DISCOVERING PORTO'S PUBLIC ART .AN EXPERIENCE OF CONDUCTING ROUTES OF INTERPRETATION ON PUBLIC SCULPTURE COLLECTIONS

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SUMMARY

Having studied Public Contemporary Sculpture for about ten years as an Art Historian, one of the issues that ever interested me was the harsh theme of the public reception of public contemporary sculpture.

As Siah Armajani pointed out in his Manifest, I believe that Public Sculpture plays a quite relevant role in modern society, for, as Amajani says, "Public sculpture attempts to fill the gap that comes about between art and public, to make art public and artists citizens again." 2

Many and difficult problems rise when a researcher intends to develop a public survey on *Public Sculpture* reception. What kind of inquiry should be adopted? What interpretation methodology should be used? How should the researcher approach the public? I started by reading some specialized literature about direct inquiry methodology, but I found its approach quite inductive and impersonal³, even if from the start I only considered the use of qualitative inquiry methods⁴, such as those followed by Clark Moustakas.⁵

Also, I became much interested on the use of indirect methods like Natalie Heinich⁶ and other French researchers of the so-called Sociologie de la Médiation, or Médiologie⁷, do.

From that literature, I took up their main eidetic assumptions, and start thinking about how could I engage a theoretic and pragmatic approach that might create enough good conditions, at the same time easy to achieve and capable to give me what I was looking for.

What I was looking for, was how to obtain some direct statements about a few public sculptures, by people that I knew had looked with real attention to some public works.

The opportunity came by when I was invited by Prof. Manuel Janeira and Dr. Luísa Garcia Fernandes from IRICUP⁸ to set up a couple of Routes around Porto's Public Sculpture, after my MA in *Porto's Contemporary Public Sculpture*, defended in Porto's Faculty of Humanities.

At once, I saw there a possibility of getting some direct and reliable statement.

RESUMEN

Habiendo estudiado la escultura pública contemporánea durante diez años como un historiador del arte, una de las cuestiones que siempre me interesó fue el difícil tema de la recepción pública de la escultura contemporánea.

Como Siah Armajani señaló en su manifiesto, creo que la escultura pública desempeña un papel muy relevante en la sociedad moderna, ya que, como Amajani dice, "la escultura pública los intentos de llenar el vacío que se produce entre el arte y público, de hacer arte público y los artistas ciudadanos de nuevo."

Muchos y difíciles problemas aparecen cuando un investigador se propone desarrollar un estudio sobre la recepción de la escultura pública. ¿Qué tipo de investigación deberían adoptarse? ¿Qué interpretación metodológica se debe utilizar? ¿Cómo el investigador puede aproximarse público? .

Comencé por la lectura de alguna literatura especializada acerca de la metodología de investigación directa, pero su enfoque me pareció bastante inductivo e impersonal, incluso si desde el principio sólo considerara el uso de métodos de investigación cualitativa, como los de Clark Moustakas.

Además, me interesa mucho el uso de métodos indirectos como Natalie HEINICH y otros investigadores franceses de la llamada Sociología de la Mediación, o Médiologie, plantean.

Desde la literatura, tomé partí pris de sus principales hipótesis eideticas, y empecé a pensar en cómo podría articular un enfoque teórico y práctico que podría crear condiciones suficientemente buenas, al mismo tiempo fácil de lograr y capaz de darme lo que estaba buscando.

Intentaba encontrar la manera de obtener algunas declaraciones directas sobre algunas esculturas públicas, por parte de la gente que efectivamente había examinado con atención real algunas obras públicas.

La oportunidad apareció cuando fui invitado por el Prof. Dr. Manuel Janeira y Luisa García Fernandes del IRICUP de la Universidade de Porto, a crear un par de rutas en torno a la escultura Pública de Oporto, partiendo de mi tesis de maestría sobre la "Escultura Contemporánea Pública en Porto", defendida en Facultad de Humanidades de aquella Universidad. A la vez, percibí una posibilidad de obtener información directa y fiable.

I-Theoretical Premises

Three main assumptions were considered: The conduction of Public Art routes of interpretation is a communicational process that supposes being aware of a wide range of aspects, such as urban, historical, technical and artistic data, cultural background of the public and deep personal feelings about art. Because *Public Art Collections* aim to be significant to all, its meaning shouldn't be established only by the expert (*artists*, *critics*, *art historians*, *public art specialists*) but also by the citizens to whom they are addressed.

When conducting routes of interpretation of Public Art Collections, it is essential that a Public Sphere might be created involving the interpreter and the participants.

It seems to me important to point out that organizing Routes of Public Art is not be the same thing than to teach or to dissertate about plastic contemporary art. In my opinion, organizing routes of interpretation means setting up a communicational process, being its two poles formed by the interpreter and the participants, both focusing their attention on other two poles: in the foreground, the public work of art (and everything it is engaged with), and in the background, the city (and everything which is engaged with it).

Being so, I guess that the main role the interpreter should play is that of presenting objective and concise data about the work of art and about the city history and planning.

Starting by the work of art, those data should involve the main aspects related with the production of the work, as if it was seen as mere object, in the same way Heidegger says when he talks about the character of thing the work of art always has9.

Still talking about the work of art, I think it's also useful that the interpreter may speak about the processes used by the author to produce the work. It's relevant to distinguish between different methods and techniques.

Finally, it is necessary to point out some different expressions used by different artists of the same period, and some identical ones used by the majority of artists of each period.

Concerning the City, an equivalent approach is requested. Every public work rises in a certain city space, and its location, function and meaning is intimately related to its site.

Being so, the public art interpreter should be aware of these aspects, and present them to the participants in a simple and clear manner, if possible remembering aspects of recent transformations of the city space, transformations that everyone has in mind, and likes to speak about, in order to display and to share his firm and strong ideas.

I think that the social meaning of public art can be produced from quite simple approaches like these, and the interpreter should keep some silence about judging public works of art, unless the participants ask for his opinion, something that happens a lot, and that the interpreter should promptly answer without reservation.

The main conviction that inspire these assumptions, is that in order to produce or to increase the social meaning of public art, it is necessary that a Public Sphere might be created between those that approach and talk about public works, in the same way that Jürgen Habbermas speaks about in The Structural Transformation of the Public Space. 10

In a single word, it seems to me much more relevant to the scope of producing a social meaning for public art, to create that Public Sphere than dissertating about "great" plastic or "hermetic" conceptual issues, that are only meaningful to the expert.

2. Pragmatic Procedures

Having this premises in mind, I begun to conceive the instruments I needed, so that I could achieve the scope I intended to. They could be sequenced like this:

I started by selecting the pieces to be seen along the route, attempting to gather a rich variety of works, periods and plastic languages

Next, I designed an itinerary linking each piece, and created a few groups of pieces related to a specific city nucleus (plaza, public building, public garden)

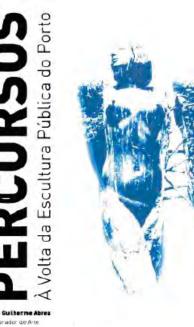
Finally, I made a pamphlet to be delivered to each participant, where one could get some generic data about each piece, and find out some blank spaces to be filled with their judgments, comments, feelings, etc.

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The interior of the pamphlet made for Route 2, looked like this:

Designação	Autoria	Data	Materiais / Técnica	Tipologia	Classe Intencional	Análise
1. Padre Américo	Henrique Moreira	1961	Bronze / Metal	Grupo escultórico	Lugar de Memória	Retrato, Pietismo, Culto Religioso
2. Rapto de Ganimedes	A. Fernandes de Sá	1916	Bronze / Metal	Grupo escultórico	Qualificação Urbana	Naturalismo, Mitologia, Paganismo
3. Baco	Teixeira Lopes	1916	Bronze / Metal	Torso	Qualificação Urbana	Naturalismo, Mitologia, Paganismo
4. S. José e S. Joaquim	Soares dos Reis	1880	Granito / Pedra	Imagem	Lugar de Devoção	Classicismo, Plasticismo, Religiosidade
5. Descida do Espárito Santo	Henrique Moreira	1945	Bronze / Metal	Baixo-relevo	Lugar de Devoção	Classicismo, Iconografia, Religiosidade
6. Almeida Garrett	Barata Feyo	1954	Bronze / Metal	Estátua	Lugar de Memória	Modernismo, Tensão, Implantação
7. Carlos Cal Brandão	José Rodrigues	1995	Bronze / Metal	Baixo-relevo	Lugar de Memória	Sinalização, Simbologia, Abstracção,
8. Corcăs	João Fragoso	1957	Bronze / Metal	Grupo escultórico	Qualificação Urbana	Modernismo, Mitologia, Decoração
9. Platibanda do Rivoli	Henrique Moreira	1942	Cimento / Mista	Baixo-relevo	Animação Arquitectónica	Academismo, Decoração, Requalificação
10. Meninos	Henrique Moreira	1932	Bronze / Metal	Grupo escultórico	Qualificação Urbana	Nosecentismo, Decorativismo, Putti
11. Juventude	Henrique Moreira	1929	Lioz / Pedra	Estátua / Fonte	Qualificação Urbana	Novecentismo, Decorativismo, Sensualidade
12. A Nacional	Sousa Caldas	1924	Bonze /Metal	Estátua	Animação Arquitectónica	Academismo, Simbolismo, Nacionalismo
13 Imperial	Henrique Moreira	1936	Bonze /Metal	Escultura	Animação Arquitectónica	Modernismo, Estilização, Decoração
14. Banco de Portugal	Sousa Caldas	1934	Bonze /Metal	Grupo escultórico	Animação Arquitectónica	Academismo, Alegoria, Decoração
15. D, Pedro IV	Anatole Clamels	1865	Bonze /Metal	Estátua equestre	Lugar de Memória	Neoclassicismo, Monumentalidade, Liberalismo
16. O Ardina	Manuel Dias	1991	Bronze / Metal	Estátua pedestre	Qualificação Urbana	Realismo, Cidade, Memória
17. Altares dos Congregados	Henrique Moreira	1948	Mármore / Pedra	Baixo-relevo	Lugar de Devoção	Modernismo, Narrativivdade, Iconografia

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Finally, the interior of the Pamphlet for Route 3, looked like this:

Designação	Autoria	Data	Materiais / Técnica	Tipologia	Classe Intencional	Análise
1. Cinema Batalha	Américo Braga	1947	Terracota / Mista	Baixo Relevo	Animação Arquitectónica	Neo-Realisma, Simbólica, Censura
2. D. Pedro V	JJ Teixeira Lopes	1866	Bronze / Metal	Monumento	Lugar de Memória	Oitocentismo, Retrato, Homenagem
3. Teatro de S. Jaão	Diogo de Macedo	1915	Cimento / Mista	Baixo Relevo	Animação Arquitectónica	Naturalismo, Simbolismo, Alegoria
4. Amaldo Gama	Rogério Azevedo	1971	Bronze / Metal	Estátua Pedestre	Lugar de Memória	Academisma, Retrato, Homenagem
5. D. António Barroso	José Rodrigues	1999	Bronze / Metal	Escultura	Lugar de Memória	Abstraccionismo, Desenbo, Tensão
6. Escultura sobre a Água	Alberto Cameiro	1993	Granito / Pedra	Escultura	Animação Arquitectónica	Ecologismo, Transfiguracionismo, Técnica
7. Vimara Peres	Barata Feyo	1968	Bronze / Metal	Estátua equestre	Lugar de Memória	Modernismo, Tensão heráldica, Implantação
8. O Parta	Sousa Alão	1818	Granito / Pedra	Estátua Pedestre	Animação Arquitectónica	Sinalização, Simbólica, Proteçção
9. Virgem de Vandoma	Anónimo	Séc. X	Pedra pintada/ Mista	Imagem	Lugar de Devoção	Devoção, Simbólica, Protecção
10. Arco de Santana	Anónimo	Séc. XII	Granito / Pedra	Nicho	Lugar de Memória	Porta, Memória, Protecção
11. Tragédia da Ponte	JJ Teixeira Lopes	1897	Bronze /Metal	Baixo Relevo	Lugar de Memória	Classicismo, Narratividade, Culto cívico
12 O Cubo	José Rodrigues	1983	Bronze /Metal	Escultura	Qualificação Urbana	Abstruccionismo, Tensão, Integração
13. S. Jaão	João Cutileiro	2000	Mármore / Pedra	Imagem	Lugar de Devoção	Neo-Figuração, Erudição, Contraste
14. Infante D. Henrique	Tomás Costa	1900	Bronze /Metal	Monumento	Lugar de Memória	Academismo, Fin-de-Siècle, Convencionalismo

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Analysing its structure we may follow the steps of some other aspects:

The Pamphlet displayed, numbered by order, a list of pieces, with their main artistic data Two kinds of questions were present

A closed question for evaluation of best and worse pieces

An open question asking for opinions and comments related to the piece(s) judged as best or worse, or a confrontation between both

There was also a suggestion of making a photo of the pieces chosen, during a second individual visit, when the questions should be answered

Finally, each participant was asked to send back the filled form by mail

Other relevant details:

There were in average twenty participants in each route

The participants were mainly professors, students and executives of Porto University

Some of them followed the three Routes

Only a few sent the filled form by mail, as asked

3- Porto's Routes

Route Nr. 1: Around the University Historic Building

This first Route reflects the importance that the Historical building of the University of Porto has. Placed in a wide plateau, surrounding the Central Services of the University one can find a quite relevant sample of Porto statuary and public contemporary sculpture.

Placed in Porto's historic Centre recently classified as Cultural Patrimony of the Humanity, as in so many other European Cities, close to the University central building other historic and relevant buildings are set, such as ancient churches, like "Torre dos Clérigos" (Tower of the Clergy) which is Porto's most famous architectonic ex-libris, a 19th century hospital, the first Porto's Medical School, a few historic cafés, and other public buildings, like the Court, which remains one of the most prominent building of the Estado Novo (Portuguese Dictatorship Regime).

In this sense the public sculpture punctuation of the zone is a constant presence, merging many different sculptural works side by side, as it is usual in the public sculpture display.

In Table nr. I, we set up the main structural aspects of the Public Sculpture Collection present in Route nr. I:

Analysing this Table, one may see that the Collection was divided into two main Categories:

Periods	Universalism 3** quarter of 19th Century	Fin-de- Siècle Final 19 th Century	Novecento I≠ quarter of 20th Century	Nationalism 2 ^{scd} quarter of 20 th Century	Modern/ Tradition 2sd quarter of 20th Century	Renovation 3 ^{scd} quarter of 20 th Century	Rupture 4 ^{sed} quarter of 20 th Century	Global Final 20** Century First 21** Century
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Periods and Classes

Each *Period* refers to a specific quantitative chronology, and simultaneously is characterised by a qualitative expression. The chronology range, however, refers not to the works' consecration date, but to the original definition of the model (formal, expressive or conceptual) created or displayed by the artists, for one must be aware of the fact that many public pieces are works that reflect a clear continuity, and even that its continuity might well represent a differential distinctive value of the very nature of the Public Art work.

We distinguish, then, eight different periods. The establishment of each one had as main preoccupation the fact that each period could be meaningful not only for this specific sample of Porto's Public Art Collection, but for every Public Art Collection, not only in Porto and Portugal, but that could also be meaningful for the larger European situation.

In a similar way, the definition of the three classes reflects that preoccupation of some kind of an universal understanding of Public Sculpture Collections. Now the relationship is no longer established with History, not even with styles or typological schemes, but with spatial and functional roles that the public sculptural works play in the City image and fabric.

Therefore, we distinguish the logic of displaying memory (people, facts) from that of dis-playing ornamentation architectonic integration (or animation) and that of urban qualific-ation (or regeneration).

From that point of view, there is no such big gap between tradition and modernity, or even between traditional and contemporary public sculptural work, if we consider that the rup-ture between both, being formal or even conceptual, don't exclude the topological and eide-t-ic continuity of public sculpture work, when related with the city structure and image.

In order to present that perspective, the interpreter of public art routes should give much importance to the historical and cultural context of the public.

Being inadequate to display all the relevant information that each context has in order to make transparent the presence of the public work of art, and remembering that the main scope is always to help make arising the social (or interpersonal) meaning of public art, I came up with the idea of relating each period with a strong epochal image of a city place and social ambient, with which specific sculptural work was indeed involved to.

Route Nr. 2: Along Porto's Civic Centre

In Table nr. 2, we set up the main structural aspects of the Public Sculpture Collection present in Route nr. 2.

Analysing this Table, we notice that another class of sculptural works appears, compar-atively to Table nr. I: Places of Devotion. With this insertion we may see together the four classes that composes the field of public sculpture production, as I use to suggest.

In this table, we can find the reference to a work whose quotation is presented between brackets. It refers to a sculpture that was proposed to a competition for the orna-mentation of Plaza D. João I, but didn't wan the first price.

Talking about ornamentation, it's relevant to notice that although we are dealing with the sculptural punctuation of the main axis of the city's civic centre, one cannot find here a majority of works displaying com-memora-tion, but instead one finds ornamental works.

Nevertheless, we find here two of the most important city's commemorative sculptures: the monument to D. Pedro IV and the statue to Almeida Garrett, two symbolic references to the armed combat and to the artistic claim and use of liberty values.

Also, it's important to point out the semiotic value of the implantation of those monu-ments: the first located in the central main Plaza of Porto, whose name is justly Plaza of Liberty, and the second located just in front of the central Town Hall building.

Periods Classes	Universalism 3** quarter of 19** Century	Fin-de- Siècle Final 19 th Century	Novecento * quarter of 20** Century	Nationalism 2sd quarter of 20# Century	Modern/ Tradition 2sd quarter of 20th Century	Renovation 3 ^{scd} quarter of 20 th Century	Rupture 4 ^{sed} quarter of 20 th Century	Global Final 20# Century First 21# Century
Places of Memory	Î	-,	(-)	-,-	Ė	-	Ü	-
Places of Devotion	-	Li		2	(-)	-	-	-
Elements of Architectonic Animation	-	-	2	İ	ľ	-	-	-
Elements of Urban Qualification	I	2	2	-	L	(1)	2	I

Route Nr. 3: Between High and Low Porto's Symbolic Centres

Finally I refer to the last Route, the one that deals with the most representative and symbolic Porto's Medieval centres: the high Cathedral place and the low Market place.

As I did with Route nr. I and 2, I display now the table with the main structural aspects of the Public Sculpture Collection presented in Route nr. 3:

Periods	Universalism 3** quarter of 19* Century	Fin-de- Siècle Final 19 th Century	Novecento 1* quarter of 20* Century	Nationalism 2 ^{scd} quarter of 20# Century	Modern/ Tradition 2sd quarter of 20th Century	Renovation 3 ^{std} quarter of 20 th Century	Rupture 4sd quarter of 20th Century	Global Final 20** Century First 21** Century
Places of	4		7	***		,	V	
Memory	2	2	(3)	-	2	(-	I	-
Places of Devotion	4	2	12	2	2		Ţ	1-
Elements of Architectonic Animation	-	-	Ė	-		-	ı	-
Elements of Urban Qualification	-	-	(-)	-,	-)	-	ı	-

Finally, in the next Table I assemble the three Routes with the images of master works of each one sorted by period and by class.

Public Art (Rotte no. 3)							
Public Ant (Roste no. 2)						1	
Public Am (Roste na. 1)				W. Salar			
Public Space							
Urban Faces							
Images Periods	Universal or 3th quarter of 19th Century	Fix-4-2360 Fine 1198 Gentley	Numero Preparties of 20th Contany	Netseeloo 24 quarter d 204 Canuar	Medens' Translation 2nd quantum of 20th Connuny	Reception 300 quanter of 200 Cannay	Righters 10 quarter of 20th Century

4- Participants' Statements

As I've said, since the beginning was really the main scope of the initiative, although it was not presented as

I've asked to the participants to deliver the pages (or photocopies) filled with their points of view, but it's true that I hadn't created a communication system that could turn easy their participation, for the method depended entirely on the participant's will on sending their statements by mail, to my own house

Obviously, that procedure had its own risks, but at the same time I thought it was the one that assured the most diligent and responsible public commitment to the matter.

Also, one must not forget that even there would be no answers delivered at all, that particular result would be a quite relevant one, and no less meaningful than any other.

In fact, as I said before, there were just a few participants' statements delivered: three.

It was a quite tiny participation, as the average number of each Route participants was twenty, what should make the final amount of sixty inquiries delivered, although there were some participants that entered the three Routes.

However, form the beginning my approach to the matter was not a quantitative one, and even now I don't believe that the survey had been a failure.

On the contrary I find much useful to display the three statements delivered.

5- Final Considerations

The very little number of delivered comments and evaluations show that there is not yet assumed that the citizens' points of view are necessary for the perception of the collective meaning of public art

When expressing their opinions and feelings, the participants showed that they are still very much touched by the importance of the qualities of the monumental work, such as the impact of scale, and the communicational value of the narrative dimension. In this sense, I suppose that artists, critics and theorists of public art need to reflect upon this, in order to include those aspects in their work, analysis and models

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NOTES

¹ Art Historian Vice-President of

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- ² ARMAJANI, Siah, Manifesto Public Sculpture in the Context of American Democracy, In, AA.VV., Reading Spaces, MACBA, 1995, pp. 111-114 ³ Vide, FRANCO, Núria, The Citizen's Attitude towards work of Art in Public Space: the case of Barcelona, In, REMESAR, A. (Ed.), Urban Regeneration. A Challenge for Public Art, Universitat de Barcelona, 1997, pp. 86-90
- ⁴ I rejected pure quantitative methods like those used by Frederico Revilla, vide Colóquio-Artes, Lisboa, nº 88, Março de 1991, pp. 30-35.
- ⁵ MOUSTAKAS, Clark, Phenomenological Research Methods, Sage Publications, 1994, London
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- ⁸ IRICUP: Institute of Common Initiatives and Resources of Porto University
- ⁹Vide, HEIDEGGER, Martin, A Origem da Obra de Arte, Edições 70, s/d, Lisboa
- 10 HABERMAS, Jürgen, The Structural Transformation of the Public Space. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, MIT Press, Massachussetts, 1991, (1962)

	S tatements	Images
Route nr. i	"I distinguish the pieces made by Barata Feyo (n° 16) and Arlindo Rocha (n° 9) because I they please me. But my choice goes to the statue "Justice" (n° 14) and the relief "Justice and Judges" (n° 15), both from the Court nucleus. The statue, by its grandeur, magritude, imposingness and excellent representation. The relief, by its composition and its original narrative qualities" (University student: History)	14-
Route nr. í	"The one that touched the most was the monument to Julio Dinis (n° 20) for the person it refers to, and for its well-made plastic form. However as a monumental work, I would distinguish the statue "Justice" (n° 14) by its grandeur, impressive both as a sculptural work, and for the message it spreads"	20-
Route nr. 3	"I prefer the statue of Vimara Peres (n° 7). By its image of predominance, and power, and its pose of expectation, denotes the concentration and fixes the instant that precedes the battle "	7-