

Fazer uma escola. Da/UAL = To build a school. Da/UAL¹

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Reviewing a book with interviews is not easy. Architecture is portrayed in the book as a stage whose major player is the Architecture Department at Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, with its twenty years of existence, many achievements, and a series of extraordinary people with unique experiences.

The book, just like the world, is divided into two parts. The first is a chronological description of its history, starting from today, and conveys to us, in my opinion (I am a mere reader with no knowledge of architecture), its concept of architecture. The several heads of the Department have contributed to the book by reflecting on the time they were the School's leader, and who may be compared to musical instruments, each of them different and contributing to the school's uniqueness.

The straight lines, the curves, the wide variety of the interviewees, they all contribute to a distinctive and intense texture. This feeling is also a result of holding the book and remembering its content and of the book's structure, which I will analyse later in this review - an environment was created based on a well-thought perspective. Not only have I learned from reading this book, but I also feel incredibly tempted to enrol in

¹ Estudo Prévio thanks the author the invitation to write this text, which marks the launching of the book Fazer uma escola. Da/UAL = To build a school. Da/UAL, a compilation of the interviews conducted by Estudo Prévio between 2011 and 2017.

Architecture, particularly in the course on Drawing.

The second part of the book includes the interviews to relevant individuals who have left their mark in architecture. The visual in the text reminded me of cinema, a film with several directors and parallel stories with a common thread. In fact, it reminded me of a documentary rather than a film, a documentary whose protagonists are conveyed to us through the interview, when the interviewees share their options, indecisions, thought processes, when they evidence their humanity, knowing that the equipment we use every day has been designed by them, that they have contributed to the architecture that surrounds us.

Though they talk about theory, research, architecture history, they use a very visual discourse, in which traveling is always present and provides a dimension beyond time and space to our reading, taking us from classical to contemporary creations.

I do not know much about architecture, but I am fascinated by beauty, by what attracts the eye, by novelty, comfort, simple, safe, quality, transforming dreams into places we enjoy being or passing through (such as bridges) and that spark our imagination. They make us feel good. And that does not seem very important, but it is.

The interviews share (almost) unanimous feelings on the Lisbon and the Porto Architecture Schools - respect and admiration for those professors that left a mark in the lives of the interviewees, the idea that an architect must intervene more in political terms, the close relation between studying and working at an office, first projects designed on familiar topics or with friends, the importance of traveling. All this is complemented with a shared global view that lead us to conclude that vision must be direct, without intermediaries. This book has brought back so many trips, memories, amazement I had kept in my memory, very neatly stored, and that have now gained new prominence.

The book also includes, besides those shared feelings, the subversion of Manuel Graça Dias (1953 - 2019), José Adrião's openness to discovering architecture by students at different points in the program, Inês Lobo's holistic and multidisciplinary perspective, Nuno Mateus's idea of learning about your place in the world, Manuel and Francisco Aires Mateus's importance of persistence to attain and maintain freedom by, Ricardo Carvalho's combination of the richness of the past with that of the present, João Santa-Rita's understanding of the whole city and the land on which a building is constructed, Pedro Reis's search for impact in people's lives that reflects on the architect's personal feedback, Telmo Cruz's observation of popular architecture around the world and the acknowledgment that there are connecting threads in decision-making that optimize solutions, João Gomes da Silva's relevance of collaboration, the maritime perspective, João Luís Carrilho da Graça's attempt to catch the waves that derives from your attention to experiences with apparently no connection with architecture, by, Manuel Vicente's (1934-2013) straightforward questioning to learning from books, by which, as a librarian, I have left for last, unwilling to accept his perspective though understanding it in the context.

All these perspectives have contributed to the School and I am not sure that students realize its dimension, even those who have moved to Lisbon on purpose to attend it. I believe they do know they are in a place that is different but perhaps only later in their lives will they be aware of its uniqueness and the people that made it so.



The cover of the book shows Da/UAL and the title “Inhabit, think, research, make”. The EN/PT layout is well thought of and allows for good reading of the original, in case those reading it in English would like to do so.

Graphically, the column on the centre-right, in the first and last texts, which provide a limit to the interviews (in the other two columns) make for a rather balanced look. Text is aligned to the left and provides a poetic reading, since we start on the left and each line stops at a different point. like a drawing whose initial lines do not evidence its final accuracy.

I felt privileged to have had the opportunity to read the text even before it was a book as such. As if a secret only I had access to and which is now a public secret, available to everyone.

RAMALHETE, F.; LOPES, J. C - Fazer uma escola. Da/UAL = To build a school. Da/UAL. Lisboa. Caleidoscópio, 2019, 265 pp.