

MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN TEÓFILO REGO ARCHIVE

Alexandra Trevisan

Centro de Estudos Arnaldo de Araújo/ Escola Superior Artística do Porto
Porto, Portugal

Abstract

The Project Photography and Modern Architecture and "School of Oporto": interpretations on Teófilo Rego archive carried out for the last two years, has already accomplished the majority of the proposed goals, and created, in simultaneous, a theoretical corpus grounded on a consistent research that permits to share some reflections and conclusions within an enlarged international context.

This paper intends to systematise the work carried out within this project, departing from three fundamental aspects:

- 1. The commercial archive of the photographer, where we gathered the images. This archive provided the main sources of theoretical development, namely in what concerns to its articulation with Portuguese modern architecture and the "School of Oporto". It was also this archive that enabled the construction of an online database.*
- 2. The revelation of less known or even simply unknown architects, never referred works, and subjects incipiently treated, present in the Teófilo Rego archive. This documentation generated some new research line, who initially were not previewed.*
- 3. The creation of alternative and grounded hypothesis for new approaches to the history of modern architecture produced in Portugal, departing from monographic approaches or transversal subjects in the chronological period in study, from 1940 to 1970.*

Keywords: Modern architecture, photography, Teófilo Rego, "School of Oporto".

The research project Photography, Modern Architecture and the "School of Oporto": interpretation on the Teófilo Rego Archive, which started two years ago, is now sufficiently developed to permit a reflection on the proposed aims and the results achieved.

Among the main points stated in the project's aims, emphasis was given to the relations between 20th century photography and architecture, in particular, to the period from 1940 to 1970, and its influence on architectural practice, having the Teófilo Rego Archive (1915-1993) as background.

The photographic archive was the fundamental source of the documents on which most research was based; it was also the source of new perspectives of reflection about such an up-to-date theme. As a matter of fact, then as now, thinking about architecture and the built environment also means recognizing

the power of image and of photography as communication tool for the architects.¹



Figure 1. Teófilo Rego (1913/1993). Teófilo Rego Archive, Casa da Imagem, Fundação Manuel Leão

The survey of the architectural photos conserved at the commercial archive of Teófilo Rego corroborated the idea that photography had become a specific, fundamental and even ideal medium for the dissemination of architectural image.

Albeit the unavoidable importance of the relationship between architectural photography and the press that was, in particular, demonstrated by the studies using specialized magazines as sources, in our project we used them mainly as comparative sources. The absence of signature, as concerns the photographs published in journals, as well as the difficulty to identify various projects and built works, in some specific cases were solved by complementary identification.

¹ In her article "Media as Modern Architecture" Beatriz Colomina argued "that architecture is a form of media that is not just a set of buildings in the streets but is built as image in the pages of magazines and newspapers. This is not just because architects are trying to sell a product, making advertising images of their spaces – although that also clearly constructed by de architect." (Colomina, 2010: 134).

However, some identification difficulties remain, which can be explained by the fact that Teófilo Rego had organized his archive in a very personal way, that is to say, in boxes identified with the client's name, but containing unidentified negatives of the photographed works. The identification of those negatives is a work in progress that counts on the cooperation of other people besides the project's researchers.

We, thus, moved from a first moment of survey and treatment of the photographs to the organization of the theme approaches, which gained critical and theoretical consistency through a continuous process of reappraisal that reflected on both the papers and texts produced by the team.

We were, thereby, able to contribute, simultaneously, to the preservation and contextualization of a part of the national cultural heritage, by creating a corpus that can be interpreted materially and theoretically according to other perspectives besides the fields of the history of photography and the history of modern architecture.

Our project is an open field due to its characteristics and its inherent interdisciplinarian character.

The temporary exhibition of the Archive of Teófilo Rego, which is being prepared at the moment, will also contribute to this purpose. It will complement the research, and, in parallel, it will permit the fulfillment of another objective, i. e., the opening of the research results to new publics and other interpretation forms.

...



Figure 2. Photograph from the box of the Oporto School of Fine Arts. Magna Exhibition, 1968. Teófilo Rego Archive, Casa da Imagem, Fundação Manuel Leão

From the beginning of the construction of our project, we have known that the diversity of architects who were Teófilo Rego's clients would permit a rereading of the history of modern architecture produced in Porto and Northern Portugal. This certainty resulted from the fact that Rego's commercial archive is in possession of photographs by architects consecrated by the history of Portuguese modern architecture, but also of photographs by other less known professionals. The photographic register of the latter's works allows us to establish a wider panorama of architectural production at a time when the action and the pedagogical project carried out by Architect Carlos Ramos at the Escola de Belas Artes do Porto [Oporto School of Fine Arts] (ESBAP) was of paramount importance.

We chose to understand the "Escola do Porto" [School of Oporto] in the sense defined by Octávio Lixa Filgueiras (1986: s/p), that is to say, as the Escola de Carlos Ramos [School of Carlos Ramos]. This idea is implicit in the researcher's theoretical production.

As a matter of interest, Carlos Ramos left a deep imprint in Oporto's architectural culture due to the role he played between 1940 and 1969, firstly as a project professor, and, from 1952, as director of ESBAP, where he implemented an updated and culturally diversified pedagogical program.

The architects who resorted to Teófilo Rego's work, such as João Andresen, Arnaldo Araújo, Luís Pádua Ramos, José Carlos Loureiro, Alfredo Viana de Lima and Agostinho Ricca Gonçalves, were trained and carried out their activity at this school during the same period. Rego's clients included such architects as Rogério de Azevedo, Arménio Losa and Januário Godinho, who belonged to a generation born between the 1910s and 1920s and that graduated at the ESBAP under the pedagogical influence of Architect Marques da Silva.

The photographs conserved at Rego's archive and commissioned by ESBAP, probably by Carlos Ramos's suggestion, have proved to be extraordinarily rich documents, particularly those that register The Magna Exhibitions (hereafter called Magnas) which took place at this school.

Carlos Ramos created the Magnas – the first of which was held in 1953 – to show the “works of the students who had obtained the best marks during the previous school year, as well as of the professors who were responsible for teaching those specialties.” The official goal was to publicly diffuse “the professional and scholar activities of masters and students.” (*Arte Portuguesa*, 1953, p. 5).

Teófilo Rego was the photographer chosen to register the Magnas, as well as other exhibitions organized by ESBAP. By then, the conditions of professional recognition were already consolidated, determining also the choice of this photographer to register the works by architects and artists who worked in Oporto.

The exhibitions, such as the Magna, that were carried out within an academic context, constitute an especially interesting research line, for two main reasons. On the one hand, they reveal the projects of the best qualified students evaluated by the School. On the other hand, they contribute to the creation of a

narrative that goes well beyond the mere question of authorship or of the exhibited object. This path would also render it possible to consolidate the idea of the School of Oporto as being the School of Carlos Ramos.

Moreover, some students who exhibited their works became later Teófilo Rego's clients. For that reason, the archive and the photographic documents conserved their validity as the source for a wider research field into Portuguese modern architecture, in particular, when the images produced had resulted from a specific commission by an architect, originated by a professional aim.

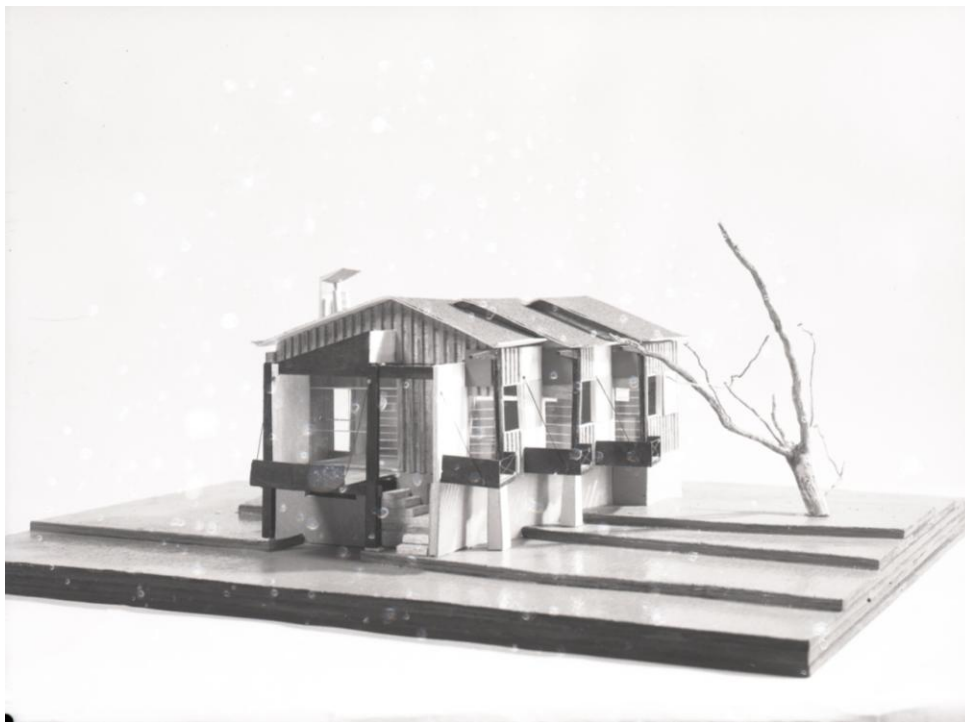


Figure 3. Photograph from the envelop of the architect Luis Cunha. Teófilo Rego Archive, Casa da Imagem, Fundação Manuel Leão

From the research done until the moment, and that comprises interviews to architects and other persons with different professional backgrounds, we may infer that architects resorted to photographic records not only in order to meet the requests to diffuse their work through publication in journals, but also through the organization of photography exhibitions.

There are also numerous photographs of scale models of single works or urban sets, which were made to present the architect's work to the client. Many of those scale models remained in the client's possession, so we believe that architects photographed the models to build their own personal archives. We have not yet succeeded in identifying the project's author in a considerable number of cases. However, as a whole, those documents made it possible for us to have an insight into the collaboration established between the architect and the photographer. In some cases, the preparation and assemblage carried out for the photographic session reveals the dialogue and the complicity created among those professionals, and opens an exciting research field that we have already begun to explore, i. e., to understand the forms during the whole process which the photographer was invited to take part in, and not only for the diffusion of the works as final products.²

Clearly, the absence of a signature in the photographs denotes a possible devaluation of the photographer in view of the architect, which was a common attitude at the time the photographs were produced and published. However, that was not the case with all of Teófilo Rego's clients.

...

At the moment, in which, the ESBAP instituted the Magnas in Oporto, the ODAM (Organization of Modern Architects)³ created in 1947 and comprising circa 30 architects who had graduated also at ESBAP was already in existence.

²As we have argued in a previous article, "The architects' collaboration in the preparation of the photographic production of the scale models of their works, in the studio or in the atelier, leads us to conclude that the architect's eye is present in the choice of the plans and settings. It must be mentioned that the results are not uniform and some works are of better quality than others (setting, lighting, detail). On the other hand, the suppression and manipulation made by Teófilo Rego of innumerable negatives of both sketched and executed works, though it may result from a dialogue established with the client, seems to represent a bigger intervention by the photographer." (Trevisan and Maia: 2014).

³The Organization of Modern Architects (ODAM) was created in Oporto in 1947 and was active until 1953. The group of architects that formed ODAM belonged to a second generation of architects of the Modern Movement, and a post- World War II generation of architects, and had absorbed some of the lessons that resulted from the experiences undertaken in the 1920s and in the 1930s, when Portugal show readiness to open itself to the more important tendencies of the international architectural and urban panorama.

Coinciding with ODAM's activity period from 1947 to 1952, due to the intervention of Carlos Ramos, some members of the same group, such as Arménio Losa, Delfim Amorim, Agostinho Rica, Fernando Távora, José Carlos Loureiro and Mário Bonito were docents at ESBAP, and a strong proximity among the aims of the School and the aims of this group was established.

Special reference must be made to the first of ODAM's aims: to diffuse the principles on which Modern Architecture should be based on, trying to affirm, through one's own work and its components, how to form professional conscience and create the necessary understanding among the architects and the remaining technicians and artists, and, in this sense, fostering the divulgation of Modern Architecture through exhibitions, conferences and publications⁴.

ODAM considered the aspects listed for divulgation as the departing point for its professional activity. Indeed, ODAM's activities were based on that premise, and were perfectly tuned with ESBAP's policy of disseminating its pedagogic activities. Besides the conferences delivered and the papers written by some of its members, in 1951, ODAM organized an exhibition of the architectural and urban works by c. 30 experts.

The exhibition was widely publicized in the city's daily newspapers, which announced its inauguration, and reported on its closing activities, more precisely, on the conference on urbanism delivered by Carlos Ramos.

The projects presented were either finished or in progress and covered a wide range of programs, from factories and *pousadas* to detached houses and residential blocks, and spread over a considerable area of the country's Northern region.

⁴ "The Organization of Modern Architects has as aim to diffuse the principles on which Modern Architect should base, trying to affirm, through the work of its components, how the professional conscience should be formed and how to create the necessary understanding between the architects and the remaining experts and artists. It thus tries to diffuse Modern Architecture through exhibitions, conferences, publications, a.s.o:
The grounding principles for their professional work are the following:
- to contribute to the valorization of the individual and the Portuguese society.
- to stimulate the experts and the lay people, the graduated architects or the students of architecture, the engineers and the builders, in the sense of an efficient and effective work in favour of the country's progress.
- to hinder aggressive, dangerous and dishonest amateurism to spread and throw architecture into chaos."
(Barbosa: 1972, p.19.)

This last aspect became determinant in the professional activity of the architects of Oporto, who answered to commissions by clients intending to build in other cities and towns or in the countryside. ODAM's projects demonstrate a great diversity of solutions due, in part, to the different materials used and the concern to integrate the work in the specific context of a region. This characteristic never disappeared from the work by many architects, even in the cases where adherence to the principles of the Modern Movement assumed greater importance.



Figure 4. Church of *Santo António das Antas*, c.1950, architects Fernando Barbosa e Fernando Tudela. Photograph from the box of *Cooperativa dos Pedreiros*. Teófilo Rego Archive, Casa da Imagem, Fundação Manuel Leão

The photographs found at the archive of Teófilo Rego confirm the existence of an increasing number of architects and a diversity of programs and architectural solutions; they also show that the projects extended to the whole Northern region of Portugal.

Since the early 1950s, the Oporto architects had sought a balance between the suitability of contemporary techniques to the new constructive challenges and

the use of regional materials and building techniques in order to create a modern architecture without losing sight of the national identity.

Such concerns can be also traced in the work by some architects who, led by Viana de Lima, founded CIAM Porto⁵. As we have previously argued, the creation of a new group including members of ODAM probably contributed to the end of the latter in 1953 (Trevisan: 2013, p.307). The group's participation in CIAM also reveals their intention to contextualize their ideas about modern architecture within the international debate.

In spite of all difficulties posed by dating and authorship, Rego's archive offers an incredible range of possible interpretations. For sure, it is, however, centred on fundamental moments of the history of Portuguese modern architecture, such as the transformation of ESBAP due to the action of Master Carlos Ramos. Special reference must be made to the Magna's and the homage to Architect Marques da Silva (1954), as well as the whole work developed at UIA⁶ and involving the students and colleagues; the activities by ODAM, the Portuguese participation in CIAM (1951-1959)⁷, and the Survey to the Popular Architecture in Portugal (1955-1961).

⁵ "The first participation of Porto architects in CIAM, represented by Viana de Lima and Fernando Távora, took place during the VIII Congress in Hoddesdon, England, in 1951, when the Core of the City was studied. At this congress, Viana de Lima was appointed as delegate to CIAM in Portugal at the invitation of Professor José Luís Sert and Professor Siegfried Giedon. Viana de Lima and Fernando Távora participated also in the IX and X congresses that took respectively place in Aix-en-Provence, Dubrovnik and in the CIAM' 59, in Otterlo." (Maia and Cardoso, 2014).

⁶ " In Portugal, special reference should be made to the fundamental contribution by architect Carlos Ramos (1897-1969), together with Pardal Monteiro, to the relations developed between Portugal and the UIA, in particular, the creation of SPUA (Portuguese section of UIA). In 1950, when Carlos Ramos was elected president of the Portuguese section of UIA, he started to contact a great diversity of architects of different nationalities. The establishment of those relations was advantageous and probably contributed to the recognition of his work and his commitment by his partners. He was, indeed, responsible for the organization of the congress *Arquitectura no Cruzamento de Caminhos* [Architecture at the Crossroads] that took place in Lisbon in 1953. He was further selected as a member of the Executive Commission of the UIA during the same year. Carlos Ramos participated at the congresses that followed. In 1959, he was elected vice - president of the UIA during the general assembly that took place in Lisbon, having ceased functions in 1963." (Trevisan, 2014, p.525).

⁷ "The first participation of Porto architects in CIAM, represented by Viana de Lima and Fernando Távora, took place during the VIII Congress in Hoddesdon, England, in 1951, when the Core of the City was studied. At this congress, Viana de Lima was appointed as delegate to CIAM in Portugal at the invitation of Professor José Luís Sert and Professor Siegfried Giedon. Viana de Lima and Fernando Távora participated also in the IX and X congresses that took respectively place in Aix-en-Provence, Dubrovnik and in the CIAM' 59, in Otterlo." (Maia e Cardoso, 2014).

This framework has been dealt with by oral and written papers produced within our project and will serve as background for the oral papers that will be presented at this international meeting.

We argue that the conclusions that we are steadily reaching will permit us to open a set of alternative hypothesis for the construction of the history of modern architecture in Oporto and in Northern Portugal, and, by extension, contribute to the history of modern architecture in Portugal.

We hope that the research developed in this project will contribute to the better knowledge of history of portuguese photography and to the study of Teófilo Rego's work, a photographer that remains still scarcely recognized.

Acknowledgments

This paper is funded with FEDER funds by the Operational Competitiveness Programme – COMPETE and national funds by FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia within the project *Fotografia, Arquitectura Moderna e a "Escola do Porto": Interpretações em Torno do Arquivo Teófilo Rego* (FCT: PTDC/ATP-AQI/4805/2012 – COMPETE: FCOMP-01-0124-FEDER-028054)

References

ARTE PORTUGUESA, Boletim da Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto, anos lectivos 1951/52-1952/53.

Barbosa, C. (1972). *Organização dos Arquitectos Modernos - 1947/1952*, Porto: Edições Asa.

Bonito, M. (Agosto,1951). "Primeira Exposição de Arquitectura Moderna da ODAM" in *Vértice*, Coimbra: Tipografia Atlântica, Vol. XI.

Colomina, B. (2010). "Media as Modern Architecture" in *Exit, Architecture II. The Artist's View*, Madrid.

Filgueiras, O.L. (1986). "A Escola do Porto (1940-1969)", in *Carlos Ramos*, Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

Maia, H., & Cardoso, A. (2014). "Portugueses in CIAM X" in *20th Century New Towns. Archetypes and Uncertainties*. Conference Proceedings. Porto: Departamento de Arquitectura e Centro de Estudos Arnaldo Araújo da ESAP, 2014.

Trevisan, A. (2013). *As Influências Internacionais na Arquitectura Moderna no Porto (1926-1956)*. Tese de doutoramento. Universidade de Valladolid

Trevisan, A., & Maia, H. (2014). "Photographer and architects, a professional collaboration", Fifth Internacional Conference on The Image, Berlim, Germany, November 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2549C6FD94B4AA67>

Trevisan, A. (2014). "A Travelling Theatre", in *International conference Dramatic Architectures, Places of Drama, Drama for Places*. Conference Proceedings. ESAP: Porto, 3- 5 de Novembro.

Author identification

Alexandra Trevisan. Graduate (FLUP, 1986) and MSc in History of Art (FLUP, 1996) and PhD in Architecture (ETSA/UVa, 2013) with the thesis *International Influences in Oporto Modern Architecture between 1926 and 1956*. Assistant Professor/Theory & History Department at ESAP (since 1986) teaching History of Modern Architecture (Architecture MA) and History of Art, among other curricular unities. Researcher of the Architectural Studies group of Centro de Estudos Arnaldo de Araújo (FCT uRD 4041). Currently is PI of the research project *Photography, Modern Architecture and the "Escola do Porto": Interpretations on Teófilo Rego Archive* and researcher of the project *Southern Modernisms*. Co-editor of the books *Ler Le Corbusier* (2012) and *Apropriações do Movimento Moderno* (2012). Last related papers: *On Modern Architecture, photography and city readings: Teófilo Rego and the "School of Oporto" with M.H. Maia e Miguel Moreira Pinto* (Athens, 2014); *Photographer and architects, a professional collaboration with M.H.Maia* (Berlin, 2014); *A Travelling Theatre* (Porto, 2014); *Primeira aproximação às arquiteturas do Sul: instrumentos possíveis de leitura with A.Cardoso, M.H. Maia and J.Couto* (Lisboa, 2014).