

A HOMELAND DIVIDED IN SQUARES: JOAQUIM DE VASCONCELOS (1849-1936) IDENTITY PANELS

A PÁTRIA AOS QUADRADOS: JOAQUIM DE VASCONCELOS (1849-1936) PAINÉIS IDENTITÁRIOS

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ABSTRACT

Considered the founder of Art History in Portugal with a rigorous method, Joaquim de Vasconcelos was also a Musicologist, Museologist, Teacher and Professor, Art Critic and a “champion” of visual transmission “systems” like Photography and Drawing. His capacity for critical analysis, his anarchic enthusiasm for various areas of knowledge, providing ways of thinking and acting when almost everything was still undone, impose him as an anti-mythical and unique character who created his own legend, a myth and a romantic hero, a master of himself far beyond from Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) or Giambattista Cavalcaselle (1819-1897) just to point out two of the masters that he admired. *Homeland squares* are not only a way of referring how tiles are a very important part of the Portuguese identity puzzle, but also a way of alluding to the geometry of parallels and meridians that Joaquim de Vasconcelos drew when trying to identify the Art in Portugal.

KEYWORDS

Joaquim de Vasconcelos | Industrial and Commercial Museum of Oporto
National identity | Exhibitions | Tiles

RESUMO

Considerado o fundador da História da Arte em Portugal com um método rigoroso, Joaquim de Vasconcelos foi um Musicólogo, Museólogo, Professor, Crítico de Arte e “campeão” dos sistemas de transmissão visual como a Fotografia e o Desenho. A sua capacidade de análise crítica, o entusiasmo anárquico por várias áreas do conhecimento indicando pistas certas, ou erradas, num tempo onde quase tudo estava ainda por escrever, impõe Vasconcelos como um caráter anti-mítico e único, um homem que criou a sua própria lenda, um mito e um herói romântico, um mestre de si mesmo muito além de Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) ou Giambattista Cavalcaselle (1819-1897) apenas para apontar dois mestres que admirava. *A Pátria aos quadrados* expressa, em metáfora, como os azulejos são uma parte muito significativa do quebra-cabeças da identidade portuguesa e alude igualmente à geometria dos paralelos e meridianos que Joaquim de Vasconcelos desenhou ao tentar identificar a Arte em Portugal.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Joaquim de Vasconcelos | Museu Industrial e Comercial do Porto
Identidade Nacional | Exposições | Azulejo

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON JOAQUIM DE VASCONCELOS

Joaquim de Vasconcelos was born in Oporto on February 10th, 1849 (Fig. 01). Orphan of both parents, the family sent him to Hamburg when he was ten to continue his studies. There he attended Harms College where he acquired not only an excellent general education but also studied Music, which would define the beginning of his intense professional activity (Lacerda et al., 1929: 268-278). Vasconcelos returned to Portugal in 1865, and later, when he wanted to return to continue his Philosophy studies in Berlin (França, 1990: 115), he was frustrated by the Franco-Prussian War. At the time when Francophone culture was dominant, Vasconcelos was a pro-German (Leandro, 2006: 4-5). His first book entitled *Os músicos portugueses* (*The portuguese musicians*) was published in 1871 and the following year he gave his contribution to the controversial "Question of Faust" that prolonged the "Coimbra Question" opposing "new" and "old" generations of writers. It was due to this debate that Vasconcelos came to the acquaintance of the ~~opisthokorymbic~~ of the wise Berliner Carolina Michaëlis (1851-1925), and in 1876 he married her. Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, a remarkable woman who had an important role in Portuguese Culture, specifically in Literature, was the first woman to teach at a University in Portugal. The way they supported each other is a fact to be acknowledged (Leandro, 2014: 97). It should also be considered that, from a certain point in his life, Vasconcelos economic income came from his activity as a teacher.

Let us focus on the theme of national identity. When Vasconcelos returned to the country in 1865 he was not exactly a patriot, on the contrary, but progressively he fell in love with Portugal, but not for everything... For instance, his position against *Manuelino*¹ was not popular, and it collided with the stronger power of a myth that fuelled the growing nationalism of the "Ultras" (Ultra-Lusitanians) as Vasconcelos called them (Leandro, 2008: 423). And it was not only on this issue that he faced what he considered "wrongly patriotic views" (Leandro, 2008: 237).

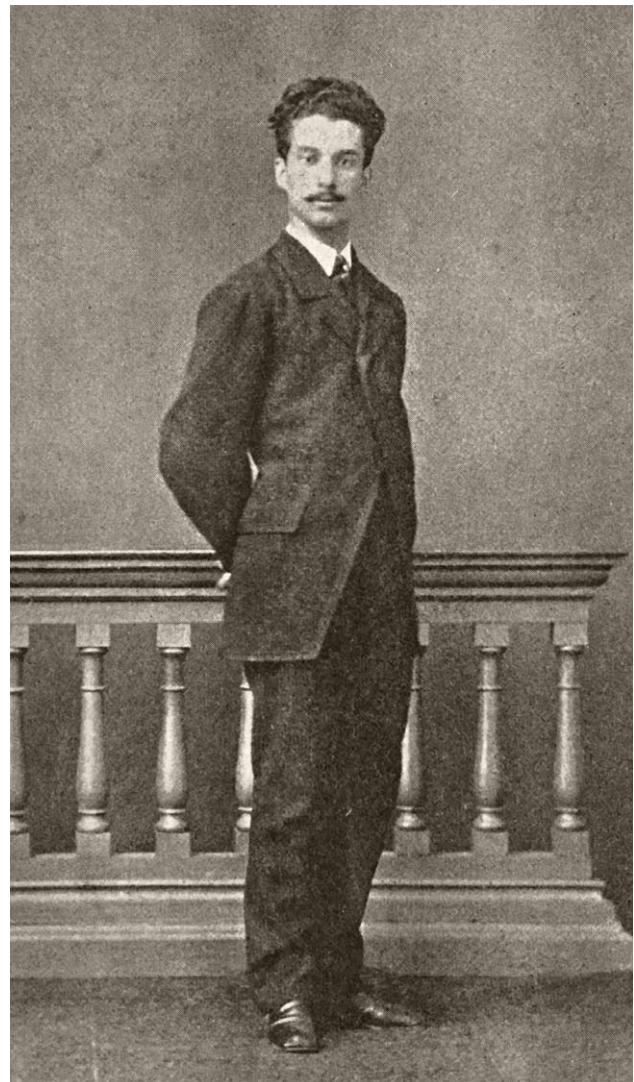


Fig. 01 · Joaquim de Vasconcelos, 1868. Two years before the edition of his first book *Os músicos portugueses*, [*Portuguese musicians*]. In *Ilustração moderna*, 30 (Fev. 1929)

Fencer of ideas, Vasconcelos was an outstanding debater who hated his country's capital because, like many others, he thought that Lisbon despised all Portuguese cities. Oporto, the country's second town, felt continually hampered with Lisbon macrocephaly and he often named the capital as octopus... (Leandro, 2008: 181).

1. Aesthetic trend associated with the reign of King Manuel I in the sixteenth century and supposedly a national style.

JOAQUIM DE VASCONCELOS: THE POWER OF EXHIBITIONS AND THE CREATION OF INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL MUSEUMS



Fig. 02. Engraving of the *Ceramics Exhibition*, curated by Joaquim de Vasconcelos, at Crystal Palace, Oporto, 1882. In *O Occidente*, 147 (21st Jan. 1883)

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Portugal suffered from chronic industrial backwardness, and the political community felt it was time to boost the industry by any necessary means. Industrial arts were an important subject because they meant hope for the country's economic and cultural revitalization.

It was during the Liberalism and the Regeneration periods of the Government of Fontes Pereira de Melo (1819-1887), with António Augusto de Aguiar (1838-1887) as Minister of Public Works, Trade and Industry, that were established the Industrial and Commercial

Museums in Lisbon and Oporto, several Industrial Schools and the Schools of Industrial Design throughout the country. Such measures tried to streamline the sector. Aguiar had visited the South Kensington Museum which inspired him (Costa, 1997: 33) and there were, probably, other ~~inspirations~~.

The museums were created by Decree of December 24th, 1883, with the main objective to exhibit collections of labelled products and raw materials to the public so they could know its origin, the name of the manufacturer or dealer, the price, the place of pro-

duction, transportation expenses, consumer markets, etc. The aim was to stimulate national production and consumption. In other words, these kinds of Museums were created as vehicles to promote national products, one of the expressions of the Nationalisms raised in the nineteenth century.

Vasconcelos had a much earlier enthusiasm compared to official deployment plan. Knowing and enjoying the Museums of Berlin, Vienna and South Kensington, he studied and dreamed of a way of doing something similar in Oporto. In 1877, Eduardo Augusto Allen (1824-1899) wrote to him: "I hope to see you soon crowned with triumph because of your patriotic efforts to establish your Industrial Art Museum" (Leandro, 2008: 263). This emphasis on the possessive pronoun "your" turn out to be more significant as I studied the existence of the no longer existent Industrial and Commercial Museum of Oporto. Vasconcelos managed this institution as a very personal thing, for better and for worse.

Nevertheless, before he was able to establish his museum, he had a powerful experience organizing various exhibitions of Industrial Arts and Home Industries for Centro Artístico Portuense (Art Centre of Oporto) and for the Sociedade de Instrução do Porto (Instruction Society of Oporto), guilds where he was a distinguished member.

Let us pause at a large exhibition organized by Vasconcelos in 1882: the *Ceramics Exhibition* in the Crystal Palace of Oporto, where tiles were represented (Fig. 02). In July 16th, 1882, Joaquim de Vasconcelos wrote a letter to his friend from Coimbra, António Augusto Gonçalves (1848-1932), who among other activities was a draftsman, asking if he could do some drawings: "For our exhibition of ceramics we need a coloured copy of the collection of tiles of Sé Velha [Old Cathedral of Coimbra], natural size of the square, so that each drawing is represented complete (...). What we want is the complete collection. Do you have time that is 2 months and a half until September 25th. The opening is on October 1st [The opening of the exhibition was later postponed to 22nd October]; counting 5 days for shipping and setting. Your work will be properly paid by the Society, and it is only with this condition that we give you the burden, and we consider ourselves more than happy to be able to show the public that there are those who knows how to do things well and who does not consider that they

damage the pencil, serving industrial art. You know what to do: wide drawing, colour watered, the character of the drawing very accentuated, brush cleared" (Vasconcelos, 1973: 32). And then he informed his friend: "I'm going from Bussaco to Lisbon to finish my Conferences" (Vasconcelos, 1973: 33).

The conferences that he mentioned were about the *Exposição de Arte Ornamental Portuguesa e Hespanhola* (*Exhibition of Portuguese and Spanish Ornamental Art*) in Lisbon, an exhibition on which Vasconcelos made quite a number of criticisms. At the fifth conference he referred to tiles as a scholar industry (Leandro, 2008: 244). In the next conference he showed that "the patterns of old lost carpets were visible in the tile" and one of the examples was the Alhambra (Leandro, 2008: 249).

Outraged with the poor depiction of tile at the *Exhibition of Portuguese and Spanish Ornamental Art*, he pointed out that insignificant samples from the sixteenth century had been collected and exposed, when with an exceptional collection "which would serve, more than any other in the Exhibition, to demonstrate, in a small space, all types of ornaments from the 13th to the 18th centuries" (Leandro, 2008: 249) the same objective could easily be obtained. As Vasconcelos pointed out if the organizing commission had used the collection of José Maria Nepomuceno (1836-1895), the most prominent in the country, and perhaps of the Peninsula, that insufficiency would never have happened. He wondered why "a person so understood in this matter as Mr. Nepomuceno, who had rendered remarkable services in the works of conservation of the celebrated monastery of Madre de Deus, and had organized there a museum of a very remarkable national pottery, which was then robbed by who wanted" was not consulted (Leandro, 2008: 249-250). For Vasconcelos it was enough to see the lack of judgment, knowledge and science of the commission that organized the abovementioned exhibition.

According to his opinion, Spain sent to the *Exhibition* a small but well-chosen collection of tiles, plates, vases, objects of gallantry in earthenware and porcelain. The Spanish delegates had had the good sense to choose only the best and to concentrate everything in a room (Leandro, 2008: 251).

To make a comparison, let us return to the *Ceramics Exhibition* that Vasconcelos organized at Crystal Pal-

ace in Oporto. Vasconcelos wrote to Gonçalves “We will have an exhibition of ancient tiles that will dazzle” (Leandro, 2008: 295-296). Asking for museographic advice, he questioned his friend if it would not be better to arrange his tiles drawings in a frame, just as he did with the embroidery.

When the exhibition opened on October 22nd, José Frutuoso Gouveia Osório (1827-1887), president of the Sociedade de Instrução do Porto, did not hide the tension that existed between public power and private initiative in his opening speech. He regretted that the Minister of Public Works Trade and Industry had not been able to inaugurate the exhibition, since the whole group was committed to making public authorities aware of the importance of individual efforts and the necessity to guide them through good professional schools, a vital need for certain local industries that were failing because of this shortage.

The first article on the *Ceramics Exhibition* published in the *Comercio do Porto* by Vasconcelos, was dedicated to “The Hispanic-Portuguese tiles” and expressed several of its patrimonial concerns. He emphasized that the Sociedade de Instrução do Porto in this *Exhibition* presented for the first time to the public the magnificent collection of José Maria Nepomuceno one “of the few Portuguese, who, in these days and age, think that not everything should be measured in gold, that not everything should be sold abroad” (Leandro, 2008: 299). Here it was the big difference compared to the *Exhibition of Portuguese and Spanish Ornamental Art*.

Declaring that he had seen what existed in Madrid and in the provincial museums of Spain, and what existed in South Kensington, Louvre, Cluny, etc., he “strongly affirmed that the Nepomuceno collection was” unique in the peninsula and in Europe for its variety, by the

uninterrupted connection of the historical series, and by the beautiful state of its conservation”. However, he added: “The expert may perhaps note the imbalance in which the epochs are represented: extreme abundance of types of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, much smaller in the seventeenth century, and still smaller in the following century” (Leandro, 2008: 299).

One of the distinguishing features of Joaquim de Vasconcelos’ writing is the questions he made, problematizing the subject that he is exposing (Rosas, 1997: 299). Regarding the theme of the Hispanic-Moorish tiles seen in the exhibition, he questioned: “Is everything good as a fabrication (raw material) and as a model of the style? There is order, is there a possibility of a rational classification, of style and dates? We will see” (Leandro, 2008: 299). After this observation, he explained to the reader that he did not wait for the solution of all the doubts raised by this event.

These exhibitions like *Ceramics Exhibition* dealing with Industrial Arts and Home Industries, tried to give light to the state of that same industry and came up with solutions to the problems detected. Usually improvements were proposed in teaching methods. From this exhibition resulted the Escola de Desenho e Modelação (School of Design and Modelling) applied to the ceramic industries that were instituted near the Fábrica das Devezas (Factory of Devezas) in Vila Nova de Gaia.

In short, the *Exhibition of Portuguese and Spanish Ornamental Art* was the embryo of current Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (National Museum of Ancient Art) and it is plausible that the *Ceramics Exhibition* made definitely clear the need for the establishment of Industrial Schools and of Industrial and Commercial Museums.

THE INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL MUSEUM OF OPORTO

Thanks’ to Joaquim de Vasconcelos knowledge, enthusiasm and practical experience in organizing exhibitions, he was appointed in May 7th, 1884, as the museum curator of the Industrial and Commercial Museum of Oporto and in January 17th, 1889, as its director.

The Museum opened on March 21th, 1886, with the presence of António Augusto Aguiar, former Minister and official responsible for its creation. Housed in the Olympic Circus, commonly denominated “Circo dos Cavalinhos” (Circus of wheelies), the Museum belonged to the grounds of the Crystal Palace.

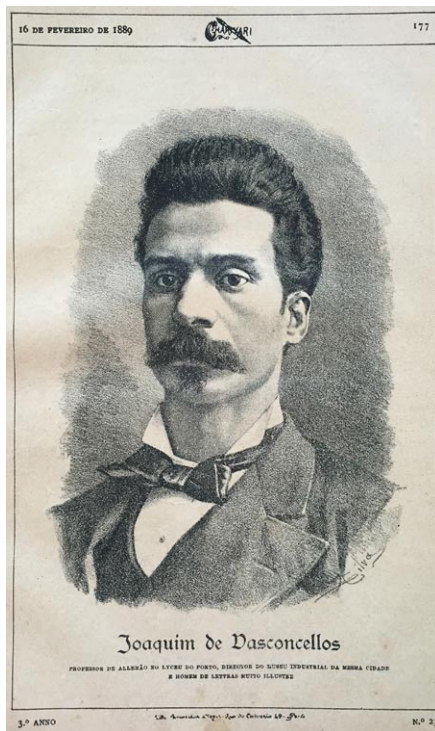


Fig. 03. Almeida e Silva drew (by photography or other drawing...) Joaquim de Vasconcelos as "Professor of German in the Lyceum of Oporto, Director of the Industrial Museum of the same city and remarkable in the field of writing". In *Charivari*, 23 (16th Feb. 1889)

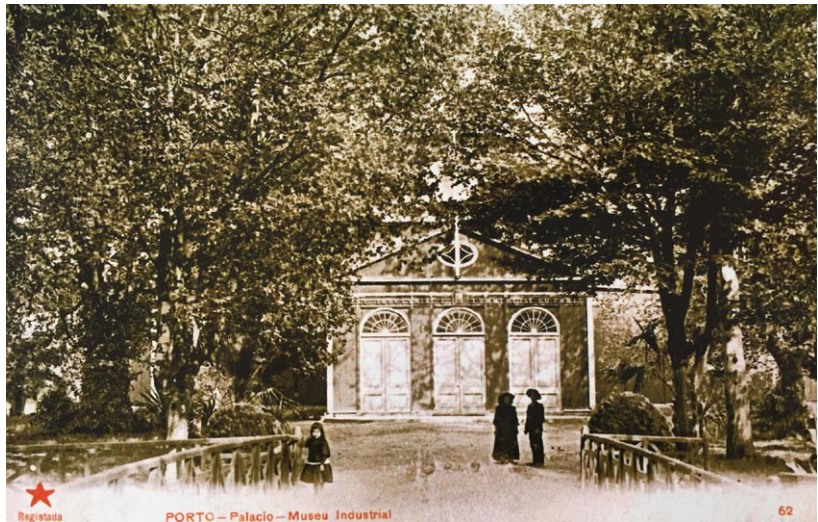


Fig. 04. Postcard showing the exterior of the Industrial and Commercial Museum of Oporto. The Museum opened on March 21st, 1886 (Private collection)

In the initial direction of the Museum was Joaquim Pedro de Oliveira Martins (1845-1894) the Government Delegate. When Oliveira Martins entered politics, he was asked by Guerra Junqueiro (1850-1923): "– What are you going to do to Lisbon? – I'll put away those thieves! – he replied. It was the time of Mariano and Navarro; it was when Marçal Pacheco, a very *smart man* shouted towards scandals and thievery: – Steal, boys! Steal, but give me my share!" (Brandão, 1999: 198). Oliveira Martins had great political influence in this institution, and it was Vasconcelos himself that pointed out what his departure meant, and that the initial direction worked for free (1884-1888) without a word of thanks and recognition (Viana, 1970: 93). Vasconcelos stayed as Curator and Director of the Museum since his creation. Did Oliveira Martins left because he assumed other responsibilities? Did he left because of the differences between him and the Minister Emídio Navarro (1844-1905) who succeeded António Augusto de Aguiar?

What was the key idea that structured this institution? The museum was, above all, a teaching tool for draftsmen and factory workers, as was shown by the exhibi-

tion plans that Vasconcelos established. It was a place of identity, a Museum of proto-Design and a pre-Museum of Ethnography (Leandro, 2008: 3). Articulated with this notion this museum was a vehicle of dynamic promotion and application of national products, like a "museum-storefront" (Leandro, 2008: 369). It was also a "place of salvation", conservation and preservation, where he could show various traditions that prevailed since immemorial times, as if some of the pieces of ethnographic art that were featured on paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries stood out. With this Museum Joaquim de Vasconcelos mapped what the Portuguese people did with their hands by the ancestral way and what the national workers could produce in factories. As Lúcia Rosas observed, "Here emerges the romantic myth of demo purity, and also the static veneration of the worker virtues who, through his work, is the protagonist and promoter of progress, ideals of demo-liberal resonance" (Rosas, 1997: 230). The Museum unveiled Portugal's Northern production (Neves, 1996: 89), but there were also some industries from the South such as Fábrica de Faianças das Caldas da Rainha (Earthenware Factory of Caldas da Rainha) or Fábrica de Sacavém (Factory of

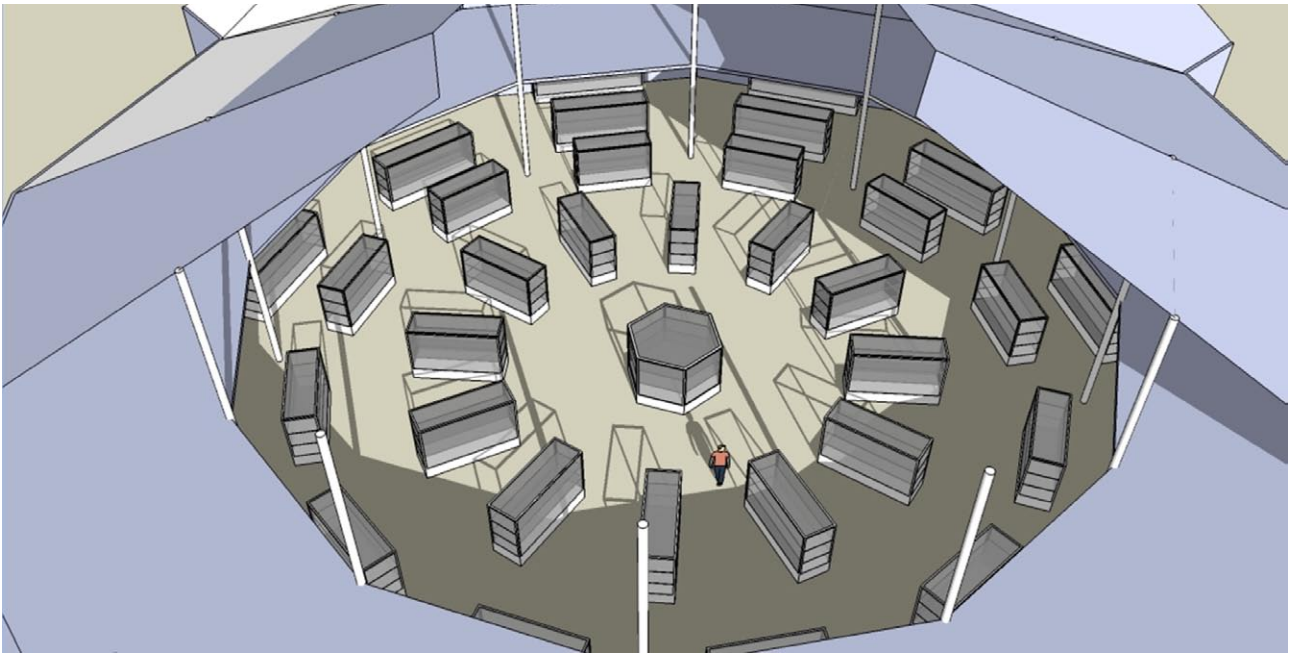


Fig. 05- Industrial and Commercial Museum of Oporto (reconstitution of the architects Paula Jardim and André Maranhã, 2009 © Sandra Leandro)

Sacavém) and it is to be admitted that in the respective showcases, tiles have been exposed.

Although in a small-scale, Joaquim de Vasconcelos used the same type of spatial organization which had been adopted at the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1867. He created a radiating structure centred in a hexagonal showcase with objects of glassware and crystal with some of them coming from the prolific Portuguese factory of Marinha Grande (Fig. 05). It was a shimmering centre as a heart of glass, from which the other cases radiate.

Vasconcelos left to the exhibitors the display of their objects, and concentrate with the general layout and arrangement of the small industries. Let us summarize the panorama: hung from the balcony of the upper gallery, and in the intervals of the twelve columns supporting the metal roof of the building, were displayed various types of fishing nets used in the North of the country. Eight mannequins arranged on pedestals were distributed between eight angles of space, dressed in traditional costumes also from the North. Vasconcelos covered the room walls with posters and photographic and lithographic reproductions of national and foreign industrial arts.

To complete this brief overview, Teresa Viana also added that "The collection of old earthenware of Coim-

bra gave a graceful note and enriched the presentation" (Vasconcelos, 1983: 18). Through a letter dated October 16th, 1885, addressed to António Augusto Gonçalves, we can detect the origin of these pieces – tiles and other ceramic objects – that Joaquim de Vasconcelos asked his friend for two or three months: "We need to "garnish" the Museum, in the early days, to captivate our unique audience. It is true that samples of charcoal, wood, lime, clays, wool and cotton, granite, etc., have little artistic significance, and give little pleasure to the eye. Let us now transpose a little; and the Statute gives us this freedom" (Vasconcelos, 1983: 95). Tiles gave pleasure to the eye, and the Fábrica de Cerâmica das Devezas of António Almeida Costa & C.ª exhibited tiles, in this Museum, from the very first moment.

Unfortunately, the Museum's catalogue was never published because Vasconcelos received official orders to suspend it for no apparent reason. However, he wrote thirty articles in the newspaper *O Comercio do Porto*, between 1886 and 1887 which were a kind of catalogue of the Museum.

Among the documents found in the estate of Joaquim de Vasconcelos preserved at Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra (General Library of University of Coimbra), one of the most important and illuminating manuscripts is this one: "The Industrial



Fig. 06. “A visit to the Industrial Museum”, humoristic draw by Almeida e Silva. In *Maria da Fonte*, 22 (6th Apr. 1886)

and Commercial Museum of Oporto notes for its History”. These “notes” went to the press, but in the comments that Vasconcelos wrote on the margin, it is very important to emphasize the following observation: “Unpublished. Not published by request of prudent people” (Leandro, 2008: 382).

In this manuscript, Vasconcelos stressed that he had made significant proposals to streamline and develop the Museum, which, however, did not obtain reply or approval from Lisbon (read: Government). These initiatives were: the Bulletin, Workshops, Travelling Museum, the historical and educational conferences, and the Cabinet of study. Nevertheless, Vasconcelos developed some of these activities on his own.

The Minister Emídio Navarro sought to develop vocational education in existing schools, enacting a new form of organization on December 30th, 1886. With this rearrangement the: “museums lost ground in the network of industrial and commercial establishments branch” (Costa, 1990: 100). The structure originally set for Industrial and Commercial Museums was further processed through a new regulation – The General Regulation of Industrial and Commercial Museums – approved by Decree on December 19th, 1888, and signed by the same minister. With the aid of Joaquim de Vasconcelos, the following Minister – João Franco (1855-1929) – did another reform of industrial and commercial education and Museums by Decree on 8th October, 1891 (Leandro, 2008: 355).

CLOSING THE SQUARE AND TURNING TO CIRCLE: THE EXTINCTION OF THE MUSEUM

In 1894, the Government of Hintze Ribeiro (1849-1907) dissolved the Trade and Industrial Associations. This was only a measure among many that prove a deliberate disinvestment in the national industry. Chronically and cyclically, the country returned to ~~the~~ ~~election~~ secular economic activities: agriculture and trade.

By Decree of December 23th, 1899, the Minister of Public Works, Trade and Industry Elvino de Brito (1851-1902), extinguished the Industrial and Commercial Museums. Vasconcelos couldn’t review “his”

institution on the words of the Decree which considered that the Industrial and Commercial Museums were “far from satisfying, the motives aimed either as permanent exhibitions of industrial and corresponding articles of raw materials or as a subsidy providing the teaching of industrial schools” (Gouveia, 1997, vol. II: 89).

Contrary to what happened to the Industrial and Commercial Museum of Lisbon, which was quickly dismantled, the process of extinction of the Oporto Museum was slow, which made it more painful to Vasconcelos.

Most of the collections remained closed in the “Circus” supervised by one or two guards at least until 1918. However, in 1927 the Museum would still be visited by a Minister. In short, if there was an officially endangered, in practice there was a suspension: the Museum did and did not exist... (Leandro, 2008: 401).

A tortured man, This was one of the wounds that Joaquim de Vasconcelos never healed until the end of his life. In 1911, he confessed to António Augusto Gonçalves: “The Museum is my creation. (...) Taking the museum away from me is like amputating my legs” (Vasconcelos, 1973: 213).

However, the peculiar survival of this Museum was attested in many ways. Joaquim de Vasconcelos had the key to the institution and opened it for those who asked to him, especially friends. For instance, in 1906, José Queirós (1856-1920), a ceramics historian asked him for documents and forms of containers, questioning: “Isn’t there anything in your Industrial and Commercial Museum of Oporto?” (Leandro, 2008: 402). Currently we only have objects and small pieces of this ghost Museum in some other museums or institutions, like Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis (National Museum of Soares dos Reis) or on deposit at Museu de Olaria of Barcelos (Pottery Museum of Barcelos).



Fig. 07 · Box with the collection of laces at the Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis [Soares dos Reis National Museum] “backstage”, Oporto (photo by Sandra Leandro, 2008)

In 1907, Joaquim de Vasconcelos published *A cerâmica portuguesa* and left the second edition of *Indústria de Cerâmica*, the ceramics industry manual – the XXIII volume of the Library of Instruction and Professional Education, coordinated by Pedro Prostés –, with a preface of his authorship where he addressed the issue of tiles (Leandro, 2008: 166).

Tiles were part of the national identity puzzle and Vasconcelos opinion on those matters was requested. In a letter dated April 27th, 1909, Rocha Peixoto (1866-1909), another remarkably intellectual, asked Vasconcelos’ “authorized opinion” (Leandro, 2008: 174) as to a series of single figure tiles which had been sent to him from Braga.

The aesthetic standards of Joaquim de Vasconcelos made him abominate everything that he considered

excessively ornate, fanciful, artificial, and for that reason he manifested himself “against the [Jorge] Collaço tiles and his island of Loves (in tile) of Bairro Alto”, loved served in what he referred to as the “Bussaco ice cream” (Vasconcelos, 1973: 219).

To his friend António Augusto Gonçalves he wrote on April 8th, in 1921, showing great interest in obtaining the catalogues of the Count of Ameal’s collection important auction, and stated: “Since the end of last year I have made an inquiry with José de Figueiredo to save, before the auction, through the National Museum the main elements of the national art of the alluded collection: tiles [which I bought from Nepomuceno (Lx.º)] for the Count, for a quarter of their value] (...) But José de Figueiredo, not even a line answered!!!” (Vasconcelos, 1973: 249). Considering the glimpses on tiles dispersed and fragmented in this article, I



Fig. 08 · Detail of a yoke of the Industrial and Commercial Museum of Porto. Museu de História Natural e da Ciência da Universidade do Porto (Natural History and Science Museum of the University of Porto) (photo by Sandra Leandro, 2016)

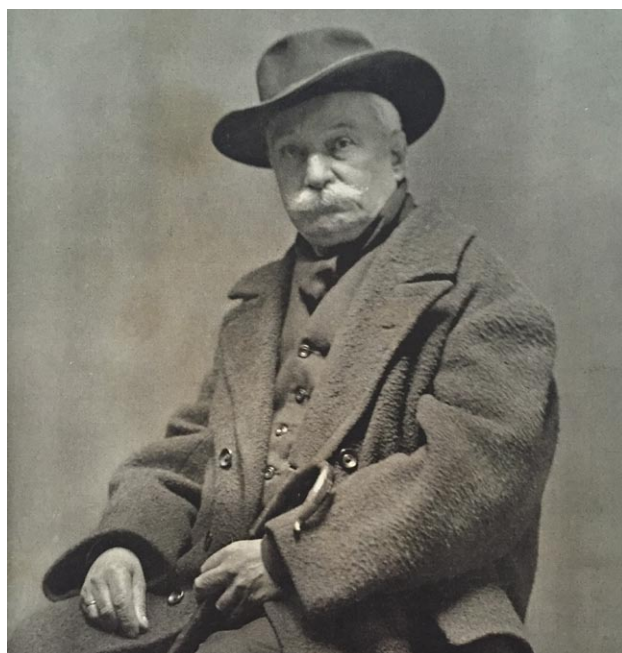


Fig. 09 · Joaquim de Vasconcelos, 1928. In *Ilustração moderna*, 30 (Fev. 1929) (photo by Fotografia Medina)

believe it is explicit the importance that Vasconcelos attributed to this issue in the national artistic panorama.

In 2016, I curated an exhibition evoking Vasconcelos Museum and called it *Museu Infinito (Endless Museum)*. There were tiles from Fábrica das Devezas. Also, it was to have exposed tiles of the Factory of Sacavém, but I did not have enough space. *Museu Infinito* was a way of mapping the theme of identity. Most of

the times History tends to look more like a circle than a square: as it happened to the Industrial and Commercial Museum of Porto, the catalogue of this exhibition did not come out, until today. Nevertheless, I edited a newspaper to leave clues and I called it *Infinitum*. I still have hope to see one day the edited catalogue. I started with a square and I end up in an open circle, where I always try to honour the memory of Joaquim de Vasconcelos.

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