

# Raúl Hestnes Ferreira, the time span of an architectural archive

## Raúl Hestnes Ferreira, o tempo de um arquivo de arquitetura

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### ABSTRACT

The article intends to demonstrate the challenges that an architectural archive faces in order to render records accessible to the public, focusing the analysis on the specific collection of Raúl Hestnes Ferreira. The various occasions when the records were consulted have been justified in the article. This began with the development of my doctoral studies, through to the post-doctoral fellowship in 2015, having had the privilege of visiting the architect's studio between 2007 and 2018. Following his death in February 2018, all records were donated by his family and integrated into the Marques da Silva Foundation (FIMS). Since this date, I have collaborated with the FIMS in the identification and organization of this collection. If the statement that archives are the documentary by-product of human activity retained for the long-term value holds true, the value of the Raúl Hestnes Ferreira collection is unquestionable for the understanding of Portuguese architecture and our identity as a country.

**KEYWORDS:** Raúl Hestnes Ferreira archive; Architecture; Marques da Silva Foundation.

## RESUMO

O artigo pretende mostrar os desafios que um arquivo de arquitetura encerra para poder ser disponibilizado à sociedade, centrando a análise no caso específico do espólio de Raúl Hestnes Ferreira. No artigo fundamento os vários tempos de contacto com o arquivo, desde o desenvolvimento do meu doutoramento, passando pela bolsa de pós-doutoramento em 2015. Entre 2007 e 2018 tive o privilégio de estar no *atelier* com o arquiteto. Após a sua morte em fevereiro de 2018, o arquivo foi doado pela família e integrado na Fundação Marques da Silva (FIMS). Desde essa data, tenho colaborado com a FIMS no seu tratamento. Se considerarmos válida a afirmação que os Arquivos são o subproduto documental da atividade humana retida pelo seu valor a longo prazo, o valor do arquivo de Raúl Hestnes Ferreira é inquestionável para a perceção da arquitetura portuguesa e da nossa identidade enquanto país.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVES:** Arquivo Raúl Hestnes Ferreira; Arquitetura; Fundação Marques da Silva.

## Introduction

Archives are the documentary by-product of human activity retained for its long-term value. However, due to their specificity, the International Council on Archives (ICA) established in 1948, felt the need to create the Section on Architecture Archives (SAR) in 2000, during the 14th International Congress on Archives, in Seville. The main objective was to promote architectural records worldwide. Architectural records are a key element of our cultural heritage, bearing witness to how architecture was created, built, managed, and used; in some cases, it is the only record of the existence of ancient structures or unbuilt projects.

According to the SAR (<https://www.ica.org/en/about-architectural-archives-sar>), the main objectives are to encourage the identification and preservation of architectural records found in offices/studios, taking them from the hands of private individuals to local or national agencies, in order to make them accessible to the public and researchers. In doing so the aim is to promote the knowledge and application of best archival practices; to encourage the allocation of resources to architectural archives in areas of the world where specialized centres do not exist; to be a forum for all those responsible for the care of architectural records; to represent the views and

interests of architectural archives in the International Council on Archives, among others. It should be noted that according to the SAR, the qualifications or title of the archivist is not what matters but rather their ability to create a coherent collection through well-informed and proactive selection and collection.

In terms of methodology, due to the lack of available literature on the work of this Portuguese architect, there was a need to reference several of my own articles written over the years. These are essential for a better understanding of this paper as they help to provide a context for the architect and his life's work.

## **The three moments of interaction with the archive of Raúl Hestnes Ferreira**

Raúl José Hestnes Ferreira (1931-2018, Lisbon) was the son of the Portuguese writer José Gomes Ferreira and Ingrid Hestnes, a Norwegian. His career started in 1960, and he worked mainly in Portugal until his death. He was in contact with other cultures, particularly when he studied and trained in Finland, between 1957 and 1958 and then later in the United States of America from 1962 to 1965. It was during his stay in this country, with a scholarship from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation that he learned about North American architecture and experienced their way of life first-hand. First at Yale and then in Pennsylvania.

The Raúl Hestnes Ferreira archive is composed of a wide range of drawings (both paper and digital) and related written documents (paper and digital), photographs (paper and digital), audio, video, and scale models. My interaction with the Raúl Hestnes Ferreira archive, takes place in three distinct phases and periods: from 2007 to 2011; 2015 to 2018; and from 2018 to the present date.

### **Phase 1**

The first phase began in 2007 and coincided with the beginning of my doctoral research, entitled *The influence of Louis I. Kahn in the work of Hestnes Ferreira*. The thesis was defended in 2011 at the University of A Coruna, Spain. It was the first time the life work of the architect was analysed from a scien-

tific viewpoint. Ten of his major projects completed during his professional career of over five decades were studied in detail.

Contact with the collection of documents at this stage was limited and depended on the information made available directly by the architect, Raúl Hestnes Ferreira. During this period, several interviews were carried out, two of which were later transcribed and validated by the architect and published as an appendix to the thesis. These interviews are important as they validated information about his work, academic experience and his professional career, thus making crucial information available to the scientific community. During this period, I kept in touch with the architect as well as the staff in his office.

Working with this repository of documents led to the publication of various articles and within this context, results from the doctoral research were published. During this initial phase, interaction with the archive happened merely from the perspective of the user/researcher.

## Phase 2

The second phase coincided with part of the post-doctoral research submitted to FCT, '*A monumentalidade revisitada – Hestnes Ferreira, entre intemporalidade europeia e classicismo norte-americano*<sup>1</sup> (1960-1974)' (SFRH/BPD/111869/2015), supervised by Paulo Tormenta Pinto, which began in September 2015. The aim of this research was to trace Hestnes Ferreira's interactions, influences, and relationships, seeking to understand the impact of the cultural exchanges between Europe and the United States on his designs, during the initial stage of his career between 1960 and 1974. This was when he designs the SAAL social housing project for the Fonecas and Calçada neighbourhood in Lisbon.

It is important to highlight that much of the research took place in the offices of Raúl Hestnes Ferreira, in Largo da Graça, Villa Sousa, in Lisbon. From this moment to his death in February 2018, the architect as well as his former designer, Jaime Pereira and his secretary Deolinda Tomé, along with other former staff members provided their full support.

The following photographs (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 6) are a selection of different images showing the different workspaces in

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<sup>1</sup> Monumentality revisited – Hestnes Ferreira, between European timelessness and North American classicism.

Hestnes Ferreira's office/studio, reflecting his life and working conditions at the time of his death.

It was vital to register this moment in time before the process of transferring his life work to the Marques da Silva Foundation. The photographer Luis Pavão was invited to document the spaces which made up the studio for future reference, before the transfer was made on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2018.



Fig. 1. Photographs of the various spaces in RHF's studio.  
[source: Luís Pavão, Largo da Graça, Lisbon, May 14 2018.]

The fact that this research was the first of its kind meant that it was not possible to have an idea of the size of the archive at the outset. As previously mentioned, the size of the archive and the time limitation (1960-1974) set at the beginning of this research excluded forty-four years, from 1974 to 2018, of architectural records. Raúl Hestnes Ferreira carried out his professional activity as an architect from 1961 until 2018, the date of his last project, involving the refurbishment of Largo do Terreirinho, in Lisbon as well as the alteration of its façade.

His death, on February 11 2018, coincided with the 3rd year of post-doctoral research, and this event made the research even more relevant. As a consequence, a request was submitted to the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), the funding entity of the scholarship, to include the architect's entire career, from 1960 to 2018 as opposed to the time span initially proposed — 1960-1974. The request was accepted, and the research was concluded in March 2022.

Even though the architect had had an international career, he was not widely known, further justifying the need for and importance of promoting his knowledge and applications in the scientific community.

### Phase 3

The third phase occurred after the death of the architect when his daughters decided to donate his entire archive. Faced with the need to find an institution which would ensure the needed care to process, preserve and make this extensive body of material available to the community, I undertook the role of consultant, to advise on the decision of which institution to select.

As a specialist in the work of Raúl Hestnes Ferreira, it was clear from the onset that the chosen institution should deal essentially with architectural archives, be competent and have the financial capacity to maintain the archives over the years. The heiresses were of the same opinion. Thus, in September 2018 the donation agreement was signed with the Marques da Silva Foundation, part of the University of Porto.

Together with the technical staff of the Marques da Silva Foundation (FIMS) I participated in the process of transferring the archive, from the offices in Lisbon to the foundation's facilities in Porto.

In that same month, the processing of the archive began with the assistance of the CICA – Centre for Documentation and Research in Architectural Culture of the Marques da Silva Foundation (FIMS). This was carried out in accordance with the technical-scientific standards and procedures based on the guidelines set by the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the Section on Architecture Archives (SAR). My extensive knowledge of the archive allowed me to catalogue and make information readily available.

During this process, documents which had been considered lost were found. This sparked the need to make them known to the scientific community and led to the publication of several articles both in international scientist journals (Saraiva, 2020; Saraiva & Pinto, 2018), and in conference proceedings (Saraiva, 2019).

The photograph below (Fig. 2) displays how written records were stored at the architect's offices. It was here that the first steps of surveying and processing the collection took place. Each folder contained different written records on one or more of the 300 or so projects completed over the course of the architect's lifetime.

This archive consists of written records, drawings, models, photographs, slides, as well as a huge amount of digital material, which also includes written records, drawings, and photographs.

The other images (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4) display how the different types of material which compose the collection were stored including written documents (Fig. 3) and drawings (Fig. 4).



Fig. 2. Storage



Fig. 3. Storage of written records



Fig. 4. Storage of drawings

[source: Alexandra Saraiva, FIMS, Porto, 7 January 2020.]

## From an Archive to an Information System (IS – RHF) Raúl Hestnes Ferreira

The structure of the Information System (IS) at the Marques da Silva Foundation (FIMS) is twofold: personal and family. According to Silva (2004), it signifies that documents and objects produced and accumulated by an individual person or a family, compiled throughout generations by several interrelated members, can be accessed, regardless if the search is made by document or object, by means of the respective cataloguing, going through the Organic-Functional Framework (QOF).

The systematisation and organisation of the Raúl Hestnes Ferreira archive are still in the processing phase, being held captive for preservation and restoration actions at the FIMS. Nonetheless, all documentation has been made available on an ongoing basis for any researcher who makes a request.

According to Ramos et al. (2015), the information description platform used at FIMS is an open-source software — built to comply with International Standards of Archival Description such as ISDIAH, ISAAR(CPF), ISDF and ISAD(G) — aimed at providing a multilingual description of the archive and capable of handling multiple integrated repositories. As a normative application with no financial cost, AtoM is used by the FIMS, as well as by other archival institutions worldwide.

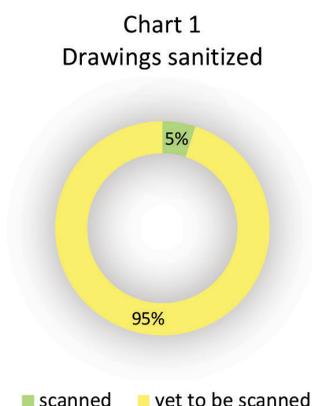
In the FIMS digital catalogue, in the related field, SI RHF — Raúl Hestnes Ferreira Information System, the archivist's notes refer that documents were

organised and described by Alexandra Saraiva and Conceição Pratas (Senior Archival Technician of the FIMS). It is currently possible to access part of the information on the FIMS website, such as the biographical summary I authored<sup>2</sup>.

In June 2020, the Marques da Silva Foundation began the process of sanitizing all the drawings. At the moment a total of 24,566 documents (drawings) have been processed. As a result, several documents from a significant number of projects were selected for digitalization and made available on the FIMS AtoM Platform, in order of importance and architectural value.

This task has been performed with the aid of the technical staff at CICA — Centre for Documentation and Research in Architectural Culture of the Marques da Silva Foundation (FIMS) in order to select and describe the documents to be made available to the scientific community.

The size of this architectural archive (see Chart 1) is extensive, and the digitalization process is lengthy. From the 24,566 drawings, only 5% of the total have been scanned.



[source: Alexandra Saraiva.]

When selecting the documents to be scanned, their relevance, conservation and preservation for future memory were considered. The aim was also to ensure variety in the scanned items according to their use - education, housing, urbanism, and services (see Chart 2).

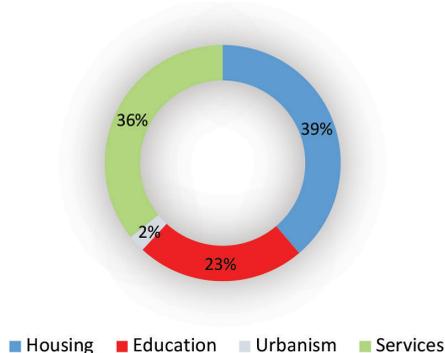
Not only were professional documents included in this selection but also documents relating to the architect's education, thus it is possible to

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<sup>2</sup> Available at [https://fims.up.pt/ficheiros/Bio\\_RHF\\_FIMS%20AS%203.pdf](https://fims.up.pt/ficheiros/Bio_RHF_FIMS%20AS%203.pdf), accessed July 22 2022.

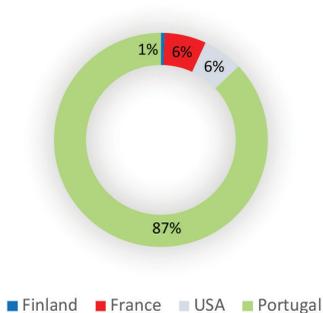
see four locations in Graph 3 corresponding to work and/or education. With regards to education/training, Portugal, Finland, and the United States have been referenced, while Portugal, France and the United States have been referenced in professional terms.

Chart 2  
Scanned drawings by use



[source: Alexandra Saraiva.]

Chart 3  
Scanned drawings by use



[source: Alexandra Saraiva.]

It is also of interest to mention that, in chronological terms, this sample of documents covers the period between 1950 and 1985. The time span for his studies begins in 1950 at the Escola de Belas Artes de Lisboa (EBAL) and continues from 1952 to 1956 at the Escola de Belas Artes do Porto (EBAP). He then attended the Helsinki Polytechnic Institute in Finland in

1957 (Saraiva, 2015) and goes on to complete the competitive examination for the Diploma of Architect (CODA) delivered at the Lisbon School of Fine Arts in 1961, with a project for University Dormitories, for the University of Lisbon campus.

Still related to his studies is the period he spent in the United States, first at Yale, then at the University of Pennsylvania between 1962 and 1965. Between 1963 and 1965 he worked in Louis Kahn's offices in Philadelphia, having participated in the following projects: the Pakistan Government Center Plan in Dhaka and Islamabad; the National Assembly Building in Dhaka and Islamabad; the Main Hospital in Dhaka, as the lead architect; Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, Indian Union; and the project for the School of Art in Philadelphia, unbuilt.

In professional terms, our selection includes the first project from 1960 for a house in Albarraque for José Gomes Ferreira and the last one from 1985, a Caixa Geral de Depósitos branch in Aviz. The first project corresponds to the house he designs for his father, the writer José Gomes Ferreira, influenced by the main principles of Scandinavian architecture and the training acquired at the Porto School of Fine Arts. "Hestnes manages to transpose the neorealism advocated by his father to this project, by creating a refuge that respects the family's way of life and the simplicity of the rural environment" (Saraiva, 2015).

The last project received an award from the Association of Portuguese Architects (currently designated as Ordem dos Arquitectos Portugueses) in 1993, in the Technical Construction and Detail category. According to Saraiva (2015), in this project the "design results from the previous knowledge of the constructive parameters of this material, which is materialised in the design — there is a fusion between the idea behind the design and the final image of the whole".

## Conclusion

The added value of the collaboration between the specialist architect and the archivist is to have prior knowledge of the various phases of a project and to be able to reconstitute the construction process at these different stages. At this point, we must always consider at least three key moments: schematic design, construction drawings/licensing, and execution. Moreover, by being familiar with the whole archive, it is easier for the specialist architect to gather all the documents from one project in a quicker and more efficient manner.

Typically, architects are not very organised, and the amount of documentation produced is excessive and repeated, often accumulating copy of a copy. The Raúl Hestnes Ferreira archive is no exception and has been quite challenging to process. Hence, it is essential to always include an architect — a specialist in the lifework of the person, and this for each collection — and an information manager, for the accurate compilation of an archive.

The effective management of collections must ensure the long-term physical survival of the contents through the classification and arrangement of reliable and detailed information. It must also include the sustainable care of the contents to guarantee their long-term survival. One must also consider an access programme which is logical and easy to use, facilitating research by anyone, and allowing the search for content to be catered to the needs of the end user. In this specific case, provided by the AtoM platform, as a normative application without financial costs, used worldwide by different archival institutions.

Although the systematization and organization of the Raúl Hestnes Ferreira archive are still in the processing phase with the Marques da Silva Foundation, it is guaranteed that its value is safeguarded. The value of this archive is unquestionable for the study and understanding of Portuguese architecture and its identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In this sense, the four factors which ensure the value of the archives for society have been respected, and they are: authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability.

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