Education, Design and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Hestnes Ferreira between European timelessness and North American classicism

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• Abstract (300 words):
Raúl Hestnes Ferreira (1931-2018) belonged to the fourth generation of modern Portuguese architects, who received their diploma between the 1940s and 1950s. After the graduation, his experiences, studies, and surveys made him a unique character among his fellows and a key-figure to understand the national debate, particularly in the second half of the 20th century.

This article aims to emphasize the importance of staying in the United States as a student and architect, having Louis Kahn as his greatest teacher, which was crucial to his career as an architect in Portugal.

The article based on an ongoing postdoctoral research, which aims to study Ferreira’s personal archive, donated to the Marques da Silva Foundation. His drawings, letters,
models, and memories have been fundamental pieces to define a map of the theoretical bases of Portuguese architecture after the Carnation Revolution of 1974.

Between 1957 and 58, Ferreira traveled through Scandinavia, trying to understand Aalto’s architecture and the Nordic production. This moment was not only an opportunity to frame a possibility to overpass the crisis of the modern movement but also a chance to figure out a key for intervening in his own country. At the time Portugal was under Salazar’s dictatorship. His studies on architecture would be extended from the early 60s on at Pennsylvania University where he developed a master’s degree. This venture drove him to meet Kahn, whom he collaborated with in Philadelphia.

The American experience allowed Ferreira to understand the significance of the ancient Mediterranean culture and the extension of the idea of ‘monumentality’ according to Kahn thoughts. After returning to Portugal, in 1967, this awareness was crucial to develop architecture conceived from common technological processes, sensitive to popular knowledge, to place, matter, and proportion, providing to a certain extent the restoration of some social foundations of architecture.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Alexandra Saraiva (Vila Nova de Gaia, 1972) Architect (1995) and Master of Architecture (2008) from Universidade Lusíada Porto, Portugal. PhD in Architecture from University of Coruña, Spain (2011). She has been Assistant Professor at Universidade Lusíada Porto, since 1996 and master’s thesis adviser in architecture. She was researcher (2007-2015) at the Territory, Architecture and Design Research Centre (CITAD), with published articles in international conferences. In 2015 Saraiva integrates DINÂMIA’CET-IUL from ISCTE, as post-doctoral researcher, with FCT Post-Doctoral Grant (SFRH/BPD/111869/2015), under the supervision of Prof. Paulo Tormenta Pinto, for the development of "The monumentality revisited- Hestnes Ferreira, between the European timelessness and American classicism (1960-1974)". This research will have as main contribution the understanding of Ferreira’s architecture, traveling through the constant triangulation between the Mediterranean, Scandinavian architecture and the work of Louis I. Kahn, searching for the essence of architecture, crossing this triangulation with the neo-realist universe of his father, José Gomes Ferreira, promoting reading about cultural heritage and European identity. This Research Programme is part of the Reflective Societies - cultural heritage and European identity.