

# Political Spectacle, Folklorist Practices, Visual Representations, and Print Media at the 1940 Portuguese World Exhibition

Filomena Serra

Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Instituto de História Contemporânea, FCSH | INPAST 2

sfmc@fcs.unl.pt

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3011-2383>

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## Abstract

Without ignoring the broader theoretical context that, since Walter Benjamin, has considered the “political spectacle” as the aestheticization of politics, this essay seeks to refocus the discussion on the social relationship mediated by images (Guy Debord, *La Soci  t   du Spectacle*, 1967) that visual propaganda produces as a political spectacle and spectacularization of everyday life. To this end, the article will discuss the cases of the Regional Centre of the 1940 Portuguese World Exhibition and its relationship with the illustrated album *Vida e Arte do Povo Portugu  s* (Life and Art of the Portuguese People, 1940), a lavish publication on ethnography produced by the regime’s propaganda organization, the National Propaganda Secretariat.

Trying, analytically, to bring together two propaganda devices – an exhibition and an illustrated book that reinforces the messages of the exhibition –, we will examine what role did they play as visual propaganda. We will explore the dialogue and

## Resumo

Sem ignorar o contexto te  rico mais vasto que, desde Walter Benjamin, considera o “espet  culo pol  tico” como estetiza  o da pol  tica, o presente ensaio procura recentrar a discuss  o na rela  o social mediatizada pelas imagens (Guy Debord, *La Soci  t   du Spectacle*, 1967) que a propaganda visual produz, enquanto espet  culo pol  tico e espectaculariza  o da vida quotidiana. Para tal, o artigo discutir   os casos do Centro Regional da *Exposi  o do Mundo Portugu  s de 1940* e a sua rela  o com o   lbum ilustrado *Vida e Arte do Povo Portugu  s* (1940), uma publica  o luxuosa sobre etnografia produzida pelo organismo de propaganda do regime, o Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional.

Procurando, analiticamente, aproximar dois dispositivos de propaganda – uma exposi  o e um livro ilustrado o qual refor  a as mensagens da exposi  o – examinaremos o papel que ambos desempenharam enquanto propaganda visual. Exploraremos a interliga  o entre os dois suportes e com outras publica  o  es,

the interconnection between the two media and with other publications, as well as the interplay between the exhibition's visuality and the graphic arrangements combining drawings, photographs, texts and manipulated symbols, the rhetoric of "Portugueseness" and the coincidence of those imagery discourses. In other words, how the "spectacle-politics" was formally reincarnated, as memory, instrument and images mediation, in this transmediatic process.

Keywords: Political Spectacle; Visual Propaganda; Folklorist Practices; Portuguese Estado Novo (New State); Propaganda Books.

bem como a interação entre a visualidade da exposição e os arranjos gráficos que combinam desenhos, fotografias, textos e símbolos, a retórica da "portugalidade" e a coincidência desses discursos imagéticos. Por outras palavras, a forma como o espetáculo político foi formalmente reincarnado, como memória, instrumento e mediação de imagens, nesse processo transmediático.

Palavras-chave: Espetáculo Político; Propaganda Visual; Práticas Folcloristas; Estado Novo Português; Livros de Propaganda.

## **Introduction**

The *European* fascist dictatorships of the inter-war period regularly organised their propaganda through spectacles, be they political rituals, ceremonies, pilgrimages to new places of worship, exhibitions, public works, displays, plays, pageants, jousts making them the preferred media for cultural policy. As persuasive propaganda these spectacular events of power were carefully organised performances reimagining myths, and genealogies for the crowds of people who attended them, symbolizing and enhancing power or ideology. These entertainment programmes had great appeal. They were visual experiences with emotional impact: they needed to surprise, impress, and disturb minds. As “collective emotions” they represented “the synchronous convergence in affective responding across individuals towards a specific event or object”<sup>1</sup>.

Guy Debord, a forerunner of the May 1968 movement, analysed the consumer society as the display of commodities as a huge accumulation of spectacles. According to him, the spectacle as “a material reconstruction of the religious illusion”<sup>2</sup> has blended into everyday reality and commands all the media. “The spectacle is not a collection of images”, he wrote, but rather, “a social relation among people mediated by images”<sup>3</sup>.

The staging of international exhibitions was one of the most powerful means of this mediation of images onto mass audiences. Attracting depoliticised mass crowds enacting “spectacle, fantasy and entertainment”<sup>4</sup>, and despite their pedagogical intentions, they had been the preferred tactic of political elites to reinforce national identities. Print media would be their main communicative supports. They enabled the rapid dissemination of images through illustrated and photographic books, catalogues, guides, posters, leaflets and magazines. That’s why exhibitions became a graphic laboratory and a job market for architects, artists and designers.

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<sup>1</sup> Christian von Scheve & Sven Ismer, “Towards a theory of collective emotions”, *Emotion Review*, May (2013), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Guy Debord, *A Sociedade do Espectáculo*, Lisbon, Fernando Ribeiro de Mello Edições Afrodite, 1972, p. 11. In 1988, Debord published in Editions Gerard Lebovici, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*.

<sup>3</sup> Guy Debord, *A Sociedade do Espectáculo...*, cit., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about world fairs and international exhibitions, with particular emphasis on the 1986 world exhibition in Vancouver, see D. Ley, K. Olds, “Landscape as Spectacle: World’s Fairs and the Culture of Heroic Consumption”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 6, 2 (June 1988).

Visual propaganda of exhibitions played a spectacular role in the portuguese fascist regime, when António Ferro (1895-1956), the head of National Propaganda Secretariat (from now on the SPN)<sup>5</sup>, depending directly on Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), the founder and ideologue of Estado Novo's dictatorship, had started to intervene, after 1933, in all aspects of the country's cultural life through the "Politics of the Spirit"<sup>6</sup>. This expression, coined by Paul Valéry, which Ferro adopted became the cultural policy in the early years. The aim was a moral and spiritual "resurgence" that should integrate the Portuguese into the nation, within its multiseccular traditions. With a complex administrative structure, coordinated with the regime's censorship services, the SPN controlled all media.

The first years of the SPN's existence, were marked by a series of events that "reflect a progressive move toward the consolidation of an official aesthetic for the regime" bent on reaffirming traditional values and managing social contradictions. Salazar defended an ultraconservative ruralist ideology during his first decades in power, as Ellen Sapega rightly wrote: "many of the SPN's original ideological presuppositions were borrowed from cultural practices and discourses that had their roots in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries", reproducing certain already existing notions of "portugalidade" (Portugueseness)<sup>7</sup>. With the contest to discover the "Aldeia mais portuguesa de Portugal" (The most Portuguese village in Portugal) (1938), and in the planning and execution of the Regional Center Pavilion (1940), during the Double Centenary of the *Portuguese World Exhibition* (1940), Ferro sought "to present an image of the nation as essentially humble and agricultural but at the same time historically destined for imperial greatness"<sup>8</sup>.

When Salazar announced the planning of the Centenary Celebrations in 1938, he stated an Official Note published in *Diário de Notícias*<sup>9</sup>. He wanted the festivities to be extended to the whole country in order "to give the Portuguese people a tonic of joy and self-confidence through the evocation of eight

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<sup>5</sup> After the Second World War, the SPN adapted to the new times by replacing "propaganda" with "information". Its services were reorganised in 1945 and renamed The National Secretariat for Information, Popular Culture and Tourism (SNI).

<sup>6</sup> See Decree-law nº 23.054, *Diário do Governo*, 1ª Série, nº 218, 25.09.1933, where the main guidelines are established.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen W. Sapega, *Consensus and debate in Salazar's Portugal. Visual and literary negotiations of the national text, 1933-1948*, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen W. Sapega, *Consensus and debate in Salazar's Portugal...*, cit., p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, "Nota Oficiosa do Presidente do Conselho", 27.03.1938. This Official Note was based on an António Ferro Report, in Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Arquivo Salazar, Correspondência Oficial da Presidência do Conselho, Centenários 1938-1941, AOS/CO/PC-22, Relatório sobre as Comemorações de 24.02.1938.

centuries of history”<sup>10</sup>. According to him, it would be “a story told in pictures” through a vast programme of public ceremonies, parades, medieval-inspired tournaments, and dance shows by folkloric groups. For these achievements to be recorded for the future, the process of historicization had also to be confirmed through worthy and “memorable publications”. The celebrations mobilised the whole country and colonies and led to the production of a wide range of official print media relating to those events, part of which was also orientated towards the country’s tourism industry. The magazine *Revista dos Centenários* (Centenaries Magazine) was an exhaustive echo chamber of all that doctrinal and ideological promotion propagated during the exhibition. As a historical archive and bibliography of the Centenary Celebrations<sup>11</sup> that *Magazine* was the Executive Committee’s information tool, whose Secretary-General was António Ferro.

The planned “memorable publications” would be a book about the monuments and landscapes of Portugal; another about the Portuguese house; other about the Portuguese Primitive painters; a 1940 photographic album<sup>12</sup>; and a “folklore album of Portuguese customs and popular types”<sup>13</sup>.

Despite the constraints imposed by the course of the Second World War, the *Portuguese World Exhibition*, held in Lisbon between 23rd June and 2nd December 1940, celebrated the Duplo Centenário (Double Centenary) of the Foundation of Portugal in 1140, and the date of the Restoration of Portugal’s independence from Spanish rule (1640).

With over 3 million visitors, this interclassist tool<sup>14</sup>, transformed the country into an enormous spectacle of nationalist euphoria. Such historization was an important element of national cohesion, an “exhibitionary complex”<sup>15</sup>, a purposed display of national greatness and established an intricate network of origin myths linking the present to the past, fabricating memories to be venerated and, ultimately, creating both real and an imagined community<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, “Nota Oficiosa do Presidente do Conselho”..., cit., note 8.

<sup>11</sup> With its twenty-four volumes, published between 31st January 1939 and 31st December 1940.

<sup>12</sup> About Salazar’s official note, the planned publications and this photographic album, see Natacha Revez, *Os álbuns Portugal 1934 e Portugal 1940. Dois retratos do país no Estado Novo*, Master’s dissertation in Art History, September 2012, p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, “Nota Oficiosa do Presidente do Conselho”..., cit., note 8.

<sup>14</sup> Alexandre Oliveira, *Herança de António Ferro: o Museu de Arte popular*, Lisbon, Ed. Caleidoscópio, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Tony Bennet, “The exhibitionary complex”, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London, New York, Verso, 1991.

The *Portuguese Exhibition* was in line with events previously held in other European fascisms, such as Germany, Italy and Franco's Spain in the 1930s and 40s. Both the head of SPN, António Ferro, and other elements of the regime were aware of *La Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (The Fascist Revolution Exhibition) in 1932, the model for the Portuguese *Documentária* (Documentary) in 1934<sup>17</sup> and future SPN exhibitions. However, the *1940 Exhibition* had, in general terms, more affinities with the fascist exhibitions *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* (Augustan Exhibition of Roman Times) (Roma, 1937-1938), and *La Expansión Española en el Mundo* (Spanish Expansion in the World Exhibition) organised in Madrid (October 1940), since these exhibitions commemorated the myths of origins of the historical past and its genealogies<sup>18</sup>.

Miriam Basilio observes that the rebel visual propaganda of Spanish Civil War circulated in various formats and media “to create cohesive propaganda imagery”. This kind of visual propaganda has largely been dismissed as “kitschy, derivative, mediocre, and objectionable political propaganda”<sup>19</sup>. The situation is similar in Portugal. Many studies have focused on the urban, architectural, colonialist, anthropological and folkloric aspects of the *1940 Exhibition*, but print media are often overlooked. However, I want to highlight in this article the contribution of Vera Marques Alves' book, which is focused on the SPN's initiatives in ethnography and folklore, as well as the Regional Centre discussion that supports our analysis. Another important study is Daniel Melo's approach to the perspective of ideological inculcation of the SPN's folklorist activities, which includes the activities of libraries and moving cinemas, or government bodies such as FNAT and the JCCP. Cândida Cadavez, on the other hand, describes how tourism played a vital role within the new political paradigm and argues that the representations of tourism were perfect arenas to display ideology<sup>20</sup>. Heloísa Paulo, for her part, also addresses the standard image of “being Portuguese”, showing how

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<sup>17</sup> See Filomena Serra & João Parreira, “Usos e funções da fotografia impressa na exposição Documentária do I Congresso da União Nacional (1934)”, *Comunicação Pública* [Online], 12, 23 (2017).

<sup>18</sup> Anaritta Gori, “Celebrate Nation, Commemorate History, Embody the Estado Novo: The Exhibition of the Portuguese World (1940)”, *Cultural and social history*, 15, 5 (2018), p. 705-706.

<sup>19</sup> Miriam Basilio, *Visual propaganda, exhibitions, and the Spanish civil war*, Routledge, 2013, p. 4, 6, 129.

<sup>20</sup> Cândida Cadavez, *A bem da Nação – As representações turísticas no Estado Novo entre 1933 e 1940*, Lisbon, Livraria Almedina, 2017.

the folklorist policy was subordinated to the Salazar ideology<sup>21</sup>. Margarida Acciaiuoli's contribution on the Estado Novo exhibitions<sup>22</sup> and on António Ferro was also significant, as was Nuno Medeiros' studies about the history of the book and SPN/SNI publishing<sup>23</sup>.

Visual narratives in print media have gained their own entity in recent decades, many about photobooks, photography and illustrated books and exhibition catalogues. One of these cases is Natasha Revez's work on the albums *Portugal 1934* and *Portugal 1940*<sup>24</sup>, as well as the book edited by Filomena Serra about printed photography and propaganda in the Estado Novo<sup>25</sup>. In this collective book, Javier Ortiz-Echagüe discusses and contextualises photography and the print media<sup>26</sup>. Yet, none of the above-mentioned authors analysed the Regional Centre connecting the "political spectacle" and visual representations of the album *Vida e Arte do Povo Português*.

The first part of this article discusses the "spectacle politics" as an aestheticization of politics. The second section reflects on the SPN initiatives regarding folkloric practices as "spectacle politics" taken by António Ferro's SPN, which anticipated the folklorisation of the 1940 Regional Centre Exhibition. The third section synthesizes the visual propaganda folklorist practices of the Regional Centre Exhibition. Finally, we discuss the illustrated album, *Vida e Arte do Povo Português*, and we will seek to understand how the "political spectacle" was reincarnated and materialised on the book.

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<sup>21</sup> Heloísa Paulo, "Vida e arte do povo Português: uma visão da sociedade segundo a propaganda oficial do Estado Novo", *Revista de História*, 16 (1994), p. 105-134.

<sup>22</sup> Margarida Acciaiuoli, *Exposições Estado Novo 1934-1940*, Lisbon, Livros Horizonte, 1998; and "O Centro Regional da Exposição do Mundo Português" in *Exposição do Mundo Português. Exposição de um lugar*, Lisbon, Fundação CCB, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Namely by this author, "O SPN e o SNI na encruzilhada do livro: António Ferro e o campo oficial da edição no Estado Novo" in Filomena Serra, Paula André, Sofia Leal Rodrigues (ed.), *Projectos editoriais e propaganda. Imagens e contra-imagens no Estado Novo*, Lisbon, ICS, 2020, p. 41-77.

<sup>24</sup> Natasha Revez, *Os álbuns Portugal 1934 e Portugal 1940. Dois retratos do país no Estado Novo (The albums Portugal 1934 and Portugal 1940. Two portraits of the country under the Estado Novo)*, Master dissertation in Art History, September 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Filomena Serra (ed.), *Fotografia impressa e propaganda em Portugal no Estado Novo / Printed photography and propaganda in the Portuguese Estado Novo*, [Gijón], 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Javier Ortiz Echagüe, "Uma pátria de papel: a fotografia, a história e os media impressos no Estado Novo Português (A homeland on paper: photography, history and printed media in the Portuguese Estado Novo)" in Filomena Serra (ed.), *Fotografia impressa e propaganda em Portugal no Estado Novo...cit.*, p. 41-48, 293-307.

## 1. The spectacularisation of everyday life

According to Georg Simmel (1858-1918), the new urban individual is an atomised being, indifferent to and distant from the social environment<sup>27</sup>, a consumer separated from his tools of production. In the late nineteenth century, the masses began to be represented in newspapers, illustrated magazines, news, programmes, and documentaries. Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) also foresaw this communicational metamorphosis when he wrote about this transformation and the close relationship between modernity and the spectacle as well as the emergence of a new aesthetic. Benjamin has described that the democratisation of the reception of visual images, was interwoven with the emergence of masses, urbanisation, and acceleration of the nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. A new type of media literacy began with the advent of image diffusion, made possible by the development of mechanical printing processes. This resulted in a change in the nature of the work of art and its cult value, replacing the aesthetic dimension with the spectacular dimension<sup>28</sup>. He also discusses the language of the camera. The machine reveals an “optical unconscious”, a magical value that a painted image never possesses. Photography, and especially cinema, have contributed to the “aestheticization of life”. An experience that is gratified by the spectacle, making the viewer distracted and uncritical. A spectacle that doesn’t require reasoning, as Benjamin says. The politician assumes the role of the star and the citizen becomes a mere consumer-spectator. This is what happens with the political aesthetics practised by fascism<sup>29</sup>.

In fact, the great transformation took place around 1927, with the advent of sound cinema and the first steps in the development of television<sup>30</sup>. The

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<sup>27</sup> “A metrópole e a vida do espírito”, translated by Carlos Fortuna in Carlos Fortuna (ed.), *Sociologia, cultura urbana e globalização*, Coimbra, CECS, p. 3-45.

<sup>28</sup> He wrote about the changes that technical reproduction brings to society and works of art. It takes away their aura, it calls in question their authenticity and authority. But it frees the work of art from the domination of tradition, giving her great autonomy and, through reproduction, allowing replacing its cult value with its “exhibition value”, replacing the aesthetic dimension with the spectacular dimension. This has resulted in a change in the nature of the work of art that no longer takes place as unique and unrepeatable occurrence to becoming constantly updated, in Walter Benjamin, “A obra de arte na era da sua reprodutibilidade técnica”, *Sobre arte, técnica e política*, Lisbon, Relógio d’Água, 1992, p. 75-13.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Benjamin, “A obra de arte na era da sua reprodutibilidade técnica” . . . , cit., p. 108-112.

<sup>30</sup> The great transformation occurred with the discovery of the principle of television in 1927, coinciding with the first sound film *The Jazz Singer* (1927), ‘signalling the arrival of the sound film and specifically synchronized sound’. See Jonathan Crary, “Spectacle, attention, counter-memory”, *October*, 50, Autumn (1989), p. 100-102.

spectacular will henceforth combine the optical model with sound and image, voice and figures, time, and narrative, in a decisive convergence imposing a new mode of attention and subjective experience. This new visuality will be inseparable from the re-organisation of public space and the perceptual consumption and attention demanded by the spectator<sup>31</sup>. It is in this context that the new concept of political propaganda became crucial for seducing both intellectual elites and artists as well as the general population, imbuing spectators with a single ideology that Gustave Le Bon's "psychology of crowds" attempted to explain<sup>32</sup>.

This picture of social control due to the spectacularisation of our lives, as Guy Debord pointed out, unifies and gives political power the possibility of using the spectacle<sup>33</sup>. It is recognised that "spectacle" can take on different meanings depending on how it is situated historically<sup>34</sup>. Other authors, closer to us, try to explain fascism's fascination with crowds. Simonetta Falasca-Zamponia addresses the field of aesthetics in Italian fascist politics and the construction of its self-identity through political spectacle as a form of "art for art's sake" movement<sup>35</sup>. She claims that discourses, written words, and images autonomously compete for power to construct national history and identity, memories, and their interpretation. Previous works, such as those by Emilio Gentile<sup>36</sup> and George L. Mosse<sup>37</sup>, considered the fascist political spectacle in

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<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Crary, "Spectacle, attention, counter-memory"..., cit., p. 100-102.

<sup>32</sup> It's interesting to note that there are 50 works by Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, in the National Library of Portugal, with editions dating back to the 19th century. The first Portuguese edition is (1909) by the republican Agostinho Fortes, a professor at the Faculty of Letters (University of Lisbon) and its director between 1931 and 1933.

<sup>33</sup> Guy Debord, *A Sociedade do Espectáculo...* cit., p. 14-15.

<sup>34</sup> Many authors have addressed the notion of "spectacle". D. Ley and K. Olds also cite, among others, the contribution of Roland Barthes' post-structuralism and the notion of myth; Jonathan Crary draws up a genealogy of the term "spectacle" by quoting Henri Lefèvre as well as Jean Baudrillard and art historian T. J. Clark, inspired by W. Benjamin, when analysing consumer society and determining a modernity at the end of the 19th century. A "neat temporality" emerged, associated with a reformulation of economic and social life created a new societal dimension and Henry Lefèvre built his famous theory of alienation'. See Jonathan Crary, "Spectacle, attention, counter-memory"..., cit., p. 96-107.

<sup>35</sup> Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist spectacle: The aesthetics of power in Mussolini's Italy*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California; London, England, University of California Press, 1997, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Emilio Gentile, "The theatre of politics in fascist Italy" in Günter Berghaus (ed.), *Fascism and theatre: comparative studies on the aesthetics and politics of performance in Europe, 1925-1945*, 1st ed, Berghahn Books, 1996.

<sup>37</sup> Georges L. Mosse, Emily Braun and Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *A estética do fascismo*, Lisbon, Edições Sá da Costa, 1999.

its ideological and aesthetic aspects. Focussing mainly on Germany, Mosse investigated the role of symbols and mass movements, introducing terms like “secular religion”, “political liturgy,” “national mystique”, “the new politics,” and “the aesthetics of politics”. Roger Griffin has written of a “palingenetic nationalism” regarding fascist political ceremonies<sup>38</sup>, and Michel Lacroix<sup>39</sup> addresses how an aesthetic of beauty, violence and spectacle was used by French fascism as the cultural foundations for strengthening consensus.

Miriam M. Basilio’s work<sup>40</sup> is essential for understanding the way Spanish intellectual and political elites used, manipulated and interpreted images and propaganda during the Civil War (1936-1939) and the early Franco regime. She emphasises the visual circulation of images during and immediately after the conflict as well as the strategies artists employed to imbue their work with meaning, as well as the way in which rebel supporters and republicans reinterpreted national myths and historical events.

This excursus through the history of an idea seemed necessary in order to understand the spectacularisation of the 1940 *Exhibition* and the way in which the images were disseminated on a large scale by the Salazar regime’s political elite and consumed by spectators immersed in politically aestheticised information, propaganda and entertainment. Comparable to that of other fascist regimes in the 30s and 40s, the Portuguese fascists adapted however, the political spectacle of visual propaganda to the Portuguese context and gave it certain characteristics that came to define the ideology of “Salazarism”.

## **2. The SPN initiatives of folkloristic propaganda as “political spectacle”**

Unlike Mussolini, Salazar did not command a large mass movement, nor had he any appetite for political spectacle in the public square. When Salazar came to power, he emerged as the fatherland’s financial saviour, his rhetoric as common sense and presenting himself as an example of the moral virtues of “salvation-sacrifice-rebirth”. He admired the art of oratory but detested improvisation, methodically preparing “the subject, the form,

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<sup>38</sup> Roger Griffin, *Modernism and fascism. The sense of a beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*; London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Michel Lacroix, *De la beauté comme violence. L’esthétique du fascisme Français 1919-1939*, Montréal, Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Miriam Basilio, *Visual propaganda, exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War*, New York, Routledge, 2013.

the exposition” of speeches<sup>41</sup>. Having no interest in spectacles and crowds, he left this task to the journalist and writer António Ferro whom he invited to head the SPN, impressed by a series of articles in the *Diário de Notícias* in 1932.

Ferro did not hide his admiration for a political and cultural solution similar to that of Mussolini fascist Italy. In one of those articles entitled “O ditador e a multidão” (The dictator and the crowd)<sup>42</sup>, Ferro presented Mussolini’s thoughts on crowd psychology and recommended to Salazar a more direct contact with the people. He pointed to the country’s need to have a *metteur-en-scène*, someone who would mediate between the leader and the people. Ferro even suggests mitigating the effects of political repression through “joy, enthusiasm, faith” by means of “parades”, “parties”, “emblems” and “rites” that were indispensable to the dictator’s ideas would not fall into emptiness and boredom<sup>43</sup>.

Ferro had been editor of the magazine *Orpheu* (1915) and as a young futurist an active promotor of the modernist movement<sup>44</sup>. Nationalist and modernist<sup>45</sup>, he was a cosmopolitan reporter who had interviewed the main European dictators of the time and some of the leading figures on the world political scene<sup>46</sup>. It was not difficult for him to organise a “corporation” of artists able to renew the image of the nation. Salazar and Ferro defined very clearly the cultural policies to be undertaken. Essentially, a cultural programme was designed to offer State support to modern artists and presented itself as an alternative to the naturalist academicism of art academies, such as the SNBA (National Society of Fine Arts). At the *1940 Exhibition*, Ferro had already

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<sup>41</sup> Oliveira Salazar, *Discursos 1928-1934*, Coimbra, Coimbra Editores, 1935, vol. 1, p. XXVII-XXVIII.

<sup>42</sup> António Ferro, “O ditador e a multidão”, *Diário de Notícias*, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1932.

<sup>43</sup> António Ferro, “O ditador e a multidão”..., cit.

<sup>44</sup> He was also presented at the *Brazilian São Paulo Modern Art Week* in 1922. After that, he presented for several times the conference, *A Idade do Jazz-Band*, in the most important Brazilian cities, in authentic declaimed and musical performances. Enthusiastic about Gabriele D’Annunzio, he interviewed as a journalist the poet and witnessed the nationalist rituals at Fiume.

<sup>45</sup> Manuel Villaverde Cabral has underlined the modernism (*Orpheu*, 1915) and futurism (*Portugal Futurista*, 1917), which he argues contributed significantly to the “attitude of mind” and “aesthetic politics” that gave Portuguese fascism of the 1930 its initial aura that attracted creators and intellectuals. See “A estética do nacionalismo: modernismo literário e autoritarismo político em Portugal no início do século XX”, *CEBRAP*, 98 (March 2014). There is an older version in English: “The aesthetics of nationalism: literary modernism and political authoritarianism in early twentieth-century Portugal”, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, XXVI, 1, 1984.

<sup>46</sup> As Mussolini, Primo de Rivera, Hitler and Mustafá Kamel. Those interviews were published in *Viagem à volta das ditaduras*, Lisboa, Empresa Diário de Notícias, 1927.

formed his main team (mostly men) with the painters Bernardo Marques (1898-1962), Carlos Botelho (1899-1982), Paulo Ferreira (1911-1999), as well as publicists and graphic artists: the Swiss. The Swiss, Fred Kradolfer (1903-1968), who had arrived in Portugal in 1928, was a key promoter of these new visual languages; as was José Rocha (1907-1982) and the Luso-Brazilian graphic artist, Tomás de Melo (Tom) (1906-1990) in Lisbon since 1926. There were also architects, like Jorge Segurado (1898-1990), and photographers, such as Mário Novais (1899-1967). Together with the painters, Maria Keil (1912-2012) and Estrela Faria (1910-1976), they all collaborated on the Regional Centre exhibition.

In addition to the aforementioned painters, António Ferro also sought to surround himself with a group of ethnographers and folklorists linked to his “Politics of the Spirit”<sup>47</sup>: Francisco Lage (1888-1957), Luís Chaves (1889-1975) and Manuel Cardoso Marta (1882-1958)<sup>48</sup>, among others. They worked for the SPN organising important ethnographic and folklore initiatives, such as the launch of the 1935 National Ethnography Commission<sup>49</sup>. A *Exposição de Arte Popular* (Folk Art Exhibition) took place in 1936, with the same folkloric items used at the *International Exhibitions of Paris* (1937) *New York* and *San Francisco* (1939) (Fig. 1). In 1933, the Grupo dos Pauliteiros de Miranda (“pauliteiros”, or “stick wielders” being similar to English Morris dancers) performed at a festival organised by the *English Folk Song and Dance Society* at the Albert Hall in London and in 1935, an exhibition of Portuguese folk art was sent to Geneva.

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<sup>47</sup> A fourth and new period in the development of Portuguese anthropology developed from the 1930s to the 1970s, with a diversity of actors and organisations: the *Junta Central das Casas do Povo* (Community Centres’ Central Board); the creation of ethnographic museums and folkloric dance groups in the *Casas do Povo* (“House of the People”, a type of community centre). There was also the *FNAT – Federação Nacional para a Alegria no Trabalho* (National Federation for Joy at Work) created in 1935, and other official corporate bodies. Academic ethnography figures such as Leite de Vasconcelos and Jorge Dias (1907-1973). João Leal, *Etnografias Portuguesas (1870-1970)*. *Cultura popular e identidade nacional*, Lisbon, Publicações D. Quixote, 2000, p. 35-37.

<sup>48</sup> Francisco Lage would head the ethnographic services of the SPN; Luís Chaves was then curator of the *Museu Etnológico Leite de Vasconcelos*, and Manuel Cardoso Marta, who collaborated with them on ethnographic matters and founded several magazines during the 10s and 20s.

<sup>49</sup> Part of the general plan was to have theatre performances and show films in small villages where Parish Councils and *Casas do Povo* were installed as corporate bodies for the *Teatro do Povo* (People’s Theatre) in 1935, and *Cinema Ambulante* (Moving Cinema) created in 1937. This commission was supposed to promote interest in folklore and all that was truly Portuguese, disseminating the country’s ethnographic wealth among the Portuguese and foreigners.



Fig. 1 – Maria Keil decoration maquette for the monumental showcase on the façade of the Portuguese Pavilion. *New York International Exhibition, 1939*; Pavilion of Portugal. Popular Art Room. *Paris International Exhibition, 1937*. Col. Estúdio Mário Novais I FCG – Library and Archives.

In those events, popular art was transformed into spectacle. The folkloric organisation, for example, in *1937 Paris Exhibition* included an *arraial minhoto* – a sort of folk festival – of Portuguese women from the Minho province in the far North of the country, parading in regional costumes. The women held “little arches, paper flowers, festoons of greenery [and] little bowls of various colours” lent by the country’s museums<sup>50</sup>. The photographer Mário Novais accompanied Ferro and covered the event and all the decorations and panels of photographs.

Following the remarkable success of that exhibition, António Ferro organised one of the “Politics of the Spirit” most significant propaganda events – the contest for the *Most Portuguese Village in Portugal* in 1938. The quest to discover the “most Portuguese village [...] aimed to convince both urban dwellers and residents of the provinces themselves of the centrality of village life as a repository of national virtue”<sup>51</sup>. At the same time, he invested in the production of images showing rural life as fostering social harmony and stability to promote a picture of an essentially agrarian, bucolic, preindustrial

<sup>50</sup> Vera Marques Alves quoting Fernanda de Castro in *Arte popular e nação no Estado Novo. A política folclorista do Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional*, Lisbon, ICS, 2013, p. 48.

<sup>51</sup> Ellen W. Sapega, *Consensus and debate in Salazar’s Portugal...*, cit., p. 14.

Portugal<sup>52</sup>. The aim was to celebrate a village of mainland Portugal with certain characteristics defined in advance, in order to recover an image of a specific ethnic type in its “purity and grace”; to find “the people of the villages, the anonymous artists who “have managed to keep intact, the traditional customs of their land”. This image was to be inculcated and internalised psychologically, to build a specific picture of the Portuguese nation and the “Portuguese being”.

At the 1940 Regional Centre's exhibition, inhabitants of the villages in the 1938 contest were invited to take part in the “living groups”, bringing their domestic and work objects<sup>53</sup>. There was the same idealisation of the rural world, as if it possessed a basic personality with ontologically psychological and symbolic qualities. A collective identity of the village and the peasantry as a model of “portugalidade”: the true Portuguese spirit.

According to anthropologist João Leal, since the end of the nineteenth century, liberal and romantic intellectuals have been concerned with customs and popular traditions, spreading this knowledge as a civic action on behalf of Portuguese culture. The study of popular culture was carried out mainly through popular literature and popular traditions. The SPN propagandistic investment in folklore differed from this liberal republican civic culture and patriotism. At the turn of the nineteenth century, objects came to be considered in terms of their visual and plastic qualities, a shift that directed ethnographic research towards technologies and material culture<sup>54</sup>. With the advent of the Estado Novo, folkloric practice was institutionalised and understood as a process of construction, a folklorisation<sup>55</sup>. The cult of tradition, national regionalism and the objectification of culture were stimulated. Rustic objects were conceived as an idealised national decorative fine art, from which poverty was airbrushed out. Hence the insistence on staging reinvented traditions aimed at national and foreign spectators, such as folk-dance groups and the formation of the *Verde Gaio Dance Group* by the SPN<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Ellen W. Sapega, *Consensus and debate in Salazar's Portugal...*, cit., p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> Alexandre Oliveira, *Herança de António Ferro...*, cit., for an up-to-date bibliography on the Regional Centre and the history of the Popular Art Museum.

<sup>54</sup> João Leal, *Etnografias portuguesas...*, cit., p. 43.

<sup>55</sup> “While folklorism encompasses ideas, attitudes and values that exalt popular culture and the manifestations inspired by it, folklorisation is understood as a process of construction: an institutionalisation of performance practices, considered traditional, made up by fragments taken and decontextualised from popular art, usually rural”, Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, Jorge Freitas Branco, “Folclorização em Portugal: uma perspectiva”, in Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, Jorge Freitas Branco (ed.), *Vozes do povo. A folclorização em Portugal*, Lisbon, Etnográfica Press, p. 1-2 e note 1.

<sup>56</sup> See Maria Luísa Roubaud, “Verde Gaio: uma política do corpo no Estado Novo” in Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, Jorge Freitas Branco (ed.), *Vozes do povo. A folclorização em Portugal*, Lisbon, Etnográfica Press.

### **3. The Regional Centre: “The Poetry of a Little Portugal”<sup>57</sup>**

There, in Empire Square, in the Lisbon quarter of Belém, lay the heart of the exhibition. In the adjacent spaces stood pavilions dedicated to the Foundation of the Nation, the Discoveries, Independence, the Portuguese in the World, the Portugal Pavilion. It was the “city of history”, as the empire’s capital, that the architect Cottinelli Telmo designed as a grandiose ephemeral construction<sup>58</sup>. The other pavilions were the Colonial Section (today the Tropical Garden) which included indigenous African and Asian villages and even a Macau street where Portuguese could discover the whole Portuguese empire<sup>59</sup>. Next to the Colonization Pavilion the Brazil Pavilion, the only foreign country invited to participate. By the river Tagus, on the right-hand side of the Monument to the Discoveries, the Regional Centre was created and organised by António Ferro and his artists.

Consisting of a series of pavilions the Regional Centre (Fig. 2) – the Metropolitan area – the heart of “Portuguese being”<sup>60</sup>, was divided into sections: the Portuguese Villages, and the Popular Life Section. Mário Novais<sup>61</sup> was the photographer called in by Ferro to shoot the *1940 Exhibition* and the historic pavilions’ interiors<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Expression inspired from the words of António Ferro at the opening of the New York Pavilion in 1938: “It is the claim of moral values, of these eternal values that constitutes the reason, that is the soul of the little Portuguese Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair, that Pavilion that should not be measures in surface but in spiritual depth”, in *A cultura portuguesa e o Estado*, Lisbon, Edições SNI, p. 30; and the article, “A geografia da saudade e da poesia. Aspectos inéditos dum Portugal pequenino”, *Diário de Lisboa*, 30.04.1940.

<sup>58</sup> Margarida Acciaiuoli, “O Centro Regional da Exposição do Mundo Português” in *Exposição do Mundo Português. Exposição de um lugar*, Lisbon, Fundação CCB, 2016.

<sup>59</sup> See Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, “Power and identity: the exhibition of human beings in the Portuguese great exhibitions”, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 21, 2 (2014), p. 202-218, ([https://repositorio.ul.pt/bitstream/10451/22681/1/ICS\\_PFMatos\\_Power\\_ARI.pdf](https://repositorio.ul.pt/bitstream/10451/22681/1/ICS_PFMatos_Power_ARI.pdf), accessed on 2024.07.05).

<sup>60</sup> *Roteiro do Centro Regional. Exposição do Mundo Português*, Lisbon, SPN, [1940].

<sup>61</sup> Mário Novais was probably one of the most in demand by Ferro. He came from a family of great photographers. He started his professional career in the 1920s as a portrait photographer. In 1933, he set up the Novaes Studio in Lisbon, where he remained active for 50 years. He specialised in the photography of works of art and architecture, and also worked in photo reportage, advertising, commercial and industrial photography.

<sup>62</sup> See Clara Pedro Serra et al., *Mário Novais: Exposição do Mundo Português 1940*, Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1998, p. 19.



Fig. 2 – Metropolitan Ethnography Area. The Regional Centre. 1940 Portuguese World Exhibition, Lisbon, Portugal. Col. Estúdio Mário Novais I FCG – Library and Archives.

Of the countless photographs from Novais' collection made available online by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, we can see that he photographed the Regional Centre and the exhibition's exteriors at night. In these night shots, the photo critic Jorge Calado sees an influence from Bill Brandt, *A night in London* (1938), but above all from Brassai's photobook *Paris de Nuit* (1933)<sup>63</sup>. According to him, Novais is original "by his use of light and slanting perspectives". Indeed, Novais reinforced the contrasts of deep black and white through lighting, giving images an aura of timelessness; and he clearly shows the attractive decorations of this "Portugal in miniature", this "laborious and simple land"<sup>64</sup> of the Portuguese Villages Section – the representations of popular houses – <sup>65</sup>, according to the realities of their geography and reenactments of labourers working in their trades, craft shops, small courtyards and even vegetation representing each region (Fig. 3, 4).

<sup>63</sup> Jorge Calado, "Rectas e curvas" in *Mário Novais: Exposição do Mundo Português 1940*, Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1998, p. 54-55.

<sup>64</sup> "Aldeias portuguesas. Exposição do Mundo Português", *Século Ilustrado*, n° 133, 20.07.1940; "A arte Popular. A exposição de Belém", *Século Ilustrado*, 135, 03.08.1940.

<sup>65</sup> Replicas of traditional houses from all the provinces – Minho, Douro Litoral, Trás-os-Montes, Beira Alta, Beira Litoral, Ribatejo and Beira Baixa, Estremadura, Alentejo and Algarve – and the islands of Madeira and the Azores.

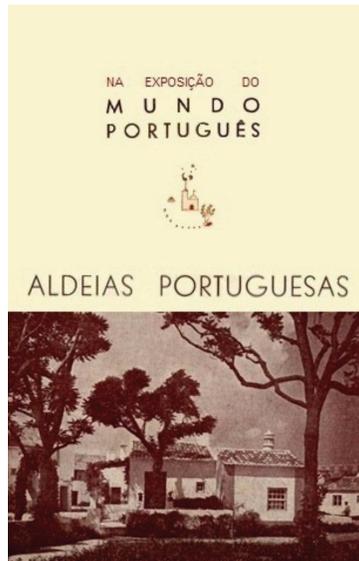


Fig. 3 – *Aldeias Portuguesas*, Lisboa, SPN, 1940 (catalog cover).



Fig. 4 – Portuguese Villages Section. The Regional Centre. *1940 Portuguese World Exhibition*, Lisbon, Portugal. Col. Estúdio Mário Novais I FCG – Library and Archives

Ferro was directly influenced by the *Pueblo Español* of the 1929 Barcelona exhibition, which he had visited as a journalist in 1931, where popular culture was promoted by presenting regional dances and a regional centre<sup>66</sup>, as well

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<sup>66</sup> Jordana Mendelson, “Josep Renau and the 1937 Spanish pavilion in Paris”, *Public photographic spaces, exhibitions of propaganda, from Pressa to the Family of Man, 1928-1955*, 209, Barcelona, MCABA, p. 313-349.

as by the French section of the *1937 Paris International Exhibition*, where the Front Populaire, created a National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions<sup>67</sup>. As it recognises Shanny Peer, the emphasis itself as a collective identity joined hands with commercial function and the nascent tourist industry, as well as the disenchantment with modernity. These events focused on the theme of the rural village and the “life groups” of the 1900 exhibitions and World Fairs<sup>68</sup>. The sets were designed with real characters and the “life groups”, reconstituting the most varied peasant activities as a “living theatre”<sup>69</sup>.

The illusion of authenticity and realism was an effect of these life performances, whether recreations of everyday scenes or formal stagings. This manipulated theatrical situation expected spectators to react emotionally – to be passive receivers of images or quoting Foucault “docile bodies”<sup>70</sup>. The same method of rural life folklorisation would be followed in the Portuguese Exhibition Colonial Section<sup>71</sup>. In the Portuguese villages, people were also exploited as mere creatures, but here was added the “exoticism” of Africans and the erotic titillation of nude women<sup>72</sup>.

The Popular Life (Vida Popular) Pavilions were made up of the Prologue Pavilion, the Goldsmiths Pavilion, the Land and Sea Pavilion, the Arts and Industries Pavilion, the Transport, Weaving and Pottery Pavilion and the Confectionery and Bakery Pavilion, located next to the river Tagus on the other side of the railway line. Visitors discovered streets and courtyards where they could admire the peopled replicas of rustic houses and domestic interiors. Through the photographs of Mário Novais we see women lace-makers, weavers, confectioners, among others, huddled in a simulacrum of the intimate sphere, performing their assigned roles, while men were busy in their workshops exercising their professions (Fig. 5). Shepherds, fishermen, goldsmiths, potters, basket makers, cork makers and blacksmiths were seen dressed in reinvented

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<sup>67</sup> See chapter 1, Shanny Peer, *France on display: peasants, provincials and folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair*, New York, State of University of New York Presse, 1988.

<sup>68</sup> Vera Marques Alves, *Arte popular e nação...*, cit., p. 73.

<sup>69</sup> *Diário de Lisboa*, 02.07.1940.

<sup>70</sup> Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, Paris, Editions Galimard, 1975.

<sup>71</sup> Henrique Galvão, *Exposição do Mundo Português: secção colonial*, Lisbon, Neogravura, 1940.

<sup>72</sup> They were known as “Black Venuses”. See (in this issue) Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, “Female Landscapes: The presence of women in the photographs and images of the Portuguese colonial exhibitions”, *Revista Portuguesa de História*, 55 (2024); and Filipa Lowndess Vicente, “Black women’s bodies in the Portuguese colonial visual Archive (1900-1975)”, *Portuguese literary and cultural Studies*, 30/31 (2017), p. 16-67.

replica costumes of their region, staging work before the public. Scenes were also complemented by songs and folkloric dance groups. These stagings were images without context, the citizen becomes a mere consumer-spectator of an empty reality.



Fig. 5 – Portuguese Villages Section. The Regional Centre. *1940 Portuguese World Exhibition*, Lisbon, Portugal. Col. Estúdio Mário Novais I FCG – Library and Archives.

Moreover, on the walls, there were panels painted with colourful designs and illustrated with popular quatrains. The “geography of saudade and the poetry” of this “little Portugal”<sup>73</sup> was so complete that it even had a post office and a railway station, with its train coming into the village.

The Salazarist aesthetic thus projected its normative ideal of labour, considering its social division as important as the economic one. Progress, order, discipline, an obedient mind, the commitment of men, the passivity of women, wives, and mothers, a “civic religion” supposedly led to a better future<sup>74</sup>. Those “life groups” were also repeated in most of the Pavilions of the Popular Life Section, where many objects from the previous exhibitions in Geneva, Paris, New York, and San Francisco were displayed. Objects were presented, like the people of the “life groups” out of context, aestheticized as “museum” pieces. At the same time, other objects, animated by use, represented different rural and maritime activities. In the large, square space of the Prologue Room, one could see a gigantic carrousel, where picturesque, animated puppets of the most varied types carried out their arts and industries<sup>75</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> “A geografia da saudade e da poesia...”, cit.

<sup>74</sup> Georges L. Mosse, “Estética fascista e sociedade. Algumas considerações”, in Georges L. Mosse; E. Braun and R. Bem-Giat, *A Estética do fascismo*, Lisbon, Edições João Sá da Costa, 1999, p. 7-12.

<sup>75</sup> “A geografia da saudade e da poesia...”, cit.

The Popular Arts and Industries Pavilion, which painter Estrela Faria decorated, used a fresco technique. Meanwhile, the reenactments of traditions and customs contrasted with the large, modern exhibition spaces, the careful placement of objects and the modernist museographic composition guiding the gaze and interpretation.

Paradoxically, the “balanced modernity” propagated by the *SPN* was expressed by formal elements like the painted architectural interiors, the niches, showcases or mouldings, the use of iron for ceiling suspensions and the light emphasised their visual aspect. Naval decorations were made by Estrela Faria, Paulo Ferreira, Eduardo Anahory and Maria Keil. Fishing nets hung from the ceilings dividing the space in the Sea Room, where series of oars and miniature boats were arranged on the surface, high up on the walls. Alongside all this, there was an overabundance of lettering inscribed on the walls or on panels and murals, in a typography that reflected a modernist synthesis, together with lyrical figurations of colourful drawings that sought to represent a certain rurality.

In *O Diabo*, a left-wing magazine, the damning attack was by the historian and critic, Adriano de Gusmão. Deploring the failure of the painters, he wrote: “Mural painting was done because it is on the walls, but we have not learnt the intimate meaning of mural painting”. For him their activity had resulted in no pictorial revelation’ because “in the broad composition created by fantasy, they have failed”<sup>76</sup>. These artists were transformed into official decorative artists of the regime. Ferro had shifted his initial modern intentions towards a sentimentalised and apologetic logic of the “national soul”. Painting in particular had been corrupted by a conception of history and a romantic historicism that created an official style. This was reinforced by the prizes awarded to their team at international exhibitions. In 1937, Portugal would win a Grand Prix and numerous gold medals, successes publicised in 1939. However, though most artists ended up aligning with the *SPN*’s paradigm, criticism of its folklorist action grew increasingly stronger.

#### **4. *Vida e Arte do Povo Português*: a “realistic and poetic alphabet of images?”**

It is now important to consider how an editorial object sought to translate, mediate and normalise the discourse of power. The book *Vida e Arte do*

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<sup>76</sup> Adriano de Gusmão, “A exposição e a arte de Belém”, *O Diabo*, 09.11.1940.

*Povo Português* (Fig. 6 e 7) provides an artistic integration of drawing, painted figures and photography. It was a Secretariat edition on national ethnography, and one of the books portraying “the golden years” of Estado Novo. It can be considered an expanded edition of *Quelques images de l’art populaire portugais*, a book also published by the SPN. It was previously printed for the already mentioned *Exposição da Arte Popular Portuguesa*, held in Lisbon, in June 1937, as well as being publicised at the *1937 Paris Exhibition* (Fig. 8 e 9).



Fig. 6 – *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* (Life and Art of the Portuguese People), Lisboa, SPN, 1940.



Fig. 7 – *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* (Life and Art of the Portuguese People), Lisboa, SPN, 1940.



Fig. 8 – *Quelques images de l'art populaire portugais*, [Porto], Edition du Secretariat de la propaganda Nationale, 1937.



Fig. 9 – *Quelques Images de l'Art Populaire Portugais*, [Porto], Edition du Secretariat de la propaganda Nationale, 1937.

Before moving on to analyse *Vida e Arte do Povo Português*, we will consider the imagery, form and content of the 1937 book *Quelques Images de l' Art Populaire Portugais* published in French, and with 34 pages<sup>77</sup>, is a larger book (around 36x28.5 cm), than *Vida e Arte...*, which reproduces António Ferro's speech on the occasion of the *Exposição de Arte Popular*, followed by a text by the journalist Augusto Pinto. It had a print run of fifty numbered copies on Dutch paper and fifteen hundred on offset paper.

As *Vida e Arte ...* the themes and drawings centre around craft objects from different parts of the country. However, one realizes that without the texts of Ferro and Augusto Pinto the book could have been aimed at children, given the vibrant colours of Paulo Ferreira's drawings of miniature objects, and the human figures' costumes. One would think of a magical, fairy tale world (Fig. 9).

The characteristics of this book corresponded to what Vera Marques Alves considered to be the three aspects that usually defined the artefacts in all the SPN's folk art exhibitions, in particular at the 1940 Regional Centre: the exploitation of detail, excessive decoration and the miniaturisation of these artefacts<sup>78</sup>, such as the 60 cm mannequins (dolls) representing workers, rural people or fishermen. At the same time, the accompanying discourse emphasises the "poetry" of rural man. A lyricism recognised by António Ferro: "aucun peuple possède un art populaire plus coloré, plus riche, plus heureux que le nôtre" (no people have a more colourful, richer, happier folk art than ours). Or according to Augusto Pinto, who found in Camões the lyricism perpetuated through the centuries in the Portuguese people. For the ethnographers of the Estado Novo and for Ferro, Portuguese workers were aesthetic creators and poets, or what Vera Marques Alves called "peasant aesthetes"<sup>79</sup>.

*Vida e Arte do Povo Português* is also an artistic book, a refined graphic illustration of ethnographic themes and folkloric essays, regarded also today as

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<sup>77</sup> The book was composed at the Imprensa Portuguesa in Porto and printed by the Tipografia Nacional in the same city.

<sup>78</sup> Vera Marques Alves offers clues to these characteristics by quoting various authors, especially Claude Lévi-Strauss, who associates reductions (Japanese gardens and miniature boats) with aesthetic pleasure. However, the aestheticization to which the SPN subjected popular objects is more likely to be linked to arousing emotion in visitors to exhibitions, due to their decorative impact and to practical aspects such as transportation. See Vera Marques Alves, *Arte popular e nação...*, cit., p. 174-175 e 180.

<sup>79</sup> Vera Marques Alves, *Arte popular e nação...*, cit., p. 180-187.

a “masterpiece”<sup>80</sup>. From a formal and thematic point of view, it is an extension<sup>81</sup> of the previous book, but its structure, organisation of themes and rigorous aesthetic design have been greatly improved by both Francisco Lage and Paulo Ferreira, with Ferro’s supervision.

If we try to apply the same characteristics pointed out by Vera Marques Alves and discussed above about *Quelques Images...* it is clear that the scale of the figures and objects has been increased in *Vida e Arte do Povo Português*, and miniaturisation is less noticeable (Fig. 10). On the other hand, photography has monumentalised the figures represented and the portraits introduce a realism that *Quelques Images...* does not possess. Ferro, now with a bigger budget for *Vida e Arte do Povo Português*, wanted to show a better work that was very seductive and captivating to promote and internationalise Portuguese popular culture. However, we find the same exploitation of detail and some excessive decorative features, despite the excellent print quality. The work’s readability would be also preserved in accordance with the practical and specific objectives of a balanced modernism, and so that it could be fully publicised for propagandistic-political purposes.

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<sup>80</sup> Vasco Rosa, “Paulo Ferreira, vinte anos depois”, *Newsletter*, 15 (14th December 2019), Fundação António Quadros, Cultura e Pensamento, (<https://www.fundacaoantonioquadros.pt/newsletter/newsletter-preview.php?id=189>, accessed on 2024.06.30).

<sup>81</sup> Maria Micaela D. de Barthez de Marmourieres de Bragança, *Francisco Lage, um intelectual: ideia e acção na etnografia e cultura popular (1935-1948)*, Tese de doutoramento, Lisbon, FCSH/NOVA, 2016, note 7, p. 457.



Fig. 10 – *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* (Life and Art of the Portuguese People), Lisboa, SPN, 1940.

To this end, *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* editorial planning was carefully prepared. It was one of the most important graphic works under the coordination of António Ferro and organised by the ethnographers Francisco Lage with the collaboration of Luís Chaves and the painter Paulo Ferreira, who was responsible for the artistic direction and illustrations. The Book has 32x24 cm, 259 pages, hardback in light green with a design, was composed and printed at Litografia Nacional of Oporto, with an edition of three thousand copies on ordinary paper. A print run of fifty copies was also made on “gateway offset” vellum paper.

The publication included the contributions of various authors and dealt with themes highlighting the plastic visuality of the objects approached which we recognise are those already covered in Regional

Centre Pavilions: “The People’s Costume” (Luís Chaves); “Looms and Weavers” (D. Sebastião Pessanha), “Lover’s Art” (Luís Chaves), “Boats of Portugal” (Rocha Madail), “Popular Art” (Luís de Pina), “Embroiderers and Lacemakers” (Maria Madalena de Martel Patrício), “The Rural Car” (Vergílio Correia), “Work in the Countryside” (Guilherme Felgueiras), “Shepherding and Pastoral Art” (Tude de Sousa), “Popular Lamps” (Cardoso Marta), “Calendar Festivities” (Padre Moreira das Neves), “Dance and Songs” (Armando Leça), “Fireworks” (Armando de Matos), “Potters and Pottery” and “Clay Dolls” (Santos Júnior), “Popular Gold Jewellery” (Luís Chaves).

All the texts are separated by illustrations and photographs. Ferro’s text is itself an image in which the words form a drawing in the space of the page with a very modernist style. Naive and lyrical coloured drawings with expressionist and naturalistic features by Paulo Ferreira relate to each theme, as well as sixteen photographs by Mário Novais.

Photographs assign “realism” (a presumed “realism” in style) and reinforce the imaginative power of the observer along with the texts and the decorative drawings (Fig. 10, 11, 12). The images appeal to the reader’s aesthetic sense, inviting them to see and appreciate the objects drawn and photographed. This relationship, based on a “combination of mediums” and “intermedial references”<sup>82</sup> in the perceptual dynamics of those who observe, constructs a permanent symbolic act<sup>83</sup>. We find this “artistic ethnography” in some of the best SPN publications<sup>84</sup>, with an abundance of iconographic and ethnographic material. This says a lot about the cooperation between ethnographers, photographers, and painters, as well as the connection between ethnography and the history of art and archaeology. From a formal point of view, these visual formulations, demanded by the new means of communication of those years, gave advantages to the languages of montage and photomontage.

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<sup>82</sup> Irina O. Rajewsky, “Intermediality, intertextuality, and remediation: A literary perspective on intermediality”, *Intermedialités*, 6 (2005).

<sup>83</sup> Hans Belting, *Pour une anthropologie des images*, Paris, Gallimard, 2004, p. 20.

<sup>84</sup> A recurrent expression in texts of the period, João Leal, *Etnografias Portuguesas...*, cit., p 46.



Fig. 11 – *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* (Life and Art of the Portuguese People),  
Lisboa, SPN, 1940.



Fig. 12 – *Vida e Arte do Povo Português (Life and Art of the Portuguese People)*, Lisboa, SPN, 1940.

In presenting a thematic continuity in relation to the 1910s and 1920s, *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* was, according to Ferro, a “wonderful specimen of graphic arts”, because with “every page you turn” there is ‘a surprise that enchants us’<sup>85</sup>. Ferro’s preface is all praise, and he argues that “our popular art, simultaneously realistic and poetic, is the permanence of our history alive through the centuries – its alphabet of images”. To reinforce the idea, he wrote that what were archived there, in rigorous photographic documentation, were

<sup>85</sup> António Ferro, *Vida e arte do povo português*, Lisbon, Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional, Edição da Secção de Propaganda e Recepção da Comissão Nacional dos Centenários, 1940, p. 15-16. Ver também o artigo sem autor “Um livro maravilhoso”, *Panorama: revista portuguesa de arte e turismo*, 9 (1942), p. 4.

“masterpieces by Mário Novais”; and the “soberly stylized drawings” in which Paulo Ferreira tried to respect “the authenticity of the form and colour (...) the most characteristic and beautiful of our popular art”<sup>86</sup>.

As we have already seen, the illustrations mark a continuity with the spirit of the representations of *Quelques Images...* resembling the dolls in regional costumes in the Popular Art Room produced for the *1937 Paris Exhibition*, inspired by the French model of the same show. A vision and an aesthetic of the picturesque and of the graphic design of miniaturised figures, that the Estado Novo sought to perpetuate for example, at the *Exposição do Livro Português no Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro Portuguese Book Exhibition) in 1941<sup>87</sup>, where both books were on display; and others book exhibitions, as *1.ª Exposição Bibliográfica de Turismo e Propaganda de Portugal* (1st Bibliographical Exhibition on Tourism and Propaganda of Portugal) (July 1943) in Lisbon, Ateneu Comercial, as well as on the aesthetics of *Panorama*, the SPN’s propaganda magazine (1941-1974), specially on its magazine covers (Fig. 13).

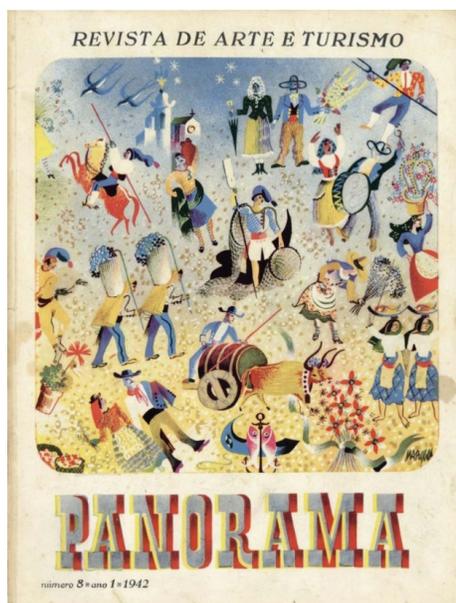


Fig. 13 – *Panorama*: revista portuguesa de arte e turismo, Ano 1, 8, 1942.

<sup>86</sup> “Um livro maravilhoso”, *Panorama: revista portuguesa de arte e turismo*, 9 (1942), p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> The first exhibition following the Cultural Agreement signed by António Ferro in 1941 with Brazil. See Gastão de Bettencourt, “Exposição do livro português no Rio de Janeiro”, *Panorama: revista portuguesa de arte e turismo*, 8, abril (1942).

We know the dual role of photography as an instrument of power. Mário Novais' visual and graphic modernity is undeniable. Perhaps for that very reason, he was chosen to accompany António Ferro at the *Paris International Exhibition* in 1937, where his photomurals of enormous photomontages were outstanding. Novais also organised, at that exhibition, a collection of twelve postcards, on regional types of *Costumes Portugais*<sup>88</sup>. in which he applied the stereotypes of rural nationalism<sup>89</sup>.

In *Vida e Arte do Povo Português*, Mário Novais has a set of photographs illustrating the objectives of *Estado Novo* artistic ethnography, interpreting the aims of the head of the *SPN* and its ethnographers' cinematic conception, aestheticizing and highlighting the formal characteristics of the objects and the people photographed.

But if we look beyond the ethnographic and the artistic, what are these photos hiding? What is absent, but revealed by the presence of the figures and objects, carefully placed and posed just like those photographed? What were these people's lives like? Were they paid to pose for the photographer? We won't ever know the answers to many of these questions, but it is important to ask them.

Novais used all his skills as an artwork and portrait photographer<sup>90</sup> to give man portraits an image of virility and to women a dimension of submissive passivity. Simultaneously, these images also have a modernist sense of choreographic movement. A kind of spectacularisation of objects and people with the use of a sort of vorticism<sup>91</sup>, when he photographed from above and below. The low angle photos of the photomontage of a "campino", (peasant horsemen from the Ribatejo region) dancing the fandango and the music score are also good examples of the figures monumentalisation (Fig. 10). The monumental portrait of the dancer assembled with a graphic text confirms this photographer was aware of the narrative possibilities of Russian and German photomontage of the 1930s, as well as the exploitation of a fascist "photogeny"<sup>92</sup>: costumes and

<sup>88</sup> São 12 postais: p&b; 14,5x9 cm. In *Costumes portugueses: Exposition de Paris 1937*, [Lisbon], S.P.N., 1937.

<sup>89</sup> Clara Pedro Serra et al., *Mário Novais: exposição...*, cit., p. 19.

<sup>90</sup> Mário Novais came from a family of great photographers. He started his professional career in the 1920s as a portrait photographer. In 1933, he set up the Novaes Studio in Lisbon, where he remained active for 50 years. He specialised in the photography of works of art and architecture, and also worked in photo reportage, advertising, commercial and industrial photography.

<sup>91</sup> Jorge Calado, "Rectas e curvas", *Mário Novais: Exposição...*, cit., p. 52, 53.

<sup>92</sup> The concept of "photogeny" applied to the *Estado Novo* seems to have been used by Leitão de Barros. See "O povo no cinema português", *Panorama: revista portuguesa de arte e turismo*, 3, August (1941), p. 9 and *José Augusto*, "Ala Arriba -novo filme nacional", 10, August (1942).

men's body special poses, the artificiality of the setting and its combination with symbolic objects like the fishing net. Women have been replaced by the domesticity of their objects of labour. This explains the foreground pictures of a loom fragment and cork objects (Fig.11).

We find another similar picture of a man clearly posing. The "Malpiqueiro" of Tagus River (Fig. 10), wearing a hat and smoking a pipe, pretentiously dressed in folk clothes, he looks at us in an attitude of defiant masculine assertion. Or a staged shot of a labourer with his rural cart (Fig. 12). These are strong, highly contrasted black and white images highlighting Novais' professional skill, experienced as he was in advertising and industrial photography, modern architecture, portraiture, and photographing works of art.

The great graphic quality of this richly illustrated book was a strategy used to seduce the literate classes, educated elites and diplomatic entities, and above all to publicise the country's tourism internationally<sup>93</sup>, as one could read in *Panorama* magazine in 1942 about the logic established by the strong impact generated by the *Exposição do Mundo Português*:

(...) it was no wonder, then, that the publication of books, leaflets and illustrated periodicals – which, as we know, are the most important and effective means of advertising tourism - is intensifying. Through words and images, people get an idea of what the land and urban centres have to offer, which is worth seeing and admiring<sup>94</sup>.

The editorial project had some effect as it was featured in several international exhibitions, as already mentioned. Its graphic work was emphasised by the German literary and ethnographic studies magazine *Wolkstum und Kultur der Romanen*, which published an extensive article on the book by the philologist Fritz Krüger, as a reference work in the field of folklore<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> José Oliveira e Israel Guarda, "Panorama: Revista Portuguesa de Arte e Turismo" in Filomena Serra (ed.), *Fotografia impressa e propaganda em Portugal no Estado...*, cit., p. 131 e 336.

<sup>94</sup> Acácio Leitão, "Campanha do bom gosto", *Panorama: revista portuguesa de arte e turismo*, 9, (June 1942).

<sup>95</sup> Fritz Krüger (1889-1974) was a German academic and philologist, director of the Faculty of Letters in Hamburg. From 1948, he was Director of the Institute of Philology of the National University of Cuyo in Mendoza, Argentina. An expert in the field of Ibero-Romance studies, he spent part of the summer of 1939 in the Monchique Mountains, Algarve in Southern of Portugal, observing the preparation and manufacture of agave fibre into rope. These studies, photographs and sketches, and written notes were destroyed by fire during the Second World War. Krüger took part in the Centenary Commemorations in 1940 and participated in the National Congress

### Closing remarks

Paulo Ferreira's illustrations and the photographic images by Mário Novais in this luxury edition of *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* intended to build a specific picture of the Portuguese nation and the "Portuguese being". Those images were disseminated on a large scale by the SPN and consumed by spectators immersed in politically aestheticised information, propaganda and entertainment. An iconography that would be repeated and circulated *ad nauseam* in Estado Novo publications like the aforementioned *Panorama*, the SPN propagandist publication<sup>96</sup>. We find a similar iconography in SPN "pousadas" decorations or on wardrobes of *Verde Gaio Dance Group*. Concerning the Regional Centre, the objectification of the nation was targeted for national visitors and for tourists. Just like in the book, the aim was to portray what was called the "Portuguese soul" embodying an ideal of "Portugueseness" that would bring together the entire Portuguese population and its various regionalisms<sup>97</sup>. The ethnographers' interpretations infantilised the discourse of popular art, as well its images. Over the years, the official face of the rural population had been inspired by illustrations of "elegant mannerism" and by decorative miniaturisations that the SPN would extend to publications and artistic and touristic activities, largely due to the "Good Taste Campaign"<sup>98</sup>.

However, the models presented were not absolutely anti-modernist. Ferro and his collaborators intended to resolve the antithesis between the preservation of traditions, their invention and modernity, through a harmonious synthesis and aestheticization of old and new. This ambiguity is evident in *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* and even in *Quelques Images...* Beyond that,

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of Population Sciences, with the paper "Der Beitrag Portugals zur europäischen volkskunde (Portugal's contribution to European folklore)" in *Actas do Congresso Nacional de Ciências da População*, vol. 11, Porto, Imp. Portuguesa, 1940, note 13, p. 459. See Tanley Robe, "Homenage Fritz Krüger", *Romance Philology*, 9, 1 (August 1955), p. 79.70; and also Maria Micaela D. de Barthez de Marmourieres de Bragança, *Francisco Lage...*, cit.

<sup>96</sup> José Guilherme Vitorino, *Propaganda e turismo no Estado Novo. António Ferro e a revista Panorama, 1941-1949*, Lisbon, Aletheia Editores, 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Heloísa Paulo, in *Fotografia impressa...*, cit., p. 123, 335.

<sup>98</sup> The "Good taste Campaign" was an expression used by António Ferro in a lecture he gave on the national broadcasting station in August 1940. It was defined during the Centenary Celebrations and its purpose was associated with and continued the "Politics of the Spirit". Embracing very different interventions and initiatives its purpose was to create an aesthetic awareness among the Portuguese people. See Margarida Acciaiuoli, "As ambições da campanha e o mecanismo dos concursos" in António Ferro, *A vertigem da palavra. Retórica, política e propaganda no Estado Novo*, Lisbon, Bizâncio, p. 238-245.

we know that in 1947 a second edition of *Vida e Arte do Povo Português* was planned as were other initiatives that were not carried out<sup>99</sup>.

To conclude, the great graphic quality of this richly illustrated book was intended for the elites, diplomatic entities and governments, “contrary to what its dedication said”<sup>100</sup>. Through international exhibitions its dissemination seems to have had some significance, as was the cases in Brazil, Spain and Germany.

In this closing remark, the story comes full circle, from the Regional Centre to the analysed book, the afterlife of the propaganda images of the regime. Perhaps we are now in a better position to define the folkloric practices of the Salazar regime politics as historicised performances of visual propaganda. In a country with a serious illiteracy rate, we have analysed fictional narratives and symbols of a happy rurality – a national fiction narrated in images in the Regional Centre and in *Vida e Arte do Povo Português*. A set of archetypes built around ideal models of life and domesticity; a picturesque aesthetic that praises rural life in permanent tension and contradiction with a staged and paradoxical modernism.

Some of these archetypes with new formal design and contemporary art values often still inspire today national touristic and advertising imagery<sup>101</sup>, such as the Barcelos rooster, the current re-appropriation of the sardine campaigns, the Nazaré dolls, and the imagery related to folkloric dances groups which have appropriated the costumes and dances reinvented by the ethnography of the Estado Novo<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>99</sup> Maria Barthez, “Etnógrafo sem cátedra, dramaturgo do folclore português: vida e obra de Francisco Lage, um homem de cultura integral”, *Bérose, Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l’anthropologie*, 2021; “Etnógrafo sem cátedra, dramaturgo do folclore português: vida e obra de Francisco Lage, um homem de cultura integral” in *Bérose – Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l’anthropologie*, Paris.

<sup>100</sup> Heloisa Paulo, “Vida e arte do povo Português...”, cit., p. 117.

<sup>101</sup> See Eduardo Cintra Torres, *História ilustrada da publicidade em Portugal*, Lisbon, Principia, 2023, p. 183, 188, 222 and by the same author *História da publicidade em Portugal, com um estudo de caso do grupo Cuf*, Lisbon, Principia, 2023.

<sup>102</sup> Even today, the “silver rooster”, the prize in the 1938 “Most Portuguese Village in Portugal” competition, is displayed as a symbol of the regional identity of the village of Monsanto. Also, in Peroguarda, Baixo Alentejo, the village that came second, there is now a “tacitly assumed way of linking the village to the competition”. This link is made through the maintenance of the mixed folk dances and the monograph published and re-edited for posterity. See Jorge de Freitas Branco, “Peroguarda: folclorização e memória” in Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco; Jorge Freitas Branco (dir.), *Vozes do povo. A folclorização em Portugal*, Lisbon, Etnográfica Press, p. 409-418.

