

Chapter 4 - Portuguese Museums under the *Estado Novo* - National Museums

As explained before and in order to understand the situation of Portuguese museums during the *Estado Novo*, some case studies were chosen. They are significant examples of what the Portuguese museums during that period were.

Fig. 4. Approximate location of the museums and name of the cities where they are installed.

(MAB) *Museu do Abade de Baçal*, Bragança

(MAS) *Museu de Alberto Sampaio*, Guimarães

(MNSR) *Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis*, Porto

(MMC) *Museu Monográfico de Conímbriga*, Conímbriga

(MJM) *Museu de José Malhoa*, Caldas da Rainha

(MNAA) *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, Lisboa

(MAP) *Museu de Arte Popular*, Lisboa

(MNE) *Museu Nacional de Etnologia*, Lisboa



It was common for the museums to combine collections of national importance with others of regional relevance - this is the case of the *Museu do Abade de Baçal* (MAB), *Museu de Alberto Sampaio* (MAS) and the *Museu de José Malhoa* (MJM). This is due to the origin of these museums. A significant number of the Portuguese museums have their origin closely related with the cultural policy of the First Republic. These museums were intended to represent regional values and to have regional importance. However, due to the directors' acquisition policies or to central political influences, some acquired important collections of national relevance. Long after

their institutional creation some of these regional museums became 'national', the importance of their collections being recognised by the governmental department in charge.

The Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis (MNSR) had a different history. The *Estado Novo* had planned for it to be a national museum that would represent decorative arts in the north of the country. This museum inherited the collections of at least two previous museums of the city and has been seen, since the 1930s, as 'the' national museum of Porto.

The Museu Monográfico de Conímbriga (MMC) is a very special case: the museum exists because of the archaeological site that gave it the name. Conímbriga is a very important and well-preserved Roman site, commonly referred as one of the most important Roman remains of the Peninsula. The architectural importance of the buildings, the numerous and very well preserved mosaic pavements, the rich stratigraphy and the relevant archaeological remains, provided a place for the development of scientific work and the organisation of permanent exhibitions in close connection with the archaeological site.

The museums in Lisboa are of a very different nature. The Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (MNAA) is always referred to as the most important Portuguese art museum. Due to its characteristics, it was a national museum. Another Lisboa museum, the Museu de Arte Popular (MAP), originated from the Great Exhibition of the Portuguese World.²⁵⁹ It inherited the building, the collections, the organisation of the Pavilion and almost the same name that had been used in that Exhibition. Because of the nature of the collections, by the time it became a museum it was established as a national museum, which should represent the whole country in one museographic space. Finally, the Museu Nacional de Etnologia (MNE), was established as a national museum in the early 1960s, and resulted from the strong influence of the ethnographic studies developed both in the European and in the overseas territories.

For the purposes of the research, these museums were organised according to a tripartite division. The first group, the presentation of which follows in this chapter, is that of the national museums (MNAA, MNSR and MAP). For the *Estado Novo* these should be exemplary museums, both for the techniques used and for the accomplishment of the propagandistic objectives set for them in the legislation. They were expected to receive a broad public, either

local or national. If compared to other museums, they were favoured in budgetary terms. Their directors were closer to the places of the political power and might be able to exert influence upon it. Besides, the new professionals of museums who introduced some of the new concepts and methodologies for museum work in the 1950's and 1960's came from these museums.

The second group is that of the regional museums (MAB, MAS, MJM). These were mainly dedicated to the local public and were only expected to receive other visitors exceptionally. The communications inside of the country were difficult and slow and few people, and only rarely, would travel between main towns – for example from Oporto to Bragança. Hence the museums were planned for the preservation of local and regional heritage (and this partially describes their collections) and for the inhabitants of the specific regions where the museums were located. They were nevertheless in the propaganda plans of the State, although they did not receive the same amounts of money as the national museums.

A third group is that of what we called specialised museums, for the specificity of their themes, for the specialisation of their collections and for their connections with specialists coming from the universities. The cases chosen (which are the MMC and the MNE) were created at a late stage of the *Estado Novo*. The MMC was the result of the national concern with an exceptional archaeological site. The MNE was intended to be a national museum that would portray and enhance the image of the Portuguese empire.

At the departure our working hypotheses were that there would be substantial differences between national and regional museums, due to their different aims, different connections, different budgets. The guiding questions were on whether both had made the propaganda of the regime, and on its efficacy. From a different point of view, specialised museums were particularly stimulating for the research, as they might contain some of the elements of intellectual resistance, that the work of some specific cultural elites sometimes produces, especially under governments that tend to “order” society’s self-reflexive capabilities.

The search for evidence of propaganda in the museums archives was not an easy task. Specific methodological criteria were mentioned in the Introduction. Yet a criterion directly related with the contents of the sources had also to be introduced. The fact is that propaganda is

²⁵⁹ This Exhibition will be the topic of analysis in chapter 7.1.

sometimes evident and sometimes not. Either only clear cases of propaganda as such were considered (for instance, the combination of museum objects with nationalistic symbols, in the rooms of the exhibitions) or I looked deeper into the museums and tried to find other indirect forms of propaganda in the day-to-day life of the museum. I took the second option. Hence, I searched the museums according to five main topics that are: statistics of visitors (rather uncommon for the period analysed); information on the collections, objects and display techniques (that is not very often available); material conditions (buildings, budget, acquisition policies); personnel (from the directors to the workers); data on the day-to-day life of the museum (especially evidence of the internal and external social and political networks established). Whenever it was possible, the information was completed with the testimonies of former workers and directors of the museums. Unfortunately, and as was mentioned before, the archive of the MNE was inaccessible.

4.1 The *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga* (National Museum of Ancient Art)

All through the period of the *Estado Novo*, the MNAA was always referred to as the most outstanding of all the national museums of the country.²⁶⁰ The museum was the biggest national museum in Portugal, both with regard to its collection and buildings. In addition, its director had a fundamental role in institutions with direct responsibilities over other museums in the country²⁶¹ and an important number of future museum directors and curators made their first professional training in the MNAA.²⁶² Furthermore the laboratory for restoration of art objects (*Instituto José de Figueiredo*), which was the only one in the country for many years, was under the supervision of this institution. Finally, it was the director of this Museum who undertook the task of establishing ICOM-Portugal relations, in the 1950s. For these reasons, the MNAA can be described as the first national museum, as a model, that others tended to imitate.²⁶³ The value

²⁶⁰ Letters of director (1937/08/19 and 1937/09/18): he affirmed that the MNAA was "the first museum of the country" and that it "owned the most important art collection of the country".

²⁶¹ See Chapters 3.4.1 and 3.4.2

²⁶² E.g.: in 1937, sixteen future curators were learning the profession in the museum.

²⁶³ E.g.: the MNSR followed the system of inventory the MNAA developed; even the internal regulations of the MNSR were, in part, copied from MNAA's (letter of director -1941/01/13).

of its collections and the role of its director in the museological and cultural domains in Portugal easily explain its importance.

The MNAA was the result of the division of another national museum. In March 1911 the National Museum of Fine Arts (*Museu Nacional de Belas Artes*) was divided into two different national museums: one for Ancient Art and other for Modern Art. The first one remained in the building of the former institution,²⁶⁴ where it is still located today.²⁶⁵ Because of the importance of its collections the MNAA was one of the institutions the First Republic decided to modernise. In order to do so a new director (José de Figueiredo) was appointed in 1911. After his death in 1937 one of his curators, João Couto, was appointed director a place he occupied until the early 1960s. These two men were central to the major decisions in the museum during the period discussed in this chapter.



Fig. 5. Main Hall of the MNAA. Photograph of Alvão, Archive of Photography of the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisboa.

The following are examples of the difficulties the director had to face. They are significant as they show his permanent struggle to keep the museum open to the public. The museum had to

²⁶⁴ The National Museum of Fine Arts had its first location in another building; in 1884 the museum was transferred to the definitive location. See report sent by the director to the President of the Art and Archaeology Council (1930/03/31).

face many difficulties not because the directors neglected it but because the governmental decisions were bureaucratic and consequently very slow. The directors had to get governmental approval for almost every decision. Budgetary issues were particularly sensitive, especially when the results would have no ideological or propagandistic impact.

During the second half of 1926, the director of the museum repeatedly informed the DGEMN that the museum urgently needed some repairs. In July, he stated that the external walls of the museum needed to be painted; in October, he reported that he feared the rain would enter through the roof. Another of his concerns was the very poor state of the house of the guards.²⁶⁶ In 1930 the director was still claiming for the urgent need for repairs in the roofs and in the house of the guards.²⁶⁷ In March 1930 the director wrote a comprehensive report that was sent to the President of the Art and Archaeology Council.²⁶⁸ This department had no direct responsibility for the decisions concerning the repairs in the museum, but the director was exerting all the strength he could in trying to convince the government that the museum really needed some attention. In this report he stated that the museum had improved significantly since 1911. In his opinion, the rooms that had been completely remodelled had acquired a "dignified" appearance.²⁶⁹ But he remarked that all the other rooms, despite some provisional changes he had determined,²⁷⁰ needed complete repair and that the museum did not have enough resources to do so. Another important issue in his report was related to the scarcity of staff in the museum and the low salaries paid. José de Figueiredo also pointed out the need for a conveniently organised library to be opened to the public²⁷¹. Finally, he stated that the inventories had been updated and gave a brief information concerning the total number of visitors per year.²⁷²

²⁶⁵ Traditionally the window frames of the palace were painted in green and the museum was, and still is, often referred to as the "Museum of the Green Windows" (*Museu das Janelas Verdes*).

²⁶⁶ Letters sent by the director (1926/07/12, 1926/10/18 and 1926/12/10).

²⁶⁷ Letters sent to the governmental responsible (1930/01/23 and 1930/02/22).

²⁶⁸ Report sent by the director (1930/03/31).

²⁶⁹ The director refers especially some of the rooms on the first floor and the rooms of the French silverware.

²⁷⁰ The main changes José de Figueiredo ordered were related with the display of art objects and not with the repairs of the rooms, as he did not have enough budget.

²⁷¹ The library of the museum counted some 3.000 volumes, the majority being the result of donations.

²⁷² In the twenties the average number of visitors per year to the MNAA was less than 30.000. The exception was the year of 1924, when a temporary exhibition about national faience brought to the museum more than 36.000 visitors.



Fig. 6. Interior of one of the rooms of goldsmithery and faience. Photograph of Alvão, Archive of Photography of the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisboa.

During the early 1930s some minor repairs were undertaken in the museum.²⁷³ However, the director repeatedly protested against the poor conditions of the building. During the winter the rain often produced severe damage inside the rooms.²⁷⁴ Finally, in 1937, the government decided the repair of the roofs and also the construction of new facilities. This phase ended in 1939 when the new buildings were considered ready.

²⁷³ Letter (1931/05/22).

²⁷⁴ Letters (1932/11/06, 1933/12/05, 1937/01/17, 1937/10/04 and 1937/12/02).



Fig. 7. Interior of one of the rooms of paintings. Photograph of Alvão, Archive of Photography of the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisboa.



Fig. 8. Interior of the main room of Portuguese painters. Photograph of Alvão, Archive of Photography of the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisboa.

The following years brought in important changes in the main building of the museum, that made it necessary to partially close it to the public between 1940 and 1945 (only a temporary exhibition was available).²⁷⁵ During this long period of decisive changes the director kept insisting that the 'new' museum that would emerge from the repairs and the construction of new buildings would need more staff.²⁷⁶ The museum reopened in 1945, but the changes did not end: the director was committed to having the reserve collections available to art students and other specialists.²⁷⁷



Fig. 9. Interior of the reserves of the museum, after the changes. Photograph of Alvão, Archive of Photography of the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisboa.

²⁷⁵ Letters (1938/01, 1938/06/04, 1938/08/24, 1940/01/30, 1940/08, 1942/04/28, 1948/08/07, 1943/09/01).

²⁷⁶ Letters (1942/08/07 and 1943/09/01). The director was asking for an important improvement in terms of staff.

²⁷⁷ The director wrote a letter (1946/01/14) on this matter to the governmental responsible.

As a result of this period of changes, the exhibition area of the museum was enlarged and other very important services got proper space inside the building.²⁷⁸ Nevertheless, five years after the repairs the director had, once again, to face the same old problem of rain infiltration in the museum.²⁷⁹ In October 1950 it was raining so heavily inside the museum, that the director was forced to transfer the collections and to close some of the exhibition rooms.²⁸⁰ It rained inside of the museum all through the winter and still in the spring of 1951,²⁸¹ two years later the same problem was still unsolved.²⁸² Yet, the rain was not the only difficulty the director had to face: during summer time the ventilation of the exhibition rooms was deficient and the temperature reached inadequate values;²⁸³ during the winter the museum depended on the central heating, that also became a reason for worries. In 1954 the central heating ceased to work and despite all the efforts made by the director to solve the situation, the next winter arrived with no solution whatsoever.²⁸⁴

The issue of repairs is linked to another of the major topics of the museum's history: revenues and expenditure. The museum was in almost complete dependence²⁸⁵ of the central budget. Sometimes the Association of Friends of the Museum contributed with some money to buy books for the library or other equipment,²⁸⁶ but the usual expenditure of the museum could not rely on these donations. The system adopted by the public finances for museum expenditures was complex. The annual budget was divided into twelve parts and the museum received each part monthly. That amount of money was not to be used freely by the museum, as the budget was

²⁷⁸ In 1938 the museum had only 23 exhibition rooms; in 1945 the number of rooms of the permanent exhibition was of 44 and 5 more rooms were dedicated to temporary exhibitions. The total area of the museum was 16.735m², of which 10.981 m² were exhibition areas.

²⁷⁹ Letters (1950/03/18, 1950/06/07 and 1950/09/29).

²⁸⁰ The director decided to cover the roofs with large impermeable pieces of cloth. Letter (1950/10/06).

²⁸¹ Letter (1951/05/24).

²⁸² Letter (1952/11/24).

²⁸³ Letter (1953/09/23).

²⁸⁴ Letters (1954/02/26 and 1954/10/06).

²⁸⁵ Two letters (1940/01/18) one sent to the DGEBSA and the other to the producer of showcases, make it possible to understand that the director was trying very hard to obtain permission to acquire the glass cases, a purpose that proved very difficult to achieve.

²⁸⁶ In 1942 the director asked for the help of the Association because he desperately needed money (letter, 1942/02/24). He had asked for some equipment to the central administration but the answer was negative.

divided into several sections (e.g. stationary, cleaning products, electricity, wages) and the money could only be spent for a specific purpose within each section.²⁸⁷ The administration of such a budget was obviously a hard task and the director protested more than once against this system.²⁸⁸ One of the most significant examples of the difficulties the directors had to face is the 'case' of the typewriter. In October 1941 the director informed that a new typewriter was needed in the museum and that he had no money available to buy it. In November 1942 the director insisted that the typewriter was really necessary; in November 1947 the director was still asking for the typewriter with no success; in October 1948 he sent another letter, asking for a typewriter once again. In 1951, and for the first time since the beginning of the museum, the director had to inform that the administrative section of the museum would not be able to respect a legal deadline to handle some documents. The staff of the museum had too much work and the secretariat services lacked a typewriter to accomplish the task.²⁸⁹

The archive of the museum still keeps most of the expenditure documents, as the museum had to prove the acquisition of each item or service.²⁹⁰ Each month, from 1930 onwards, the director had to produce a document justifying each expense and giving detailed information about the person who was responsible for it.²⁹¹ Annually, the director had to propose a budget clearly justifying all items included. Frequently the budget planned by the director was not accepted and the central administration would reduce the amounts requested drastically.²⁹² Another difficulty was that the museum, as all other public services, could not hire a service without having received quotes from several different suppliers. The normal decision was to accept the lowest price. The

²⁸⁷ Once, he even asked for permission to transfer the money from one section of the budget to another, but without success. Letter (1946/07/02).

²⁸⁸ Letter (1926/10/28) where the director explains the difficulties of handling the administration of the museum with the restricted budget he had; he adds that he frequently had to use his own money to pay for museum expenses and then wait to receive it back. This situation occurred repeatedly and in 1940 the director protested again for the same reason (letter, 1940/12/17).

²⁸⁹ Letters (1941/10, 1942/11/12, 1947/11/18, 1948/10/30 and 1951/02/26).

²⁹⁰ As examples, see the lists sent to the central administration service (1927/08/31 and 1927/12/31).

²⁹¹ The central department in charge of controlling the expenses of the public services really checked those documents. Once the director had to face a criticism from that department and had to answer explaining the acquisition of a particular item. The case was about the acquisition of a large bottle of mineral water (5 litres). The central department considered the expense a luxury and the director explained that that water was not for the use of the staff of the museum but to fill the glasses of lecturers that had gone to the museum to present conferences. He added that he had decided to buy a large bottle because the price per glass of mineral water was lower that way (letter, 1953/05/11).

²⁹² See budgets sent to the Art and Archaeology Council (1927/04/27, 1930/03/05 and 1931/01/20).

director disagreed with this standard procedure, at least with certain specific issues, such as hiring the services of a professional photographer. Once the director argued that what really mattered was the quality of the service and not the price, but he had a very hard time convincing the central bureau in charge of the expenses to allow such exception.²⁹³

The low salaries paid to the workers of the museum were also a reason for difficulties. The director used all opportunities he had to protest against the amounts paid per month to the museum staff, from the cleaners to himself. In the extensive report he sent to the president of the Art and Archaeology Council in 1930²⁹⁴ he stated that the salaries of the museum's personnel should be increased, as they were low compared to other professions. He added two other arguments: the MNAA was a very demanding institution in terms of schedules and responsibilities and similar jobs in other European museums were much better paid.²⁹⁵

As a consequence of his institutional responsibility, the director of the MNAA had to travel and visit other national and regional museums. These trips should be paid by the Portuguese state, but the procedures that had to be undertaken are worth explaining, as they show how the Portuguese state tried to avoid budgetary responsibilities by making the bureaucratic procedures almost impossible to follow. Each time the director wanted or needed to travel he had to send a letter to the central department in charge asking, in advance, for proper authorisation and then wait for the answer. Then he had to send another letter asking for a special document²⁹⁶ that enabled him to acquire the train tickets for free. In the 1940s the director had his own car²⁹⁷ and used it for the service of the museum, without receiving any payment or even co-participation in the expenses with petrol. During the war, and in the years that followed, the use of imported products was under severe restrictions and some were even strictly rationed. Such was the case of fuels, in general, and of any other products made of crude oil. In 1945 the director asked for permission to buy petrol to go to some museums away from Lisboa, but the central department in

²⁹³ Letter (1953).

²⁹⁴ Quoted in previous note.

²⁹⁵ He kept insisting on that point in other letters (1927/04/29, 1931/01/20 and 1933707/08, this one sent directly to the Minister) with no practical results.

²⁹⁶ The name of that document was "*guia de viagem*" (as example, 1932/10/25); the director was asking for the "*guia*" to visit museums in Coimbra, Aveiro, Porto, Braga and Guimarães.

²⁹⁷ The director affirmed he bought the car in 1945 (letter, 1946/06/27).

charge (*Instituto dos Combustíveis*) refused.²⁹⁸ The director insisted and it is possible to know that he finally got the authorisation.²⁹⁹ Again in 1946 he had to ask for permission to buy tyres. This time he pointed out that he had always used his own car for the service of the museum without receiving any compensation.³⁰⁰ All these difficulties the director had to deal with 'behind the scenes' were the hidden face of the museum, the one the public was not aware of, the one the propaganda of the regime carefully covered by stating "the MNAA is one of the good museums of Europe".³⁰¹ The museum was used as an object of propaganda but the excessive care of the regime with public expenditure turned out to be an obstacle for the real development of the institution.

After the war, and with the improvement of national economy, the Portuguese State showed some 'generosity' towards the cultural services. The museum's budgets were increased and in 1948 the director of the MNAA even wrote a letter of gratitude to the Ministry of Finance.³⁰² However, the difficulties did not end, and some years later the director had to protest against the budget that the government had allocated for the restoration of several paintings. The director vehemently pointed out that the amount granted would, in foreign countries, be enough but for the restoration of one painting, and therefore, totally inadequate for all the historic paintings that needed urgent care, in Portugal.³⁰³

The fact that the Portuguese state would never spend more money than the strictly necessary caused embarrassment. In the early 1950s, the director had been present in international meetings and conferences and, as a consequence, Portugal joined ICOM since its foundations. In 1955 the director received a letter from ICOM informing that if Portugal wished to remain as a member of the Council, fees would have to be paid, just like all other members. In fact, the Portuguese State was already owing about 65.000 French Francs. The director

²⁹⁸ Letter (1945/09/13). The director reduced the request and was asking only for 100 litres of petrol.

²⁹⁹ As some months later he sent back the remaining documents that he had not used . Letter (1945/11/02).

³⁰⁰ Letter (1946/06/27).

³⁰¹ Decree 15.216.

³⁰² Letter (1948/01/23).

³⁰³ Letter (1950/03/01). As the director obtained no response he insisted in another letter (1950/03/16) but with no success.

suggested that either the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Finance should pay.³⁰⁴ The aim of João Couto was to keep in touch with what was being done in the rest of Europe, in terms of museums and museological policies. He thought that the reconstruction of the European museums, after the Second World War was a process worth of attention because the Portuguese museums could learn a lot from it.³⁰⁵ He did his best to enable the Portuguese presence in international conferences and other scientific meetings, either by going himself or by encouraging some of his staff to go.³⁰⁶ He succeeded in his efforts and due to his participation in the First Conference of ICOM, Portugal had the right to participate in the Second International Conference (dedicated to restoration of art objects) organised by ICOM, in Rome in 1949.³⁰⁷ In 1950, Portugal was represented by a curator of the MNAA (Maria José Mendonça) in the Conference of ICOM, in London, and by João Couto in the Conference of Paris on restoration of art objects.³⁰⁸ The presence of Portugal was registered by ICOM and João Couto was proud to inform, by the end of 1950, that this organisation was preparing a publication entirely dedicated to Portugal.³⁰⁹ Another consequence was the organisation, in October 1952, of an international conference about the restoration of paintings, in the MNAA, under the supervision of ICOM.³¹⁰

With all the restraints imposed by the budgetary limits to expenditure, the directors of the MNAA always faced serious difficulties in implementing a coherent acquisition policy. One of the sources of the objects and collections the museum had were the donations of private collectors.³¹¹ The director had to ask for hierarchical approval to accept such donations, but he was also to

³⁰⁴ Letter sent to the *DGESBA* (1955).

³⁰⁵ João Couto wrote a letter to the *DGESBA* affirming that it was a duty for the Portuguese museum professionals to take a close look at what the other countries of Europe were producing in terms of museums. He then asked for three scholarships so that the curators of the MNAA could visit the main European museums (letter, 1946/12/12). In 1948 João Couto organised a visit to the museums of Galiza for the curators of the MNAA (letter asking for permission and for the necessary passports, 1948/08/21).

³⁰⁶ For example he asked for financial support so that a curator of the Museum could go to London and attend the sessions of the Museum's Congress that took place at the National Gallery; in June of that year he made all efforts to enable a Portuguese presence in the First Conference of the ICOM, in Paris (letter 1948/06/15).

³⁰⁷ Letter (1949/11/18); João Couto intended to go to Rome to be at the Conference and to visit some museums. Then he intended to return via Paris where he would represent Portugal in another international meeting.

³⁰⁸ João Couto informed of his intentions the governmental department in charge (letter, 1950/04/17).

³⁰⁹ Letter (1950/12/14).

³¹⁰ João Couto informed the *DGESBA* of this event (letter 1952/09/20).

give his own approval.³¹² Sometimes this procedure resulted in embarrassing situations such as the one that involved an Insurance Company (*Fidelidade*) that had offered a hunting knife³¹³ and then wanted the museum to have it always on display. The director tried to justify the removal of the knife from the permanent exhibition with the lack of space. He informed the insurance company that if the situation did not please them the solution would be either to have it returned by post, or for them to send someone to collect it at the museum. Some years later, in 1935,³¹⁴ the director had to face another embarrassing situation: the daughter of Delfim Deodato Guedes wrote a letter protesting against the removal from the display of a medallion *in memoriam* of her father. José de Figueiredo never had agreed with the display of the medallion. When he died in 1937, this question was not yet solved and João Couto had to face the anger of the "insulted" daughter who even wrote to the government to protest against such affront to her father's memory. As a consequence, the director had to explain his resolution and even suffered political pressure. Nevertheless, he never altered his resolution. This is an example of the difficult balance the director had to establish between museological criteria and political, ideological and propagandistic stress. Although the director of the MNAA was a notable person of the regime, due to the importance of the museum, he was not immune to political pressure and demands.

Despite all difficulties and budgetary constraints, during the 1930s, the museum enlarged its collections and was even able to acquire a significant number of art books for the library. This was because the Portuguese financial situation had improved and the directors were able to convince the political power to spend more money with the museum. The overall investment in the museum is impressive, as is evidenced by the graphs below.³¹⁵ If compared with the average number of acquisitions and with the amounts involved during a longer period of time (between the

³¹¹ The director always thanked the donors by letter. See, for example, documents related with the donations of José de Lencastre e Távora (1927/03824), of the *Conde d'Elba* (1930/01/15), of Augusto Rosa (1933/01) and of the deceased director of the museum, José de Figueiredo (1938/04).

³¹² In 1940 several collections were given to the museum.

³¹³ The object had no possible coherent relation with the exhibits of the museum and the director decided to remove it from the display (letter, 1933/04/15).

³¹⁴ Mail of August 1935, in particular letter dated 1935/08/05.

³¹⁵ José de Figueiredo died in 1937, after several months of illness. The fact may explain the cut in the acquisitions.

late 1920s and the early 1950s)³¹⁶ the late 1930s (especially the years of 1936 and 1938) are exceptional.

Fig. 10. Acquisitions between 1935 and 1938 (MNA)

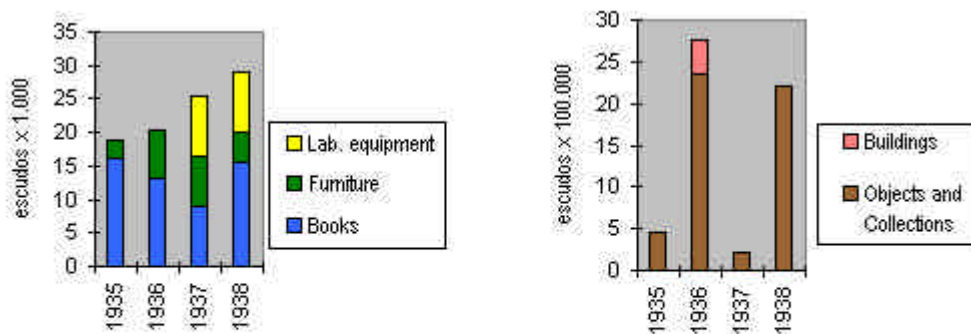
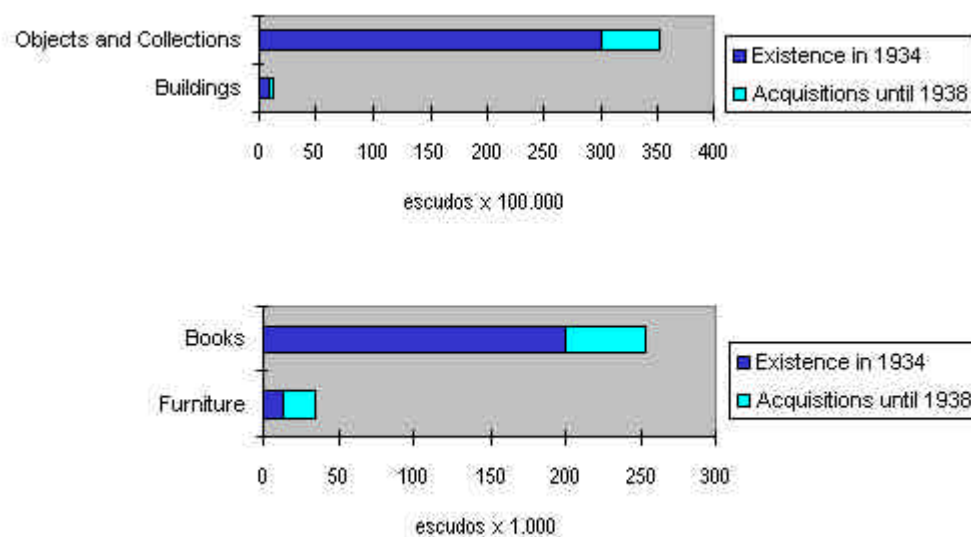
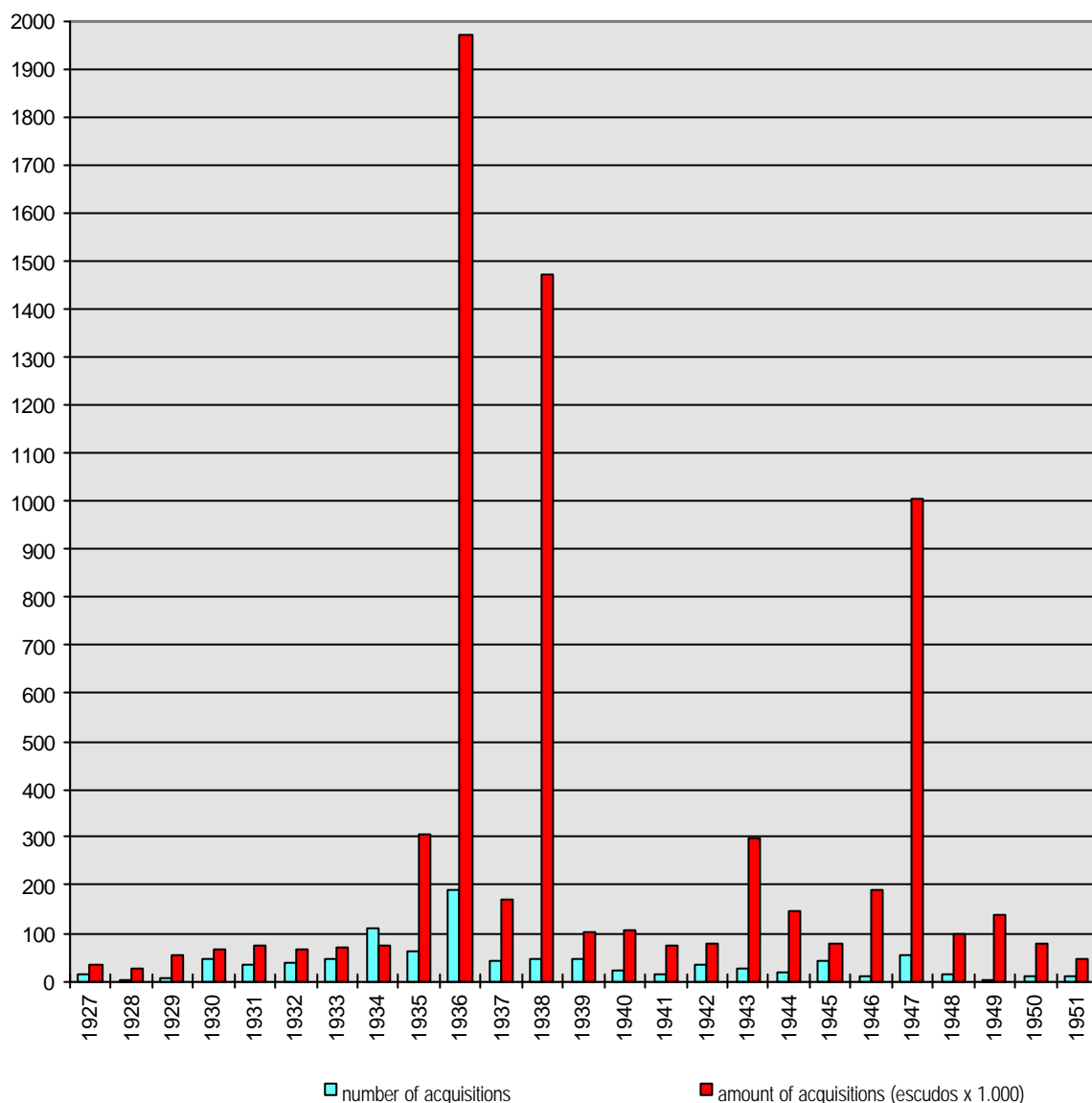


Fig. 11. Comparison between the patrimony in 1934 and 1938 (MNA)



³¹⁶ The average number of acquisitions per year, between 1927 and 1951, was of 38,7; during the same period the average amount spent per year in those acquisitions was of 273.056\$00.

Fig. 12. Expenditure and number of acquisitions per year 1927-51 (MNAA)



As Portugal was not militarily involved in the Second World War the years of the conflict had no visible effect on the museum's acquisition policy. The acquisitions of 1946 and 1947 show an increased budgetary capacity. The threat of German bombardments over the country during the early 1940s resulted in the adoption of some emergency procedures in the museum: the director asked for advice from military experts to prevent major damage in case of attack and informed the Minister of National Education of the measures he was undertaking.³¹⁷ In order to

³¹⁷ Letter (1942/04/08).

know the priorities in an emergency the director also ordered that all inventories should be checked.³¹⁸ In June 1942 another exercise was performed.³¹⁹ Some days later, the Minister of Finance and the Commandant of the Portuguese Legion went to the museum for supervising the removal of some objects and collections as if in an emergency.³²⁰ All this activity proves that the Portuguese government was really fearing an air strike and that the MNAA was one of the priorities in terms of preventing possible cultural heritage damage. The museum was seen as a national treasure and it was imperative to save it. During the Cold War the threat of war was again a reality and the director addressed the government department in charge of the national museums claiming that Portugal should not be confident that if another World War was to occur the country could easily escape. Therefore he insisted that special measures should be programmed for the museum.³²¹

There is another important issue about the collections that is well documented in the archive of the museum: the directors (first José de Figueiredo and then João Couto) always insisted on good care of the collections. One of their concerns was the constant updating of the inventories.³²² João Couto also had to face some problems concerning the objects and collections that had been the property of the Catholic Church, which were now part of the museum's collections.³²³ In 1948 the *Cardeal Patriarca*, who was the highest representative of the Pope in the country, demanded the devolution of these objects and collections. In a confidential letter sent to the DGESBA the director of the museum replied to that demand by affirming that it should not have a positive answer as, legally, it was against the spirit of the *Concordata*.³²⁴ Besides that, it was against common sense, he argued, as the museum had received objects that had been

³¹⁸ Letter (1942/05/19).

³¹⁹ Letter (1946/06/20).

³²⁰ Letter (1946/06/25).

³²¹ Letters (1953/03/16 and 1953/05/18).

³²² See *Boletim Dos Museus Nacionais de Arte Antiga*, vol. III, Lisboa, 1944, p.46-68; letter (1946/11/19); letter (1948/08/18).

³²³ During the First Republic the Portuguese State took possession of a significant part of the Catholic Church property.

³²⁴ The *Concordata* was an agreement between the Portuguese State and the Catholic Church, signed in 1940. The agreement was celebrated to put an end to the previous decades of misunderstandings and even of hostility, to agree on some basic points concerning mutual respect and to determine the basis of future normal diplomatic relations. See CRUZ, Manuel Braga da - *O Estado Novo e a Igreja Católica*, Lisboa, Ed. Bizâncio, 1998, especially p.17-88.

nationalised by the First Republic, but had also bought many others with its own budget. Therefore, it would not seem right to return all religious objects to the Church.

The director's policy on the good care of the collections was disturbed by some official demands of the governmental protocol. Different governmental departments and Ministries had the right to request objects from the museum to display in cabinets or to be used during official ceremonies. The directors always tried to avoid such practices, but were hardly ever successful.³²⁵ In these cases the vanity of politicians and bureaucrats was strong enough to overwhelm museological concerns, proving that power over museums, during the *Estado Novo*, was frequently in the hands of politicians and not in the hands of museum curators.

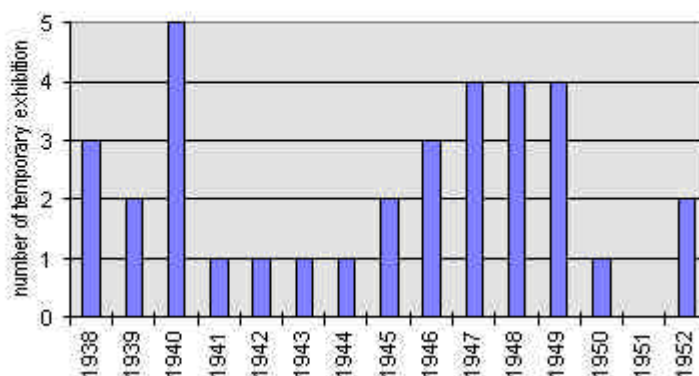
Temporary exhibitions were a means of bringing public to the museum. The MNAA was very much a model for other national museums. One of the novelties the MNAA brought to the national concept of public museums was the foundation of a service dedicated to scholars. In 1937³²⁶ the museum was established as an "extension of schools" and therefore an institution with an important educational role.³²⁷ The MNAA had a significant number of objects and collections that were not on permanent display. Some of them were considered of exceptional historic and artistic value. João Couto, while director of the museum, promoted temporary exhibitions using the reserve collections. These exhibitions were meant to be interesting and meaningful for students. This procedure became frequent during 1940, as this was the year of the national celebration of the centenary of independence.³²⁸ During the Second World War the number of such events was restrained by the fear of bombardments and economic difficulties, but after the War the number of temporary exhibitions increased again, as is shown in the graph below:

³²⁵ One of the most significant examples is the systematic use of a collection of French silverware during official banquets. The director formally protested against this practice (letter 1248/12/09). Another very important information concerning this question was given by Bairrão Oleiro in his interview (see appendix for synopsis). He affirmed that when he became responsible for the governmental department in charge of the national museums, in the middle 1960s, he had to face the difficult situation of having a significant number of museum objects away from the museums. More than four hundred objects belonging to the National Museum of Contemporaneous Art were being used in official departments. In an official visit to Madrid, Bairrão Oleiro accidentally found an object belonging to the MNAA used as an ashtray at the Portuguese embassy.

³²⁶ Letter (1937/02/11), sent to 82 schools informing about the services provided by the museum in the field of education.

³²⁷ From the beginning of the 1930s the museum received an impressive number of letters from schools asking to visit the museum.

Fig. 13.
Temporary Exhibitions at the National Museum of Ancient Art



The graph on the right shows the profile of non-paid visitors to the museum, during 1931. The data for this year is a good example of the scarcity of the visits of students to the museum. It also explains the measure mentioned above. After the death of José de Figueiredo the policy of providing students facilities was continued by João Couto. He had well defined ideas about the functions of a national museum one of which was the educational purpose.³²⁹ The development of his ideas resulted in the establishment of an educational department in the museum, which was the very first in the country.³³⁰

Non paid visits to the MNAA in 1931



At the same time the museum wanted to attract new visitors³³¹ and, despite the governmental decision to impose entrance fees for national museums,³³² the number of visitors

³²⁸ See chapter 7 on this matter.

³²⁹ See COUTO, João - "Extensão escolar dos museus", in *Museu*, revista do Círculo Dr. José Figueiredo, II, nº 2, Porto, 1961.

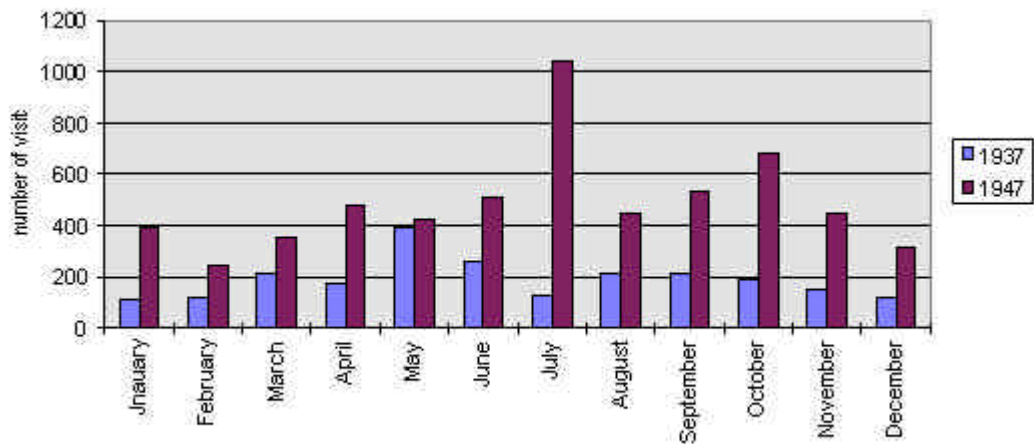
³³⁰ In 1953 João Couto was already mentioning his project of an educational department (e.g.: he sent a letter to the SNI about a film on the museum directed by António Lopes Ribeiro - who could be considered as one of the official film directors of the regime). João Couto supported the idea that other films of the sort should be made to be used didactically in high schools and in the educational department..

³³¹ E.g.: the director sent a letter to the national mail (*Administrador Geral dos Correios e Telégrafos*) asking for collaboration in implementing an idea: as all stamps had to be validated by the Mail using some kind of sentence printed over, he thought that that sentence could be "Visit the Museum of the Green Windows". In 1953 the director tried to promote the museum once more: in February he addressed a letter to the SNI, protesting against the fact that in a leaflet with the title "Visit Lisboa" no mention to the Museum could be found.

³³² Decree 19.414 (1931/03/09). The museum changed the admission conditions according to this decree (letter, 1931/03/12).

increased. In 1947, it exceeded 1937 (2,58 times more visitors in 1947), as the graph below demonstrates.

Fig. 15. Paid visits to the MNAA in 1937 and 1947



All the efforts of the 1950s³³³ to keep in touch with the process of development of the European museology made the decade an important period of international influence over the Portuguese museological concepts. The MNAA was the most active museum on what international relations were concerned. The MNAA was the "first national museum", the one that played a decisive role in the modernisation of the Portuguese official policy towards museums.³³⁴

Despite the importance given to the MNAA as an object of propaganda, its directors always faced difficulties in terms of staff. The directors frequently complained about the situation but with very few success.³³⁵ One of the major difficulties was the number of curators working in the museum. Before 1911 there were two curators; later on another one was appointed to the museum, but after that and with no further explanation the central department in charge of the national museums suppressed two curators, thus leaving the museum with only one.³³⁶ During the 1930s the museum had a director, one curator, one chief clerk, one clerk, one chief of guards,

³³³ See above paragraphs about ICOM.

³³⁴ It is only natural to link the decree of 1965, number 46.758, that changed the official definition of museum and that formally recognised museums as educational institutions, to this international connection João Couto, (and others, Bairrão Oleiro, for example) were performing.

³³⁵ Letter (1926/08/17).

³³⁶ In 1930/04/21 the director wrote a letter protesting against this situation, remembering that he had already complained in 1922/03/06, 1925/01/12, 1926/03/15, 1926/04/14 and 1927/01/27.

one porter, ten guards, two servants and a gardener.³³⁷ The directors were particularly worried with the lack of curators in the museum and repeatedly remarked that the museum should have at least two curators.³³⁸ In the mid-1950s, as the museum increased its facilities and developed more activities the reduced number of staff became an ever major problem.³³⁹ Again the regime reacted as in the case of the budget of the museum. Expenditure should be reduced and that explains the deficiency of staff. The main concern of the *Estado Novo* was not the efficiency and quality of the museum but the political image of it. And for the propagandistic image purpose no further staff was essential.

Despite some difficulties³⁴⁰ between the director and his staff, staff relations in the museum were generally good. The director even got involved in private problems of the employees willing to help them. Between 1946 and 1950 he helped a former porter of the museum, someone who had served for more than 35 years. The porter received a monthly salary of 550\$00 but after retirement the Portuguese state was to pay him only 192\$00 and asked him to pay 5.779\$00 of taxes. The director wrote several letters to the DGESBA³⁴¹ vehemently protesting against the situation. The director also had to intervene in procedures related to accidents occurred during working hours. The major problem would usually be the cold, slow, bureaucratically insensitive nature of the Portuguese state, always with the aim of spending less money.³⁴²

³³⁷ See copies of the statistical forms (1931/01/17 and 1937/01/07).

³³⁸ Letters (1940/08/22, 1944/09/08 and 1949/11/28).

³³⁹ Letter (1954/10/29).

³⁴⁰ It is relatively easy to trace the moments of conflict between the director and the staff because whenever they occurred the director would edit an internal document determining procedures. These documents were called "*Ordem de Serviço*". The list below shows some of the most important ones: 1933/06/26: The director formally reprehends two of the guards because of misconduct and use of improper vocabulary during working hours; 1937/09/18: The director demands that all personnel takes good care of the uniforms. The personal care for the uniform became object of official evaluation; 1938/05/18: The director instructs the guards to remain in the respective rooms and not to abandon their places under any excuse; he interdicts any disputes in loud voice or other kinds of misconduct; 1939/02/06: The director forbids the guards to read newspapers, magazines or books during working hours and when visitors are in the rooms; he also forbids the guards to remain seated while visitors are in the rooms; 1940/06/12: The director formally thanks all staff and personnel of the museum because of the help he received with the organisation of the temporary exhibition of painting during the commemorations of the centenaries; 1940/07/08: The director explains the main rules to be followed to ask for temporary leaves; 1940/08/07: The director reprehends two guards in consequence of acts of misconduct and menaces with formal disciplinary sanctions if something of the kind happened again; 1942/10/19: The director informs all personnel that any further complaints should be submitted in writing and that only that formal procedure would be accepted.

³⁴¹ Letters (1946/12/07, 1950/05/15 and 1950/06/05).

³⁴² It is worth mentioning two accidents which demonstrate these difficulties: in October 1952 a guard got injured during working hours; he had to go to hospital and to buy penicillin with his own money; the director asked (1952/10/19) for the payment of all expenses by the Portuguese State, as the guard was on duty, but in December he was still asking for the same thing with no practical results (letter, 1952/12/30). In 1954 another guard of the museum had a bad accident on his way to

Staff employment procedures in all departments under the Portuguese government were intricate. The admittance of a new worker depended on proof that the person would not disrespect the National Constitution, had no subversive ideas and was not a communist.³⁴³ Whenever the museum wanted to admit someone a standard procedure to check the "qualities" of the candidate was used. One example of this is the case of Leopoldina Martins, in 1951. Someone wrote anonymous letters to the director accusing her of being involved in subversive activities. Leopoldina had to wait until in a formal process it was found out that the letters had been written by a guard of the museum who had some private dispute with her. The guard (Luis Pereira) was suspended from work for two years, while Leopoldina got the job.³⁴⁴

In brief, the MNAA was seen very differently by its directors and by the Portuguese State. For the directors the museum was a cultural and scientific institution, the major and principal museum of the country, the one that should represent Portugal in internal and foreign events regarding art and art objects.³⁴⁵ For the Portuguese state the Museum was, like many other museums, a vehicle of propaganda; the museum should be evidence that Portugal was taking good care of its art and historic objects. Before the *Estado Novo* the Portuguese state had been very proud to declare that the museum had changed a lot in the early decades of the century.³⁴⁶ In 1940, for the celebration of the centenaries, the *Estado Novo* presented the museum as an exemplary institution.

Even in its recognised role of first Portuguese museum, the MNAA had to face severe financial difficulties. José de Figueiredo never seemed to fear political pressure and some of his intervention were even 'politically incorrect'. João Couto also had a strong will and more than

work and had to remain inactive for more than two months; the accident was not regarded as a work accident and therefore the Portuguese State assumed no responsibilities.

³⁴³ In 1935/05/13 the decree 25.317 ordered that every person working for the Sate that had shown some kind of opposition towards the Constitution should be compulsorily retired; in 1936/09/14, to become a civil servant, the decree 27.003 made compulsory a declaration of acceptance of the Constitution and of active renounce to all subversive ideologies, including communism..

³⁴⁴ Letters (1951/09/20 and 1952/08/23). By another letter (1954/12/30), it is possible to know that the guard returned to the museum two years after (see also the official diary, second part, number 283, 1954/12/03)

³⁴⁵ E.g.: in the early 1930s, referring to the presence of some Portuguese paintings in the Exhibition of Antwerp as a major example, the director of the museum affirmed that taking such works of art to such event was "one of the best acts of propaganda" (letter, 1933/04/21).

³⁴⁶ Decree 15.216 (1928/03/22). The museum, that had been a "chaotic warehouse", had become "one of the major museums of Europe".

once challenged the administrative decisions he considered inappropriate.³⁴⁷ In certain circumstances, the particular characteristics of the objects in the museum, prevented propagandistic use³⁴⁸ as the directors argued that some objects could not leave the museum without severe risk of permanent damage. Nevertheless, the political power was stronger than the scientific or curatorial evidences and sometimes the directors had to concede.³⁴⁹

Despite all the difficulties, the directors of the MNAA were able to influence the political power on particular, yet very important, subjects. José de Figueiredo took the responsibility of modernising the museum and he managed to accomplish that task. He also had a decisive influence on the restoration and preventive care of art objects.³⁵⁰ From the late 1930s and for more than two decades, João Couto was director of the museum. One of his major objectives was the development of the educational role of the museum, and his ideas had a decisive influence over the Portuguese legislation of the 1960s about museums.³⁵¹ The museum was no longer seen as a mere deposit of objects, and the collections became important not only by their artistic or aesthetic value but also by their educational potential. This legislation still had the paternalistic tone of the regime but some very important principles were evoked, such as the social importance of the museum, the imperative necessity of having a broader public and the need to communicate with that public in terms of a pedagogical relationship.³⁵²

This new definition of 'museum', the last the *Estado Novo* was to produce, lasted for almost two decades and it is undeniable that the MNAA, under the direction of João Couto, exerted a decisive influence in the engendering of it. Obviously, other museums had new

³⁴⁷ One of the major quarrels João Couto had to face was the one about the exhibition of 1940, when the museum was asked to lend some objects that were not in acceptable conservation conditions to leave the museum. João Couto firmly opposed that request but he had to face powerful political decisions that overwhelmed his authority while director of the museum. See Chapter 7 on this subject.

³⁴⁸ This is the case of temporary exhibitions both in Portugal and abroad. More than once the director tried to avoid the transport of certain objects that were too fragile.

³⁴⁹ Letter (1940/04/20) João Couto wrote to the president of the Commission in charge of the National Exhibition demanding a formal order to let some objects leave the museum; he declined any further responsibility if his disapproval to the use of such objects was not taken into consideration.

³⁵⁰ The institution linked to the MNAA in charge of those proceedings was named after him.

³⁵¹ Decree 46.758.

³⁵² The decree assumed that some of the visitors of art museums had the capability of enjoying the visit by themselves, because they were educated people; others, less educated (as manual workers or students), should be guided into the aesthetic, artistic and historic importance of the objects on display. This interpretation of the educational role of the museum was elitist

approaches and new attitudes towards their educational role and their public (the Museum of José Malhoa and the Museum of Conímbriga are good examples of that). But the MNAA, due to its cultural and national importance and due to the fact it was the national 'school-museum' for curators and museum directors, played an exceptional role in the process.

4.2 The *Museu de Soares dos Reis* (Museum of Soares dos Reis)

The MNSR was for a long time the only national museum in the city of Porto. This gave the museum's director reason to argue in favour of his institution and enabled some demands that otherwise would not have been well received in Lisboa. Even before becoming a national museum, the Soares dos Reis was valued as the only art museum in Porto.³⁵³ The *Estado Novo* recognised that value and was therefore careful in the relations with the museum.

Before being called Soares dos Reis, the museum was known as the *Museu Portuense*, founded in 1833 by King D. Pedro IV. Some years later, the museum was ruled by the "Academy of Fine Arts of Porto" (*Academia Portuense de Belas Artes*) and remained so until the First Republic. In 1911 the museum came under the authority of the "Third Art and Archaeology Council" (*Conselho de Arte e Arqueologia da 3ª Circunscrição*);³⁵⁴ the name of the institution was then changed and it became *Museu Soares dos Reis*. After the revolution of the 28th May 1926 the new regime decided that this museum should be considered as national.³⁵⁵ This resolution was inspired by the new policy towards national heritage and museums. The introductory text of this decree is a self-eulogy of the government policy towards culture, aesthetics and heritage.³⁵⁶ The decree also affirms that the museum of Soares dos Reis was one of the poorest museums of the country and that this circumstance hindered the institution performing its "high cultural mission".³⁵⁷ This situation deeply concerned the central government

³⁵³ Decree 21:504 (25/07/1932); the MNSR was officially recognised as the only opened-to-the-public museum of the city. The local authorities' museum was closed due to the very small building where it was installed.

³⁵⁴ See chapter 3.4.1 .

³⁵⁵ Decree 21:504 (25/07/1932).

³⁵⁶ Original text: "*Tem o Governo demonstrado o interesse que o desenvolvimento da cultura estética lhe merece [...]*".

³⁵⁷ Original text: "*desempenho da alta missão cultural que lhe incumbe*".

because the museum possessed collections of national value (such as the painting collections of Silva Porto, Sousa Pinto, Vieira Portuense, among others, and the collection of sculptures of Soares dos Reis) that should be displayed or stored in better conditions. The government stated clearly that the museum of Soares dos Reis did not have sufficient financial support and that this resulted in deficient facilities.

Another important issue concerning this museum was the collections that had belonged to the Catholic Church authorities of Porto and that the Republic had nationalised. These collections were temporarily under the custody of the city's museum,³⁵⁸ but the government considered this fact as an anomaly: these collections were of great cultural and aesthetic value and the decision of nationalising them was taken with the purpose of enabling the public use of the collections.³⁵⁹ In order to solve this situation the government decided to alter the status of the museum. This is reflected in a change in the name of the museum: it became *Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis*. The decree also includes the decision to transfer other collections of the Church that had been nationalised during the Republic to the new museum. The local authorities could transfer the collections of their museum to the new one, and still keep formal possession of them. Finally, the decree determined that the new national museum should have a director with a salary paid by the government.³⁶⁰ The director had authority to choose from the ceramic collections of the "Commercial and Industrial Museum of Porto" (*Museu Comercial e Industrial do Porto*) those which he thought should be in the new national museum. Obviously, changing the management and name of the museum would not solve all its problems. In fact, the museum remained in the same old building with the same old problems, even if some repairs (that implied the closure of the museum) were undertaken to mend the most urgent needs.³⁶¹ The main difference was that the director had an official route to protest against the situation.³⁶²

The museum reopened to the public in April 1933 and, to the sadness of the director, the government department responsible (the director of the DGESBA) was not present at the

³⁵⁸ The one that was closed due to the very small building.

³⁵⁹ Decree 21:504.

³⁶⁰ The director's salary was of 13.572\$00 annually.

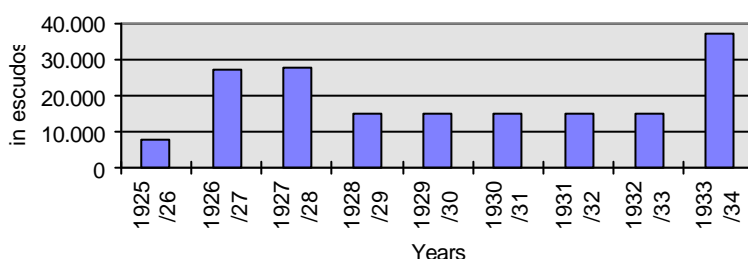
³⁶¹ Letter (1932/11/09).

ceremony.³⁶³ During the following year the average number of visitors was approximately four hundred per month.³⁶⁴ Despite these numbers, the only permanent personnel of the museum was the director. There was also a guard and a porter but they were temporary.³⁶⁵

During these first years of the existence of the new national museum the director (Dr. António Vasco Rebêlo Valente) cared for the collections and for the museum's internal organisation (he undertook the essential task of preparing the inventory: the method was the same used in the MNAA). He also cared for the correct official use of the museum's name. In 1933 he wrote a letter to the department responsible for public finances (*Chefe da Repartição da Direcção Geral da Contabilidade Pública*) clarifying that the name of the museum should include the word "National". The director feared the lack of such word could result in "future complications".³⁶⁶ In 1934 the inventory of objects on display was completed. According to the director, the stores were too cold for anyone to work there and therefore no inventory of them could be made.³⁶⁷ In 1934 the director informed his superior about the statistics (between 1925 and 1934) of the money received from the public resources by the museum.

Fig. 16.

Money received by the Museum of Soares dos Reis



The graph above makes it clear that after the revolution of the 28th May 1926 the museum had its budget increased almost three times; this was the result of the national policy regarding

³⁶² Letter (1935/04/29); the director affirmed that the provisional installation of the museum in a dark, narrow, cold and damp place lasted for a century.

³⁶³ Letter (1933/04/12).

³⁶⁴ Letter (1933/06/02).

³⁶⁵ The complete list of personnel was sent to the governmental responsible (1932/12/31).

³⁶⁶ Letter (1933/06/12).

heritage and museums that the military dictatorship undertook. After the change in public finances imposed by Salazar in 1928, the budget was reduced and the same amount was awarded each year until 1933. In 1933/34, having improved the country's economic and financial situation,³⁶⁸ the regime realised that the museum needed some extra support, and increased its budget. The director emphasised that finally the State had given some real attention and support to the only national museum of "the second capital of the Country".³⁶⁹ Even so, he asked for additional money. In May 1934, he requested money to buy some more sculptures of Soares dos Reis.³⁷⁰ After a bureaucratic struggle he finally received it. The acquisition policy was restrained by these budgetary problems, but the director had other options: during the second half of the 1930s he successfully asked for private collections to be handed to the museum as deposits.³⁷¹

In terms of staff, the situation improved a little with this new budget. New personnel was admitted (in 1935 the director informed that three curators were working in the museum³⁷²). Nevertheless, he never ceased protesting against the facilities.³⁷³ During 1936, he supported the guard and porter's complaints about the differences between their working conditions and those of other guards and porters in other national museums.

The government had plans for the museum. In 1934 a first and significant step was taken, when the future building of the museum (*Palácio das Carrancas*) became classified as a "building of public interest" (*imóvel de interesse público*).³⁷⁴ This decision would become very significant some years later, when the government decided that that building should no longer be private

³⁶⁷ Letter (1934/03/07).

³⁶⁸ This idea spread in the country. For example, in July 1933 the director of the MNAA wrote a letter to the Ministry of Public Instruction (*Ministro da Instrução Pública*) about a question he had already mentioned in previous letters: his salary. The director received 1.450\$00 per month what he considered insufficient. The director also mentioned that for more than five years he was claiming against insufficient salary and he points out that, as a result of the work of Salazar, the national finances were finally capable of paying a fair salary to public servants.

³⁶⁹ Original text: "[...] *único Museu Nacional da 2ª Capital do País*" in letter (1934/04/25).

³⁷⁰ Letter to the DGESBA (1934/05/05) asking for 6.000\$00.

³⁷¹ As an example, in 1938 the director asked Mr. Sebastião Calheiros de Menezes to deposit a collection of objects that was suffering severe damage because of the conditions it was stored. The director reassured the owner that the formal possession of the collections was not at stake and that the objects would be better preserved in the museum. Letter (1938/08/06).

³⁷² Letter (1935/03).

³⁷³ Letter (1935/04/29).

³⁷⁴ Decree 24:003 (1934/06/12). The museum was installed in another public building, with poor conditions.

property but should belong to the state and be adapted to receive the MNSR. 1934 was a great year for the museum in terms of visitors. The figures available for the previous years show that very few people entered the museum during paying days; but, after the repairs and with a new facade, the museum received an impressive number of visits during the end of 1933 and 1934.³⁷⁵ This enthusiasm did not, however, last for long and the figures for the following months are again very low.³⁷⁶ Again in 1937 some more visitors went to the museum, but the average of 1934 was not exceeded.³⁷⁷

The director of the museum experienced other difficulties, and always expressed his concern to the official responsible. An important example of these difficulties is the fact that the museum had no telephone service until 1936. In the beginning of 1936 the director wrote a letter asking for that service and two months later the museum was able to communicate via telephone.³⁷⁸ Other apparently minor details made the work in the museum very difficult: for several years the director asked for a typewriter, as no such thing existed in the museum. In 1936 the director wrote another polite yet emphatic letter to DGESBA;³⁷⁹ he had to wait for another eleven months, but finally the museum was authorised to buy the typewriter in November 1937. These were simple facts of the internal life of the museum the public would not be aware of. They illustrate the fact that the official policy of great concern for national heritage was, at least partially, a façade and that the regime was either indifferent or incapable of solving real day-to-day problems.

The situation of the museum, which had never been acceptable to the director, became unbearable with an increase in collections acquired through private donations and the deposit of

³⁷⁵ All figures concerning the number of visitors in the museum are not sequentially coherent; nevertheless, it is of some interest to quote those available. The museum received an average of 400 visitors per month during the first months of 1933; during that whole year the number of paid visits did not exceed 187 (letter, 1934/04/25). From July 1933 until July 1934, the total number of visitors sums 13.739, what corresponds to an average of 1.145 visitors per month (letter 1936/07/15).

³⁷⁶ From July 1934 until December 1935, only 434 paid visits are registered, what represents an average of only 24 visitors per month.

³⁷⁷ In 1937 2.248 males and 540 females visited the museum. The monthly average is about 232. Another information on this matter can be found in the figures forwarded to the National Institute for Statistics (*INE Instituto Nacional de Estadística*) in the beginning of 1940: during the previous year 2.194 males and 415 females visited the museum, in a total of 2609, what represents an average of 217 visits per month.

³⁷⁸ Letter (1936/02/29); in March that year the director informed that the telephone was installed.

³⁷⁹ Letter (1936/12/30).

objects and collections coming from other museums.³⁸⁰ In face of this situation the government finally decided that a new solution had to be found, and that was a new building. The timing could not be better; as the commemorations of 1940 were arriving and the regime wanted the country to exhibit a good national image. The problem of the building was to be resolved by a governmental decision that also solved another difficulty: the *Palácio dos Carrancas* had been classified as building of public interest in 1934, but the owner, a religious organisation called *Misericórdia*³⁸¹ was not being able to use the facilities as it should.³⁸² Therefore the State decided to buy the building and to adapt it in order to install the MNSR. This decision was taken in 1937³⁸³ and the changes began in May 1939.³⁸⁴ Another very important decision was that the collections of the local authorities' museum should be transferred into the MNSR; despite this, the ownership of the collections remained unchanged.

During the last months of 1939, and the beginning of the following year, the director closely watched the building works. At least twice he sent letters informing the central government departments of the progress made so far and reported everything was going well. He was obviously glad with the idea of a new building for the museum.³⁸⁵ He had, however, to take some stern measures to ensure that the local authorities surrendered the collections of the *Museu Municipal do Porto* to the MNSR.³⁸⁶

Problems also arose concerning the gardens of the museum. The grounds, adjacent to the museum, were used by a private club (the *Velo Club do Porto*). This club did not agree with the request to give up the use of those grounds so that the museum could install an open-air theatre and display some large archaeological objects. In a formal letter that was sent to the Ministry the

³⁸⁰ In 1937 the director informed that the museum received 8 objects by donation, bought 17 and obtained 50 from other museums. In 1937 the museum received 4 objects and bought 81 (information transmitted to the National Institute for Statistics (*INE Instituto Nacional de Estatística*)).

³⁸¹ The direct translation of this word would be "Charity"; it belonged to the Catholic Church and was devoted to help those who needed (young orphans, poor people).

³⁸² The building had been given to the *Misericórdia* by king D. Manuel II with the intention of being used as a house for orphans.

³⁸³ Decree 27:878 (1937/07/21). The Portuguese State "forced" the transaction, as this decree clearly states.

³⁸⁴ Letter (1939/05/10). The general tone of the letter demonstrates the contentment of the director.

³⁸⁵ Letter was sent to the DGESEBA (1939/11/04); letter sent to the *Director Geral da Fazenda Pública* (1940/01/15).

club contested the proposal made by the museum's director and mentioned the collaboration with the "Portuguese Youth" (*Mocidade Portuguesa*) as a strong argument for retaining the garden.³⁸⁷ The director was informed by the Ministry of this formal objection of the club and answered by contesting the arguments. The director based his case on the idea that the museum should perform other cultural tasks rather than only putting objects and collections on display. He argued that the gardens were essential to have an open-air exhibition and to build a theatre.³⁸⁸ However, the political influence of the club and its connections with the "Portuguese Youth" were sufficient to defeat the director's beliefs and wishes. By the end of May 1940 the director knew that the grounds would remain for the club. Nevertheless, he protested violently and used very strong words in a letter sent to the governmental responsible for the public property.³⁸⁹ The *Estado Novo* had complete control of the situation and this kind of decision could not be contested. The strong presence of the regime in the internal life of the museum is perceivable in other ways. For example, when the director wanted to admit new personnel, he had to send records containing information on the candidates to a special police force.³⁹⁰ The director had to ask for evidence of the political and moral trustfulness of the candidates.³⁹¹ Another similar situation recorded in the documentation of the museum is the case of a employee of the museum who was a member of the "Portuguese Legion" (*Legião Portuguesa*).³⁹² He had the right to be absent from work for training and public parades.³⁹³ Even in smaller matters the importance of the state was present in the museum. The SPN could take photographs for internal and external propaganda; only

³⁸⁶ Letter (1940/03/07); see also decree 27:878.

³⁸⁷ Letter (1940/04/20).

³⁸⁸ Letter (1940/05/15).

³⁸⁹ Letter (1940/05/23). Original text: "[...] o museu fica incompleto, defeituoso, devassado, quando poderia ser modelar"; in English this would be "the museum will be incomplete, deficient, encroached, when it could be perfect".

³⁹⁰ This police had different names in different periods: first it was the PVDE (*Polícia de Vigilância e Defesa do Estado*) "Police of Vigilance and Defence of the State"; then PIDE (*Polícia Internacional de Defesa do Estado*) "International Police of the Defence of the State"; finally DGS (*Direcção Geral de Segurança*) "Bureau of Security".

³⁹¹ Letter (1940/09/03).

³⁹² This was a national and official paramilitary organisation that provided military training to its members and used to participate in official ceremonies of the regime.

³⁹³ In 1954/05/24 the commandant of the north section of the Legion sent a letter to the director of the museum demanding the presence of Leonídio Coelho Dias in a parade that would take place in Lisboa. He was to be absent for three days and the director had to agree with the demand.

requests were merely a formality as the SPN had the right to use museum material for its actions.³⁹⁴

But the director had other concerns during these final months of 1939, mainly the organisation of the "commemorations of the centenaries". He received instructions from the central department in charge of the commemorations (as other directors of museums did) to contact private owners of objects or collections of national interest in order to get proper authorisation to include those objects and collections in the national temporary exhibitions that were being organised.³⁹⁵ One of the objects that was meant to be in Lisboa for the commemorations was the sword of D. Afonso Henriques, which was in possession of the MNSR. Naturally the director agreed with the intention of taking the symbolic weapon to Lisboa. The *Estado Novo* wanted the object they considered contributed to Portugal's independence to be associated with the nationalistic festivities. The symbolic importance given to that sword is representative of the spirit of the commemorations that were taking place. In 1944 this weapon was the centre of an argument about the right of its possession. The director of the MNSR received a formal report from the DGESBA informing that "a city" (not identified in the document) was reclaiming the right to keep the sword and to have it on display. The governmental decision reported to the museum was against such a request and stated that the sword was in its right place, well displayed, and that it could not be in better hands. Again in 1947, the sword went to Lisboa, this time to be exhibited at the commemorations of the conquest of the city by D. Afonso Henriques. Apparently, this sword was, for the *Estado Novo*, one of the most important and symbolic material evidences of Portuguese nationality.

Finally, in September 1940, the building was considered ready and the director began to install the museum. In March of the following year he informed his superior of the problems he had found: the lift was not working, the roof leaked rain water into the museum, the air-conditioning was not functioning properly, the temperature in some galleries would not normally exceed 5° centigrade and the electrical system was faulty.³⁹⁶ In preparation for the public opening

³⁹⁴ Letter received by the museum (1944/02/19).

³⁹⁵ As an example, letter (1940/02/27) sent by the director of the museum to the *Ordem Terceira de S. Francisco* (a catholic organisation) asking for permission to use some of their paintings in a temporary exhibition about early Portuguese painters to be held in Lisboa.

³⁹⁶ Letter (1941/03/01).

the director asked the tramways to provide a stop in front of the museum. This wish was not granted, and in 1943 he was still asking for it. These difficulties faced by the director are evidence that the regime, either directly from government or indirectly from public services, was not very concerned with the ordinary running of the museum. During periods of intense propagandistic activity (such as the grounding of the regime during the late 1920s and early 1930s or the commemorations of 1940) the *Estado Novo* did pay a great deal of attention to national museums and monuments. But apart from that they were not considered first priority.

During 1941 the fear of German air strikes imposed some restrictions on life in Portugal and the museum had to prepare a means of defence.³⁹⁷ Despite this threat, in January 1942 the director was able to inform that the museum was ready to open to the public.³⁹⁸ A museum library was also opening by 1940-41. The director had asked for the help of private and public institutions to gather one together. During its first year the museum received a significant number of visitors.³⁹⁹ The new building also demanded more personnel and the number of people working in the museum increased: in 1950 the museum got four additional guards and two other employees.⁴⁰⁰

As the museum began to function, other difficulties concerning the facilities were found. In 1944 the director asked for the installation of two laboratories: one for photography and the other to perform preservation and restoration of objects. To solve these and other questions, in 1948 the government decided to buy two adjacent buildings,⁴⁰¹ but the director still asked for more museum space.⁴⁰² The main building needed remodelling, but the bureaucratic central

³⁹⁷ Confidential letter (1941/08/26) informing that some defence exercises were being performed. See decree 170 (Official Diary, *II série*, 1953/07/17) and letters received in the museum (1954/01/20 and 1954/04/20) from the committee in charge of the protection of national heritage in case of war (*Comissão encarregada de estudar as providências a adoptar, em caso de Guerra, para a protecção dos bens culturais da Nação*).

³⁹⁸ Letter (1942/01/17).

³⁹⁹ The total was 13.859, what represents a monthly average of 1.155 visitors. This number decreased in the following years: in 1945 9.552 visitors went to the museum (6.355 males and 3.197 females) what represents a monthly average of 796; in 1948 9.145 (5.926 males and 3.219 females) visited the museum, what represents a monthly average of 762. In 1949 10.024 visitors went to the museum (5.953 males and 4.071 females) what represents an average of 835 per month. In 1950 the number of visitors was 12.146 (7.446 males and 4.700 females) what represents a monthly average of 1.012.

⁴⁰⁰ In 1950 the museum had a director, two curators, a clerk, a porter, five guards and two servants. Letter (1950/01/23).

⁴⁰¹ Letter received (July 1948).

⁴⁰² Letter (1949/02/10).

administration decision for such intervention implied pressure put on by the director. Vasco Valente died without achieving this objective and the new director kept on insisting on the need for renovation. During the summer of 1951 at least two letters claimed for urgent help, as the museum would not be able to withstand winter conditions.⁴⁰³ However, the decision to renovate the museum was only made in 1953.⁴⁰⁴ It could be argued that economic difficulties caused by the Second World War were one of the reasons that led to this negligence. However, it is evident from the documentation that the directors of the museum always struggled against such neglect. The regime wanted to appear as 'the' protector of national heritage for reasons of political and ideological propaganda, but often neglected the good care of that heritage by providing economic and bureaucratic excuses.



Fig. 17. Aspect of one of the rooms of the Museum of Soares dos Reis, during the forties (photograph by Alvão, Archive of Photography of the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisboa)

During the 1950s the museum not only became more important in the national domain, but was also recognised by the ICOM. In the beginning of 1955, ICOM approached the museum

⁴⁰³ In July a letter (1951/07/18) informed that humidity had infiltrate the previous winter and that that would happen again if nothing was done; another letter (1951/09/25), insisted on the urgent need of repairs.

⁴⁰⁴ The repairs began in April 1953. At the end of May the director sent a letter (1953/05/29) informing that the remodelling of the museum implied its closure to the public; he foresees the repairs could be conclude in four months, but some necessary interventions will not be performed because of the lack of money. The museum suffered new intervention in 1955. In 1963 new repairs took place during summer (letter, 1963/09/05).

with a detailed survey.⁴⁰⁵ During this period, members of museums staff in Portugal were very interested in the museum developments that were happening in other countries of Europe. In 1968 a curator of the MNSR asked permission to go abroad and visit several museums in order to learn what was happening there.⁴⁰⁶

During the late 1960s and the early 1970s the museum did not change significantly. Only some minor rearrangements occurred, but they were not really important⁴⁰⁷ in terms of the overall organisation of the museum. This process is coherent with the Portuguese economic and political situation of the period: the war in the colonies had begun in the early 1960s and was demanding a lot from the national resources and the economic crisis of the 1970s only made things worse.

The MNSR, which is one of the oldest of Portuguese museums, received some attention from the state during the first years of the dictatorship, but then had to struggle with many difficulties until the *Estado Novo* finally decided that a new building was urgently needed. This is coherent with the pattern of the period, as the regime had regained some financial capacity, and so the nationalistic ideology and propaganda had direct effects on the improvement of public buildings, museums as well. After that the museum continued to fight against all kinds of difficulties. Nevertheless, the central financial support enabled some important changes both in the building and in the displays, and the museum was modernised in the middle 1950s. As other museums and organisations in Portugal during the *Estado Novo*, the MNSR was also under the ideological pressure of the regime. This pressure was directed to the people that worked there and also to the objects and collections that were seen as means of propaganda.

⁴⁰⁵ The director answered the questionnaire in February 1955. Another detailed description of the museum, dating 1957, exists in the archive.

⁴⁰⁶ By a letter sent to the DGESEBA, the curator Maria Clementina de Carvalho Quaresma (Dr^a) asked permission to be absent from the 24th July until the 12th August. She intended to visit several French museums.

⁴⁰⁷ For the 1960s and the 1970s there are annual reports available, that mention activities and modifications that occurred in the museum.

4.3 The *Museu de Arte Popular* (Museum of Popular Art)

The MAP received its building and displays from the Pavilion of "Popular Life" (*Vida Popular*), which had been built to the Great Exhibition of the Portuguese World, in 1940.⁴⁰⁸ This exhibit was organised by administrative regions,⁴⁰⁹ each region occupying an area of the Pavilion, or even an entire room. This layout remained unchanged until the late 1990s.⁴¹⁰ The museum is, therefore, the most long-lasting testimony of the 1940 Exhibition. The intention of the Pavilion was to present the diversity of the rural and traditional Portuguese way of life. According to the ideology of the *Estado Novo*, one of the characteristics and reasons of the Portuguese unity was the diversity of the traditional agriculture, products and survival strategies that co-existed in such a small territory. Indeed it was seen as a patchwork of different traditions⁴¹¹ which together formed the nation. This ideological image was the one presented by the exhibitions of 1940 and the one preserved in the MAP, created in 1944 and inaugurated in 1948.

This museum was directly dependent on the Bureau of Information, Popular Culture and Tourism (*Secretariado Nacional da Informação, Cultura Popular e Turismo* - SNI) and was therefore a direct vehicle of propaganda. It is therefore possible to observe the major guidelines of the policy of the *Estado Novo* concerning museums (from the mid-1940s to the mid 1960s) in this particular institution. The museum had a task to perform: showing the Portuguese nation in its best traditions through its material culture. This was evident in the displays. The museum was a 'path' through Portugal, showing the aspects the SNI wanted to promote. Within the museum space the visitor would walk from one region to another and could admire objects considered as most significant to local popular culture. The objects lacked interpretation because it was

Fig. 18.
Portuguese Administrative Regions
of the *Estado Novo*



⁴⁰⁸ Part of the collections had been gathered for the exhibition of Portuguese Popular Art, held in Geneva in 1935.

⁴⁰⁹ Portugal was divided in eleven administrative regions, as shown in the map.

⁴¹⁰ The museum remained almost unchanged until 1998/9.

considered unnecessary: the object was seen as a value by itself, the 'real thing', an evidence of the Portuguese nation, which demanded no further explanation or interpretation.⁴¹²

The control exerted over the museum by the authorities of the *Estado Novo* was intense. All the budget was strictly controlled⁴¹³ and a number of items had to be asked from a central department supplier and could not be directly bought by the museum.⁴¹⁴ Sometimes this process resulted in significant delay in the delivery of the items, forcing the curator to complain about the procedure.⁴¹⁵ This process did, however, enable a very strict control of the expenses of the museum.⁴¹⁶ This budgetary control was so strict that the money available was often too short and, sometimes, lead the curator to use personal funds for museum purposes.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹¹ This is demonstrated in the poster of the Exhibition of Paris (chapter 3.3.) See also CHAVES, Luís - "O Museu de Arte Popular" in *Pnorama*, SNI, n° 35, vol. 6, 1948.

⁴¹² The labels just identified the geographical provenience of the object, sometimes its age and its producer or donor.

⁴¹³ For example, in 1968 the museum had a budget of 200.000\$00, but this amount was to be used in monthly portions of 16.666\$70, and the director had no authority to spend more than this per month (folder "*Museus Existentes / Contas do Museu*").

⁴¹⁴ Almost all items of current use were submitted to this regime, as stationary, washing liquids, furniture, all kinds of items for the garden around the museum and even some non-material needs as transports of large objects or repairs the museum needed (folders "*Apetreçamento Mobiliário*", "*Requisições*" and "*Notas de Expediente*").

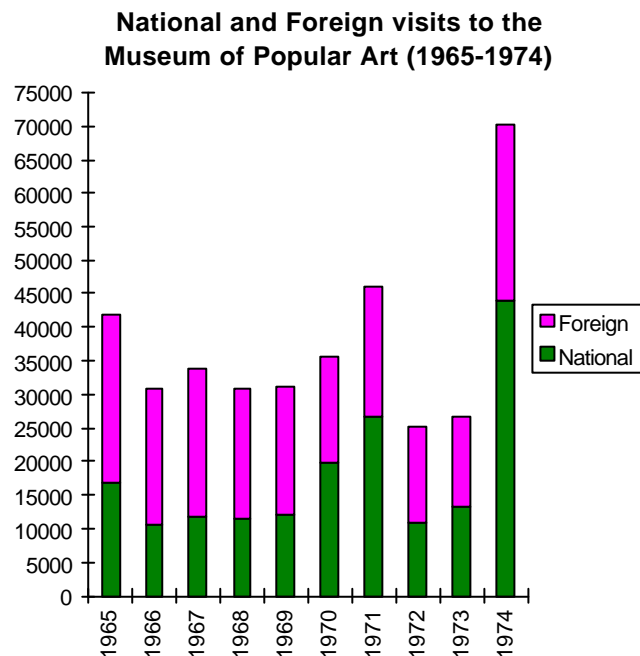
⁴¹⁵ E.g.: a letter sent by the curator to the director of the museum (folder "*Apetreçamento mobiliário*" - 1967).

⁴¹⁶ In 1963/12/10 the responsible for checking the expenses of the museum (*Chefe da 1ª Secção da Repartição Central*) sent a letter to the director, marked as "Confidential". He remarked that the MAP had asked for an unjustifiable quantity of toilet paper, considering the number of people working in the museum; he also remarked that the museum always asked for foreign washing products when the national ones were cheaper and as good; finally he also pointed out that the museum's personnel should take better care of the museum machines and tools, as a number of these items had to be repaired more that once during the year (folder "*Apetreçamento mobiliário*").

⁴¹⁷ One of these situations occurred in 1969/01/02 (folder "*Notas de Expediente 1969/70*").

The MAP was one of the most popular Portuguese museums. This was the result of several factors among which three stand out: it was visited by a significant number of tourists as the regular tourist tour of Lisboa included a stop at the museum;⁴¹⁸ it kept an aura of the magnificence of the Exhibition of 1940; it was located in one of the most emblematic parts of the city that attracted an important number of Portuguese visitors. These visits to the museum were, substantially, paid ones. This changed in 1974 when, after the revolution of April, the number of free visits increased significantly.⁴¹⁹

Fig. 19



Graph of the visits to the Museum made from the data kept in the archive of the museum in the folder "*Notas de Expediente*"

⁴¹⁸ António Jesus Lopes Crucho is a day guard of the museum and still remembers that sometimes three or four buses arrived at the same time with tourists to visit the museum. See appendix for synopsis of the interview with António Crucho.

⁴¹⁹ There is no official explanation to this increased number of free visits, but it is logical to accept that the revolutionary ambience during May 1974 contributed to it.

Fig. 20.
Charged, Free and Students visits to the Museum of Popular Art (1958 - 1974)

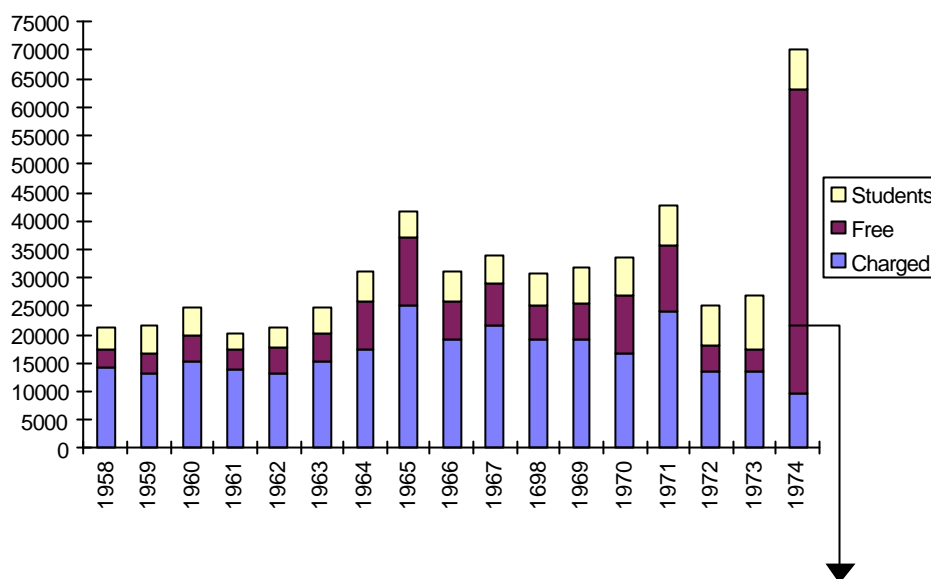
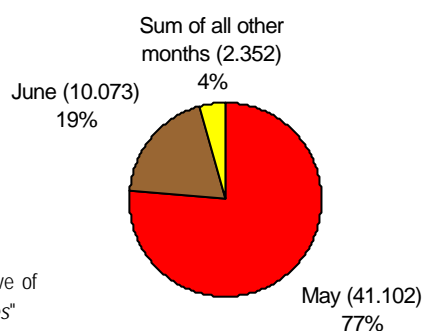


Fig. 21. **Free visits to the Museum of Popular Art in 1974**



Graphs based on the data kept in the archive of the museum, folder "Mapa Geral de Visitantes"

The number of students (of all grades) that visited the museum is not very significant if compared with the number of other visitors. Nevertheless, in absolute figures, the museum received an important number of students.⁴²⁰ The museum received numerous solicitations for visits from schools, boys scouts, private cultural associations and militaries.⁴²¹ From the graphs presented above it is evident that the number of Portuguese visitors to the museum increased in 1974 especially in May and June, the months immediately after the revolution (1974/04/25). This phenomenon is quite interesting, and was probably because the museum was seen as a landmark

⁴²⁰ The highest number was reached in 1973 (9.366 students visited the museum); the average between 1958 and 1974 was of 5.500 students per year.

⁴²¹ In folder "Pedidos de Visitas". In 1970 the museum received 175 applications for visits.

of the *Estado Novo*, an ideological construction made with the obvious intent of political and ideological propaganda.

The museum kept formal relations with other institutions of the kind, even out of the normal political environment of the Portuguese foreign relations.⁴²² This may seem difficult to understand; however, the *Estado Novo* always kept control and only accepted certain courses of action. The role of the curator (Maria Madalena Cagigal e Silva) was decisive for these foreign relations, as she always pointed out the advantages of permanent co-operation with foreign institutions. In 1958 she advised that the museum should become a permanent member of the "International Institute for the Conservation of Museum Objects". She pointed out that the museum would benefit by receiving their publications, which she considered extremely important.⁴²³ Another way of keeping up with the European news on the museological field was travelling: the curator asked for permission to be absent from the museum several times and undertook different study trips (in 1959 to Belgium; 1960 to France; 1962 to Spain; 1963 to Belgium; 1964 to Greece; 1966 to the UK).⁴²⁴ The library of the museum also kept an active policy of interchange of publications with other museums in Europe, Africa, Brazil and USA.⁴²⁵

Staff is one of the issues best documented in the archive of the museum.⁴²⁶ The museum director was frequently absent⁴²⁷ and almost all the responsibility was passed to the curator. During the period under analysis two different curators worked in the museum: Maria Madalena Cagigal e Silva occupied the place since 1958 and Maria Helena Meira Dias Coimbra replaced her in 1968. Maria Madalena Silva applied for the job after a long experience in museum work as a curator and the director approved her application because he had always considered the former

⁴²² In 1969 a delegation of Russian intellectuals visited the museum. The opportunity was used to exchange publications of both institutions. In 1971 the director asked for permission from the Secretary of State to present a temporary exhibition of Romanian popular art. The reply established the necessity of equal treatment by the Romanian museum, but allowed the event (letters, 1971/06/15 and 1971/07/23, folder "*Visitas e Viagens de Estudo; Congressos e Exposições; Postais e Fotografias*").

⁴²³ The letter of the curator is dated 1958/03/13; the formal authorisation is dated 1958/03/31 (folder "*Biblioteca*").

⁴²⁴ Folder "*Visitas e Viagens de Estudo; Congressos e Exposições; Postais e Fotografias*".

⁴²⁵ Folder "*Biblioteca*".

⁴²⁶ The examples that will be used in the following paragraphs are documented in folders "*Movimentação de Pessoal*", "*Pessoal Menor*" and "*Questões de Pessoal*".

⁴²⁷ The director also worked in the SNI, that was in another part of the city.

curator, Henrique Vaz Viana, incompetent.⁴²⁸ Ten years later she left the museum to become director of another national museum (the *Museu Nacional dos Coches*). Then Maria Helena Meira Dias Coimbra took her position. While Maria Madalena was the curator the labour disputes in the museum were constant and when she left some very difficult questions were still unresolved. Maria Helena tried to implement a peaceful working environment, but she had to face similar difficulties as her predecessor.

Problems arose with the guards about holiday entitlement. The guards had no right to paid holidays, they could only ask for unpaid leave for twelve days in each year. The result was that during the absence of one guard the others had to do his job. It was impossible for the curator to impose co-operation among the personnel of the museum, and for more than once some of the guards refused to work overtime.⁴²⁹ The curator even appealed to the director's authority as she recognised that her orders were no longer respected inside the museum.⁴³⁰ This problem was partially solved in 1968 when the museum admitted another night guard.⁴³¹ The problems between Maria Madalena and the personnel of the museum were continual. During the period she was responsible for the museum the number of disputes is significant. In 1960 the curator used for the first time a printed 'Warning' to the guards, because she found the staff toilets and some of the objects in the displays dirty with a substance she avoids to identify. In 1962 she tried to put an end to the lack of discipline with another 'Warning' to the guards, which the chief guard was compelled to sign. From then onwards, it was absolutely forbidden to smoke inside the museum both for guards and visitors.⁴³² Just before the curator left the museum she had to face another two quarrels: the first one occurred in May 1968 when one of the cleaning ladies wrote a dismissal letter in which she accused the curator of making her work too much, while she allowed

⁴²⁸ Letter (1958/01/15).

⁴²⁹ In 1958/02/04, a director's internal decision allowed changes of duty among the staff if properly documented and communicated, in written, in advance. During the 1960s there was hardly ever a month without some justified absences to work (medical reasons, and other accepted justifications).

⁴³⁰ Letter (1968/11/19).

⁴³¹ On this matter it is interesting to hear what the guards, still working in the museum, have to say. See appendix for synopsis of interviews with António Jesus Lopes Crucho and Sebastião Gouveia Santos.

⁴³² The curator remarked that she had found some of the objects in the displays used as ashtrays.

that others worked very little; the second one occurred in December of the same year involving a guard who was systematically disobeying her orders and being insolent.⁴³³

This was the state of labour relations in the museum when Maria Helena became curator. She tried to solve things, and the number of quarrels decreased significantly.⁴³⁴ Nevertheless, the problems among the guards remained unsolved and the disrespect for the working hours was constant. In 1971 this question resulted in an intervention of the governmental representative responsible for the museum who reprimanded the director and demanded discipline. The director sent a letter informing the curator⁴³⁵ and imposing a 'martial law' in the museum: no more privileges, no more confidence, no more prerogatives. Any minor disrespect to rules was to be immediately and severely punished. A month later the governmental representative responsible for the museum sent a hand-written note⁴³⁶ to the director asking whether the museum timetables were being respected. The workers of the museum were not concerned with the pseudo-authority of the curator or with the intervention of the director, but they feared the intervention of governmental administrative disciplinary decisions because a simple act of work disobedience could be interpreted as an act of subversion (as they were considered civil servants) and, therefore, have dramatic political consequences: to be against the state and the *Estado Novo* was a crime.

Despite all these difficulties the curators were perfectly conscious that the guards were not very well paid⁴³⁷ and that their work was dangerous and hard.⁴³⁸ When Maria Helena became curator she tried to help the gardener, Feliciano Coelho, who had been working in the museum since 1948 with no right to retirement. In 1970, he was seriously ill, he sent a letter to the director

⁴³³ Some months before, the curator had forced the guard to sign a document where she had written down all the duties he had to know and to perform.

⁴³⁴ In 1970/02/03 Maria Helena had to face a legal question with a guard (Manuel de Jesus Maria) who had been absent from work since December 1969.

⁴³⁵ Letter (1971/03/17).

⁴³⁶ Folder "*Pessoal*", note (1971/04/24).

⁴³⁷ In 1965 the guard António Monteiro received 1.300\$00 per month.

⁴³⁸ As an example of this, there is the case of an aggression perpetrated against a guard during the night of 1963/10/08. In the interviews with the guards the issue of self defence was raised and Mr Sebastião Santos informed that he has a pistol which is his own gun, but he is not allowed to use it inside the facilities. Nevertheless, he had to use it once while going back home during the night, after having finished his shift.

imploing some help.⁴³⁹ The curator took the defence of the gardener and sent a letter⁴⁴⁰ to the director. The official answer arrived two months later⁴⁴¹ denying all the requests.⁴⁴² This official answer demonstrates the total indifference of the *Estado Novo* bureaucratic system towards its workers. Apparently, the main goal of the regime was to save money.

The lack of harmony inside the museum and the poor respect towards the regime generated a significant number of absences that the guards had to justify. The most common justification for these absences was health problems. They had to present a formal document from a doctor but it was common knowledge that some of those were false. Another excuse to be absent, for those who belonged to the "National Legion" (*Legião Nacional*),⁴⁴³ was the participation in official ceremonies. Still another reason evoked by one of the guards (Germano Folgado) was the fact he was studying.⁴⁴⁴ The effort of Germano Folgado was an exception. Most of the guards of the museum had only completed compulsory education. The guards had to deal with international visitors and had to explain the contents of each room. This was seen as an act of propaganda because the museum intended to represent Portugal in its most vernacular and truthful traditions. Because of that, in 1959, the director of the SNI decided that all the guards of the MAP should take French classes.⁴⁴⁵ French was the second language traditionally learned in Portuguese schools and an important percentage of the tourists visiting Portugal were French speakers. That decision was therefore understandable. Some years later the number of English speakers visiting the Museum increased considerably (see graphs below).

⁴³⁹ The general tone of the letter is remarkable: the gardener uses a very humble and submissive text, begging for help and affirming he knows he has no legal rights whatsoever.

⁴⁴⁰ Folder "*Pessoal*", letter (1972/03/07).

⁴⁴¹ Letter (1972/04/26).

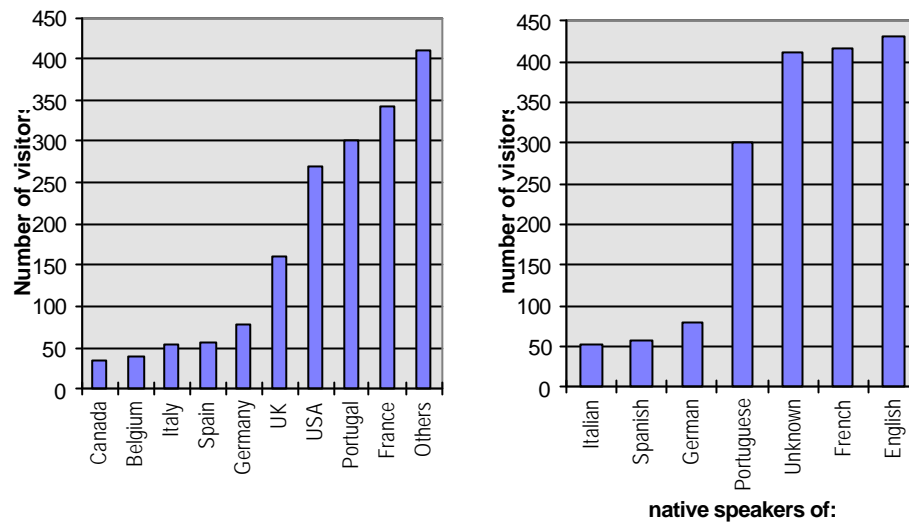
⁴⁴² In 1973, the curator tried to help the gardener again, using the same arguments and receiving the same answers; letter (1973/07/13).

⁴⁴³ The guard Fernando Pinhão Alegria was a member of the *Legião* and between 1954 and 1957 there are several letters from that organisation asking for his presence in official events.

⁴⁴⁴ In 1958/01/30 Germano Augusto Folgado sent a letter to the director of the museum explaining that he was trying to finish the 9th grade. The director asked for the curator's opinion who agreed; Germano Folgado was authorised to be absent from work all Sundays during the morning (letters in folder "*Movimentação de Pessoal*" dating 1958/02/01 and 1958/02/06).

⁴⁴⁵ Letter (1959/10).

Fig. 22. Visitors to the Museum of Popular Art in August 1972



The lack of formal education and the poor social conditions for the guards working in the museum shaped the relationships among them and between them and the curators and directors. Despite all the conflicts there are several examples of an almost complete dependence of the guards on their hierarchical superiors, even for asking for their legal rights. As demonstrative examples, there are two letters sent to the director and written in such terms that 'feudal' could almost be a good adjective to classify the relationship of which they are evidence. The first one is from Cristovão Saboia Farinha, who wrote a letter to the director of the museum applying for a job.⁴⁴⁶ The second one is a letter of one of the guards of the museum who was going through health problems.⁴⁴⁷ He asked to be transferred to a different workplace, but emphasised that he was aware that he was asking for a favour.⁴⁴⁸ This kind of paternalistic relationship between different social classes is one of the characteristics of the regime. Inside museums and other public services it was considered as a privilege to be respected by hierarchical superiors. Most of the

⁴⁴⁶ In his letter he reminded the director that he was the person who had been in charge of the paperwork related to the director's dog and humbly asked for forgiveness for writing the letter. It is remarkable that the word "dog" (*cão*) is written with a capital letter as a sign of respect. Letter (1967/02/17).

⁴⁴⁷ He was a night guard and the cold and moister of the river associated to a rheumatic disease and to very long years of work in such conditions was making it impossible for him to work.

⁴⁴⁸ The terms of the final sentence of the letter are almost humiliating: the guard declares himself as an "humble" servant who finds himself in the need of imploring the help of the director; he adds that the director could do with him whatever he wanted in his high judgement. Letter (1968/12/29).

labour difficulties inside de MAP were the result of a sentiment of rebellion that could not be freely expressed but that was present, poisoning day-to-day life.

With slight changes⁴⁴⁹ the Museum remained the same during the whole period under analysis. The organisation of the rooms and of the collections were kept almost unchanged, as they were considered perfect from the ideological perspective. It was of almost no relevance if the museological criteria were different. The only news of important repairs in the museum dates from the late 1960s. During a brief period in 1969 the museum had no curator and a clerk, named Ângelo Ricardo Antunes Reis,⁴⁵⁰ had to assume the responsibility for the institution. He was worried that any problem could arise under his responsibility and wrote an internal note to the director stating that rain was infiltrating into the room dedicated to *Algarve*; two weeks later, he reinforced the information by affirming that it was "really raining" in *Algarve* and in *Trás-os-Montes*.⁴⁵¹ Yet those were not the only difficulties Ângelo Reis had to face. Only a few days later (on the 27th February) an earthquake caused major damages in the museum. Cracks opened on the walls, especially in the room of *Minho* that was in danger of collapsing.⁴⁵² In the beginning of March, Ângelo Reis informed the director that the roofs had finally been inspected and that he had carefully restored the objects broken during the earthquake with a special glue he had expressly bought for that task.⁴⁵³ As a consequence of the inspection of roofs some emergency repairs were made⁴⁵⁴ but the building needed a much deeper intervention. So, a complete inspection to the building occurred a few days later.⁴⁵⁵ There is no record in the archive of the museum that any repairs were done to the building.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁴⁹ For example, the installation of night emergency lights or other devices meant to improve the security of the building and of the night guards. See appendix for synopsis of interviews with the guards.

⁴⁵⁰ Ângelo Reis had had a problem with the director some ten years before: he used to drink heavily and behave in improper ways; the director informed the responsible of the SNI of this problem. Nevertheless Ângelo Reis remained in his job. Letter in folder "*Movimentação do Pessoal*" (1958/02/04).

⁴⁵¹ Internal notes in folder "*Notas de Expediente*" (1969/01/14 and 1969/02/04),.

⁴⁵² Internal note in folder "*Notas de Expediente*" (1969/02/28).

⁴⁵³ Internal notes in folder "*Notas de Expediente*" (1969/03/04 and 05).

⁴⁵⁴ Internal note in folder "*Notas de Expediente*" (1969/03/07).

⁴⁵⁵ Internal note in folder "*Notas de Expediente*" (1969/03/11).

⁴⁵⁶ It is a fact that the museum was in very poor condition during the 1970s and the 1980s. The interior of the rooms was too humid and the ceilings and walls had evident marks of moister. This situation remained unchanged until de late 1990s.

The MAP can be considered as a 'model' of the *Estado Novo*: almost all of the most important ideological marks of the regime could be found inside the museum. The displays provided an image of Portugal that the *Estado Novo* wanted to transmit both to international visitors and to the Portuguese. Besides, the personal and labour relationships inside, the museum had the 'trademark' of the *Estado Novo*. The paternalistic domination was to produce a humble submission, but sometimes a paradoxical effect emerged and it is possible to observe a subversive resistance. The Museum, unlike other national museums, was under the direct supervision of the SNI and this institution had decisive propagandistic and ideological interests in the museum, as it was 'the' museum of the SNI and one of the most visited Portuguese museums. Therefore, the MAP was a very special case as it was the centre of political, propagandistic and ideological concerns. Perhaps more than any other Portuguese museum of the epoch, the MAP reflected the *Estado Novo*'s policy for museums, while objects of propaganda and ideological activity.