

A.R. da SILVA JÚNIOR THE ARCHITECT OF ATLANTIS

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Partner Institutions

Câmara Municipal de Cascais (CMC); Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Cascais (AHMCSC); Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa (AML/ CML)

Expected Future Partner Institutions

Museus de Lisboa / Museu da Cidade (MC/CML); Arquivo Histórico do Ministério das Obras Públicas (AHMOP) Arquivo da Câmara Municipal de Évora; Arquivo da Câmara Municipal da Horta.

OBJECTIVES

Learning with the "beaux-arts": to recognize an almost unknown Portuguese architect with important projects in Portugal. To provide information concerning this projects and the involvement of architectural heritage of the 19th/20th centuries, towards its classing ("classificação") and protection. To provide knowledge about Silva Junior's proclivities towards his relationship with theosophy and its consequences.

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ABSTRACT + IMAGES

António Rodrigues Silva Júnior (1868-1937) was a non-graduated architect, with a versatile activity expressed in engineering and architecture projects some of which remained unbuilt. Son of a painter (António Rodrigues da Silva), his training was completed at the Industrial Institute of Lisbon. He then joined the Public Works Service as "3rd. class conductor" and, later, already in the maturity phase, becoming responsible for the works of the General Plan of the "Estoril-Sol Society". It will be in Estoril (since 1914-1918) that his work of supervision and conductor of construction works, evolves soon after to the activity of designer. *"Linked to the style of the 1900 International Exhibition and Art Nova, through historical revivals and regional traditionalisms, he used all the architectural, formal and decorative resources and combined them with technical innovation, through the introduction and valorization of materials such as iron and concrete and functional constructive solutions that guaranteed fruition and comfort. The perception of the international reality, through readings and permanent visits abroad and participation in events related to the artistic and architectural environment, was decisive for a cosmopolitan vision."* (Maria Calado).

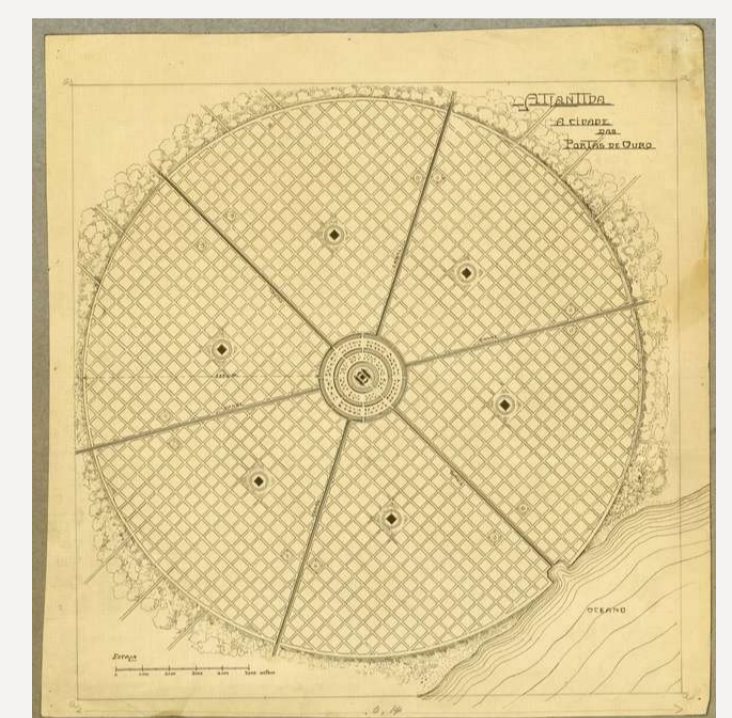
However, Silva Junior's works, although documented, lack a global study. In fact, most of the studies undertaken, which are rare but significant (Helena Gonçalves Pinto, in particular), focus on proposals concerned with health and hygiene issues, as well as on works and projects dedicated to thermal baths ensembles and tourist resorts. However, his eclectic voraciousness and dedication includes a wide range of proposals, some of them built, ranging from the relatively modest single-family house to considerable large factories or fun houses such as casinos and clubs, as well as hotels and railway annexes, particularly in the Cascais/Estoril zone, in Sintra as well as in Lisbon and elsewhere.. with special emphasis on "vivendas", some income buildings, interior refurbishments (Monumental Club, nowadays Casa do Alentejo, Lisbon), but also industrial buildings (such as the Fábrica de Cervejas Germânia – a brew factory - ,which would later be known as "A Portugália", also in Lisbon). The list of his projects, mainly kept in excelent archival conditions in the Arquivo Histórico Municipal da Câmara Municipal de Cascais (AHMCSC) is significant in terms of the tipologies concerned, such as:

- Customs, customs stations and dwellings (1920-1936);
- Sanitation projects and hydroelectric power plants (1895-1937);
- Schools, churches and hospitals (1901-1926);
- Municipal buildings (1915-1934);
- Tourist, sports and show equipment (1914-1919);
- Railway stations (1920-1930);
- Industry and Trade (1910-1930);
- Associations (1919-1927);
- Residential buildings and technical drawings (1899-1934)
- Studies (1890-1937);
- Residential buildings (1899-1931);
- Technical drawings (1920-1934);
- Atlantis (1930-1933);
- Artistic locksmith (1929-1934);
- Furniture (1916-1930)
- Illustrations and drawings (1890-1937)

As such, we can witness his rather plethoric production that goes from the interpretation of the utopia of Atlantis reconstituted (more of that below), passing through the large and high standing establishments of the thermal setting of Estoril as well as the medicalized water resort of Vidago, passing by the proposal of a large place for the Portuguese Theosophical Society, but also including drawings of private garages, septic tanks or a... poultry house! Touched by his training within the framework of the Beaux-Arts, they reflect the avatars of "eclecticism", however, not devoid of singularity with some unusual "modern" incursions.

In addition Silva Junior was a well-known theosophist, an unusual fact in the tradition of Portuguese architectural culture revealing an original penchant, for archi-ancient historical speculations as he was an enthusiastic adherent to Theosophy, becoming an outstanding member of the Portuguese Theosophical Society..

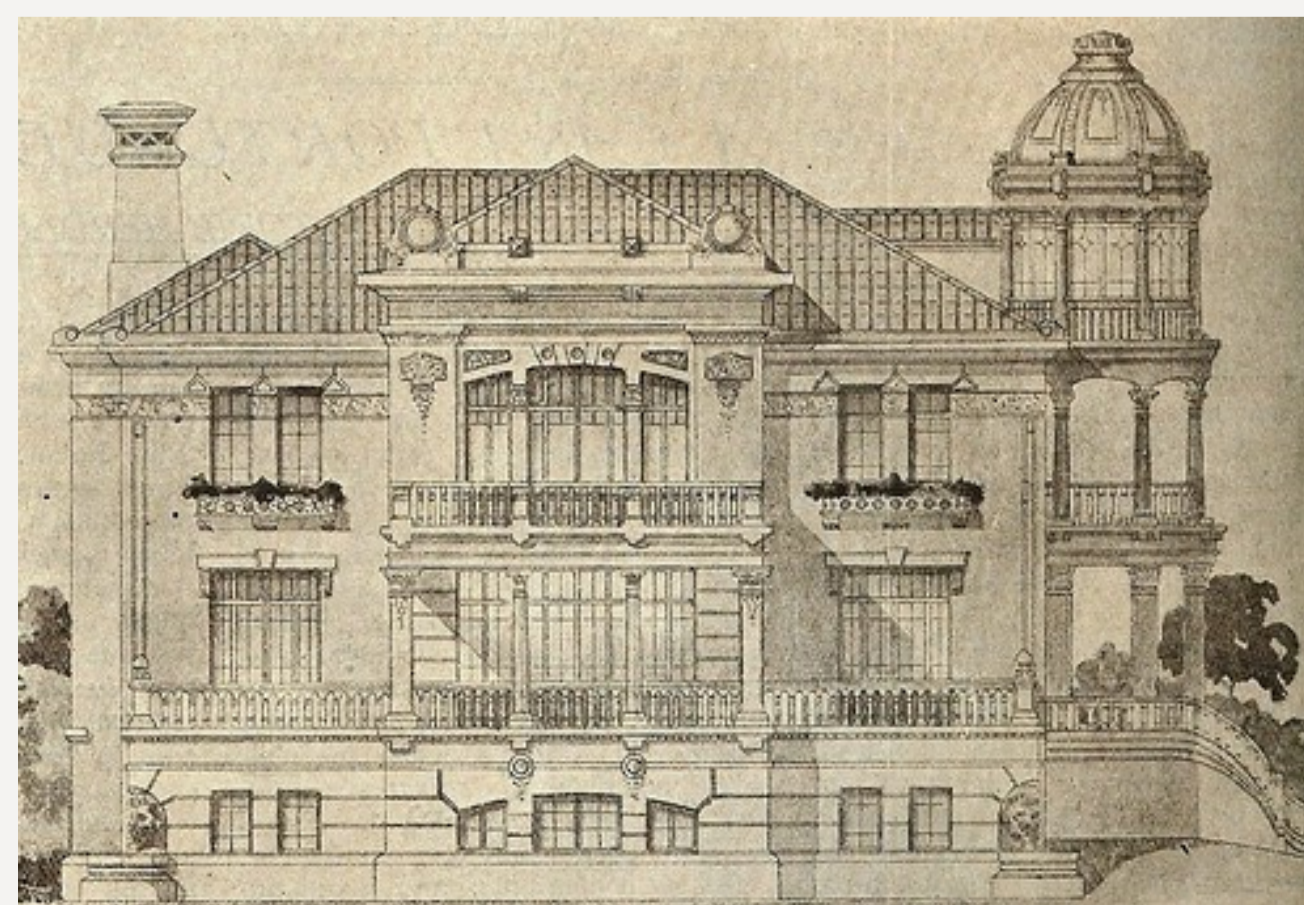
So, as for the "visional" projects on Atlantis, Silva Júnior will follow the Theosophical tradition. Indeed, the founder of Theosophy, Elena Petrovna Blavátskaya (Russian: Елена Петровна Блаватская (Ekaterinoslav, 1831 – London, 1891), born in Dnipro, present-day Ukraine, and known worldwide as Madame Blavatsky, who later became associated in companionship regime with Henry Steel Olcott (Orange, USA, 1832- Avar, Madras, India 1907), promoted a theory that included a Cosmogogenesis and an Anthropogenesis that, in line with mid-19th century positivism, also accompanied evolutionary theories, but giving them a counter-scientific content, and to a certain extent, proving that the place of Humanity today is that of an involutivist stage.



In the theosophical conception, the cycles of formation of the World have always counted on the presence of various Humanities that have been degrading or descending in the scale of spirituality, until they reach a materialist state: better, materializing when before they were part of an ethereal dimension and invisible, close to God and the Gods, or to this divine condition, and then semi-divine. The "eons" of life on the planet are such as to compromise any scientism and result from your mediumistic ability. In fact, it is in contact with "unknown superiors" and "supreme masters" situated in a "supra-world", that Madame Blavatsky acquires the knowledge Revealed. By Revelation, insist. The theosophical background also aimed at ecumenism, although its appropriation and derivations were wearing away this message, which, being anti-humanist, did not fail to arouse a feeling of communion among all the world's religions. There were, as can be expected, many problems in which she found herself involved, including the accusation of fraud and for that reason she emigrated to India, the United States and then to London. Her followers were many and the internationalization of Theosophy led to the constitution of Theosophical Societies in many countries, among which Portugal, founded on September 5, 1921. A.R. Silva Júnior was one of the most prominent members of the Society, and became its president. It is within the framework of Theosophy that Silva Júnior will thus develop his "Atlantean" speculation, which will see the light of day in the publication of essays in various issues of the magazine *A Architectura Portuguesa*, in its 2nd series, between 1930 and 1933.

Many were her followers, and the internationalization of theosophy led to the constitution of Theosophy societies in many countries, among the quias Portugal, founded on September 5, 1921. with a foundation charter signed by Blavatsky's sucessor, Annie Besant. A.R. Silva Júnior was one of the most prominent members of the Society, and was once its president. It is in the framework of Theosophy that Silva Júnior will thus develop his "atlantean" speculation, which will see the light of day in the publication of the essays in various issues of the magazine *A Architectura Portuguesa*, in its 2nd series, between 1930 and 1933.

His speculations around the "visional" restitution of Atlantis and its buildings, excel in etheric and astral research, translated into canonical projects, some of which are unusual, but marked by its architectural culture. Nonetheless, the relationship he establishes with the cultures of Antiquity, from Asia to South America, in an impressionist pseudo-archeologic array based on the speculations of Ignatius Donnelly.



VISTA EM PERSPECTIVA DO TORREÃO DOS SILOS

SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE FOR THE DISCIPLINE

The tension between tradition and modernity in the context of the transition period of 1920-1930 is particularly relevant in Silva Junior's thought and architectural culture. The lack of knowledge of his work requires a deeper understanding of the learning framework of this architect, his techniques of architectural representation, and his inscription in the social and economic activity of the time. Added to this is militancy regarding the dissemination of architecture and the technical advances that can be seen in the early 20th century, and the incidences in terms of taste, which is halfway between an inventive framework whose timbre is traditional training, experience outside the academic context, the encounter with aspects of specialized engineering (such as hygiene) and considerations of an ideological nature of unexpected contours. Also, its theosophical leanings, is not without relevance for his research into "alternative" authors and as an inventive contribution to architecture itself when "visionary" projects are at stake, such as those he presented for his peculiar reconstitution of Atlantis, either in drawn form, or in texts.

EXPECTED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Perceiving Silva Junior's architectural production implies a parallel process of recognition with implications in terms of the built heritage and its protection. Some of his works have been lost, but others still stand, although they are virtually unknown. This will result in an exhaustive and rigorous survey of existing architectural achievements, and their valuation and reassessment. In the context of academic practice, it is foreseen that this research process will be included in the different study cycles of the architecture course, with a special focus on the 2nd cycle (4th and 5th years), as well as an exhibition of student work, in a cost-controlled monographic exhibition on Silva Junior, and the publication of a book, accompanied by the creation of a website dedicated to the life and work of Silva Junior, with returns in terms of employability and active training in the areas of architecture, urbanism and design.

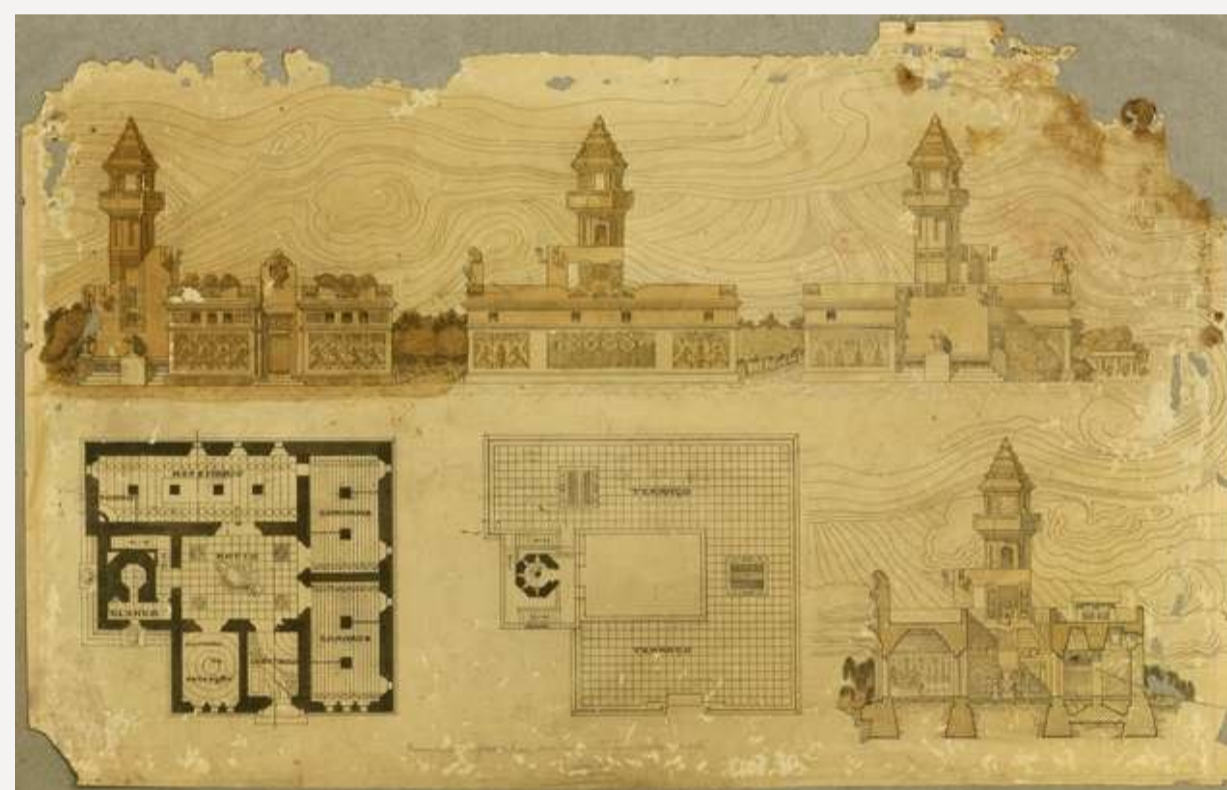
RESEARCH PLAN AND TASKS

1. Study of the foreign sources on which Silva Junior's visionary inquiry was based, almost all of them in the domain of Theosophy and resulting from it:

Madame Blavatsky: Elena Petrovna Blavátskaya (Russian: Елена Петровна Блаватская (Ekaterinoslav, 1831 – London, 1891)
Henry Steel Olcott (Orange, USA, 1832- Avar, Madras India 1907)
William Scott-Elliott (Scott-Elliott) (1849-1919)
James Churchward (1851 -1936)
Michel Manzi (1849-1915)
Rudolf Cronau (1855 -1939)
Mario Rosa de Luna (1872 – 1931)

2. Reconstitution, through the author's text, and the practice of 3D modeling (or scale models) of Silva Junior's "visional" projects for Atlântida, among which ten stand out:

- Alfa Project: "The alpha Project comprises a single-storey house, with an interior patio, flat terraces covering all the compartments, and a tower, an accessory that was, so to speak, inherent to the most important buildings and even the median ones. This tower was usually placed in one of the corners of the building, which does not mean that it was not in the center or even in the front. We see them in ruins in the temple of the Incas, on the island of Coati, in Lake Titicaca (Bolivia), we see them in more than one drawing by Wilkinson on the Egyptian dwelling, in the Chaldean temples, etc." (...) "Another particularity of this project is the transversal configuration of the walls, wider at the top than at the bottom, trapezoidal or tomb ceilings that were closed in the center by flat slabs. In the palace of Palenque in Guatemala and in other historic locations in Central and South America there are traces and ruins of buildings of this kind". (Silva Junior).
- Beta Project: "On the main façade, the central door is made of wood lined with metal in strips at the top, silver, ouricalcum and copper, on the lintel a bas-relief in stone covered with a thin blade of beaten and pressed ouricalcum over the indicated ornamentation covering it entirely. The floor plan comprises an entrance hall giving access to the central courtyard which communicates with two chambers divided internally by screens allowing the accommodation of isolated beds, a refectory with an oven at the end hidden by another screen, a reception chamber and a cloaca next to the tower base. The floors can be seen in the floor plan covered with geometric designs, which represent stone mosaics of various colors, floors already used in those eras and also using a cement with which they manufactured the so-called "prehistoric ant", which we refer to, on page 49 of this study, they built smooth floors without joints, as is currently done using screed." (...) other notable models of ancient America such as the figures of the great pyramid of the Yucatan, those of the Temple of the Two Serpents, the expressive human heads that we published on pages 28 and 30, sculptural production of the Incas of Bolívia." (Silva Junior).



- Project Gama: "All the important cities had real palaces for this purpose, maintained by the State, where visitors, foreigners or not, were received as guests of the city and welcomed with the most captivating hospitality for the entire time they stayed there. The Gamma Project represents a visionary interpretation of one of these palaces and has a capacity far below what, according to traditions, it is inferred that such buildings had. However, it should only be considered as a type, because its greatest graphic representation, in this Magazine, would be diminished and one would not be able to perceive details, which thus become appreciable. It is a high-rise building without the resources of modern materials: iron and reinforced concrete, with which today wonders are made in construction. Thus, ordinary masonry predominates and the vault helps, as an appropriate means of covering, the lower compartments, where greater loads are imposed, as seen in the section of the said project". (Silva Junior).
- Delta Project "Designed with subordination to an organic and symbolic program, which was in force in ancient historical times when science and all human knowledge were



taught to chosen ones, who could face fearful tests and obtain self-control over all the passions that agitate individuals, this project is an attempt to reconstitute a building as it would be represented today, taking into account the modern habits of civilization and the progress obtained in construction technique and hygiene (...). The quaternary, the triangle and the circle represents, in philosophy and in the esoteric school, which gave rise to all, or almost all, the various religious systems, identical symbols relating to definite stages of human and cosmic evolution; such symbols have deep correlations with the principles of things, colors, sounds and shapes. It is a scheme of deep significance that encompasses knowledge, which were the hallmarks of the mages of Atlantis." (Silva Junior).

3. Study of the connections between the ornamentalism of eclectic architecture and beaux-arts with the sign and decorative/symbolic system of architecture in Meso-America and South America. Detailed analysis of all projects, built or not, and of a current or exceptional nature but corresponding to specific orders, integrated in the architectural (and theoretical) production of Silva Junior.

4. Survey of all existing Silva Junior projects, modified or not, on the mainland and in the Atlantic islands.

5. Comparative study between the achievements and ideations of Silva Junior and his predecessors and contemporary colleagues, with a special attention to the architectural composition.

6. Modernist projects by Silva Junior:

"If antiquity, considered as the descendant of the Atlanteans, always lived in the thoughts of its predecessors and in the desire to be able to restore and revive the splendors and progress of a primitive and so eminent civilization, whose wonderful artistic and material manifestations lie in the abyss of the Atlantic Ocean and the memories of its powerful ideology, imagination and deep knowledge endure through traditions and form the substrate of human subconsciousness, even today we feel the constant revival of Atlantean thought transplanted in historical antiquity by witnessing the blossoming of the modern ideation of architecture, sculpture and the very decorative painting. No matter how much originality one seeks to find in modern morphology and aesthetics, the primitive feeling unconsciously revives and, when contemplating many of the more recent constructions, one hears exclaim: it looks like Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian style! Indeed, one returns to large mural surfaces, slender pillars, columns without a base or capital, highlights and dark highlights obtained by superimposing or combining geometric shapes, bare, friezes and widowed panels of artistic ornamentation of any motif from the living nature but filled with polygonal or rectangular undulations, sometimes naive arrows, all with a schematic character as if covering the most beautiful and profound treasures of grandiose thoughts in future gestation" (Silva Junior).

EXPECTED SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

The knowledge of the entire architectural production, designed and built, as well as a deeper knowledge of the biography and personality of Silva Junior, fills a gap in terms of knowledge of the context of architectural culture in Portugal, especially in everything related to the processes transition between the beaux-arts "style" and eclecticism, which lasted until the 20s and 30s of the 20th century and the first manifestations of a modernism still marked by Art Deco but with traces of an aesthetic progression endowed with its own tectonics. The set of works by Silva Junior will thus be documented and restored through their definitive insertion in the context of the history of Portuguese architecture, further involving aspects of great originality such as his inquiries into "Atlantean architecture". This fact alone recommends a study of mentalities and culture and their impact on Portuguese "transitional" architectural circles. And, at the same time, it documents the interest and ambiguity between the seemingly futuristic visionary reconstitution of Atlantis, curiously tempered by the aesthetics of architectural eclecticism, which emerges in each proposal of the city of Poseidonis with the conceived Silva Junior.

BUDGET: € 7.500,00

A work of this nature requires a reasonable budget, which will still be far from the proposed limit. Study and work trips in archives in Lisbon, Estoril, Cascais, Samora Correia, Évora, Oporto, Vidago, Horta in Faial Island (Azores), etc.; travel within the country for photographic survey of architectural works implicit in this study; acquisition of bibliography; registration of archival work to be carried out in several institutions, described below, with possible expenses for the travel and compensation of researchers, as well as possible copyright, reproductions, 3D modeling work, 3D print and assisted design in the necessary cases: ACML - ARQUIVO GERAL DA CÂMARA MUNICIPAL DE LISBOA / AHCMP - ARQUIVO HISTÓRICO DA CAMARA MUNICIPAL DO PORTO / AHMOP - ARQUIVO HISTÓRICO DO MINISTÉRIO DAS OBRAS PÚBLICAS/ ANBA - ACADEMIA NACIONAL DE BELAS ARTES / ANTT- ARQUIVO NACIONAL DA TORRE DO TOMBO ATC / BA: BIBLIOTECA DA AJUDA / BAHMOP - BIBLIOTECA DO ARQUIVO HISTÓRICO DO MINISTÉRIO DAS OBRAS PÚBLICAS /BNP - BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE PORTUGAL / BPMP - BIBLIOTECA PÚBLICA MUNICIPAL DO PORTO / FCG / BA- FUNDAÇÃO CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN : BIBLIOTECA DE ARTE / FS/DGPC - FORTE DE SACAVÉM - MONUMENTOS.PT /DGPC / GEO: GABINETE DE ESTUDOS OLISPONENSES / MC- MUSEU DA CIDADE (CML).