

Strand 2. Art Nouveau and Politics in the Dawn of Globalisation

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, a portuguese Art Nouveau artist

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Abstract

The Art Nouveau gradual appearance in the Portuguese context it's marked by the multidimensional artist Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, and by his audacious affirmation as an avant-garde figure focused upon the industrial modernity, that is able to highlight some of the most original artistic solutions of his time. He manages to include in his production a touch of Portuguese Identity alongside with the new European trends of the late 19th century, combining traditional production techniques, themes and typologies, which are extended to artistic areas as varied as the press, the decorative arts and the decoration of cultural events.

In this article, we pretend to analyse some of his proposals within Lisbon's civil architecture interior design and his participation in the Columbian Exhibition, held in Madrid in 1892, where he was a member of the Portuguese Legation, co-responsible for the selection and composition of the exhibition contents.

Keywords: Art Nouveau, Cultural heritage, Portuguese identity, 19th Century, interior and exterior design, Decorative arts, ceramics, tiles, furniture, Colombian Exposition of Madrid 1892

THE FIRST YEARS - PRESS, HUMOR AND AVANT-GARDE

Rafael Augusto Prostes Bordalo Pinheiro (1846-1905) was born on March 21, 1846, in Lisbon, Portugal. His taste for art has always been boosted up by his father, Manuel Maria Bordalo Pinheiro who, together with his occupation as a civil servant, was also known as a painter and an external student of the Academy of Fine Arts of Lisbon. This passion seems to have influenced his offspring and gave rise to notable artists, such as Columbano Bordalo Pinheiro (1857-1929). Rafael, the eldest brother, has always been the biggest fan of the engraving area. However, he was never fully determined in this practice, having other typical of youth interests in mind.

After attending the Central High School, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro starts taking a deep interest in the performing arts and all the theatre surroundings, working and developing his skills both as an actor and scenographer. In 1861 he enrolls in the Course Design and Civil Architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts of Lisbon. Four years later, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro attends as student in a course in the areas of language and literature. In this phase, we find evidence of his numerous caricatures made with the tip of a cigar on the walls of the *Convento de Jesus*. The satires directed to his old master D. Pedro V and to Viale (the responsible for the subject of his Ancient Literature course) were held responsible for his resigning¹.

Still he continued attending the Academy of Fine Arts, being enrolled in the Old Drawing lessons between 1867 and late 1871, although he could not be regarded as a committed regular student. He attends the Live Model Studio as an apprentice in 1869 and occasionally attends evening courses as external student. Together with his father he participated in exhibitions in *Sociedade Promotora de Lisboa*, receiving good reviews.

In 1870, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro became a man connected to the press and periodicals expressing his critical witty vision on the social, economic and political reality. This criticism is also present in the engravings that he created to adorn his published articles. By the time it was already evident his originality reflected upon the headings he produced, with evidence in capital letters and remaining elements, already denoting some traces of a more organic style

¹ José-Augusto FRANÇA, *Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro O Português Tal e Qual*, Lisboa, Livros Horizonte, 2007.

that he would refine after². We may affirm this author was a pioneer of a new creative area in Portugal known today as comics.

This was followed by several publications over the years, but it was with *A Lanterna Mágica* in 1875 that Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro started being regarded as a unique and charismatic journalist.

In that same year, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro settles in Brazil working as a collaborator in several publications and creating many others. During these years his production was intense, always sparkled with an innovative creativity and audacious humour, truly unusual in the Brazilian context. Often involved in public controversies caused by his own sharp political and social satires directed to the Brazilian Empire, there were conflicting feelings of animosity among the political classes which motivated the two life attacks he suffered and strengthened the decision to return to Portugal.

Back to his country in 1880, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro joins the *Grupo do Leão* which includes other artists, writers, friends and his brother Columbano, that didn't intend to follow the artistic panorama of the time³. Distancing themselves from the academicism, this group struggled to renew the Portuguese art focusing on the proliferation and success of Portuguese Naturalism, especially in the painting area. The artist continues his national press activity, founding his own weekly newspapers, as *O António Maria* (first series: 1879-1885), collaborating in others as a guest and contributing with his illustrations for several literature works of contemporary authors. By 1883 the process which would lead to the founding of the *Fábrica de Faianças das Caldas da Rainha* had already begun, a daring project that Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro will hug and that will be contextualize a little further on in this text. In the following years the artist makes several international trips, studying the ceramic work and industries of different European countries, such as England, France and Belgium. He participates in a myriad of national and international exhibitions where he presents his drawings, engravings and ceramic pieces.

² Manuel RIO-CARVALHO; M. Margarida L.G. MARQUES MATIAS, *História da Arte em Portugal - Do Romantismo ao Fim do século* V.11, Lisboa, Publicações Alfa S.A., 1986.

³ José-Augusto FRANÇA, *Historia da Arte em Portugal*, Lisboa, Editorial Presença, 2004.

At that time Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, stands out for the prizes he was awarded as: the gold medal in the area of ceramics in the Industrial Exhibition in 1888; or his participation in the decoration of the Portuguese Pavilion of the Paris World Exhibition in 1889, in which he won a gold medal from the *Fábrica de Faianças* and a silver one at the *Exposição de Faianças*. In 1903, he was guest of honour in a great banquet sponsored by the Association of Journalists of Lisbon, in D. Maria II Theatre, event that attracted many friends, co-workers and state figures and ended up being one of the most affectionate tribute events he experienced.

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro also stood out as one of the most important Portuguese pottery creators, mainly by the close connection to the foundation of the *Fábrica de Faianças das Caldas da Rainha* (1885), located north of Lisbon, popular for its large ceramic tradition. Together with his friend José Ramalho Ortigão (1836-1915), his sister Maria Augusta (1841-1915) and his brother Feliciano Bordalo Pinheiro (1847-1905), Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro goes to Caldas da Rainha committed to revitalize this centre not only by artistically investing on it but also by industrializing it. On June 30, 1884, the deed of sale is signed while the general group of shareholders decided to hand over the technical and artistic direction to our author.

THE ARTIST AND THE ART NOUVEAU

In Portuguese territory, the Art Nouveau style reached Portugal late. Its greatest impact was felt between 1905 and 1920 and its proliferation coincided with a rising urban bourgeoisie. This group promoted the construction of buildings in the most important cities of the country with incredible marks of this artistic influence. The production of tiles covering the buildings façades typically characterized the urban environment of the main Portuguese cities of the late 19th century and become representative of the growing industrialization and technical advances in the area. Closely related with the city architecture, the tile acquires a leading role in the national development of this style as a sign of wealth, and they could no longer be considered as just a decorative element. The tile panel was now embroiled in symbolism⁴. At some point, ornamental ceramics applied on the façades began to present an increasingly naturalistic trend all over the city, present in train stations, atriums and hotels, exteriors and interior spaces of

⁴ José-Augusto FRANÇA, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX V.II*, Lisboa, Livraria Bertrand, 1967.

palaces, state buildings and private houses. In some specific situations, as in the case of small emblematic shops of Lisbon, tiles panels are also used as an advertising means to expose the products to be sold⁵. By this time, there wasn't a rule set concerning the Art Nouveau architecture. Nevertheless, the tile stands out from other construction materials, as an echo of taste and modernity⁶.

From the renewed production of the *Fábrica de Faianças das Caldas da Rainha*, tiles are produced together with utilitarian pottery, objects of artistic ceramics and construction material, in which the Art Nouveau style manifest the unique creativity of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro. Mastering technical performance and constantly showing concern towards the aesthetic and production mechanisms carried out in other European countries, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro creative genius reaches extraordinary levels of excellence. The new international aesthetic models that he met in his previous trips assured him this geniality.

In this context, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro creates a remarkable collection of tiles intended for both the inner and outer coverings, considered as the most important decorative elements. Embossed tiles were produced, figurative themes explored (vegetable and animal), merging the reproduction and incorporation of imaginative elements as well as national cultural symbols⁷. This organic originality, very Art Nouveau, together with the high quality of his technical production, seen on the manually applied glazed tiles, help us dating these years of intense labour as those in which some of his most emblematic works were created. These creations were presented in several national and international exhibitions, as the Universal Exhibition of 1889, held in Paris, and the Colombian Exhibition of 1892, held in Madrid, which earned him numerous awards and honours.

⁵ *Idem*.

⁶ Luísa ARRUDA: "Azulejaria nos Séculos XIX e XX", *História da Arte Portuguesa* V.3, 1995, p. 407.505:410.

⁷ Aida Sousa DIAS, Rogério MACHADO, *Cerâmica de Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro*, Porto, Lello e Irmão Editores, 1987.



Fig.1 Pattern Tile Panel "Butterfly and Ear".

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro; 1905.

Glazed polychrome tiles; 152 x 38 cm.

©Museu Bordalo Pinheiro; MRBP.AZU.0005

In the Portuguese context we find Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro truly engaged in an artistic production able to encompass not only aspects of the European aesthetic modernity, but also able to transmit values and Portuguese traditional symbols. The demand for this type of "national modernized solutions" which was present throughout his life, identify his production with the lines of thought defended by other Portuguese personalities closely connected to the art review, literature and to national heritage discussions. Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro reaches a top position reinforcing a new artistic style in which many traditional and historical details are highlighted, thus becoming a constant feature throughout his whole work. Rafael finds inspiration in important moments of the nation, as is the case of their re-interpretations of the *Manuelino* style (that marked the national transition from gothic to renaissance), praising the greatness of the Portuguese people through the inclusion of more or less evident details in his artwork. The efforts for the dissemination and enhancement of these contexts are undoubtedly an attempt to keep alive the concept of being Portuguese.

All over the country, we witness a growing taste for decorative arts together with Portuguese traditions that will gradually come close to the English Arts and Crafts movement

and pre-Raphaelite⁸. Areas such as jewellery, lace and embroidery, tapestry or embossed and carved decorated furniture, start having projection mainly in the production aimed at the interior design of buildings. Partnerships between artists, designers and artisans are increasingly frequent, often combining their knowledge of the materials, techniques and each one's different expertise. It is precisely in this context that Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro will continue working (in addition to his activity linked to the press and social caricature) becoming one of the most versatile artists of his time.

There are still several examples of decorative engineering of both commercial and private buildings of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro in Lisbon. In the *Panificação Mecânica*, in *Campo de Ourique*, we can delight our eyes with the Art Nouveau influences in the decoration, the columns holding iron beams or the tiles showing ears of wheat in a clear reference to the traditions of bread making, the nature and traditional work. In this game of colours the ear of wheat assumes itself as an element of the relationship between the structure of the building and its decor. Another example is the *Tabacaria Monaco*, decorated with naturalist tiles, in blue and white, combining Art Nouveau and mudéjar influences. The panels display a fun and curious caricatural sequence under a bucolic countryside, where frogs smoke cigarillos and read the pages of newspapers for sale at the store and cranes dance surrounded by water lilies. The small details in yellow illuminate the sections of tiles that cover half of the inner walls of this tidy century-old shop.

As a reference to his domestic architectural space, it must be referred as an example the *Beau Séjour* palace, located in Lisbon, which was rehabilitated, between 1887 and 1892, in a partnership carried out with his siblings Columbano e Maria Augusta, as well as other artists. In the dining room foyer, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro created a piece of considerable size, where there is a water wash-hand basin fountain. This flamboyant functional element is decorated with vegetal and zoomorphic motifs, trying to create an optical illusion that unites the scenic surroundings. A frame of tiles entitled *Frog and Water Lily* performed in distinct patterns, composes the entire set. In the dining room small details of ceramic were applied in the gas lamp, suspended in the middle of the dining room, showing foliage, grape bunches, fruits and bees, which make up intricate shapes of bright colours, following again a naturalistic organic

⁸ José-Augusto, FRANÇA, *Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, Lisboa, Livraria Bertrand, 1967.

style. The artist also suggests applying two tile panels of the same pattern as the one used in the wash-hand basin to adorn the wood neo-gothic style archway that gives access to the kitchen service area. Emphasizing the most unique aspect of this work, we highlight the furniture choice, especially designed to complement the decorative language picked out by his brothers. Likewise, three sets of different furnishings sizes and functions are specially designed for receiving Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro's ceramic decoration. Strategically placed in the dining room, these elements functionally and aesthetically complete the entire environment.



Fig. 2 Wash-hand basin fountain.

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro; Fábrica de Faianças das Caldas da Rainha; 1891.

Glazed polychrome tiles and ceramics; 334 x 225 cm.

Pedro Boffa Molinar; Color Photography; 1992.

©Palácio Beau Séjour; FT9706CMLEO, NEG344/92CMLEO.

Internationally, we highlight Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro's important satirical contribution for the preparation of the Universal Paris Exhibition in 1889, whose theme was the celebration of the French Revolution centenary. On that specific occasion, he was invited to intervene in the interior design of the exhibition rooms, including the decoration of the wines Pavilion, by the Committee which represented Portugal at the event, set up by the Real Association of Portuguese Agriculture and by the Portuguese Industrial Association. However, when he joins the project, the pavilions are already under construction and he truly show his regrets for not having had the possibility to create a building that best illustrated the architectural national

tradition⁹. The Portuguese representation was composed of sixteen rooms, eleven dedicated to the continental exhibition and five to the colonial one. In the decorative speech the inclusion of several of his *Fábrica de Faianças das Caldas da Rainha* ceramics was proposed to the artist. The French government gave the Legion of Honour award to Rafael for his decorations works. Both strongly influenced by Art Nouveau and his national imagery, the author sought to explore the national decorative arts through the most picturesque and original elements of his country. These ingenious aspects assumed a critical importance in the characterization of each of the exhibition rooms, distinguishing each geographical area of Portugal as it was intended in that context. The elements were easily accepted and appreciated by the target audience as they were in a naturalistic and organic language that was familiar to them.



Fig. 3 Sideboard.

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, Frederico Ribeiro; 1892/93.

Wood, Glazed polychrome tiles, 100 x 144,5 x 76,5 cm.

©Museu Bordalo Pinheiro; MRBP.MOB.0036.

PORTUGAL AT THE FOURTH CENTENARY OF THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA - THE COLOMBIAN EXHIBITION IN MADRID, 1892

In the context of this article we want to focus on the presence of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro in the Colombian Madrid Exhibition, integrated in the fourth centenary celebration of the discovery of America, in 1892. This approach is carried out not only by the artistic performance that the author present in his solutions, but also for his link to the political objectives set by the Portuguese legation that reflected the social context at that time. In fact,

⁹ Rafael Bordalo PINHEIRO: “Exposição Universal de Paris. O Pavilhão Portuguez do Quai d’Orsay”, *Os Pontos nos ii*, Special Edition n.d. 1889, p. 1-35:9.

this conjecture could not come at a better time for the Portuguese interests once the social and political circumstances were of national fragility in terms of its global geostrategic position, reflected by the concerns of the Portuguese loss of sovereignty over some colonial territories. Given the opportunity to put down a marker on colonial legitimacy, all the exhibition event was carefully thought bearing this goal in mind¹⁰.

José Ramalho Ortigão, a figure of culture in the national context, at the time secretary of the *Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa*, was assigned as a representative of the Portuguese group, integrating the team responsible for the preparation of the exhibition. He was commissioned to choose the pieces to be exhibited, their layout in the different Portuguese rooms, as well as the general decoration¹¹. In addition to the various academics who accompanied him on this task, José Ramalho Ortigão called his long-time friend Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro to join the team, considering his previous experience in Paris.

To expose the aesthetic trends and the traditional Portuguese technologies, in addition to show the distinct national features, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro comes up with several studies and projects for the exhibition rooms. In the end, beyond the reproduction of multiple tile panels from the 16th century and a sculpture of D. Henrique, some works stand out such as the decorative rigging made by a group of the Portuguese Armada sailors composed by various elements and architectural Renaissance symbols of national monuments, such as various details of the *Igreja da Madre de Deus* entrance in Lisbon and the production of different royalty nautical elements.

After the exhibition installation, visitors were invited to experience the Portuguese Discoveries in a route divided into four distinct sections. This sequence was intended to strengthen the Portuguese affirmation of the past while validating and supporting the present. The public could visit the maritime section; a documentary and bibliographical section; the American Ethnology and the decorative art section¹². In the first of the two rooms the reality of

¹⁰ Alice Nogueira ALVES: “A influência do mar na visão museológica de Ramalho Ortigão”, *Vox Musei arte e património* V.2, 2014, p. 46-55:50.

¹¹ Ramalho ORTIGÃO, *Catálogo Especial de Portugal, Cuarto Centenario del Descubrimiento de América, Exposición Histórico-Americana*, Madrid, Est. Tipográfico «Sucesores de Rivadeneyra» Impresores de La Real Casa, 1892.

¹² Joaquim de ARAÚJO, *A Comissão Portuguesa da Exposição Colombiana*, Lisboa, Thyphopia da Academia Real das Siencias, 1892.

traditional fishing arts was presented, with flags and banners framing the exhibitors, widely decorated with pre-Columbian America artefacts, numismatic objects and several pieces from the *Fábrica de Faianças das Caldas da Rainha*, composing an invocation of the Portuguese maritime spirit, its glories and its achievements as well as its maintenance throughout the centuries. Furthermore, some pieces of furniture of the time was also selected which, together with the exhibitors, presented several copies of official documents and pieces of jewellery illustrating the history of Portugal with captions attesting their authenticity, provenience and above all its antiquity. Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro created a physical path with a set of carpets laid out from the entry of the first room to the exit so that the visitor could enjoy the entire exhibition experience¹³.

Following the aesthetic line that Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro had already suggested for the Paris World Exposition in 1889, in Madrid, we can again observe some of the most characteristic details of his vision that explores the emerging Art Nouveau style embroidered with a constant Portuguese spirit. In this convergence of ideas, a proof of his geniality lays on the ornamental solution suggested for the decoration of the existing furniture in the rooms of the exhibition. On the main images divulged, we can distinguish the inclusion of ceramic elements in different furniture and exhibitors. In the lateral façade, small panels of tiles of Moorish tradition appear, very similar to what had already executed for the furniture of the *Beau Séjour* palace in Lisbon. Generally speaking, we can conclude that the decorative design composed by Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro transmits an organic exoticism, sprinkled with very particular combinations of modernity and the glorification of the collective national memory in a unique overwhelming environment. More than the elements seen separately, it's important to underline the rooms design in an integrated way, in which the exhibited pieces along with the decorative artefacts converge in a single, fully integrated speech, strongly marked by a naturalistic organic.

¹³ José Miguel Pimenta SILVA, *Portugal no IV Centenário do Descobrimento da América (1892-1893)* Dissertação de Mestrado em História dos Descobrimentos e da Expansão, Lisboa, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, 2012.

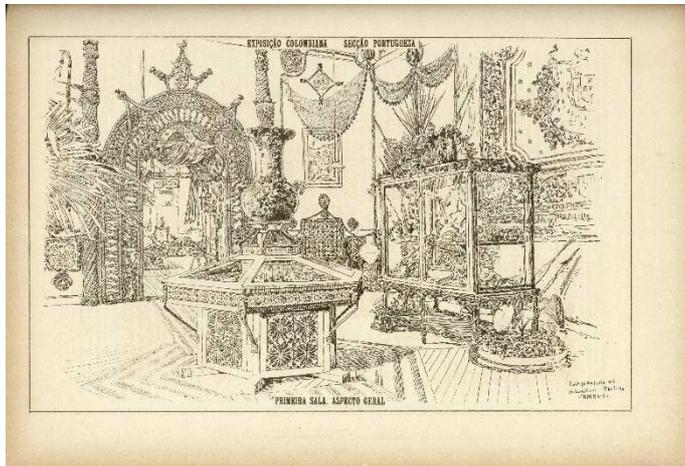


Fig. 4 Engraving.

“Colombian Exhibition, Portuguese section. First Room, general aspect”.

Published in the *O António Maria* newspaper; December 22, 1892.

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Several international journals have focused on the national¹⁴ and international representation of Portugal in Madrid as well as the celebration of the fourth centenary. When the exhibits were inaugurated, Portugal gaining greater distinction receiving several praises regarding the design presented in its two rooms, having more images of these rooms spread than any other room of the event. It was also mentioned the arrival of the Portuguese royal family¹⁵ and of the Portuguese Commission to Madrid. National heroes such as D. Manuel I, Vasco da Gama, Bartolomeu Dias and the Infante D. Henrique were emphasized. These allusions played an influential role all over the Spanish cultural publications and Portuguese personalities such as Teófilo Braga, Ramalho Ortigão, Oliveira Martins and Pinheiro Chagas, were invited to write articles about it.

¹⁴ Silva PEREIRA, “Centenario da Descoberta da América por Christovao Colombo, Os Autographos de Christovam Colombo”, *O Occidente: revista ilustrada de Portugal e do estrangeiro Magazine* V.15, November 11, 1892, p.1-8:7-8.

¹⁵ Anonymous, “Los Reyes de Portugal”, *El Liberal*, November 10, 1892, p.1-4:1.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In an approach based on the reading of the Art Nouveau style in Portugal, the analysis of the work of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro becomes crucial to understand and support his importance in the national, historical and artistic context. In this artist we find a strong connection to the social and cultural reality of the time, revealing in his vast and varied production, the purpose of illustrating the events of everyday life, targets of his social, political and economic criticism, together with the constant willingness to modernize the techniques and materials used in the national artistic production.

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro has always been regarded as a progressive and driving force, focusing on making the best use of the technological innovations available, so it is not surprising that he has dedicated himself to the most diverse areas of production. In his ceramics work we discover curious decorative schematic compositions that combine artistic traditional techniques with wise confluences of themes, complemented by the elegance of lines in his naturalistic drawings of Art Nouveau inspiration. His name is often referred by historians as one of the greatest national artists that best interpreted *Manuelino* and *Mudéjar* styles in tiling. Constantly committed to improve the production quality of *Fábrica de Faianças da Caldas da Rainha*, he also fought for the promotion of the local craftsmen and remaining working classes. These factors largely contributed to his admiration and respect in the national context.

Throughout his life, the artist managed to achieve an aesthetic unity in perfect harmony with the used vast raw materials, gradually approaching the Arts and Crafts movement and other avant-garde movements of his time, deepening an eclectic taste in the decorative arts, which he revitalized while simultaneously influencing its production and consumption. Grown up in a bourgeois family background that appreciated art and the Portuguese culture, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro early contacts the universe of ancient traditions and customs, as well as the value and accuracy of the work performed. These features doubtlessly shaped his prolific professional and personal experience. He never distanced himself from the national memory in his work turning out to be a compelling reference of Portuguese culture for decades, leaving significant marks in the collective imaginary (up to the present) as an important reference, in the passage of the 19th century to the 20th century.

Curriculum Vitae

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