


## ***Marriage and the school of architecture in the 1940s: the case of B. (Lisbon, 1926-)***

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper is about the oldest woman architect alive in Portugal (Lisbon, 1926-); B., the initial of the petit nom she was given as a child, entered the architecture course at the former Lisbon School of Fine Arts (EBAL) in 1944 and finished it in 1950.*

*This was not common at the time. In Portugal, in the 1940s, a woman's role was generally that of housewife and caretaker. Having a degree beyond 17 was an exception attributed to upper-class and cultivated families. However, B. faced two significant opposite influences in her journey with architecture. First, her father, the painter Jaime Martins Barata, used pressure on her to study architecture. Second, her marriage to another student from the same school led her to step away from actively practicing architecture and prevented her from completing the final examination (CODA) required for taking on actual responsibility over projects.*

*This peculiar discrepancy between her married life and her father's wish takes us to question Portuguese's society generation gap of the 1940s.*

*Today, B. is recognised for her lifelong talent in craftwork and, above all, as an illustrator. What influence did her marriage have on the vocational direction of her life? Was architecture school just an occupation?*

***Keywords:*** Gender; architecture school; Lisbon; 1940s.

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## Introduction

This case study is about the possibly oldest Portuguese woman architect (Lisbon, 1926-). She agreed to talk to me, her granddaughter, and to show old pictures, but she refused to be photographed, recorded or filmed. When she was little, her father used to call her a nickname that reflected her shyness because she would often hide in the doghouse (“without a tenant”, in her own words). B. is the initial of her *petit nom*, the meaning of which has remained to this day since she refused to reveal her identity.

In 2013, I managed to record a conversation with my grandfather and her husband, J. C., about the writing of my doctoral thesis on the teaching of architecture in Portugal in the 1970s and 1980s. As my grandmother was sitting next to my grandfather, and I think for that reason alone, she also ended up talking a little about her experience as a student at the Lisbon School of Fine Arts (EBAL), from 1944 to 1950, and it was recorded. Afterwards, my grandmother and I had several informal conversations, both in person and over the phone. This research was based on her testimony. It was also carried out with the help of various books containing family history and illustrations. As well as specific bibliography.

With the aim of contributing to research on gender studies from a historiographical point of view, the text is organised by theme and in chronological order. It does not attempt to portray the period rigorously although it is based on the framework and personal reading of the history of a family and, more specifically, of a woman.

## 1. Portuguese society in the 1940s

### 1.1 A brief look at national identity: politics, family, social classes, and art

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal went through a period of dictatorship which began after the First Republic and was consolidated by the so-called “Estado Novo” (1933-1974), whose leader was António de Oliveira Salazar. It is common to call his stay in power between 1932 and 1968 “Salazarism”. In Portugal, “during Salazarism, an ideology was produced around Portugueseness [portugalidade] and overseas expansion, the family and the Catholic religion”<sup>1</sup>. In addition to nationalism, which was duly propagandised, there was also political repression and censorship. The country was socially unequal and based on more definable social classes than today – the working class, the bourgeoisie, and the aristocracy<sup>2</sup>. At the same time as it had a *superavit*, it applied rationing<sup>3</sup>, perpetuating the misery of a large part of the population.

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<sup>1</sup> Cecília Barreira in Ferreira, José Medeiros and José Mattoso (dir.). *História de Portugal*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. <https://www.publico.pt/2012/08/05/jornal/o-quotidiano-de-miseria-e-privacoes-no-ano-em-que-houve-um-superavit-25019399>.

Although it was a repressive state, many of the regime's opponents, from all strata of society, maintained a certain understanding with its supporters. Because although the family to which these opponents belonged was generally a "closed cell"<sup>4</sup>, it suffered political influences – both in favour of and against the regime. And above all because it was the state that most employed these opponents, offering stability that contrasted with the violent turmoil experienced in countries that, unlike Portugal, took part in the Second World War (1939-1945).

In the same way that political tendencies were divided, the artistic expressions of the 1940s were fundamentally divided along two lines: what França calls "the traditionalist clan"<sup>5</sup> and those men and women who broke with the more (self)controlled art forms.

All this dissipated even before the revolution of 25 April 1974, when the country was democratised. The 1960s confirmed the progressive decline of the regime and the opening to new lifestyles, especially in the urban centres, which were closer to the foreign reality of the Western world. In the post-revolutionary period, society became even more influenced by democratic regimes. Censorship, and even self-censorship through habit or through the convictions of certain social groups, disappeared and gave way to a post-modern logic, permeable to multiple influences and without a style barrier.

## 1.2 The Roque Gameiro family: the "tribe of paintbrushes" and the status of women

To see B.'s specific family history, it is essential to go back two generations. Roque Gameiro is a family name that dates from at least the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through the father of the important Portuguese watercolourist Alfredo Roque Gameiro (1864-1935). B., his granddaughter, still has Roque Gameiro as her maiden name, on her mother's side. This double name was later lost through her father, the painter Jaime Martins Barata (1889-1970) (Figure 1), and later her husband, the architect J. C., surnames that B. adopted and passed on to her children.

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<sup>4</sup> Ferreira, José Medeiros and José Mattoso (dir.). *História de Portugal*, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> França, José-Augusto. *A Arte e a Sociedade Portuguesa no Século XX*, p. 54.



**Fig. 1.** *B. (on the left) with her father, as well as her mother and brother José Pedro in Eugaria, Sintra, c. 1934. Source © M.B.C.*

Roque Gameiro studied for three years in Leipzig, Germany, at the same time and place as the well-known architect Raul Lino. This architect influenced him when he designed his own house on the outskirts of central Lisbon. The house in Amadora, in the parish of Venteira (due to the intense wind that is often present)<sup>6</sup>, was a picturesque construction, with various configurations of spaces, roofs and accesses, a place far enough away from Lisbon “with traits that were still Queirosian”<sup>7</sup> being possible to produce original works, that is, contrary to “fashions and trends”<sup>8</sup> and the result of a career based on observing a frugal country.

His family’s history has a peculiarity when it comes to his professional vocation. All five of Alfredo Roque Gameiro’s children, and many of his later descendants, devoted themselves to art: painting or sculpture, illustration, and applied arts, among others. The group of family members descended from Roque Gameiro has been called the “tribe of paintbrushes” by family tradition and art lovers alike<sup>9</sup>.

In that context, architecture comes as no surprise to B.’s generation. As mentioned, her grandfather had designed the “Venteira house” himself. But there is a fundamental difference between the two, which is related to the condition of the female sex. If we look at the great art schools of the Western world, such as Paris, we can see that painting, unlike architecture, was a male profession, but also an occupation (rather than a career) for women. In the Roque Gameiro

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<sup>6</sup> *Vento* is Portuguese for wind.

<sup>7</sup> Barata, José Pedro Martins in *Roque Gameiro: O Mar, a Serra, a Cidade*, p.13. This means that they were from the time of Eça de Queiroz, the famous 19<sup>th</sup> century writer.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. <http://www.roquegameiro.org/>. We can also see a more illustrative description of the “tribe” in the programme “Visita Guiada”, with Júlia Moura Pinheiro in: <https://www.rtp.pt/play/p3373/e289865/visita-guiada>.

family, three of Alfredo's five children were women, and they all learned to draw in the same way. Each one left her own legacy that is still valued by art lovers today. Alfredo's youngest daughter was called Maria Emília, with the *petit nom* of Mâmía (1901-1996). Mâmía met Jaime Martins Barata, a painter, through the National Fine Arts Society. She would go on to be the mother of four children, including B. With Mâmía, B. learnt "her first letters and the rudiments of arithmetic"<sup>10</sup> – which is significant because it demonstrates Mâmía's dedication to her family, corroborated by testimonies<sup>11</sup>.

As a child, Mâmía exhibited, with her father and on her own, and she modelled herself in her youth (Figure 2).



**Fig. 2.** Mâmía (*Maria Emília Martins Barata*) portrayed by her father in 1921. Source © M.B.C.

However, unlike her sisters, Mâmía remained in her husband Jaime's shadow from the moment she got married<sup>12</sup>. Her sister Helena, married to the multi-talented film-maker Leitão de Barros (1896-1967), would have a different posture<sup>13</sup>.

In contrast to what Leitão de Barros says<sup>14</sup>, we can consider that women are not particularly endowed with "common sense", "perspicacity" or "persistence", but rather with universal human traits. Mâmía, like B. – from the next generation – perhaps took advantage of her

<sup>10</sup> Rodrigues, Ângela (coord.). *Ver Tudo: Mâmía Roque Gameiro (1901-1996). Pintura e Ilustração*, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Cabral, Luís in *Roque Gameiro: O Mar, a Serra, a Cidade*, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Rodrigues, Ângela (coord.). *Idem*. p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Barros, Joana Leitão (coord.) and Ana Mantero. *Leitão de Barros: A Biografia Roubada*, p. 326.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Idem*, p. 316.

personality, which was attached to family and domestic life, as well as adhering exclusively to social and moral values of modesty and love of neighbour.

The facts show that the patriarch, Alfredo Roque Gameiro, treated his daughters equally. The watercolourist taught his daughters with the same dedication as he did his sons, at least judging by their individual biographies. And this stance extended to future generations.

## **2. Post-war architecture in Portugal**

### **2.1 The politically inspired nationalist style and the emerging first generation of modernist architects**

In its opening year, the 1940s were marked by a major propaganda exhibition entitled *Mundo Português* (Portuguese World), which aimed not only to commemorate achievements in Portuguese history but also to celebrate the “Estado Novo” (New State), which was consolidating itself<sup>15</sup>. Located in a riverside area, within the framework of the Lisbon Harbour Improvement Plan, it ended up leaving some traces in the area that can still be enjoyed today. The planning and design of the pavilions was entrusted at the time to Portuguese architects, sculptors, and painters, including Jaime Martins Barata, Mâmía’s husband and B.’s father, in collaboration with Cottinelli Telmo (chief architect), but also Leitão de Barros, his brother-in-law. In conclusion, it can be said that the names involved were aligned with the regime. However, it was difficult to circumvent the system without giving in somehow<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, it’s not really possible to know what each and every one of the artists involved in organising the exhibition thought. In general, “political mobilisation was very low (...). The regime was based more on conformism than mobilization”<sup>17</sup>. The political impetus was left to the “modernists” who, in practice, fuelled the left-wing opposition. Movements such as socialist realism (better known as neo-realism)<sup>18</sup>, surrealism and, later, abstractionism sometimes eclipsed current practice<sup>19</sup>. However, historian José Augusto França believes that the exhibition added little to the history of Portuguese art and architecture.

This judgement is all the more pertinent with regard to the career of another one of the architects involved in the exhibition, Luís Cristino da Silva (1896-1976) (Figure 3). His career, which has already been studied from various perspectives, clearly reveals the influence of his training at the Paris School of Fine Arts (1920-25) – a conservative education based on artistic virtuosity

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<sup>15</sup> In this respect, it is worth consulting the doctoral thesis of Margarida Acciaiuoli, vol. I, chapter I.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ramos, Rui (coord.), Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro. *História de Portugal*, pp. 652 and 653.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, p. 653.

<sup>18</sup> França, José-Augusto. *A Arte e a Portuguesa no Século XX*, p. 45.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Idem*, p. 51.

and emulation. However, his early work, contradictory to his training, is derived from the Modern Movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Cristino clearly belonged to the first generation of Portuguese modernist architects.



**Fig. 3.** *Luís Cristino da Silva, c. 1950.* Source © M.B.C.

In summary, and in general terms, it can be said that like painting – which was the preferred method of the neo-realists – the path of modern architecture took a break in the 1940s (and also the 1950s) to assume a nationalist style. The “Portuguese house”, with its eaves and roofs, porches and multiple rooms, which came from the imaginary of architects like Raul Lino, is seen as the high point of this style, although later, the Inquiry into Popular Architecture in Portugal, which resulted in a book with the same name (1961), printed by J. C., B.’s husband, proved that the Portuguese vernacular house really did have a different configuration and geometry. As a result, “nothing was the same in Portuguese architecture after 1940 until the following decades when a new generation of authors finally managed to impose the modern idea once again.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Fernandes, José Manuel in Wang, Wilfried, Ana Tostões and Annette Becker. *Portugal: Arquitectura do Século XX*, p. 126.

### **3. B. and the Section of Architecture of the Lisbon School of Fine Arts (EBAL) between 1932 and 1950/57**

#### **3.1 The school experience and its players**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the teaching of architecture in Portugal was characterised by various reforms. It is important to look at the reform that was in force between 1932 and 1950/57 in order to frame the years in which B. was a student (1944-50). In this period between reforms (one in 1932 and the other in 1950, applied only from 1957) there were only two official architecture courses in Portugal, both public: one in Lisbon and the other in Porto. Both came from the same tradition, that of the Academies of Fine Arts, thus configuring a type of teaching that was fundamentally artistic in nature, despite the aforementioned mid-century reform that qualified them as more technically orientated.

The Lisbon and Porto courses were similar as they were both part of public fine arts schools (where painting and sculpture courses were also taught) and because they were located in Portugal's two main cities. From their creation until the 1974 revolution, it can be said that they shared the same curriculum (with occasional exceptions). These facts are significant, although often overlooked by historiography.

However, the courses differed in terms of their proximity or distance from the tutelage. In Lisbon, the course was highly controlled in obedience to the dictatorial political regime. In contrast, the course in Porto moved towards a "more modern", as B. would describe it, and a more autonomous and democratic character<sup>21</sup> – namely through the leadership of Carlos Ramos, who came from the Lisbon school and whose motto during his time as director (1952-1957) was "maximum freedom with maximum responsibility"<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, in Lisbon, the school had more human capital, with more senior academics, and was even more bureaucratic because it was responsible, for instance, for the equivalence processes.

In Lisbon, unlike Carlos Ramos, the actions of Luís Alexandre Cunha, director between 1946 and 1949, and also a professor, were repressive and irrational, both in terms of how he treated students, according to most testimonies from the time, and how he assessed them. Nicknamed "Cunha Bruto", he was also known for being a PIDE inspector (the regime's political police) and, above all, for disregarding female students and giving them lower marks than men. J. C. recalls:

*"The class had around twenty or so [students men and women]. It was the first year that there was a group – which was our group – that all passed the first time. Because, until*

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<sup>21</sup> B. in a statement given to the author in 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bárbara Coutinho in *Carlos Ramos*, <https://www.instituto-camoes.pt/atividade/centro-virtual/bases-tematicas/figuras-da-cultura-portuguesa/carlos-ramos>.



*then, “Cunha”, by ‘obligation’, failed everyone in the 1st year. And if they were girls, sometimes they’d fail two.<sup>23</sup>”*

These constraints and the distinctive aspects of the two courses made it considerably difficult for dissatisfied students to fight back, which led to an exodus from Lisbon to Porto. This was the case for some professors, but also for students like Carlota Quintanilha, from the B.’s course (Figure 4) who, being from Coimbra, did her first two years in Lisbon, after which she asked to be transferred to Porto (1946).



**Fig. 4. Maria Carlota Quintanilha: photograph of the school process at the Porto School of Fine Arts, c. 1953.** Source © Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Porto

This migration was mainly a choice of what B. refers to as the “cultivated” students<sup>24</sup>. In an unashamed and perhaps politically incorrect way, B. consigns the “cultivated” students to a separate group – the group of the more up-to-date and activist students. Most of the students didn’t interfere with the powers established, which, ironically, brought them closer to arts other than architecture, as was the case with B., who took up illustration, calligraphy, and other crafts, which at the time were already considered suitable for young women.

One of the most famous names of this period, who is often described, erroneously but comprehensibly, as the school’s director, is the aforesaid Luís Cristino da Silva. Cristino da Silva’s practice introduced the kind of architecture favourable to the regime – symbolic, monumental, nationalist. In 1932, he was admitted as professor of the 5<sup>th</sup> subject (Architecture; which is equivalent to the subject of “Project” today) and became an influential professor. Although he had contributed to the blossoming of modernism in Portugal, in this late period of

<sup>23</sup> J. C. in a statement given to the author on 20/04/2013.

<sup>24</sup> B. in statement to the author on 20/04/2013.

his career Cristino da Silva was bringing out his Parisian *beaux-arts* lineage, collaborating with the state in what today's most historians pejoratively describe as the "soft Portuguese" style. Cristino's influence on his pupils is widely mentioned in testimonies and his professional life was reflected in his way of teaching. B. recalls that being Cristino da Silva's pupil meant working with certain restrictions:

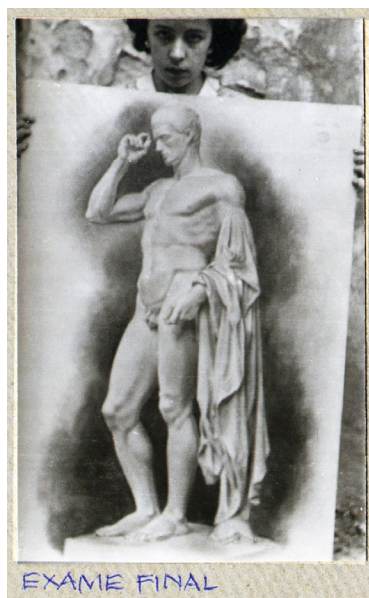
"We had some History classes, but not much. They were one-hour classes, twice a week, if I remember correctly. We talked about the time of the Greeks. The 20<sup>th</sup> century? ... it was given in class; Cristino would go over it and correct it. I remember I got a good grade in a cafe or a bar. José Pedro [brother] went with me to the Gambrinus [restaurant] to find out what some architecture stuff was like (I can't remember well). I'd never been there before. So, I did the project, and, on the top, I applied some glass guards – which, at that time, was 'modern'. And Cristino said: "But this will break...!" I remember that I wanted to put that glass in. But everything was done with old materials like brick.<sup>25</sup>"

These restrictions were compounded by the length of the course. Today it can be said that the high level of demand for architecture courses in Portugal is rooted in this aspect. The course was disjointed from a creative point of view, as well as fragmented from a pedagogical perspective, and was strongly contested at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Congress of Architecture (1948). In addition to the "special course" in architecture, which lasted four years, there was a "higher course", of indeterminate duration, developed through competitions and a complex assessment system (based on scores that equalled points), with the "rewards" being medals and mentions. Prizes were also awarded (for donations and legacies)<sup>26</sup>. The content included knowledge of styles and ornaments based on ancient architectural treatises, the practice of model drawing (Figure 5), often live models, the history of ancient art, mathematics, geometry, and little else.

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<sup>25</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>26</sup> In accordance with the "Regulamento das Escolas de Belas Artes de Lisboa e do Porto" published in Decree 21:662 of the *Diário do Governo*, Series I, no. 214, of 12 September 1932.



**Fig. 5.** B. holding a drawing proposed for final examination at the EBAL, c. 1950. Source © M.B.C.

This meant that formality took precedence over individuality and imagination, and it wouldn't be surprising if the students ended up producing similar compositions (as the projects were called). In fact, one of the techniques favoured at the school was emulation<sup>27</sup>, namely copying classical orders. This method of learning continued beyond the 1950 reform and was much discussed at the end of the 1960s as one of the elements to be removed from the curriculum. But B. recalls that

*“there was architectural drawing (...) which was essentially drawing columns and temples, Greek and Roman buildings. What’s the point of spending a year drawing these things (Ionic and Doric columns, etc.)? It was highly contested. However, I’m glad I did it because I think it gave me a knowledge of proportions and balance – which I apply to what? Whatever it takes, it’s inside us and we get to know it. The course was awful for everyone, but I think it had that positive side.”*<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> A form of copying that was typical of the *beaux-arts* model.

<sup>28</sup> B. in statement to the author on 20/04/2013.



architecture students imply a strengthening of their interpersonal relationships (Figure 7) expressed, for example, in lasting friendships and marriages.



**Fig. 7.** *B. between fellow students at one of the entrances to EBAL (model drawing room), c. 1945.*

Source © M.B.C.

The fact that there were so few of them also meant that each student was likely to become a relevant figure in society and culture, an aspect that was diluted with the democratisation of education. The 1960s, and more strongly the revolution of April 1974, opened up space, on the one hand, for greater equality and, on the other, for greater anonymity for most professional architects, who were now conforming to a mass logic.

B.'s case is exemplary (Figure 8): her biography is accessible on Wikipedia (neither she nor her family created this webpage), which would not be expected of the tens of thousands of architects trained today, with equally relevant and original curriculums.

ESBAL		003065	FICHA DE ALUNO
NOME <i>Maria Antónia de Assunção Roque</i>	LIVRO		
<i>Camilo Martins Barata</i>	FOLIO		
FILIAÇÃO	PROCESSO <i>48</i>		
NATURALIDADE	<i>DATA 76</i>		
FREGUESIA <i>S. Sebastião Pedreira</i>	PRIMEIRA MATRICULA		
CONCELHO <i>Lisboa</i>			
DISTRITO <i>Lisboa</i>			
OBS.		PROVA FINAL OU EXAME DE SAÍDA	
		VALORES	
		VALORES	
		REGISTO N.º	
		EM	

**Fig. 8.** *Student file from B.'s school process, c. 1944.*

Source © Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon

At a time when the majority of women were domestic workers and caregivers, to be an architect was to belong to an elitist environment. Choosing to study at EBAL, rather than a technical course for draughtsmen, made this *milieu* a universe of students from the middle and upper classes. Although there were scholarships and tuition fee waivers, there were always expenses to cover, and the admission to the course – namely the statue drawing test – was conveniently supported by artists known to the parents, or someone influential, who offered to help the candidate. Moreover, after the “higher education course” (1<sup>st</sup> phase), “the course went on”<sup>31</sup>, which favoured early professionalisation, especially on the atelier or office circuit.

If studying architecture at a higher level was rare, it was even rarer for a woman to finish her degree, i.e. take the Competition to obtain a Diploma in Architecture (CODA), which the students called “thesis”<sup>32</sup>. This final exam was essential for the officially recognised practice of architecture. Therefore, for those who wanted to pursue the practice professionally, it was an essential step.

The architecture course could be accessed through enrolment followed by a transfer from the painting course, which was more assured, and there was no need to complete high school. At this stage in B.’s life, there was a combination of contradictory factors. Coming from Liceu Pedro Nunes, B. chose painting to continue her studies because it was what she really liked (Figure 9).



**Fig. 9.** *B. drawing in Eugaria, Sintra, 1951.* Source © M.B.C.

So, what made her father pressure her to choose architecture? When questioned about why, B. suggests that the painting course was considered too accessible. Perhaps her father felt that the

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<sup>31</sup> José Pedro Martins Barata in a statement to the author on 20/04/2013.

<sup>32</sup> Curiously, until the 1980s, successive models of final exams were called CODA, for different syllabuses.

course she wanted was not suited to her status and abilities. Painting was, at that time, more of a female occupation than architecture. Her father, Jaime Martins Barata, a painter, didn't believe that his own livelihood was worthy of one of his descendants, even if she was a woman. We hypothesise that painting was an occupation, as already mentioned, and not a profession within the framework of female domestic life. Being a painter by profession required a great deal of self-learning and creative impulse. For Jaime, painting was far too serious, and the course at the School of Fine Arts perhaps too light for an activity of such responsibility.

## 5. Life after attending architecture school

### 5.1 Marriage to J. C., Comics and the Saibreira

On 4 August 1952, two years after leaving EBAL, B. married J. C. (1925-2020), who had been her classmate. After attending the course, B. didn't really practice architecture, but she continued with the 'little' big things, namely the comic strip series she had already started working on in 1943, first for the magazine *Lusitas* (1943-1957) and later for the magazine *Fagulha* (1958-1974). This was compatible with marriage that didn't conflict with the country's political orientation, unlike the work of some other artists at the time.

B. and J. C. met through an intermediary, Martha Norton, and the marriage was celebrated in the traditional manner (Figure 10).



**Fig. 10.** Framed portrait from B. and J. C.'s wedding (1952) hanging in their eldest daughter's house.

Source © M.B.C.

They had six children, 11 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren (so far), a family of considerable size by today's standards. This reality conditioned B., who sought not to devote herself full-time to a profession – which, in fact, she despised, believing that she wouldn't be



able to overcome all the barriers that would be imposed on her. So, she ended up leaving CODA behind:

*“Just as I cried a lot because I didn’t want to study architecture, I didn’t want to do my thesis because I didn’t feel capable. Knowing that any project I did would have the whole jury criticising me, and that I wouldn’t be able to defend it because I wasn’t capable of defending myself, horrified me so much that I was never able to move on from it.”<sup>33</sup>*

Leaving CODA unfinished was common among women of her generation. With regard to the Porto School of Fine Arts<sup>34</sup>, that the number of female students who were awarded the final diploma was small before the 1950/57 reform, which is an indicator of what was happening in Lisbon. Today, B. says that by the time she opted to leave the course and not do her “thesis”, she had already married and embarked on a family project, naturally together with her husband. Whilst her father wanted her to be an architect by profession, J. C. wasn’t keen on it<sup>35</sup>. And as if protecting herself behind this shield, she would then, without any hesitation, take on other roles, in particular (in a moderate but very significant way) teaching drawing and other artistic work that was more compatible with motherhood, despite having “maids” (a name for today’s domestic service workers). Professional (paid) activity, particularly comics, ended with the revolution. In her own words,

*“She continued to draw until April 1974, the date on which comics ended for B.”<sup>36</sup>*

The reason for this hiatus before and after 1974 has not yet been ascertained, but it may have something to do with political issues since the magazines she collaborated on were owned by the National Commissariat of Portuguese Youth – an organisation that had an obvious relationship with the “Estado Novo”.

During this period, architects who were the husbands of women architects often eclipsed their wives. This is a common phenomenon at the time, and even today, which affected, for example, the aforementioned Carlota Quintanilha, who married João José Tinoco, a well-known architect in Portuguese colonial circles. Although J. C. didn’t dedicate himself exclusively to the practice of architecture in his professional life, we wonder about the influence of marriage on B.’s vocation and personal aspirations. In an interview, she said that she took a few courses to keep herself busy, suggesting that the architecture course was just an occupation in her life until she got married:

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<sup>33</sup> B. in a statement to the author on 20/04/2013.

<sup>34</sup> No data was obtained from EBAL (Lisbon) because it was lost when the school (now the Faculty of Architecture) was relocated to the Ajuda campus in the early 1990s.

<sup>35</sup> According to her own statement to the author, in 2019.

<sup>36</sup> According to her designed “Curriculum Vitae”.



*“I finished the course and had nothing to do so I took more subjects: Anatomy, Literature, ... I went there ‘for sport’. I played around with it a bit.”<sup>37</sup>”*

However, it should be noted that it was together that B. and J. C. built Saibreira, the name given to a house in Eugaria, Sintra, which they bought in ruins and rebuilt step by step.

Saibreira is an object of study in itself. Located almost in the middle of the mountains, it is a ‘manufactured’ house. Far from modern aesthetics and ideals, it is also close to ecological principles. The ‘waste’ was reused; the labour was also provided by B. and J. C. themselves; the systems, foundations and structures were made by local people. A picturesque, comfortable (although naturally damp) and organic (although compartmentalised) house, to which was added a swimming pool, also made by the owners, which made and makes the family happy. A spacious and well-equipped workshop allowed B. and J. C. to work with wood, iron, and other materials for decades. The relationship with nature and religion, and the way it moves away from modernist ideals, brings it closer to the works of Raul Lino, but also Gaudí. It’s a modern house with decorative and symbolic elements (Figure 11), with small framing windows and traditional materials, which invites visitors to a seclusion unthinkable in the city.



**Fig. 11.** *Decorative detail in Saibreira, 2023.* Source © M.B.C.

We believe that here B. found her greatest vocation. She’s not an architect in the most literal and traditional sense of the term – registered with the Architects’ Association, drawing in her own name, running a business from her profession – but a true architect-artist.

<sup>37</sup> B. in a statement to the author on 20/04/2013.

## 6. Epilogue

Although she is closely accompanied by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, B. now lives independently in her home, in a family building. She considers herself an architect, even though she didn't submit her thesis; but she devotes herself mainly to small-scale manual labour, which she now does with some difficulty, given her age.

When she talks about herself and her career, she diminishes herself, perhaps as a defence of the expectations that have fallen on her and continue to challenge her and make her uncomfortable. But she is asked to do a number of works (albeit seemingly modest ones), particularly “registos” (Figure 12), yet being capable of producing anything.



**Fig. 12.** Example of a “registo” made by B. with recycled materials. Source © M.B.C.

As a collector of all materials that can be recycled, B. keeps a huge collection of papers, ribbons, buttons, among other trinkets and even larger objects that she puts to good use. She keeps a current account with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of everything she can think of that might be of interest to them, i.e. not only letters but also books and other goods. Her generosity towards her descendants is why she often mentions the availability of her things, and also to work for anyone. Widowed since 2020, she misses her husband J. C. The imminence of her own death is very clear to B., and it is with humour and gratitude that she lives what she considers to be her last years.

## 7. Conclusions

In order to study gender issues from a historiographical point of view, it is important to look at women's educational backgrounds. As far as the history of architectural education is concerned, it mirrors social reality in a faithful way. In this field, while it's vague to talk about generations on their own – of students, teachers, and architects – when put in context they are useful for reading history. Thus, we can see that, as happened with the development of a Portuguese nationalist movement in the 1940s, there was also a retraction of liberal principles in customs, particularly with regard to the role of women, and a resurgence of religiosity. This latter had been lost at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in many sectors of society with the republican ideals. Women's emancipation was revived at the end of the 1960s and especially in the 1970s when a radical political and social revolution took place in Portugal.

In her youth, B.'s life was marked by this context. The role of women changed substantially with the implementation of the "Estado Novo"; they placed themselves in second plan to the "head of the family" (husband). B. is a bit of a deviation from the norm, although she doesn't completely escape the model of the time. She overcomes this condition through, firstly, her advanced education and, secondly, a marriage that has allowed her, albeit discreetly, to put her talents into practice.

Ancestry is very important to B. And her husband, J. C., had known her family closely since before they were married. So, the issue of "women's liberation" is obvious in her case, but also smaller than it could be, which reveals how history is full of contradictions and incomplete explanations.

The Roque Gameiro family motto is "Honour your grandparents". This text is the author's reading of the reality she witnessed and heard (which can be considered oral history) but leaves room for other diverse interpretations.

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