

A First approach to a different historiography model for the history of design:
DHISTO Design, History and Everydaylife. **ATOM** A Thesaurus of Man's life thru the
objects he makes and that make him.

Principal Investigator / PI

Gonçalo Falcão (ORCID # 0000-0002-5954-7188)

Integrated Researchers of CIAUD

João Paulo Martins (ORCID # 0000-0003-2263-7005)

Maria José Sacchetti (ORCID # 0000-0002-5229-2178)

Collaborating Researchers of CIAUD

Livia Maia Brasil (ORCID # 0000-0002-2647-6467)

Juliana Lotiff Araújo (ORCID # 0000-0002-0773-7588)

External Researchers

Inês Correia (ORCID # 0000-0002-2774-8954)

Carlos Bárto (ORCID # 0000-0002-8140-6330)

Keywords

Design historiography; design and everydaylife; design history; different historiographic model.

Partner Institutions

Expected Future Partner Institutions

MUDE: Museu do Design e da Moda / Lisboa

ABSTRACT + IMAGES

DHisto is a project that address the history of design from an innovative historiographical perspective - one centered on the role of design in life and societies through the times. By adopting such point of view, we hope to build a better understanding of what design is and to make a contribution to remove the discipline from a sterile pedestal that he often occupies: a misunderstood activity which main goal seems to be the production of expendable or expensive objects. Thus, our model is removed from the prevailing historiographical narratives of design (accountable for most of those misconceptions) that mythologize heroic figures and iconic objects. Our perspective reinforces the essential character of design, rescuing it to the central role it should play in society and in national economy.

In design historiography, one can identify four major types of approaches: as an history of art movements and authors and/or of iconic objects (replicating one of the dominant models in the history of Art); focused on the relation of objects to the social context; centered on the relation of objects to the industrial and commercial context; focusing on the relationships between design and social context, and particularly between design and consumption. The prevailing model, nevertheless, is that of art history: one that's based on the great works of great figures, as if they happened to be solely the result of inspiration and some kind of personal drive. Such approach neglects fundamental aspects related to the genesis of every design work: the social and economic context, the client and the commission, the collective nature of design work, the budgetary and production constraints or the acceptance of the final product by the market. Also, the objects that are considered within range of most design historiography is also in debt to same art history tradition: objects chosen by aesthetics reasons and by their links to art movements and the heroic narrative.

We propose, then, a different logic: focusing on the individual. From birth to death every person is part of countless social situations where design is ever-present, playing a crucial (if silent) role. Those are the objects that interest us: the ones that shape personal life and mediate relationships with others, corporations or the state: from banknotes to street furniture, from public transportation to tax forms, etc.

Such an approach - underlining design's ubiquity - will reinforce its social, cultural and economic importance. In doing so, hopefully, it will help change the dominant attitude towards the discipline, the activity and its professionals, with obvious gains to local companies and national economy.

To attain such goals, we aim to transcend the limitations of the book-object, and also favour other media, namely audio-visuals intended for dissemination through the internet and television and the production of specific didactic materials to students and museums. We aim to transcend the limitations of the book-object, and favour other media, namely audio-visuals intended for dissemination through the internet and television and the production of specific didactic materials to students and museums.

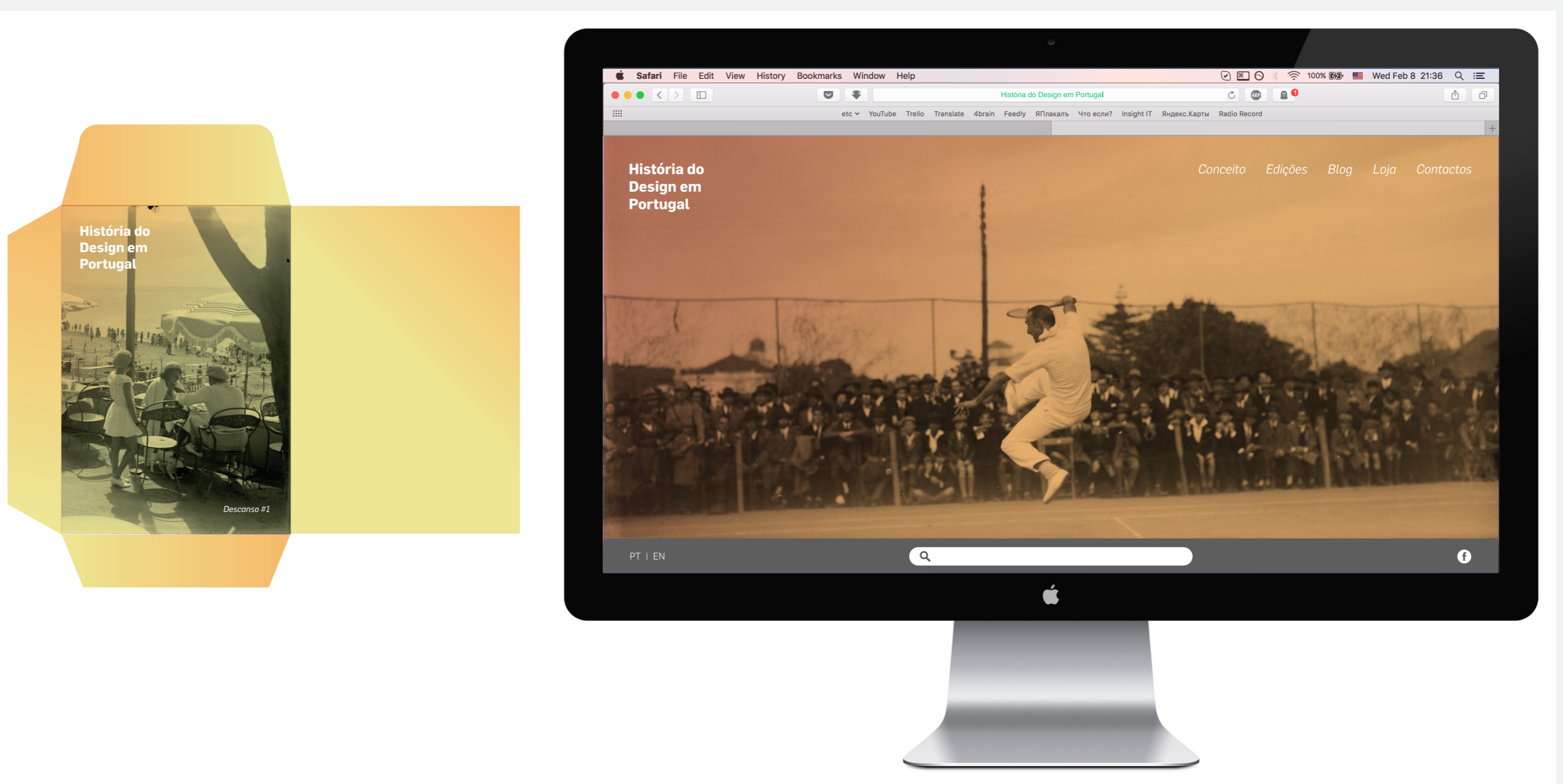
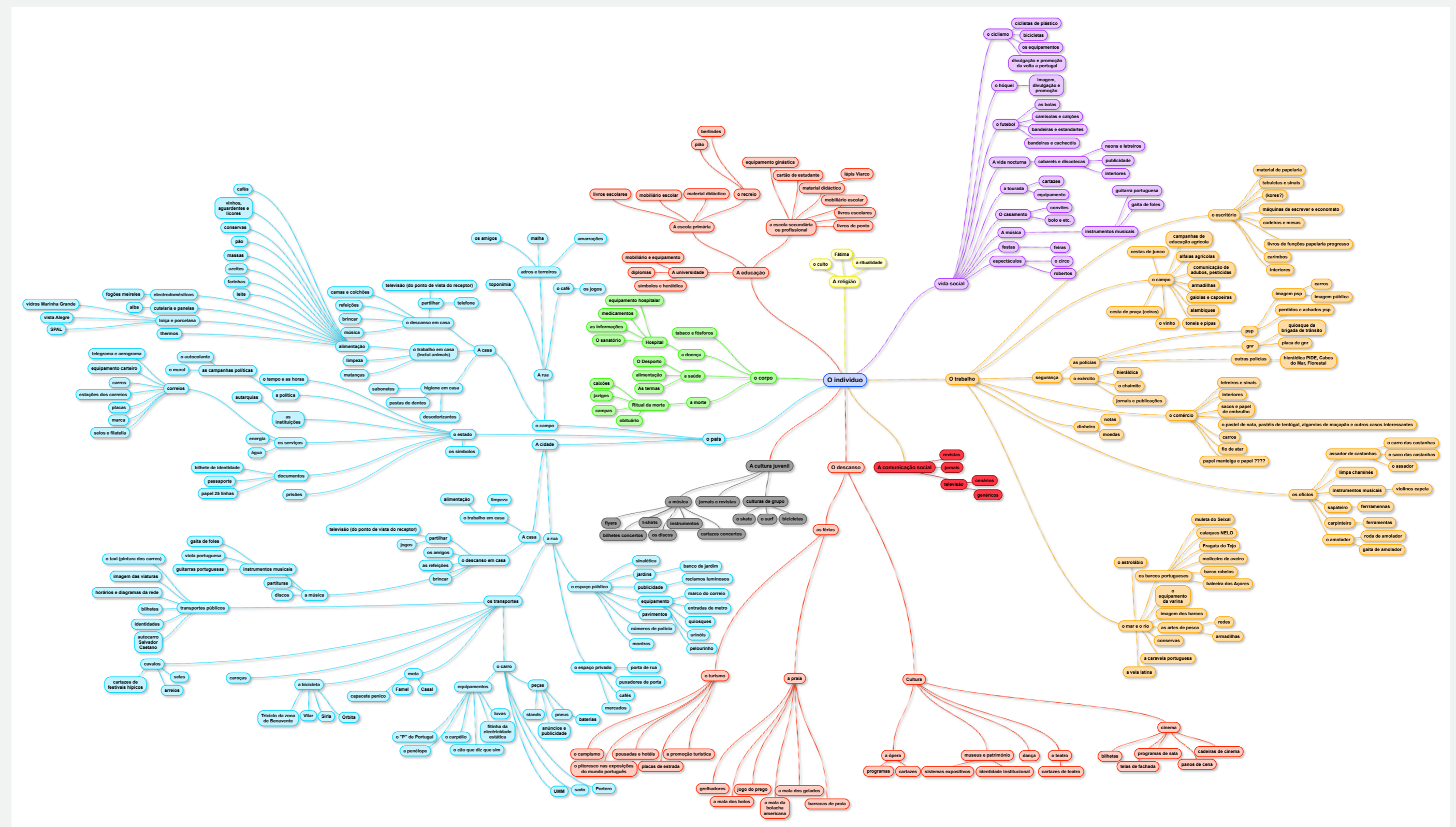
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This project was already submitted to a European Funding (SAICT-45-2017-02, call number 02/SAICT/2017) having received 4,40 points in the evaluation. It was not accepted for funding because 4,40 was the minimum value for being accepted. (free translation from Portuguese: "The minimum score for Project Merit (MP) for applications approved by POR Lisboa 2020 was 4.40 points, which therefore constitutes the minimum selection threshold / Decision proposal for Notice no. 02 / SAICT / 2017 - Lot 9").

OBJECTIVES

We intend to re-historicize design, rehearsing a different historiographical approach from the, producing an updated and consistent narrative about design in Portugal. We pursue an historiography that considers the objects of design as testimonies of the social life, repositories of a complex context (cultural, economic, political, technological, etc.) not neglecting the main elements of today's histories such as beauty or innovative form. This approach is also important to economy since we're not (only) seeking for beauty or great creators but the expansion of the spectrum of objects under today's historical scrutiny (which includes companies and brands that have contributed significantly to their time and space) through the appreciation of other historical attributes. By valuing history, the whole history and not just that of gourmet objects - exclusive, luxurious or futile - we contribute with narratives that can be incorporated into the discourses of companies, brands and products. Our historiographical model is a new-fangled attempt to build a ground on which historians could build their own discourses. We know we will not build a definitive discourse because there is no such a thing in history, but we'll make a first attempt using a new structure that we can open to our colleagues and discuss. The project aims to transcend the literary production and the limitations of the book-object, and use other media, namely audio-visual objects intended for dissemination through the Internet and television, and the production of specific didactic information to students.

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SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE FOR THE DISCIPLINE

The main contribution to science will be the structuring of a new territory where design history can be studied and developed, in some ways, very different from the one used by the dominant narratives. We hope to be able to structure an archeological field in which future designers can build a history of everyday human activities and frame these objects in a wider discourse within a time and context. This will allow a better understanding of what design is and does, specially in education and remove the discipline from the elitist plinth where it frequently stands.

Our historiographic model expects to present a viable alternative to prevailing historiographical narratives of design (accountable for a lot of misconceptions, particularly present in design education). To be able to perfect the actual model that most of the times mythologizes heroic figures and iconic objects.

We aim to produce light publications intended to the general public and short videos for the internet.

EXPECTED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

By using an innovative historiographical perspective - centred on the role of design in life and societies through the times - we hope to build a better understanding of what design is. Our perspective reinforces the essential character of design, rescuing it to the central role it should play in society and in national economy. Therefore we hope to be able to value everyday objects and an European culture of innovation and an heritage of trustability (brands).

By valuing national production, design objects - all the design objects, not just the "gourmet" objects - we expect not only to broaden the academic field of design history but to be able to better contribute to understand design and the way we make design and the way it makes us as it's value in society. The impact expected is not only academic, to establish a different historiographic approach, but also societal, activating design patrimony as a cultural patrimony and enhancing its role as a daily life mediator and builders of a nation identity; In doing so we're reinforcing and integrating the socio-economic dimension into the design and highlighting Innovation in European cultural heritage history, culture and identity;

RESEARCH PLAN AND TASKS

We intend to re-historicize design, rehearsing a different historiographical approach from the, producing an updated and consistent narrative about design in Portugal. We pursue an historiography that considers the objects of design as testimonies of the social life, repositories of a complex context (cultural, economic, political, technological, etc.) not neglecting the main elements of today's histories such as beauty or innovative form. This approach is also important to economy since we're not (only) seeking for beauty or great creators but the expansion of the spectrum of objects under today's historical scrutiny (which includes companies and brands that have contributed significantly to their time and space) through the appreciation of other historical attributes. By valuing history, the whole history and not just that of gourmet objects - exclusive, luxurious or futile - we contribute with narratives that can be incorporated into the discourses of companies, brands and products.

Our historiographical model is a new-fangled attempt to build a ground on which historians could build their own discourses. We know we will not build a definitive discourse because there is no such a thing in history, but we'll make a first attempt using a new structure that we can open to our colleagues and discuss.

The project aims to transcend the literary production and the limitations of the book-object, and use other media, namely audio-visual objects intended for dissemination through the Internet and television, and the production of specific didactic information to students.

The past can be represented by many historians' methods and figurative ways, some of which are less mythological and mystifying than others. To reduce these mystifying elements from the historical discourse one has to explicit their own processes of production. We've moved away from the myopic attention to formal innovation, good design, great designers that once dominated the historical narratives because it seems consensual that 'design history does not have a very well-defined theoretical framework and methodological apparatus - (Fallan 2010). The problem has been raised by many theorists over the past 30 years and some attempts to find other structures - methodological apparatus - on which one can build the history of design have been put in place.

TASKS

TASK 1: The first period of investigation will be done by the principal re-searcher and the two co-researchers. It will be dedicated to prepare the work for the PhD researcher whose presence in the work is expected in six months due to bureaucratic processes. At the end of the first task we expect to validate the historiographic model.

TASK 2: with the presence of the researcher we expect to solidify the historiographical model, expand it and engage other experts from other fields in critical adjustments and define the complete map of the territory and of existing resources.

TASK 3: Production of content. Definition of priorities and hierarchization of information to develop.

TASK 4: Production of the first short stories for web.

TASK 5: Closing of the production of contents for videos (and tv) and for student's book.

TASK 6: Closing of the project; continuous feed of the information (audio, video, photo, texts)

METHODS

Research will be conducted according to 3 fundamental methods.

1. Literature: Establishing an historiographical territory; this will be done through literature and also consulting experts from other areas.
2. Experts Evaluation: Map the multiple dimensions of social life, starting with the definitions of the multiple dimensions of a person's life. His sacred, work, family, state, leisure, and many other dimensions. This mapping will be evaluated and critically edited by experts (anthropology, archaeology, ethnography, sociology and history).
3. Mapping: building a comprehensive and expanded map of the relationship of an individual with design in everyday and special occasions. Establish classification procedures and hierarchy of findings from a field work (through archaeological methodology).

EXPECTED SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

The main contribution to science will be the structuring of a new territory where design history can be studied and developed, in some ways, very different from the one used by the dominant narratives. We hope to be able to structure an archeological territory for future designers can build a history of everyday human activities and frame these objects in a wider discourse within a time and context. This will allow a better understanding of what design is and does, specially in education and remove the discipline from the elitist plinth where it frequently stands.

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BUDGET: € 7.500,00

Enroll a full-time researcher for 5 months (PhD preferable) with the following objectives:
Help to design analyze, and improve the draft version (presented here) of the historic-graphical plan.

Organize an evaluation procedure of the model with insights from specialists from archaeology and anthropology. Identify a group of interdisciplinary experts;

Promote the presentation of the model and collect critical insights of a group of consultants;

Create a complete state of the art review about design history books using Anglo-Saxon references, Italian, French and Portuguese (as translation in these languages)

Collaborate in a paper for an international conference with the first public presentation of the historiographic Model

Map the researchers and research groups working in this field (and connecting borders)