

Sagres' Saga. Monument in Landscape, or Landscape as Monument?

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ABSTRACT

With the text Sagres' Saga. Monument in Landscape, or Landscape as Monument?, we aim to discuss the main theoretical issues related to the conception and approval of monumental public sculpture projects, issues that were raised by a series of four official competitions launched in Portugal, in the period between 1933 and 1988, whose purpose was to raise a monument alluding to Prince Henry the Navigator on the Sagres Promontory, located at the southwest end of the country. Over a period of more than 50 years, as they never changed their theme, those successive competitions allow us to put the evolution and involution between consecutive programs in perspective, as well as the ruptures and articulations, besides from the factors that conditioned the choice of winning solutions in each edition.

Although none of the projects was ever built, the study of their long and enigmatic course – Sagres' Saga – allows us to ascertain the main problems that involve celebratory monumentality, whose model is characterized for simultaneously aggregating statuary and architecture, allowing to scrutinize the tensions and ontic discrepancies; historical and semantic ones that manifest themselves between these two registers as we have theorized in our doctoral thesis, whose foundations are partly developed and explained in this text. [1]

Keywords: *Art History; Public Art; Statuary; Monumentality*

1 | THE PROBLEM

It's a well-known story. In 1933, 1936, 1954, and 1988, successive public competitions were launched, in order to fulfill the Government's decision to raise on Sagres Promontory a monument to Prince Henry the Navigator that should simultaneously evoke Portuguese Nautical Discoveries.

The purpose of commemorating the discoveries in Sagres by means of a monument dates back to the nineteenth century, when Viscount Sá da Bandeira, Minister of Marine and Overseas in 1840, posted a headstone [2] on the walls of the turret built by Philip II in Sagres fortress, alluding to Prince Henry and the legendary School of Sagres, this stone being surmounted by a bas-relief by Manuel Simões (Figure 1), which still stands in place.

Later, at the turn of the century, moved by a nostalgic drift, the portuguese sculptor Augusto Santo [3] imagined an astonishing monument to Prince Henry, in which his head was to be carved on the cliffs of the *Promontorium Sacrum*, "projecting streams of light through the eyes" (França, 1966, p. 225).



FIGURE 1 | M. Simões, *School of Sagres*, 1840, bas-relief, marble, Sagres Fortress, Sagres

In 1923, the American historian Doane Robinson proposed the idea of displaying the effigies of the four American Presidents carved on the Black Hills of South Dakota, reflecting both Santo's and Robinson's megalomaniac projects purpose of expressing sublimity, by means of monumental sculpture in a grand and natural scenario (Figure 2).



FIGURE 2 | G. Borglum, Mount Rushmore Memorial, 1927-41, Keystone, South Dakota, USA

After World War II, this approach became inappropriate, and a second group of non-commemorative works displaying auto-referential interventions, emerged in distant, unidentified and abandoned natural scenarios, as is the case of Land Art and Earth Works, and even site-specific landscape emplacements, which although lacking any specific narrative meaning, look for a closer relationship with the environment, in order to display a more accurate interpretation of its character (Figure 3).

Unlike monuments and memorials erected in the landscape for their grandeur, this second modernistic approach, even if monumental in scale, is no longer conceived as *monumental*, but instead as *environmental*, as we indicate, for these artistic outdoor interventions are strictly formal and/or poetical objects or structures, lacking, at least in theory, any narrative and/or evocative sublimities.



FIGURE 3 | Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, Rozel Point, Utah, USA.

Our thesis is that this second group of landscape interventions establishes a new paradigm, concerning the relationship between artistic work and the natural environment, and because of this represents a new model for large scale artistic landscape related programs.

Since artistic work is now meant to be inseparable from its environment, we recognize here the consequence of the application of the concept of cultural landscape, which merges natural, human and artistic layers as a whole, and approaches further artistic interventions as one of the actions needed for its regeneration, beautification, sustainability, and profit.

These are the aims of classification tools and safeguard measures, such as the Council of Europe document known as the *European Landscape Convention*, which was signed in Florence in 2000, in order to establish the currently expanded concept of cultural landscape, which was approved on February 14, 2005, by the Portuguese Government, thereby assuming its recommendations.

In Portugal, this mutation and sequence of models, though not explicit, starts with the four competitions launched by the Government during the 20th century, with the purpose of raising a monument to Prince Henry, in Sagres Promontory.

In fact, the Sagres competitions are the most emblematic monumental, historical and environmental artistic programs in Portugal, as their goal was not only to celebrate historical facts but also to display symbolic mythologies, both expected to reach a sublime eminence, thanks to their deployment in a superb environment, not only in geographical terms, but also in historical, symbolic and cultural ones.

Sagres is therefore the most complete, representative and problematic transformation of a natural and historical monumental site becoming a cultural landscape in Portugal, by means of a process that has been carried out over the ages, to attain its peak with four successive official competitions, none of them ever built.

In saying this, we think that Sagres is a special case, and that its study provides reliable and clear evidence, which needs a deeper analysis and interpretation. Those two purposes were the effort and the aim of the doctoral thesis we presented in 2007.

2 | THE FOUR SAGRES OFFICIAL COMPETITIONS

Obviously, we cannot describe these competitions here [4]. Instead, we will try to find out how far the paradigms previously explained are reflected in the successive editions of the competitions, in order to learn the specific and sometimes misleading (if not paradoxical) inflections that become manifest through their study.

Let us then analyze the winning projects of these competitions, since the only sculptural “monument” ever erected in Sagres by the Portuguese Government, was the headstone ordered by Viscount Sá da Bandeira, as we have already stated.

The first winning prize in the competition launched in 1933 and voted in 1935, was the project designated by the acronym “*Spreading Faith, the Empire*”, whose authors Carlos and Guilherme Rebello de Andrade, both architects and brothers, together with sculptor Rui Gameiro, presented a colossal image of a cross of Christ raised 155 meters high in the air, while leaning to the ocean, and pointing in the geographic direction of the Discoveries (Figure 4).

Erected in sublime grandeur, this project did not include any statue of Prince Henry, but only a bas-relief, alluding to the legendary Nautical School of Sagres, in strict compliance with the text of the competition’s program, whose preamble stated that “*the monument now intended, although capitulated by the name and individuality of Prince Henry, aims to achieve and express a broader historical concept: the first cycle of voyages and discoveries of the Portuguese... It is not a mere statue of a prince, but the synthesis of an era.*” (Dec.-lei nº 39713 de 1 de Julho de 1954).

Analyzing the project, we see that the plans clearly reflect the monument in the landscape’s paradigm, raising above it colossally, and dynamically projecting

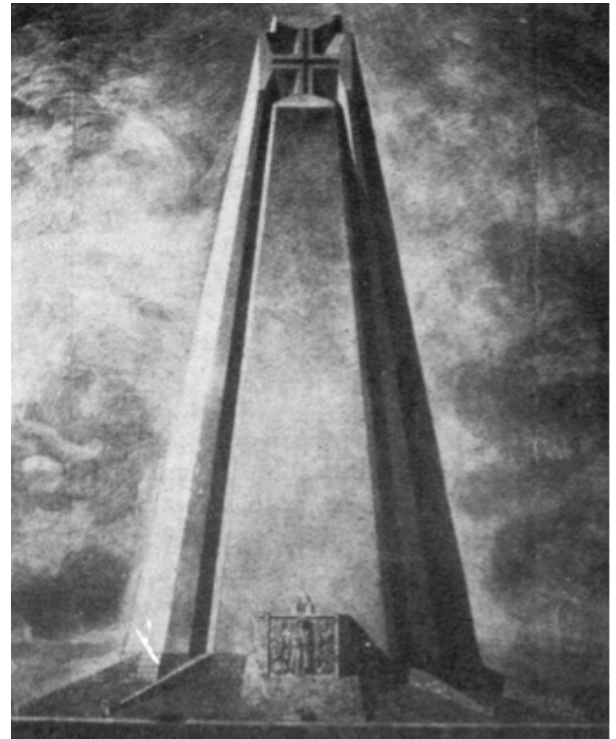


FIGURE 4 | Andrade, Gameiro, *Spreading Faith, The Empire*, 1933, model.

itself over it, as if trying to overcome its site, embodying and interpreting with particular accuracy, by means of its scale and iconography, the ideal of the “*Politics of the Spirit*”, established by António Ferro as *idearium* for the Portuguese New State artistic programs, in the same year of the Sagres competition.

Spreading Faith, the Empire is designed as a synthesis formed by a consistent and unitary block (whose interior previewed the inclusion of a caravel) that was able to gather symbolic values, iconographic allusions and dynamic features, succeeding in reconciling the irreconcilable, in the sense that it manages to merge Christian symbolism with an *avant-garde* drift, slightly contaminated by futuristic imagery. But there’s more. Although presented as a plastic synthesis, the magnification of the cross of Christ cannot be properly understood, if one ignores the massive use by the Nazi regime of another cross, which was particularly dynamic: the swastika.

Among many sorts of reasons, the execution of that project was not expected to be consensual, first of all because it could not gain the support of the so called “modern architects”, like Paulino Montez, who was a member of the evaluation board, and who stated that “*A work of architecture cannot be slanted*” (Almeida, 2002, p. 56).

Supported by the Minister of Public Works, Transports and Communications, Duarte Pacheco, architects were able to gather substantial power (Rodolfo 1999, 101), namely in the arena of the *National Union of Architects*, where a declaration against the choice made by the evaluation board was approved, stating the disregarding of the recommendations approved by the architect's previous Association, that pointed out that there should be two architects present in every evaluation board for public competitions, and also stating that the budget for the construction of the winning project exceeded by far the one specified by the competition's guidelines (Ribeiro, 2002, p. 363).

Another source of criticism was launched by a set of forty four prestigious personalities who signed a document called "*Representação 35*", addressed to Oliveira Salazar, requesting his decision to cancel the previous competition, in order to prevent "*a huge artistic disaster*" (Almeida, 2002, p. 225).

Representação 35, however, was not only meant to condemn the winning project. Instead, the text called for an aesthetic alternative to its main error. That alternative was defined as a fusion between two elements: the *Mortuary Chapel* and the *Standard Stone*, which were thought of as being the two main archetypes of Portuguese architecture. Those two models were presented in the competition by the projects of Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, conceived following the model of a *Standard Stone* and the one by Jose Cortez, conceived following the model of a *Mortuary Chapel*.

As a result of the annulment of the previous competition, a new one was launched in 1936, and the winning team was now formed by Carlos Ramos, Leopoldo de Almeida and Almada Negreiros (one of the subscribers of *Representação 35*), and the team's project clearly reflected the hybrid model advocated by *Representação 35*.

Despite the quality of its design and the attention to every detail, the now winning project (Figure 5) could not achieve the remarkable solution that was expected, and that attempt failed to create the required model for a Portuguese modern monumentality and architecture.

As Carlos Ramos said, it was "*an attempt to conjugate the static elements with the dynamic ones*" ('Como vai ser o monumento,' 1938), but the solution was incongruent, because Standard Stones are associated with the idea of a permanent and solid basis on the ground, which was not consistent with the function



FIGURE 5 | C. Ramos, L. Almeida, A. Negreiros, Project, 1936, model.

of serving as a mast of a caravel moving overseas, which was at the same time a chapel whose navigation intended to symbolize the overseas expansion of the Christian faith.

Comparing the winning projects of the first and second edition, we think that the synthesis conceived by brothers Rebello de Andrade is far more accomplished than the one presented by the team of Carlos Ramos, since the clearance of the proportions, the elegance of design and thoroughness of detail of the second, could not hide its central mistake: creating a synthesis was not a matter of combining some suggestive forms, for its outcome instead of a *unified synthesis* would result in a *composite* form.

In brief, the result was aesthetically deceptive, and in the press it was stated that the solution "*is still far from what it should be*" ('Como vai ser o monumento,' 1938).

However, despite its errors, the Carlos Ramos team project had the merit of blocking the approval of Rebello de Andrade's sublime synthesis, preventing it from standing on the *Sacred Promontory*, one thing that would drastically alter the silhouette and the character of such an exceptional place in the Portuguese territory, defacing it with the presence of a colossus that would crush it.

So, not only did the Carlos Ramos project fail to erect Prince Henry's Monument in Sagres, but it also failed to be adopted as the *ex-libris* for the Portuguese World Exhibition of 1940, being thrown

out by Cottinelli Telmo, Leopoldo de Almeida and Leitão de Barros's model for the *Monument to Discoveries* (Figure 6).



FIGURE 6 | C. Telmo, L. Almeida, L. Barros, Monument to Discoveries, 1939, model.

The defeat of the project by Rebello de Andrade's team was the most relevant fact of the second competition, and its relevance transcends the problem of proposing a proper celebration for the Portuguese Discoveries and Prince Henry, as it links with a much more central and decisive problem: the discussion (or fight?) for the (re)definition of an idea of monumentality.

One must be aware of the strategic relevance of that discussion, in a time marked by the rise of authoritarian, totalitarian and belligerent regimes in Europe, whose emergence the Spanish Civil War, right next door, made particularly real and concrete. As a matter of fact, that war was also a war of symbols. And the symbols of greatest strategic relevance were precisely those which were expected to be monumentalized, gathering higher prestige for those totalitarian regimes, and managing to mobilize the masses in their direction.

If understood from this point of view, the problem of building a monument to Prince Henry at Sagres Promontory gains a rather new dimension, for it shows us that the point there was neither a mere aesthetic problem, nor a problem of theory of architecture, nor even a problem of professional affirmation of modern architects. All these issues were present, but they were engaged with each other by the interposition of a force field that placed two distinct and antagonistic ways of understanding the superlatives of monumentality face to face. Two opposed concepts of monumentality, which were also at war.

The first concept, vertical and monolithic, aimed to monumentalize the sublime, presenting the commemorative fact as a corollary of a superhuman "*plan*" - Heroism, Race, Divinity. The second concept, horizontal and multiform, aimed to monumentalize the form, presenting the celebration's theme as a human "*deed*" - History, Civilization, Culture.

We can clearly see the antagonism between these two paradigms. On one hand the strength of the sublime presented by Rebello de Andrade's project. On the other hand, there was the power of the eclectic, present in Carlos Ramo's project. The gap that separates both solutions was absolute, and they were meant to shock and neutralize each other, creating a hybrid: the *Monument to Discoveries*, facing Tagus River, in Belém. Here culminates, and halts, the history of Portuguese New State monumentality.

Afterwards, nothing of great relevance happened. Nothing, except for in post-war time a third and last edition of the Sagres competitions cycle, during the Portuguese New State. Now a new attempt was made, intended to celebrate, in 1960, the fifth centennial of the death of Prince Henry, which according to documental evidence had occurred in Sagres.

Launched in 1954, during the aftermath of the Korean War (1950-1953), and during the repercussions in Portugal of the Indian Union pretensions to incorporate Goa, Daman and Diu into its territory, Sagres's third official competition took place in a quite different context than the previous ones. First of all, because in the specific context of the Cold War, the Portuguese dictatorship had to stand before the international scene, in order to fight for its prerogatives of a multi-racial, multi-continental and single party political state, as the Portuguese diplomacy used to describe what, in the end, still remained the "Empire".

In order to point out the specificity of this new

edition, unexpectedly the decree announcing the opening of the competition, stated that *"in this case restrictions are not applicable on the exercise in Portugal of the profession of engineer and architect, set out in Article 1 of Law N.º 1991 of March 10, 1942"* (Dec.-lei n.º 39713 de 1 de Julho de 1954).

This meant that the competition would be open to foreign authors, and that an unprecedented opportunity was given to Portuguese artists and architects to create a monumental proposal, intended to be appreciated at an international level, since two foreign architects took part in the evaluation board: Jean Tschumi, president of the International Union of Architects (UIA) and Giovanni Battista Ceas, president of the Italian section of the UIA, the former being a prominent modern architect whose work was affiliated with Le Corbusier's ideas and aesthetics.

This competition was able to raise great support, both by Portuguese artists or by foreigners [5], taking advantage of the mobilization achieved by the international competition for the *Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner* of the previous year.

Despite the obvious discrepancies due to the political changes in the international arena, the third edition of the competition did not alter its premises, as it was clearly made explicit in Decree-Law 39713, which reported that *"fundamentally, what is expected of the monument is still the same as it was twenty years ago, when the first edition was launched"* (Dec.-lei n.º 39713 de 1 de Julho de 1954).

Cruelly, however, the international political evolution was not favorable to the Portuguese Regime, and on the eve of the closing ceremony of the 500 years of Prince Henry's death, *"a resolution sponsored by twelve Afro-asiatic nations to submit information to the United Nations on territories under its administration, in order to be conferred autonomous government was voted in the UN with 45 votes against 6, with 24 abstentions and, finally, independence"* ('Portugal reserva,' 1960).

Prince Henry's Commemorations ended in the worst way, and the day after the UN vote in his closing speech held before Oliveira Salazar, next to Infant Henry's tomb in the Founder's Chapel of the Monastery of Batalha, Caeiro da Mata had reasons not to hide his dismay and nervousness, when he stated that *"Given the great crisis of today, [...] in this time of confusion and doubt in which, above all, looms the great tragedy of overseas life, Portugal, citadel of the Christian order, ruled by a man of genius - Salazar - set its path and destiny and does not want to*

retreat [...] the winds of history blow always strong in Portugal's sails." ('As comemorações Henriquinas,' 1960). The Governmental plan failed. The celebration of the fifth centennial of the death of Prince Henry failed to invert the historical changes, and so the Empire began to crumble.

Obviously, there was no room for the redeeming utopia of the Mar Novo project (Figure 7), created by the team consisting of architect João Andresen, sculptor Barata Feyo and painter Júlio Resende that won the 3rd competition with undeniable merit. The Government decided not to implement the project, in a meeting of the *Council of Ministers*, through a laconic Order of the Government, which appears in a letter from the *Minister of Public Works*, as follows:

At its meetings on 30 October and 9 November the main documents in this process were presented to the Council of Ministers, and it was discussed at length whether or not to erect the monument to Prince Henry in Sagres. The Government appreciated in its proper value the effort made by the artists who participated in the competition, and especially those who obtained the first place in the classification and were admitted to the second proofs. If a monument to Prince of Sagres were to be built it should be the project with the name Mar Novo. However, taking into account all aspects of the problem, the Council decided not to erect the monument, and even to discard the idea of building it on the promontory of Sagres. [...] 6/12/956, a) Oliveira Salazar, ('Monumento ao Infante,' 1954).



FIGURE 7 | J. Andresen, B. Feyo, J. Resende, Mar Novo 1956, model.

Project *Mar Novo* was rejected without any reasons being formally and officially presented, and the issue became an uncomfortable "taboo", during the

Portuguese *New State*, and even now this matter still remains a kind of “enigma”.

In fact, why was the project *Mar Novo* not built? In our view, this “enigma” may be clarified, if we consider it in parallel with the similar “enigma” in the competition for the *Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner*, (1951-53), whose winning project would not also be built, because once it was a propaganda weapon against foreign Soviet policy. As Joan Marter attested, “*the death of Stalin in 1953, changed the Cold War political chess, and if before sharpened antagonisms, tensions and opposition could be seen, in the meantime the atmosphere began to change, as Western Governments became aware of the depth and scope of the anti-Stalin campaigns followed by the USSR.*” (Abreu, 2007, p. 203), since the erection of such a monument could be seen as hostile to the Soviet regime, and therefore inhibiting the form of its foreign policy.

In such circumstances, the *Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner* lost its *raison d'être*, and the construction of Reg Butler’s model was finally abandoned in 1960, as a late consequence of the removal of financial support, already decided upon in 1955.

Although we cannot speak of a war of symbols, we must be aware that the competition for the *Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner* had an aesthetic agenda, as Joan Marter points out: “*to find a new means of expression for the public memorial, as well as a covert political one. In 1953, even before Abstract Expressionist painters were used as a weapon of the cold war, sculptors working in abstract modes (most of whom had never made (public sculpture) were chosen to demonstrate the acceptance of modernism to an embodiment of America’s social and political values*” (Marter, 1994), in clear opposition to the socialist realism that dominated the east, for this was also part of the bipolar scenario of the Cold War [6].

Although in the opposite direction of political and aesthetic inflexibility, something equivalent happened with the third competition of Sagres. Expected as an instrument for international pronouncement of Portuguese overseas policy, once Portugal could not block the applications submitted by Nehru to the UN demanding the incorporation of Goa, Daman and Diu within the Indian Union, in the eyes of Oliveira Salazar updating a new abstract and secular modern image of Portuguese universalism by project *Mar Novo*, had no longer, if ever, any pertinence. If the international arena refused to pay homage to the Portuguese messianic drift,

then the modern image was useless and should be discarded, in order to return to the iconography of the Sword and the Cross.

Salazar’s decision to carve Cottinelli Telmo’s *Monument of the Discoveries* in hard stone had this meaning: the refusal of modern monumentality was the corollary of the denial of the post-war world.

Now, if we compare the decision not to build the *monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner* with *Prince Henry’s monument in Sagres*, while the first decision had the purpose of not antagonizing the Soviet regime in order to pave the way for a *Peaceful Coexistence*, the second contemplated the will to face the international community, and to reiterate the determination to maintain the empire at all costs, including by use of military force.

Portugal was, therefore, alone. Alone, but proudly so. With this decision, the “monument in the landscape”, once again would not be erected. And in Belém what was actually built was nothing but a simulacrum.

Moreover, it is pertinent to note that the *Monument to Discoveries* is indeed the mixture of the model of the standard-stone caravel by Carlos Ramos’ team, with the *cross-pylon* colossus by Rebello de Andrade’s team. (Figure 8)

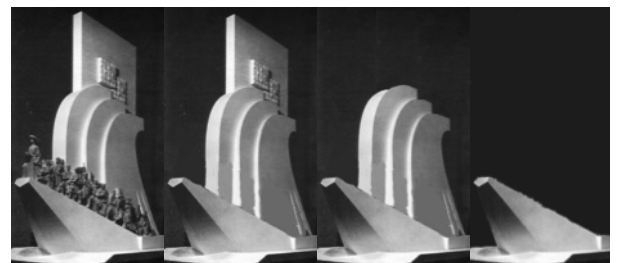


FIGURE 8 | Decomposition of the Monument to the Discoveries.

Although frustrated in Sagres, the attempt to impose that iconography was so insistent and omnipresent that in a recent master’s thesis by Gerbert Verheij (Verheij, 2012), which we argued, a picture reproducing the image of the cross-pylon of Rebello de Andrade’s team can be seen as a symbol, on the float no. 33 of the commemorative cortege held in honor of President Óscar Carmona’s visit to Lourenço Marques, in 1940 (Figure 9).

With the failure to erect the *Mar Novo* project in Sagres, the natural environment of the *Sacred Promontory* could be preserved, preventing once again the use of the site as a pedestal for an evocative monument.

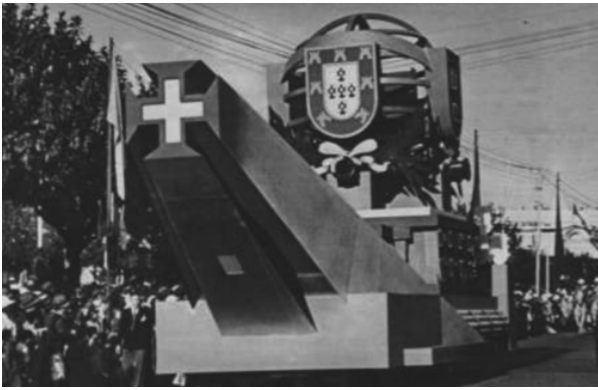


FIGURE 9 | Allegorical pageant float, no 33, o Colono e o Império.

Of course, it was now a monument of a new kind: a modern one! A modern monument, although an ambiguous one, as on one hand, it was very much inspired by the *Synthesis of the Three Arts* aesthetic program, but on the other, it still displayed the statuary figure of a great man: Prince Henry.

First announced at the 7th International Congress of Modern Architecture [7] by General Assembly Secretary Josep Lluís Sert [8], the primary goal of the *Synthesis of the Three Arts* program was, in his words, “to appoint a committee meant to gather examples of recent architectural achievements, collected by different national groups, positively or negatively showing the cases they consider to be related to this topic.” (“Actas oficiais,” 1951).

To define such a program was not an easy task, and in the opinion of Gregor Paulsson the monument should fade out its emotional impact, as he stated before in his testimony to the *Symposium on a New Monumentality* [9]:

Let us give the word monumentality the meaning of strong emotional impact, let us reduce its sphere and widen its content and let it mean the emotion in general in its artistic expression. Intimacy not monumentality should be the emotional goal. (Paulsson, 1948, p. 118).

From now on, the semantic dimension should be focused in the artistic expression. This is, we think, the best definition for the *Synthesis of the Three Arts*: an aesthetic program based on plastic art emotional intimacy in an auto-referential way, having the architectural space as a background and reference.

Rooted in a void of extra-connotations, this new plastic and voiceless concept of monumentality carried its own denial, since in the end monumentality transcends its formal and/or expressive splendor, and intends to display the union between aesthetical expression and ethical value.

The rejection of narrative memories and meanings by the *Three Arts Synthesis* program denotes a kind of a phobia for semantic records, and in our opinion expresses a first pronouncement of what we usually call *syndrome of negative monumentality*, a denial of any theory of monumentality rooted on the basis of Hegel’s idealistic ascending to “*Spiritual Unity*”, and/or on the basis of Comte’s confident instauration of a “*Positive State*”.

The denial of both idealistic and positivist theories, was very much induced by the failure to bring political harmony and social confidence, in *fin-de-siècle* years. Because of the *Franco-Prussian* war and the *Paris Commune* repression that put a dramatic end to the II Empire’s fake contentment, the idealistic or positivist belief of a continuous perfection for humanity, degraded into a rhetoric and void discourse that the inferno of the Great War would soon confirm and denounce.

Before this overturn, two paths became wide open to monumentality: a step forwards, and a step backwards. The step backwards was obviously the one taken by totalitarian and dictatorial regimes, and the first and second Sagres competitions intended as we have seen to establish and approve that drift, but in the end that aim could not be achieved.

The step forwards was taken by a new eidetic concept of monumentality, thought in the line of transcendental phenomenology, intending to connect the artistic realm to epoché’s suspension of judgment upon natural reality and mundane facticity.

According to Eliane Escoubas, this attempt first occurred in modern art within the field of modernist painting, by the hand of Braque and Picasso, as the author explains:

Thus stated, the question might suggest that the time of “Braque-Picasso” (that is to say the five or six years which mark the birth of cubism) is just one example, among others, of a *pictorial epoché* always repeated, at a price of “*variations*” throughout the history of painting. (Escoubas, 1991, p. 195)

In order to understand the history of modern sculpture from this point of view, it is necessary to find the equivalent “*sculptural gesture*” to Picasso-Braque’s “*pictorial epoché*”. That is, to find the “*sculptural epoché*” that opened the way to modern sculpture.

This equivalent gesture, we may find in Brancusi’s reduction of forms and volumes back to their essential meaning: a new eidetic investigation lead

in a very different way, comparing to the previous idealistic-classical or positivist-naturalist models.

This founding moment was achieved by the sculptural series *The Kiss*, whose original version, called Craiova's, dating back to 1908, appeared in clear opposition to the sculptural group *Le Baiser* carved by Rodin, between 1888 and 1898.

While in Rodin's version the lovers emerge from the rock, in Brancusi's the lovers constitute the very block. With Brancusi's *Kiss*, sculpture became free from the reference to natural form, while not necessarily discarding its rememorative meaning, as in 1910 a new version of the *Kiss* was implanted on the grave of Tania Rachevskãia, at the Montparnasse cemetery in Paris, recovering in a most peculiar way the monumental reference to memory.

The step to recover monumental scale was also taken by Brancusi, in 1938, with the erection of the monumental site of *Târgu Jiu*, in Romania, dedicated to the memory of the local resistance against the German Imperial Army during the Great War, displaying monumental scale also in a most peculiar way.

With this monumental set formed by the *Table of Silence*, the *Gate of the Kiss*, the *Heroes' Alameda* and the *Endless Column*, Brancusi presented a memorial which reproduces no images or descriptions of facts, focusing its purpose only on the very act of remembrance, conceiving itself as a transcendental and secular "*Via Crucis*", whose "Stations" were the elements mentioned above.

From its structural point of view, the Brancusian monumental model is characterized negatively, by the refusal of naturalist figuration (statues), and positively by the pursuit of both formal, spatial and temporal essences (eidos), sculpture becoming a total formal, spatial, temporal and emotional experience (body and conscience), rather than a mere occupation of space (object and site), echoing Heidegger's ontology, as noted here:

Sculptural creations are bodies. Their mass, coming from various materials, is configured in different ways. The configuration takes place as a delimitation inward and a limit outward. Here comes into play, space. Occupied by sculptural creation, it is characterized as closed volume, emptied and empty (Heidegger, 1990, p. 47).

Considering sculpture as a specific creation of empty space, rather than a mere occupation of space, wondering about the etymology of the word space, Hei-

degger replies that the word, space, "*speaks about making space. This is, to retrain, cleaning the woods*" (Heidegger, 1990, p. 53), and explains that "*We have to learn to recognize that the very things are places, and that they do not belong to a place*" (Heidegger, 1990, p. 57).

The understanding of space as an ontological concept where things are like places, is the discovery – the retraining – of a spatial quality that manifests itself, aesthetically, in Brancusi's monumental formula at Târgu Jiu, as a transcendental experience, i.e. as a lived connection between the place and the self, which includes, at one time, perceptual and meditative accents provided by the contact with the sculptural forms and with the effects induced by the presence and the meaning of these elements, whose titles help to make clear.

Mediated by architectural space and plastic language, Brancusi's transcendental monumentality, however, was certain to ensure a convenient and unambiguous apologetic reading, since it could not boost the sublime or enhance Power, the Nation, the Regime, or even arouse the public, as the plans to demolish *Endless Column*, in 1950, during Stalinist era, prove.

This inability to serve as a proper commemorative device was something similar to project *Mar Novo*, and its somewhat strange "winning defeat" started a weird era in the field of sculptural monuments in Portugal, establishing an impasse in terms of the monumental formula. Although few, new competitions for erecting monuments were launched in Portugal, but since those contests were won by teams that presented projects that didn't reiterate the official canon of statuary, they were systematically annulled.

This was particularly the case of projects that search for a relationship with landscape, such as the project for the *Monument to Caulkers* [10], authored by Álvaro Siza, Alcino Soutinho, Alberto Amaral and Lagoa Henriques (Figure 10), which won the competition held in 1958-59 by ESBAP and Oporto's delegation of the Executive Committee for the Commemoration of the Fifth Centenary of the Death of Prince Henry.

Conceived under a contemporary design, the execution of the Monument to Caulkers was once again canceled "*by higher authority*".

The same happened with the project of architect Francisco da Conceição Silva, sculptor Jorge Vieira (Figure 11) and others, for the plastic valorization of

the massive mooring of the bridge over the Tagus [11]. If executed, this project was conceived in a broader spatial structure, which in fact regarded the riverbank as a waterfront, refusing, as jokingly said José-Augusto França, to solve the desired plastic valorization "as fixing appliques on the wall" (França, 1964, p. 49). In fact, this official interference in the results of competitions and the disrespect of the artistic merit of monumental public sculpture projects represented a serious blockade of the natural evolution of public art projects that nowadays can still be noted.

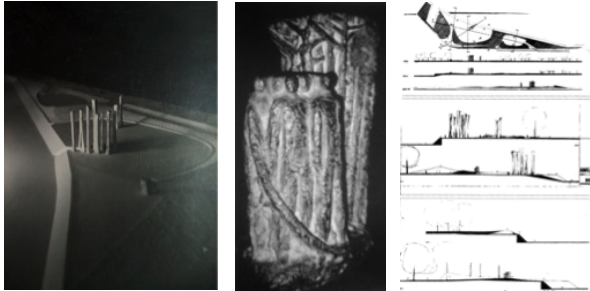


FIGURE 10 | A Siza, L. Henriques, L. Cunha, Monument to Caulkers, 1959.

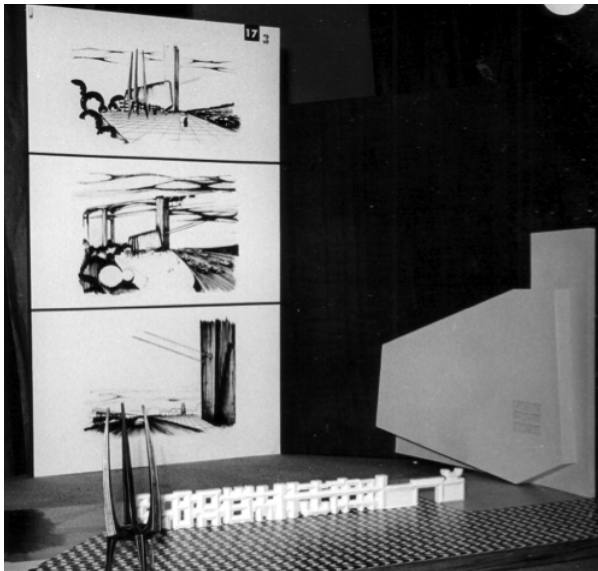


FIGURE 11 | C. Silva, J. Vieira, Mooring of the bridge over the Tagus, 1966, project.

Only some marginal works, such as *Spring Rhythms*, by Arlindo Rocha, 1961, Valença (Figure 12); *Hand*, by José Aurélio, 1966, Óbidos (Figure 13); *Sculpture at the Beach of Troia*, by Fernando Conduto, 1969, Troia (Figure 14); *Monument to the South Atlantic Air Crossing*, by Laranjeira Santos, 1972, in Lisbon (Figure 15); and *D. Sebastião*, by João Cutileiro, 1973, Lagos (Figure 16), managed to mark public space with alternatives to the anachronism of the

statuary canon [12].



FIGURE 12 | A. Rocha, *Spring Rhythms*, 1961



FIGURE 13 | J. Aurélio, *Hand*, 1966, Óbidos.



FIGURE 14 | F. Conduto, *Troia*, 1969.



FIGURE 15 | L. Santos, Air Crossing , 1972.



FIGURE 16 | J. Cutileiro, D Sebastião, 1973, Lagos.

Some of the works mentioned before, were thought of as plastic art work, embodying no allusive content. Others, however, were charged with critical meaning, and therefore were thought to be on the fringes of monumental intentionality, approaching the idea of counter-monumentality, as happened with the *Hand*, in Óbidos [13] and *D. Sebastião*, in Lagos.

Because of this blockade, only in 1976, shortly after the implantation of the democratic regime, we may find a formula that released monumentality from the limbo of negativity in which it had been enclosed, succeeding to establish a coherent model, by means of merging ethical, aesthetical, social and topographic elements, in a quite symbiotic and polyphonic way, on the basis of a program to celebrate the memory of the intrepid General Humberto Delgado, whose initiative was proposed by a group of rural inhabitants of the community of Cela Velha: a little unknown village of the municipality of Alcobça, near Nazaré, where Humberto Delgado

used to spend his summer holidays, in an ancient local farm belonging to his wife's family. Jointly designed by sculptor José Aurélio and architect Artur Rocha under the title of Monument



FIGURE 17 | J. Aurélio, Monument to the Fearless General, 1976, landscape site, Cela Velha.

to the Fearless General [14] (Figure 17), the work establishes a close link with the surrounding countryside, and marks the transition to a symbiotic understanding of the concept of monument and place, being conceived as poly nuclear installation, setting two poles: the *civic nucleus*, located in Praça General Humberto Delgado (Figure 18), and the *landscape nucleus*, situated on the above hill, in front of the square.

The *Monument to the Fearless General* emerges as an outstanding achievement that had no immediate continuity, as the fourth edition of Sagres competitions clearly illustrates, showing the misunderstandings and paradoxes of monumentality, when thought of in an architectural and equivocal basis.



FIGURE 18 | J. Aurélio, Monument to the Fearless General, 1976, civic site, Cela Velha.

We refer now to the competition of ideas for the development of *Sagres Fortress* [15], jointly launched by the *Portuguese Institute of Cultural Heritage* (IPPC) and the *National Commission for the Commemoration of Portuguese Discoveries* (CNCDP), in 1988, its *Guide Lines* and *Program* being prepared, on the basis of a report overseen by an *Inter-ministerial Working Group*, which in despite of its technical (or technocratic?) objectivity, was not able to overcome the negative anathema that still hung over Sagres' monumentality. Impressive indeed, was the passage that mentioned the purpose of building a monument of great dignity in Sagres, as the erection of a statue. (Abreu, 2007, p. 675).

Not even the competition program of 1933 was so prescriptive and restrictive in its determinations! Ranked in first place, the project of architect João Carreira (Figure 19) proposed a modernizing intervention, which introduced appreciable changes in the height and volume of the built areas of the pre-existing buildings, ignoring the official New State restoration campaign, held in the late fifties. (Monumento de Sagres, 1960).

Beyond these and other very much questionable aspects that we cannot address here, the project included a monumental structure that would trigger a long and bitter controversy.

Called *Route of the Discoverers* (Figure 20), this structure was formed by a straight line 230 meters long and 8 meters wide, enclosed by 6 meter high walls, and preceded by 8 meters of side square antechamber, whose floor was a mirror of water, crossed by a bridge that served as a passage. On the walls of the antechamber, in the east and west flanks, there were two fountains that "*allegorically intended to symbolize Adventure and Endowment*" (Carreira, 1990), being the safeguards of the *Route of the Discoverers* built by a double wall of concrete on the outside, and limestone on the inside, so that the latter should be carved in order to evoke "*the permanence of the spirit of the navigators and their journeys which together are known as the Portuguese Discoveries*" (Carreira, 1990).

Using a symbolic function, João Carreira's project transcended the directives of the Charter of Athens. However, erasing the image left by the restoration campaigns of the late 50's, he disrespected the commendations of the Charter of Venice, proposing an intervention very much hostile and intolerant at this level.

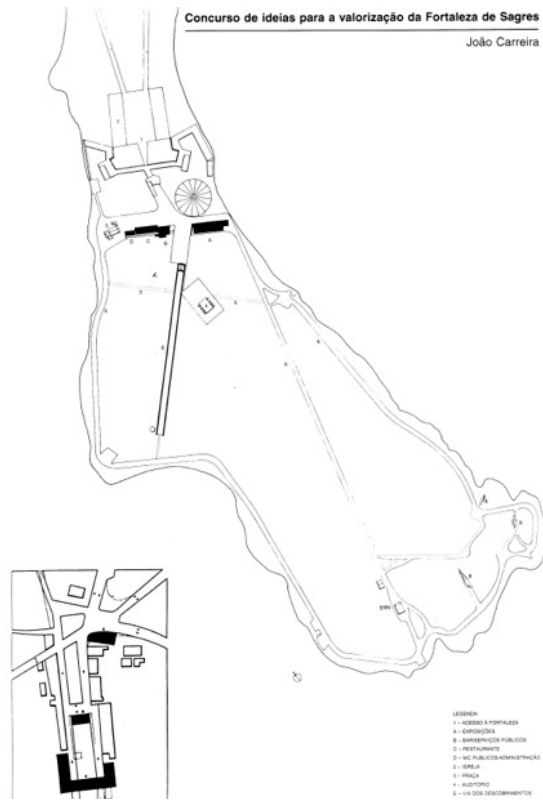


FIGURE 19 | J. Carreira, Ideas Competition for the valorization of Sagres Fortress, 1988.

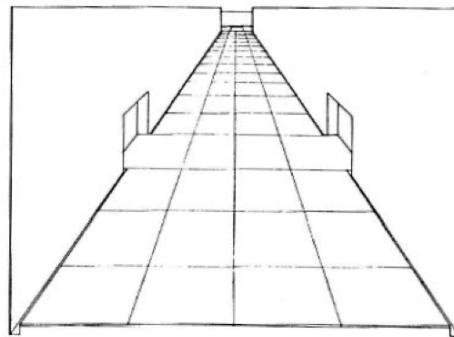


FIGURE 20 | J. Carreira, Route of the Discoverers, 1988, project.

In heritage terms, João Carreira's project was merciless in its dialogue with New State restoration campaign, "*deleting or distorting its marks, and converting Corrente zato a unique and uniform image: the image of modern architecture*" (Abreu, 2007, p. 684). However, the mistakes of the project weren't confined to the *Route of the Discoverers*. In contrast, they arise from the very notion of monument, as the project's specifications clearly show:

Making a monument today is not essentially much different than making monuments in other times. The evocative symbolism, the surprise by position and volume, a certain

intentional detachment provoked by imposing to the site, are questions that have always existed, causing controversy about its design and concept, so that the concept of a monument had not radically changed, in the end. Nowadays, or in the Past.

Having assumed this tradition of an independent and foreign object, placed on the promontory, this long construction becomes interiorized by the story it shows, but keeps the symbolic link with the outside, the sky opened, the sea horizon to the bottom, and the alignment with an axis of Rose-of-Winds (SSW) (Carreira, cited in Abreu, 2007, p. 685).

The passage is clearly revealing. Although written in the late eighties, João Carreira still conceived this project within the paradigm of the monument perched on the landscape, representing a setback in relation to the *Monument to the Fearless General*. For that reason, the *Route of the Discoverers* was barred on its sides, divorced from the landscape, with the purpose of creating a screen to illustrate a “story”.

Very much different from the monumental paths of Dani Karavan’s work, such as the *Axe Majeur of Cergy-Pontoise* (1980-86), whose route three thousand meters long presents no narrative elements, and still keeps its own meaning, as it is not a linear and monotonous path, but a route between different spaces and environments, conceived as a journey of discovery of the very landscape, and not being apart from it.

Fortunately, the *Route of the Discoverers* was not built, and once again the Promontory could resist the human passion to affix his mark in odd environments and landscapes as a sign of prevailing upon them. Sagres became a museum, but, paradoxically, Sagres appears now washed out and standardized, covered with insipid and monotonous official design signage, offering exhibition spaces, shops and restaurants, as any other heritage site in the world.

Curiously, although banned by successive competitions, the most extraordinary detail is that sculpture after all is not absent from Sagres, as strange specimens of modern sculpture of local production, suddenly appear next to the *Temporary Exhibition Gallery*, without it being clear which criteria, if any, was used in the placement of such pieces.

One shows its title: *Adamastor*. Another is *Tethys*. But the set also includes a head, casually left on the ground. Although displaying no title, his ascetic and

hieratic profile covered with his grand hat transfigured in coral type waves, shows us that after all the ghost of Prince Henry still floats over the *Promontorium Sacrum* (Figure 21).



FIGURE 21 | Author Unknown, Untitled, Sagres Fortress, Sagres.

ENDNOTES

[1] This text is a condensation of some of the arguments present in our PhD thesis, Abreu, J. G., (2007) *Escultura Pública e Monumentalidade em Portugal* (1948-1998). *Estudo Transdisciplinar de História da Arte e Fenomenologia Genética*, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa. The full text is available online. URL: <http://dspace.universia.net/handle/2024/931>.

[2] Text on the headstone: “*Monument consecrated to eternity. Great Infant D. Henrique, son of the King of Portugal D. João I, having discovered the unknown lands of West Africa and thus opened the way by the African circumnavigation to the most distant parts of the Orient, established here, at his coast, the palace of his habitation, the famous school of cosmography, the astronomic observatory and the shipyards, maintaining and promoting, and expanding all this until his death, with admirable effort and constancy, for great utility of the Kingdom, of the Letters, of Religion and all human effort. This great Prince died after having arrived with his navigations at the 8º of northern latitude, and having discovered and populated with Portuguese people many Atlantic islands, on the 13th November 1840.*

Mary II Queen of Portugal and Algarve, ordered that this monument be raised to the memory of the noble Prince of her blood, on the 379th year of his death, being Minister of Marine and Overseas Viscount Sá da Bandeira.”

[3] Augusto Santo (1868-1907) Sculptor of Gaia. Prematurely dead, he is author of a quite reduced produc-

tion but with recognized artistic value, where stands the bronze Ishmael, 1889, on display at the MNSR.

[4] A study of these competitions was elaborated by Pedro Vieira de Almeida, in *Os Concursos de Sagres - A 'Representação 35'. Condicionantes e Consequências*, PhD in Architecture, Universidade de Valladolid, 1998, Valladolid.

[5] The number of entries totalled 45, being 22 teams formed by nationals and 23 teams by foreigners.

[6] Joan Marter in the above study defends the thesis that the competition organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) London received funding support from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as explained in our PhD thesis.

[7] Held in Bergamo, between 22 and 31 July 1949.

[8] Josep Lluís Sert, with Siegfried Giedion and Fernand Léger, was one of the authors of the manifest *Nine Points on Monumentality* (1943).

[9] The Symposium *In Search of a New Monumentality* was organised by the *The Architectural Review*, in 1948.

[10] For more detailed information about this contest, see: ABREU, J. G., (2007) *Escultura Pública e Monumentalidade em Portugal (1948-1998)*, ...pp. 211-366.

[11] For more detailed information about this contest, see: ABREU, J. G., (2007), *Escultura Pública e Monumentalidade em Portugal (1948-1998)*, ...pp. 516-546.

[12] By statuary canon we understand the model of "monumental statuary" established after the consecration of the statue of João Gonçalves Zarco, by sculptor Francisco Franco, under the iconography reference to the panels of S. *Vicente de Fora*.

[13] It should be noted that the Hand of Óbidos was a commission from the local Council to José Aurélio to erect a monument to the heroes of Angola. The sculptor has cleverly solved the problem by drawing a hand which appears at the same time as a dove, thus referring not to war but to peace, something that defines it, covertly, as a counter-monument.

[14] For more detailed information about this contest, see: ABREU, J. G., (2007), *Escultura Pública e Monumentalidade em Portugal (1948-1998)*, ...pp. 587-608.

[15] For more detailed information about this contest, see: ABREU, J. G., (2007), *Escultura Pública e Monumentalidade em Portugal (1948-1998)*, ...pp. 665-763.

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