

**Representação Oficial Portuguesa na 14ª Mostra
Internacional de Arquitetura, La Biennale di Venezia**
Portuguese Official Representation at the 14th International
Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia

News from Portugal
homeland

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NOTE



to the other bedrooms. Add to this the "guest toilet", located in the house's more public area, and in some cases the "walk-in closet" which, in the most generous homes, is doubled, one for the husband and one for the wife. Curiously, this somewhat random evolution seems to head towards an important change in the life of the Portuguese: a growing appreciation of intimacy within the family itself, which is reflected in a desire for more privacy by each of its members.

But the changes in the Portuguese family go far beyond this. There's a lot of talk about "new types of family". As if overnight we transitioned from a society of predominantly heterosexual couples with children, to a society where the majority of us are lone individuals, single-parents or blended families, gay couples, etc. This is not exactly the truth. What has changed is the influence that each of these family types has on the Portuguese society as a whole and, above all, its changing social image: an image marked by a far greater acceptance of diversity and non-dominant types, one that is a far cry from the more universalist ideology on which the modern house was originally, and legitimately, founded.

That "epidemic" aspect of the house, on the other hand has changed a great deal, as much as the country itself. Large modern estates served the motto of the Revolution perfectly with an architecture that promoted

equality flanked by slogans such as: "a house for every family" or "solve your housing problem". In the late 80s and throughout the following decade, equality became an anachronism and gave way to a desire for a higher social status which would take shape in different ways. Through buildings that claimed a stake to this singularity either through form, some in a more "Portuguese style", and others more "post-modern" or by the names given to these developments, recalling either nationalistic and traditional narratives or more European and modern ones. Through the rebranding the spaces of the house, giving them names such as the Salon, a lot more audacious than Living room. Through their slogans, each going further than the previous one, in expressing the greatness of the dream that was being sold. Little by little, this exuberance becomes itself and anachronism. By the turn of the century, the Portuguese real-estate developer, a late-comer to the atmosphere of the international Starchitect system, realizes the commercial value of architecture. And architects take to the limelight. Meanwhile, there are signs that something is not quite right. It only really hits in 2008 and, for the Portuguese, even more so in 2011. From that moment on, we all know the story, but the houses of our contentment live on and remind us that once upon a time we felt like the happiest families in Europe. 70.H1

The doric column project

"It takes centuries to invent the primitive"

PEDRO BANDEIRA

Architect, researcher and professor at the Architectural School, University of Minho

Last year I was invited by the Madrid based curator Ariadna Cantis to participate in the Performing City event – an associated project of the 2013 Lisbon Architecture Triennial – , supported by the Spanish Ministry of

Culture. Together with Dulcinea Santos we developed a low budget performance called The Future is the Beginning that consisted on carrying a doric column from the centre of Lisbon to the hill of Nossa Senhora do Monte.

This performance was presented as a tribute to Greek culture, to their heritage of democracy, in a moment where Greece's national sovereignty is being questioned by perverse economical interests. Not such a different story from what was happening in Portugal.

More specifically, and closer to architectural themes, we also wanted to emphasize with this performance that the Greeks have always given importance to citizenship in the construction of the polis, using the Agora as a symbolic space for gathering, participation, discussion and debating of ideas. Not by chance, the Greeks invented the public architectural competition, which nowadays is lacking in our public decisions and finance.

In the sixties art performance was seen as a provocative gesture, most of the time related to underground or counter-culture movements intended on questioning the institutionalization of art as an expression of power and bourgeois mentality. Architecture only took on performance as an alternative practice later, but once it happened, it easily became widely accepted and, apologies for saying so, was mainly institutionalized by architecture biennales and triennials. Well framed by the context of specialized events, architectural performance, in its pursuit of art performance, lost its ability to provoke the "emancipated spectator" (as Jacques Rancière would say).

I would venture to state that the success of architectural performances, these days, is mainly related with the lack of architectural jobs and commissions throughout Europe where everything appears to be perfectly done (and note that we are writing from Portugal!). That is to say performance nowadays is more a consequence of the crisis than a conscious act of critique. And even the illusions of political or ideological statements related to some performances (like ours) are soon submerged by the entropy of cultural spectacle and superficiality, a result of the lack of money and time.

It is precisely this lack of time (that Álvaro Siza's always complains about) that pushed performance to become the stage for

emerging architects, without clients or means to develop traditional practice. Performance, most of the time with low costs and few strings attached, democratized architectural production or, at least, created the illusion of it, embracing, nevertheless, architectural thinking and cultural production. After all "everything is supposed to be architecture".

Under this field of architectural performance, and following some ideologies from the sixties, a new generation of architects started to intervene on issues concerning public space, giving visibility to urban problems or proposing more social interaction and participation. Ephemeral actions or precarious architectonic structures are used to draw attention to political and social conflicts, with some naivety they aspire to solve these problems. But most of the time they are, itself, part of the problem.

Young architects provided with "entrepreneurship" and "proactivity", see in the performance their opportunity to show themselves, but most of the time they are not paid for their actions. The betterment of one's curriculum or promises of publication are, most of the time, the currency paid by the organizations behind these events, and for those institutions "creativity" is related to "do much with almost nothing". Besides the goodwill of most of architect performers, this expresses a problem in itself, which becomes even more of an issue with an aestheticization of the "ephemeral" and "precarious" within a "low cost" culture and spectacle.

Low cost, paradoxically, promotes wide access to services and goods but, as we know, is also the expression of a savage global capitalism that at the same time corrupts social values and benefits that took so long to conquer. As Siza would put it, comfort and quality in architecture have a cost. Do we really want to question that, and downgrade our legitimate expectations?

Unfortunately, nowadays performance is not an alternative to anything, but it seems to be the only response for everything. With

the Future is the Beginning performance, we were quite aware of all these contradictions. The doric column was proposed as symbol of ethical values – that we consider perennial – and is also a symbol of aesthetic value – which

persisted up to postmodernism – , thus revealing a material and immaterial persistence needed to counter the cultural and social precariousness in which we live today.

Maybe it's time to reinvent the primitive. 71.H2

Home sharing abroad

Domesticity under discussion: a reading from the experience of architecture students home sharing abroad

FILIPA RAMALHETE

Professor and researcher at CEA CT/UAL, Department of Architecture and researcher at e-Geo/FCSH-UNL

Finding a home with the right balance between private space and a place for parties, deciding whether shoes are left at the doorway or kept on, whether having girl/boyfriends sleeping over is aloud, or one where they'd have their own refrigerator shelf are some of the challenges of sharing a home abroad, a situation which is now typical for Portuguese students. Nonetheless, it hasn't always been like this.

During the 20th century, Portuguese urban lifestyle – as in most European countries until the Second World War – was rooted on a home sharing tradition. A family-based pre-industrial traditional living was the rule, expressed by multi-generation families, often including a relative who came to live in the city, to study or work, and also a tenant, who, incapable of supporting his own rent, would help the family by paying for the expenses.

In this context, young people shared their family homes and lifestyles from birth until marriage – and often after it. University students who had to move away from home rarely went to live on their own – especially if they were women – and moved in with relatives, university dorms or rented rooms. Rented rooms provided a respectable environment for the young person, guaranteeing that family values would be properly taken care of during school periods. They also delivered extra income to the landlord/landlady,

who was often a widow(er) with low income. This reality prevailed during the second half of the 20th century and – to some extent – can still be seen today.

However, with regards to sharing homes, times are definitely changing, as are cultural values regarding domestic roles, their virtues and vices. Space is also changing, or, at least, our perception of it. One of the phenomena that has certainly contributed to the changes of the status quo has been the increasing importance and scope of exchange students programs, such as Erasmus. Since its beginning, in 1987, more than three million Erasmus students have spent several months abroad, contributing to the construction of the present European mobility patterns, nonexistent only a few decades ago (one could wonder if programs such as this one have made more for the idea of Europe than any other policies). Within this enormous mass of mobile students, a new reality emerged: home sharing abroad.

Home sharing abroad can be characterized as several students, often from different origins, renting a house or an apartment in a foreign country for a limited period of time (six months to a year). For the Portuguese, most of those students are leaving their family homes for the first time. Even if this is not the case, needless to say this is a totally different reality from the logic of the “traditional” room rental or

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