

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ART IN 'LISBON 1994': AN IMPROVEMENT TO THIS CITY'S FUTURE

Telmo Luís Garção Lopes Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT - MCT) Lisbon, Portugal. M.A. in Urban Design, Universitat de Barcelona. Ph.D. student of the program - Public Space and Urban Regeneration: Art and Society, University of Barcelona

Summary

The capital city of Portugal, Lisbon - a coastal city with a population of around 540000 people – was nominated as European Capital of Culture in 1994. This study describes how Public Art projects were included in those cultural master plans and how they affected their environment, from the cultural event to the physical identity that remained there. This study relates the impact of Public Art in Urban Design under a reflexive point of view which expresses future connections of this theme with the city, and supply with documents Lisbon's Public Art of 1994, mainly through the influence of the event of Lisbon European Capital of Culture.

Resumen

La capital de Portugal, Lisboa - una ciudad costera con una población de alrededor de 540.000 personas - fue nominada como Capital Europea de la Cultura en 1994. Este estudio describe cómo los proyectos de arte público fueron incluidos en los planes culturales y la forma en que afectaron a su entorno, desde el evento cultural a la identidad física que allí permaneció. Este estudio relaciona el impacto del Arte Público en el marco de un diseño urbano reflexivo, punto de vista que expresa las conexiones futuras de este tema con la ciudad, y el análisis de los documentos de Arte Público, Lisboa 1994, principalmente a través de la influencia del evento Lisboa, Capital Europea de Lisboa de la Cultura.

Key Words: Lisbon 1994, Public Art, Ephemeral and Perennial, Centre and Outskirts

This paper is addressed mainly to the congress theme of "production": The focus was to draw the lines for the understanding of what happened in 1994, and why that year is quoted as a boosting example of Lisbon's Public Art in the 90s.

The interest in working a casual matter of a theme of Public Art in Lisbon in the 90s resulted mainly from the awareness of internationalization and mutation of the perception and of the life interest of this city, related to the increasing number of interventions that reach their highest point with the Expo'98.

The majority part of "Public Art" in *Lisboa 94* had an ephemeral character. The confrontation with the ephemeral arts needed retrieval at risk of scattering, but due to the lack of bibliographic sources, the best choice was to read thoroughly the events of 1994 written down in the press of that same year.

The main objectives were to supply with documents how the event was produced, from the structure of the organization to the symbolic values implemented in the public space under a reflexive point of view, which expresses future connections of this theme with the city.

Background notes

The decision of naming a European capital "European City of Culture" every year came up at the first meeting of Ministers of Culture of the European Community (EC) in November 1983. Of particular interest in this paper is Lisbon European Capital of Culture in 1994 (check tables), which took time on the ascending period of the implementation of the Event European "City of Culture". It is important to notice that in European studies about cultural events, artistic elements are always pondered and the majority of "cities of culture" (defined as such by the EC), avoids the excess of star-system and tries to pinpoint a symbolic local identity.

Particular circumstances in Portugal shaped Public Art features related to:

- national political changes and subsequently a mass consumption society;
- from a national cultural image to a international cultural image.

In the aftermath of the revolution of April 1974, a set of symbolic actions and performances took place and its greatness is here assessed on the grounds, on the one hand, the attempt to eradicate the symbols of the

defeated dictatorship, for example, the renaming of the bridge on the river Tagus from *Ponte Salazar* (the name of the dictator) to *Ponte 25 de Abril* (the date of the revolution). On the other hand, the fostering of city's artistic life through many spontaneous and ephemeral events or performances of public art shaped public spaces and opinion.

In 1994 the main objectives were to prevent the centres' degradation, by alluring and creating different cultural publics. It was set up an association, organised in several departments, which was responsible for the development of the event European Capital of Culture, the society of Lisbon 94.

The Public Art of Lisbon 94

The "Sétima Colina" (7th Hill) was the most highlighted project in the press, and because it includes a "romantic itinerary" of the city, we came across an organic blend of different small themes that oppose to a clear-cut classification of the events. It is precisely this singular mixture present in each project that we commit ourselves to identify and ascertain in this study, bearing in mind that it can not be based towards the understanding of 94.

The *Sétima Colina* included themes from several areas. From the area of Public Art from the Department of Urban Intervention it was taken into consideration a program with the following projects:

- "E outras senhoras de forte carácter cultivam as ervas silvestres" by Catarina Baleiras, in Chiado Square – under the statue of the poet "Chiado";
- "Alba Mutabilis" by Sebastião Resende, Garden of S. Pedro de Alcântara;
- "Atelier voltado para a Rua" by Guilherme Parente, next to the lift of Bica
- "Fotografias de Grandes Dimensões" by Mário Cabrita Gil, through the itinerary of the 7th Hill;
- "Painel Cerâmico" by Eduardo Nery, Avenue Infante Santo;
- "Azulejos da Mãe de Água", by Luís Camacho in Mãe de Água Street;
- "Lisboa Nova Vida" by Ranieri di Bernardo, golden-slade in public street lamps of *Sétima Colina*;
- "A Cara de Cultura" by Ramos de Carvalho and Leonor Picão in Escola Politécnica Street;
- "Engenho" by Miguel Palma in Século Street;

Besides these projects that were carried out, the program also included "Special Public Illuminations" and some works on recovering urban tiles, both by the Department of Urban Intervention.

All these ephemeral projects (i.e., the Installation Art), perennial (i.e., the tiles), of original intervention or stressing other existent interventions (i.e., Special Public Illuminations) we can see that in 1994 they were all attached to the same topic, thus we can **identify several types of project of Public Art that correspond to different processes of productions and implementation, and different qualities and scales of physical and social impact.**

At the final report of the Department of Urban Intervention, where the mentioned projects were classified, we considerer that by including different projects under the same topic (Public Art), questions of classification and analyse **among the different elements** of the list must be posed because they refer to different types or Artistic intervention. Therefore, we also raised questions about **the relation of these elements with other exteriors**, from other areas and other departments that could be linked to them because they match the same type of Artistic intervention.

In the program of Public Art of the Department of Urban Intervention, we began by identifying mainly two distinct "temporal" classifications either from ante-project, conception, implementation, budget or different temporal distance that define an accurate review: Permanent Public Art and Ephemeral Public Art.

The project: "As Cores da Sétima Colina" (the colours of the 7th hill)

It is important to notice under this issue the contribution that another project from the area of Patrimony and restoring gave to the memory of this city in 1994, and even more imperative, to clarify along this study, the role it played in the theme of Public Art. It is called "As Cores da Sétima Colina", with painted façades,

renewing the itinerary through colour. The press drew a close attention to “As Cores da Sétima Colina”. The sculptor Lagoa Henriques, the architect Troufa Real and the Lisbon historian José Augusto França participated in this project.

Firstly, it was made a research about the original colours of each building and in specific situations other colours were chosen because they fitted in the bright-coloured palette desired to make downtown less “dirty” and nostalgic. This leads to a situation where, beyond restoration or original recovery of the façade, a contemporary action of intervention in the city occurs, setting an interpretative position for the benefit of specific objectives for the future’s place.

The project: “Encenar a Cidade” (staging the city)

The project “Encenar a Cidade”, as an ephemeral project, takes place during the repairs of the tube in 1994 and, more than ornament, it was a strategy to minimize the urban impact of those repairs in vital city zones. Plastic artists, together with enterprises such as Metropolitan de Lisboa and Sociedade de Lisboa 94, were invited to work on the hedges of the tube station.

Facing the interventions on this project, we are able to understand the way how it is bounded to a strategy of art and urban regeneration, despite the lack of perennality’s features regarding the building of the city. It is an example of how it is possible to consider the *Ephemeral* a kind of Public Art and also to distinguish it of any open air artistic ephemeral which doesn’t contemplate both physical and visual buildings of the city. (For instance concerts, theatres open air activities)

Some other exterior interventions on the year 1994 in Lisbon

Beyond the *Sociedade de Lisboa 94*, the metropolitan presented itself as a public art promoter, due to the plastic works on its stations. In 1994 - in terms of plastic works - some stations were renewed:

- **Campo Pequeno** was, in 1994, completely remodelled with plastic works by Francisco Simões. The themes were connected with the place or local where the station was, i.e. “Praça de Toiros do Campo Pequeno”. So it was related with items such as bullfight and the rural commercial relations in the city during the first half of the 20th century.
- **Parque** station was also remodelled in 94 by Françoise Schein and Federica Matta. The most part of the station is covered by cobalt blue; it is the background of glazed tiles with inscriptions, iconographic and cartographic drawings which, together with the theme Civil Rights, play with matters such as the Portuguese Expansion.
- In the **Restauradores** station, Luís Ventura’s panel “A Chegança” was inaugurated. It was an offer of the S. Paulo Metropolitan.

Because of the Campo Grande station, Lisbon’s Metropolitan won a prize – Prémio Municipal Jorge Colaço de Azulejaria 1992 – based on the work of Eduardo Nery. The work extends itself from the interior to the exterior part of the station.

In 1993, the first phase of the second Parque de Material e Oficinas (PMOII) was also inaugurated. In 1994, some sculptures by Dimas Macedo were placed in the exterior.

At last and besides all the interventions on the metropolitan, some other works were done: on the west side of the *Torre de Belém*, on the gates of the *Forte do Bom Sucesso*, on the monument *Combatentes Mortos na Guerra do Ultramar* by João Antero. *The Castle of Eye*, by the Japanese sculptor Minoru Niizuma, does also frame (1994) a hidden place in the *Jardins de Belém*, on the east side of the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos.

Consequences and implications of this approach:

In this type of approach, the Public Art was, first of all, connected with the sum of events. But, according to a deep analysis to every reports and documents about the interventions during that period of time, it is

possible to consider certain Public Art's programmes as a basic strategy to solve problems as the "public areas"; for example the project: "Encenar a Cidade".

In 1994, the *Lisboa 94* partnership had the mission to internationalize the portrait of a cultural Lisbon, or to support that possibility. After entering in the phenomenon of the European Union, the main aims of the event, definitely surpassed the "ancient regime's ghost" and the convolutions of the 1974's revolution. Also, a Universal Exposition for the year of 1998 was being announced.

People looked for the impetus of cultural development in the diversity of bets in different areas. These areas gain shape in the cultural sphere of the country and it was intended to expand them, directly or not, waiting for and expecting for what could happen in the future.

The Concept of Public Art in LISBOA 94

In a contemporaneous perspective, The Public Art cannot be considered a Portuguese cultural area grounded in 1994 or on the definition lines of some departments for *Lisboa 94*; It is generated in different ramifications: the genesis are in the expositions department, urban intervention department and, besides, the exterior dynamics in the city – promoted by the metropolitan and by associations - consolidate its perennality. In order to fulfil its objectives, *Lisboa 94* wanted, clearly, to stimulate the audiences:

- Attention was given to cultural areas with definite audiences (music, cinema, theatre, literature, etc...), with an exponential, programmatically and international development, cultural equipments were refreshed, despite being museums, cultural centres, etc, together with some improvements on fountains, cleaning monuments and new lightning.
- People wanted to understand those cultural areas which were "ramified" into new ones or, in association, revealed a strong possibility to turn themselves visible among the Portuguese Culture. One of those "ramifications" was the Public Art.

Make-up vs Illustration

At a first sight, every projects that "camouflage" vacant buildings, light abandoned gardens or cheer the streets out, can be interpreted as a makeover solution – to be understood as Public Art, people had to go beyond "restoring façades". They have to context both urban and cultural landscape in the reality: to illustrate and not to "camouflage" reality.

The intervenients role

There is a degree of responsibility on the actual Public Art and the artist's deontology is now emerging. Not only the artists, but citizens and promoters do influence the path things can lead. One of the already mentioned examples was the relation with the metropolitan where, in 1994, a definite way for a responsibility presented by promoters, were found.

From the experience of Lisboa 94

It is well known the evolution of the concept of Public Art within such wide fields as the interactive processes that appeared on the European new millennium or the tendency to the dematerialization of the artistic object.

As far as interpreting mutations as a result of these phenomena are concerned, and quoting Ignasi De Lecea (DE LECEA, 2000): «*O campo abre-se se diferenciarmos as obras com vocação temporal daquelas que descem ao próprio terreno da publicidade, adoptando o seu formato e suporte para transmitir mensagens novas, [...]. Uma vista contemporânea de muitos monumentos antigos permite-nos reinterpretá-los hoje sob o ponto de vista de algumas destas novas abordagens.*» (the fields opens itself when establishing the difference between the pieces with a temporal vocation from those that come down to the publicity ground, adopting its

format and support to convey new messages [...]. Contemporaneous views of many ancient monuments allow us to reinterpret them today having in mind some of these new approaches.)

The context regarding the relation between objects becomes different and the concept of Public Art raises new perspectives: beyond the artistic object (volumetric), it centres itself on the space and on people. **So it is relevant to consider the painting of the façades as a vast process of Perennial Public Art: and we are talking about a project where any object was created (in volume), but instead the centre of the city was emphasized.**

We came across the meaning of the tension of distinct trends of the several projects of Public Art from 1994, and quoting Oriol Bohigas: «reinforcing the centre, monumentalize the outskirts»: the centre is emphasized in activity and renewal of the existent, whereas the projects about the new underground stations, and the stations themselves, implement a new symbolic burden in the outskirt areas, through interventions that intend to monumentalize and give meaning to those spaces. The experience of *Lisboa 94* worked also as a preface of Expo 98, which monumentalized the oriental outskirt of the city four years later.

“Depois de Amanhã” (After tomorrow)

The concerns about the “Depois de Amanhã” figured all the projects of the *Lisboa 94*, and as we can see along this paper, as well as in the projects of Art and Public Space. *Lisboa 94* chose not to point tendencies, announce futures, nor “saying that the art is flowing here and there”.

Despite some of the identified patterns of action, the reflexions here mentioned spotlight, the importance of Public Art on drawing and understanding of the city, without draining them, because although there are no formula, it becomes essential to tap the perception of the meaning of Public Art at several levels:

- **Significance in the city structure**, Public Art illustrates the city and not itself, from the “city marketing” to the every day life of those who live in it; Public Art depends on the city and there stands its perennial, its media effect should be used as a way and not as the end.
- **Social significance**, the civic development turns possible the activity and the life interest of the public space, though sometimes there are “misunderstandings” in the acceptance of the cultural meaning. As Pedro Brandão says, they are misunderstandings of the maximization of creativity value, of the quest of the global as an essential thinking (the city’s not “a blank page”) and the search for a stylistic identity.
- **Political significance**, Art has always contributed for the state empowerment, through visibility, through the construction of landmarks for the future, through its relation with the dynamic of important events, such as creating new job posts. The 7th hill in this sense was also a landmark.
- **Economical significance**, because the arts represent a tactical investment in creativity, in supplying new ideas and handwork to other industries, they give birth to a support for “cultural industries”. Arts are a powerful visitor’s attraction, stimulate the consumption, and directly maximize the quality of the consumption services; they can catalyse the regeneration processes. A strong cultural structure attracts commerce, industry and tourism for the area. They also value the place as the space where they can live and work. Lisbon had a positive balance in this matter.
- **Artistic significance**, for the way it is carried out, for public welfare, for the timeless of human activity. The Public Art, after the 60s, it starts to assume itself as a new concept of performing and understanding the past. At the same time, a phenomenon emerges: the return of sculpture to its primeval place, out of the galleries range. In the public space, Art is there for everybody, for the ones that want to observe it and for those who bear it along with their daily dynamic. As the art stand for everybody and not for itself, the public space brought an important critical frame regarding the artistic meaning, from which the new artistic projects can not step aside, from its conception, to its implementation and maintenance.

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