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R3iAP
Rede de Informação Investigação
e Intervenção em Arte Pública

R3iAP News # 6 *Memory & Memorials* July 2026

THE NETWORK FOR INFORMATION, RESEARCH AND INTERVENTION ON PUBLIC ART (R3iAP)
studies and provides services on all aspects related to the research, promotion, conservation, preservation and restoration of public art collections in Portugal, Brazil and the and communities of Portuguese descent, provided he is mandated to do so by academic and/or cultural and/or cultural institutions of the respective countries and communities



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1.EDITORIAL

This edition of R3iAP News explores one of the fundamental themes of public art throughout history. On the one hand, the dimension of Memory, as the seed of culture and, consequently, the foundation of civilisations. On the other, the presence of Memorials, as instances of collective recognition and, consequently, milestones in the journey of peoples.

First and foremost, memory is a collective construct. Maurice Halbwachs, the French sociologist, demonstrated that memory is socially constructed. Through traditions, narratives, family and school, a community remembers together, thereby creating a sense of 'us'. Memory circulates through the ages, and its social transmission is fundamental in that it guarantees historical continuity and ensures the consolidation of values, helping to shape collective identity.

Due to its socio-cultural nature, Memory is an eminently subjective and contingent construct. We remember a few things and forget others. So, as Pierre Nora has shown, Memory is distinct from History. History is a specialised knowledge. It is an intellectual reconstruction of what no longer exists. It is a critical and analytical examination, based on methods and resulting from verification. It is a detached endeavour, separate from lived experience. Memory, on the other hand, constitutes a living and evolving record, in constant revision and transformation, subject to forgetting and reconstruction. Memory is affective, subjective and selective, shaped by emotion and identification. Memory takes root in the concrete world, through places, gestures, images and rituals.

Memorials, therefore, constitute this rooting of memory. Since Pierre Nora, we have referred to their presence in public art as 'Places of Memory'. In public art, Places of Memory include monuments, statues, busts, portraits and, of course, memorials. It was Arthur Danto who, on the occasion of the dedication of the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* in Washington, designed by Maya Lin, began his article in *The Nation* magazine by writing: '*We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and we build memorials so that we shall never forget*' (Danto, 1985, p. 152). Since then, this distinction has become fundamental to public art. Monuments celebrate victories, achievements and feats. Memorials mourn defeats, tragedies and horrors.

Materialised in this way, memory takes on a form which, like *Janus*, has two faces. One face is bright and proud, proclaiming glory. The other is sombre and ashamed, denouncing infamy. Nevertheless, a curious dialectic resides within this dichotomy. If monuments express, on the one hand, the positivity of victories and feats, on the other they presuppose the negativity of the violence used to impose them, that is, arrogance. Whilst memorials, on the one hand, highlight the negativity of defeat and disgrace, on the other they embody the positive value of ensuring that such misfortunes and disgrace should not be repeated.

In his article in *The Nation*, Danto highlighted the striking contrast between the sunken, sombre and understated setting of the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* and the prominent, immaculate and monumental obelisk of *the George Washington Monument*.

Between 1886 and 1967, *The Statue of Liberty*, located in New York, USA, was the tallest statue in the world. In 1967, it was surpassed by the statue *The Motherland Calls*, erected in Volgograd, USSR. Behind the Enlightenment-era freedom celebrated through the American Declaration of Independence lay the silenced history of the colonisation of Native American territories and the exploitation of slave labour, practised during the first hundred years of the American nation. Behind the Soviet patriotism in the resistance to the Nazi invasion lay the partition of Poland by Nazi Germany and the USSR, and the anti-Semitism practised by both Nazis and Soviets.

The fixation of memory in monuments and memorials, therefore, constitutes a historical document of great significance. Because memory is condensed within them, Places of Memory offer to the historian 'Memory captured by History' (Nora, 1984, p. xxv). For, as Nora explains, nowadays '*it is not the Nation that is celebrated, but its celebrations that are studied*' (Nora, 1984, p. xxv).

It is this circumstance that leads James E. Young to speak of the 'texture of memory'. For Young, it is as though memory were neither smooth nor continuous. Like a texture, it has rough patches, interruptions and opaque areas. In the memorials that Young studies, this 'texture' manifests itself as fragmentation, absence or instability.

The study of memorials allows us to grasp the dialectic that eludes the factual, objective and scientific analysis of History.

A sign of the times is, therefore, the fact that more and more memorials are being built. It is therefore important for History to reveal the positivity that may lie hidden behind the materialisation of such harsh negativity.

José Guilherme Abreu

ISSN 3051-8229

2.NEWS

Section dedicated to display local, national and international initiatives related to public art and the like



Miguel Conceição, *Monument to Portuguese Air Force*, 2026, corten steel on granite, Praça Marques Júnior, Viana do Castelo

Monument to Portuguese Air Force

A recent article published in the newspaper "O Minho" reports that, on 1 July, the Air Force unveiled a monument in Viana do Castelo as part of the celebrations marking the 74th anniversary of the Portuguese Air Force. Designed by architect Miguel Conceição, the monument, as the article states, represents "the simplicity of a paper aeroplane, reminding us that all great achievements begin with a dream".

A dream? Great achievements? Does the Air Force now fly in the heart of Viana? A tribute to gold filigree craftsmanship, as the news report puts it? Are these slogans nothing more than euphemisms warning us of the dark times ahead?

On the public works of Ângelo de Sousa

The University of Porto has named Ângelo de Sousa its 2026 Eminent Figure and is promoting a public programme focusing on the presence of Ângelo de Sousa's work in the city, including tours, round-table discussions and a critical re-evaluation of existing urban artworks. See here: University of Porto – Casa Comum.

UNDERDOGS Gallery

The UNDERDOGS Gallery has developed an extensive public art programme. Property owners are invited to make the walls of their buildings available for murals. See here: https://www.under-dogs.net/pages/public-art?sort=latest

3.R3iAP INITIATIVES

Section dedicated to R3IAP initiative or participation projects

This coming September, R3iAP will take part in the Regional Workshop for MA and PhD students in Kaunas, Lithuania, from 28 September to 2 October 2026, under the theme: '*Cultural Responses to War: Shaping Heritage, Building Resilience*'. According to the programme, the workshop aims to discuss a practical solution to the following question: "How can a museum interpret and present the dissonant heritage of occupations, collaboration, resistance, and trauma in ways that foster dialogue rather than social division?"

Organisers: Vytautas Magnus University, the Estonian Academy of Art and the Portuguese Catholic University. Further information: https://transform4europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/VDU_T4EU_Programme_2026-09-28.pdf

ISSN 3051-8229

4.ANNOUNCEMENTS

Section dedicated to communicating knowledge transfer initiatives organised by R3IAP and other related bodies

A number of public art projects, biennials and commissioned art programmes are already in the pipeline, set to launch in 2027 – some of them highly ambitious and with a strong urban, community and architectural focus. In Portugal:

Évora 2027 – European Capital of Culture

The programme envisages interventions in:

- streets, squares and avenues,
- historical heritage,
- the natural landscapes of the Alentejo,
- hybrid spaces combining contemporary art and the rural landscape.

There are already active open calls for projects to be presented in 2027 in urban and natural spaces across the region.

EDP Foundation — Public Art Programme

The foundation continues to develop participatory commissions for public spaces, particularly in neighbourhoods, on building façades, in urban infrastructure and in community areas. The current model focuses on:

- co-creation with residents,
- permanent interventions,
- art linked to urban and energy regeneration.

Public art projects and programmes in Spain:

Barcelona — Public Art Promotion Plan 2026–2027

The city has launched one of the most ambitious public art programmes in Spain for 2027. It includes:

- new monuments and urban sculptures,
- commissions for emerging and established artists,
- the integration of art into neighbourhoods and transport hubs,
- and the expansion of the 'open-air museum' concept.

Among the projects already announced:

- a monument to Ildefons Cerdà,
- sculptures dedicated to Freddie Mercury and Montserrat Caballé,
- new works in the 22@ district and at Les Glòries.
- The announced budget is around €1.5 million for 2026–27

European public art projects and programmes:

20th Venice Architecture Biennale

> The 2027 Venice Architecture Biennale is already in preparation and is expected to feature a strong presence of urban installations and site-specific works scattered throughout Venice. The curators will be Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu. The theme focuses on coexistence, sustainability and the relationship between architecture and material reality.

Star of Caledonia

> A large monumental sculpture near Gretna Green, on the Scotland-England border. Cecil Balmond's project is due to open in 2027

5.PUBLICATIONS

Section dedicated to notifying about publications (books, articles, reviews, etc.) on public art

The PERMORIA project (*Performativity of the Monument: Social Perception and Interventions in Public Art in Spain and Portugal since 1950*) is preparing a book that analyses public art through the controversies, debates and interventions it generates within the public sphere. The volume stems from a seminar held on 2 and 3 October 2025 in Santiago de Compostela and Caldas de Reis (Galicia, Spain) and is being edited by Miguel Anxo Rodríguez and Xosé Ramón Cisneros of the University of Santiago de Compostela.

ISSN 3051-8229

The seminar aimed to discuss the social dimension of public art, directly addressing its most problematic aspects and recognising that controversy is an essential part of the very concept of public art. It explored the role of monuments and the ways in which critical interventions can shape (or reconfigure) urban space. Monuments, sculptures and artistic actions have the capacity to influence spaces of social interaction and are sometimes embraced by communities as active elements of social life. At other times, they become the source of conflict and reinterpretation.

The book is imbued with complex debates that demonstrate the importance of specific contexts in the interpretation of monuments and other forms of public art. The issues raised during the seminar reappear throughout most of the eleven contributions included in the volume, which will be published by Comares and which we hope to present in September 2026. The first debate concerns the capacity of public art to generate social effects and reactions. Within the field of visual studies, authors such as W. J. T. Mitchell refer to a power that escapes artists, an innate capacity of images, a life that transcends the intentions of their creators or commissioners. This performativity of the image points to a domain belonging to psychology and, one might almost say, to magic. By contrast, authors closer to Marxist positions reject this interpretation of the life of images and propose instead focusing on the interests and political agendas of commissioners and communities. From this perspective, public art is embedded in existing struggles and is never innocent: it is a tool employed in battles over the control of public space. This interpretation understands the capacities of public art in terms of "political agency" rather than as an intrinsic performativity of images.

The second debate takes us to a practical level, that of heritage management, and confronts us directly with the question: what should be done with public art that causes offence, provoking reactions of rejection because it represents values incompatible with democracy or human rights? The acts of iconoclasm that have become so frequent in recent years reflect popular responses by different groups (feminists, anti-racist activists, and others) who embrace the radicalisation of democracy described by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), acting within a public space that also belongs to them.

The book is divided into three sections. The first presents texts that address the social dimension of public art from a theoretical perspective. Sergio Meijide and Laura Luque reveal the hidden tensions underlying works that appear neutral, well-intentioned and merely decorative. Núria Ricart and Isidro López Aparicio—both artists and university lecturers—write from their own experience about the processes involved in creating public art with community participation. On the one hand, artists find themselves in a difficult position, relinquishing complete control over the process and accepting the responsibility of working for communities; on the other hand, they argue that this dialogical relationship broadens and enriches the meaning of new works.

The second section reflects on art as imposition, as an exercise of power over public space, which, precisely because of this lack of dialogue, justifies the emergence of iconoclasm. Daniel Palacios González analyses the phenomenon of “roundabout art” as an exercise of control over public space and traffic circulation. José María Durán reflects on the power of images and the network of social relations they both reflect and stimulate, a field of struggles in which iconoclasm becomes a logical consequence. Mariana Pinto dos Santos problematises the notion of heritage—drawing on Aloïs Riegl—and its use by those who hold the power to control narratives about the past. In her case, she connects this theoretical reflection with the difficult management of the heritage of Estado Novo monuments following Salazar’s dictatorship.

Finally, the third section explores “anti-monumental practices”, presenting examples of critical interventions. Áurea Martín Morris and Camila Opazo recount the process that led to the removal of the statue of Antonio López in Barcelona, in the context of the anti-racist struggles that emerged following the death, in a detention centre, of an immigrant from Guinea-Conakry. The statue of this prominent businessman and patron, whose history was linked to slavery, was removed after an intense social movement; however, the authors ask whether social tensions truly dissipate once the monument has been removed.

Abraham Cea Núñez and María Gil Martínez examine anti-monumental practices and interventions in public space: the Situationists’ experiments in Paris, in the former case, and the activism and guerrilla graphic tactics associated with environmental movements in Galicia, in the latter. Finally, Gabriela Vaz-Pinheiro, a collaborator within the R3iAP network, reflects on the centrality of the image in cultural representations, understanding maps and monuments as instruments of power. These considerations lead her to investigate the work of two contemporary artists who propose critical perspectives on such devices: Kiluanji Kia Henda, through exercises in the “symbolic reconversion” of colonial monuments, and Wolfgang Wirth, who questions the objectivity and opacity of maps, detached as they are from the lived experiences of territories.

Miguel Anxo Rodríguez
Coordinator of the PERMORIA Project

R3iAP
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e Intervenção em Arte Pública

ISSN 3051-8229

R3iAP News # 6 Memory & Memorials July 2026

6.POLEMICS AND DEBATES (OPINION PIECES)

Section dedicated to the communication of critical contributions to a wider reflection on public art

The Regrettable Case of the Monument to the Portuguese Graphic Artist



Jorge P. Martins (arch.), *Monument to the Portuguese Graphic Artist*, 1994, Praça da Corujeira, Campanhã, Porto

Unveiled on January 30, 1994, in Praça da Corujeira, on the initiative of the Campanhã Parish Council in Porto, the Monument to the Portuguese Graphic Artist is a notable work of public art. It is notable for several reasons. In fact, in 1994, it was the only work of contemporary sculpture located in the eastern part of the city, and it constituted one of the most advanced pieces of public art in Porto, as I wrote in my master's thesis in 1999:

The Monument to the Portuguese Graphict Artist, which stands besides the spacious Praça da Corujeira, represents an odd piece of Porto's public sculpture, because for the first and only time, the work is conceived and organized from an assemblage of materials that constitute an integral part of that with which the work is thematically and programmatically related, functioning cumulatively as both subject and object of its intentional content. (Abreu, 2012, p. 341)

As early as 1996, a JN newspaper article reported in its headline that "*Barcelona selects project by architect from Porto: Jorge Patrício was the only Portuguese chosen for the UIA exhibition*" (JN, 09/01/1996). This serves to illustrate the impact that the urban regeneration projects, spearheaded by Orial Bohigas and centered on the enhancement of public space, had on the author, particularly the idea of "monumentalizing the periphery," within which this work falls, as I noted in the aforementioned thesis:

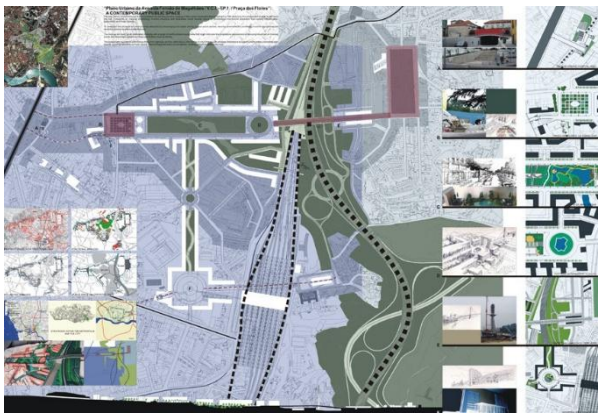
It is therefore in terms of urban regeneration that the intent behind this project must be considered, with the redevelopment of Praça da Corujeira constituting one of the "positive metastases" that drives the outlined Plan, within the framework of the objectives set forth by the Campanhã Valley Development Foundation, by the same architect who designed this project. In fact, this entire area bears many similarities to the intervention site in Sant Adrià de Besós, located on the outskirts of Barcelona – curiously also to the east of the city – next to a polluted river and crisscrossed by viaducts and major roadways (Abreu, 2012, p. 342).

Just as happened here, following the construction of the VCI, the cleanup of the Rio Tinto, and the construction of the city's Parque Oriental.

It is worth noting that Jorge Patrício Martins was engaged with APOR (Association for Modernization of Porto) e da FDVC (Foundation for Development of Vale de Campanhã), on development plans for the Campanhã Valley. He was

ISSN 3051-8229

the author of the 1994-2006 *Detailed Plan for Campanhã and Bonfim*, which was designed to integrate the established urban fabric of central Porto with the Pinheiro Valley, creating connecting routes and recreational spaces in the eastern part of the city. Alongside this, he was also the author of the *Plan for Freixo Park*, also from 1994, which would lead to the creation of *Parque Oriental*, designed by Sidónio Pardal.



Jorge P Martins, *Detailed Plan for Campanhã and Bonfim*, 1994, APOR

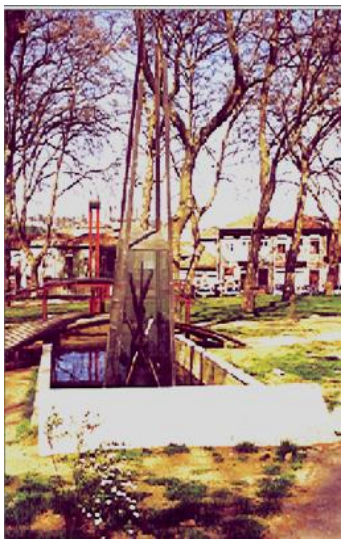


Jorge P Martins, *Plan for Parque do Freixo*, 1994, APOR

It is therefore within a broader perspective that the erection of the Monument to the Portuguese Graphic Artist should be understood, so as to appreciate that it was conceived as a means of revitalising one of the areas of the city's urban fabric that was, at the time, among the most dilapidated, if not actually run-down. Now that the results of the plans initially drawn up are beginning to regenerate that very urban fabric, it is somewhat ironic that what was one of the first symbolic focal points of that very regeneration is now in a deplorable state of disrepair

The monument consists of a truncated pyramid-shaped acrylic glass bell jar, placed over a water tank containing an assemblage of parts and materials from printing presses. A wooden and iron bridge allows visitors to cross the tank and view some examples of old typographic proofs, displayed at mid-height in glass cases, emphasizing the installation's museum-like character.

Several images taken at different times, allows us to trace the evolution of its presence in Praça da Corujeira.



Monument in 1998



Monument c. 2010



Monument in 2026

The sequence of images reveals the extent to which the monument has fallen into disrepair. In 1998, the water tank surrounding the central core was still present. In 2010, the assembly of materials and printing machine parts was still visible. In the 2026 image, the monument is almost impossible to make out, except for the part where the acrylic glass bell is broken, thus revealing its interior without filters.

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R3iAP News # 6 Memory & Memorials July 2026


Monument's present state


Monument's present state


Monument's present state

Although it was an initiative of the Campanhã Parish Council, as stated on the plaque affixed to the monument- despite its location near the Council's headquarters – it is nonetheless strange that the monument remains in such a deplorable state of disrepair.

We previously reported on the controversial relocation of the Monument to the Entrepreneur from the intersection of Av. da Boavista and Av. do Marechal Gomes da Costa to the 25 de Abril Avenue Roundabout – not far, therefore, from Praça da Corujeira – replacing the project for the Monument to the 25 de Abril, which had been approved through a public competition organized by the Porto City Council.

Monumentalizing the periphery remains, without a doubt, a best practice. Through this, Oriol Bohigas sought to introduce, as he put it, "positive metastases" into an impoverished and degraded urban fabric, positioning the installation of modern monuments and contemporary public sculpture within a practice intended to be exemplary.

In this case, the presence of a monument in its current state of disrepair, rather than a "positive metastasis," constitutes a true cancerous metastasis that threatens, with a slow death, what was intended to be an exemplary urban regeneration project.

Moreover, it is not solely as a factor in urban regeneration that this work asserts itself and stands out. In fact, by seeking to honor the printing worker and his work, the monument serves as a place of memory for an essentially mechanical profession, as alluded to in the work itself through the assembly of parts from the printing presses of mechanical typographies. With the computerization of publishing and, more recently, the introduction of AI, this mode of production suddenly became obsolete, as did its results.

All of this should contribute to keeping the monument in good condition. The Portuguese printing worker and his work are today a distant and forgotten reality. For decades, however, it was thanks to them that news circulated and informed citizens, that publishers printed books, catalogs, and brochures, and that companies printed their forms and invoices.

It would be nice if the Monument to the Portuguese Graphic Artist could benefit from the same level of maintenance. After all, having a monument in Campanhã that can be twinned with another in Barcelona by Antoni Tapiès is nothing less than a commendable reference for a forgotten part of the city's eastern district, which is already undervalued for that very reason.

This circumstance makes the monument a unique kind of memorial, which is why its inclusion in this edition of R3iAP News is warranted. Moreover, the fact that this memorial intent is embedded in the work is evident from the presence of the typographic proofs displayed near the bridge and on the north side of the enclosure surrounding the bell tower, in the manner of a mini-museum exhibition, transforming it into a memorial.

But that's not all. Beyond its memorial aspect, the Monument to the Portuguese Graphic Artist is also a work of artistic merit that echoes Antoni Tàpies' sculpture "Homenatge a Picasso", installed in 1983 on *Passeig Picasso*, in Barcelona, next to the *Mercat del Born*.

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R3iAP News # 6 Memory & Memorials July 2026



Antoni Tapiès, 1983, *Monument Homenatge a Picasso*, Passeig Picasso, Barcelona

As here, we are faced with a glass bell (in this case, laminated) surrounded and bathed in water, inside which there is an assemblage of very diverse materials and objects – or parts of objects – whose state of preservation is minimally maintained.

It would be nice if the Monument to the Portuguese Graphic Artist could benefit from the same level of maintenance. After all, having a monument in Campanhã that can be twinned with another in Barcelona by Antoni Tapiès is nothing less than a commendable reference for a forgotten part of the city's eastern district, which is already undervalued for that very reason.

José Guilherme Abreu

7.STORIES AND MEMORIES OF PUBLIC ART

Section dedicated to a work that arouses a social, political or spiritual reaction of rejection or appreciation

Frontier of Peace – Memorial to the Refugees and to Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes

> "It was truly my aim to 'save all those people', whose distress was indescribable."
> Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1940

During the Second World War, we know that many stories were lost. Many of these disappeared amidst rubble, persecution and executions by firing squad. Among the many lives touched by this period (some of which we shall never know), there are still those we can remember because they survived. Perhaps the stories that had the greatest impact on the world were precisely those passed down from generation to generation, published in books, recounted in interviews and narrated time and again at countless gatherings: the testimonies.

The testimonies of survivors allow us to understand their reality and transport us into their experience: through the memorial words of each account, we quickly find ourselves walking the same streets they describe, witnessing the scenes portrayed, and sharing in the anxieties and fears they endured. Among the many narratives and experiences that we have uncovered and come to know are those that place Portugal at the centre of this historical moment and of the flight of thousands of people.

As life in Germany became increasingly unbearable, many fled first from the Nazi environment, from discrimination and prejudice, and later from the war itself. Numerous intellectuals, opponents of the Nazi regime and communists escaped Germany, initially settling in Belgium and France. When Germany occupied Czechoslovakia in 1938, annexed Austria, and invaded Poland in 1939, war was declared. With the Second World War already under way and almost all of Europe occupied, a mass exodus of civilians began as people attempted to flee their countries and escape persecution.

R3iAP
Rede de Informação Investigação
e Intervenção em Arte Pública

ISSN 3051-8229

Following the fall of Paris, with Nazi swastika flags fluttering through the city's streets and over its monuments, thousands of people, in their utter desperation, attempted to flee France and headed south. Leaving their homes and larger belongings behind, those fleeing tried at all costs to leave France (Fig. 1). However, they needed to find someone who could provide them with transit visas and, ultimately, save their lives.

As their aim was to leave France as quickly as possible – a difficult task given the chaotic state of the rail transport systems – many headed for Bordeaux with the primary aim of crossing Spain (devastated by the recent Civil War) to reach Portugal – one of the last free ports in Southern Europe.



Fig. 1- Charles Philippe. *Bordeaux in June 1940*, etching

It was against this dramatic backdrop that Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux, decided to intervene. Aware of the state of Europe, the Nazis' ambitions and the fear felt by the refugees, Sousa Mendes decided to issue visas indiscriminately to all those who asked him for help.

Oliveira Salazar had issued a directive prohibiting consular officials from issuing visas to refugees fleeing Nazism, as well as to those unable to return to their country of origin. However, defying orders from his own country, Sousa Mendes would save thousands of refugees by enabling their escape to Portugal, towards the ocean and the much-desired peace and freedom. The visas he issued were granted most frequently between 12 and 23 June 1940. As the Germans began to approach Bordeaux, the refugees fled further south, and it was in Bayonne that Sousa Mendes continued to try to save as many people as possible, with visas also being issued in Hendaye and Toulouse by other Portuguese consuls under his command (Fig. 2).

However, his activities were soon noticed and a warning was sent to Lisbon by the Baiona consulate, accompanied by a complaint from the Foreign Office (British Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the Spanish authorities regarding the numerous queues of refugees. Shortly afterwards, the Portuguese ambassador, Pedro Teotónio Pereira, travelled to Baiona to meet Sousa Mendes and order him to return to Lisbon immediately.

Fleeing the war and the genocide that was beginning to take hold, those whose visas had not been revoked set off on trains that took them in three specific directions: north through Spain to Portugal via Valença; south via Barcelona and Madrid to Badajoz; and through the centre from San Sebastián to Vilar Formoso. Although the exodus of refugees crossed northern and southern Portugal (via Valença and Badajoz), the largest influx was recorded at Vilar Formoso. For these refugees, crossing Spain, witnessing the aftermath of the Civil War, and finally arriving in Portugal, where they found a neutral country untouched by the war, proved to be a complete surprise to many. Benefiting from a new railway line and a restoration that revitalised the railway station (Fig. 3) – decorated with blue, typically Portuguese tile panels – Vilar Formoso became the gateway to a new world.



Fig. 2- *Passports and visas issued by Aristides de Sousa Mendes and by the consulates* of Baiona and Toulouse, 1940



Fig. 3- *Vilar Formoso Station*. Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 1953

ISSN 3051-8229

According to accounts from some refugees, crossing the Portuguese border at Vilar Formoso proved to be an experience that would bring them a long-lost sense of peace. The blue tile panels, the pink of the sardine-selling stalls and the white of the railway station marked, for many, the end of their search for peace.

Portugal was a complete contrast to Spain. The people were warm, friendly and hospitable. They smiled a lot. There was no one who looked sad or gloomy. (Ramalho, 2018, p. 88)

Adapting swiftly to the arrival of the refugees, the generosity of the people of Vilar Formoso soon began to take hold, offering soup and bread to the starving people (Fig. 4). The attitude of the Portuguese people of Vilar Formoso towards those who had little or nothing left a deep impression of gratitude on all who witnessed and experienced this generosity, so different and so far removed from the world that was ravaging Europe. But this way of welcoming refugees was not unique to Vilar Formoso. In various parts of Portugal, refugees were warmly welcomed by the Portuguese people, as in Porto, Coimbra, Figueira da Foz, Caldas da Rainha, Ericeira, Sintra, Estoril and Lisbon.

Although they were generally welcomed on their arrival in Portugal, a large number of refugees were sent by the Portuguese authorities to the country's main seaside and spa resorts to prevent the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, from becoming overwhelmed. With their visas about to expire and fears that the Iberian Peninsula too might fall under Nazi rule, the refugees quickly made their way to various consulates in search of new visas – along with boat tickets – with the North American consulate receiving the most applications. Finally, upon departure, between 10,000 and 35,000 refugees left behind the world they had once known, as well as the war that was ravaging Europe, with an ocean now separating them forever from that reality (Fig. 5)



Fig. 4- Aristides de Sousa Mendes Virtual Museum. *Vilar Formoso's people handing out soup and bread to the refugees*. Vilar Formoso. Portugal, 1940



Fig. 5- Hemeroteca Municipal de Lisboa. *Departure of refugee children for America*. S. Pedro do Estoril, 1941

Aristides de Sousa Mendes's heroic act was, as is well known, strongly condemned by the Portuguese authorities, and disciplinary proceedings were brought against him by the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The consequences of these proceedings led to the end of his diplomatic career and a drastic reduction in his salary, reducing Sousa Mendes and his family to near destitution.

In his disciplinary proceedings and in response to the formal charge brought against him, Sousa Mendes defended himself as follows:

> I sought to fulfil the mission entrusted to me and to uphold our good name and prestige. I was approached, in my capacity as Portugal's representative, by statesmen, ambassadors, ministers, generals and other senior officers, professors, men of letters and academics, renowned artists, journalists, some of whom had rendered services to Portugal, university students, staff from various Red Cross organisations, members of royal houses, princes of the blood, combatants of all ranks and positions, industrialists and merchants, members of the clergy, of both sexes, and women and children in need of protection.
> (…)
> With news of the defeat of the French troops and the rapid advance of the German forces, and with telegraph and telephone communications having even been cut off at one point, I felt it was my strict duty in that exceptionally grave situation to go to Baiona in person. Upon arriving there, and faced with so many thousands of people waiting for the chance to approach the consulate, I proposed to my colleague Faria Machado that the only way to resolve the current difficulties was to grant them the visas they sought. It was indeed my aim to 'save all those people', whose distress was indescribable. (…) But, apart from this deeply moving aspect, which filled me with compassion for so much misfortune, there was another consideration for me that was not to be overlooked: the fate that awaited so many people if they fell into the hands of the enemy. (Sousa Mendes, 1940)

ISSN 3051-8229

Although his words revealed a remarkable and commendable sense of humanity, generosity and compassion towards those most in need of help and protection, Sousa Mendes was ignored and his family fell into disgrace. Not only was his diplomatic status revoked, but his own children were also stigmatised, preventing them from continuing their studies at university and from seeking meaningful employment.

Aristides de Sousa Mendes's actions would be recognised, honoured and celebrated much later.

In 1966, he received his first recognition from Israel as a 'Righteous Among the Nations'. In 1986, the United Nations General Assembly issued a proclamation honouring his heroic deeds. Finally, in the same year, the then President of the Portuguese Republic, Mário Soares, posthumously awarded Sousa Mendes the Order of Liberty, the Grand Cross of the Order of Christ and the Cross of Merit for his role during the Second World War and for saving between 10,000 and 35,000 lives. The family, meanwhile, would also receive an apology from the then President of the Republic for the injustices committed by the Estado Novo.

The historian Yehuda Bauer is said to have described Sousa Mendes's heroic act as "*perhaps the greatest rescue operation carried out by a single individual during the Holocaust*".

> I would rather be with God against man than with man against God. (Sousa Mendes, 1940)

This story places Portugal at the heart of the escape and safeguarding of thousands of people who fled the atrocities of the Second World War, with Aristides de Sousa Mendes being the key figure who made it possible for many of these lives to be saved. An exceptional and remarkable Catholic man who looked not to race, creed or nation, but to what his faith had taught him: love for one's neighbour.

It is precisely within this context that the Vilar Formoso Museum Complex – Border of Peace, Memorial to the Refugees and to Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes (Fig. 6) was established, housed in two pre-existing railway warehouses adjacent to Vilar Formoso railway station. The memorial's various corridors depict the history recounted here: from the aftermath of the First World War and Hitler's rise to power, to the refugees' flight to Portugal and their departure for other continents.



Fig. 6- Museum Complex. Border of Peace – Memorial to Refugees and to Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2021



Fig. 7- Museum Complex. Border of Peace – Memorial to Refugees and to Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes (War Corridor). Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2021

ISSN 3051-8229

The Museum Complex and its memorial were established in 2017 using European funds, as Vilar Formoso served as the main border crossing and gateway into the country during the period when refugees were fleeing.

As a space, the memorial is highly symbolic due to the design of its corridors: the 'war corridor' (Fig. 7) begins with an entrance resembling a cube (seen as a stable shape in mathematics) and ends in a hexagonal form intended to represent the Star of David (which Jews were forced to wear during the war). Furthermore, the design of this corridor stimulates the senses to evoke a feeling of oppression – due to the inherently dark environment and the sounds, photographs, images and videos on display.

The "journey corridor" (Fig. 8), in turn, is constructed entirely in a labyrinthine fashion, as if symbolically representing the difficulties that so many refugees experienced on their journey and upon arrival in Portugal, where they faced various challenges in preparing for their journey across the sea.



Fig. 8- Museum Complex. Fronteira da Paz – Memorial to Refugees and Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes (Viagem Corridor). Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2021

This almost suspended structure draws its inspiration from the shape and dimensions of a train, creating a dynamic, journey-like space where the floor, walls, and ceiling are tilted relative to the horizontal and vertical planes. The intention is for the form and content to convey to the visitor the harsh conditions of this journey (...)

Vilar Formoso — Border of Peace, 2026

Finally, the 'arrival and departure corridors' feature accounts of refugees arriving in Vilar Formoso, various testimonies describing how these refugees felt in Portugal, and other information revealing the individual stories of families. Furthermore, the walls of the "arrival and departure corridors" (Fig. 9) are painted light blue as a reminder of the blue sky of Vilar Formoso that many refugees mention in their testimonies and which, according to them, contrasted with the grey sky of the Spanish Civil War. As for the structures/walls of this corridor, according to Ramalho, they were designed to provide a sense of inclusion for visitors, as if it were an embrace – the embrace that the refugees felt from the Portuguese people when they welcomed them.

Divided into six distinct sections – People Like Us, The Beginning of the Nightmare, The Journey, Vilar Formoso – Border of Peace, Through the Lands of Portugal and The Departure – the information in the museum is presented in various ways: from photographic records of the reality in various countries that fell into Hitler's hands, namely Nazi propaganda, photographs showing the desolation of war, the vandalism of Jewish businesses, the entry of Hitler's troops into Paris; including the routes taken by refugees through Spain to reach Portugal, documentation of the visas issued by Sousa Mendes, articles taken from national and regional newspapers of the time, photographs of refugees in Vilar Formoso, the distribution of bread and soup, their departure, and videos featuring various testimonies from those who lived through this experience.

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Fig. 9- Museum Complex. Fronteira da Paz – Memorial to Refugees and Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes (Arrivals and Departures Hall). Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2021

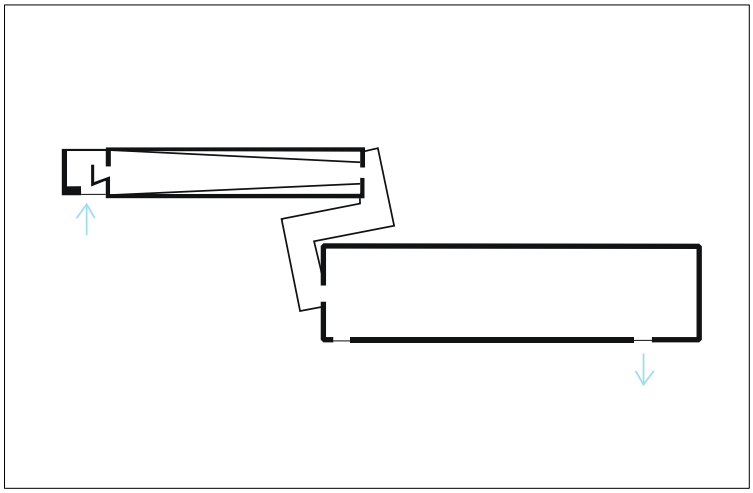

Fig. 10- Map of the Museum Complex. Border of Peace – Memorial to Refugees and Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2022

Due to the circumstances surrounding Vilar Formoso, the Fronteira da Paz Memorial has become a place that not only pays tribute to those who lived through this period, but also serves as a meeting point for various national and international stories. Moreover, this is a memorial that stands as a living testimony to those who passed through there and those who have since passed away, as well as to later generations who are still discovering it today.

Adélia Santos Costa
Visual Artist | Researcher Collaborator, i2ads

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Photo credits
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Fig. 6- Pólo Museológico Fronteira da Paz. *Memorial aos Refugiados e ao Cônsul Aristides de Sousa Mendes*. Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2021
Arquivo de Adélia Santos Costa
Fig. 7- Pólo Museológico Fronteira da Paz. *Memorial aos Refugiados e ao Cônsul Aristides de Sousa Mendes* (corredor da Guerra). Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2021
Arquivo de Adélia Santos Costa
Fig. 8- Pólo Museológico Fronteira da Paz. *Memorial aos Refugiados e ao Cônsul Aristides de Sousa Mendes* (corredor da Viagem). Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2021
Arquivo de Adélia Santos Costa
Fig. 9- Pólo Museológico Fronteira da Paz. *Memorial aos Refugiados e ao Cônsul Aristides de Sousa Mendes* (corredor da Chegada e Partida). Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2021
Arquivo de Adélia Santos Costa
Fig. 10- Planta do Pólo Museológico. *Fronteira da Paz – Memorial aos Refugiados e ao Cônsul Aristides de Sousa Mendes.* Vilar Formoso. Portugal. 2022
Arquivo de Adélia Santos Costa.

8.LETTER FROM BRAZIL

Section dedicated to news or initiatives reported by Brazilian collaborators

A glimpse into time: memory capsules and the cultural journey of time through monuments in Brazil's urban ecosystem



Time capsule in Linhares, ES.

I've been thinking a great deal about time over the last few months. Perhaps because time is slipping through my fingers. But, above all, because of my interest in humanity's fascination with the past, as embodied in artefacts that seek to bring back to the present a fragment of the time that has passed us by.

This is not a new fascination; the very process of mummification, common in so many societies of the past, was imbued with this idea that we can halt time and revisit it centuries later. In modern society, we have objects that

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become monuments to the freezing of time; believing that humankind is capable of putting time on hold. But how long does this suspended time last?

So-called 'time capsules' take various forms here in Brazil too, or in my home state of Espírito Santo (a coastal state in south-eastern Brazil). Recently, in a town in the northern part of Espírito Santo, one of them was opened.

What is striking is not that it is a monument, but the idea that the future is so fleeting. This object was created in 2005, to be opened in 2025. Twenty years of waiting. But what happens in twenty years? What is this anxiety that leads us to believe the world will change in two decades?

But what is the general trend with other 'capsules' across Brazil?

The oldest record is of a metal box, buried in the foundations of the barracks of the former Raposo Tavares Regiment (buried in 1921). Although it was not a monument, this artefact had commemorative value, with a history stretching back over 100 years (an exception amongst this type of monument or artefact in Brazil). However, in general, we find that our concept of time does not allow for a period of more than 50 years to elapse. This is the case with various time-related monuments in our country. Examples include the Sesquicentennial Monument (1973–2023, Ponta Grossa, PR) and the Centenary Obelisk (Descalvado, SP), which is opened every 50 years



Unveiling of the Sesquicentennial Monument (1973–2023, Ponta Grossa, PR) to retrieve the contents of the time capsule.

The National Museum (Rio de Janeiro, RJ) was also drawn into this five-decade cycle and, in 2022, during the bicentenary celebrations of Independence, organised the burial of a time capsule in front of the Paço de São Cristóvão, containing over 100 items, which is due to be opened in 2072.

Why this symbolic number of five decades?

This is a question I ask myself when faced with such works across the country. I am currently conducting research in the Brazilian hinterland, in Minas Gerais, and have come across another of these monuments: a blue object in a public square known as a time capsule.



Time capsule (2017), Uberlândia, MG

Uberlândia is a large Brazilian city, but an extremely recent one, having been founded in August 1888, just over a hundred years ago. As can be seen in the object's record/identification details, its projected opening date also falls within this 50-year period.

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R3iAP News # 6 *Memory & Memorials* July 2026

Do we need to be alive to see remnants of our past in order to understand what we have been through, or are we afraid of a time span longer than our own lives?

Or does our concept of memory not tolerate longer time intervals without losing its identity?

Time today seems to be measured by a span shorter than the duration of our own existence. It is as though we were fleeing from Michelangelo's notion that no one will know what we were like a thousand years from now… we cannot tolerate the idea of a timeframe longer than fifty years.

We are living in an age of acceleration

José Cirillo
UFES, Brazil

9.WORLD'S NEWS

Section dedicated to news or initiatives from the Global Village

Reflecting on Public Art. Sculpture symposia. Origin, (R)evolution, Stagnation

As this edition of R3iAP News is dedicated to MEMORY, it would be remiss not to highlight one of the most striking aspects of Public Art: the organisation of international sculpture symposia. Although this is not the most appropriate forum to explore the subject in depth, we consider it useful and timely to offer some preliminary remarks on the matter, insofar as sculpture symposia constituted a genuine movement for the emancipation of sculpture from statuary canons and models of narrative and/or apologetic monumentality; it can therefore be argued that the Sculpture Symposia were one of the founding manifestos of sculpture as public art, in that they burst onto the scene in the late 1950s as a veritable celebration of sculpture.

Referring to the origin of the word 'symposium', Nancy de Camillis explains:

> The word *symposium* comes from Latin, but its Ancient Greek roots, *syn* and *pinein,* mean to drink together. In Ancient Greece, symposium referred to a drinking party -- a meeting with music, intellectual discussion, poetry, and drinking. Today the term is usually used to refer to an academic conference or meeting with a public discussion of a topic of interest.
> Whereas the early Greeks restricted their symposia to the male aristocracy, today's events include men and women participants, members of the public, and the persons making the presentations.

An article in the 2003 issue of Sculpture Magazine reports that the first sculpture symposium was organised in Austria in 1959 by the sculptor Karl Prantl (1923–2010), as the author explains:

In this type of symposium, an organisation — whether run by sculptors or not — invites sculptors to a community, quarry or worksite to create sculptures using locally available materials, such as stone or wood, whilst working in full view of the public. The sculptors are provided with accommodation and meals, sometimes accompanied by a travel allowance and a fee. The resulting sculpture usually remains in the possession of the host community. As the sculptors live, work and socialise in close proximity — that is, they eat, drink and talk together — a spirit of camaraderie develops amongst them. (Hudson, 2003).

Regarding the symposium created by Karl Prantl, Thomas-Oberhofer note:

> In 1959 he organised the "*1st Symposium of European Sculptors*" in the quarry at St. Margarethen in Burgenland, which was subsequently held at yearly intervals. It also gave rise to many other international symposia, at which Prantl himself often took part, working there for several months, maintaining contact and exchanging experiences with his fellow sculptors. Starting in the 1960s, he created numerous large individual and group stone sculpture for public commissions and private collections. For Karl Prantl, the encounter with nature is the alternative to academic approaches, and to the confines and the isolation of the studio. The incorruptible features of nature and its materials, the changes of light and the seasons, the tempo of its coming and going, which also has its effect on the civilising traces of the use and exploitation of nature, determine Karl Prantl's thoughts and chemistry

The abandoned quarry at St. Margarethen in Burgenland, Austria, is a setting that is both natural and historic, having been in use since Roman times. In this exceptional setting, open-air theatrical performances of the Passion of Christ were traditionally staged every year during Easter.

The photographs from the Sankt Margarethen Symposium therefore show us a surprising and rare symbiosis between abstract sculpture and the local community.

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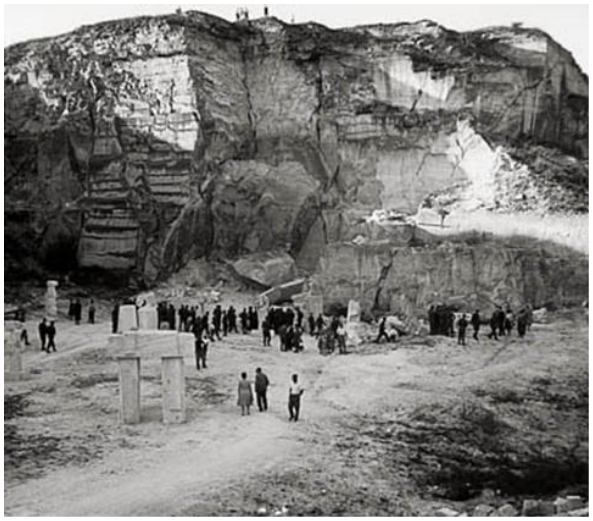

Sankt Margarethen Sculpture Symposium, 1959



Sankt Margarethen Sculpture Symposium, 1959



Sankt Margarethen Sculpture Symposium, 1959, Karl Prantl in the image (figure on the most right)

The images reveal a close relationship between the sculpture and the natural environment, a circumstance that is further enhanced by the Symposium's setting in a quarry, which fosters the establishment of a concrete relationship with the stone and inspires a non-narrative approach to the act of sculpting, emphasising a direct experience of the stone's literal nature.

And this concrete relationship with the stone and with the experience of sculpting is further enhanced by the fact that it takes place within the context of the collective experience of the symposium, which thus becomes a festival for sculptors, with the aesthetic experience transcending the boundaries of the production/exhibition dichotomy to encompass the exchange and comparison of experiences, within the convivial framework of sharing, which serves to bring art closer to life

ISSN 3051-8229

The central symbol of the symposium remains the image of the long stone table carved by Prantl, next to the headquarters of the Symposium of European Sculptors: an abandoned canteen for quarry workers, restored and adapted to host the sculptors each year.



Symposium of European Sculptors' site (1959-2017). Stone table by Karl Prantl

This was the revolution brought about by the Sculpture Symposia, conceived as forums for creation and fellowship. Hence the metaphorical presence of the 'table' as a place of gathering, sharing and communion.

Even today, one can still see the sculptures scattered throughout Burgenland, near the quarry and beyond. It is worth noting that the Symposium of European Sculptors, founded by Prantl, held annual editions that continued even after the sculptor's death. More information here:

This model, moreover, was by no means an isolated event. As early as 1961, another symposium of extraordinary significance was to emerge: the Forma Viva Symposium, developed by the Slovenian sculptors Janez Lenassi and Jakob Savinšek, who first met in 1959 at the St. Margarethen symposium organised by Karl Prantl at the Sankt Margarethen quarry.

Forma Viva is the world's oldest active international sculpture symposium. Launched in 1961 in Slovenia, it comprises four open-air sculpture parks spread across the country: Portorož (stone), Kostanjevica na Krki (wood), Ravne na Koroškem (steel) and Maribor (concrete).

In 1996, the sculptor Alberto Carneiro took part in the Kostanjevica symposium, and it was undoubtedly inspired by this experience that he went on to create the Santo Tirso International Symposium on Contemporary Sculpture.

Finally, it is worth adding that the Skt Margarethen and Forma Viva symposia originated from innovative sculptural interventions linked to the erection of memorials to the Partisans, whose resistance to the Nazi occupation would lead to the Nazis' expulsion from the former Yugoslavia. Below is a significant example



Franc Hrastar, *Padlim Partizanom Gornikov (Aos Partizans Montanhistas Caídos)*, 1953, Vale de Vrata, Mojstrana, Eslovénia. GPS: 46.40550327561022, 13.841252236600925

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This case shows that, after all, the gap between commemorative sculpture and literal sculpture is not all that wide. Moreover, even before organising the St Margarethen Symposium, as early as 1958 Karl Prantl had erected the sculpture *Grenzstein* (Boundary Stone) on the border with Hungary, near the Nickelsdorf border post. In 2001, as part of the new openness that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall, this sculpture was relocated to Pöttsching (the sculptor's birthplace), forming part of a trail of sculptures integrated into the landscape



Karl Prantl, *Grenzstein*, 1958/2001, Pöttsching, Burguenland



Sankt Margarethen Sculpture Park (1959-2010)

Sculpture symposia are still held today. In R3iAP News #4, Thierry Ferreira reported on his participation in the 14th International Sculpture Symposium – Transcarpathia, Ukraine, as part of the Carpathian Sculpture Route Project. That same year also saw the most recent edition of the Forma Viva Symposium, though there is no news of it taking place in 2026.

Be that as it may, at present, the Sculpture Symposia seem to take place more in a context of resistance than as a movement to assert a strategy of demarcation against the prevailing systems of commissioning, in which the established powers (state or private) hold the initiative: the invitation or the public competition

Moreover, in a context where dark threats of warmongering loom on the horizon, where treaties are torn up and borders violated, it is important to reflect and find the space, the presence and the discourse that art might offer in these times of uncertainty and risk that are gradually taking hold in everyday life and culture.

Here, too, the idea of finding an appropriate cultural response to warmongering takes on meaning, and of contributing to the creation of networks of resilience and convergence, because human cohesion is nourished, in part, by adversity.

I hope this opportunity will not be spared!

José Guilherme Abreu

10.WEBLINKS

R3iAP: https://ucp.academia.edu/R3iAP_Editions

11.ABOUT AND CONTACTS

The R3iAP Newsletter is organized by an editorial team. Being a semestral edition, all members of the network are nevertheless invited to send content to each of its sections until 31 December, for the January edition, or 30 June, for the July edition. We look forward to your contributions!
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