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Colonial and Post-Colonial Landscapes: Architecture, Colonialism and War. Papers' Booklet

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High Standards for Women: Architectural Education as a Pathway to Resilient Work in Former Portuguese Africa

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Abstract

Although there is still little literature that crosses colonial and post-colonial studies with gender studies, it is increasing. Concerning Portuguese Africa, if we go back to the biographical origins of the first women authors, in the 1950s, investigation should include their training path, a decade earlier, as young adults and girls, in order to be completely understandable. The metropolises of the old colonial Empires were protagonists in this framework. For women to become architects – as self-employed, technicians working for the Public Works departments or cooperants with the reconstruction of the new independent nations –, they had to attend architecture courses in the available global north schools. In Portugal, the old *beaux-arts* tradition led, in the 1960s, to a myriad of political and aesthetic trends other than concrete propositions for the outer world and its specificities. Furthermore, north and south of the country would favour different aspects of the same one-nation-oriented official syllabi; and if the capital, Lisbon, graduated more students per year – and thus more women – some of these students would migrate to the country's second city, Porto, and its (Superior) School of Fine Arts (E(S)BAP), later Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP). Today we are able not only to trace the existing women and girls students from this northern school, their names and most important works, but may go back to their original motivations and their first accomplishments in the perspective of their academic records and school works archives. We specifically look into two women architects that serve as case studies for our arguments: Carlota Quintanilha (EBAP, 1953) and Alda Tavares (ESBAP 1971/74). This paper will be structured in three parts that accompany this line of thought: firstly, it will gather the most pertinent information known about these women (a resumed state of the art); secondly, it will list all the data attained for this particular investigation; thirdly, it will validate the hypothesis of the two women pointed out that graduated in Porto School having had a resilient work in Portuguese colonial Africa.

Keywords: Architectural Education; EBAP/ESBAP; Women architects; Portuguese Colonial Africa.

Session: Learning from (and for) Africa. Architecture, colonialism and conflict

Introduction

The context in which this paper was conducted was a research project titled *WomArchStruggle: Women architects in former Portuguese colonial Africa: gender and struggle for professional recognition (1953-1985)*¹ whose Principal Investigator was Ana Vaz Milheiro, and Co-Principal Investigator the author. It was an exploratory project funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) that lasted 18 months between 2023 and 2024. Its overall goals were identified in 3 questions:

1. *Who were the women architects working in the former Portuguese colonial territories in Africa?*
2. *What was their educational and professional background?*
3. *What were their struggles for professional recognition?*

The results materialised in various forms including a website, communications, articles, a report, and a forthcoming book. The aim of this production is to draw up an unprecedented portrait of the panorama of women architects who practised their profession in former Portuguese Africa. This paper, in particular, aims to explore the relationship between training and practice of these women. In other words, to understand whether there are reasons for the exercise of women's architecture to clearly relate to their education. The summarised answers to the questions mentioned above constitute the framing of this text.

1. *Who were the women architects working in the former Portuguese colonial territories in Africa?*

The research project's progress involved the identification of a core of 9 women and the organisation of some information about them, such as their birthplace, the architecture schools they attended, their graduation status, and the nation they worked in, as presented in Figure 1.

¹ <https://doi.org/10.54499/2022.01720.PTDC>.

	NAME	DATES	PLACE OF BIRTH		E(S)BAL	E(S)BAP	GRADUATED	WORKED IN
1	Carlota Quintanilha	1923-2015	Coimbra	PT	1944-48	1948-53	Yes	ANG + MOZ
2	Maria Emília Caria	1926-2000	Santarém	PT	1957		Yes	CV + GB
3	Antonieta Jacinto	1930-2021	Kahala	AO	1948-56		Yes	ANGOLA
4	Rute Bota	1932-	Loulé	PT	1965		Yes	MOZAMBIQUE
5	Leonor Figueira	1937-	Lisbon	PT	1961		Yes	MOZAMBIQUE
6	Nátália Gomes	1937-	Lisbon	PT	1961		Yes	MOZAMBIQUE
7	Assunção Paixão	1943-	Lourenço Marques	MZ	1973		Yes	MOZAMBIQUE
8	Ana Torres	1945-2006	Dondo	AO	1974		Yes	ANGOLA
9	Alda Tavares	1945-	Porto	PT		1971/74	Yes	GUINEA-BISSAU

Figure 1. Data on women architects who worked in Portuguese Colonial Africa © WomArchStruggle. In **bold**, the two graduated from E(S)BAP, the Porto school of Architecture.

This group of women architects distinguished themselves through diverse personal and professional paths within the general framework of common geographies, time lapses, and graduation institutions. In this study, we highlight the women who were educated in Porto, namely the oldest architect in the group, Carlota Quintanilha (1923-2015), and the youngest, Alda Tavares (1945-), who were born in central and northern Portugal respectively. Both were cultured, well-travelled, and emancipated women (daughters of divorced parents, themselves separated and independent, etc.). Despite having studied Architecture at the School of Fine Arts of Porto (EBAP, in the case of Quintanilha), which later became the Superior School of Fine Arts of Porto (ESBAP, in the case of Tavares), the 22-year age, 14 years of studies and 18 years of graduation difference justify different pedagogical matrices.

2. What was their educational and professional background?

During the Portuguese colonial period, there were two institutions that ministered Architecture (along with Painting and Sculpture), both in Portugal: in Porto and in Lisbon, the capital. These were the Portuguese Fine Arts Schools. Despite the differences, they shared the same syllabi and bureaucratic processes until the 1974 political revolution. Figure 2 systematises the evolution of the different reforms and summarises their educational content, putting them side by side with some of the main global political events.

Architectural education in Portugal	Parallel political events
1881 – Creation of Fine Arts Schools of Lisbon and Porto	1884 – Berlin Conference, Africa’s territorial partition
1931 – <i>Beaux-Arts</i> Reform: 4 years + competitions + CODA	1933 – <i>Estado Novo</i> ditatorial regime (Portugal)
1950-57 – “The 57 Reform”: 6 years and a thesis	1961 – Portuguese Colonial/Liberation War
1974 – Revolutionary times lead to syllabuses revision	1974 – Political Revolution (Portugal) leads to Democracy

Figure 2. Development of architectural education in Portugal from 1881 to 1974, and its parallel events
© Leonor Matos Silva

The main difference between the two educational processes is that the first (1931-1950/57) is inspired by the French *beaux-arts* system – based on classical orders, eclecticism, and emulations – and the second (1950/57-1974) follows a model whose curriculum replaces some artistic issues with humanities and technical learnings (introducing, for example, *General Mathematics* – to be taught at the Faculty of Sciences –, to be taught at the Faculty of Sciences – but also *General Sociology* and *Human Geography*).² In Porto (Fig. 3), this official curricular differentiation also unfolded in practice in separated expressions. The *beaux-arts* system was not followed in its pure form during the old system, nor was a more “current” course developed after the 1950 reform, as suggested, or even required, at the First National Congress of Architects in 1948 (particularly by Keil do Amaral). On the contrary, the history of the Architecture course at the School of Fine Arts of Porto is presented to us by its biographers as a singular history through its own narrative, suggesting that merely reading curricula is limiting and that a whole set of values overrode the official data. Risking a history based on memory – a fallible and subjective resource – several theses were conducted with the underlying idea launched by urban planner and professor Nuno Portas of ESBAP constituting a school in the sense of an architectural trend (to simplify).³

² Cf. Decree no. 41363 of November 14, 1957.

³ This ‘narrative’ is expressed in various dissertations. In 2024, the FAUP itself published a dissertation entitled “O Problema da Escola do Porto” (*The Problem of the Porto School*). See also Jorge Figueira’s “Escola do Porto: Um Mapa Crítico” (2002) and Pedro Bandeira and Nuno Faria’s “Escola do Porto: B Side, 1968-1978 (An Oral History)” (2015?), as fundamental authors who attended the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto, successor to the ESBAP.

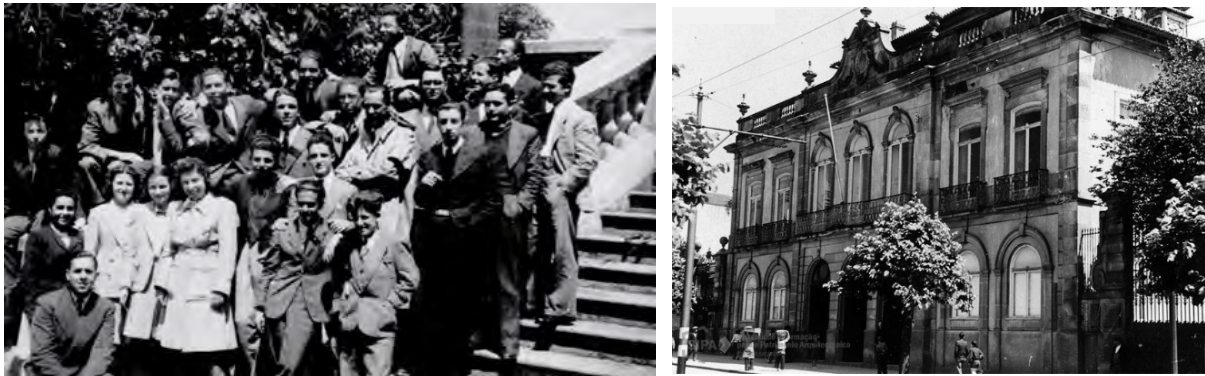


Figure 3. Manuel Gomes da Costa among colleagues at EBAP with Fernando Távora on the far right of the picture © Manuel Gomes da Costa, 2009 | Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto, 1939; © Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico – CIPA.

In the WomArchStruggle project, we also face similar difficulties. On the one hand, programmes and official documents provide what we believe to be true data but could, absurdly, be deliberately falsified. On the other hand, testimonies may be true within the scope of what the interviewee believes, in their fallible conviction.

3. What were their struggles for professional recognition?

If professional recognition firstly involves holding an academic diploma obtained from a reputable educational institution, the same principle applies to women who dedicated themselves to the design of the African built environment. Based on an alphabetical list of girls enrolled in the architecture course in Porto since records began until 1985, an analysis was conducted to determine which ones actually graduated. Subsequently, the differential between enrolment and graduation was examined. In the chart of Fig. 4, compiled by the author, which includes 99 names of young women enrolled in the architecture course between 1938 and 1976, the ones who completed the course are highlighted in colour and chronologically ordered. This colour mapping allows us to see immediately that less than half of the women completed the course. This analysis raises the hypothesis that professional recognition for these women would have been exclusive to those with greater vocation, capabilities, resilience, or even financial possibilities, health, or family support. In other words, formal recognition was derived from many variables. (We also observe that after the reform implemented in 1957, there is an increase

in the percentage of enrolled women who actually graduated, including handing in their final work, which at that time, became commonly known as a “thesis”).

Student Name	Entry	Exit	Diploma
1 Maria Adelaide Chaves Ricou Perez	23/09/1940	23/09/1940	0º Ano
2 Maria Áurea de Mascarenhas	23/09/1940	23/09/1940	0º Ano
3 Maria Helena de Oliveira Trigo Perestrelo da Silva	23/09/1940	23/09/1940	0º Ano
4 Maria Luísa da Costa Dias	22/09/1941	22/09/1941	0º Ano
5 Maria Ernestina Fernandes Marques Carneiro	23/09/1940	22/10/1941	C Sup Incompl
6 Maria da Glória Vieira Duarte Veloso	22/09/1941	08/06/1944	1º Ano ⁴
7 Beatriz José da Veiga Ferreira Pedras	23/09/1944	14/10/1944	0º Ano
8 Maria Antónia Couto de Sousa Nogueira	23/09/1940	25/09/1945	C Sup Incompl
9 Guilhermina Abaciss Canavaro	23/09/1944	25/09/1945	1º Ano
10 Maria Fernanda de Oliveira Ferreira	22/09/1945	26/10/1945	Req indefer. ¹
11 Maria Salomé Nunes Gomes	26/10/1946	26/10/1946	0º Ano
12 Maria Clementina de Carvalho Quaresma	23/09/1944	19/07/1947	C Sup Incompl
13 Maria Helena Guedes Vaz Sant'Ana	22/09/1938	22/07/1948	Diploma 18 V
14 Maria Stela Guedes Vaz Santana	22/09/1938	22/07/1948	Diploma 18 V
15 Gabriela da Silva Santos Cerveira Pinto	22/09/1948	22/09/1948	0º Ano
16 Maria dos Anjos Manta de Andrade Pais	23/09/1946	04/10/1948	1º Ano
17 Gracinda da Silva Fernandes	25/09/1947	04/10/1948	0º Ano
18 Maria Emília Rocha Cabrita	15/11/1947	21/10/1948	C Sup Incompl
19 Maria Cândida de Azevedo Sena Pinto de Oliveira	23/09/1944	16/08/1949	C Especial
20 Clemência da Conceição Valente	06/10/1947	12/09/1949	C Sup Incompl
21 Eduarda Vieira de Brito Vinhas	17/11/1947	12/09/1949	1º Ano
22 Maria Leonor Ferreira de Almeida	27/10/1948	13/09/1949	1º Ano
23 Maria Dúrcia de Silva Salgado	23/09/1947	09/10/1949	0º Ano
24 Alice Isabel Correia de Sá	17/11/1947	02/09/1950	C Spec 3º Ano
25 Maria Eduarda Duarte	13/09/1943	31/07/1951	C Sup Incompl
26 Palmira de Figueiredo Barbosa Marques	19/10/1948	15/09/1951	C Sup Incompl
27 Maria José Urubatin Martini	22/09/1938	22/09/1951	C Especial
28 Maria Antónia Torre Freire de Sousa Pinto Cochofel	22/09/1945	28/09/1951	C Sup Incompl
29 Maria Helena Sampaio Pinto da Mota	27/09/1949	10/10/1951	C Sup Incompl
30 Maria Isabel Martins da Silva	22/09/1949	11/10/1951	0º Ano
31 Maria Manuela Branco Resende	27/09/1949	09/10/1952	C Sup Incompl
32 Maria Orianda de Carvalho Vieira	27/09/1949	09/10/1952	C Sup Incompl
33 Maria Alice da Costa Batista	27/09/1949	20/12/1952	C Sup Incompl
34 Maria Carlota de Carvalho Quintanilha	19/10/1948	25/06/1953	Diploma 17 V
35 Maria Irene Guedes Coelho Pereira	22/09/1948	13/09/1954	C Especial
36 Graciana Andrade	02/02/1954	18/09/1954	C Especial
37 Olga Marília Freire Valente	22/09/1942	24/09/1954	C Sup Incompl
38 Teresa Adorinda Gamael Cardoso	14/10/1950	11/08/1955	C Esp 14,5 V
39 Ester Maria de Passos Aguiar	25/09/1945	20/09/1955	1º Ano
40 Maria de Jesus Lopes Pancada	23/09/1953	21/09/1955	C Sup Incompl
41 Regina Vicente Lobo	04/09/1944	23/09/1955	C Sup Incompl ⁴
42 Maria Augusta Garcia de Miranda Guedes	23/09/1948	26/07/1956	Diploma 18 V
43 Maria Alice de Sousa Fernandes	04/10/1948	17/09/1956	0º Ano
44 Maria Manuela da Silva Reis	22/09/1947	26/09/1956	C Sup Incompl
45 Teresa Maria Nogueira da Silva	06/10/1949	02/10/1956	C Sup Incompl
46 Margarida Carolina Costa Amaral	21/02/1950	01/11/1957	C Sup Incompl
47 Maria Augusta Mourão da Silva Terra	14/10/1950	07/10/1957	C Sup Incompl
48 Maria Carlota Amorim do Canto Moniz	12/12/1956	07/10/1957	1º Ano
49 Manuela Brasil Soares Malique	15/10/1951	31/07/1958	C Sup Incompl
50 Maria Cândida Marques Moura	21/09/1943	03/10/1958	C Especial
51 Manuela Alexandra Queiroz de Barros Ferreira	12/12/1956	23/02/1959	1º Ano
52 Maria Teresa Brandão Costa Campos	22/09/1948	26/05/1959	C Sup Incompl
53 Sílvia Bandoquin Viana de Lima	18/10/1954	28/09/1959	C Sup Incompl ¹
54 Maria Isabel Marques de Oliveira	25/09/1947	04/04/1960	C Sup Incompl ¹
55 Firmino Alberto Trubulo	22/09/1948	04/04/1960	Diploma 18 V
56 Maria Inês Moreira Hespanha	22/10/1955	10/11/1960	C Sup Incompl
57 Maria Cecília Fonseca dos Santos Eloi	23/09/1944	26/07/1961	Diploma ⁴
58 Maria Leonor Vieira da Costa Lelo	23/09/1955	18/09/1961	C Esp 13,2 V
59 Maria Helena Matos da Silva Gago Medeiros	10/10/1953	26/09/1962	C Esp 11,4 ⁺
60 Maria Emília Carvalho de Almeida	27/09/1949	14/03/1963	Diploma 17 V
61 Maria Ambrosina Homénio Gonçalves	04/10/1948	18/05/1963	Diploma 17 V
62 Sílvia de Carvalho	22/10/1951	08/08/1963	Diploma 17 V
63 Maria Noémia Mourão do Amaral Coutinho	21/09/1955	20/07/1966	Diploma 20 V
64 Maria Fernanda Alcântara Santos	15/10/1951	22/07/1966	Diploma 20 V
65 Maria Beatriz Novaes Madureira	15/01/1958	29/07/1966	6 Anos
66 Maria Margarida Paredes dos Santos Coelho	23/10/1959	07/04/1967	6 Anos
67 Emília Filomena Valença Justino	23/09/1940	14/06/1967	Diploma 16 V
68 Maria Teresa Lourenço Vieira	28/10/1959	26/07/1967	6 Anos
69 Anni Gunther Nonell	28/09/1959	19/06/1969	6 Anos
70 Maria Luísa Machado Leite	29/09/1959	29/07/1969	6 Anos
71 Maria Cândida Camossa Saldanha Amorim de Carvalho	22/09/1947	06/06/1969	Diploma 16 V
72 Maria Flora Pinheiro de Sousa Mourão	29/09/1954	09/10/1970	Diploma 17 V
73 Maria Flor de Moraes Soares Freitas Seara	16/01/1958	08/08/1971	6 Anos
74 Maria da Costa Pereira e Santos	25/10/1963	03/08/1971	6 Anos
75 Maria Cecília de Castro e Costa Cavaca	15/09/1965	04/11/1971	6 Anos
76 Maria Eduarda Gonçalves Rosas	29/10/1965	04/11/1971	6 Anos
77 Maria Celeste Silva Pedrosa	22/10/1941	14/03/1972	Diploma 14 V
78 Delmira de Jesus Calado de Carvalho Alberto Rosado Correia	22/10/1962	10/04/1972	6 Anos
79 Ilda Maria Rodrigues Duque	19/09/1963	13/08/1972	6 Anos
80 Zita Natércia Correia da Silva Areal	30/09/1963	13/08/1972	6 Anos
81 Maria Júlia Gaspar Teixeira	22/09/1945	05/09/1972	Diploma 14 V
82 Maria Emília Guedes de Castro	22/09/1948	13/11/1972	Diploma 16 V
83 Maria Júlia Corte Real	23/09/1940	30/01/1973	Diploma 14 V
84 Niza Cardoso Rios	23/09/1940	19/02/1973	Diploma 14 V
85 Maria Fernanda Machado Seixas	30/09/1964	13/11/1973	6 Anos
86 Ana Maria Pinheiro Monteiro Gama	30/10/1964	13/11/1973	6 Anos
87 Maria Domingos dos Santos Pereira Pinto	02/11/1965	13/11/1973	6 Anos
88 Maria Fernanda Martins de Azeiteiro Carvalho	02/11/1965	13/11/1973	6 Anos
89 Isabel Maria Cardoso de Sá Ferreira	02/09/1964	13/11/1973	6 Anos
90 Fernanda Angélica Pires Castro	03/11/1966	13/11/1973	6 Anos
91 Ester Adelaide de Lima Sobral	27/09/1949	14/02/1974	Diploma 15 V
92 Maria Helena Morais de Albuquerque	24/09/1963	14/02/1974	6 Anos
93 Rosa Maria Pílão Moreira	25/10/1968	27/12/1974	6 Anos
94 Maria Manuela da Silva Moreira Brás Antunes	28/10/1968	16/12/1975	6 Anos
95 Maria Manuela Ribeiro Pereira	29/10/1968	16/12/1975	6 Anos
96 Maria João Patto de Melo Freitas	08/09/1969	29/07/1976	6 Anos
97 Maria Angéla de Fátima Lopes de Melo	30/09/1970	29/07/1976	6 Anos
98 Maria da Graça Barros Nieto Guimarães	12/11/1970	30/07/1976	6 Anos
99 Maria José Abrunhosa de Castro	01/09/1966	31/07/1976	6 Anos

First female students to complete the Porto course ever (according to the registries)

Students that completed the course during the 1950/57 Reform

First female students from E(S)BAP that worked in Africa as architects

Figure 4. Analysis table: First 99 women enrolled in E(S)BAP. Dates of entry and exit, and qualifications [in Portuguese]. From a raw list provided by the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto (FBAUP)

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This systematic reading of data regarding the course of Architecture in Porto reinforces the thesis indicated in the title of this work, that certainly the women who graduated in Porto and worked in Africa (highlighted in blue) would have belonged to a group of determined students who were resistant to effort. There is the thesis that they were condescendingly supported (as Quintanilha herself mentions), but to support this other thesis, it would be necessary for the various adverse factors to learning – the numerical inferiority, social pressure for a ‘feminine’ role, rejection by male peers in offices (such as the Maria José Estanco, the first Portuguese graduate, would state)⁴ – not to weigh undeniably on the other side of the scale. Female students in Lisbon in the 1940s possibly attended the course as an occupation until they were halted by

⁴ Cf. Roxo, Joana. (2016). *A Senhora Arquitecto: Maria José Estanco*. Master Dissertation. Iscte-IUL. Lisbon: Portugal.

their ‘true’ vocation, which was marriage.⁵ In Porto, it remains to be demonstrated why this should have been different, particularly during the 1931-1950 reform. Especially since having a diploma was a prerequisite for legally practising the profession, and this may have served as motivation. Therefore, the women who graduated had the capacity for resilience at work and expectations of working in the profession in the future.

For this specific research, it is important to emphasise that young women started to get in the architectural education only in the late 1930s, the decade when the *beaux-arts* spirit, already in use at the beginning of the century, was more strongly propagated by many academics. As said, at the time, becoming an architect was difficult. Only in 1957 did the change in the study plans was put to practice and the course of architecture became more accessible, though still hard to follow and destined to an elite.

Once they had graduated in architecture, another struggle for professional recognition for these women was the question of authorship. These were usually women whose work was associated with a partnership with men, their husbands (Quintanilha’s case) or partners. Or they were part of working groups (as in the case of Tavares); sometimes with their own authorship, but often as ‘a male architect’ (in Latin languages, there is a distinction in the word for male architect and woman architect just by changing the last vowel). There would be cases of dedicating themselves to ‘minor’ arts such as interior and domestic design, for which they didn’t need a qualification. It is not uncommon for women who have worked in Africa not to feel represented in the work assigned to them by male colleagues. In Tavares’s case, this difficulty in recognising herself as an author is reflected in her refusal to be contacted by the author to help with this survey, hesitating to give her testimony beyond a brief letter.⁶ In Quintanilha’s case, this can be seen when the architect does not assume the authorship of the work she carried out together with her husband, João José Tinoco, during the 20 years she lived with him in Africa, in the interview she gave to Ana Vaz Milheiro in 2011.⁷ In this statement, she would say that Tinoco, who was also an architect and had been her colleague at EBAP, had put her name to the projects purely for economic reasons. Truth, or impostor syndrome?

⁵ Cf. Silva, Leonor Matos (2023), “Marriage and the school of architecture in the 1940s: the case of B. (Lisbon, 1926-)”.

⁶ E-mail from Alda Tavares to Leonor Matos Silva on 25 October 2022.

⁷ Interview with Carlota Quintanilha by Ana Vaz Milheiro (with Ricardo Lima) on 13 June 2011.

Aside from the issue of ‘authorship’, another difficult matter in these women’s struggle for professional recognition is the all-too-common imbalance between men and women in high positions, especially during the period in question. Being an architect was a highly regarded profession in the second quarter of the 20th century – increasingly so from the first post-revolutionary years onwards.⁸ But if, before that, the professional hierarchy positioned Architecture below Engineering,⁹ for example, and taking a degree in Architecture was a second choice, for a woman with no family entourage – as was the case in the Marques da Silva family in Porto – it could still be too ambitious.

Women architects graduated in Porto and the Portuguese colonial Africa

Before the proliferation of superior courses in Portugal in the late 20th century, there were, like said, the Porto and the Lisbon estate-run Fine Arts schools for graduating in Architecture. The Lisbon course was more favourable to the regime; the Porto course, being further away from the capital, smaller, and fortunate enough to have Carlos Ramos as a director, was a privileged place to learn architecture, a charismatic and elite school. Although it’s debatable, it can be said that this school today remains somewhat sheltered from the massification of education.

There is a lot of old archival material related to school processes that was transferred from the former Architecture Section of the Porto School of Fine Arts to the current Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP), in a different building site.¹⁰ These collections can be accessed by anyone outside the institution. Among the documents stored are the final documents (papers and drawings) commonly known as CODA – the acronym for “Competition to Obtain a Diploma in Architecture”. Through the CODAs we can see how indebted the school is to its directors and how several professors who would come to mark future generations stand out. In the case of Carlota Quintanilha and Alda Tavares, the most important teachers were Fernando Távora and Otávio Lixa Filgueiras, respectively. Fernando Távora (1923-2005) had

⁸ Cf. Silva, Leonor Matos. *Escola de Lisboa, Arquitectura e Cultura entre 1970 e 1986*, Phd Thesis.

⁹ Cf. Fernando Távora’s testimony. In RTP Arquivos (23.12.2001). *Fernando Távora* (Documentary).

¹⁰ To deepen the specific investigation about how architecture was taught in Porto we visited its school’s archives (CDUA). The archives of a specific collection are very well preserved and have been extensively studied by researchers who continuously make a critical history of the pedagogy of this school and its protagonists. The most significant students’ works are called CODA (*Concurso para Obtenção do Diploma de Arquitecto*), as explained, and can be accessed online at <https://repositorio-tematico.up.pt/handle/10405/39800>. Being the last stage of completion of the architecture course, the CODA reflected what the aspiring architects had learned in the first years as well as the professional practice they had acquired in the meantime, or even after the academic programme.

a strong influence on Carlota Quintanilha, particularly in terms of human character, according to her. He swayed her, for example, in the decisions she made about marrying João José Tinoco and going to Africa (both in 1953). However, if we look at their CODA, only three years apart (1950 and 1953 respectively), we also see many common choices, namely a distinctly modernist language, which leads us to question whether there were internationalist influences.

According to his biographers, Távora had a great awareness of authenticity and place in architecture; in fact, as early as 1945, he himself added to the first part of his famous essay ‘O problema da casa portuguesa’ (The problem of the Portuguese house) a second part entitled ‘Falsa arquitectura’ (False architecture) and a third part entitled ‘Para uma arquitectura integral’ (Towards an integral architecture). Távora was not, therefore, a pure modernist architect, but he did take part in the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) between 1951 and 1959. And, like Quintanilha, he was extremely well-travelled.

We also realised, in later video recordings, that although he was a quiet man, he was resolute; and once again we can compare him with Quintanilha who, with all her hesitations about the authorship of projects (including her CODA) was also a determined woman. In the interview with Ana Vaz Milheiro, she stated that she didn’t like architect Amâncio (Pancho) Guedes or Portuguese dictator Salazar,¹¹ for example.

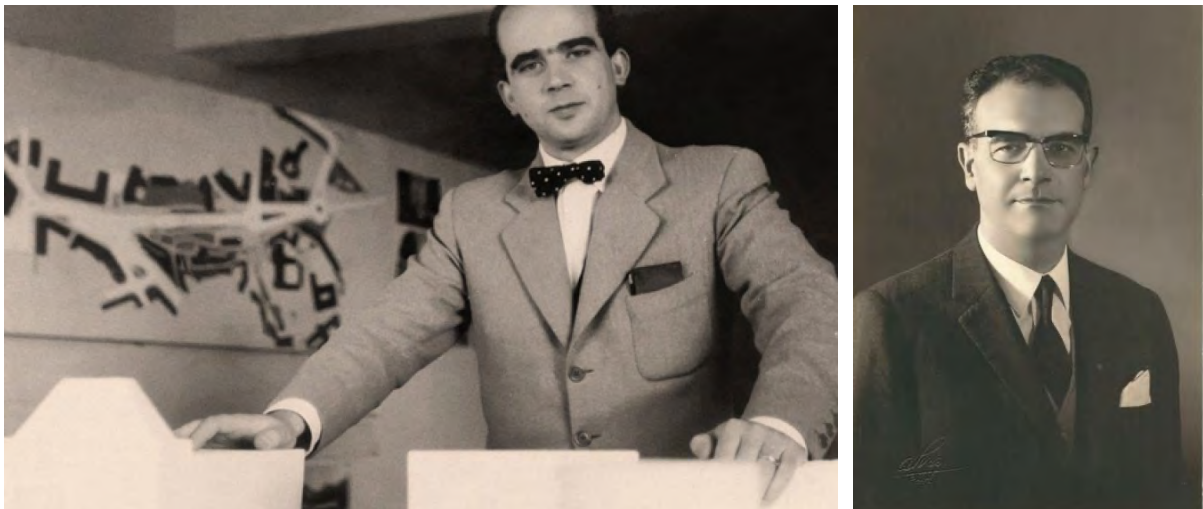


Figure 5. Fernando Távora (n.d.) © revisitavora.wordpress.com; Otávio Lixa Filgueiras (1967)
© Marques da Silva Foundation

¹¹ Interview with Carlota Quintanilha by Ana Vaz Milheiro (with Ricardo Lima) on 13 June 2011.

Contemporaneous of Távora, Otávio Lixa Filgueiras (1922-1996) was a teacher of a subject called “Analytical Architecture” between the first years of a pedagogical reform (1958) and a phase of contestation with new academic experiments (1969).¹² According to his biographers, it was with Filgueiras that the modern school guided by Carlos Ramos would disappear, giving way to a school more focused on ‘the problem of the habitat’,¹³ thus modelling itself on the concerns of contact with reality that occupied some Portuguese intellectuals.

Indeed, Filgueiras had worked with Arnaldo Araújo and Carlos Carvalho Dias on the Inquiry into Popular Architecture in Portugal, in zone 1 (Trás-os-Montes), up North, between 1955 and 1960.¹⁴ In this context, he demonstrated all the sensibility already put into his thesis in the 1962 publication “Da Função Social do Arquitecto” (On the social function of the architect). The subtitle of this book – “Towards a theory of responsibility at a time of crossroads” – illustrates the impact that the outbreak of war in the then so called ‘overseas provinces’ had on some social sectors in Portugal. And the contents refer to a time when analysing the population's habitat would replace the constructive ambitions of the post-war period. Thus, the arising of a period in which the social sciences and architecture complemented each other.

Carlota Quintanilha (1923-2015)

Maria Carlota de Carvalho e Quintanilha was the first woman graduated in Architecture in Porto that worked in former colonial Africa. According to Ana Vaz Milheiro, she is “one of the Portuguese women architects most biographed by Portuguese historiography”,¹⁵ being Milheiro one of her biographers herself. Born in Coimbra, Portugal, in 1923, Quintanilha lived her childhood and her youth in various European countries and cities, making her a woman who knew many cultural and geographical realities. She chose to register at the EBAL, the Lisbon school of Fine Arts, on the Architecture course, in 1944. Four years later, she asked for a transfer

¹² Moniz, Gonçalo Canto (2011). O ensino moderno da arquitectura: a reforma de 57 e as Escolas de Belas-Artes em Portugal (1931-69). PhD Thesis. FCTUC. Coimbra: Portugal. 456-461.

¹³ Portugal. Fundação Marques da Silva. (2017). *Sistema de Informação Octávio Lixa Filgueiras*.

¹⁴ Sindicato dos Arquitectos. (1961). *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*. 2 vols.

¹⁵ Milheiro, Ana Vaz. (2023). “Narratives on women architects in former Africa colonised by Portuguese rule: professional profiles based on training practices”. ICAG – International Conference on Architecture and Gender. Valencia: Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València. The most updated text about Quintanilha is probably Milheiro, Ana Vaz and Silva, Leonor Matos. (2025). *Nove Arquitectas em África* (book). In collection *Arquitectas Portuguesas* (coord. Patrícia Santos Pedrosa and Natália Favero). Ed. Coral Books, Ricardo Afonso (Público). (Forthcoming).

to the northern school of Porto for unknown reasons (possibly gender issues since, in the already stated 2011 interview to Milheiro, Quintanilha would state that in EBAL women weren't very welcome). In 1953, Quintanilha graduated from EBAP, Porto, with 17 over 20.

Carlota Quintanilha's CODA illustrates well what was happening in the school at that time. Unlike the Lisbon school, the Porto school, led by the already referenced figure of Carlos Ramos, challenged, as mentioned previously, the *beaux-arts* type curriculum by introducing, among other changes, a greater autonomy, which led to the appearance of works in various 'styles', including modernist. The written documents of Quintanilha's CODA – which describe her proposed kindergarten for Vila de Rei – denote, from the start, rationality and concern for the user – in this case, children. The modern design elements, like modular volumes, large windows, and bulk on *pilotis*, are seen in works later attributed to Quintanilha and her husband, Tinoco, namely in Mozambique.

Notably, also as mentioned before, there is a sharing of values between Quintanilha's end-of-course project proposal and Fernando Távora's. The pilotis, the glazing, the geometric volume, the advance over the slope, the same way of representing – with the colour stain framing the technical drawing.

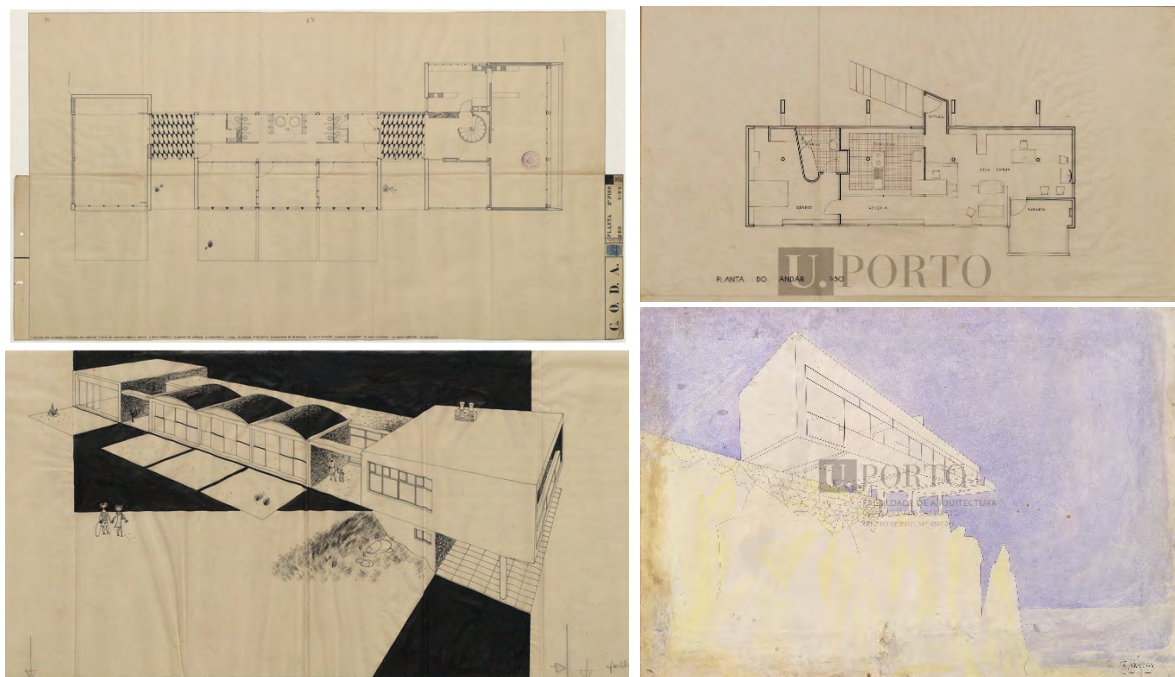


Figure 6. Carlota Quintanilha's CODA (excerpt), "A Kindergarten for Vila de Rei", 1953 © FAUP/CDUA 131;
Fernando Távora's CODA (excerpt), "A house over the sea", 1950 © FAUP/CDUA, 104

Although Távora is not known as a modernist, internationalist architect; and even though his relationship with Quintanilha and Tinoco, as far as we know, was essentially based on a relational component, this expressive analogy is nevertheless curious and noteworthy. Quintanilha would then be “linked to a tropical architecture of modern affiliation and [be] emerged in research as [a] central figure for the modern colonial culture that arose in former Portuguese Africa.”¹⁶ Her “forerunner”¹⁷ spirit reinforces the thesis of resilience that has certainly been conferred on her work in Africa. Although “the scarcity of technicians in the colonial territories gave women architects an advantage over their metropolitan colleagues”,¹⁸ the truth is that the conditions in Cunene, where they settled when they arrived in Africa, were harsh.¹⁹ (Fig.7).

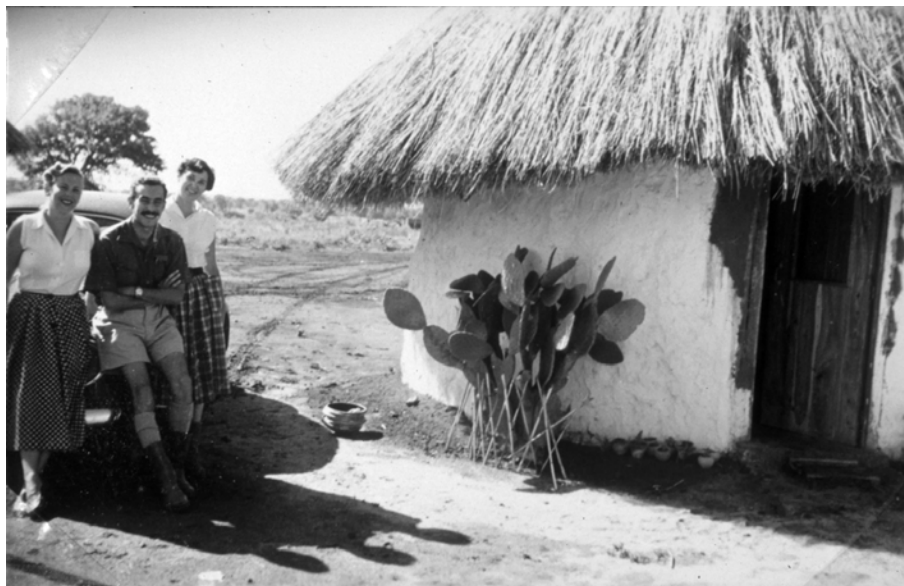


Figure 7. Carlota Quintanilha (on the right) and João José Tinoco on arrival to Cunene, Angola, 1953

© Carlota Quintanilha.

And the fact that she later stayed in Mozambique for three years on her own (Tinoco remained in Angola at the time)²⁰ wasn't also easy, either in a professional sense or in terms of marital and family life. To summarise, Quintanilha lived and worked in Africa for 20 years: three in

¹⁶ Milheiro, Ana Vaz. (2023). “Narratives on women architects in former Africa colonised by Portuguese rule: professional profiles based on training practices”, 484.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Idem.

¹⁹ Interview with Carlota Quintanilha by Ana Vaz Milheiro.

²⁰ Idem.

Angola and 17 in Mozambique. As for the work, “*only recently has Quintanilha been credited as the possible author of designs. In her late years, she was unable to help in making her real contribution understandable.*”²¹ As Milheiro emphasises,

*“Quintanilha’s personal life, culminating in her divorce [in 1966], had a strong influence on her own view of her role during the 10 years that she worked with her husband in Mozambique, between 1956 and 1966. In the rare interviews she gave, when the gender issue was gaining importance in Portuguese colonial architectural history, and in which Quintanilha was asked about her design projects, she refused to describe her professional life in Africa beyond her work as a high school teacher.”*²²

This makes our resilience thesis more challenging. On the other hand, it affirms the difficulty that some of these women, particularly of a certain generation, have in admitting their own worth.

Alda Tavares (1945-)

Alda Tavares was born in Porto in 1945 as Alda Maria da Costa Pereira e Santos.²³ She registered in the architecture course in ESBAP, now a *Superior* school, in 1962. In the 1960s, in Porto, a new generation of assistant teachers arrived. These teachers were concerned with bringing real life to school exercises. The subject with the title “Analytic Architecture” had Octávio Lixa Filgueiras as a teacher and Tavares as one of the students. She and other students sketched the interiors of houses in problematic urban areas, including its closets and everything that was inside them: crockery, cutlery, table linen... In the work of Alda Tavares an “analytic” attitude towards the interior of dwellings can be seen, in which she checks how many people occupy them and how the furniture is distributed. This might seem simplistic, but it was, in fact, very important for a certain way of thinking architecture.

At this time, the course was still long, consisting of six years plus an internship, and it was demanding. In fact, women were indeed subjected to the pedagogical high standards. As early as the first year, Professor Filgueiras proposed, as in the Portuguese Popular Architecture

²¹ Milheiro, Ana Vaz, and Filipa Fiúza (2020), “Women Architects in Portugal: Working in Colonial Africa before the Carnation Revolution (1950–1974)”. *Arts* 9 (3): 86, 42.

²² Idem.

²³ Nowadays, Alda Tavares signs as ‘Alda (Santos)’, perhaps due to marital separation.

Survey, the realisation of these so-called *Urban Surveys* based on an equivalent methodology: social surveys, performed indifferently by both boys and girls. The surveys would focus on the number of inhabitants and the conditions of the habitat, and would substitute the technical and aesthetic aspects of the construction surveys. The student identified the buildings to be studied with hand-drawn sketches, analytical plans, circulation maps, furniture surveys – as the ones mentioned previously –, usage diagrams, even visual poetry. Tavares would, for instance, draw a horizontal cut of a city block in Porto where almost a dozen dwellings are analysed, the areas, hygiene points, circulation, occupation, etc. (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. ESBAP, Analytical Architecture course by Professor Octávio Lixa Filgueiras: Operation Barredo, survey by António de Brito, 1967-68 © Marques da Silva Foundation | Alda Tavares, sketch for Analytical Architecture I, 1963/64 © FAUP/CDUA.

We believe that Tavares was an ambitious and determined student. At this age (17), she would state:

*“I chose the Architecture course of my own free will after not finding it convenient to take a decorating course in England without a more useful course of greater knowledge. My family didn't like it very much, although they don't disagree.”*²⁴

This ambition and determination are possibly what led Tavares to travel the world – just like her senior colleague Quintanilha. In 1966, Tavares moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; in 1968 she stayed three months in Peru and Brazil coming back to Portugal the following year. It was

²⁴ Alda Tavares first year hand-written exercise, 1962.

in 1969 and 1970 that Tavares worked in Africa, specifically Guinea-Bissau, a Portuguese province at war. Tavares was part of the initial establishment of a group of architects called the “Urbanisation Working Group” created by António Moreira Veloso, an architect working for the Portuguese State in Guinea-Bissau. This group was responsible for studying the rural populations and proposing alternative housing designs and resettlements to those used by the military (Fig. 9).

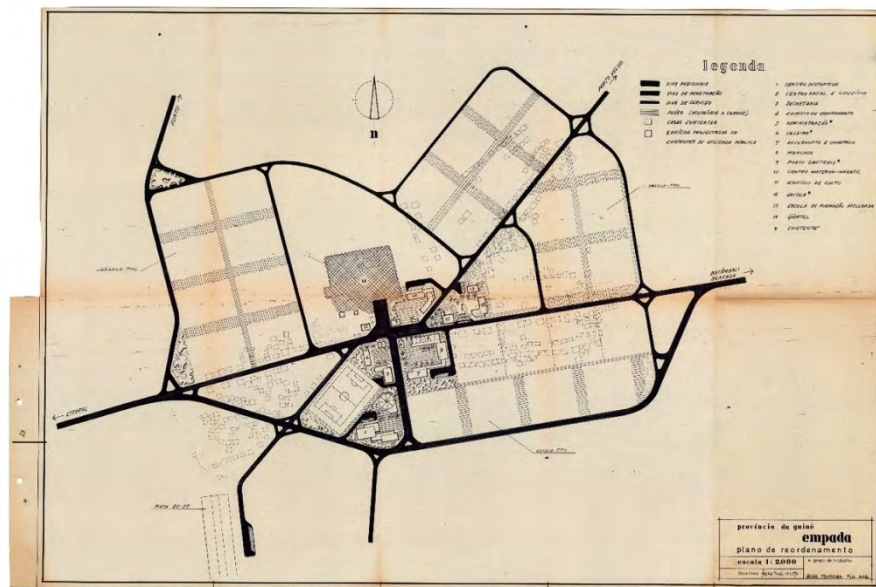


Figure 9. Empada resettlement Plan. Guinea-Bissau, 1969-1970. Alda Tavares signs in the name of António Moreira Veloso’s team © Overseas Historical Archive (Portugal). IPAD858

These same principles she had learned at Architecture school, being a scientific and methodical working approach, were adapted to a much wider scale in the case of Guinea. Without documental proof, but with the certainty that, in the words of Alda Tavares, “it was a good social and human experience”,²⁵ we can suppose that the Porto surveys, or their genesis, were the basis for her future professional choices. It was only after her experience in Guinea that she completed architecture school and became a civil servant. And it was undoubtedly her experience in Porto that enabled her to resist the Guinean context at such a young age, in a particularly adverse time.

²⁵ Alda Tavares’s hand-written Curriculum Vitae in the custody of IAWA – The International Archive of Women in Architecture at Virginia Tech, USA. <https://spec.lib.vt.edu/iawa/>

Brief closing remarks

The thesis of this work is simple: rather than patronising and facilitating women who studied architecture in Porto, there was a standardisation between female and male, if not a greater demand and difficulty for women. If not, how can one explain so many dropouts? How can one explain the resilience in such adverse geographical and cultural environments of those who completed the course? We added to this argument the example of two women: Carlota Quintanilha and Alda Tavares, both of whom graduated in Architecture in Porto at a time when there were only two institutions teaching Architecture in ‘imperial’ Portugal.

We also argue as evidence that these women brought to the colonies what they had learnt at school. For Carlota Quintanilha, her kindergarten in Vila de Rei clearly has the same modern language as the works she carried out in Mozambique; in the case of Alda Tavares, her schoolwork on housing in working-class neighbourhoods in Porto is similar to her studies of rural populations in Guinea-Bissau. There are features of the biography of these women which are subjective and which we chose not to address: the idea that they are well-travelled women, women from “good families”, independent women, etc. But there is one characteristic that is fairly objective, and assignable to all the women who did a course in Porto in the 1950s and 1960s, especially until the ‘57 Reform: they are resilient and determined women. Whatever the cause for dropping out of the course – economic needs, family or health issues – those who stayed at school certainly did not do so out of commodity, but for a compelling reason. In any case, not only in a technical sense, but also in a moral, psychological sense, these women were ready for Africa.

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