

Manifest from architects and students of architecture from São Miguel to the city of Ponta Delgada

Maria Júlia Gaspar Teixeira, Laura de Sousa e Silva, Júlio do Nascimento Cascais, Eduardo Read Teixeira, João de O. Correia Rebêlo, Manuel S. de Medeiros, Octávio Faria and Maia Rego Costa Domingos de O. Correia Rebêlo

To cite this paper: AAVV – Manifest from architects and students of architecture from São Miguel to the city of Ponta Delgada, **Estudo Prévio** 20. Lisbon: CEACTION/UAL-Center for Studies of Architecture, City and Territory of the Autonomous University of Lisboa, 2022, p. 21-23. ISSN: 2182-4339 [Available at: www.estudoprévio.net]. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26619/2182-4339/20.3> (original ed. 1953). Published from RODRIGUES, José Manuel (ed.) – Theory and critique of 20th century architecture. Lisbon: OA-SRS, Caleidoscópio, 2010, p. 370-1.

Creative Commons, CC BY-4.0 license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Manifest from architects and students of architecture from São Miguel to the city of Ponta Delgada

The people of São Miguel, Azores, are already aware of this: the important ensemble of the new square, south-side of the main church, is planned and will be built in Pombaline style! The incongruity and absurdity of such a proposition can be felt by any layman; all that is need is good faith and a little common sense. Otherwise, let's see: *the pombaline* was generated two hundred years ago by a painful occurrence in the life of the city of Lisbon. It is, therefore, the expression of a given time and place. No one can dissociate it from the cataclysm that originated it, from King D. José and his ministers, the powdered wigs, the carriages, sedan chairs, ladies with long-necklines and balloon skirts... because the Pombaline is an expression of living, genuine, authentic architecture... Two hundred years have passed since the causes that determined and explain it. And when today, just for fun, someone dares to use lace cuffs and tight stockings on the calves... when a gilded automobile with carvings of amusing cherubs and rear seats for stiff lackeys would be inconceivable, when the diverse forms in which life is expressed today, such an inescapable testimony that something new has operated in the secular foundations of man's life, when the automobile, the airplane, the door handle, the radio, the cinema, the pen, the raincoat, the book, the magazine, tell us of a new era in the life of humanity, of unprecedented technical and scientific acquisitions of unknown forms of large-scale



production, of new directions and aesthetic concerns; when everything tells us of new problems, anxieties and concerns, when the art of building sees its possibilities and means of action extraordinarily expanded with the existence of materials and construction techniques entirely new, behold, an architecture conceived in the same molds arises, expressing the same life, content with the same aesthetic ideals, and limiting itself to the same constructive forms and the same technical possibilities of the time of the Marquis of Pombal! If one appreciates the phenomenon with exemption, it will be seen that it is the formal denial of nature and reason for being of architecture. Moreover, it nullifies and destroys an entire architectural past, a whole secular heritage that cities, like nations, are proud to possess. In fact, when the architect limits, organizes and defines the space that today's man will have to inhabit, on the drawing board, when he seeks solutions to his problems and desires, it is necessary that, through him, something difficult to define is operated, but which is as if a breath of life instills the materials he works with and impregnates them with the realities and meaning of the time he lives in. In this way, even those materials of secular use in construction, such as stone and wood, acquire entirely new forms and expressions, on the scale of the material and spiritual demands of today's life and, therefore, full of content and meaning. It has been like this in all times. And in the observance and respect for this miraculous behavior, lies all the diversity, strength and grandeur of the buildings and monuments that we are proud of today. How, therefore, can we take seriously an architecture that claims to be unreal, and the absurdity of repeating today's architectural forms impregnated with life from 200 years ago? How is it possible to close one's eyes to the study, the serious and exhaustive work of Portuguese architects, gathered in 1948 in Lisbon, at their 1st National Congress, whose conclusions and votes, unanimously approved, define in the following terms, the way forward for architecture in Portugal: "... that the "Portugueseism" of the architectural work does not continue to be imposed through the imitation of elements from the past, because the time we are going through must be characterized in relation to others with the differentiation that exists between them. It is therefore necessary to correct the concepts of tradition and regionalism, fostering the application of new techniques and emanating new aesthetic ideals, so that contemporary work can have the beauty that has reached those of the purest styles of the past...". How to remain indifferent before the significance of such a document? How can one remain unmoved and insensitive when a city that is proud of the testimonies it possesses from the life of past times, such as the Manueline doors of the main church, the Old Town Hall, the Baroque Church of the college, the residences of the 17th and 18th centuries, prepares to bequeath to generations to come, as testimony and expression of the life of its time; an architecture that means nothing, translates nothing of the passing moment and, as if this were not enough, has the audacity to affirm the attitude that is no doubt comfortable, but of all disgusting and ignoble, to plagiarize the effort, the study, the serious and honest work of the men who rebuilt Lisbon from the rubble of the earthquake? All this is clamorous! And because it is resulting in discredit to São Miguel land, it urgently demands immediate reparation on the part of the ¹responsible entities that we hope will reconsider in the deliberations taken. Under these circumstances, the undersigned architects, and students of architecture of São Miguel, understand that it is an imperative and pressing duty to come forward to provide this public clarification to the mentality, the pride, and the collective consciousness of the city. This attitude should not be taken as frivolous and thoughtless. They are with all the Portuguese architects gathered at the magna assembly of 1948, and with the architects from all over the world who recently came to



Lisbon to hold the 3rd Congress of the UIA (International Union of Architects), whose theses and guidelines were exuberantly patented to the public of the city, through the remarkable exhibitions integrated therein. Much less should their intentions be misrepresented. They are only animated by their pride as “micalenses” and the awareness of the mission that prevents the architect of today in a changing world. The prestige of the city is at stake. The population of Ponta Delgada has the floor.

¹ See “Arquitetura” magazine no. 49, p. 22, and “Diário Popular” of November 16th.