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R3iAP
Rede de Informação Investigação
e Intervenção em Arte Pública

R3iAP NEWS # 4

July 2025

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

Ecologies of Attention: Between Listening and Presence in Public Art

We live in a time when everything becomes noise. The city is criss-crossed by images that dispute the gaze, messages that saturate the space, gestures that, in their eagerness to be seen, become invisible. In this context, public art faces the challenge of not being just another layer of stimulation, but of establishing other ways of listening, paying attention and relating.

This issue of R3iAP News proposes thinking of public art as an ecology of attention – a sensitive field that resists the logic of instant visibility and the symbolic monetisation of space. Attention here is not just a perceptual act, but an ethical and political disposition. It means opening up time and space for the other, for the place, for the event.

Similar to what Yves Citton proposes when he talks about attention as a common resource to be protected, we can also conceive of public art as an ecological practice: not in the most immediate environmental sense, but as an exercise in caring for the sensitive, for ways of seeing, listening and being together. Art thus becomes not an intervention on space, but listening to space.

Throughout this issue, you'll find examples and reflections along these lines. Works that refuse the monumental and the spectacular, preferring a long dialogue, a discreet inscription and a lasting relationship. Practices that call on the community not as an audience, but as co-authors. Proposals that turn public art into a laboratory of attention for the community.

In this context, the city is neither a stage nor a showcase. It is living matter, made up of layers of time, of memories in dispute, of latent conflicts, of sedimented affections. The public art we are interested in is not that which is superimposed on this matter, but that which is inscribed in it – as a counterpoint, as an excavation, as a poetic or political interruption.

The contributions we have gathered – from sound interventions to community projects, from debates on the decolonisation of monuments to the valorisation of intangible heritage – form a possible route through this complex landscape. But more than mapping out answers, this issue aims to raise questions:

- How do we listen to public space?
- What voices does it amplify, what presences does it make invisible?
- What future can we design with and from attention?

In a time dominated by acceleration and fragmentation, recovering attention as an aesthetic and political practice can be a gesture of resistance. And public art, more than any other form, also carries the power to transform common space into shared space.

We invite all members of the Network to contribute proposals, reports, essays or documents that fall within this horizon. May this be an edition made up of multiple listenings, crossed by the plurality of practices that think about and make public art an exercise in radical attention.

João Sequeira
iA* investigação em Artes – UBI

2.NEWS

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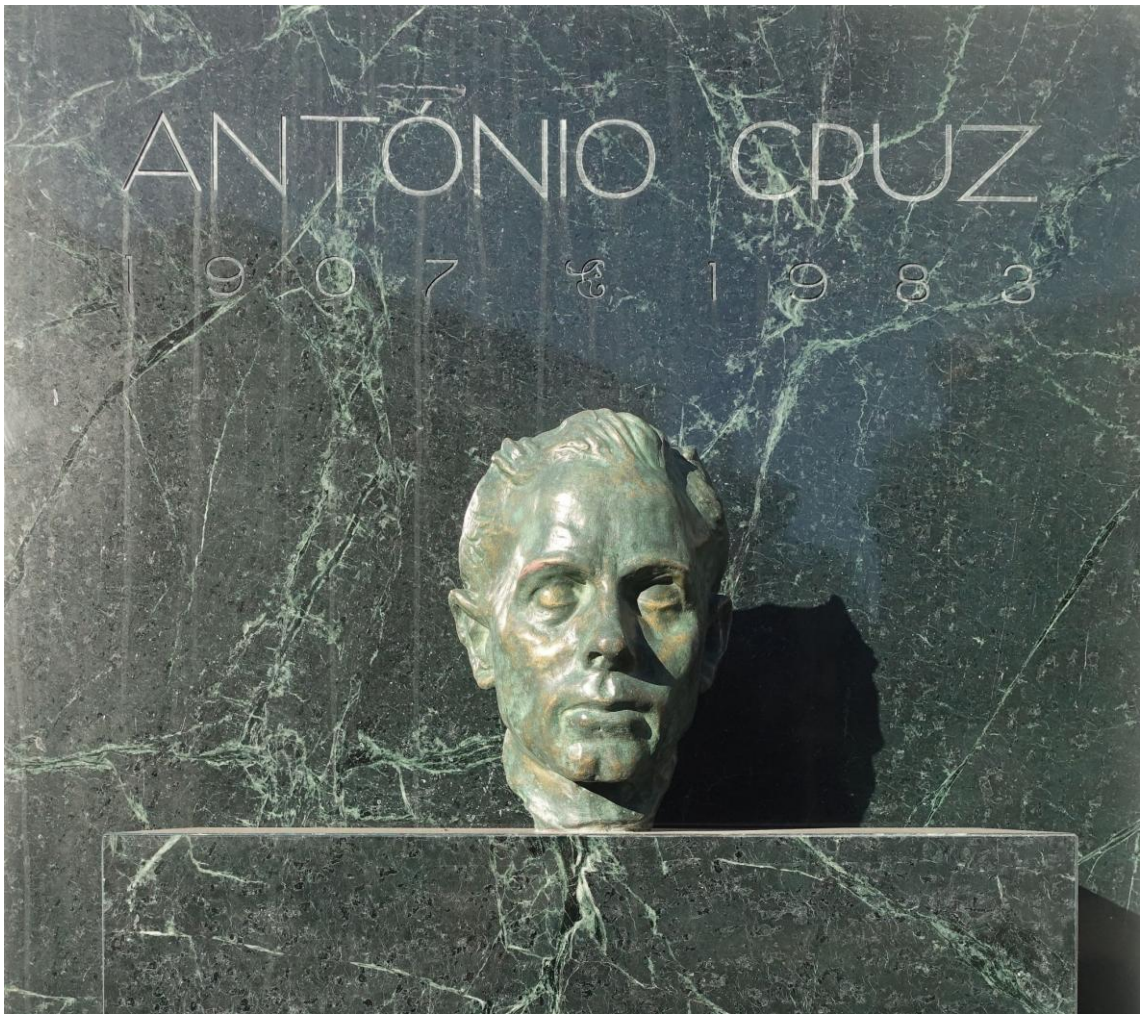
Section dedicated to display local, national and international initiatives related to public art and the like.

Tribute to António Cruz

Implanted at the end of 2024, it is important to announce the placement of a simple but beautiful monument next to the former Academy of Fine Arts of Porto, now the Municipal Library, in honour of the watercolourist and sculptor António Cruz. A singular figure, António Cruz, whose biography is summarised on the page dedicated to him on the University of Porto's website, the tribute paid to him by his family and the Porto City Council is a tribute to the artist's watercolour research into the peculiar luminosity of his city, which was immortalised by Manoel de Oliveira in the 1956 documentary 'O Pintor e a Cidade' (The Painter and the City), which inaugurated the introduction of colour in Portuguese cinematography.

A visual and musical meditation on light as only watercolour can present, António Cruz's work thus problematically documents the artist's encounter/disencounter with his city, through a discreet but solemn memorial in dark marble streaked with white, projected by arch. José Carlos Cruz, where the artist's expressively modelled self – portrait rests, reminding us that as well as painting, António Cruz also mastered sculpture.



This monument also serves to establish the historian and art critic Bernardo Pinto de Almeida's understanding of António Cruz's work, bringing it into the limelight of recognition, as we read here:

ANTÓNIO CRUZ THE GREAT WATERCOLOURIST / FROM PORTO LEFT US A / COHERENT AND DENSE WORK THAT IN ITS / EXACTITUDE OF LIGHTNESS SHOWS ITSELF TO BE CAPABLE / OF ALMOST SUSPENDED, / MAGICAL CAPTURES, AND THAT THROUGH THEM GAINS A / TRULY POETIC CHARACTER. / IT IS IN ITSELF SO SINGULAR THAT IT NO LONGER / MATTERS THE HISTORICAL TIME IN WHICH / IT WAS MADE, OR THE ADVERSE CONDITIONS / THAT

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WELCOMED IT, BECAUSE IT SIMPLY / REMAINS A PORTRAIT OF THE / WORLD DRAWN IN THE LIGHT / BERNARDO PINTO DE ALMEIDA

LISTENING TO SCULPTURE

STONE AND BRONZE – PODCAST ABOUT SCULPTURE, BY RITA MEGA

Rita Mega has been producing a podcast about sculpture for two years now. The latest episode, number 105, is about the sculpture Pas de Trois, by José Aurélio, at the International Museum of Contemporary Sculpture in Santo Tirso.

The first episode was released on 3 July 2023. In it, Rita Mega explains what she came for: to give sculpture a voice, to talk about monuments and sculptures that are in the public space and to answer basic questions – why is it here? Who made it? Who commissioned it? What does it represent? At the same time, he has committed himself to only talking about sculptures that he has known, seen and felt, which gives each account an experiential flavour.

The podcast presents national and international cases. Each episode is very clear and concise. Varying in length from 5 or 6 minutes to around half an hour, Rita Mega opts for an informative and personal account of the experience and encounter with sculpture.

Between the first and last episodes, we learn about works, artists, materials, techniques, workshops and ateliers, institutions and collections, competitions, monuments and awards, exhibitions. Catalogues and other publications are mentioned. You walk round public buildings, museums, parks and boulevards dotted with sculpture. Pieces are moved and the surroundings changed, and people's relationships with the works are discussed. Sculptors, stonemasons and foundrymen are identified. We go through the troubled installation processes, controversies, uncomfortable situations, erasures and censorship's curiosities.

It's not just Rita Mega who talks about these issues; through her voice we hear the voices of sculptors, critics, historians and sculpture researchers. The whole of sculpture society appears on this digital radio station.



For those who want to follow Rita Mega, here is the page's project on Spotify:
https://creators.spotify.com/pod/profile/rita – mega2/

ILÍDIO FONTES' PUBLIC SCULPTURE

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On 31 March 2025, Agrupamento de Escolas D. Afonso Sanches, Vila do Conde, was visited by renowned sculptor Ilídio Fontes and historian/researcher José Guilherme Abreu, who came to talk to us about public art in general and Ilídio Fontes' sculpture in particular.

This meeting with the sculptor Ilídio Fontes and José Guilherme Abreu was aimed at students from the Visual Arts and Graphic Design courses, as well as the school community in general, who filled the Auditorium of the D. Afonso Sanches Secondary School. Afonso Sanches.

The first part of the exhibition was shown by Moisés Tomé, a visual arts teacher at the school and organiser of the event. The presentation of the most significant exhibition of Ilídio Fontes' works of art was commented on by the sculptor Ilídio Fontes who, in a very eloquent way, explained the technical processes, foundations and aesthetic choices of the main works made throughout his long career in the plastic arts. In this way, the audience, especially young people aspiring to study the plastic arts, had the opportunity to learn more about the artist's works, the materials used and the different execution processes, such as drawings, engravings, sculptures and medals.

In the second part, researcher José Guilherme gave an excellent presentation on public art, its foundations, as well as the different aspects and purposes that art in the public space can have.

Finally, the sculptor Ilídio Fontes presented the entire construction process of a work of public art by him, the 'Memorial to the Liberating Army of 1832'. The sculptor's clear and pertinent explanation gave the audience a better understanding of the construction process involved in a large sculpture and the need to work as a team so that the end result is in line with what the author has requested and imagined for a public space.

As well as meeting a sculptor with a vast body of work and a long career on the art scene in the north of Portugal, this was a meeting of three generations with an enormous affinity for the plastic arts: the young aspiring artists, their teacher, Moisés Tomé, and Ilídio Fontes, whose pupil he was at the Soares dos Reis Secondary School in Porto. It was a meeting where the need for inter – generational sharing of knowledge, of emotions in the visual arts and of healthy coexistence in society became clear.





At the same time as this meeting, a small exhibition of works of art by the sculptor Ilídio Fontes was on show in the atrium of the main building of the school:

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a multiple of the 'Rendilheira' – Vila do Conde, by him; a copy of this piece, executed in an exemplary way by the educational assistant Cândido Vareiro, very close to its real scale and a wooden mask, 'Pascoalina', also by the sculptor Ilídio Fontes.

Moisés Tomé, Lecturer
João Azevedo, Photograph

3.R3iAP INITIATIVES

Section dedicated to R3IAP initiative or participation projects

PERMORIA Project: Studying what public art makes

The study of public art has been enriched in recent years by contributions focused on its social dimension, which analyse the effects and reactions provoked by monuments, murals and other works of art located in public spaces. This is the focus of the PERMORIA project "Performativity of the Monument. Social Perception and Interventions in Public Art in Spain and Portugal since 1950", funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities and launched in autumn 2024.





PERMORIA presents itself as a research proposal on public art in the Iberian Peninsula, paying attention to the controversies and reinterpretations of the works. The aim is to analyse how the works were perceived by citizens and what reactions they provoked in public spaces. Attacks on monuments are not a new phenomenon and, in many cases, are due more to symbols or meanings than artistic forms. However, abandonment is also common, with some works being recovered and turned into icons of new social struggles. This places us in a field of research that complements the studies already carried out and the catalogues. We recognise in the works a performative capacity that has a lot to do with the plurality of interpretations (the public space is always a terrain of dispute and dissent) and with the evolution of societies. Recent debates, such as those on historical memory (the memory of the civil war and the repression of the dictatorship) or the decolonisation of museums and public spaces, have accentuated social interest in public art, seen as a source of conflict or a desirable place of remembrance and reparation for injustices.

The focus on events and audiences gives a more 'social' character to studies of these art forms exhibited 'outdoors', bringing them closer to the social sciences and emphasising the interdisciplinary nature necessary for this work. The project also proposes collaborations with research groups and networks that have been working on the subject of public art in recent years. We will be establishing relations with the Public Art Information, Research and Intervention Network (R3iAP), which has been investigating some of the case studies to be documented in Portugal and has drawn up proposals such as converting the Monument to General Sem Medo into a memorial. Collaborations were also established with the European Memory Observatory (EUROM) to document and exchange information on monuments linked to a dissonant heritage.

The project's conceptual framework was developed from various elements: on the one hand, reflections on the plural and conflicting nature of public space, along the lines of Rosalyn Deutsche and Manuel Delgado; on the other, the emergence of other voices of the subaltern and the critique of Eurocentric narratives (from Walter Mignolo and Enrique Dussel to Françoise Vergès), which led to a decolonising critique and an interesting line of work on the conflicting nature of heritage and museums; We also incorporate debates around historical memory, the need for reparation and remembrance of the victims of conflicts, and counter – monuments as a form of commemoration; finally, discourses around the performativity of images, with contributions such as those by Jacques Rancière and Andrea Soto. A separate chapter, which we would like to highlight, is the reflection on the "power of images", especially in its iconoclastic direction: the approaches of W.J.T. Mitchell on violence and monuments and David Freedberg on iconoclasm, which have been enriched in recent years (Alex von Tunzelmann, Erin Thompson, etc.).

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The project carried out a selection process for the case studies being analysed. These include monuments, contemporary sculptures (permanent or ephemeral), performances and socio – environmental activism with a strong aesthetic component. We will analyse cases such as Jorge Oteiza's sculptures abandoned for 14 years on a road in the Basque Country, monuments attacked or vandalised such as the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort (in Porto), controversial modern sculptures such as the sculpture of the Monument to the 25th of April in Lisbon, and environmental activism linked to the protests against the management of the Prestige oil tanker disaster off the coast of Galicia.

In addition to a website with descriptions and materials related to the works analysed, two research seminars will be held, resulting in two publications. Meetings and intervention proposals on existing public art (in the form of research on paper or carried out on site) will complement the studies and reflections. Finally, we will endeavour to publish our research through scientific articles and participation in congresses, and we will share some of our work on social networks.

PERMORIA is a project led by the University of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia and brings together a significant group of researchers from Spain and Portugal who have developed studies on these themes in various fields (Fine Arts, Art History, History and Cultural Studies). In recent years, Isidro López Aparicio (University of Granada) and Gabriela Vaz – Pinheiro (University of Porto) have worked on the practice and theory of community art. Jordi Guixé (University of Barcelona), John Thompson (Montana – Bozeman State University, USA) and Uxío – Breogán López Cequiel (University of A Coruña) are working on the subject of 'uncomfortable' monuments and the memory of repression under dictatorships. In the latter field, we can benefit from the experience of Nuria Ricart (University of Barcelona), who was one of the promoters and coordinators of the memorial to Les Corts Women's Prison in Barcelona. The theme of iconoclasm and the agency of public art was explored from a theoretical perspective by Daniel Palacios (UNED, Madrid) and José Mª Durán (Hanns Eisler University, Berlin). The theme of decolonisation and attacks on monuments related to conquests, discoveries and the slave trade was explored by Mariana Pinto de Almeida (Universidade Nova de Lisboa) and members of the Tanquem els CIE collective in Barcelona. Our aim in this project is to promote disciplinary intersections, but also to establish an Iberian field of action, promoting studies that compare the situations and perceptions that have arisen in Spain and Portugal in relation to public art since the mid-20th century.

Miguel Anxo Rodriguez, (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)

4.ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Public presentation of book

The first public presentation of the monograph The Art of Ilídio Fontes will take place on 11 September at 9pm. 'Imagining Form, Moulding Life' will take place in the Milheirós Parish Council amphitheatre, in the municipality of Maia.

The session will be attended by the author and the artist, as well as the municipality's leaders. Dr Manuel José Moreira will present the work.

Next, comes the news of its publication.

5.PUBLICATIONS

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

Publication of a Monograph

The monograph A ARTE DE ILíDIO FONTES. IMAGINAR A FORMA. AFEIÇOAR A VIDA, was published in June, by *Épocas Esculpidas Edições*. As usual, we've added the cover image, the table of contents and the technical sheet.

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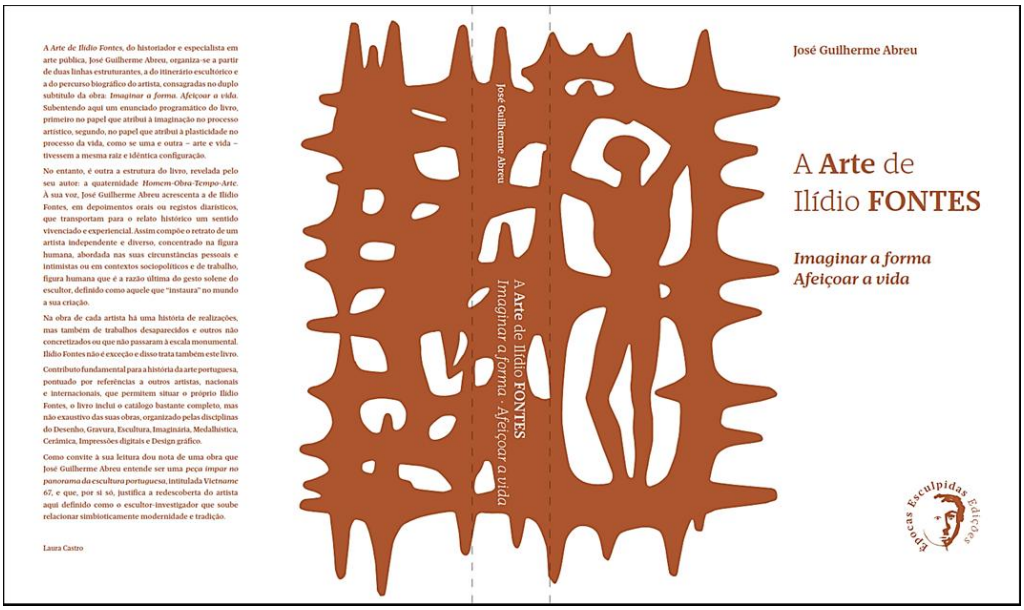

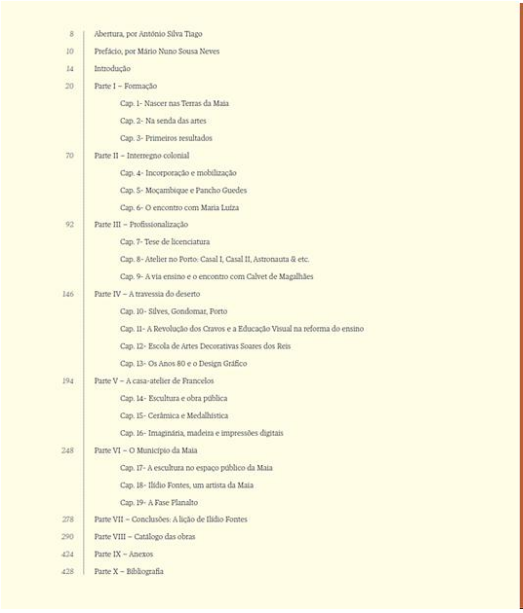
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Ficha técnica

Título: A Arte de Ilídio Fontes. Imaginar a Forma. Afeiçoar a Vida
Autor: José Guilherme Abreu
Abertura: António Silva Tiago
Prefácio: Mário Nuno Neves
Testemunhos: Cláudio Ricca, José Melo, Moisés Tomé, Vitória Gomes
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Junho 2025

Conceived as a monographic essay, this publication aims to describe the life journey and analyse the artistic work of Ilídio Fontes (1938 –), in order to discuss his place in the panorama of modern art in Portugal. A sculptor trained at the Oporto School, his work is characterised by the traits of the time and the school, as well as others from broader genealogies, one and the other denoting genuine personal expression.

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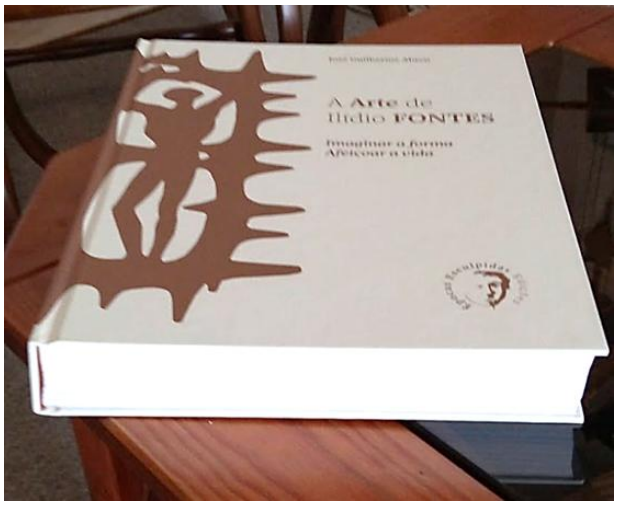

In future editions of R3iAP News we will report on public launch sessions for the book, as well as ways of acquiring it, either in print or as a pdf, since R3iAP has also made itself available to promote its dissemination.

Publication of Book

'The End of a World', author: Mário Mesquita

The photographic essay by Mário Mesquita entitled 'The End of a World' was presented. The launch of the joint edition between UPORTO PRESS and HÚMUS took place in the Ruy Luís Gomes Auditorium at the Rectory of the University of Porto on 25 June, and there was also a presentation at the UNICEPE Bookshop on 7 July.

The session at the Rectory was led by José Guilherme Abreu, researcher at CITAR – Centre for Research in Science and Technology of the Arts and coordinator of R3iAP – Network for Information, Research and Intervention in Public Art, Sílvia Simões, researcher at i2ADS – Institute for Research in Art, Design and Society and President of the FBAUP Pedagogical Council, and Joaquim Magalhães, architect and President of the Board of Directors of the "O Lugar do Desenho" Foundation.





Synopsis:

In this visual essay, through the photographs that make it up and the prose that frames it, "we avoided the shadow of the pre – announced death of these places that have been losing people and dared to enter the unfinished concert of their dotting the landscape and which still lasts."

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And then, "without a fixed destination, we drifted among the ruins and discovered that the memory of the places is growing old. These constructions are reflected in our lens, which is decanted into black and white photographs, emphasising their character and personality and recovering the essence of each of these actors in the territory."

In order to construct the visual narrative, the entire research process resulted in critical thinking based on "the wandering of our repeated wanderings, which left more than just images. The initial feeling of melancholy gives way to the realisation of something that has endured, of the end of a world that has not ended and has remained, indomitable not out of conviction but out of abandonment, constituting dissonances in times of modernity."

(Mário Mesquita, "O Fim de um Mundo", 2025)

'Ao Cabo do Mundo'

The book 'O Fim de um Mundo' (Mesquita, Mário, 2025) has a post-essay between prose and photography ('Ao Cabo do Mundo') that the author considers to be a reference to a work of art and architecture (Marginal de Leça) that he synthesises as a work of exemplary pioneering spirit, a form of contemporary materialisation of possible learning on the subjects covered by the published research.

The final text of the book is reproduced here because it is thought to contribute to reflection on architecture as art and, in this case, as public art.

> "The construction of the whole and the care taken with the parts. The fusion of form and background. Drifting along the Marginal de Leça, these are the two phrases that strike me. It's been a century and a half of transformation. And so we come to the present. Loaded with information about the work of countless creators, we are faced with creation. The waterfront is a work in itself, a unique object highlighting what has ceased to be just a landscape – as if it were so little – and has become a territory, humanised by the ingenuity of many and fixed, perhaps forever, by the genius of one. Álvaro Siza is defined, despite the many other places he has architected, by this unique combination of luck and mastery. There is no more to sum up his act of magic, like an extensive sprawling sculpture, savouring the rocks, dialoguing with the sea and inventing a place, with the place, in the place, simultaneously a limit and a threshold.
>
> What if one day a traveller came back from the old days and walked along this intermittent line, made up of fills and voids, of multiple shapes and volumes combined in a sober play with what remains of what is, and was amazed by the gods of the earth and released the word of beauty and the beautiful? What better place could he find than here? This flâneur would dream again of losing himself on the shores of the Atlantic and would restore the art of seeing to the eye, resting on his path of losing himself so many times, there, at the mouth of the beach, before the loftiness of something that has long ceased to be a project and has passed into the constellation of imagined places that have always been there, as if there had never been anything else.
>
> Coming from the restless kiss between the river and the sea, to the south, the traveler finds the wide road of the endless avenue between lighthouses, a landscape with women and the sea in the background, culminating in the chapel, a memory of so many who have lived and died. He only hoped to continue on to Santiago. But something stopped him, something held him back. There was more than just the small stone track: the line that led along the coast, a segment that his vision could see and that wouldn't let him follow the straight line northwards. Shrouded in the mist that is advancing towards the west, he settles on the wall that stands out from the ground that, until then, was completely his and shares his walk with the intermittence of the building that welcomes him. Sitting down, after the crude labyrinth, he rests his gaze on the sublime embrace that, on platforms that are drawn with the wall, is filled with awe.



At the back is a house. Tea calls out to the traveller. In the distance, waiting for the short path that runs in the low shadow of the late afternoon sun's rays. Alone, with the name Nobre like the owner of the poem inscribed on the rock that supports the sacred

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monument that forms its background. The white walls that define boundaries and take us to stairs without bulkheads, scratching the horizon with their landing. The traveller drifts along and finally arrives at the masterpiece that is illusioned by the rocks, a large plane of golden roof tiles raised by the elevation of the glass fitted into a dry joint. Beyond, there's only the sea. And everything disappears again in the fog that no longer lets you see the road behind, now just an illusion of the sharply defined cut-outs from before."

Mesquita, Mário. 2025. “O Fim de um Mundo”

6.POLEMICS AND DEBATES (OPINION PIECES)

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

The Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort. What use can it have today?

The shield with the corners at the top of the standard leaves no room for doubt. This is a monument to Portuguese colonisation. A monument to colonisation, because next to the standard, or rather, attached to it, are six allegorical statues of European complexion, which are conceived as personifications of Portuguese colonisation, as I described in my master's thesis some twenty – five years ago, which I'll transcribe:

> The Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort is formed by a Monument with the arms of Portugal carved at the top, composed of a slender pillar supported by two high buttresses soon reinforced by two narrower ones, which give the monument a certain circular effect, reinforced by the plinth that widens at the sides to the ground, in cubic volumes, staggered in steps, on which sit six allegorical statues that are arranged around the pattern, holding on tightly with their hands to a rope that surrounds the whole, in a suggestive allusion to the fascio. Measuring around three metres in height, the figures are represented with Mussolinian features, personifying Portuguese colonisation. To mark them, one attribute distinguishes them: the Warrior – the sword; the Missionary – the cross; the Merchant – the caduceus; the Doctor – the snake and the rooster; the Farmer – the ear of corn; the Woman – prominent breasts. Its notorious formal refinement gives the monument a bold modernist feel. (Abreu, 2012, p. 224)

Three of these personifications are active agents, in that they aim to establish the necessary conditions for colonisation: the Warrior aims to impose presence, by force. The Missionary aims to spread belief through conversion. The Merchant aims to recover riches (gold, spices, slaves) through exploitation.

The other three are passive agents, in that they depend on the first, and aim first and foremost to sustain, maintain and multiply them: the Farmer, producing food, the Doctor, curing illnesses and treating wounds, the Woman, generating legitimate offspring.



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The colonisation of the new overseas territories therefore presupposes an act of conquest and aims at domination, both of which emerged as a corollary of the fortunate discovery of the new maritime routes. While the discovery of the new routes initially added geographical and scientific knowledge, contributing to the advancement of culture and civilisation, the subsequent conquest and colonisation of territories brought with it a regrettable setback, as it established the unbridled practice of the 'slave trade', precipitating Christendom into an atrocious slavery, condemned by Christian doctrine.

It is important to note that slavery was not a common practice in medieval Europe. Regarded as the main labour force during the Roman Empire, the medieval period saw a shift from slave labour to serf labour, with this transition becoming more systematic from the Year One Thousand onwards, with various papal bulls recommending it, which, on the other hand, certainly demonstrates its persistence, particularly on the Iberian Peninsula, where the most intrepid 'Moors' and 'Slavs' served as lackeys of the warlords.

With European expansion, however, what had been residual became prominent. Gomes Eannes de Azurara's Chronica do Descobrimento e da Conquista da Guiné recounts the arrival in Lagos of the caravels carrying the first consignment of captives, captured by the Portuguese on the West African coast, to be delivered to the Prince of Navigations, Prince Henry the Navigator.

Guessing the Prince's satisfaction, Azurara says:

> I cannot contemplate the arrival of these ships, with the novelty of those captives before our Prince, without feeling some pleasure, because it seems to me that I see with my eyes what his joy would be. Because the more things are desired, and the more and greater efforts are made for them, the more pleasure they bring with them when man manages to achieve them." (Azurara, 1841, p. 87)

Bringing captives to the kingdom was therefore an express wish of the Prince Navigator. In this regard, it is important to remember the five reasons that, according to the Chronicler (Azurara, 1841, p. 44-47), had led the Prince to demand the lands beyond Cape Bojador:

- The desire to get to know the lands that lie beyond the Canaries
- To know if there are settlements or harbours in these lands that supply goods that bring wealth to the Kingdom
- To find out how far the power of the infidels extends in these lands
- To know if there are any Christian princes in these lands
- To bring the pagans of these lands into the Christian faith

Through these objectives, the multifaceted nature of Portuguese expansion becomes clear. Geographical curiosity; Obtaining an economic advantage; Assessing the power of the infidels; The desire to establish favourable political alliances; Striving for the expansion of the Christian faith.

Obtaining captives was part of two of the Infante's five declared objectives: to gain economic advantage and to make Christendom grow, thus contributing to the economic and (geo)political strengthening of the Kingdom and, from there, of Christian Europe.

In this context, guessing the Infante's satisfaction on receiving the first consignment of captives, Azurara concludes:

> When you saw them in your presence, without having spent anything on them, it pleased you so much to see them, even though their greatest value was in themselves. For even if their bodies were subject to some pain, that was little compared to their souls, which would eternally enjoy freedom because they possessed the good of God." (Azurara, 1841, p. 88)

The pain of subjection to which the captives were condemned was nothing compared to the freedom obtained thanks to the salvation of their souls by being brought to Christ.

From now on, obtaining captives in African lands was no longer an expense, and they became cheap and efficient labour, especially for the exploration of the New World.

The European colonial empires were thus born, since Portugal was not going to be alone in this quest, and the objectives of the expansion of the European states did not differ much from those previously set out by the Navigator Prince, with the exception of the emphasis he placed on the late medieval ideology of the so – called 'Crusading Spirit'.

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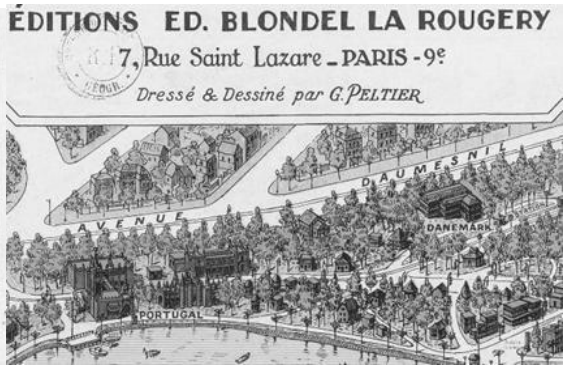
Although it was conceived as a Padrão, the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort only remotely corresponds to the landmarks erected by Portuguese navigators in the 15th century along the African coast. Beyond this rhetorical aspect, the monument in question is an unmistakably modern landmark, reflecting the new impetus that was then intended to be given to colonisation, as a strategy for promoting 'national aggrandisement', in order to free the country from the Masonic chains of international Liberalism, as had been idealised and then practised by the head, the 'Prince – Dictator' Oliveira Salazar.

The significance of this monument cannot be understood today without seeing it as the leitmotif of the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition, held in the gardens of the Crystal Palace during the summer of 1934. This exhibition, which was also the dress rehearsal for the larger exhibition that was to become the Portuguese World Exhibition, was so emblematic that Oliveira Salazar even came to Porto.



Despite the nationalist ardour that shaped it, the 1934 Portuguese Colonial Exhibition replicated the model of the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris, where Portugal was also present, represented by Raúl Lino's historicist Pavilion (see Moreira et al, 2020, pp. 78-79).





It was at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exhibition, which took place in the wide – open grounds of the Bois de Vincennes, that the national commissioners witnessed the sad spectacle of natives staging indigenous daily life in thatched-roof cubicles, like 'human zoos', representing the French colonies of Senegal and Polynesia, among others, as reproduced in an edition of Revista do Ultramar.

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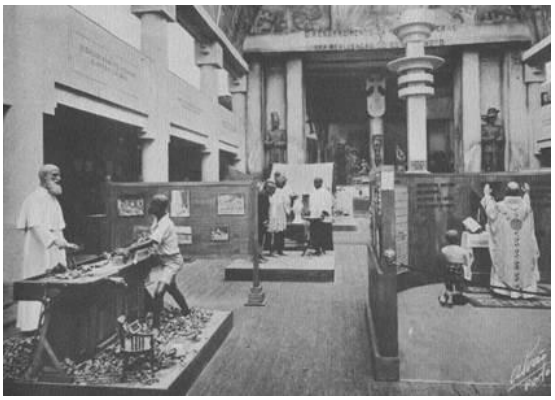
Uma aldeia indígena na Exposição de Vincennes

It was this model that the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition replicated. Alongside the exhibition in the modernised 'Palácio das Colónias', where the practices and productions of Portuguese colonisation were displayed in the different spaces and sections of the Palácio de Cristal gardens, there was a scenography whose extras were the indigenous populations of Portuguese Africa and Asia, reduced to the status of rare specimens, also there, in the manner of a 'human zoo'.









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The Portuguese Colonial Exhibition was therefore conceived as a strong and powerful staging. Not a reenactment of history, as was the case with the Portuguese World Exhibition, but a reenactment of the present and, as a reenactment, also a projection. The projection of a desired future: the future of Portugal as an Empire.

An empire no longer of masters and slaves, but an empire of pacified peoples, now on its way to becoming the civilisation of the powerful. And of course, the celebrated pacification of the indigenous people was also a pretext for presenting the obedience of the natives to the Portuguese as a lesson to be learnt and replicated by all.

The Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort is therefore the plastic expression of the formation of a modern imperial project. One that the Regime, for lack of a more appropriate expression, called the National Revolution.

A new creed was trying to be formed, somewhat equivocally, between the Lusitanian imperialism of Augusto da Costa, theorised in the book Portugal, Vasto Império, published in 1934, and the luso-tropicalism enunciated by Gilberto Freyre in his book *Casa Grande e Sanzala*, published in 1933.

In the year Portugal, Vasto Império was published, Augusto da Costa was Oliveira Salazar's secretary, after having been the director of the magazine Monarquia and an outspoken supporter of the corporatist concept of the Estado Novo, defended by diplomat Pedro Teotónio Pereira, which made the former an ideologue of the regime.

In an article published in the July 1931 edition of the magazine Portugal Colonial, Augusto da Costa said:

> We are convinced that the idea that Portugal is a vast empire is making its way. The Colonial Exhibition that is being prepared in Porto will undoubtedly take this idea a big step forward. [...] However, the government needs to take a clear step in this direction. And the time is now more than ever ripe for this, since we have an economic problem to solve, and this problem will not be solved if it does not include, as one of its fundamental factors, the existence of a colonial economy (Costa, PC Nº5, July 1931).

First of all, it's important to remember that it was precisely as part of the propaganda related to the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition that Henrique Galvão, the Technical Commissioner of the exhibition, organised the map 'Portugal is not a small country', which was displayed in all the country's primary schools, along with the series 'A Lição de Salazar' (Salazar's Lesson), an aspect that in itself illustrates the regime's imperial reverie.



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Regardless of the value of Augusto Costa's theses, the transcribed quote, and the rest, show that the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition reflected the basic strategic program of the National-Corporate Regime aimed at by the Estado Novo, and it can be said without hesitation, by logical inference, that the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort was the paradigmatic image of that same program.



That was the point of the monument: it embodied the ideals of the collective strategy defined by the Estado Novo as a (geo)political project for the country, thus helping to galvanise its collective mobilisation. We even believe that, more than the Padrão dos Descobrimentos, which appears as a nostalgic, rhetorical and mythologised (re)construction of a distant historical past, it is the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort that most adequately interprets and monumentalises the Estado Novo's strategic political and economic project.

In this sense, that is, because it is a paradigmatic image of a political project, the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort is uncomfortable. While the Padrão dos Descobrimentos refers to, commemorates and iconographises the past, assuming as its own the time of the navigators and navigations, faithfully transcribed by the iconography and clothing of the characters, in contrast, the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort is a modern monument, unequivocally reiterating not exactly the historical past, but rather the political program of the Estado Novo.

That's why the monument, which had been built for the exhibition out of perishable material, was immediately turned to stone to ensure its longevity, although once the modernist skin with which the 19th century façade of the Palácio de Cristal had been covered was dismantled, its image appeared somewhat out of focus. That's why, in the first phase, the monument was moved to the side of the Crystal Palace. In a second phase, however, when the demolition of the Crystal Palace began, the monument was dismantled and the stones of the Monument were piled up in a corner of the Crystal Palace gardens.

For around thirty years, these stones remained abandoned in the same place. Only fifty years after its inauguration, the monument was set up in its current location, which, ironically, is called Praça do Império (Empire Square), adding to the discomfort caused by its presence, which is often contested.

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The text is already long, but the length I'm giving it is aimed first and foremost at taking a fundamental personal position on the subject, which I formulate as follows: the way I see it, uncomfortable statuary issues (which bother me too) shouldn't be dealt with superficially or hastily, as happens when they are covered by the media or, worse, when they spread through the inflammatory clamour of social networks.

The reiteration of a colonising project, even more so monumentalised from a place called Praça do Império, is obviously an affront. As we've already seen, this monument doesn't evoke or commemorate the bygone era of discoveries and conquests, it reiterates a colonising project, which is its own.

In the current context of the deconstruction of the world order established in the post-war period, after the defeat of the dictatorships and now during their recent resurgence, what role can this monument play? Can a monument of an imperial nature coexist with a democratic society? Can a monument that reiterates colonisation celebrate decolonisation at the same time?

The most obvious way to resolve these dilemmas is to erect counter – monuments that convey messages opposite to those of the monuments erected by the dictatorships. Praça do Império in Porto, with its vast neighbouring spaces, offers favourable conditions for the installation of works of art that convey messages opposite to those conveyed by this monument.

Instead of removing the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort, it would be better to organise a competition of ideas for the installation of counter-monumental elements next to it, which would certainly be a stimulating challenge for artistic creation.

But that's not all. In addition to the practice of confronting the monuments of dictatorships with counter-monuments that denigrate their discourses, another option has been to adapt the first monuments, removing from them the elements considered (most) offensive, in order to neutralise their ideological content. This was the case, for example, with the Monument to the Effort of the Race, also designed by Alberto Ponce de Castro, which began construction in Praça do Império in Bissau in 1934 and was inaugurated in 1941. Built with granite from Porto, the Bissau monument is a copy of the one erected in Porto.

After Guiné-Bissau's independence, the monument was renamed the Monument to the Heroes of Independence, and Empire Square was renamed Heroes of Independence Square. But that's not all. Not only was the title changed, but also the content of the consecration, the previous designation and the shields with the corners were removed from the monument and it was topped by a five – pointed star, the symbol of proletarian internationalism, as can be seen by comparing the original image with the current one.

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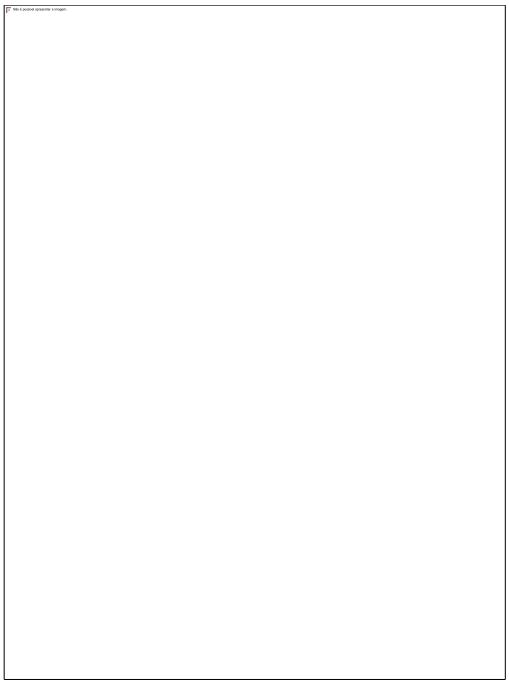



Could the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort be renamed and the words 'In commemoration of the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition' be removed? What if, instead of the 'Arms of Portugal', the symbol of the CPLP – Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries – were placed at the top of the Monument?

Since the likelihood of implanting counter – monumental elements next to the monument, or the action of neutralising it, seems remote, since this is not common practice in Portugal, in order to coexist peacefully with the Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort, we are left with the thankless and controversial task of trying to project a different view of the monument, looking for positive elements that can be glimpsed in it, making new readings possible.

To this end, it is important to make a brief excursion into the imperial dimension that is inscribed on the monument.

In the 1940s, Augusto da Costa called the Portuguese imperial project the 'Lisbon Meridian', defining it as a cultural and political axis based in Lisbon, whose mission was to establish a universalist empire from Portugal.

The project was cancelled, however, and the 'Lisbon Meridian' was unable to gain a foothold in the bipolar geopolitics of the post – war period, despite the inglorious efforts of Oliveira Salazar, who described the Regime's international isolation with the expression 'proudly alone'.

The 'Lisbon Meridian' project had failed to legitimise the idea of Portugal as a pluri-continental, pluri-racial, pluri-ethnic and pluri-cultural state, spread across a series of overseas provinces, united by an indelible political and spiritual cohesion, like a metaphysical link.

I believe it is possible to glimpse this metaphysical link in the monument, represented metaphorically by the rope that surrounds the pattern, to which the allegorical statues cling (without being caught).

Given that the statues are not tied down, but only attached, can the connection to this link be seen in any other way than in the form of subjection or domination? Is there room for understanding this metaphysical link as a benign cultural bond nowadays?

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Maybe! After all, all empires, like all civilisations, are temporary. What remains of both are not the instruments or fruits of power, but the instances and cultural links. That's why Pessoa said 'My homeland is my language'. If, instead of an allusion to fascio, we are able to see in the rope to which the figures cling, an image of concord, culturally engraved on the monument, then the image of fascio dissolves, and in its place is formed the image of solidarity.

If this new reading were to prevail, the allegorical statues would no longer be the embodiment of the instruments of colonisation, but the germs of a post-colonial culture, which would be pluricontinental, pluri-racial, pluri-ethnic and multicultural, disseminated not by overseas provinces, but by the reaffirmation of an omnipresent and regenerated Global Village.

Civilisations pass, but the seeds of culture endure and germinate. As early as 1968, pop singer Donovan Leicht wrote this in his masterful song Atlantis, an extract of whose lyrics I transcribe, expressing a surprising agreement with the monument:

Knowing her fate, Atlantis sent out ships	Sabendo do seu destino, a Atlântida enviou navios
To all corners of the Earth	Para todos os cantos da Terra
On board were the twelve	A bordo estavam os doze
The Poet, the Physician, the Farmer	O Poeta, o Médico, o Agricultor
The Scientist, the Magician	O Cientista, o Mago
And the other so – called Gods of our legends	E os outros chamados Deuses das nossas lendas
Though Gods they were	Embora fossem deuses
And as the elders of our time choose to remain blind	E como os anciãos do nosso tempo escolheram ficar cegos
Let us rejoice and let us sing	Vamos alegrar – nos e vamos cantar
And dance and ring in the new	E dançar e tocar na nova
Hail, Atlantis!	Salve, Atlântida!

Instead of being sent to create an empire to add to their homeland, the ships sent by Atlantis were intended to transmit those who, in the myth, are ultimately the founding archetypes of the universal culture that, surprisingly, characterises and unites us.

In the song, instead of six figures, Donovan speaks of twelve, but only mentions five. Certainly the ones he considers essential: the Poet, the Doctor, the Farmer, the Scientist and the Magician. The remaining seven that make up the twelve, equalling the number of the Knights of the Round Table, are what the musician symbolically calls the gods of our myths.

So future colonisation is no longer defined as the conquest of territories and the domination of peoples, but as the gestation of a new consciousness. An expanded consciousness, focussed on cultivating the germs of creative imagination. This is what Fernando Pessoa alluded to when he said that we had yet to discover that New India that doesn't exist in space, and that in his prophecy would be discovered by ships built of 'what dreams are made of'.

Could scrutinising the echoes of these reminiscences and germs be an instance of this ecology of attention, formulated as the focus of this edition of R3iAP News in João Sequeira's editorial? Could such an exercise even constitute a new functionality and social utility for a monument that is unique in the panorama of statuary and monumentality of the Estado Novo, and which for this reason alone would be regrettable to demolish?

José Guilherme Abreu

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7.STORIES AND MEMORIES OF PUBLIC ART

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

Looking for their place. Adventures and misadventures of two monuments from Porto

There are sculptures that never seem to find their place. The nomadism of statues is a recurring theme in many cities. The city is a living entity and its image is constantly changing, taking on different aspects, with public sculpture being one of the elements that contribute to this change.

Porto is no exception. On the contrary, it could even be said that the Invicta sometimes sees phenomena of somewhat radical statuary nomadism, as is the case with the O Porto statue, whose current installation, if I'm not mistaken, is already the ninth.

The case of the O Porto statue is a peculiar phenomenon, firstly because it is an allegory of the city itself. A self – representation that borrows, as an avatar, the image of a Roman warrior, armed with spear, shield, gladius and armour, thus prepared for combat.

Inaugurated in 1818, O Porto is also the first work of civil statuary, which gives it a unique symbolic status. Incarnating a war figure, nine years after the second French invasion which, as we know, was marked by the Tragedy of the Ponte das Barcas, where it is estimated that around 4,000 people died between nationals and invaders, these circumstances were certainly not indifferent when it came to choosing the avatar of a Roman warrior to personify the city. Not only had the defence lines erected around the city been broken by the Napoleonic troops, but once the French had been expelled from the Kingdom, the British soon followed, taking over the prosperous trade with Brazil and, worst of all, starting a relentless persecution of those who showed discontent, In 1817, the year before the inauguration of the O Porto statue, the all – powerful commander – in – chief William Beresford had ordered the arrest of General Gomes Freire de Andrade, Grand Master of Freemasonry, who was accused of treason and sentenced to death by hanging, despite having asked to be shot.

The choice of the figure of an intrepid Roman warrior as the new symbol of the city served as compensation for so much humiliation and fierce repression, and was also somewhat premonitory, since two years after the statue was placed in the acroterium of the Monteiro Moreira Palace in Praça Nova, which has since been converted into the Municipal Palace, it was precisely there that, under the aegis of this same warrior, the Military Pronouncement of 24 August, which established Liberalism in the Kingdom, was proclaimed.

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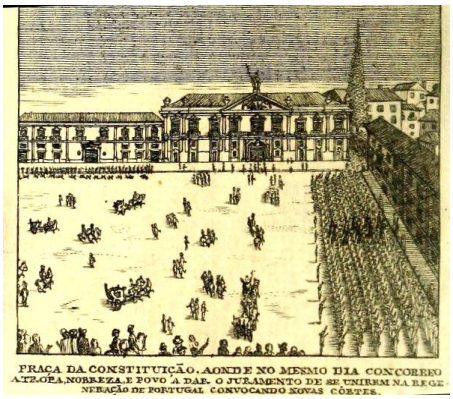

A new civil symbolism replaced the Christian one of Civitas Virginis, with the image of the Virgin of Vandoma relegated to the warrior's shield, while the figure of a Dragon (Serpis) appeared at the top of his helmet, an image that reiterated and asserted the sovereignty of the House of Braganza, which had been lingering there since the retreat to Brazil.



Two years before the iconic statue's 100th birthday, it was pulled down in 1916 from the Paço do Concelho Municipal, the palace having been demolished to open up the Avenida das Nações Aliadas, a fact that led to the statue wandering off.

Once the Republic was established in 1910, the new regime preferred the image of progress that emanated from the Parisian boulevards, framed by the tall buildings of the headquarters of banks, insurance companies, trendy cafés and glamorous shops. These were the true icons of the metropolises of capitalism, to which Porto wanted to ascend.

Civil statuary thus lost its symbolic relevance. Instead of iconographising the public space, it was now up to the statue Juventude, by Henrique Moreira, to decorate it: a smiling female figure sitting atop an art – deco fountain. The people of Porto soon fell in love with her, calling her Menina Nua (Naked Girl). Curiously, she was located close to where the O Porto statue was.

From here, you realise that the Naked Girl, which will be 100 years old in 2029, is not a nomadic statue. If the piece is well – established in the place it occupies, it's even better if it's implanted in the city's imagination, having therefore resisted unscathed the minimalist remodelling of the area, designed by the duo Souto Moura and Siza Vieira.

Unlike the equestrian statue of Pedro IV, which in Siza's vision had to be rotated 180 degrees to orientate itself towards the north, the Naked Girl has remained the same, which helps to show how immutable her presence is, despite the historical and symbolic value of the figure of the Soldier King who, before his death, donated his heart to the city after renaming it Cidade Invicta.

Because of its collective dimension, the history of public art reflects, like no other, the history of the community to which it belongs, if not history tout court.

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In this sense, it is important to ask what dynamics are present in the history of the installations of the Monument to the Entrepreneur, inaugurated in 1992 at the intersection of Avenida da Boavista and Avenida do Marechal Gomes da Costa, also in Porto.



It should be borne in mind that this was the first abstract monument erected in the city, since the Ribeira Cube, although an abstract sculpture, installed in 1983 in Ribeira Square, does not have the same symbolic dimension. Instead of referring to an economic and social segment of the community – the businessmen – Cubo da Ribeira refers to the place where it is located, appearing as an icon of its requalification, and it was to mark the conclusion of the first phase of the CRUARB program – Commissariat for the Urban Renewal of the Ribeira-Barredo Area – that the architect Viana de Lima had invited José Rodrigues to install a sculpture where there had originally been a fountain, the stones of the tank that formed it having been discovered in the meantime.

The Cubo's impertinent minimalism, even if it was vernacularised with the insertion of the local pigeon note, soon gave rise to acrimonious comments. However, the Monument to the Entrepreneur was no less critical.

An initiative of the Portuense Industrial Association, the monument was seen as an exaltation of the business community, and therefore of capitalism, at a time when the city and the country were well aware of the consequences of the post – 25 April period, from PREC and the respective nationalisations, to the process of European integration, which in the meantime had accelerated towards the Single European Market, the implementation of which was taking place at the end of the year in which the monument was erected.

From this point of view, the monument was a glorification of private capital and the business elite. Furthermore, the symbolism of the shapes used (pyramids, pillars and spheres) expressed a discourse of power and domination, distancing it from the wider socio – economic reality of the city itself.

In addition to the ideological criticisms, its urban presence was also criticised for being too imposing, since 'due to the size and means used, it is the sculptural work with the greatest urban impact installed in the city since the Monument to the Heroes of the Peninsular War' (Abreu, 2012, p. 339). Qualified by the architect Gomes Fernandes as a location of 'great dignity' (Fernandes, JN 9/7/1992), on the other hand, as it corresponds to the 'residential area of Porto's wealthy class, the insertion of the monument in that location denoted the class origin of the business community that was subliminally honoured there' (Abreu, 2012, p. 339).

In other words, the placement of the monument in one of the city's most privileged areas compromised 'the subtle references to the city itself and the efforts of man' (Rodrigues, JN 9/7/1992) that the author had in mind 'due to the lack of an urban setting where the presence of business activity and labour could make its sociological connotation more objective and comprehensive' (Abreu, 2012, pp. 339 – 340).

For all these reasons, the news item O Monumento ao Empresário vai ser levado para Campanhã, published in the JN on 6 September 2023, which announced the new location of the monument on the eastern outskirts of the city, seemed to reflect a decision taken in the right direction, since the new location was in line with the idea of 'monumentalising the periphery' applied by Oriol Bohigas as a strategy for the 'Reconstruction of Barcelona' (Bohigas, 1985), by moving advanced urban design exercises to the depressed areas of the city, so that these exemplary interventions could act as 'positive metastases', thus promoting 'urban regeneration'.

So far, so good. Good principles and good practices, when they are, should be adopted without reservation. It turns out, however, that the first expectations were dashed when it became known that the site chosen for the new monument was, after all, the roundabout on Avenida 25 de Abril, the same place where, in 1999, a Monument to 25

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April had been planned, and a municipal public tender had even been launched, the program of which was to erect a monument to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Democracy, a tender whose selected solution, as we shall see, was ultimately not carried out.



The fact is that erecting a Monument to the Entrepreneur in a space that had been conceived and designed for a Monument to the 25th of April is incongruous, if not unusual, in that while the celebration of the 25th of April is an ephemeris that cuts across the population and represents a founding act of the current political cycle, the celebration of the entrepreneurial community does not have the same scope.

What's more, the only property that exists next to the Avenida 25 de Abril roundabout is a thirteen – storey building that was intended for a private hospital, "but the idea was abandoned. The new owner wants to build a hotel, but the PDM doesn't allow it." (Público, 29/12/2022)

It's not that the framework offered by the monument's new location is bad. On the contrary, from an urban and spatial point of view, the different perspectives and angles of view seem to add value.

But a monument is not just a spatial installation. What's more, a monument is first and foremost a symbolic instance. Narrative registers, semantic content and ethical values can be drawn from it.

This is also the case with this monument, since it reveals the confrontation between Capital and Labour. This confrontation is expressed through the cohabitation of the mirrored surfaces of the skyscrapers of the Corporations' offices, which allude to Capital, with the grooves and perforations in the granite left by the cutting machines and pneumatic hammers, which allude to Labour.

That's why I've said on other occasions that the best place to put this monument would be the AEP Roundabout, on the dividing line between the Municipality of Porto and the Municipality of Matosinhos. The cohabitation (and confrontation) between Capital and Labour is the dominant feature.

For all these reasons, we wonder if the Monument to the Entrepreneur, which has taken the place that was planned for a Monument to the Carnation Revolution, has actually found its place now.

The text is already long and it is not appropriate to study this competition here. I'll just transcribe a few passages from the Descriptive Memory of the winning project, by the artist Gilberto Reis:

> The entire area of the roundabout is covered in trees. They vary in height and arrangement, creating different intensities, both to the eye and to the terrain. Semi – immersed in the treetops is a cube of light that is visible from both outside and inside the roundabout. (Proposal 693518)

This forest was planted in a concave space, since the surface of the roundabout would be excavated on a gentle slope towards the centre, where the aforementioned cube would be erected.

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Access to the centre of the roundabout – forest was via two diametrically opposed tunnels, which allow you to cross it, as explained:

> The two access entrances to the tunnel are located in two laterally opposite areas that create a linear axis as they cross the terrain.
> The entrance to the tunnel is characterised by a glass roof with a visor to the outside. As a symbol of the route/monument, the image of a large fingerprint is serigraphed on this visor. (Proposal 693518)

The image of the fingerprint serves, from the outset, to introduce an idea of the personification of the monumental experience, since the fundamental assumption of the monument is interaction, as explained:

> The thematic concepts given for the 25 April monument are present in every idea developed in the project, and are fundamentally realised in interaction. This is a value that underpins the entire project and is defined in the following ways:
> – the monument as an extension of the city in its living continuum
> – the reaction to the city's sound stimuli that trigger the light in the cube, where the different sound intensities cause light variations;
> – real – time images of visitors projected onto the base of the cube
> – a space where the area of trees planted on the ground invites visitors to build their own path. (Proposal 693518)

The idea of interaction thus emerges as the leitmotif of the project, aiming to establish a factual rather than allegorical way of experiencing freedom and democracy.

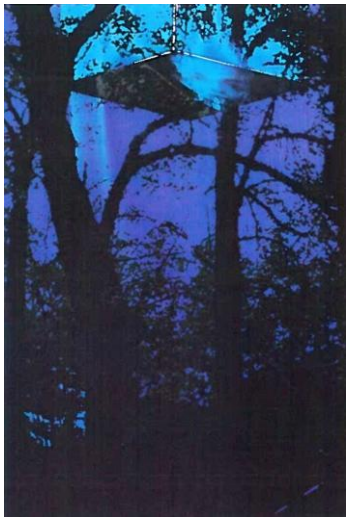
In addition to interaction, the other essential element is light. Inside the roundabout, 'buried in the ground, there are 15 circular lamps with the date 25/04/74 inscribed on them that emit bluish light, serving as a luminous reference on the ground at night'. (Proposal 693518)

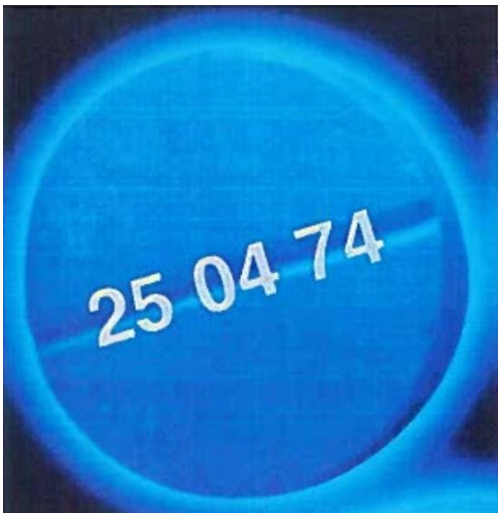
We've attached the images that accompany the Descriptive Memory, which, despite their poor definition, help to visualise the project better.




First, a daytime image of the forest to be created inside the roundabout. Then, an image of its night – time 'vision'.

Alongside these 'visions', the authors added other images, as follows.



From what has been said and presented, I think it will be possible to realise the relevance of a project that was conceived in 1999, that is, twenty-six years ago.

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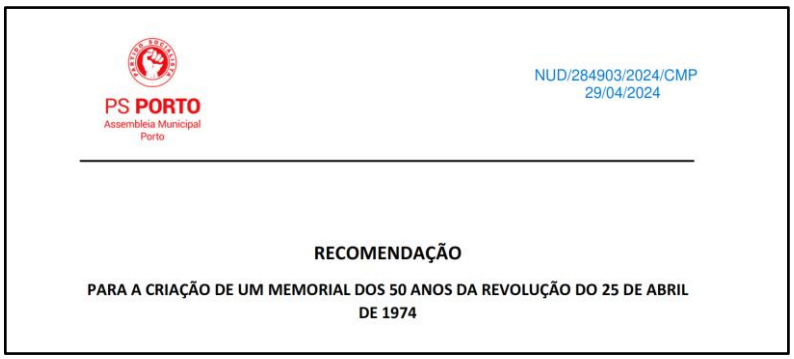
I even suppose that today the monument's lighting project would be easier and more effective to resolve, thanks to the use of LED light technology, which would allow images to be reproduced directly on a giant screen placed on the underside of the cube, instead of being projected.

Given this description, it's hard to understand why Proposal 693518, which won the competition, wasn't carried out. Apparently, from what I've been able to ascertain to date, it wasn't because the tender was cancelled, but because of delays in the process of expropriating the land needed to open Avenida 25 de Abril. At the same time, in 2001, Porto was named European Capital of Culture and a series of mega-projects emerged that absorbed very large sums of money, some of which were even discarded.

Meanwhile, in 1999, Fernando Gomes stepped down as Mayor of Porto, and the 25 April Monument lost one of its biggest supporters. When the Avenida and Praça 25 de Abril were opened to the public, it was during Rui Rio's presidency, and the Monument to 25 April had already fallen by the wayside, or at least had ceased to be a priority for the City Council.

Reality was ungrateful for this project. And it was doubly ungrateful, because not only did the 25 April anniversary pass and the monument wasn't erected, but when the 50th anniversary of 25 April passed, bitterly, instead of erecting the monument, the controversial Monument to the Entrepreneur was moved to its place.

And it wasn't for lack of remembrance, since on 29 April 2024 a proposal was presented to the Porto Municipal Assembly, signed by the socialist José Agostinho de Sousa Pinto, which expressed the following recommendation



PS PORTO
Assembleia Municipal
Porto

NUD/284903/2024/CMP
29/04/2024

RECOMENDAÇÃO

PARA A CRIAÇÃO DE UM MEMORIAL DOS 50 ANOS DA REVOLUÇÃO DO 25 DE ABRIL DE 1974

It's important to note that this recommendation was rejected by the current majority of the city council, who then claimed that 25 April had already been duly honoured in Porto, precisely because it had been named after an avenue and a city square, the same one where the Monument to the Entrepreneur now stands, and not the Monument to 25 April.

All this leads me to assume that the Monument to the Entrepreneur may not yet have found its place in the urban fabric of the Invicta City, and that like the statue of O Porto, in the manner of the Prodigal Son, it may have begun a long journey that will lead it down tortuous paths until it finally arrives at the Father's House.

José Guilherme Abreu

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8.LETTER FROM BRAZIL

Section dedicated to news or initiatives reported by Brazilian collaborators

Recent Public Monuments in Southern Brazil

The vast and diverse cultural, social, and political landscape of Brazil – with its many disconnected regions – makes it difficult to assess permanent public art projects, whether contemporary works that engage with local contexts or traditional commemorative monuments.

What is clear is that Brazilian public art as cultural heritage – so-called "historical monuments" – is in its worst state of conservation. Urban collections are steadily lost due to neglect by public authorities and the organized civil society that once claimed them. The lack of maintenance leads to their disappearance, increasingly due to theft of materials and both random and politically-motivated vandalism.

In southern Brazil, especially in Rio Grande do Sul, public commemoration through monuments (mainly sculptures) remains strong, resulting in a significant body of work since the early 20th century. However, this heritage suffers heavily from theft and vandalism – perhaps more so than in other Brazilian states. Despite this, municipalities continue to commission monuments through local laws or executive initiatives, such as those commemorating 19th – and early 20th – century immigration.



Vinícius Vieira, *Monument Diversity in 200 Years*, 2024/07/25, São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, Photo: JF Alves

In 2024, the Municipality of São Leopoldo (officially a "Prefeitura Municipal") commissioned a monument for the bicentennial of German immigration in Brazil – São Leopoldo being its historic birthplace in 1824. Echoing a similar gesture from 1924, the city unveiled the "Monumento Diversidade em 200 anos" by Porto Alegre sculptor Vinícius Vieira on July 25. The figurative-modern sculpture celebrates all ethnic and cultural contributions to the region's formation.

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Mario Cladera, *Zumbi's Statue*, 2024/11/20, bronze, Largo do Zumbi, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. Fotos: JF Alves e André Ávila (Agência RBS)

In 2025, Porto Alegre will inaugurate a major monument marking 150 years of Italian immigration (1875-2025), the second largest immigrant group in the state. This effort, among others, is backed by organized groups, businesses, and public authorities. In 2024, a bronze statue of Zumbi dos Palmares (1655-1695) by Mario Cladera was unveiled in response to demands by Black movements, complementing an existing abstract 1997 monument to Zumbi by Cláudia Stern across the same avenue. This return to statues and busts is becoming a broader trend across Brazil.

Lastly, in response to the devastating May 2024 floods – the worst in Rio Grande do Sul's history – Porto Alegre saw a new wave of figurative monuments commemorating acts of heroism and solidarity. With cut steel figures or bronze statues and busts, figurative art seems to be triumphantly returning to Brazilian public spaces. For now, these recent works are preserved thanks to oversight by the groups who championed them, whether through public funding or private campaigns. The hope remains that they avoid the fate of earlier neglected public art across Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, and other Brazilian cities – especially state capitals, where upkeep is often overlooked.

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www.curador.art

9.WORLD'S NEWS

Section dedicated to public art news or interventions at a global scale

REHEARSING A CROSSING IN TIMES OF WAR. PUBLIC ART IN UKRAINE

What is a border anyway?

An invisible line that, when drawn, not only divides the land – it sews together fear, desire and belonging. Borders don't exist in nature; they are human constructions, fuelled by history, culture and power. More than geographical boundaries, they become fissures in time and experience.

Crossing from Hungary to Ukraine, I feel the displacement not just as physical, but as a crossing of the real. Being where nothing expected me to be causes a spasm in time – and the present, there, seems to hesitate. The guards react with suspicion. After all, what makes someone want to enter a country at war? The mere presence of a body outside the usual narrative upsets the established order.

Perhaps we are all just cells in a vast body, reacting to impulses from the universe and the context – forces that we don't choose, but that mould us. If we can't choose where we are, perhaps we can choose how to be. Being aware of what we make of ourselves is perhaps the only real freedom. And this awareness, however fragile, can transform us into a lucid presence, capable of generating health in a sick world.

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In the first few days, everything is too much: the work, the stone, adapting to the environment, the other bodies. After three or four days, routine sets in – and with it, a more critical eye. That's when the tensions return, the questions that can't be answered. How can we give body to what is essential, when urgency demands only efficiency? How can we listen to what isn't screaming when everything around us demands production?

Meanwhile, the children play. Yes, they play. And this act, which seems light, is perhaps the most serious of all. Influenced by the context, no doubt – but still able to inhabit the moment with a freedom that adults have lost. While grown – ups try to understand, justify, flee or resist, children just be. And in that being, there is a pure form of wisdom. The last few days of work have flown by, running away, pushing us towards the conclusion of what we set out to do: a sculpture that is meant to be a symbol of resistance, of empathy – an act of love, giving without expecting anything in return.

How many points of view are there on the same event? Countless. War, for example, is experienced by those who flee, those who fight, those who watch from a distance and those who just listen. The language of pain perhaps has no translation. I remember the woman I met in Mukachevo. She had lost everything. She needed to talk – more than shelter or bread. At the end of the conversation, she simply said: 'We have to wait.' Wait for what? Peace? The end? Memory? Waiting in that place wasn't patience: it was suspension. A bottomless abyss.

At the end of this and other conversations, I finally realise that it's not possible to talk about war – so violent is the suffering, so absurd the non – sense, so incomprehensible the hatred that is ingrained in our bodies.

I observe nature with a deep admiration that brings tears to the corner of my eyes, and I ask myself: what if the world existed without man? Perhaps nature would breathe more lightly, without having to hide among ruins and armour plating. Nature doesn't belong to us. The world is more than us – we are the disturbed, sick beings who desecrate a beautiful, perfect and unique ecosystem. Yet it persists – generous and resilient. It sprouts among the rubble, accompanies children's laughter, lurks in the pauses. Where is it, after all, in the midst of our senseless activities? Perhaps it watches us with patient indifference. And perhaps with a mute wisdom

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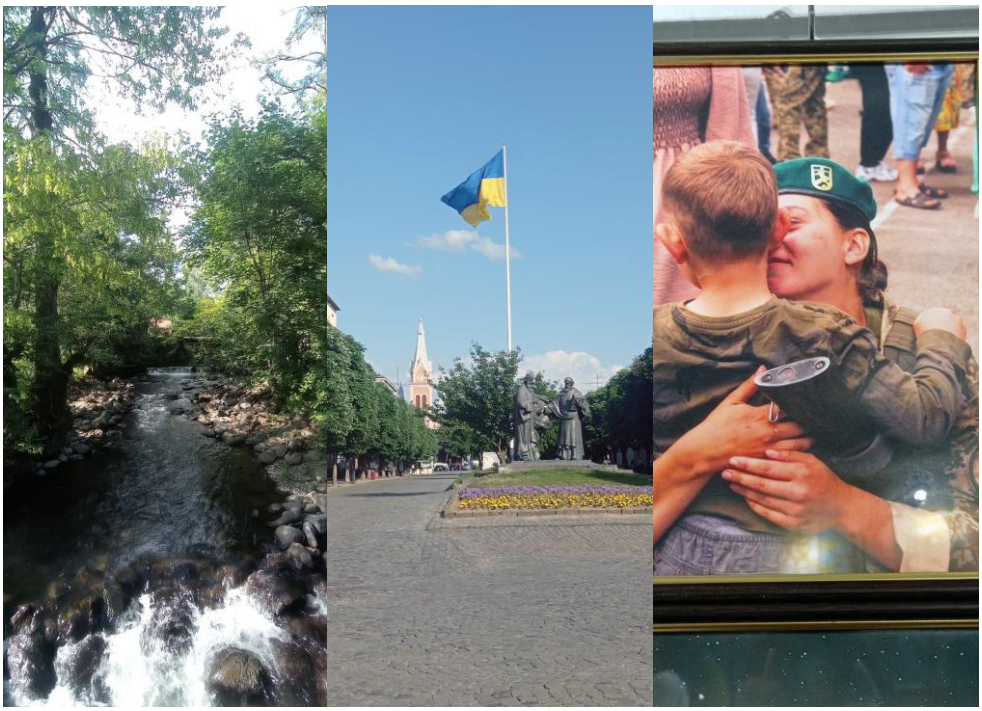

When we have doubts about how to live in a moment, it's because the moment is beyond us. And in this confrontation, my two personal pitfalls also emerge: the illusion of being able to understand everything and the tendency to humour what worries me the most. Understanding everything is a delusion. Laughing at everything is an escape. In my inner silence, I can only do the difficult exercise of accepting not knowing – and the pain that not knowing brings.

Culture, history, belonging – all this builds imagined identities, but it also imprisons. It takes away our freedom in the present and our ability to reshape the future. The little big man fears becoming little, for fear of his frailties. The big little man isn't afraid of shrinking – he knows his true size in the world. Those who have a lot fear loss. Those who have little know the lightness of not possessing. Perhaps therein lies the truest form of freedom: to live without fear of losing, or pursuing what will inevitably be lost one day.



The question that accompanies me, in the end, is this: how do I look closely at something so vast without losing myself in its centre? How can I name a reality that continues to pulsate, silently, even when it's not spoken? The war in Ukraine isn't just an event – it's a field of questions. A space where time bends, where language fails, where the body feels what speech cannot name.



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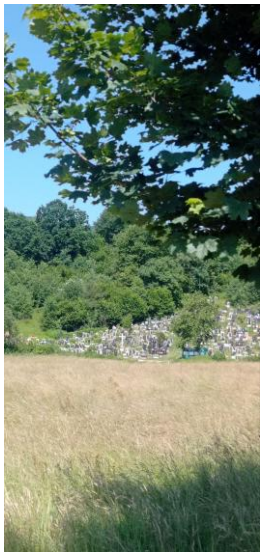
And in this territory of doubt, tension and amazement, awareness remains. Not that of understanding everything, but that of being – whole – in what you're experiencing. And to make this, perhaps, an intimate and silent gesture of humanity.









XIV International Sculpture Symposium – Transcarpathia, Ukraine

Carpathian Sculpture Route Project

1 to 15 June 2025

As part of the 14th edition of the International Sculpture Symposium, part of the Carpathian Sculpture Route project, Portuguese artist Thierry Ferreira presents the sculpture Amálgama Poética – a work that invites reflection on the limits of contemporary sculptural practice and the dialogue between human beings, matter and space.



Held between 1 and 15 June in the mountainous Transcarpathia region of Ukraine, the symposium brought together sculptor Natalia Leykina from Ukraine, sculptor Éva Czibor from Hungary, sculptor Eugen Petri from Romania,

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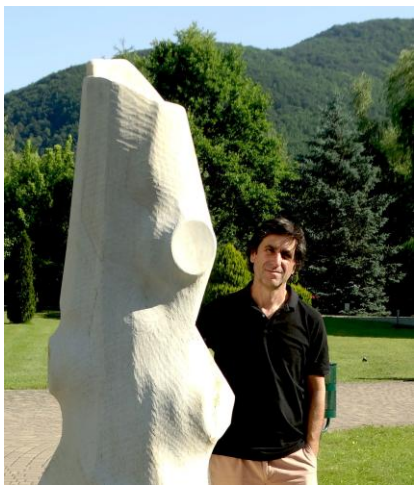
sculptor Piotr Bies from Poland, sculptor Thierry Ferreira from Portugal and sculptor Sabrina Coco from Mexico. The works created during the event are part of the growing collection of the Carpathian Sculpture Route – a cultural itinerary that already exceeds 250 kilometres and includes 126 works installed in local communities, contributing to the enhancement of the region's artistic heritage and identity.



Amálgama Poética (Poetic Amalgam), measuring 200 x 60 x 60 cm and made of sandstone, is part of the Pedra Arcaica series and is proposed as a sculptural object that questions the very discipline of sculpture, its symbolic codes and its relationship with time and space. Far from following a traditional or monumental logic, the work asserts itself as a device for thought and contemplation. Three – dimensionality is explored in a fragmented and open way, inviting the viewer to physically walk around the piece and discover different readings from multiple perspectives – without any of them completely revealing the totality of the object.

Stone, as a primordial material, takes on a symbolic and philosophical role: it is more than raw material – it is an archive of memory, an inscription of time and the material of thought. As the author says, sculpture 'becomes a space of active archaeology, where the past and the present coexist in a state of constant updating'. Through the use of abstract forms, worn surfaces and archaic materials, the work refuses direct representation and instead proposes a poetic experience, open to sensitive speculation.

Its dialogue with the surrounding space is also essential. The sculpture transforms the physical place into a symbolic territory, in which the forms evoke the tension between the natural and the constructed, between chaos and order, between fragment and totality. As the author suggests, the work reflects on 'the coexistence between the ephemeral and the eternal, matter and meaning, the visible and the indecipherable'.



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In a time marked by uncertainty and the constant presence of images of destruction – in which 'apparently normalised everyday life is mixed with the brutal images of war' – Amálgama Poética incorporates shapeless forms and contorted fragments, evoking 'a new imaginary reality that magnetises reality, transforming our space – time into a suspended time, where the wait for a normalised everyday life silences voices, erases smiles and empties the idea of the future.'

This year's symposium was held for the fourth time at the 'Flor das Poloninas' sanatorium, which welcomed the artists and offered ideal conditions for the development of their work. As Margarita Zahumenova, Deputy General Director of LLC 'Constellation', emphasised, the event 'transforms the venue into an open – air gallery, attracting the attention of visitors, tourists and local residents.' Young people and students also had the opportunity to follow the artists' creative process closely and watch as blocks of stone were transformed into monumental sculptures over the course of two weeks.

Thierry Ferreira

10.WEBLINKS

EUROM: https://europeanmemories.net/

R3iAP: https://independent.academia.edu/RedeArteP%C3%BAblica

11.ABOUT AND CONTACTS

The R3iAP News is the interactive Bulletin of the R3iAP Network. It is organised 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!

Contact to send contributions:

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12. EDITION NOTICE

R3iAP News is the interactive bulletin of the **Public Art Information, Research and Intervention Network (R3iAP)**
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Cover Image:
Isaque Pinheiro, *Parla o Silêncio*, 2005, Marble, Vila Verde, Distrito de Braga