from this work that Viana de Lima knew the drawings of *immeubles-villas* created from 1922 and published by Le Corbusier in *Vers une architecture* or in *Urbanisme*, both in 1925, or even in *L'Almanach d'architecture moderne*, dated already 1926. A communication strategy developed by Le Corbusier, that gained its self-narrative with the publication of the chapters consecrated to the *Salon d'automne* of 1922 and to the *Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau* of 1925 and were included in the book *Oeuvre Complète 1910/1929*, in which the same *immeuble-villas* became '*a kind of typological motive that permits to detail a project of radical urbanism and answer more contextual situations*' (Nivet, 2011, p. 126), as in the photomontage where the *Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau* is included as a housing cell in a *immeuble-villas*. In this narrative Le Corbusier never defined the constitutive relation of the *villa* with the *immeuble* as well as the elements with which the *villa* is made, something that renders the suggestion of Viana da Lima even stranger.

The production of visual meaning through the juxtaposition of elements '*is usually associated with Mies van der Rohe's photomontages and occurred only*

after the Dadaists had developed montage as a new visual grammar that radically broke with the idea of homogenous pre-modern spatiality' (Stierli, 2012, pp. 35-36). The Dadaist visual culture and the vanguards' techniques of photomontage and manipulation of the photograph¹ were fundamental for the creation of a new conception of space announced by Mies' work². Indeed, Mies used photomontage as a framework of study as much as a means of representation of an idea of architecture, sharing with the Dadaists a fundamental investigation of the modern metropolis as a symbolic form of a new cultural paradigm, related to an aesthetics of contrasts, and believing profoundly in change through technological progress. He may have been aware of the potential of collage and assemblage techniques for architectural discourse, representation and production.

Those techniques served Mies's intentions to visualize his ideas about form, light and space in a more precise way closer to his conceptual ideas that could be produced by any building, as well as to make those ideas accessible to a wider audience (Stierli, 2012, p. 32). As he began to understand modernity as the age of mass communication means, and, by extension, modern architecture, as a question of representation, his assemblages were explicitly produced with the intension of public diffusion. (Stierli, 2010, p. 67).

If a photographer, through his photographs of a scale model, can give *'the impression that the building is living, removing all traces of its function as a model and carefully blurring the lines between the object and its background'* (Colomina, 2010, p. 132), Mies make it in the photos of the Glass Skyscraper Project and the photomontages of the skyscraper to Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, attempting to create *'a kind of "reality effect"'* (Stierli, 2010, p. 65). Those projects demonstrate *'how Mies employed the technique not to fabricate an*

¹ The photomontage collectively developed by the Berlin Dadaists is a variation of the collage, in which the elements used are photographs and photographic reproductions taken from the press. The appropriation of the mass media provided endless material for the Dadaist critic, and the disjunctive cuttings of the photomontages captured effectively the fissures and the crashes of modernity. The Berlin Dadaists used the photomontage in their radical fight against artistic tradition, replacing painting instruments by scissors and glue, and entitling themselves as *monteurs* (mechanics) instead of artists.

² Mies changed completely the style of his projects, moving from the classic aspect of his traditional formation to an experimental phase, reinventing himself both as architect and as a personality with another cultural paradigm.

illusion of reality, as most architects would do, but to manufacture dramatic images, each version becoming progressively more expressionistic – aided (...) by crayoning to darken photographic details' (Elwall, 2004, p. 110). He produced a series of photomontages with a sketched building over a photograph of the street with electric cables and vehicles. At this point, it is important to mention *'that these images are large, so large that you find yourself in the street when looking at them, drawn into the image. The viewer of the photomontage experiences the space of the street, then arrives at the new building at the end'* (Colomina, 2010, p. 132). Those photomontages associated with an illusionist perspective don't break the consistency of the space in the image. His refusal to use other techniques such as the axonometrics – photomontage and axonometry become popular forms of architectural representation at the same time³ – persisting in the use of linear perspective, is due to his understanding of architecture, first of all, as a visually perceived medium.

Manipulated photographs were *'frequently used to illustrate the impact of a projected building on the existing cityscape or landscape, in particular in those cases where projects were of a monumental scale'* (Stierli, 2012, p. 40) or affected the place both from an historical and an artistic point of view. Photomontage became an instrument in the promotion of grandious, even utopic projects by vanguard and non-vanguard artists.

At the archive of Teófilo Rego we find two sorts of documents. On the one hand, the collages and photomontages made by architects and photographed by Teófilo; on the other hand, we can find collages and photomontages of Teófilo commissioned by architects, and whose depth denotes apparently the collaboration, if not the complicity of the architects, and a free, curious and imaginative spirit of research and deepening of formal and expressive hypothesis proportionated by the commissions.

We can retrieve various works using diverse techniques among the first category of documents. One is the project for the sculptural motives at the Praça D. João

³ Yves-Alain Bois does make clear that axonometry and isometry were taught widely in engineering schools from the end of the 19th century. Thus, the «re-invention» in avant-garde circles around 1920 may need to be seen more as a re-interpretation of an established tool for specific epistemic purposes.

I. The Gabinete A.R.S proposed the design of the first square projected and built from scratch at the time of Estado Novo, in the city of Oporto. This square should be rectangular in form and delimited by two buildings of considerable height – the Edifício Rialto to the North, by Rogério de Azevedo, and the Palácio Atlântico to the South.

The implantation of the statues of D. João I and D. Filipa de Lencastre on elevated plinths in the flanks of the same place should introduce *monumentality* and *sumptuary*. (Abreu, 2006, p. 208). However, the layout of the square funded by private initiative was too liberal, broke with the formal administrative proceedings and collided with the interests at stake. Thus, it was *gently* refused by the city's Council of Aesthetic Committee⁴. The layout of the Praça D. João I without those two statues was then approved, and the final destination of the two plinths was postponed. Such a decision fostered a "greater monumentality" and a solution that would improve the "aesthetic party of the architectural whole"⁵. The process culminated with the competition in an edict of the City Hall of Oporto dated 1954, opened to both the Escola de Belas Artes de Lisboa and the Escola de Belas Artes de Porto⁶, in the same year and month in which the call of the International Competition for the Monument to Infante D. Henrique in Sagres was announced. A national historicist thematic was replaced by a symbolic thematic, through the attribution of the first prize to a solution with two sculptural groups, each presenting a figure near a horse.

Two projects by Architect Fortunato Cabral also belonged to the same category of works. One of the projects referred to the renewal of the dock pavilion at Porto de Leixões commissioned by A.P.D.L. It is a view taken under the platform of the viaduct that gives access to the lift bridge on the side of Leça. The enlargement of the pavilion for the commercial exploration of the docks – this

⁴ Arquivo Geral da Câmara Municipal do Porto, *Actas do Conselho de Estética Urbana* (9/2/1946 a 9/1/1951), 20/2/1950, ff. 78-79.

⁵ *Boletim da Câmara Municipal do Porto*, n.º 730, 8 de Abril de 1950, *Despachos da Presidência*, pp. 621-622.

⁶ *Boletim da Câmara Municipal do Porto*, n.º 954 de 24 de Julho de 1954, p. 556.

pavilion was concluded already by 1957 – is visible in the sketch put on the photograph and dated probably from 1955. The second floor was never built.⁷

The other project refers to a residential block that should be built in Espinho. This project includes a photomontage produced with cuttings of photographic elements and an intercalary sketch. Thus, the whole presents a rude completion. In this aspect, it is in stark contrast with the previous photomontage. Both the works seem destined to later reproduction and diffusion, on the account of their graphic treatment.

Let me also mention the photographs of two photomontages and of an elevation concerning the project to renew both the Architecture and Exhibitions Pavilions of the Escola de Belas Artes do Porto. I was not able to identify the author, the date of this project – it is probably dated from the 1960s – or its intention. What is known it that the Escola de Belas Artes moved to the Palacete Braguinha, at the Av. Rodrigues de Freitas, in 1928. In order to proceed to the restructuration of the building and the construction of the other dependencies, a project was elaborated under the orientation of Architect Manuel Lima Fernandes de Sá, but later refused. In 1949, Architect Carlos Ramos presented the draft project for the construction of pavilions in the gardens of the Palacete, as well as the refurbishment of the latter (Moniz, 2011).

The first of four new pavilions provisionally assigned to the teaching of architecture and drawing, and to serve as library was inaugurated in April 1950. The painting and sculpture pavilion projected by Architect Carlos Ramos was finished in 1951. Both the Architecture and Exhibitions pavilions projected by Architect Manuel Lima Fernandes de Sá also in 1951 were constructed three years later. (Fernandes, 2007, p. 125).

⁷ This information was given by Architect Dúlio Silveira, who entered APDL in 1957.

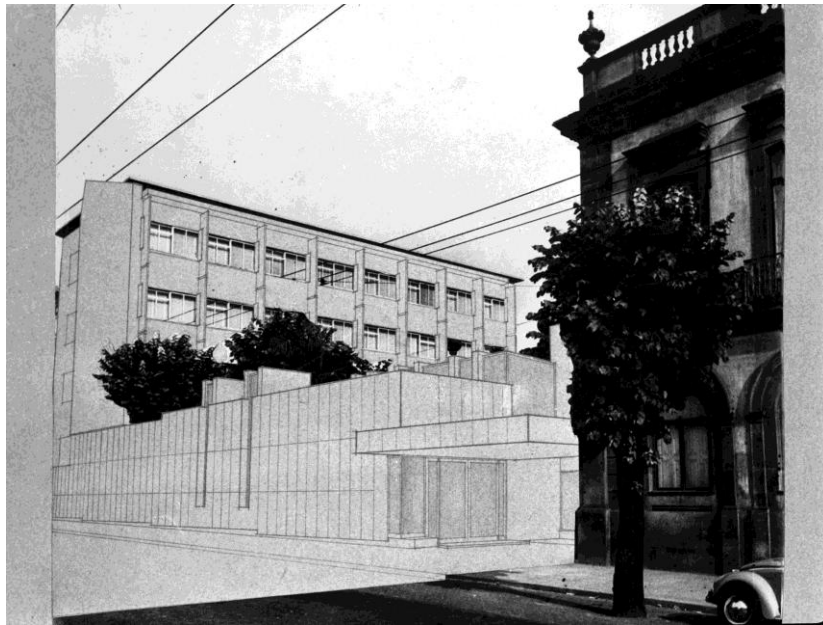


Figure 1. Remodelling of Architecture Pavilion, the wall and the outside entrance to the grounds of ESBAP, c. 1960. Photographic reproduction of a photomontage. Archive Teófilo Rego, Casa da Imagem - Fundação Manuel Leão

The difference between the building constructed in 1954 and the photomontages lies in the vertical elements adorsed to the main and side façades as windows' separators, the *addiction* of a new space, and in the reformulated wall and entrance. The basic project for the façade and the windows are the same. Apparently, this project individualizes both the architecture and the exhibitions pavilions from the rest of the school, creating a new and independent entrance from the main building, and distributing for the different spaces of the school complex. In contrast to the two projects mentioned above, in this project, an illusory perspective is completely assumed, in accordance with the photographed reality.

Finally, we find the photomontage of an urbanization designed by the architect Luis Leitão near the bridge of Arrábida, probably from the 60s, now one of the poles of the University of Oporto.

We shall take notice of the apparent small scale of all those photomontages reproduced by Teófilo. The photomontages intended to foresee, document or inform either the architects or their clients, without, however, including the observers within their involving space.

The second set of documents encountered at the archive refers to collages and photomontages by Teófilo Rego. Recognizing in Teófilo a special capacity to photograph scale models, we find two photo-collage constituted by the assemblage at scale of a photograph of an uncut scale model to a photograph of the place.⁸



Figure 2. Detached house. Project by Architect Francisco Ferreira. Photograph of a photocollage. Archive Teófilo Rego, Casa da Imagem - Fundação Manuel Leão.

One of them refers to the work of a undated project for a detached house by Architect Francisco Ferreira, where the illumination of the scale model fits perfectly into the ambient light of the photographed territory, and constitutes a unique exemplary of this practice found at the archive, as the other images, *i. e.*, the images of the International Competition for the Monument to the Infante D. Henrique in Sagres, 1954-1957, aren't collages but photomontages, true performances of the scale models staged in the *place* and within their respective environmental surrounding. Those photomontages carried out during the two phases of the competition constitute a moment of great creativity for Teófilo Rego.

⁸ It is the case of the project of architect Madureira for a complex of office buildings and housing in the Campo Alegre street corner with street Gonçalo Sampaio, in Oporto, probably from the 60s and where now stands the building of the Insurance Company Axa, designed by the architects José Pulido Valente, Nicholas Brandão and Ricardo Figueiredo in 1970.

It is here necessary to mention some aspects related to the competition.

The promontory of Sagres has been intimately connected to the figure of the Infante D. Henrique and has played an undeniable role within the ambit of the Portuguese spiritual patrimony, as properly emphasized at the construction of the Estado Novo discourse. The opening of various competitions for the construction of a yet unaccomplished monumental sculptural work during the 20th century is demonstrative of the nationalistic ideological importance attributed to it by the regime.

Article 2 of the decree – law creating the Nacional Commission in charge of the commemorations of the 5th centenary of D. Henrique's death (*Comemorações Henriquinas*) mentioned that those '*commemorations will include the raising of a monument that, in addition to constitute a particular homage to the Infant, shall represent the consecration of the first cycle of Portuguese Discoveries and of the movement that opened the sea to Western civilization*'⁹.

From the four projects worked out by Teófilo Rego, only *MAR NOVO* by João Andresen was admitted to the second phase of the competition¹⁰. Such a fact, the scale of the photographed scale models and the apparent use of the same clay scale model of the promontory of Sagres at the execution of all photographs of the diverse projects in competition makes me infer that the photomontages of the promontory of Sagres may have been still executed in the first phase. None of the scale models was published as such in the catalogue of the competition. Except for a few cases, this catalogue reproduced all scale models cut against a black background - and they weren't used in the projects, as well.

⁹ Decreto-Lei nº 39.713, *Diário do Governo I Série*, n.º 142, 1 de Julho de 1954.

¹⁰ 22 national and 23 international candidates coming from 9 different countries went for the competition at the first phase. Only 45 of the 51 fulfilled the regulation and were thus accepted. The panel formed of 31 personalities representing the various cultural institutions selected initially 9 of those 51 projects. At the meeting of the 30 September 1955, 5 proceeded to the second phase by majority, and their authors were compelled to the presentation of the monument's projects on the scale 1: 100. The project *MAR NOVO* by João Andresen won the competition with fourteen favorable votes. Architect Raul Lino (DGEMN), one of the panel's members, didn't vote at the last meeting because he considered that none of the projects answered to the proposed subject. Later, a mere notice by the Executive Commission of the V Centenary of the death of the Infante D. Henrique, published in the newspapers of the 12th December 1956, informed about a resolution taken by Salazar and dated the 6th December that communicated the decision taken by the Ministers Council forbidding the construction of the monument in Sagres.

The scenery staged by Teófilo was a central element of the work in the three photomontages concerning the Project *CRUZ* by Architect Nadir Afonso. To demonstrate this aspect, the totality of the photographic proofs are exemplary of the working methodology of Teófilo, albeit the fact that we are aware that the final images were framed and manually retouched afterwards.

At first, an image of the sea was associated with the photograph of the scale model. An image of the cloudy sky was later associated with this image compounded with a false visual horizon. The final image was then printed and retouched.

In the three extant negatives, Teófilo explored different points of aerial view (South, North and Southeast), and eventually opted to develop and retouch the point of view that characterised better the monument's architecture and its insertion into the promontory.

There was precedents in the previous Competition for the The Monument to Infant D. Henrique in Sagres, in 1933-1935. The photomontages of *MAR*, a project by the architects Pardal Monteiro and Leopoldo de Almeida, and the *PADRÃO DAS CINCO QUINAS*, by Architect José Cortez. In the first case, a cut out photograph of the scale model was superposed to an aerial view of the Promontory of Sagres. The same was done in the competition of 1954-1957 with the scale model of the project *CARAVELA* by Architect Veloso Reis Camelo relative to its implantation. In the second case, the aerial view of the scale model of the promontory itself with the monument was pasted to a view illustrating the sea and the sky. As we can observe, the Teófilo's technical and expressive approach was completely diverse.

In one of the two photomontages of the project *FÉ* by the the architects Manuel da Silva Passos Júnior and Rafael de Oliveira, Teófilo staged a different point of view emphasizing the architectural elements, their verticality and the straightforwardness of the composition. The connection of all photographic elements has apparently as reference one image of the simulacrum that was enclosed with the report by the Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil (National Laboratory for Civil Engineering) about the visibility of a monument

measuring 100 m high above sea level. He practically repeated the composition made for the project *ROTA* by Architect Eduardo Raul da Silva Martins in the other photomontage, where he superimposed an aerial image of Sagres similar to the previous collage of 1933 with a scale model of the monument.

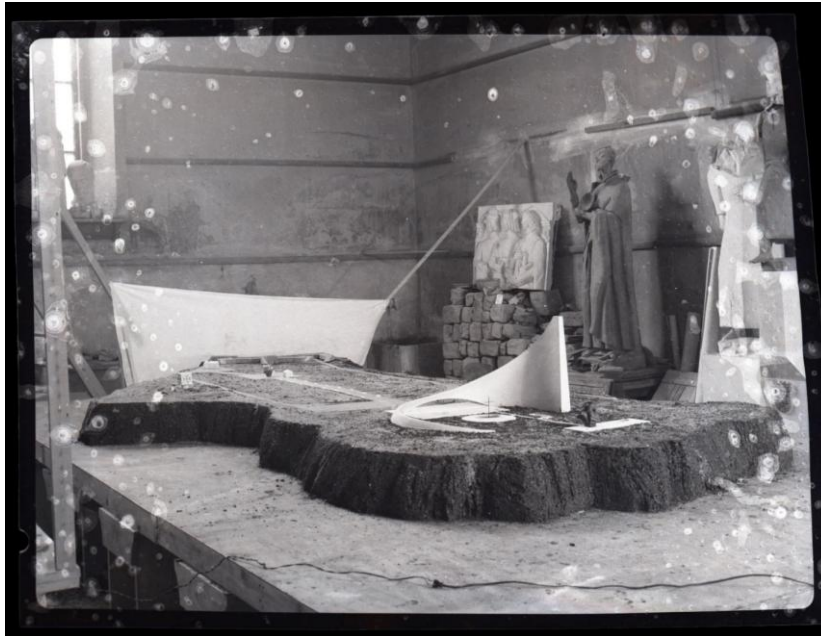


Figure 3. Photography of *MAR NOVO* model, project by João Andresen, 1955. Archive Teófilo Rego, Casa da Imagem - Fundação Manuel Leão

Photography played an important role in the project *MAR NOVO* by Architect João Andresen, both in the book of the descriptive memory that accompanied the second phase of the competition, as during the project's process.

Besides a close and lengthy professional relation established between the architect and Teófilo Rego (Pinto, 2012), this work was marked by an enormous complicity and the number of images and expressive approaches strictly necessary for the accomplishment of the work was largely exceeded. An overflow of imagination is clearly present in this work that became for Teófilo a motive or necessity of a great creativity, as if it would be imperatively demanded by the place and the project. We may affirm that '*any representation of a place is a representation of the photographer's perspective – his (...) individual relation to a place or site. A representation must address this subjective aspect, as well as the limitations of the medium of photography itself*' (Emerling, 2012, p. 50).

And Teófilo came even closer to a fantastic realism. His work shows the contamination by the place and the new plasticity of the project for a modern monument, and his investment on the representation of the atmosphere, in dramatization, in symbolic. In contrast to the photomontages that he made of the project by Nadir Afonso, those photomontages don't clarify the implantation in the terrain.

As in the Project *FÉ*, one of those photomontages may have been influenced by another image of the simulacrum enclosed with the report of the Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil; this time about the visibility of a monument measuring 100m high above the navigation line (distance of 3 nautical miles).



Figure 4. *MAR NOVO* photomontage, project by João Andresen, 1955. Archive Teófilo Rego, Casa da Imagem - Fundação Manuel Leão

We already knew that Teófilo Rego manipulated the sky in his photographs, using it as a dramatization element¹¹. In the photomontages he made for the project *MAR NOVO*, he repeated the photographs he had made of skys, using them in the production of photomontages, where he created an image of a

¹¹ This is illustrated, among others, by the photographs of the buildings projected by Architect Rogério de Azevedo and done by Teófilo Rego for the exhibition *Marques da Silva Exposição conjunta das principais obras do Mestre e de alguns dos seus discípulos. Homenagem promovida pela Escola Superior de Belas do Porto com a colaboração da Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes e do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos*. Porto: Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto, Dezembro de 1953.

natural environment, as in the photographs of the scale model both cut out against a background and serving as background, as well.

With the deliberate intention that the monument would be the expression of a new epoch, João Andresen conceived it as *'a form, claiming deliberately that the monument would be an expression of a new epoch. It is a circular and rising gesture that was born in the Portuguese earth of Sagres and disappeared in heaven. This form would have the value of a plastic synthesis of the Discoveries'*¹². For him, *'our epoch is a new epoch, that enforced itself inevitably due to a new concept of the monumental situated under the sign of the Form, thanks to the new conquests in the domains of the technique, the art and the science'*¹³. Andresen was of the opinion that the project formed a coherent whole and fulfilled clearly a monumental intention.

However, we know that

one characteristic of the modern movement was a certain contempt for the involvement of local architecture, and that come up as a concern dyed with a romantic longing for past times.

The plastically remarkable solution presented by Andresen expressed exactly the idea above.

The work he developed (...) didn't interpret the meaning of the place, and, indeed, nor could it do that.

To understand Sagres was to understand the myth, the sacred, and this lied beyond the ambit of the modern language.

And he couldn't do that, because this was really a precise point of the modernist affirmation. (Almeida, 2002, p. 132)

João Andresen has probably intuited this reality in her plasticity translation into the realized images, as none of his photomontages with the promontory were

¹² Mar Novo, *Concurso de Projectos para o Monumento ao Infante D. Henrique, 2ª Fase, Memória Descritiva e Justificativa*, s/d, Porto.

¹³ Mar Novo, *Concurso de Projectos para o Monumento ao Infante D. Henrique, 2ª Fase, Memória Descritiva e Justificativa*, s/d, Porto.

used in the illustration of the project or in the book of the descriptive memory during the first and second phases of the competition. The photomontages isolating the scale model of the territory and showing its implantation on a neutral basis, with a cloudy sky as background, were included in panels of the process as elevations on the scale of 1: 200. Two negatives of those images can be found at the Archive of Teófilo Rego. By contrast, the two collages made by Andresen and photographed by Teófilo, on two of the underground spaces of the intervention, so that none of the buildings entered *'in flagrant conflict with monument that shall exist isolated below the panorama of Sagres, in permanent partnership with the Sea and the Wind'*¹⁴, appear in the memory book.

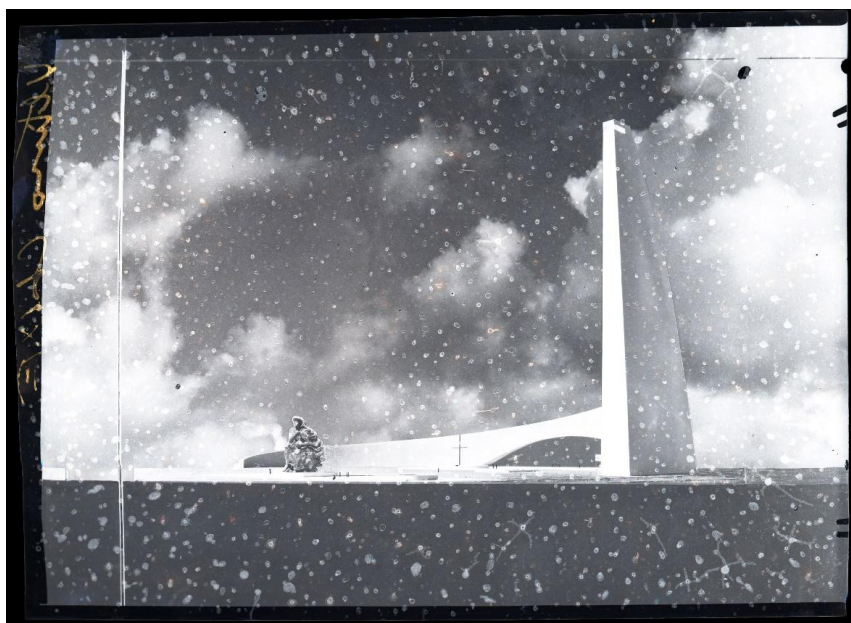


Figure 5. *MAR NOVO* photomontage, second phase of the project by João Andresen, 1955. Archive Teófilo Rego, Casa da Imagem - Fundação Manuel Leão

In contrast to the collage of the photo of one scale model of the detached house above mentioned, all photomontages by Teófilo Rego are constructed images, and constitute the result of a rational method, but are also emotional. As their glance moves closer to the scale models, the visual field closes, the images become more sculptural and abstract, as well as forms modeled by light. They move away from a possible illusory effect of reality. Whereas, in the

¹⁴ *Mar Novo, Concurso de Projectos para o Monumento ao Infante D. Henrique, 2ª Fase, Memória Descritiva e Justificativa, s/d, Porto.*

compositions about the territory and the monument, Teófilo searches, more than realism, a certain expressive naturalism somehow demanded and reinforced by the text of the descriptive memory of *MAR NOVO* and that is still an heritage of his formation¹⁵, in the photos of the great plans, it is the geometric abstraction of the architectural form that prevails, taking Teófilo's work to a new research field.

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¹⁵ Teófilo Rego initiated his career with Marques de Abreu (1879-1958), editor, engraver and specialized photographer of architecture. The work by Marques Abreu represents one last manifestation of naturalist/pictorialist photography in Portugal.

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