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## **Expositive Architectures and National Identity:**

The Portuguese pavilions in International Exhibitions  
between the First Republic and the *Estado Novo*

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## Abstract

International Exhibitions fostered architectural and technological vanguards that constituted pivotal points for true modernism, encompassing artistic experiments that live on today as memories, drawings, video and photographic records. Some structures persist, not only as residues of these extraordinary events, but also as iconic references. These events affected profoundly the development of architectural history, through the buildings displayed and revolutionary ideas that were explored. Their influence spread far and wide, influencing many countries, such as Portugal.

Understanding the national participation in these international events, from the First Republic to the upheaval of the *Estado Novo* regime, requires an analysis from multiple perspectives. Different political and economic circumstances moulded the strategy to adopt in each participation, as well as selecting the architectural style that should be used to convey a certain image of the country. This sparked a debate between architects and cultural agents, sometimes selected as jurors for the architectural competitions held for the Portuguese Pavilions. Evaluating these architectural competitions means identifying key participants, their proposals and their thoughts on the issue of a representative 'national style'. This particular period also dwells with the issue of implementing modern architecture, distanced from eclectic historicisms yet rooted in vernacular elements.

The Portuguese Pavilions aid in documenting paradigm shifts in style, construction systems and decorative program, as well as presenting important case studies on ephemeral architecture reuse and adaptation. There are many possible paths and correlations, fostering the acquisition of knowledge and experimentation, encompassing a kaleidoscopic vision.

**Keywords:** "International Exhibitions"; "Expositive Architectures"; "Portuguese Pavilion"; "Architecture Competitions"; "National Style"; "Total Work of Art".



Image 1. Pedro Cid, Entrance, Portuguese Pavilion in the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. BAFCG, CFT164 044133.ic.

## Theme and objectives

The International Expositions comprised true emblems of modernity since its inception, in the nineteenth century, as mediums for paradigms of Art and Technique among several nations. Under the motto of promoting international relations, both hosting countries and foreign participants sought to take advantage of the opportunity to display and expand their technological progress and economical supremacy. The uniqueness of each country was enhanced through industrialization, trade and development, alongside a cultural standpoint, through its history and artistic production. The exhibition medium translated into the specific design of national pavilions, in order to incorporate a set of own identity references (GREENHALG, 2011).

The Portuguese Pavilions erected in these events constitute important case studies for the evaluation of experiences in expositive architectures and how they aspire to showcase a certain national profile. After the nineteenth century, when Portugal had entrusted the design of these buildings to foreigners, the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1900 marks the first architectural competition among Portuguese architects. The design of national pavilions in the twentieth century was then in the hands of our architects, through competitions or direct adjudications, always subjected to specific ideological, aesthetic and stylistic orientations, igniting arguments and diatribes among architects and other cultural agents. In many cases, architecture fulfils the function of a scenic vessel, a vitrine in order to project the image of Portugal abroad, both of progress and historical evocation (THIESSE, 2001). Thus, the pursuit for defining the 'national style' in relation to building an image of the 'Portuguese Empire' dominate the discourse, translated into architectural options in these Pavilions, between the First Republic and the *Estado Novo*. These constitute the boundaries and time frame for this present study, comprising about a dozen exhibitions between 1915 and 1970.

Examining the Pavilions of Portugal, within this chronological framework and typology, allows the evaluation of core outlines in the development for contemporary architectural thought among us. There were nine participations of Portugal in these International and Universal Exhibitions, involving the construction of a national pavilion:

Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco 1915, Arch. António do Couto (assigned)  
Independence Centenary International Exposition, Rio de Janeiro, 1922, Archs. Cottinelli Telmo, Carlos Ramos and Alexandre da Cunha – Honor Pavilion; Archs. Rebello de Andrade – Pavilion of Portuguese Industries (competitions)  
Ibero-American Exposition, Seville, 1929, Archs. Rebello de Andrade (competition)  
Internacional and Colonial Exposition, Paris, 1931, Arch. Raul Lino (competition)  
Paris Universal Exposition, 1937, Arch. Keil do Amaral (competition)  
New York World's Fair and Golden Gate Exposition, San Francisco, 1939, Arch. Jorge Segurado (assigned)  
Brussels World's Fair, 1958, Arch. Pedro Cid (competition)  
Expo'70, Osaka, 1970, Arch. Frederico George (assigned)

These constituted the choices made by the Portuguese governments based on strategies influenced by political, economic and ideological purposes. There were other shows held during the twentieth century, in which Portugal decided not to participate. Some of them did not acquire the status of sanction by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), created from an agreement signed in November 1928 in Paris (PELLE *et al.*, 2008). The organization came to regulate the frequency rights and obligations of host nations and invited countries. Every exposition in this study was sanctioned by the BIE – except the Colonial exposition in Paris 1931 and the Golden Gate Exposition in 1939, most likely due to the specific nature of these events.

This study addresses other expositions held or planned, such as the International Exposition in Antwerp in 1930, also of colonial nature, and the Rome Universal Exhibition planned for 1942, never realized due to the World War II. In Antwerp, Portugal had its own stand, well located on the slant of a floriculture warehouse, allowing for the design of its own facade on the outside. Despite a reduced intervention at government level, it is still relevant to contextualize this initiative, considering the disparity with the participation in the International and Colonial Exhibition in Paris, held the following year. As for the preparations for the Rome

Exhibition, these had not gone unnoticed in the Portuguese professional context, establishing an important vector of admiration and inspiration for Italian modernist architecture.

As an overview, the objectives can be listed in the following points:

- Assessing the importance of International Expositions for architectural development at a global level, both as a synthesis of principles and for opening new paths;
- Encapsulate the Portuguese participation in these events, between the First Republic and the *Estado Novo*, assessing their importance;
- Deliberate on the issue of "national style", both for the adopted eclectic models, as to the genesis of Portuguese modernism;
- Regarding the competitions of the 'Pavilion of Portugal' as the commitment and/or synthesis of architectural thought, as well as the discussion around the issue of "style";
- The design of the 'Pavilion of Portugal' as a total work of art, bearing in mind the relationship between architecture and decorative program in service of a national image;
- Review of different building techniques employed and its evolution;
- Adjustments from ephemeral to permanent for reusing the pavilions;
- Consider the 'Pavilion of Portugal' as an opportunity for acquiring know-how experiences for the projection of showcasing spaces and their expositive discourse.

It is proposed an overall critical assessment of Portuguese pavilions – in the perspective of the architectural field – as well as questioning key issues for the inception of modernism in Portugal. There are three key aspects in dealing with the fundamental aspects of the expositive architectures, in correlation with 'national identity'.

### **International Expositions and Architecture**

These exhibitions function, in the architectural field, as key mediums for experimenting with new concepts, but also register persistent models and even setbacks. The close collaboration between the architectural programs and political resolves might condition the architect's practice, not always sanctioning innovation, while identity issues lead to the use of specific forms, devices and ornaments of their national heritage, or certain speeches for propaganda and assertion of power. It is sufficient to regard the stark contrast between Melnikov's Pavilion of Russia in 1925 and the work of Boris Iofan in 1937, or Mies van der Rohe in 1929 and Speer's German Pavilion in 1937.

Innovation did not always originate from dominant nations. With fewer resources, and therefore much more modesty, countries like Japan presented with such subtlety as ubiquitous significance. Its elements infiltrated western Art, Architecture, Design and Industry, establishing itself as key drivers for creating new paradigms in these areas. Finland revealed itself to the world by the 'art and genius' of Alvar Aalto, revealing an 'organic' route for modernity, by using traditional materials such as wood and brick. Brazil presented its interpretation of Le Corbusier's modernism, showing to other countries the possibility of providing national features to the 'International Style'.

These events influenced Portuguese architects profoundly, constituting opportunities to experience pioneering concepts first hand, with multiple experiences gathered in one site. Their relevance stems not only from what was observed, but also the experience of developing ideas, concepts and buildings to bring into these expositions.

## The participation of Portugal: between the political decision, controversy of the competitions, the subject of "style" and 'Portuguese modernism'

It is vital to analyse the Portuguese participation in four crucial vectors. One of them is to establish the political circumstances that preceded the decision to participate in competitions, as well as the conditions to do so and consequently the strategy to adopt. Most of the time, the political decision comprised by a call for competition between Portuguese architects, making it mandatory to explore who participated and the works presented, as well as a whole range of issues raised from these proceedings (TOUSSAINT, 1997). One of the competitions' key aspects was the wording of the respective statements, where it was often solicited a "national appearance". This request was subsequently regarded either as an oppressive restriction or an apparent liberation that was inherently ambiguous, triggering a series of controversies surrounding the design of the 'Pavilion of Portugal'.

Overviewing a general analysis on the several architectural competitions held to choose the project for the construction of the "Pavilion of Portugal" in international exhibitions for this period, one can conclude on the great importance national architects devoted to these competitions. This investigation allowed the formulation of two synoptic tables, assembling data gathered of the participants in these competitions, as well as the appointed judges (see Tables I and II).

	Competitors				
	1 <sup>st</sup> place	2 <sup>nd</sup> place	3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Honorable mentions	Others
Rio de Janeiro 22 Honor Pavilion	Cottinelli Telmo, Luís Alexandre da Cunha e Carlos Ramos	Pedro Rodrigues Machado	Eugénio Correia e Paulino Montez	Pardal Monteiro José Marques da Silva	?
Pavilion of Industries	Carlos e Guilherme Rebello de Andrade e Alfredo da Assunção Santos	Pedro Rodrigues Machado	?	?	?
Seville 29	Carlos e Guilherme Rebello de Andrade	Cassiano Branco e Carlos Dias	Cottinelli Telmo	-	Tertuliano Marques, Jorge Segurado Paulino Montez Cristino da Silva Francisco de Oliveira Ferreira
Paris 31	Raul Lino	Carlos e Guilherme Rebello de Andrade	Carlos Ramos e Adelino Nunes	-	Álvaro Machado, Ferreira da Costa, Rogério de Azevedo, Norte Júnior, Victor Piloto, Cassiano Branco Carlos Dias
Paris 37	Francisco Keil do Amaral	António Maria Veloso Reis Camelo	Artur Simões da Fonseca	Raul Lino João Simões	Francisco de Oliveira Ferreira Henrique Taveira Soares
Brussels 56	Pedro Cid	-	-	-	Maurício de Vasconcelos João José Malato, José Luís Tinoco e J. Américo d'Oliveira Francisco Figueiredo Sebastião Formosinho Sanchez Rui Mendes Paula Manuel Taíinha

Table 1. Architects who participated in the Portuguese Pavilion's architectural competitions 1922 -1956.

	Jury Members of the board					
	President	Commissioner	Academy/School of Fine Arts	Committee of Art and Archaeology / Superior Committee of Fine Arts /Education Ministry	National Society of Fine Arts	Society of Portuguese Architects
Rio de Janeiro 22	Alfredo Augusto Lisboa de Lima	João António Piloto	?	?	?	?
Seville 29	Manoel Gonçalves da Silveira Azevedo e Castro	João António Piloto	José de Figueiredo António Augusto da Costa Mota José Alexandre Soares	-	Lúis Alexandre da Cunha José Urbano de Castro	-
Paris 31	Manoel Gonçalves da Silveira Azevedo e Castro	José Alexandre Soares	António do Couto Abreu Luciano Freire José de Figueiredo José Simões de Almeida	Adolfo Marques da Costa António de Brito (Porto)	José Urbano de Castro	-
Paris 37	António Ferro	Luis Cristino da Silva	Paulino Montez	António do Couto Abreu	Pardal Monteiro Adelino Nunes	Jorge Segurado Francisco Franco
Brussels 56	José Penha Garcia	Jorge Segurado	-	-	José Pessoa	Francisco Keil do Amaral Mário Neves Manuel da Silva Martins

Table 2. Members of the jury convened for the Portuguese Pavilion's architectural competitions 1922 -1956.



Image 2. News article regarding the architectural competition for the Portuguese Pavilion in Seville, 1929. AML, Espólio Cassiano Branco, PT/AMLSB/CB/04/02/16.

The debate around the issue of a "Portuguese Style" was not confined to the great international exhibition of 1900, and the following architectural competitions in the first half of the twentieth century granted the opportunity for architects to express their views on the subject, entering a hitherto restricted debate to historians and other intellectuals. This circumstance was not without some friction among the members of the jury and competitors. The Pavilion of Portugal would then mirror the complex conjecture on the issue of 'national style', and competitions – particularly the choice of winning projects – are an excellent barometer in assessing the eclectic references adopted at the time.

In order to implement this image, it was necessary to choose an architectural style not only representative of past glories, but also a reflection of the current theories on what it should be. After the historical eclecticism of Portuguese pavilions during the nineteenth century, Ventura Terra's projects emerged as the harbinger of a new era in Portuguese architecture. However, the inspiration in the Parisian Beaux Arts did not satisfy the intellectual factions of the time, setting in architectural history the confrontation between the winner and the design inspired by Portuguese vernacular architecture by Raul Lino, compared by Bordallo Pinheiro. José de Figueiredo, prestigious art critic and director of the National Museum of Ancient Art, dubbed the Colonies Pavilion as a "clothing flat iron" (FIGUEIREDO, 1901). Also not pleased with Lino's proposal, Figueiredo suggests hesitantly, the Romanesque. His idea of a 'national style' was not yet formed, and was only stated – and implemented – later on.

This reflection was driven by the fall of the monarchy, where the Ultimatum 1890 generated an excessive use of Manueline, pressing the model to exhaustion. The apparent incongruity in using this style in the Portuguese Pavilion at the Panama-Pacific Exhibition, without any tendering procedure, can only be explained by the troubled instability of the First Republic, with only five years since its establishment. With little time, scarce resources and a large Portuguese community in San Francisco to assuage, the idea was to assemble different decorative elements of the great monuments of Portugal, also picture on the pavilion's interior as Tourism advertising. The architect Antonio do Couto Abreu designed the pavilion in this style as it was requested by the Commissioner, drawn from a suggestion by the minister in charge of choosing the plot in the grounds of the Exhibition.

It was, however, necessary a disruption from the monarchical "Estylo manuelinho", and the search for alternative models reached the 'quinto-joanina' baroque-style inspiration, based on large manor houses and palaces of the eighteenth century. This stylization was very pleasing to José de Figueiredo, and their participation in the preparatory committee for the 1922 Exhibition of competition in Rio de Janeiro was not a coincidence – since the statement called for a building on the "spirit of our brightest times of civil architecture". The project of Carlos Ramos, Cottinelli Telmo and Alexandre Cunha was far from the linearity and dryness (ALMEIDA, 1986) of the House Barros & Santos Ramos and Gil Vicente High school from his partners, establishing that there was a clear gesture of compromise in the eclectic pavilion's design.

Modernity grappled with spreading to the Portuguese Pavilions, with faint and far apart requests. Jorge Segurado appealed for a modern and rational expression in 1927, anticipating the competition for the Ibero-American event, to be held there in two years. However, his words did not correspond to the project that he presented for the competition. Many discrepancies could be pointed out, between the historicist stylizations presented in these competitions and other projects by the same authors. The 'generation of compromisers' in the words of Carlos Ramos, was exactly that particularly in competitions for the 'Pavilion of Portugal' for the exhibitions in Rio de Janeiro (1922), Seville (1929) and Paris (1931).

Debates and propositions to find a Portuguese architectural identity underwent a major change with the advent of the *Estado Novo*, where the confrontation with other

totalitarian models that emerged in Europe precipitated a process of looking for a new national veneer (ACCIAOULI, 1998). In addition, the architects themselves felt the need to stop looking at the past and turning to the future, trying to prepare the first steps towards a modern yet Portuguese architecture. This attitude also reflected in the pavilions, which should be framed in architectural production, from 1934.

The refusal to collage international models, inspiration in the vernacular instead of monumental styles found a very particular tenderer in Raul Lino, a case absolutely paradigmatic and rather isolated. The consistency and specificity of his vision distances him from other architects, creating difficulty in defining Lino's work. In the 70s, the label of "modern" by Pedro Vieira de Almeida caused controversy, but one cannot forget the positioning Cottinelli Telmo in his assessment of the projects for the Monument to Henry the Navigator competition in 1935. Although 'medieval', Telmo recognizes the modern character in Raul Lino's proposal, and in drafting the manifesto Representation 35, the name of Raul Lino is emphasized, placed next to Cottinelli, presumably the author of the complaint for the competition.

The rupture of this ambiguous solution to compromise and the attempt to impose a modern style in Portuguese architecture comes with the establishment of the *Estado Novo* as a fertile ground for its effectiveness. This competition was the opportunity to aid the leader of the regime see how much it was needed an identifiable image that was not inferior to previous historical times. The modern could be a reference to take lead, without being strictly wedged to international models, but imbued with a national feature. The idea appealed to Salazar, naming in charge Antonio Ferro and Duarte Pacheco to mediate the affirmation of the proposed model by this generation of architects.

This process reflected directly in the competition for the Portuguese Pavilion for the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1937, where for the first time the statement asked the architects to design a 'modern but Portuguese' building. However, the 'generation of compromisers', in the words of Carlos Ramos, did not participate in this competition, and the victory went to his disciple, the young Keil do Amaral. While this generation enshrines the "national modern" in the Mundo Português Exposition in 1940, Keil and Jorge Segurado designed the Pavilions of Portugal in Paris and New York, in its purified form and large surfaces prepared to receive the integrated decoration, in order to function as a large poster to promote Portugal abroad. If the Modern principles were adopted, other competitors in 1937 persist in historicist references, without giving signs of understanding or acceptance of the change that was being implemented. The very Raul Lino foresees this paradigm shift, submitting a proposal in line with Pardal Monteiro's Art Deco, as seen in the Instituto Superior Técnico.

The struggle of these architects for enforcing their intentions to create architecture for the regime that it was both modern and national met its apogee in 1940. Eight years later, at the First National Congress of Architecture, these architects have been forced to confront their disillusionment with the regime, facing criticism in regard to the so-called 'Português Suave', rather than the consecration of their efforts. Keil do Amaral will take over as leader of the group of architects in Lisbon, rejuvenating the magazine *Arquitectura*; while Carlos Ramos would provide the educational environment necessary for the development of innovative thinking of architects such as Fernando Távora (TOSTÕES, 2008). From this point, two fundamental aspects of modernity developed in Portugal.

Many architects will express their desire to join and explore the concepts of CIAM, intervening in the city at the urban scale, according to Corbusier's doctrines. Pedro Cid's Pavilion at the Brussels World Exhibition in 1958 is presented as an overview of the principles of the 'International Style'. However, the project is criticized for his mischaracterization. Indeed, alongside the use of foreign models, some architects did not forget the intention to develop a language simultaneously refined and vernacular. The survey for Portuguese

Regional Architecture had its importance in this search, and architects such as Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas would come to develop this third approach, long dreamed of by national architects. The last pavilion studied, designed by Frederico George, falls within this alternative path, unconcerned with the traditional-modern dichotomy and seeking only a solid conceptual and formal cohesion.

### **The execution of the selected projects: ephemeral architecture as a "total work of art"**

It is also important to assess the "life" of the Pavilions, translated throughout the process comprising the project, whether by competition or assignment, construction, experience and afterlife of Portuguese pavilions. In the domain of integration of architectural design and exhibition program, the national pavilions built on foreign lands, between 1915 and 1970, undertook distinct configurations. The first exhibitions followed a model of simple showcasing, displaying a set of selected works, and along with industrial products, Fine Arts exhibits were held. The expositions subsequently evolved toward a model of commissions for works of painting and sculpture. In Seville, the decorated rooms were also replete with cabinets of agricultural, industrial and colonial products. In 1931, after choosing the architectural winning project, a competition for artists was launched under the supervision of the author of the architectural project. Slowly a team of artists from various specialties was formed, who shared the same guidance and learnt to work together towards the production of a consistent exhibit. Under the guidance of Antonio Ferro, and taking advantage of lessons learned from the 1931 exhibition, a new model was created. This consisted of a narrative-driven architectural design, enriched by decorations so as to advertise the political and ideological significance of the regime.

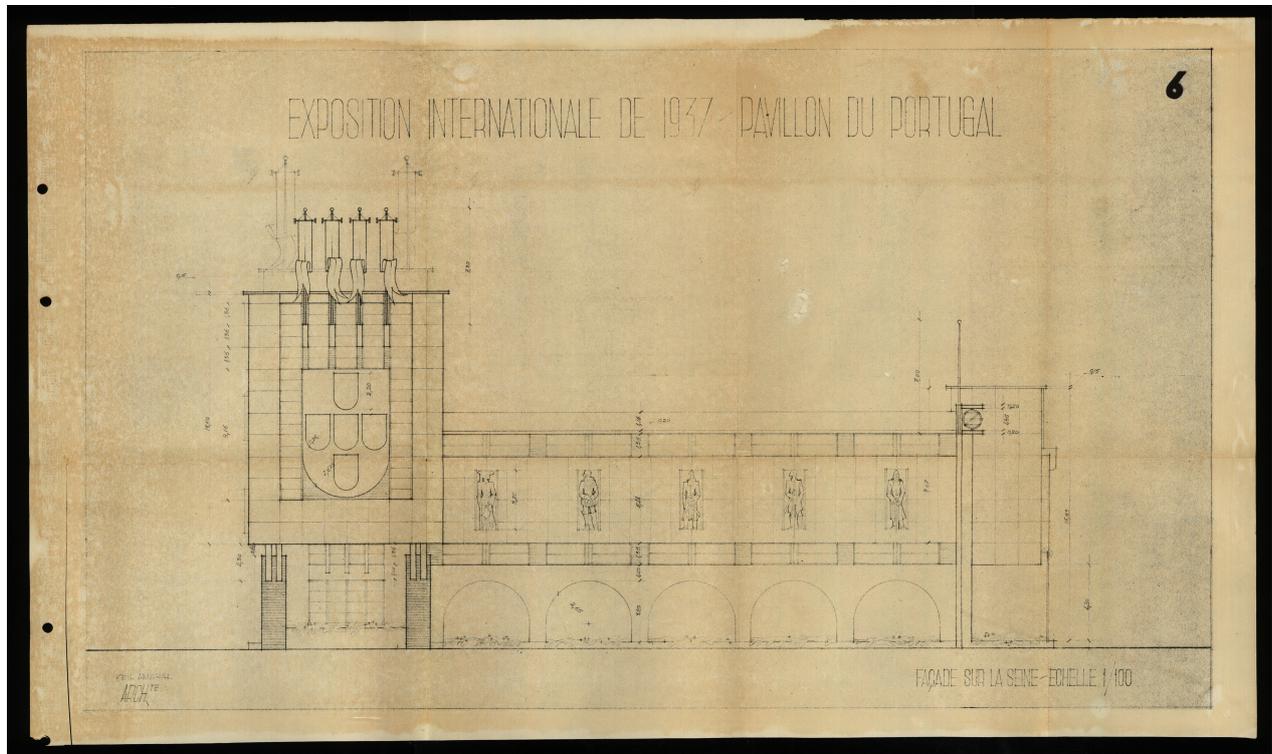


Image 3. Keil do Amaral, façade facing the Seine, Portuguese Pavilion for the Paris Universal Exposition in 1937. ANTT, SNI, cx. 1424.

The pavilion in Brussels marks the triumph of contemporary modern art, although it appears somewhat scattered in the large glass 'container'. That is not true in 1970, where the extensive experience in designing museums and executing decorative interiors of Frederico George allowed the architect to draw an exposition fully integrated with the architectural project, and the close collaboration with Daciano da Costa allowed for elevating the concept of total work of art – studied in 1929, tested in 1931 and improved in 1937 and 1939 – to a fully integrated whole.

The development of technical and constructive paradigms is also notorious when looking at these Pavilions globally, where the choices were also conditioned by their transience, re-use and permanence. Metal structures covered by panels and rich ornaments modelled in plaster served the ephemeral pavilions in 1915 and 1922, built in Portugal and sent to San Francisco and Rio de Janeiro. However, the choice of materials in 22 was deliberate, since there had been the intention of being able to reuse the buildings, as eventually happened with their reassembly in the Park Eduardo VII, where today stands the Pavilion of Industries by brothers Rebello Andrade, reformulated by Jorge Segurado. Seville followed another model, where the intention of fixing the Portuguese consulate in Andalusia led to a combination of brick masonry system in the definitive segment and metallic structure in sections, to be removed after the end of the event, with care to maintain the remaining structure. Without any reuse plans for the Pavilions at the Colonial Exhibition in Paris, those were built with wooden structures and plaster.

The first exhibition of the *Estado Novo* followed common principles of construction, with reinforced concrete for the structure and the walls were executed in brick masonry. After demolishing the pavilion in the Seine riverbank, it was chosen to adopt a metal frame for the New York Pavilion, covered with cement mortar. Both pavilions have been carefully coated in stucco, where inside were applied murals integrated with the exhibition program. According to the principles of the 'International Style' the pavilion designed by Pedro Cid was executed in prefabricated materials, structural steel modules, large glazed planes, aluminum brise-soleils and ceramic stoneware. Osaka presented the only instance where the construction was entirely to the responsibility of a local firm, eventually offering an excellent opportunity for learning Japanese techniques on laying mortar. The structure was executed in steel, covered with plasterboard panels and copper foils for roofing. Traditional finishes were exported from Portugal, such as panels of 'azulejos' and regional marble sections.



Image 4. Frederico George, construction of the Portuguese Pavilion for the Expo'70 in Osaka. DGPC/SIPA, *Espólio Frederico George*, Exposição de Osaka.

## Final considerations

- International Expositions comprised important mediums of architectural experimentation;
- Portugal, between the first republic and the end of the *Estado Novo*, raised nine national pavilions;
- During this period, Portuguese architects were in charge of these projects, either by direct assignment or winning a competition;
- Persistent debate around the issue of a 'national style' for 30 years, in which architects finally take part;
- Procuring a modern, yet Portuguese architectural style;
- Portuguese Pavilion in Paris 1937 was the first modern experience after several historicisms;
- The Pavilion in Brussels 1958 marks the official compliance to the 'International Style', although the intention to look more closely to national realities persisted;
- The Pavilion for Expo'70 represents the balance of these perspectives, consecrating the full integration of architectural and exhibition program;
- Use of different construction systems, according the ephemeral nature, reuse or permanence of these pavilions.

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