

# MRAR – The Portuguese “Religious Art Renovation Movement” (1954-1969) and the Changes in the 20th Century Religious Architecture in Portugal

INVITED

*Religious Architecture, Modern Architecture, Sacred Art, Renovation, Portugal*

## /Abstract

Founded in 1954, the MRAR – Religious Art Renovation Movement was the product of the will of a group of architects, artists and historians, such as Nuno Teotónio Pereira, João de Almeida, Nuno Portas, Diogo Pimentel, Luíz Cunha, Manuel Cargaleiro, José Escada and Vitorino Nemésio, who were committed to giving religious buildings in Portugal greater dignity and artistic quality, in a formal opposition to the maintenance of traditionalist models.

For fifteen years, the MRAR made a significant contribution to the Church's and country's cultural renewal through an artistic, political and pastoral programme that constituted the best example of religious and cultural intervention of an elite who operated an effective renewal of religious buildings, as well as an anthropological and sociological appreciation of liturgical space. After it came to an end, the high quality of architectural and theological discussion of religious buildings provided by MRAR was never repeated in Portugal.

## /Author

João Alves da Cunha  
Lisbon, Portugal | CEHR – UCP  
(Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa –  
Universidade Católica Portuguesa)  
joaoalvesdacunha.arq@gmail.com

Architect by the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon - FAUL (1998) and Master in Rehabilitation of Architecture and Urban Centers by the same university (2003). He holds a PhD in Architecture History at FAUL (2014) with the thesis “MRAR – The Religious Art Renovation Movement and the Golden Years of Religious Architecture in Portugal in the 20th century”, work distinguished by FAUL with the Professor Manuel Tainha Award, corresponding to the best PhD in Architecture (2013-2014), and published by Universidade Católica Editora in 2015. He is a lecturer and author of several books and articles in the field of religious architecture. Since 2010, has organized meetings and exhibitions of architecture and religious architecture. He is a researcher at the Centre for Studies in Religious History of the Portuguese Catholic University (CEHR-UCP), where he has collaborated in research projects such as “The Catholic Church and the modern city” (2015) and “Dominicans. Portuguese Art and Architecture. Dialogues with Modernity” (2018).



Lisbon (1954). A group of young architects and students of architecture at the School of Fine Arts, who had become outraged with the architectural expression of the religious buildings of the last decade, decided to found the MRAR – Religious Art Renovation Movement, thus creating a vehicle for their desire to fight for greater dignity and artistic quality of religious architecture and sacred art in Portugal, while opposing traditionalist architectural models that characterized recent religious buildings in cities like Lisbon and Oporto.

The complex political, cultural and ideological context that led to the foundation of MRAR had begun taking shape almost half a century before, in 1910, the year the first republic was established in Portugal. After the monarchy ended, the republican government began its efforts to rid the country of the Catholic Church in Portugal, by banning worship, closing seminaries, expelling priests and religious orders, and nationalising their assets, which made the Holy See cut diplomatic relations with Portugal.

However, the political and economic developments of the nation, far from prospering, endured a decade and a half of serious crises, revolt and protest, which only ended with the coup of 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1926 and the creation of a military dictatorship, which, in 1933, became the “Estado Novo” regime, and was focussed on the President of the Council of Ministers, António de Oliveira Salazar.

One of the first measures taken by the new government of the second republic was to authorise the re-establishment of the Catholic Church in Portugal, which led Pope Pius XI, in 1929, to nominate D. Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, who was a former colleague of Salazar, as the new Cardinal-Patriarch of Lisbon, starting a relationship of proximity that would make the restoration of the Catholic Church in Portugal possible. In order to achieve this task, amongst other works, one of Cerejeira’s first decisions was to erect a large church in the capital, the first to be built in two decades, dedicated to Nossa Senhora de Fátima [Fig. 1], who

Fig. 1  
Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, Lisbon, 1938, architect Porfírio Pardo Monteiro. External view (*Revista do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos*, no. 7, 1938, p. 211).

was the focus of increasing devotion since the first apparitions in Cova da Iria in 1917. To implement the project, he called upon the regime's most favoured architect, Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, who had made a significant contribution to the renovation of Portuguese architecture in the 1930s, taking advantage of the knowledge that he had acquired through trips abroad and contacts with architects from other countries.

The author of numerous works in the capital, he was recognised for the solidity, sobriety, functionalism and modernity of his buildings, features that also characterised the new Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, a building of large dimensions, set at the top of one of Lisbon's new avenues, the reflection of a Church that no longer hid away, but rather one looking to regain its previous status.

Architecturally speaking, Pardal Monteiro rejected historical styles, such as the Neo-Romanesque or the Neo-Gothic still present in Portuguese architecture, and finding inspiration in the work of his French friend and colleague, August Perret, architect of the well-known Church of Notre-Dame de Raincy, he designed a church with clearly modernist facades, which won an award from Lisbon City Council in the year of its inauguration, 1938, and published the following year in the famous architectural magazine *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'Hui*.

Despite the notoriety obtained among the cultural elite, the architect's choice was not immune from strong opposition from the more conservative sectors of Portuguese society, forcing the Cardinal to write a letter in defence of the new church's architecture.

"When building the new Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, we wanted it to fulfil three criteria: for it to be a church, a modern church, a beautiful modern church. (...)

As for being modern, we could not imagine it being anything else. All artistic forms of the past were modern in their time. The Church of our days should translate, as much its sacred nature and the cultural purpose allow, the expressions of contemporary art and techniques. Copying artistic forms blindly from other times is a work of artistic archaeology; however, it is certainly not the work of living art.

As for being beautiful, (...) if it were not beautiful, it could not even be considered a good church. Any church, because of its nature and purpose, (...) is necessarily a work of art".

This letter did not go unanswered. In 1939, by Tomaz Ribeiro Colaço, director of A Arquitectura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação Reunidas, who took the lead in objecting to modernism in religious architecture, published the following in the magazine:

All of Lisbon is softly confessing that the new church is very ugly; but nobody says it out loud for fear of upsetting such or such person, and especially your Eminence. (...)

The new church is ugly, most ugly. (...)

To demonstrate that it is ugly, all one has to do to prove that it lacks one feature that would be essential to its beauty: the new church has no «Portugueseness».

What had just begun to be a promising period for Portuguese religious buildings was nearing its end. A year later, Oliveira Salazar organised the great Exhibition of the Portuguese World in Lisbon, and to best enhance «Portugueseness», he used architecture to promote his ideal of the nation, creating the “National Style”, historically and derogatorily also known as “Português Suave” (name of a famous brand of Portuguese cigarettes).

This new “style” was immediately applied in the construction of a major new square in the capital, Praça do Areeiro, which became the architectural model to be adhered to and which led to the censorship of other stylistic expressions, especially those inspired by the Modern Movement.

From here, the “National Style” spread throughout the country, however, it was in the greater Lisbon area that it was most significantly used, an excellent example being the set of buildings on Avenida Sidónio Pais, close to Eduardo VII Park, winner in 1945 of the same Municipal Architecture Award that was previously attributed to the Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima.

Faced with the Regime’s new architectural preferences and fearing the potential consequences for the Church if he started an aesthetic confrontation, Cerejeira chose to relinquish the defence of modernity in his religious buildings, in order to ensure good relations with the government.

This decision started a time of revivalism and nationalism in religious architecture, the most famous examples of which were the three churches built in the capital, dedicated, not coincidentally, to three famous Portuguese Saints: Santo Condestável (1946-1951), by architect Vasco Regaleira, in Campo de Ourique; São João de Deus (1949-1953), by architect António Lino, in Praça de Londres; and São João de Brito (1951-1955), another project by architect Vasco Regaleira, this one at the top of Avenida da Igreja, in the Alvalade neighbourhood.

For MRAR, 1951 was year zero. That year, when the Santo Condestável church was inaugurated, the Catholic newspaper *Novidades* published an illustration of the facade of the church that would be built in Alvalade on its front page, the future São João de Brito church [Fig. 2].

Faced with this prospect, the young architect and militant of the JUC (Catholic University Youth) Nuno Teotónio Pereira, motivated by the defence of Christian virtues that he found in modern architecture, opposing the lack of architectural truth of the “National Style”, decided to organise a petition that classified the



Fig. 2  
Church of São João de Brito, Lisbon, 1955, architect Vasco Regaleira. 1st version (*Novidades* – Letras e Artes, 26 August 1951).

architecture of the proposed building to be contrary to the spirit of the neighbourhood and of the Catholic Church itself.

We are residents of Alvalade and future parishioners of the parish of São João de Brito. (...) We all recognise that the architecture of the new church of S. João de Brito, by its appearance, is consistent neither with the present time nor with the general environment of the Alvalade neighbourhood. (...) It seems to us that, if the proposed project is erected, it will be like a body without a soul. (...) Under these conditions, the undersigned respectfully ask your Eminence to order the modification of the project of the S. João de Brito church, in such a way that the new religious building has the beauty, spirituality, clarity of design, dignity and the elevation that constructions of this nature demand.

At the same time, Nuno Teotónio Pereira met João de Almeida, a young student of architecture and future seminarian, who had been working as a trainee at the famous magazine *Art Sacré* in Paris since 1949 with the well-known Dominican priests Marie-Alain Couturier and Pie-Raymond Régamey, and later in Switzerland with the architect Hermann Baur, designer of numerous churches, and who was very interested in bringing to Portugal the modern religious architecture that he saw and drew in his travels through France, Germany and Switzerland, nations that formed the vanguard of religious architectural renewal.

Supported by some colleagues, the two young men were received by Cardinal Cerejeira to present the petition, achieving the amendment of Vasco Regaleira's original project. However, the most significant consequence of this initiative was the creation of a small group that began to meet regularly to discuss the status of contemporary religious architecture.

Encouraged by the news that João de Almeida had brought back, they quickly decided to set up an exhibition that would deal with the subject directly, criticise the churches being built and present new solutions.

They called it the "Contemporary Religious Architecture Exhibition", and it opened in April, 1953, in the gallery of the church of São Nicolau, in the centre of Lisbon. In the small catalogue, it read:

When we see that, in the majority of the most recent churches, the spirit of the Gospel has been forgotten (...) a clarification and a revision of concepts are needed, so that the architecture can show the world the true face of Christ's Church. It depends on the Christian public if that face remains egregiously disfigured or all its purity is revealed.

The great success and support obtained by the exhibition encouraged the young group to go further, and, the following year, create the MRAR – Religious Art Renovation Movement, which was organised and motivated to fight for truly modern art and religious architecture. Initially consisting of eleven members, soon joined by another four, their very diverse backgrounds (architects, painters, historians and priests) soon proved to be one of MRAR's greatest strengths.



The first years were mainly dedicated to extending their knowledge in the field, but also in the education of the general public. They published articles in newspapers and magazines, organised courses and meetings, and new exhibitions were held, such as “Arte Sacra Moderna”, “Paramentaria Moderna” and “Novas Igrejas na Alemanha”, shows that made it possible for the Portuguese public to come into contact with some of the works that most directly influenced and inspired the members of MRAR.

Through its Bulletin, which was published with some irregularity between 1957 and 1967, MRAR contributed both to the cultural renewal of the Church in Portugal, as well as to the collective awareness of the serious issues that were suffocating the country, politically, socially and culturally.

However, this dynamic (both educational and editorial) was not matched by consistent artistic and architectural production, which was limited, either due to cultural resistance or economic difficulties, to the church of Santo António, in Moscavide (1956, by João de Almeida and António Freitas Leal, with works by Lagoa Henriques, José Escada and Manuel Cargaleiro), and the church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, in Águas, near Penamacor (1957, by Nuno Teotónio Pereira, with intervention of Frederico George and works by António Lino, António Luís Paiva and Euclide Vaz).

These two buildings were erected in the first phase of the movement, which corresponded to the 1950s, an era in which MRAR had yet to reach a conclusion about a modern proposal for Portuguese religious architecture.

For this reason, they also appreciated and disseminated a third work, the chapel of Nossa Senhora de Fátima (1958, by Manuel Nunes de Almeida, with sculpture by Barata Feyer), despite being designed by an architect not associated with MRAR. Moscavide church [Fig. 3], near the Patriarch’s residence, reflects a significant and conscious gesture towards the renewal of religious architec-

Fig. 3  
Church of Santo António,  
Moscavide, 1956, architects  
João de Almeida and António  
Freitas Leal, with works of  
Lagoa Henriques, José Escada  
and Manuel Cargaleiro.  
External view (MRAR archive).



ture by the Cardinal, who commissioned the design of the church from João de Almeida, who, in turn, requested the collaboration of fellow MRAR founder and newly-graduated architect António de Freitas Leal, to develop the work.

This decision gave rise to a unique building in the history of the Portuguese religious architecture, characterised by its essentially sober and functionalist modern style, but mainly by its proximity to Swiss architecture, imported by João de Almeida from the projects on which he worked with Hermann Baur.

Its simple interior was based on the “*Guidelines for Building Churches According to the Spirit of the Roman Liturgy*”, from the Liturgical Commission of the Fulda Catholic Bishops, published in 1955 by João de Almeida in the Lisbon Seminary magazine, *Novellae Olivarum*, and it surprised the public with its complete subordination to the centrality of the altar, which for the first time in Portugal was placed away from the back wall, as well by the limited number but high-quality works of art by renowned young artists, a practice that was repeated later in the various churches associated with MRAR.

The second church that opened during this period, in Águas, 200 miles from Lisbon, was designed by Nuno Teotónio Pereira’s, who tried to combine tradition and modernity, creating a contemporary building carefully related to the surrounding environment, establishing a harmonious relationship [Fig. 4].

Liturgically and in comparison with the Moscavide church, he proposed a much more traditional organisation of the assembly, slightly open in a V shape, to create a convergence that highlighted the importance of the altar, which was also placed away from the back wall.

The third work emerged the following year, even further from the capital and very close to the Portuguese border with Spain, approximately 320 miles from Lisbon. The small chapel, which was directly linked to the architecture of the

Fig. 4  
Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, Águas, Penamacor, 1957, architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, with intervention of Frederico George and works by António Lino, António Luís Paiva and Euclides Vaz. External view (MRAR archive).



Modern Movement, was characterized by a parallelepiped structure with a very sober interior, where modern art works coexisted with the traditional liturgy.

At the beginning of the 1960s, when the MRAR architects began receiving commissions to design small churches across the country, from the three proposals tested, they chose the second, Águas, and adopted its liturgical and architectural principles as the “Portuguese way” to build a church. Or, as Avelino Rodrigues, one of the seminary members of MRAR, wrote in the article “*A construção de igrejas modernas e a responsabilidade do clero*”, published in *Novellae Olivarum*, no. 154, July 1958:

In Portugal, we can distinguish the beautiful liturgical spaces of «Santo António» of Moscovide, and of the Águas church. (...) The second has a trapezoid plan, with the sanctuary on the smaller side and seems more adapted to the Portuguese environment.

This choice, which was not exclusive to religious architecture, was part of the new architectural theory that was starting to take place, known as the “Revision of the Modern Movement”. It advocated a less globalised vision of architecture, more attentive to local and regional traditions and settings.

In Portugal, the “Revision” had important leaders like Fernando Távora and Álvaro Siza Vieira, who were both very close to MRAR, and was unreservedly accepted by Portuguese architects after the publication of the famous survey of Portuguese popular architecture, which revealed the wealth and variety of Portuguese buildings and confirmed that it was very different from the repeated models of the Modern Movement or the scenographic architecture of “National Style”. The first MRAR architect to start building in the 1960s and implementing this new paradigm was António Freitas Leal, with the design of a small chapel in Figueira, in southern Portugal, dedicated to Nossa Senhora de Fátima [Fig. 5].

Fig. 5  
Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, Figueira, Vila do Bispo, 1961, architect António Freitas Leal. External view (MRAR archive).



Inaugurated in 1961, it boasted a number of characteristics that would become typical of MRAR: simple and discrete architecture symbolising a rejection of monumentality, on a scale and proportion that was on a par with what was around it, contemporary design that was strongly influenced by vernacular architecture, construction using local materials combined with concrete, many smooth and homogeneous surfaces in stone or plaster painted white.

The interior, which was characterised by few but very fine works of sacred art, as well as an atmosphere dictated by natural light and organised according to functional and pastoral purposes, was divided in two distinct and clearly separate areas: the sanctuary and the nave. In the nave, the assembly was distributed longitudinally in relation to the altar, which was the most prominent element of the chapel, due to its isolated position and bare surroundings. Between these two areas was the ambo, which reappeared as a place of major importance and significance in liturgical celebration.

This way of designing and devising a religious building was repeated by the same architect in the church of Nossa Senhora da Piedade, in the village of Vidais, 80 miles north of Lisbon. The church, was opened in 1963, was also discreet in its relationship with the surroundings, while clearly demonstrating its function, particularly via the presence of a remarkable bell tower. Once again, the interior was very sober space that was focused on the altar, where the careful design of all liturgical furniture could be seen.

Liturgically speaking, the space was obviously functional, with the assembly set out in a line in front of the altar and ambo. For pastoral and theological reasons, the baptistery was positioned near the main door, outdoors, at the base of the bell tower, and the images of the patron saints, purposely absent from the shrine, were placed to welcome worshippers at the entrance.

The following year saw the inauguration of the church of São Simão, designed by architect José Maya Santos, in the village of Barco, 170 miles from Lisbon. This building, which used local stone and concrete as the main construction material, remained faithful to the MRAR concept.

Fig. 6  
Church of São Mamede,  
Negrelos, Santo Tirso, 1965,  
architect Luiz Cunha. External  
view (MRAR archive).




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As in the previous works, and similar to what had been done in the churches of Moscaide and Águas, the bell tower was located some distance from the main body of the church, in this case, at one end of the churchyard. The baptistery was, once again, in the location preferred by MRAR: in the transitional area between the outside and inside, as a reminder that one enters the Church via an initial baptism. Inside, the same features: the altar as focal point, processional assembly, few decorative elements, and carefully studied natural light.

Three new churches were built in 1965: one in the North and two in the central region of the country. São Mamede [Fig. 6], at Negrelos, 220 miles from Lisbon, was one of the first works of architect Luiz Cunha, who came to devote almost all his professional work to the Church. Strongly influenced by the vernacular architecture of Northern Portugal, the church was built according to traditional techniques, with stone masonry and wooden roofs, but following the contemporary interpretation of Luiz Cunha. The great attention to detail and the enormous creativity and artistic ability of this architect could also be seen in the interior of the church, equally dominated by both stone and wood.

Closer to Lisbon, a mere 90 miles away, architect Diogo Lino Pimentel designed the church of the Dominican Seminary of Olival [Fig. 7]. As a building open to the local population, its architecture was very domestic in character-like, transmitting to the community the idea that the church was also their home, or God's people home, as was said at that time. The intention was to make the church a very familiar place, with the bell tower being similar to a chimney.

The interior, which was covered by a wooden roof reminiscent of traditional ones, was very sober and focussed on the altar surrounded by modern works of sacred art by the artists Maria do Carmo D'Orey and Espiga Pinto and carefully designed liturgical furnishings.

Just 10 miles away, in the newly founded city of Fátima, Luiz Cunha designed another church, this time for the Dominican Convent. Due to the lack of good architectural references that could inspire the church's design, the architect

Fig. 7  
Church of the Dominican Seminary of Olival, Aldeia Nova, Ourém, 1965, architect Diogo Lino Pimentel. External view (MRAR archive).

Fig. 8  
The Tree of Jesse and the Last Supper, artist Ferdinand Gehr, Church of Nossa Senhora do Rosário, Dominican Convent, Fátima, 1965 (photo by the author).

took the option of trying to build one. The result was the first church in Portugal built from exposed concrete, and possibly still the most accomplished religious building in Fátima, sixteen years on.

The interior was organized in a very peculiar way, with the altar in the centre, between the two opposite assemblies (one Dominican and the other for visitors), seeking to create a single community gathered by Christ around the altar.

In terms of the presence of modern art, it is worth mentioning the painting of the Eucharistic Chapel's ceiling featuring the Tree of Jesse and the Last Supper, the only work by the famous Swiss artist Ferdinand Gehr to be found in Portugal [Fig. 8].

As can be seen, in the first half of the 1960s, the MRAR architects were able to put all the theory they studied and learned the previous decade into practice; however, this only occurred in small towns, away from Lisbon and far from the centre of political power and the Regime's censorship.

Building a modern church in a big city, and particularly in Lisbon, was yet to be achieved. The first step towards this end came in 1962, in the architectural competition for the future church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in the centre of Lisbon, which was won by the architects Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas, with a radically new urban proposal and truly modern architecture.

With this victory, MRAR saw its position bolstered, but even more so the following year, when the Second Vatican Council confirmed, via the approval of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Constitution, that the Church could use modern languages, including architectural ones, or as stated in article 123,

The Church never considered a style as his own, but accepted the styles of all times, according to the nature and condition of peoples (...)

The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church.

With these new directives issued by the Holy See, it was no longer possible to deny the construction of modern churches in every city, large or small, and MRAR architects were starting to be invited to design these new projects.

The first of these churches opened in August 1969, in Paço de Arcos, just 3 miles from Lisbon. Built according to João de Almeida's plans, the church of Sagrada Família [Fig. 9] displayed all the characteristics of the early churches of MRAR, but now adapted to the new urban context and scale. Continuing to resist temptations to monumentality, the building exchanged a rural appearance for a clearly urban facade. In terms of its exterior, it was expressive and dynamic volume, enriched by greater functionality.

The needs of new urban populations led the Church to create parish complexes, where a number of social services were at the city's disposal. This was the realisation of one of the Second Vatican Council's intentions, which led the Church to relate with the world in a new way, working with and for it, and not just praying away from it.

Often, these services led to the duplication or more of the area traditionally



occupied by the church. In Paço de Arcos, the parish complex developed on different floors, benefiting from the slope of the terrain.

The church was built only using modern techniques, as was common practice in the large constructions in cities, and boasted new materials, such as concrete, which were unembellished, literally expressing the Truth they found expressed in the Gospels.

Its interior, which was defined by the great dynamics of the plan and elevations, maintained the central position of the altar and the clear separation between the sanctuary and assembly. In terms of the latter, in order to achieve the unity of large congregations, inspiration was found in Le Corbusier's Firminy church, with the balcony functioning as a natural continuation of the lower level seats.

A few months later, the church of Nossa Senhora da Assunção opened in Almada, a town that faces Lisbon, on the other side of the Tagus River. Designed by Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas, it repeats the features of the church of Paço de Arcos.

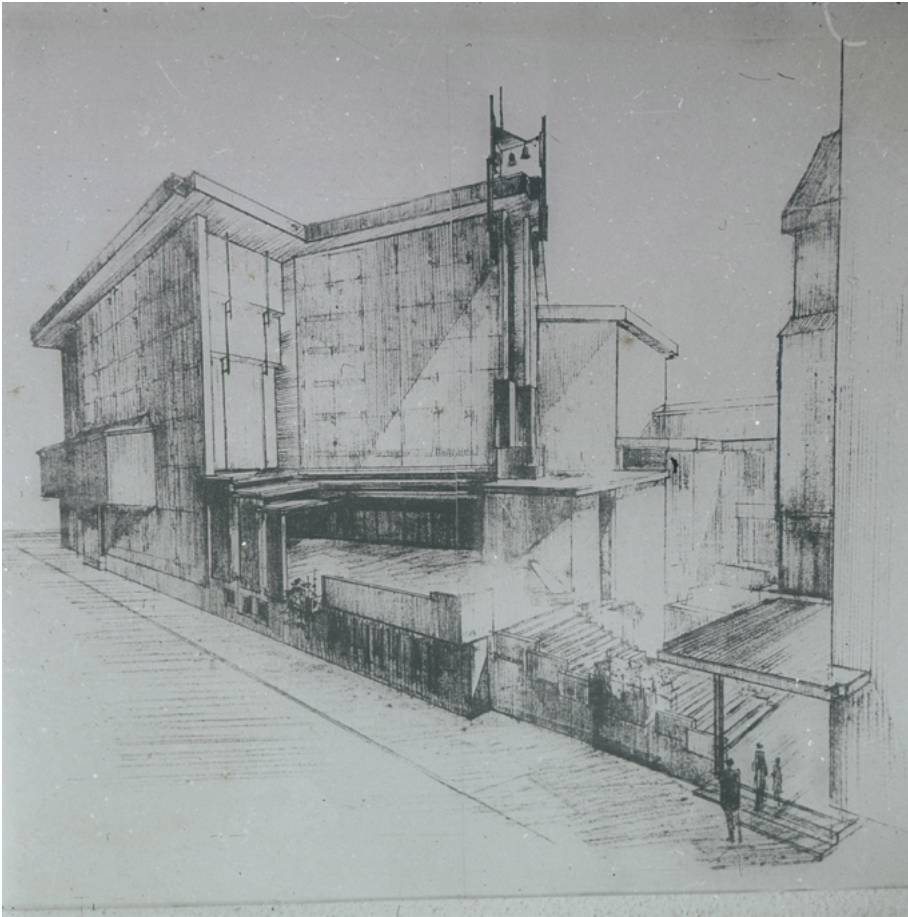
Inside, special mention goes to artist José Nuno da Câmara Pereira's work in concrete on the back altar wall, and the way the light was crafted to intensely dramatic effect [Fig. 10].

However, it was only in the following year, 1970, that these two architects inaugurated the MRAR's most renowned work: the church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in Lisbon, the result of the 1962 competition, which brought together, on a small plot, a wide range of facilities and services, such as a conference hall, theatre and cinema, a library, a medical room, a social centre, a small religious congregation residence, a kindergarten, a shop, a restaurant, etc., in addition to the church, which remained as the dominant element of the complex.

The radical novelty of this project was related to the way the construction connected with the city, reflecting the relationship that the Church should have with the society. In urban terms, the church could no longer present itself as the Temple or a Monument, a symbol of power that dominated the city, but rather a church that serves, open to the world, characterised by its acceptance and participation in the life of the world.

Fig. 9  
Church of Sagrada Família,  
Paço de Arcos, 1969, architect  
João de Almeida. External view  
(MRAR archive).

Fig. 10  
Church of Nossa Senhora  
da Assunção, Almada, 1969,  
architects Nuno Teotónio  
Pereira and Nuno Portas, with  
work by artist José Nuno da  
Câmara Pereira. Inside view  
(MRAR archive).



The Church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus [Fig. 11] was built within the urban quarter, as a normal street building. Instead of occupying the centre of the plot, dominating the surrounding urban area, as was the norm, the buildings were positioned at the edges, freeing the centre, which became part of the city. A street traversing the plot was opened, thus creating a church that was part of everyday life and one that sought to be ever relevant.

Inside, the church was a surprisingly calm place, despite the dynamism of multi-nucleus design. This was the result of the materials chosen and how they were used, the relations between surfaces and empty spaces, of how the intensity of natural light was controlled and the use of the minimal elements necessary for maximum expression [Fig. 12].

The vast assembly, which was divided into two levels, was set up length-ways in front of the altar, the predominant feature of the presbytery, upon which a ray of light shone to highlight its importance, clarifying the hierarchies of the space, and at the same time, giving it an aura of transcendence.

This church was almost iconoclastic, due to the almost total absence of images. Here, the art was the architecture itself; the materials and textures, the light and shade, which made it possible to relate the interior of this church with those of the large Cistercian abbeys, such as Alcobaça, and integrate this contemporary building into the history of religious architecture. It was no coincidence that in 2010 the church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus was classified as national heritage, in public recognition of its true quality and value.

Fig. 11  
Church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, Lisbon, 1970, architects Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas. External view (MRAR archive).

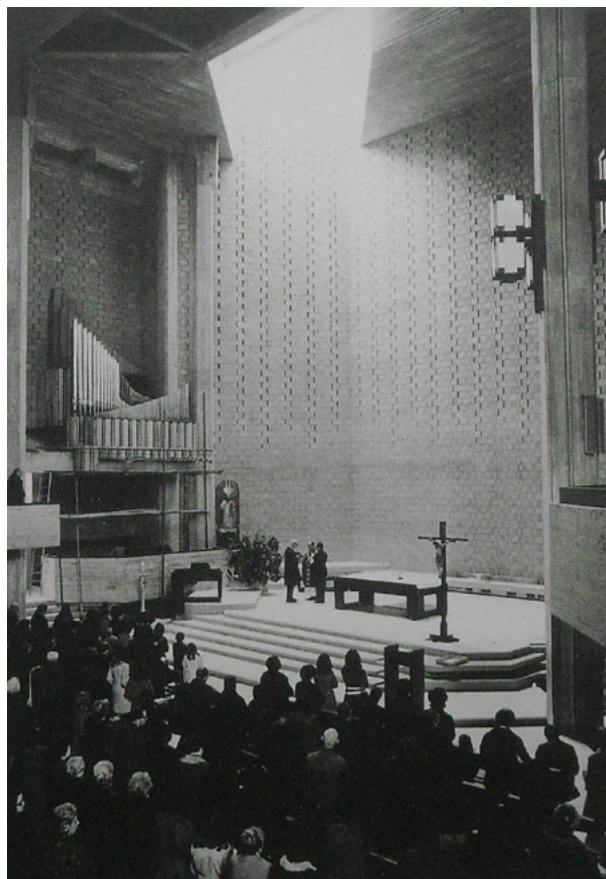
In 1972, three other churches followed in its footsteps, displaying the same characteristics of the MRAR family. These were the church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, a project by architect José Maya Santos, located in Queluz, two and a half miles from Lisbon; the church of São Jorge de Arroios, in Lisbon city centre, which was designed by the architects Alzina de Menezes and Erich Corsépius; and the church of Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in Oporto, which was another of architect Luís Cunha's design.

However, around these years, new times have arrived, in the Church and in the world. Times deeply touched by the events of the end of the previous decade. The concepts of the MRAR in relation to church building were also being questioned, being replaced by new ideas that took advantage of the way that was paved by MRAR.

As for the movement itself, its history had already come to an end. With the end of the Second Vatican Council, in 1965, and with the movement's initial objectives achieved, the MRAR slowly began to wind down and reached its end in 1969.

In a time of strong secularisation, the MRAR proclaimed an artistic, pastoral and political programme in Portugal that constituted the best example of religious and cultural intervention of an elite that operated an effective renewal of religious buildings, as well an appreciation of the anthropological and sociological dimensions of liturgical space.

The role of the MRAR in the process of affirmation and consolidation of modern religious architecture in Portugal was essential. However, the theological and aesthetic care and debate for religious architecture and art provided by MRAR over almost two decades was never to be repeated in Portugal.



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Fig. 12  
Church of Sagrado Coração de  
Jesus, Lisbon, 1970, architects  
Nuno Teotónio Pereira and  
Nuno Portas. Inside view  
(MRAR archive).

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