

## **The Junta Nacional da Cortiça (Cork Portuguese Board) and the Paris Exhibition of 1937. Cork Marketing from the Portuguese “Estado Novo” regime.**

### INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we want to present the notion that the cork presence in the Portuguese pavilion, built for the international Exhibition of 1937 in Paris, was a turning point in Portuguese Cork international marketing strategy. The Portuguese exhibition leader, Antonio Ferro, made efforts to accommodate cork presence, supported by the guidelines of the “Junta Nacional da Cortiça” (1936-1972,<sup>1</sup> JNC). Ferro and his allies, determined to link Portugal (and cork) with progress and modernity, commissioned modern artists and photographs to design and decorate the rooms of the Portuguese pavilion.

The JNC (and the “Instituto dos Produtos Florestais”, 1972-1988) played a vital role in the management of the Portuguese cork industry for half a century. Still, there is not academic literature about the JNC. Those are some of the reasons that have pushed for the release of this study: a) to bring the JNC to light and b) to recognize the important value of this institution within the cork industry and within Portuguese contemporary history. In addition, this study campaigns for the reappearance of some form of associative group within the cork business, able to defend the interests of the sector. Knowing about the past of the sector helps to understand the present of it. Especially, it is relevant to enlighten the work of the JNC today because, due to the recent international economic crisis, several local governments in Portugal are aiming to implement some of the old duties the JNC performed at its time.

At the heart of this study is the relationship between politics, aesthetics and cork during this volatile period. Portuguese fascism appealed to Portuguese intellectuals and cultural producers to defend their identity and their materials.

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<sup>1</sup> In a tribute to the history of the Portuguese Cork National Board (JNC), a new book (For a schedule of events and additional information, please visit the [www.Promocork.com](http://www.Promocork.com) web site), released in the first part of 2010, entitled “Junta Nacional da Cortiça (1936-1972)” captures stories and accomplishments that haven't yet been told about this Institution.

## ESTRUCTURE OF THE SUMMARY

The article is divided in four parts that aim to cover the trajectory and the historic context of the JNC Paris Exhibition presence in a comprehensive way. Thus, the first part deals with the circumstances in which the cork sector was, prior to 1936. The second, intends to explain how the JNC was a product of the political context of Portugal at that time: the “Estado Novo” which, on its turn, was characterized by favouring corporativism in the economy. The third, covers the production of the Portuguese 1937 pavilion. Finally, the fourth chapter looks one of the JNC’s functions: Marketing and Advertising.

### FIRST PART: PORTUGUESE CORK SECTOR PRIOR TO 1937

The Portuguese cork sector is not only important for being the biggest producer and manufacturer of cork in the world. In addition, Portuguese cork production enables the preservation of a precious ecosystem (rich in biodiversity): the “montado” (Cork oak forest). However, the cork industry in Portugal is going through challenging times. The greatest part of the demand for cork comes from the wine and spirits trade, where cork is used as bottle’s stopper. But, since the beginning of the 80’s, spirits producers have started choosing alternative materials to bottle, such as plastic and aluminium stoppers. Within this critical context for the cork sector appears this study.

To begin with, it is worth noting that Portuguese cork started to have market value as a woodland product at the end of the XIX century. A succession of negative and positive events for the cork sector took place during those years. During this first third of the XX century, the foundations for the creation of the JNC were laid.

During the time frame from 1920 to 1936, the cork sector in Portugal was going through difficult times. For instance, the 1929 economic crisis that started in the USA, had an important impact on cork exports. The USA, that used to import 60% of the total Portuguese cork exports, drastically reduced its cork demand. However, even if the cork production often stagnated during the 1920s, cork extraction kept high. In fact, cork demand was so large that people started to indiscriminately harvest cork at the point of extracting “male cork”<sup>2</sup> from the trees. Eventually, the appearance of these bad practices led to two attempts – along this period of time- made by interested parts, of putting into action administrative measures for the protection of cork oaks.

Therefore, it can be observed that efforts were made - even if timidly - to ameliorate the situation of the sector. Those efforts were coordinated actions amongst cork stakeholders. That fact would support one of our thesis, which is that the future of the Portuguese cork sector depends on the joining together of the actors interested in the “commercial survival” of this material.

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<sup>2</sup> The first removal is therefore undertaken, and the male cork is removed which, being hard, inelastic, irregular and dense is unusable in the production of stoppers. It is only at the third removal, when the tree is over 40 years old, that cork of a high quality will be obtained.



“Descortiçamento”, photography n. 57, Autoridade Florestal Nacional collection.

## SECOND PART: AN “ESTADO NOVO” WITH A CORK POLICY

In 1933, an authoritarian regime was installed in Portugal with the name of “New State” – “Estado Novo” in Portuguese - and with Antonio de Oliveira Salazar as his leader. The creation of the JNC took place within a centralist and corporatist ideological trend that prevailed in the “Estado Novo”. The Salazar government created the JNC due in part to the consequences of the world economic crisis of 1929 on the sector. Furthermore, the following question is posed an open to enquiry: to what extent the cork was part of a promotion programme and a project to assert the state authority?

Another Portuguese institution of the cork sector, the “Associação Industrial Portuguesa” (AIP), worked hard in these moments. The interest for the cork grew within Portugal because the production of cork was also augmenting.

To begin with, it is worth pointing out that Salazar’s “Estado Novo” contributed to the institutionalization of the cork sector by creating the JNC. The new political regime started economic reforms addressed to the industrial sectors that were going through difficulties as cork sector was. As mentioned above, the economic policy of the Estado Novo was centred on a corporatist ideology. In addition, the regime’s economic agenda was marked by interventionist actions. One of the products of this interventionism was the “industrial conditioning” (CI). To give an example of what the “industrial conditioning” was about, it can be said that it subordinated the establishment of new companies or industrial equipment, to a previous governmental authorization.

According to the Portuguese “Organization for Economic Coordination”, the economic reforms ordered by the “Estado Novo” did ameliorate the cork sector performance. In addition, collective actions by the cork sector took place. For instance, the AIP launched a campaign for the promotion of the cork. The overarching collective action by the cork stakeholders took the name of “Portugal Corticeiro” and it contributed to the development of the industrial cork society of the 1930s. In addition, “the contemporary organization of the cork sector is not a simple adaption to the natural and technical production conditions, but the result of an economic and social historical process”<sup>3</sup>, characterized by the performance of economic coordination mechanisms. Nevertheless, the basis of the way the cork industry was organized date far back to the creation of the JNC as well as the problems associated to the sector—such as the surplus of production and the cork’s lack of quality.

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<sup>3</sup> Ignacio García Pereda, Junta Nacional da Cortiça (1936-1972), 2009, Euronatura.

### THIRD PART: THE PRODUCTION OF THE 1937 PORTUGUESE PAVILION

The 1937 Paris Exposition arrived 4 years after the creation of the “Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional” (SPN), directed by Antonio Ferro, that defined the evolution of the Portuguese Plastic Arts.

The esthetical option of the 1937 Portuguese Pavilion, work of the young architect Keil do Amaral (1910-1975), was “essentially modern”, “modern, but Portuguese”. It considered the Portuguese dictatorship “another contemporary work of art”, and the “Salazar financial science” a “definitive example of modern technique”. It wanted to show how it was possible to change a country in only 10 years<sup>4</sup>. Oliveira Salazar and Antonio Ferro resolved to shape the “formation in the international society of our constructive value and our civilizing action”<sup>5</sup>.

The Paris opportunity, after years of isolationism justified by the necessity of centring in the internal issues, came almost at the same time of the confirmation of the Portuguese presence in the Berlin Olympic Games. For Salazar, it was also important to show the importance of the principal products of the national industry and agriculture. The exposition, like others world fairs that had preceded it, offered a vision of a world in which commercial goods flowed free among peoples and nations. Visitors could survey the latest products and scientific accomplishments (from wine to radio) in the pavilions devoted to luxury goods and industrial manufacturing. At every turn, there were things to sale. Economic need and the desire to increase trade are at the core of every world fair. Portuguese Cork was just going out from the effects of the Depression. Paris was a good opportunity to cultivate international commerce, and so between performances by the Paris ballet, politicians and economic leaders trolled for lucrative business deals. To wit, the cultural iconography of the Portuguese pavilion increased the perceived quality and value of the exhibited goods.

The Portuguese Pavilion was going to be built next to another 300 pavilions, 44 of which not French, with the works of architects like Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto, or painters like Picasso<sup>6</sup>, from the Spanish Republic Government. For Ferro, “*in a moment when Spain struggle in a very sad and painful war, Portuguese life was not at all amended and moves calmly and fruitful in realizations*”<sup>7</sup>.

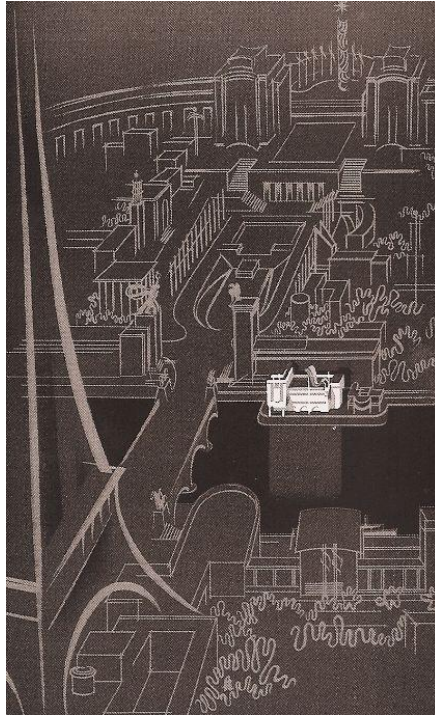
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<sup>4</sup> p461, rui Afonso santos, o design e a decoraçao em portugal, 1900-1994, volume iii da historia da arte portuguesa

<sup>5</sup> P38, Margarida acciaiuoli, exposições do estado novo 1934 1940, 1998

<sup>6</sup> By the time the Spanish pavilion had been dismantled , the Spanish Republic had been destroyed

<sup>7</sup> P43, Margarida acciaiuoli, exposições do estado novo 1934 1940, 1998



P41, Margarida Acciaiuoli, exposições do estado novo 1934 1940, 1998

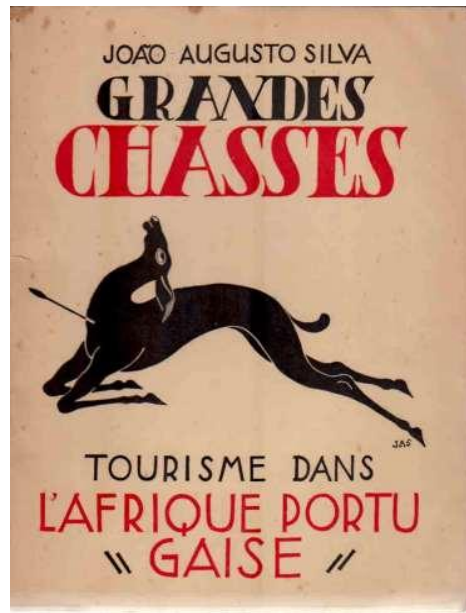
Ferro required the collaboration of some of the members of a new group of “decorators” (photo-designers) of the country, some of them had already participated in the 1932 Industrial Lisbon Fair. Fred Kradolfer (FK) (Zurique, 1903 - Lisboa, 1968), Swiss designer arrived to Portugal in 1928, was the mentor of decoration arts and publicity for the second generation of “artistas modernistas”. He made the revolution of the Portuguese “affiche” (Poster) with an international style, more or less attenuated by national characteristics: a powerful formula, with ideological adjustment. Kradolfer had worked as decorator in the Colonial Paris Fair (1931). His decoration of the Portuguese Pavilion, in 1937, was one of the most important plastic works of the decade.

	
<p>Poster of FK (signed K) for the Portuguese Pavilion in the Paris Colonial Fair (1931)</p>	<p>Poster of JVN (signed N) for the Boletim Cortiça (1938)</p>

Others decorators that worked with Kradolfer in Paris were: Bernardo Marques, José Rocha, Botelho, Tom, Emmerico, Paulo Ferreira. They used simple materials: Wood, plywood, cork, paper, brass, wrought iron or glass, in extremely imaginative solutions; decorations that surprised even the French critics. Photographical works were responsibility of Mário Novais and Domingos Alvão<sup>8</sup>. It was an unitary decoration, with total desertion of historicist formulas and art deco graphic niceties.

The pavilion was divided in 8 thematic rooms: State, realizations, public works, colonies, popular art and handicraft, natural wealth, science and tourism. All the visitors were offered with bags containing SPN editions, showing a strong hospitable efficacy. Works like “Le peuple portugais et ses caractéristiques sociales” (Stuart drawings), « L’empire colonial portugais », « Grandes chasses, Tourisme dans l’Afrique portugaise » (João Augusto Silva text), wine and fruit posters (Roberto de Araujo), or the Catalog “Portugal Exposition Internationale de Paris 1937” (Ferreira Gomes cover). The 1937 exposition offered an opportunity to showcase their social and cultural reforms to a global audience and thus gain greater political legitimacy in international affairs.

<sup>8</sup> FIGUEIREDO, Filipe – Nacionalismo e Pictorialismo na Fotografia Portuguesa na 1ª metade do século XX: o caso exemplar de Domingos Alvão, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2000



Cover of João Augusto Silva 1937 work

## Fourth Part: Cork in the Portuguese Pavilion, modern Cork Marketing

Between the functions of the JNC that had eminently economic traits, we want to remember the pioneering marketing one. The JNC became the Portuguese Cork sector's marketing organization responsible for the generic promotion of the quality and sales of Portuguese cork, domestically and abroad.

A greater marketing awareness toward cork products was emerging as a trend in the 1930 decade. In Portugal, this has been brought about partly by the JNC gaining stature in the industry. With the Spanish Civil War, there was the possibility to "steal" some of the markets worked by the Catalonia Cork Industry.

The JNC understood that some new countries comprised a major market, representing a big percent of all cork purchasing decisions. It made good business sense to make sure that communication messages had appeal to these new buyers.

JNC made inroads in the commercial world for more than half a century, and the Portuguese cork industry reflected this change. Cork Portuguese products started to appear in International Fairs and in some JNC publications, in English, Portuguese or German. A watershed year was 1937, when JNC was present in Paris.

Thanks to the massive crowds drawn to this kind of Fairs, two goals were accomplished: competitiveness and advertising, deemed to be essential to the development of industry and the internationalisation of trade. The fairs provided an opportunity for different countries to meet and draw comparisons.

The "Portugal Corticeiro" (PC) magazine (1934-1938), one of the responsible of the lobby campaign for the creation of the JNC, edited a special number: "*Portugal corticeiro, exposition internationale Paris 1937 : pour une plus grande utilisation du liège dans le monde entier*". In 1937, PC was one of the 10 specialized Cork Magazines edited in Europe, near titles likes "Le Liège" (Paris), "Le Chêne-Liège" (Algerie), "Boletín Corchero" (Sevilla), "Corcho y Taponés" (Sevilla) or "Industria Corchera" (Pallafrugell). In the words of PC: « *nous faisons des vœux pour la prospérité de nos confrères, leur rappelant qu'il nous incombe à tous de faire un effort soutenu pour une plus grande utilisation du liège dans le monde entier* » (p.13)



For the PC, the Portuguese situation of first world cork producer "*nous obligait a marquer le fait de notre primauté*" (p.2). The Paris Fair was an excellent opportunity to present the JNC, created only some months before. The magazine remembered one of the Junta objectives, that of « *provoquer l'expansion à l'étranger du liège nationale et des lièges manufacturés ; faisant une juste propagande et défendant le bon renom et la juste valeur de ses produits* »

Because of the need to construct pavilions to house the different machines and products, the fairs drew attention to the development and use of new building techniques and materials. Exhibitions were a pretext for erecting buildings using new materials. JNC could use this chance, the same way the 1878 International Fair highlighted the increasing importance of Portland cements in public works and the 1900 Fair established the use of concrete<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> P230, Ana Cardoso de Matos. "World exhibitions of the second half of the 19th century: a means of updating engineering and highlighting its importance". In Quaderns d'Història de l'Enginyeria: 2004, vol VI.

The PC special number took the lines of an article published in the French magazine “Candide”: « des l’entrée, sur le panneau de gauche, on est frappé par les armoiries de l’Etat portugais réalisés entièrement en liège aggloméré de différents teintes, ce qui donne un cachet d’originalité car nous ne sommes pas habitués a ce camaïeu de lieges (...) Au pavillon portugais, le socle du sextant historique de l’amiral et grand navigateur aérien portugais Gago Coutinho est constitué par des plaques assemblées de liège aggloméré fin, ce qui est une des curiosités du pavillon » (p.7)

	
<p>“Mostruário”, photography n. 714, Autoridade Florestal Nacional collection.</p>	<p>“Exposições no País”, photography n. 1376, Autoridade Florestal Nacional collection.</p>

The international public, in 1937, could see in the Keil do Amaral Pavilion some private **collections of Cork Objects** destined to the Art Room, like one from "Paço da Quinta" (Azaruja, Alentejo), property of the lady Leonor Fernandes de Barahona Caldeira<sup>10</sup>.

The experience would be repeated in **New York, 1939**: “The artists showed, like in Paris, their just value. We would say even, much better than in Paris exposition. Bernardo Marques, Kradolfer, Tom, Botelho, Américo Nunes and José Rocha acquired, in the ornament art of that kind of pavilion, a surprising virtuosity”<sup>11</sup>.

In 1944, Kradolker<sup>12</sup> worked directly for the JNC in the decoration of the stand for the Feira Popular (Popular Fair). The Feira Popular was opened in the centre of Lisbon. The opening of the JNC stand happened the 8 June, and the stand received “an extraordinary influx of public and very surprising commentaries, wakening up the interest and helping to bring to the public knowledge many cork applications and aspects of the sector, normally unknown outside the directly concerned sectors”<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> p189, Vera Marques Alves: “Camponeses Estetas’ no Estado Novo. Arte Popular e Nação na política Folclorista do SPN/SNI”, PhD Thesis, ISCTE, 2008. Years before, Leonor Fernandes had been one of the founders of the Pro-Évora Group, Évora Patrimony Defense Association, 1919

<sup>11</sup> P.13, Boletim Cortiça, n.6, 1939.

<sup>12</sup> revista Panorama, n19, 1944

<sup>13</sup> P404, Feira Popular de Palhava, Boletim Cortiça, n.69, 1944.



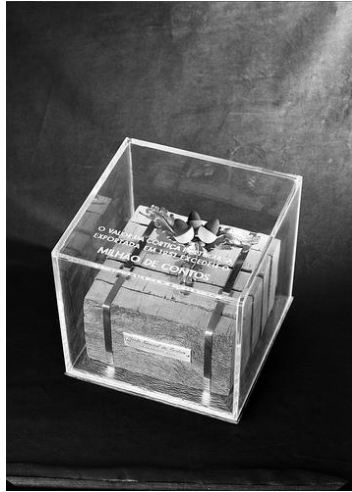
“Exposições no País”, photography n. 1560, Autoridade Florestal Nacional collection.

After the Paris Exposition, the JNC started the edition of a brand new magazine in 1938, the “Boletim Cortiça”. The Boletim survived 50 years and more than 600 numbers that have conserved the major works of some of the best cork specialist, such as the forest engineer Joaquim Vieira Natividade <sup>14</sup>(1899-1968) or the Spanish Salvador Robles Trueba <sup>15</sup>(1897-1972).

We must not forget the photography studio of Mário Novais (collection saved today by the Gulbenkian Foundation). Mário Novais (1899-1967), opened his own studio in 1933, and specialized in architecture and advertising photography. He was the most recognized photograph of the Colonial Lisbon Fair in 1940, and the Gulbenkian conserves today at least one photo made by Novais for the JNC, without date.

<sup>14</sup> Ignacio García Pereda, *Ciência e Política do Sobreiro e da Cortiça*, 2008, Euronatura

<sup>15</sup> Francisco Manuel Parejo Moruno, *Europacork*, enero 2010, Un ingeniero al frente de la economía corchera nacional, p46-49.



Novais, Gulbenkian Collection

With all this activity in Fairs and publications, the JNC put a new face on the Portuguese cork sector, taking lead roles in sales, marketing and distribution.



Photography of the Realizations Room, 1937. In the upper part, a photography with Vieira Natividade next to a cork oak. p.56, Margarida Acciaiuoli, exposições do estado novo 1934 1940, 1998

## CONCLUSIONS, SOME RESTS OF THE 1937 PAVILION IN THE MAP LISBON MUSEUM

On the one hand, it is suggested that the JNC was a hindrance to the dynamic entrepreneurship<sup>16</sup> of Portuguese cork sector. On the other hand, the enriching role of the JNC as a centre for cork indicatives is valued through this study. For instance, the JNC set up innovative work on advertising and marketing.

As a consequence of the beneficial contribution of the JNC we have just referred, the situation of backwardness and stagnation in which the Portuguese cork industry was after 1929 came to an end. JNC performed a role that the Spanish cork sector and Government were not in conditions to achieve.

Some members of the team that prepared the Portuguese Pavilion in 1937, continued working for a new Antonio Ferro's project: the new "Museu de Arte Popular" (MAP). Nowadays, after more than 5 years closed, it's predicted to open once again at the end of 2010<sup>17</sup>.

Although the MAP project was prepared in 1936, it didn't open his doors until 1948. The success of the Portuguese representation in Fairs like the Paris one, laureated by the international reviews, materialized in this place. Reusing the Popular Life Pavilion prepared for the 1940 Lisbon Colonial Fair, this Museum had an absolutely modern museographic quality.

Between the Paris participants, inside the MAP we can find the Alentejo Panel, piece painted by Estrela Faria, one of the Gold Medals in 1937. More than 70 years later, it will be possible to contemplate in Lisbon some beautiful rests of the way of advertising Cork that happened in Paris before the Second World War.



"Sala do Alentejo com a pintura mural de Estrela Faria (1910-1976). Foto de Armando Serôdio". 1966. Arquivo Fotográfico de Lisboa.

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<sup>16</sup> We campaign today for the creation of a new version of the JNC. Such an important exporting industry as the one around the cork, in Portugal and Spain, needs few and good defensive elements with active representatives. Due to the European Dimension of the actual context, inexistent in 1936, this new Junta should choose an Iberian format

<sup>17</sup> P4, Alexandra prado coelho, O regresso do museu que se recusou a morrer, publico, 17-5-2010