

The background of the cover is composed of large, expressive, overlapping brushstrokes in various shades of teal and blue. A dark, textured square is positioned in the center-right area, overlapping the brushstrokes.

COMUNICAR LA ARQUITECTURA

DEL ORIGEN DE LA MODERNIDAD A LA ERA DIGITAL

eug

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TOMO I

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del origen de la modernidad
a la era digital

TOMO I

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(EDS.)

COMUNICAR LA ARQUITECTURA

del origen de la modernidad a la era digital

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A Thick Magazine: Manuel Graça Dias' *Jornal Arquitectos* and the Construction of the Culturalist Architect

Una revista espesa: el *Jornal Arquitectos* de Manuel Graça Dias y la construcción del arquitecto culturalista

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Abstract

Con el cambio de milenio, el paisaje arquitectónico portugués está experimentando una transformación rápida y significativa: el optimismo económico de los años 90 se desvanece, aumenta el número de escuelas, la profesión rejuvenece, aumentan las publicaciones en papel y las nuevas plataformas de comunicación. Es en este contexto que *Jornal Arquitectos*, el medio de comunicación oficial de lo Colegio de Arquitectos portugueses, se transforma, bajo la dirección de Manuel Graça Dias, de manera inesperada: de periódico corporativo a revista culturalista. Como es sabido, cualquier publicación especializada moldea y delimita un saber y una práctica disciplinaria, consolidando, inadvertida o estratégicamente, el “tipo-ideal” de un arquitecto. Al subvertir sus expectativas, esta serie del *Jornal Arquitectos* –aunque no exclusivamente– formó una imagen de un arquitecto que sirvió como referencia para toda una clase profesional.

At the turn of the millennium, the Portuguese architectural landscape is undergoing rapid and significant transformation: the economic optimism of the 1990s is fading, the number of schools is increasing, the profession is rejuvenating, the number of paper publications and new communication platforms are increasing. It is in this context that *Jornal Arquitectos*, the official communication medium of the Portuguese Architects Association, is transformed, under Manuel Graça Dias direction, in an unexpected way: from a corporate newspaper into a culturalist magazine. As is well known, any specialized publication shapes and bounds a disciplinary knowledge and practice, consolidating, inadvertently or strategically, an architect's “ideal-type”. By subverting its expectations, this *Jornal Arquitectos* series –albeit not exclusively– shaped an image of an architect that served as a reference for an entire professional class.

Keywords

Jornal Arquitectos, Manuel Graça Dias, tipo-ideal, imagen del arquitecto, mito
Jornal Arquitectos, Manuel Graça Dias, ideal-type, architect's image, myth

The construction of the culturalist architect

In the transition of the millennium, Manuel Graça Dias (1953-2019) is invited to be the editor-in-chief of the official medium of the Portuguese Architects Association (OA): *Jornal Arquitectos (J-A)*, a free publication all OA members. Without any kind of associative relationship besides being a member of the OA, but with vast experience in the media world¹, Graça Dias, in order to accept the challenge, demands editorial autonomy, an Editorial Board and better working conditions, meaning, that the editorial staff were paid for the work they developed (which had not happened until then). Together with Ana Vaz Milheiro as deputy editor-in-chief and Clara Germana Gonçalves as main editor, accompanied by an Editorial Board formed by Alexandre Alves Costa, Eduardo Souto de Moura, João Luís Carrilho da Graça, Jorge Figueira, Michel Toussaint and João Belo Rodeia, Graça Dias put together a heterogeneous team that in common had the intense relationship they established with architecture. The editorial project² intended to be more theoretical, promoting the dialogue and disciplinary reflection, a space for criticism and exchanging ideas³, where articles and architectural designs would wield arguments under discussion. The way in which the texts are organized within the same issue reveals a willingness to point in several directions, staging a possible debate: an article historically contextualizing the topic, the testimony of a personal experience, a disciplinary provocation, a provocation coming from outside of the discipline –20% of the articles are signed by non-architect authors–, the example of a building, the difficulty of the practice. In the sequential reading of the articles, the contrast in the tone of each author seems intentional; an attempt is made to deepen the topic without losing the multiplicity motivated by the different perspectives and preference is given to “depth” rather than the discussion of more “current” themes. The present, under this direction, is defined by broader horizons.

In one of the several articles that he writes in this series, in an issue entirely dedicated to architecture criticism, Graça Dias, as a kind of a balance of the 16 issues published up to that time, reflects:

Foi, estabelecido, desde o início, dar maior espaço à crítica e à reflexão sobre os diversos temas que envolvem a arquitectura. Esta perspectiva pretende ainda socorrer-se de vozes

¹ This work was funded by national funds through FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., within the projects UIDB/04041/2020 and UIDP/04041/2020 (Arnaldo Araújo Research Centre). Manuel Graça Dias had already published 11 articles in and was part of the previous Editorial Board; he was editor-in-chief of the magazine *Arquitectura* (in 1984) and *Arquitectura Portuguesa* (between 1985 and 1988), where he was also part of the Directive Committee, guest editor of the magazine *Architécti* number 33 (May-July 1996), having been regular columnist in *Jornal de Letras, Artes e Ideias* and *O Independente*. At the same time, for the television channel RTP2, between 1992 and 1996, he was the author of the fortnightly program “Ver artes/arquitectura” and, for the TSF radio, he produced, among others, a set of ten programs with the title “Ao volante pela cidade” between February and June 1997, later published in a book: Manuel Graça Dias, *Ao volante, pela cidade (dez entrevistas de arquitectura)* (Lisbon: Relógio D'Água, 1999).

² Manuel Graça Dias and Ana Vaz Milheiro were responsible for 24 issues between number 195 (March/April 2000) to number 218/219 (January-June 2005).

³ Manuel Graça Dias, “A desurbanidade é que assusta”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 195 (March/April 2000): 10.

habitualmente exteriores à disciplina, no sentido de procurar em áreas afins, paralelos ou soluções já testadas que auxiliem à compreensão das problemáticas da arquitectura e da cidade, abrindo o debate e os horizontes de modo a evitar conversas fechadas dentro de grupos mais ou menos “especializados”. O que se deseja, precisamente, é *expor pensamentos*, aberto a todos os que lêem (e que se imaginam 11 000!) negando o cinismo autoritário e académico da “propriedade do saber”⁴ (fig. 1).



Figure 1. “Procurar a liberdade (Portugal, panorama da crítica de arquitectura nos últimos 30 anos. Viagem através de algumas revistas)”, Manuel Graça Dias. Source: *Jornal Arquitectos* 211 (May/June, 2003): 26-27.

The critical dimension that the *J-A* reflects in this series, anchored in thematic issues that took a certain literary work as a guiding principle, sometimes extending to more than one issue, bets much more on a cultural dimension and much less on a corporate one. For example: Denis Diderot’s *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (issues 198 and 199), is the pretext to reflect on the professional practice; Tom Wolfe’s *From Bauhaus to our house* (issue 203), about single-family houses; Frederick Engels’ *The housing question* (issues 204 and 205), the multifamily housing; Jean Baudrillard’s *America* (issue 207), looks upon the landscape issues; François Lyotard’s *The post-modern condition* (issue 208), evaluates the Modern Movement legacy and the signs of its overcoming in Portuguese architecture; Italo Calvino’s *Six memos for the next millennium* (issues 209 and 210), the new urban plans for several

⁴ [It was established, from the outset, to give greater space to criticism and reflection on the various themes involving architecture. This perspective also intends to make use of voices usually outside the discipline, in the sense of looking in similar areas, parallels or already tested solutions that help to understand the problems of architecture and the city, opening the debate and the horizons in order to avoid closed conversations within more or less “specialized” groups. What is precisely desired is to expose *thoughts*, open to all who read (and who imagine 11.000 of them!) denying the authoritarian and academic cynicism of the “property of knowledge”] Manuel Graça Dias, “Procurar a liberdade (Portugal, panorama da crítica de arquitectura nos últimos 30 anos. Viagem através de algumas revistas)”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 211 (May/June 2003): 40.

of a supposed seriousness innate to the profession. This is, in fact, a peculiarity of this direction—the tone with which the articles are written—which was not verified with so much diversity in the previous ones. In addition to the irony with which some are written, others have an almost literary flavour⁶; in some it is the academic tone that prevails⁷, in others it is the pragmatic spirit that stands out⁸, there is still the poetic⁹, the legal¹⁰, the oral¹¹, among others. Sometimes, the personal tone with which they are often written—36% of the signed texts are written in the first person—or reporting their own experiences, emphasizes a particular way of looking at reality. The account of an experience that occurred in childhood¹², which at the outset had little to do with architecture, reveals how “small” details can shape a personality and the history of the individual, which later, eventually, not in a literal way, but crafted by memory and experience, it will provide its author-architect with material to reproduce or avoid in his architectural practice, as suggested by Peter Zumthor¹³.

The overlap between the subject and the architect

Throughout the articles of *J-A*, one can witness an overlap between the subject and the architect¹⁴, which presents itself as a common position, revealed in stories of intense experiences¹⁵ or in trivial particularities¹⁶. This overlay is also highlighted by Manuel Tainha, for whom:

⁶ Júlio Teles Grilo, “Vidago: a piscina do Palace”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 196 (May/June, 2000): 25.

⁷ Which is not surprising given that almost 54% of signed articles are by authors who belong to academia, which does not mean that all of them write in an academic tone.

⁸ Eduardo Souto de Moura, “Com a naturalidade das coisas naturais”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 213 (November/December, 2003): 76-77.

⁹ Pedro Barreto, “Haiku d’aqui: a teia da lei”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 198 (November/December, 2000): 18.

¹⁰ Diogo Freitas do Amaral, “Projecto de Lei de revogação (parcial) do DL 73/73, 28 de Fevereiro”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 215 (April/June, 2004): 14-19.

¹¹ Manuel Vicente, “O ‘campo’ é o sítio onde paro para mijar quando viajo entre duas cidades,” interview by Manuel Graça Dias, *Jornal Arquitectos* 195 (March/April, 2000): 61-65.

¹² José Manuel Fernandes, “Férias Nacionalistas e Arquitectura Tradicional,” *Jornal Arquitectos* 196 (May/June, 2000): 31-35.

¹³ [The roots of our understanding of architecture lie in our childhood, in our youth; they lie in our biography. Students have to learn to work consciously with their personal biographical experiences of architecture.] Peter Zumthor, “Teaching architecture, learning architecture”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 201 (May/June, 2001): 11.

¹⁴ [Being an architect is not an occupation, it’s a commitment to life. It’s more than a vocation, it’s a necessity!] Pedro Ressano Garcia, “Das experiências ibéricas passando para o mundo anglo-saxónico”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 202 (September/October, 2001): 70.

¹⁵ For example, when professional practice is carried out in countries other than the country of origin, where the challenges are more intense: [It’s not worth talking about the widespread hunger that dies at the entrance to our gate. Between neocolonial neurosis and let’s-drink-to-forget, there is little room left for militant internationalism.] Júlio Teles Grilo, “Sketches, etc. Uma estação sem cor”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 198 (November/December, 2000): 35.

¹⁶ As is the case of the non-separation between the private space of the bedroom and the workplace, where the drawing board is next to the bed. Roberto Cremascoli, “Sim, é verdade que tenho o estirador ao lado da cama!”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 198 (November/December, 2000): 32-33.

O trabalho em arquitectura é, na realidade, um trabalho feito sobre a nossa interpretação, a nossa maneira de ver as coisas, pois nós não vemos as coisas como elas são mas como nós somos. E daí a multiplicidade de versões que o mesmo problema suporta, sem que se possa dizer que a minha versão é mais verdadeira do que a tua. E isso é que é verdadeiro.¹⁷

And perhaps it is this lack of distinction between the personal and the professional dimension that may be at the origin of an internal tension that appears to be structural: the inner struggle between the need for commissions, and therefore a client, and the will to carry out the work with artistic independence.¹⁸ As a result of this condition, Tainha believes that “que é das profundezas de uma consciência infeliz de desapossado do poder sobre o acto de construir que o arquitecto procura pateticamente, isto é, com paixão, a terapêutica para a sua sanidade mental”.¹⁹ Faced with the uncertainty of aesthetic and theoretical movements, the decline of dominant ideologies, of common enemies, the “therapy”, for Tainha, is in a “campo de reflexão que lhe seja próprio”²⁰. But to what extent will a field that belongs to the architect alone indicate more freedom and bring him closer to conditions that are eventually more independent and desirable than those exercised by more artistic practices? (fig. 3) If, as Nuno Lourenço states, the independence of architecture is achieved by defending the values of the profession and the public interest in the face of economic and political powers, is it possible to maintain that independence at a time when its own professional practice is dragged by the nets of neoliberalism and submitted to pragmatic and efficient responses in order to maintain its financial survival?²¹ And if the reality of the architect’s professional practice is made with the market²² – a reality that has been around for a long time, as

¹⁷ [The work in architecture is, in reality, a work done on our interpretation, our way of seeing things, because we don’t see things as they are, but as we are. And hence the multiplicity of versions that the same problem supports, without it being possible to say that my version is truer than yours. And that’s what’s true.] Manuel Tainha, “Dificuldades conceptuais”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 198 (November/December, 2000): 20.

¹⁸ [the conflict between the commission on which architecture lives and the architect’s spirit of independence manifests itself in a stubborn performance, conflicting and painful, as he deeply experiences a contradiction, unknown to other artistic practices, between freedom and necessity.] Tainha, “Dificuldades conceptuais...”, 19.

¹⁹ [it is from the depths of an unhappy awareness of being dispossessed of power over the act of building that the architect pathetically seeks, that is, with passion, therapy for his mental sanity.] Tainha, “Dificuldades conceptuais...”, 20.

²⁰ [in a field of reflection that is his (the architect) own.] Tainha, “Dificuldades conceptuais...”, 20.

²¹ [Is it possible to maintain this independence when the professional fabric increasingly tends to organize itself through large offices conditioned, by their size, to an increasingly pragmatic response to the problem of architecture? (...) And are we going to defend the values of architecture and territorial organization working under directives from administrations only interested in the profits of their shareholders?] Nuno Lourenço, “A face de dentro da profissão”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 198 (November/December, 2000): 16.

²² Alexandre Alves Costa, “Um quadradinho a menos. Round-table with Alexandre Alves Costa, Álvaro Siza, Domingos Tavares, Eduardo Souto Moura and Sergio Fernandez”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 208 (November/December, 2002): 16.

Michel Toussaint observes²³—, a market that for Nuno Teotónio Pereira has become a new “dictatorship”, where are the possibilities of freedom and independence for the architect?²⁴ For this old freedom fighter of the Salazar’s fascist regime it seems that the only possibility is to: “resistir, tentar persuadir e, quando possível, recusar”²⁵. And to fight, to assert the “author-architecture”, meaning, to conquer a field of freedom and independence. In Manuel Vicente perspective, the architect needs to be courageous²⁶.



Figure 3. “Os arquitectos como feiticeiros, presdigitadores, negociantes de mercadorias fantásticas, poções, promessas, bruxarias. Eu como curandeiro”, Pancho Guedes. Source: *Jornal Arquitectos* 208 (November/December, 2002): 50-51.

²³ Michel Toussaint, “Reler as maleitas da arquitectura nacional”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 199 (January/February, 2001): 15.

²⁴ [They tell us that this is what sells well, because if there are those who buy it, it's because they like it—and if that's the taste, then you have to satisfy them—. This is the great power of the new dictatorship that is imposed on us: the dictatorship of the market, which corrupts everything, which ruins everything, because this is what is sold. And we remain silent, entertained with the quality objects with which the so-called author architecture punctuates the territory flooded by mediocrity. And, if in the other dictatorship it was not possible to denounce or protest, because censorship was vigilant there—today we seem resigned to suffering the curse—] Nuno Teotónio Pereira, “A arquitectura manipulada, hoje como ontem ou a ditadura do regime à ditadura do mercado”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 198 (November/December, 2000): 50.

²⁵ [resist, try to persuade and, when possible, refuse] Teotónio Pereira, “A arquitectura manipulada...”, 50.

²⁶ [With the courage of convictions; with the courage to negotiate them, to disguise them, not to make them too apparent, but also the courage to review them in dialogue, to review them in this constant confrontation with their physical viability, with their financial viability, with their social viability and politics, with the solidity of his poetics] Manuel Vicente, “As dificuldades da prática profissional à luz de Diderot...”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 198 (November/December, 2000): 27.

However, in Paulo Pereira's historical reading, the architect never considered himself as an artist, and architecture always has been a particular and multidimensional form of a social contract²⁷. Throughout the centuries, with the development of representational techniques, industrialized production methods, the institutionalization of teaching, the demographic increase in cities or new programs, the architect comes closer and closer to the status of a “creator”²⁸. Which also means that architecture is increasingly self-referential²⁹ and the architect even more alone³⁰. In Paulo Pereira's reading, the relevance of the architect seems, therefore, to inevitably tend towards to “author-architecture”. But this is an interpretation that may give rise to some misunderstandings.

The need for “autonomy”

The “author-architecture” in this series of *J-A*, has to do with a particular way of looking at the world, shaped by a broad culture of references that, case by case, presents answers that each architect, at that specific moment, considers to be the most appropriate, which, if successful, would contain that indescribable quality of architecture that Manuel Vicente talks about³¹. For this to happen, it would be favourable if architecture managed to conquer for itself a little “autonomy” in the sense of taking advantage of its own qualities: to tell a story, the ineffable light variations or the scale of the space³². In this perspective, in addition to his particular way of living and thinking about architectural space, one can see, above all, an intense relationship with architecture, the same one that he seeks to show his students:

... eu acho isso bastante extraordinário –a descoberta desta autonomia–, a qual tem a incidência sobre o modo de ensinar. De “ensinar”? De formar arquitectos! Ou seja, de libertar

²⁷ [(architects) rarely assumed themselves as “artists” or considered “architecture” as a pure “art”. Architecture is –always has been– a peculiar and complex form of social contract. And what prevailed for centuries, sedimented in a lot of experience (and in a lot of fallen vaults), was the pragmatic relationship of the master or the architect with the work for which he was responsible –in terms of construction and in terms of organization of manufacture–] Paulo Pereira, “Arquitecto, profissão antiga”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 198 (November/December, 2000): 44.

²⁸ [Creating new objects, that is, objects never seen before, then becomes a distinctive factor in the architect's language, which is increasingly approaching the status of an artist] Pereira, “Arquitecto, profissão antiga...”, 45.

²⁹ Pereira, “Arquitecto, profissão antiga...”, 46.

³⁰ Jorge Figueira, “A rainha da Holanda na cidade-estaleiro (6 pontos sobre a requalificação da baixa portuense – Porto 2001)”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 199 (January/February, 2001): 18-19.

³¹ Manuel Vicente, “A vida é real! Interview by Manuel Graça Dias”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 203 (November/December, 2001): 87.

³² [This *autonomy of the architectural thing*, this *sending back to itself* –not exclusively, or not mainly, in formal terms, but in terms of the vibration of the discourse itself–. That desire for *experience*, for architectural experience (...) the telling of a story that has a lot to do with the paths and with the ways of being and with the ways of receiving the light and with changes in scale and space... And this is what gives architectural production a certain universalism; and a certain “timelessness”, simultaneously!] Manuel Vicente, “Oh, si ma mère me voyait! Interview by Manuel Graça Dias”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 208 (November/December, 2002): 68.

nos estudantes uma enorme paixão pelo construído, pela materialidade, pelo peso, pela luz, pela sombra!³³

Perhaps from here one can understand how a certain way of being in the profession, of being an architect, the “craft”, is transmitted between different generations, how the “passion” for what one does contributes to the construction of who one is³⁴, and how, also, the “universalist” and “timeless” referents implies that identification with the “other” does not depend exclusively on a physical presence but through a mediated process as well³⁵.



Figure 4. “A face azul do Moderno”, Jorge Figueira. Source: *Jornal Arquitectos* 203 (November/December, 2001): 6-7.

Nevertheless, throughout the pages of this series, there is a desire to approach the international architectural context, not only by exposing projects by foreign architects, but also by

³³ [I find this quite extraordinary –the discovery of this autonomy– which has an impact on the way of teaching. Of “teaching”? To train architects! That is, to release in students an enormous passion for what is built, for materiality, for weight, for light, for shadow!] Vicente, “Oh, si ma mère me voyait!...”, 68.

³⁴ [There is, in students, an intense process of personal identification with the objects of study, hence the difficulty of criticism. (...) The responsibility of those who criticize is to understand that often it is not just the work that is at stake, it is the person himself through it.] Luís Urbano, “A propósito de Billy Elliot”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 201 (May/June, 2001): 23.

³⁵ [Thus, from the growing individualism of the “popular” authors, we pass to those of the students themselves and the true teaching guides are again not the ideas or the paths to follow in the face of contexts and meanings, but the images published in magazines or other media –with which design teachers find it increasingly difficult to know how to deal effectively–] Nuno Portas, “Ensino: o projecto dos arquitectos”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 201 (May/June, 2001): 30.

publishing reference texts by renowned authors from other geographies (Walter Gropius, Josef Albers, Peter Zumthor, Paulo Mendes da Rocha, João Vilanova Artigas or Louis Khan). (fig. 4) However, the references are not limited to the “classics”, there is also space for unpublished texts by contemporary authors and for the translation of articles published in foreign journals –which can be interpreted as an effort by *J-A* to strengthen the national reality with new and fresh ideas– in which the Portuguese architectural culture seeks to match the international one. In the same sense, there is a careful reflection in the Portuguese theoretical production on the debate beyond national borders, incorporating in its argumentation foreign theoretical references and practices, contemporary and historical.

At the turn of the millennium, Portuguese architectural culture claims a level position with the international context. If, on the side of architectural design, the “strength” of Álvaro Siza (but not only) had already been affirmed for a long time, on the theory/criticism side, some authors find in the pages of this series adequate conditions to flourish, diversify and sediment a personal thought, but without ever losing its culturalist dimension.

The inflection of professional reality and the print therapy

In 2006, the Portuguese Architects Association commissioned to the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon a report on the architects’ profession. In this study, over than 81% identified the model of the architects’ professional ideal-type as a liberal profession, exercised exclusively and in its own name, producing an “author-architecture”³⁶. Nonetheless, it is curious to observe that this form has a small practical correspondence among Portuguese architects (little more than 25%³⁷), presenting itself as an *inflection* of their professional reality. Despite the sociological study coordinated by Manuel Villaverde Cabral portrays the architects’ profession in 2006, the identified ideal-type expands beyond its temporal limits; the analysis carried out points to the perpetuation of a professional ethos transversal to several generations, even resisting the strong regeneration that occurred in the 1990s³⁸ and foreseeing its continuity in subsequent generations³⁹. Although its portrayal took place at the beginning of this century, this is a form that is not limited to the time in which it was identified. The lack of correspondence between the idealized model –depicted, for example, in *J-A*’s pages– and the practical exercise of the discipline leads to what those responsible for the Report designate as the tension between vocation and profession⁴⁰. According to them, this internal tension appears, for most architects, incapable of harmonizing their ideal-type with the objective conditions of their work⁴¹. As Rute

³⁶ Manuel Villaverde Cabral and Vera Borges, *Relatório profissão: Arquitecto/a* (Lisbon: Universidade de Lisboa; Instituto de Ciências Sociais, 2006), 60.

³⁷ Villaverde Cabral, Borges, *Relatório profissão...*, 66.

³⁸ Villaverde Cabral, Borges, *Relatório profissão...*, 27.

³⁹ Villaverde Cabral, Borges, *Relatório profissão...*, 34.

⁴⁰ Villaverde Cabral, Borges, *Relatório profissão...*, 123.

⁴¹ Villaverde Cabral, Borges, *Relatório profissão...*, 42.

Figueiredo⁴² defend in the pages of *J-A*, the “identity” of the architect is hostage to a series of paradigms founded on history that configure the “naturalness” of the model, but which are shown to be out of tune in its relationship with the contemporary reality. But perhaps it is based on this condition of difficult agreement with the “real” that one can understand how architecture in its built dimension is, in most cases published in *J-A*, discussed, thought about and represented as an independent object, self-contained, self-sufficient and centred on itself, apparently free of the extra-disciplinary constraints that shape it, even if the authors themselves (designers and critics) reject or oppose this exclusive possibility. Even though there are several reasons that can explain this: as a reaction to the persistent theoretical constraints of Portuguese architecture, the maturation of the national architectural culture, the increase in the number of critics and architects, the ever-increasing articulation between practice and theory, the expansion of knowledge or the demanding quality claimed by the disciplinary environment.



Figure 5. “Uma escola, uma síntese arquitectónica”, Dalva Thomaz. Source: *Jornal Arquitectos* 201 (May/June, 2001): 86-87.

As an example, when Manuel Vicente speaks about the “autonomy of the architectural thing” as a kind of delight, an almost sensual pleasure that the building can provide, is stripping it of everything that is superfluous (meaning, what does not promote its sensory and intellectual experience) and to focus all attention on what contributes to their spatial enjoyment. In other words, and from his perspective, for what remains and survives the test

⁴² Rute Figueiredo, “O astro baço. A profissão do arquitecto sobre o signo da ‘independência’”, *Jornal Arquitectos* 240 (July-September, 2010): 83.

of time. (fig. 5) Ultimately, what seems to matter, regardless of all the constraints that may determine the design, is the constructed building and everything else pales before that. This position should not, however, be interpreted as a whim or presumption, but as a belief that everything else is more or less manageable restrictions on which the of the design should not be focused. It has to do, above all, with an optimistic vision that is at the root of the impulse that leads the architect to believe and build. It somehow prevents a kind of "defeat" that the constraints could announce; the "real" they regulate is nothing more than one among other possibilities. Which is a way of saying that this "real" will be whatever each architect wants it to be –the optimistic vision that stimulates the designer and makes him believe that the transformation of reality is possible–. And without this belief, the conviction in the transformation of the world fails; hence the need to believe in the autonomy of the architectural thing. Perhaps this is the reason why the attention of the "author-architect" is focused on those works in which he has greater control –public buildings, for example, but also manifestations in which he is better able to control the final object–. This option, however, does not exist (hopefully) just for a reason to assert individual power or narcissistic control, but because it will be one of the few therapies for his neuroses, as compensation for his impotence –ultimately, who decides is the promoter, economic or political power, or other entities on whom the architect depends or for whom he works–, purging, in the printed pages of the publication, his "imperfection".

The myth of the "author-architect"

The myth, to use Roland Barthes's term –and in fact the characterization developed here is very close to the description of the French author– of the "author-architect" is also reinforced in the form of "success" in how works and authors are presented. The dissemination of the obtained prizes, the competitions won or even the fact of being published, is equivalent to a type of consecration that highlights him in an immense universe of possibilities. Taking into account the percentage of published designs, the "success" of disciplinary practice seems to be found in public buildings (53%). Actually, the conditions they provide are, most of the time, exceptional, from the programs to the places, from the budgets to the means for their production. This is an opportunity that architects do not reject, taking advantage of the chance to experiment with solutions that the constraints of other contexts would hardly allow. Given the broad, collective and inclusive character that characterize these programs, and in the absence of a specific user, it is not surprising that this place is occupied by the architect himself (even if putting himself in the place of the "other" implies a certain detachment, this will necessarily be an idealization based on the experience of those who conceive it, therefore, a projection of themselves). (fig. 6) In other words, the public building favour –not only, but probably is where its intensity is greater and the impact is more extensive–, from a personal point of view of the architect, the construction of an idealized vision of the world, reinforcing the relationship author-building. In this perspective, the "success" that this type of program allows is not only an exceptional job opportunity, but also a privileged condition for the "natural" perpetuation of the architect as an "author".



Figure 6. “O paradoxo do arquitecto”, Bernardo Rodrigues. Source: *Jornal Arquitectos* 199 (January/February, 2001): 4-5.

Another form of the “author-architect” is the one personified by some architects. In them, the presence of the ideal-type, its most complete signifier, the evidence of its “success”. Despite the singularity of each one of them, under the external gaze of the reader, the author who gathers all these forms in himself becomes a myth. In the mythological reading, the “author-architect” becomes a naturalized stereotype (reinforced by the constant presence in the publication); the meaning of his actions is emptied, even if it does not disappear, becoming a signifier for the meaning of what it means to be an architect. That is, the discourse that each author builds are not seen as a singularity, but as a form of myth.

The mythological dimension of the ideal-type reveals itself, therefore, mainly through two aspects: the imperative and interrogative character with which it is addressed to the reader-architect and the natural and eternal vocation with which it is considered. In the first, it forces the recipient (specific and clearly identified: the Portuguese architects to whom the J-A is addressed) to recognize its presence, its existence as a reference model, the way in which it articulates and relates to the discipline, with its code of values, modes of doing, behaviours and habits; it forces the reader to accept its meaning as fact. The published author who produces a “personal”, self-referential architecture, under his own name, exercising the *profession libérale*, with a passionate relationship towards the discipline, without distinguishing between the subject and the architect, regardless of his singularity, is the very presence of the ideal-type. In the second, it is the normalizing effect of the “author-architect” as a

myth that converts a historical circumstance (be it the references to the modern "heroes", the significant increase in job opportunities provided by competitions at the end of the 20th century or the individuality of the architect as an alternative to the great collective projects) into something natural, explicit, evident and, therefore, "eternal".

The yet-to-be answered question

Much of the comprehensive and inclusive personality, but also demanding and rigorous, of Graça Dias was transposed to the pages of *J-A*, summoning a multiplicity of authors, often with antagonistic positions, but who had in common this intense and passionate relationship with architecture. It is also an object of great generosity, bringing to the debate authors from different generations, geographies and backgrounds, revealing that the discipline will be the more complete as the more diverse and heterogeneous it is. The humanist and cultivated temperament of *J-A*'s editor-in-chief is reflected in a publication that does not seek neutrality, but which, for that very reason, becomes a place of great freedom and resistance. And this builds an image of an architect that reflects an ideal-type.

As there are no eternal myths, just as the rise of the "author-architect" was recorded in the pages of the *J-A*, so were the notes of his perceived decline in its latter series. The question that remains is whether this erosion will be a small accident or the beginning of the end; whether the loss of its hegemony is due to a change of referent, the appearance of other stronger myths/models/images, or whether due to the lack of material conditions for its effective exercise.



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