



## Manuel Vicente explained ... turning South

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### Abstract

Manuel Vicente can be explained in many ways. He was born in Lisbon in 1934 and died there in 2013. He was a man with a huge European culture, tempered by visits to the America of Louis Kahn and Robert Venturi, giants with whom he was in close contact. He was always in transit to Macao, towards the East. A man who felt flabbergasted in Goa. A fierce Lisbonite. An artefact collector. A narrator of invented memories. A voyeur in the best architectural tradition. A teacher. A postmodern.

From an early age, Manuel Vicente expressed his empathy for a world not completely made of lights, because it made itself available to unpredictability and a minimally regulated incongruity. For him, to be an architect "was really a life more than a profession," as he testified in a testimony in the 1980s.

**Keywords:** Manuel Vicente, Macao, Kahn, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism, Venturi.

## Full Article



Fig.1- Manuel Vicente (picture by João Carmo Simões)

### **The beginning**

Architecture can be rigorously executed as a machine, but there is a space that is impossible to freeze in the drawing, which allows, for example, that two plasters, although perfectly defined, may be different. It can be said that the level of tolerance in architecture is expressed in centimetres; even when prefabricated in a yard, the work will always be made of small corrections, of accumulated mistakes (Vicente, 2011, 2011, p. 197).

Manuel Vicente's quoted sentence is not exactly what one would expect to start a text about the life and work of this architect. The construction side, his fondness

of more technical details, his obsessive concern with the transition from design to materiality, do not seem to be clearly representative features of a man's career that critics have classified - and well - as "postmodern." But in this observation, the architect who mediates the world between the idealized form embodied in the "rigorous" design and the inspiring brutality of the real can be clearly felt. Everything in Manuel Vicente expressed this intense humanity, from the conception of the project to the completed work. Manuel Vicente can be explained in many ways. He was a man with a huge Western culture, tempered by visits to the America of Louis Kahn and Robert Venturi, giants with whom he was in close contact. He was always in transit to Macao, towards the East. A man who felt flabbergasted in Goa. A fierce Lisbonite (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p. 64). An artefact collector. A narrator of invented memories. A voyeur in the best architectural tradition. A postmodern. Jorge Figueira spelt it out clearly: "All the essential points of a postmodernist itinerary are covered by Manuel Vicente" (Figueira, 2014, p.169). What are these points? Figueira enumerated them, linking each to an argument, quoting Vicente himself: the break with the social sciences that conditioned a more plastic and sensitive knowledge; the acceptance of pop culture and of the trivial as poetic matter; the adoption of the real estate market and its logic. Three signs that reflected the contemporaneity of an open discourse ranging beyond Portuguese borders, eager for a cosmopolitanism that then undermined the architectural culture; a culture undergoing profound transition between the 1960s and the 1970s, finally freed from the more formal regionalisms and the far-flung Modern Movement. From an early age, Manuel Vicente expressed his empathy for a world not completely made of lights, because it made itself available to unpredictability and a minimally regulated incongruity. Quoting Denise Scott Brown by heart, as he did comfortably: "Chaos is an order that has not been revealed" (Vicente in Figueira, 2011, p. 86).

Manuel Vicente was born at the beginning of *Estado Novo*, in 1934. The Portugal that was emerging during the 1930s was built on the fantastic fabulation of the Empire. The post-war period consolidated this colonial vertigo and, instead of

what happened with other formally colonizer European countries, it meant a greater obsession with its maintenance. The Atlantic islands, Africa and Asia formed a geography engendered by a political, dictatorial and centralized power, which approached continents as the continuation of the Portuguese territory, with the same coherence of development of pacificity and the same expectations. North-South circulation was relatively easy. Reading the interviews that Manuel Vicente gave throughout his life, one realizes how the world was within reach of personal relationships. There was always a family member, a friend of a friend, a benefactor, who facilitated access to the "Empire". Vicente had Lisbon, Goa, Funchal, and Macao, with a sole passage through Lourenço Marques, today Maputo, celebrated only by his friendship with Malangatana Valente, the "negro" (Vicente, 2011, p. 167-169).

Africa escaped him, that is to say, the five territories that today comprise the essentials of the Portuguese-speaking world, beyond Brazil. Consequently, he survived the daily exposure to an obsessive modernism, which shaped the best "Colonial Architecture" of Portuguese matrix in those countries, and which only Pancho Guedes - older almost by a decade, but with whom he maintained a strong complicity - fought. It was not a mainstream route, but the most singular that the condition of "being Portuguese" offered at the time. Vicente would still describe paths such as his, of the "truly Portuguese" who crossed continents, acquired learning and accumulated experiences, almost without leaving home. Already at the end of these memories, in the interview that he gave to Ana Magalhães for newspaper "*Público*" in the context of the retrospective exhibition "Plot and Emotion" held at the Orient Museum in Lisbon, he clarified the Lisbon/Macao dividing line: "I always feel at home, I'm just changing rooms. I only need vestiges" (Vicente, 2011, 2011, p.193). This feeling of familiarity, however, did not fail to reflect the pulse of the "Empire" to which, despite its historical exceptions, exoticism and distance, Macao also belonged, even if only at the level of political and literary narrative.

## **Macao**

Sometimes it is quite hard: it is very lonely, it is a bit mediocre, in certain aspects it is a hole. But then, on the other hand, it also has everything to do with us. That scattered dust, so generously scattered everywhere, where the world took place and remained, made in our image; a world tailored to our fantasies, with very few technical resources and probably even less technological, in which we never shine ... always being there to stay, but being able to leave at any moment. But since we are here to stay, the present is more important than the future ... (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p. 75).

Manuel Vicente understood the Portuguese colonial condition well: an effort that was always a strategy of the present time. The past was run through mentally as a history with gaps with very few signs of progress, lived with a sense of permanent inferiority, in view of the greater realization capacity of the European powers with which Portugal had been measuring forces since the Berlin Conference (1884-85); the future remained an abstraction, a difficulty. In Macao, when the developmental acceleration was dictated by the proximity to the handover in 1999, many works ignored any vestige of identity, losing the right to eternity, failing the future. Fortunately, Manuel Vicente worked in the territory before this final delirium. In 1962, he supported the public administration staff, a technical group in charge of continuing the policies outlined by the Overseas Ministry, which always began - or almost always - in the delineation of an urban plan initiated in Lisbon by the men of the Department of Urban Planning and Housing of the Directorate General of Public Works and Communications, whose implementation should correspond to a more local knowledge (Vicente, 2011, 1983, p.82). Leopoldo de Almeida led the group. At the same time, the colonial administration authorized architects displaced in the territory to open offices for private practice. The first wave of architects in Macao was made with people from the generation close to Manuel Vicente. The commissions were essentially public and were reflected in the programmes, such as "schools, orphanages ... social housing for public servants" (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p.65). Vicente did a little bit of

everything. Without references that enabled him to acknowledge the solidity of an "exalting" culture (Idem) - like the one he came across in India the year before his arrival in Macao - he clung to memories from the Mainland. To be able to deal with the Helen Liang orphanage (1963-66), he resorted to Fernando Távora and the Vila da Feira market (Santa Maria da Feira, 1953-59): "You needed to get a lot from yourself because you received too little. I at least received little" (Vicente in Figueira, 2011, p.88). This formal relationship ended up being affirmed at the level of affectivity. Vicente recognized in Távora qualities that he practiced in his architecture, a certain comfort, a "*joie de vivre*" that manifested itself in the details. But there were also references to the architecture of the studio of Nuno Teotónio Pereira, in the project of the four dwellings in Travessa da Praia Grande (1964), whose work process he became familiar with while still in Lisbon. There were also "details": the blinds placed upside down so that anyone who passed did not trespass the privacy of the houses (Vicente in Figueira, 2011, p.89). And, of course, there was the strong presence of Raul Chorão Ramalho, who had left four buildings of reference in Macao, all built during Vicente's first short stay in the territory. But one should not "look for Lisbon (or New York or Hong Kong) in Macao", rather "let the gaze go over the current" (Vicente, 2011, 1983, 81). The architecture of the city then accumulated a history that was not that of architects. The 1960s also proved to be the decade when the gambling concession was awarded to the Tourism and Entertainment Society of Macau, SA, which had Chinese businessman Stanley Ho as one of the partners. The casino industry would start up a phase of strong growth, marking the deep transformation of Macao's geography to the present day. For Vincent it was a fruitful period, very much anchored in an architecture that knew where it was going from (then part of an anti-modern generation and perhaps even anti-Corbusier), but did not know exactly where it was going. A language that perhaps later made sense to characterize as belonging to the "third way," to "revisionism," or the "organicism" of Bruno Zevi. (was not Frank Lloyd Wright always the true hero for Vincente?). They were all categories that stood outside the orthodoxy of the Modern

Movement without entirely refusing it. The buildings breathed something from mainland Portugal, they had a certain "family look" regarding the Portuguese architecture of the time, not only in the details, but in the typological approaches, the constructive solutions, the forms. But there were already signs of some perplexity that would make Manuel Vicente particularly happy in his old age, as he acknowledged in an interview in 2006, for what they seemed to promise or anticipate. Describing the set of 18 houses for the Post Office (CTT) staff (1964), he confirmed: I myself will 'close a balcony: I will not leave it as an open balcony, I will transform it into a closed balcony with orange plexiglass, which gives a very interesting light to the house" (Vicente in Figueira, 2011, p.89). With a handful of Macanese works, such as this one, formalized in just under four years, Manuel Vicente eventually applied for a Fulbright scholarship to pursue a postgraduate course in the United States, ended up being accepted at the University of Pennsylvania in 1968, where Louis Kahn taught. Seen from provincial and reclusive Portugal, to where he had returned in 1966, Kahn "seemed an important man, who had suddenly appeared to put emphasis on things that people had already given up to make emphatic" (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p. 67).

## **Kahn**

Kahn appeared suddenly, with all that deep breath we did not quite know what it was; we could not trace his origins, nor could we have a critical perspective on Kahn's roots and the deeper roots of his language and actions (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p.67).

Kahn seemed to bring order into the disorder in which the sixties had become. Between the Anglo-Saxon brutalism and Milan's neo-historicism, the European architectural culture remained at a speculative and dilettante stalemate, a dead end. The Manuel Vicente who returned from America was not, therefore, the one who had left the island of Madeira, where he stayed between 1967 and the first

half of the following year. His American stay "was one of those experiences" (Idem) that only gain dimension with temporal and probably physical distance. The change in his architecture was equally subtle. The references to Kahn, always allusive to his theoretical thought and less to his architectural formalism, were intensified with old age. Kahn became a spectral presence, bursting with the authority of a master on all occasions taken as timely. Some stories went through different interviews, testimonials, circumstances. The most famous was about keeping the sun in a box (Vicente, 2011, 1998, p. 139). The second, equally famous, referred to the freedom of the artist who painted square wheels in opposition to the architect's commitment to the real. But, of course, there was the constructive ethic that Kahn demanded: "And with what are we going to build?" (Vicente, 2011, 1991, p. 88). If the space was intended to be intimate and secluded, with small spans, then brick would do; if the areas were to be more generous, with large surfaces, concrete was suitable; if it was of a more delicate nature, steel was advised; if, in the end, it was none of the aforementioned, then a new material would have to be invented. Kahn disassembled the randomness discourse and matter gained density. They argued a lot. Vicente was, in the description of his colleagues in Pennsylvania, out-spoken (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p. 67). And if the question touched a nerve - "Tell us which buildings have impressed you the most in your life?" (Vicente in Figueira, 2011, 92) - Manuel Vicente's favourites contained none of Kahn's authorship. But it is likely that he owed him the reconciliation with Le Corbusier and the theoretical and sensitive ramblings around the Carpenter Centre for the Visual Arts (University of Harvard, 1962) (Vicente, 2011, 1990, p 105).

### **Travelling companions**

One thing I used to say in Lisbon was: I wish I had a "kitsch building contractor" just for me. Like that story of the flea couple and the dog. "When we are rich I buy



a dog just for you" says the flea's husband to his flea wife. "When I arrived in Macao, my clients are all "kitsch" and I could deceive them ... but I did what they wanted by giving them the amount of floor area and houses they needed to make the operation profitable (Vicente in Figueira, 2011, pp. 94-95). In 1969, Manuel Vicente returned to Lisbon. In his luggage he brought not only Kahn (but not Kahn's severity) but new travelling companions, in good affinity fashion: Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi. He had met them also in Pennsylvania. The formal influence of the couple's architecture is more obvious in Vincente's turn of this period, although the literary references are much smaller than those he was collecting on Kahn. It was here that he began to move away from the Portuguese architecture of the formative years. The moment would also be marked by the opportunity to work in an official and institutional framework in the Housing Development Fund, probably one of the least studied periods of his professional life. In this context, he accomplished one of his most controversial works: the Social Housing block in the Chelas Urbanization Plan Zone N2, Lot 232 (1973-75). The project for Chelas would be the beginning of a research around the lexicon of the Modern Movement, a limitless experience of de-contextualization of its constructive structure. It was about enunciating a narrative that carried the programme's usual quantifiable role to less obvious, more speculative, and aesthetic plans, ascertaining whether architecture - as a discipline - "survived" this more random arrangement (Vicente, 2011, 2002, p. 157). Chelas - an ill-loved project and later handed over to other architects - thus marked Vincente's entry into postmodernity. The other two projects that dominated the waiting period for a new return to Macao were the house designed for the Weinstein family (Cascais, 1969-1974) and the Portugal Novo Neighbourhood (Lisbon, 1974-1986), conceived under the auspices of SAAL (Local Ambulatory Support Service), a housing assistance programme created following the April 1974 revolution by Nuno Portas as Secretary of State for Housing and Urbanism in the first three provisional governments of the post-Revolutionary period.

Three years after the revolution, Manuel Vicente was ready to return to the East. The Empire had gone, geographically speaking, and had been abruptly reduced to the tiny Asian peninsula after the African processes of decolonization. Work in mainland Portugal was scarce. Civil construction had entered a deep crisis. Vicente was now fascinated by the new opportunities Macao offered him, more receptive to the free individual initiative of promoters and professionals. The opportunity seemed perfect to him. The arguments echoed from Venturi's and Scott Brown's America. They focused on the possibility of "working the ordinary, the coarse, the vulgar, the trivial, the banal and still, go there and say ... it is almost good" (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p. 71). Macao was the promise of work and the conquest of a new freedom of action, an escape to avoid working for institutions, which a job in the civil service obliged him to and that in mainland Portugal seemed inevitable. Macanese private promoters, in their ignorance of European culture, Western norms and quality standards, were, within the limits of the market, relatively adjustable. Public commissions operated in very similar ways. Speculation was measured in terms of profit, and what remained was left to architecture. Manuel Vicente dealt with this matter in an extremely skilful way and the city became "quite comfortable" between the late 1980s and the early 1990s (Vicente, 2011, 1987, p.90). In Macao, he was finally able to realize, as did filmmaker Luís Acao in Mexico (whose films Vicente was an avid enthusiast), that he was "capable of making architecture right there!" with what he had at hand (Vicente, 2011, 1980, P 72). There could not be a more suited scenario for the development of a postmodernist "practice".

## **Postmodernism**

... If there is anything the so-called Postmodernism saved us from, it was the idea that there was an ethics or a rule for drawing; that drawing was a captivity that was not only aesthetic but ethical, which frankly (I do not necessarily feel postmodern), I think was an achievement of our time, this separation between

ethics and aesthetics (Vicente, 2011, 1990, p. 100). Manuel Vicente's architecture broke with Portuguese culture at the very moment of his second departure for Macao: "what should I be that I am not?" (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p. 60) he asked Carlos Duarte and José Manuel Fernandes with true perplexity, who interviewed him for the "Architecture" magazine on the eve of the inauguration of the exhibition "The Practice of the City (Architecture in Macao 1976/1979)" at Ar.co in Lisbon (October 1979), in one of his short visits to the capital: "I would like to understand ... what I have done wrong, so that I can acknowledge it and correct myself" (Idem). It is true that in the waiting period between the revolution of April 1974 and the entry into the European Union in 1986, Vincent became uncanny even to those who were close to him, who had chosen to stay. The Macao that emerged in the works of Manuel Vicente seemed a space of transgression to them. Portuguese architecture resisted as it could the attacks of the "internationalists", closed in a regionalist armour, a "critical regionalism" celebrated internationally and that seemed to safeguard what remained of the values of authenticity, economy, and modesty. Manuel Vicente was an iconoclast. He defied the *status quo* of the history of Portuguese architecture itself, identifying himself with profane figures such as Cassiano Branco, or denying the formal repression imposed by the *Estado Novo* on modernist architects. He used a sacrosanct and progressive character - Porfirio Pardal Monteiro - to accumulate arguments, because it seemed to him that all of Monteiro's work at that time demystified the idea "according to which the Fascists had invented a template that forced architects to use scrolls as in the time of King D. João V" (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p. 72). He opposed the perception that the Portuguese architects of the 1920s were suddenly hostages of the regime, that "there were fantastic heroes who had made some pilotis and ... had immediately been sent to the Caxias jail" (Ibid). Vicente caricatured a whole modern generation and those who survived did not forgive him. It was only in 1991, with Pedro Vieira de Almeida's article in "Colóquio Artes" magazine published by the prestigious Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation - "a history of the future" - that

Macao appeared as a well-kept secret, a promise of renewal of the national culture, generating strong expectation about the contribution of the "group" that gravitated around Vicente in the Asian peninsula still under Portuguese administration. The years in Macao were the most productive in Manuel Vicente's public life. His studio was filled with co-workers, residents, exiles and migrants, who, for more or less prolonged periods, stimulated the dialectical exercise that characterized his work method. There was a collective, cosmopolitan spirit, always in transit, although control was clearly in his hands. Vicente could confirm, paraphrasing Pancho Guedes, that the "centre of the world was travelling with him".

His output was divided into two strong programmatic branches, official and private commissions: buildings to accommodate services and (mainly) collective housing. Macao's density and verticalization were increasing realities. The gradual presence of the skyscraper altered the city, the lot remained unchanged: "Lot architecture is a current architecture that can be named. The great novelty was that it was ... a block architecture" (Vicente, 2011, 1990, p.98). Macao was not New York or Tokyo (he insisted), and it had long been unparalleled with Lisbon - in fact, it had been "losing its Portuguese features" since the 1920s, in Silva Mendes's description, quoted by Vicente (Vicente, 1983, p. 79) - yet residential programmes, by appealing to the more ordinary side of daily life, clearly demonstrated the transfiguration potential to which it aspired. The historic lot included buildings such as "Edifício 1980", at Rua do Chunambeiro (1978-81) and the Avenida da República building (1979-81). Here, eventually, I changed "the drawing, the taste", not "the existing vocabulary ... that has a name, made of windows, ... entrance door, ... cantilever balcony, retracted balcony" (Idem).

The projects regarding the three "Torres da Barra" for employees (1976-78/1982-83), the Housing Reintegration Block for the Tourism and Entertainment Company of Macao Limited - STDM (1978-84), and the two blocks of buildings in Fai Chi Kei (1979-91, demolished in 2010), had greater visual presence and a distinct approach, and were all completed as a result of public commissions. The

towers in Estrada de Cacilhas (1977-85) for a middle class with the capacity to invest in a view overlooking the water reservoir was a project carried out as a result of private investment. Each new project that broke with the traditional lot and expanded through the block was a possibility for reflecting on the meaning of the public use of the city. In the Barra towers, the walkway facilitated the circulation between the buildings, generating a collective area, open to the possibility of using it commercially in future, an aspiration of urbanity shown in the drawing and insinuated in the site through minimal tracks; in the STDM, the three blocks were unified by circulation galleries. The latter became a tower in confrontation with the border of mainland China. An arcade on the ground floor meant the return to the urban devices of the traditional city; in the Fai Chi Kei there was the scenic splendour in the distribution yards and the emptiness between the two blocks, "the central alley" (Vicente, 2011, 1979, p. 51), remnants of the old urban boulevards or the old buildings of the fishermen who once inhabited this limit of the city by the water. When Portuguese architecture was the subject of a display at the Deutsches Architektur-Museum in Munich in 1997, curated by Ana Tostões, Macao was represented by the Fai Chi Kei amphibious project. In those years, the city that Vicente described to Manuel Graça Dias, built not only by himself, did not rise in opaque anonymity, as there were always opportunities, as in Rem Koolhaas' Manhattan, without, however, having to become "interesting":

"Not my cup of tea", he insisted (Vicente, 2011, 1990, p. 100). Nor was there exactly an ethics reflected through drawing. As he had pointed out, postmodern times had finally ended the promiscuity between "ethics and aesthetics". But they were not replaced by any other new kind of depravity. It was in this ambiguity that the gap between Vicente and the architects of the Metropolis continued to be dug.

## Monument

I cannot accept this idea, now very fashionable, of removing architecture from the dimension of monument, from the public dimension, from the dimension of things that can be seen with pleasure, because they are things that somehow escape daily life and that mark the city, give it points, offer it a score (Vicente, 2011, 2010, p. 180).

Vicente's action in the public sphere was reflected in a strong set of buildings, with capacity to intervene in the city at different levels, partly through the programmatic objectives, partly through their architectural intensity. All denoted his immanent desire to draw a monument, perceived as a significant object, but already in the process of replacing the most elemental Venturi concept.

The Macao Historical Archives (1985-89), the World Trade Centre Tower at Avenida da Amizade (1986-95), the TDM - Macao Television Headquarters (1986-90), and the Macao Praia Preta Firefighters' Unit (1990-98) are works by him that stood out in Macao. In Portugal, this place in the history of Portuguese architecture was essentially Casa dos Bicos, intervened in two phases (1980-1983/2009-2012). The question posed by the monument was also synthesized in the resistance to "functional obsolescence". The materialization of the architecture corresponded to "a production that was too heavy to be discarded like any mass-produced consumer object" (Vicente, 2011, 1995, p 129). Overcoming the weight of the programme represented the final cut with the remnants of modernity in the contemporary work. This moment of rupture was fundamental to understand the direction taken by Vicente after his arrival in the territory. The written document accompanying the Firefighters project was loaded with poetic definitions. It was quite true that, confronting the building already built, "there are points everywhere for our eyes to set forever" (Vicente, 2011, 1993, p. 127). This cannot be understood as being the same as Oscar Niemeyer's quip, repeated over and over again: "It's a beauty; if it works, even better". For Vicente,

a building always worked, regardless of "beauty" or any other aesthetic category that replaced it.

### **Postcolonialism**

Macao has a territorial, physical and architectural component that makes architects or engineers, in short, people connected to construction, important partners in the management of this area of power (Vicente, 2011, 1999, p.146). The transition of the Portuguese administration to the People's Republic of China and the creation of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) put a final stone on the Portuguese colonial issue. Macao was not exactly perceived as a colony, but the existence of a special status that connected it to the old European continent through Lisbon still pointed to a history that people wanted to discard since the post-revolutionary period, a past that the Portuguese themselves intended to alienate. Manuel Vicente moved with great comfort around Macao before 1999, despite some quarrels with the different governors, issues that went back to the time before April. The Urban Plan for the Bay of Praia Grande (1982-94) already had the responsibility of being an legacy for the next phase, for the post-handover period, only when the Chinese thought it was time to take command: "We designed Praia Grande in the course of the city and in the course of history" (Vicente, 2011, 1982, p.76). This passage seemed imminent. In fact, it was close. The territory was shaped, the lakes delineated and the embankments made. Macao was definitely based on an amphibious materiality. An uncontrollable desire for conquering space from the water had marked the "Portuguese" Macao, becoming a delirious form of survival in "Chinese" Macao. However, the Nam Van Square (2001-03), implanted within the limits of the actual plan of the eighties, was a work of postcolonial understanding. The square would mark the first gesture of consciousness of the change of regime. Vicente wisely took refuge in the southern past where Macao's expansion was viscerally linked by the long occupation by the Portuguese. The written arguments of the project opened with a traditional Portuguese rhyme: "The horses running, the girls

jumping, which one is the most beautiful for me to marry" (Vicente, 2011, 2003, 165), confirming the disarming condition of the new reality, especially for those who, like Vicente, had been in the Territory since 1962 awaiting Chinese integration. The new administration, however, wanted an "icon without connotations with the past of the city" (Idem), a new civic square that represented, even without great apparatus, a schism. Vincent must have turned to Kahn (if it does not exist already, then one must look for a "new form"). The discovery of the ellipse was part of the solution found in the very circumstances of the place for this kind of enigma that the Square represented for a man from the South:" "The tradition of creating public spaces usually begins with an accident ..." (Idem). After 1999, Manuel Vicente designed very sporadically for Macao, renamed the international capital of casinos, surpassing poetically and factually the Las Vegas of Venturi and Scott Brown. Lisbon was his last destination.

### **Teaching**

The problem will be whether the students realize whether they want to be architects or not. They must be quite clear about what architecture is, what its purpose is, what the goals of getting into such a complicated thing are! (Vicente, 2011, 2010, p. 185). The first ten years of the 21st century confirmed Manuel Vicente's vocation as a professor of architecture. He had already taught at the School of Fine Arts in Lisbon, immediately after the reopening of the course in the post-revolutionary period. He was also a project professor at the University of Hong Kong, where he met Eric Lye, coordinator of "Manuel Vicente, caressing trivia", the first monograph on his work. Therefore, teaching was another facet, less explored in historiography, of his career as an architect. In Lisbon at the end of the nineties, teaching became a form of mature age performance, of assuming the proximity of old age. He was, without doubt, an eloquent teacher, a mobilizer. He focused on "instilling students with an enormous passion for the built works" (Vicente, 2011, 2002, p.159). Architecture was not exactly an activity that could be "taught", rather, it "trained" students by making them aware of materiality,



weight, light, and shadow, in a persevering reference to the colossal teacher that Kahn had also been for himself. Or it "instructed" students, a *démodé* word that he used to reflect on the reason why "he never felt a lack of 'libertine' freedom", in a testimony to the "JA-Jornal Arquitectos" of the Architects Society when he was its vice president. "In the first place, one cannot be illiterate" (Vicente, 2011, 2010, p.185). Vicente had the "teacher's function" clearly present: "To verify the fulfilment of the rationality of the established arbitrariness!" (Vicente, 2011, 1991, p 93. His students were constantly and systematically provoked. In class, he used to teach in the old "doctoral" way. But his language was liberating. The descriptions gained physical and sensory dimensions. There was a determination to assist in the construction of a "taste", but one that (individually) corresponded to a condition endorsed by the assembly of a related narrative. Vicente encouraged aesthetic fruition not limited by time, theory or history (Idem). He knew it was necessary to make room for new revelations. Being a teacher was his last professional captivity on a continuous basis. The emptiness left by the closure of the studio, the absence of commissions, the lack of agitation in the world (now too much regulated by European standards), was occupied by his teaching and students.

Manuel Vicente died in 2013.

## **Epilogue**

How does one measure the contribution of an architect? The weight of Manuel Vicente's presence in the Portuguese and Macanese architectures since the beginning of the 1960s is invaluable. Vicente taught us the path to freedom, to tolerance, to knowledge, to intelligence, to affections. He proposed a cultured and humanist view of the world of architecture. Today, his architectural and urban production can be understood from different points of view, in a more cubist equation: his American initiation to postmodernism of a graphic, historicist, and

semiological tendency, coined by Venturi; the persistence of Kahn's ideological integrity; the construction of a new Macao, where he settled from an early stage in his career, and whose stays lasted until he was an old man; the constant returns to Lisbon, which he cherished so much. His path crossed the dictatorship, was marginal to a decaying colonial empire, stood firm in democracy, and resisted the standardization of Europe. Manuel Vicente's architecture naturally reflects the tension of each of these political and economic regimes, the internal pressures for a certain orientation of the discipline, the opening of the Portuguese regime and culture. His path was always in translation. Being an architect was indeed a life more than a profession (Vicente, 2011, 1980, p. 60).

**Author's Note:** The different co-authorships of the various architectural and urban projects mentioned throughout the text were not highlighted.

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