

## **The Monument to the Discoveries: the Project, Target Audiences and Strategies**

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Nowadays, the audience at which an event is targeted is one of the most important aspects to consider in relation to the organisation of the event, the cultural intervention involved, the measuring of its success, the surveying of the expectations aroused, the spatial and scenographic layout of an exhibition or workshop, the communications strategy used, and the evaluation of the activity.

Strategies are developed and refined in accordance with the target audiences for a particular project with the aim of involving those audiences and raising their awareness, bearing in mind that projects are designed and organised to be understood, experienced and enjoyed by them.

In this statement, an account is given of the most recent experiences associated with the Monument to the Discoveries, which has seen the introduction of a new programme of exhibitions and a more attentive and creative form of cultural intervention, drawing closer to the Portuguese public by seeking to enhance its presence and loyalty without neglecting other audiences. Thus, the difficulties, deadlocks and successes involved in this work and the strategies behind it are made known.

## The Monument to the Discoveries: The Project, Target Audiences and Strategies



The Monument to the Discoveries, due to its unique form in the shape of a caravel, flanked by sculptures, it is perhaps one of the most internationally well-known and photographed of Portuguese monuments.

Isolated and standing high over the Tagus, the Monument to the Discoveries invokes the Portuguese overseas expeditions, sums up a glorious past and symbolises the greatness of the work of Prince Henry the Navigator who propelled these discoveries. A caravel sets out to sea, on the prow is Prince Henry the Navigator and some of the heroes (32) of the overseas expeditions and the culture of the times; navigators, mapmakers, warriors, colonists, evangelists, essayists and artists, all of whom are portrayed with the symbols that represent them.

It is located on the bank of the river and is part of a valuable cultural, patrimonial, and historical area around Belém (6 km from the centre of Lisbon).<sup>1</sup>

The first Monument was built in 1940 and was designed by the architect Cottinelli Telmo (1897 – 1948) and the sculptor Leopoldo de Almeida (1898 – 1975). It was first built in 1940, as a temporary structure for the Exhibition of the Portuguese World. The initial construction used temporary materials: the light structure was of iron and cement, and the sculptures were made from plaster and tow<sup>2</sup>.



Opening of the exhibition, June, 23, 1940, Horácio Novais

The aim of the exhibition was to commemorate the past and its most significant milestones: the foundation of the Portuguese nationality and the restoration<sup>3</sup>, highlighting at the same time, the glorious past of the discoveries. The area alongside the river was chosen for the exhibition, as it was felt important to underscore the symbolism of the location and the importance of the route to the sea. After the fair, the monument was demolished.

In 1960, to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator (1394 -1460), the Monument was reconstructed in concrete and rose-coloured stone from

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<sup>1</sup> Belém is also home to the Belém Tower, the Jerónimos Monastery, the National Coach Museum, the Naval Museum and Planetarium, the Museu da Presidência da República, and the Centro Cultural de Belém, among others.

<sup>2</sup> A blend of plaster and tow over a wooden and iron framework.

<sup>3</sup> This period puts an end to the Spanish dominance (from 1580 to 1640) over Portugal.

Leiria, and the sculptures were made from limestone from the region of Sintra. It is interesting to note that this second version in stone went against the wishes of the architect, who, in 1940, had understood that the Exhibition of the Portuguese World was to be a temporary scenographic project.<sup>4</sup>



Prince Henry, The Navigator, reconstruction, 1960, Horácio Novais

The design ended up having significant influence on Belém's spatial planning, and in spite of having been conceived of as scenographic temporary projects, some of the pavilions are still standing today.<sup>5</sup>

1985 saw the inauguration of the Centro Cultural das Descobertas [Cultural Centre of the Discoveries], with the monument's interior redesigned by the architect Fernando Ramalho, who gave the Monument a viewing point, auditorium and exhibition rooms.

The site includes the Monument to the Discoveries and the Compass Rose which is located in front of it. This monumental piece was designed in the studio of the architect Luís Cristino da Silva<sup>6</sup>, and was offered by the South African Republic in 1960, the same year that the latter

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<sup>4</sup> According to its creator and chief architect, the exhibition plans for the group of monuments, would thus be freer and offer greater challenges.

<sup>5</sup> An example is the Museum of Popular Art, which is close to the Padrão dos Descobrimentos.

<sup>6</sup> The Compass Rose is made of black and red Lioz limestone. It is 50 m in diameter, and has a 14 m wide *Mappa Mundi* decorated with flora, 5 small compass roses, 3 blowing faces personifying the winds, a mermaid, a mythical fish and Neptune with his trident and trumpet, mounted on a marine creature. Dates, ships and caravels show the main routes of the Portuguese expeditions between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>

joined the commemorations in tribute to Prince Henry the Navigator, and is therefore a contemporary part of the Monument to the Discoveries' final construction.

## **The project**

The Monument to the Discoveries is now an information centre under the management of the EGEAC municipal company. We are responsible for the management, safeguarding and valorisation of the site that comprises the Monument and the Compass Rose.

The Monument to the Discoveries does not have a collection. It is the homage to Prince Henry the Navigator and the men involved in the Portuguese Expeditions, and its historical location that give its identity. This representation and symbolism underscores one of the main areas of work, and a central theme in the cultural mediation now being developed.

Two main themes define the current cultural project:

- The Portuguese Expansion, which inspires the construction of the Monument; and
- The Monument itself, as an architectural and sculptural work, born out of an exhibition in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

These are the major themes behind the new programming, and also the themes that we are seeking to communicate with both Portuguese nationals and foreign visitors. In conjunction with this, and in keeping with the targets in our mission statement<sup>7</sup>, we want to promote access for as wide a range of public as possible to the monument and to the learning and cultural projects on offer, providing new experiences, learning processes, knowledge and enjoyment.

The new programme took place in 2012. It looks for a new positioning, to instil a more dynamic programme, to find a greater range of action, to offer more, and to meet the expectations and wishes of the public, providing new areas of interest and - as far as possible - using 100% of the space's facilities<sup>8</sup>. The idea was to promote a more open and up-to-date vision inviting to reflection and debate.

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centuries. The surround of the compass is formed of open waves, made with traditional Portuguese cobblestone-style pavement.

<sup>7</sup> The mission of the Monument to the Discoveries is to manage, safeguard and enhance the value of the heritage site comprising the monument and the Compass Rose. It encourages discussion on the subject of the monument as a testament to the memory of a cultural and patrimonial identity that is inseparable from the history of Portuguese expansion and Portugal's presence in the world.

It also encourages learning and debate and the history of the Monument to the Discoveries and of the various figures who, in political, cultural and artistic terms, helped to make it a reality and to represent and shape it according to the plans drawn up for the 1940 exhibition, its subsequent reconstruction in 1960, and the present day.

Moreover, it enables various sectors of the public to gain access to the monument and the cultural and educational projects that it undertakes, providing new experiences, learning processes, knowledge and enjoyment.

<sup>8</sup> After the auditorium had been released from a previous contract it was possible to reactivate the space and offer more to visitors. This created the opportunity to develop and show a film to schools about the Monument and the Belém area, as well as a documentary about the history of the Monument to the Discoveries, considering the international, national, political and historical circumstances that surround its initial construction (1940) and its subsequent and definitive construction (1960). This film is

A new and cohesive programme was drawn up to give the exhibition area a more permanent, rather than episodic, character. In the sense of valuing the monument and its history, the refocusing and rethinking of the main themes was fundamental to the starting project.

### **Partnerships and program exhibitions**

The project established some important partnerships. Their contribution gave the programme a new impetus and scientific grounding, and enhanced cultural mediation both for the exhibitions and the educational activities that were developed.

One of the most important partnerships was established with CHAM – the Overseas History Centre/Universidade Nova de Lisboa, which led to the exhibition about Prince Henry the Navigator. Exploring a polemic theme, this exhibition enabled visitors to discover more about the personality and actions of Prince Henry through the recent investigation of the historian João Paulo Oliveira e Costa. The partnership with CHAM also provided fundamental support to develop several themes, and new exhibitions concerning the Portuguese Expansion.

Another important partnership was forged with the Observatório Político regarding the exhibition *Scrapbook of Memories, Portuguese India 1954-62*. The exhibition was based on photographs, documents and recollections by Portuguese soldiers in mission at Portuguese India (before and after the fall of Portuguese India). The Observatório Político collaborated in bringing together the memories, images and testimonies shared in the exhibition, and this helped to reframe the national and international backdrop to the historical and political events of the time.

The aim was to build an open programme, and this made it possible to invite a range of partners and collaborators to participate and to build a more challenging project.

### **The Public**

And what about the public? What conclusions can be drawn from the previous project? What changes could be introduced with the new programme

The available data showed that the Portuguese public only visited the monument infrequently. The monument was more commonly visited by foreigners, and there was a huge disparity between these and national visitors. In general national visitors came through the Educational Project and school visits, which meant that overall there were few Portuguese visitors.

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a complement that hopes to meet the expectations of the public, and give a more authentic perspective of the Monument's history. The film is to be released soon in several languages.

To increase visitor's numbers, and in particular attract and appeal to the national public, it was important to expand the project. The entire project needed to be overhauled in order to make it attractive and accessible to all.



A new communication plan was built. For the first time the monument had its own media department. The project became more coherent and the communication work more effective. A new identity and a dynamic and appealing website promote and support the new project. A substantial and systematised information concerning the monument and its history, was for the first time available on the website.

### **The exhibition programme and the public**

Some of the exhibitions' subjects were polemic or even unpopular, and they could even have had adverse effects. They were, however, relevant and challenging, and they needed a new approach. We took up the challenge. The exhibition themes and the way they were presented revealed, on the contrary, the public enthusiasm and interest. The scientific support enabled new readings and an opened debate. Some of the exhibitions were the object of a strong interest, particularly from the national public.

In the case of the exhibition *Scrapbook of Memories, Portuguese India 1954-62* the theme was always a contentious one, and was stifled by the government at the time. The year 2012 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return of the last troops from India, and it seemed appropriate to revisit the subject and the international and national view of the situation in a period that had seen considerable changes in several overseas territories. This exhibition attracted a great deal of interest from the national public, and was of relevance to Portuguese society. It was visited and enjoyed by many people. The theme was of great interest to

nationals, but it was also relevant to the history of several other European nations, and was therefore of interest to foreign visitors as well.

Another of the proposals of the exhibition programme was likely to cause some resistance as the subject matter was relatively recent, and might involve some prejudice regarding how the near past and the period prior to the Carnation Revolution could still be seen. The exhibition *Photographers of the 1940 Portuguese World*<sup>9</sup>, looked at a subject still present in people's memories and lives, and it is widely understood that the 1940 World Fair was a propaganda coup.

The exhibition program, and particularly *Photographers of the 1940 Portuguese World*, aroused a lot of interest on the part of the public as well as on social media.

The presence or distance of the public has forced us to reflect, innovate, adapt, and improve working methods to make them more in tune and more capable of meeting the public's interests and expectations, and to thereby optimise the project and make it increasingly aware and global.

### **The next exhibition: an exhibition for the wider public?**

The next exhibition, curated by Professor João Paulo Martins, will be dedicated to the architect who designed the Monument to the Discoveries, José Ângelo Cottinelli Telmo (1897-1948), who was also the architect-in-chief for the 1940 Portuguese World Exhibition. He is a key theme and point of departure for the programme dedicated to the aforementioned event.

The exhibition will be a platform for making his work as an architect and the architect-in-chief of the *Portuguese World Exhibition* known, and also for his other creative work that included comic strips, illustration, graphic design and film. It will revisit the man, the work and the times, and try to comprehend his value and contribution to Portuguese architecture, and to the new paths that he opened up.

The process of building the mediation work for this project will have to develop every possible resource so as to appeal to the wider public, to promote the exhibition and its themes, and to draw in a new and younger public to disclose this theme.

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<sup>9</sup> The exhibition showed a wide selection of images from the Portuguese World Fair and was based on works held in Lisbon's Municipal Archives and in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Library of Art.





The aim is to construct different activities for each sector of the public, to enable them to find out about the exhibition and the different themes that it integrates.

It is not in the scope of this presentation to outline all the proposed activities, but in general, activities will include regular guided exhibition visits, themed visits for different age groups, tours in Lisbon, and will take into consideration Cottinelli's work, his unrealised projects and different ways of seeing the architecture and the city itself.

Architecture, illustration and comic strip workshops have been under represented in our proposals, and they will be aimed now at several age-groups and sectors of the public and offer new channels for discovery and enrichment that are associated with the exhibition.

The planned conferences on Cottinelli Telmo's architectural work and the other fields in which he worked will bring a more technical and participatory element for the public linked to these fields. It is expected that they will make an important contribution to further discussion, understanding and promotion of not only his work, but also of the artistic and cultural group that Cottinelli Telmo brought together.

There will also be workshops dedicated to senior citizens (who tend to frequent this kind of exhibition and cultural activity less often) which will tackle the theme of the city and its memories, using the film *A Canção de Lisboa* [*The Song of Lisbon*]. This workshop could also signify a starting point for discovering Cottinelli Telmo's work for this sector of the public. The film *A Canção de Lisboa* will be presented simultaneously in the auditorium and should appeal to the public; it is perhaps the best "poster" for the exhibition.<sup>10</sup>

And what about children?

How can they be brought into this exhibition? Into a world they barely know? What approaches can be used, and how can references be built?

The activities concerning this ages and public have on occasion needed the work of an actor who regularly creates workshops for children, although this has not been done before in the scope of an exhibition. With a solid, yet careful and precise understanding of the project, this director and actor can intervene in the world of our youngest visitors (8 to 12 years), and we trust that he will be able to create a path for them to walk along together towards Cottinelli Telmo's creative universe.

The fundamental aim, without misrepresenting the themes and greater purpose of the exhibition, is to find the different keys that could open the right doors for each kind of public.

We are aware that with this exhibition and chosen theme we are focusing more deeply on the involvement of the Portuguese public, who are naturally those most aware of and sensitive to this proposal

On the other hand, we have to take into account a foreign and seasonal public and we cannot ignore the incidence of these seasonal variations. We must not therefore neglect the expectations and interest of foreign visitors, either regarding current exhibitions, or regarding our contribution to promote Portuguese History and Culture. It is therefore necessary to ensure that language and communication is clear for all, meaning that bilingual presentation is necessary (Portuguese/English), as well as the usual exhibition leaflets in three languages (Portuguese/English/Spanish).

The concept of "the wider public" is thus always in construction. It is a constant aim, even if it is hard to achieve. It does however, have the virtue of inspiring us to work tirelessly on this proposal, and also to highlight the exhibition's advantages and purposes, showing not only the project's positive aspects, but also its weaknesses, which we strive constantly to revise.

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<sup>10</sup> *A Canção de Lisboa* was directed by Cottinelli Telmo. It was his first and only film, and despite the polemic surrounding it, it continues to be a reference in Portuguese Cinema, as it was the 1st sound film in Portugal and was a huge success at the box office.

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