REPORT ON

the portuguese prison photo project

Exhibition and international conference
at the Centro Português de Fotografia (CPF), Porto
9.9.-3.12.2017
The initiator and organiser of the exhibition, Daniel Fink, and the photographer and scenographer, Peter Schulthess, as well as Luis Barbosa, express their gratitude to all who made the exhibition possible:

At the Ministry of Culture and the CPF
Silvestre Lacerda, General Directorate for Book, Archives and Libraries
Dr. Bernardino Castro, Director CPF
Sonia Silva, Márcia Freitas, Archimedes Carvalho, Maria Luísa Azevedo, all CPF

University of Porto
Prof. Cândido da Agra
Prof. Maria José Moutinho Santos
Gilda Santos

Direção-Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais – DGRSP
Dr. Celso Manata, Director general of the DGRSP
Dr. Paulo de Carvalho, Deputy Director general of the DGRSP
José Alves de Sousa, Divisão de Documentação e Archivo Histórico, DGRSP
The Directors of the establishments photographed
The wardens guiding during the photo shootings in the establishments

At the University of Lausanne
Prof. Olivier Ribaux
Prof. Marcelo Aebi
Philippe Gagnebin, Head of the Communication and Audio-visual Services Unit
David Monti, Unit of Communication, Video Production UNIL
Jean-Denis Bredin, Unit of Communication

And the following institutions and organisations which sponsored and supported the exhibition project:
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Entry hall of the former prison (Patio dos presos), today entry hall to the exhibition rooms on the ground floor.
© Daniel Fink
The exhibition center – Centro Português de Fotografia (CPF), Porto

Photo of the former prison and courthouse of Porto (ca. 1760 to 1974). Since 1997 used by the Centro Português de Fotografia, a multifunctional national competence center on photography. It holds the national archives of photography and the museum for photographic material and cameras. A monument of national importance, the building provides space for exhibitions.

The photographic exhibition project was initiated in September 2015 by Daniel Fink, lecturer at the University of Lausanne, at that time attending the annual Conference of the European Society of Criminology in Porto, and jointly organized with professor Cândido da Agra, then Director of the School of Criminology of the University of Porto. It became the portuguese prison photo project. The exhibition of prison photographs was shown from 9 September to 3 December 2017.

People entering the edifice were provided with detailed information regarding the exhibition project, the photographers Peter Schulthess and Luis Barbosa, historical photography and the historical work of prof. Maria José Moutinho Santos as well as the prisons which were photographed.

For more details on the CPF and the project, the photographers and the prisons photographed see the Media File available on www.prisonphotoproject.international.
The exhibition rooms, their layout and design

The configuration of the rooms was not altered as the former prison was adapted as much as possible to house exhibitions. Therefore, the hanging concept had to fit the reality of the rooms at disposal and the photos of the two photographers, as well as the exhibition of the historical photographs.

Room 1 – Introduction - Luis Barbosa and Peter Schulthess

View of the entrance of room 1. On the left side the information on the content of this room, in Portuguese and English. On the right side a picture of prison staff members who accompanied the photographers in two of the prisons, with thanks for their support and fair attitude.
One picture by Luis Barbosa, one by Peter Schulthess on the prison staff members who accompanied them in one of the prisons.

Photographs by Luis Barbosa at the entrance of room 1.
The second part of room 1 with pictures of Peter Schulthess. Of great importance were the photographs of the size of 160x200, hanged very low, so as to give the viewer the impression to stepping directly into the rooms, the wings or the courtyards.

Peter Schulthess while taking photographs from a watchtower of the Establishment of Carregueira, in the north-west of Lisbon.
© Daniel Fink

Photographs by Peter Schulthess in room 1
Room 2 – The Lights and Shadows - Luis Barbosa

Room 2: The photographs in black and white of Luis Barbosa
Room 3 – The Details - Peter Schulthess

© Daniel Fink

Photographs in room 3, by Peter Schulthess, intitled “A detailed account on the prison system and different aspects of everyday life.”
Both photographers used a flat, large size TV screen with automatically scrolling images to show further pictures of the prisons. The TV screens were placed, in room 2 and in room 3, on the floor to give viewers an unusual perspective.
Room 4 – Historical photography – Maria José Moutinho Santos

The exhibition would have been incomplete without a historical part and it was the historian of the CPF-building – professor Maria José Moutinho Santos, from the University of Porto - who brought her contribution in this domain.

The historical photographs presented, taken in different contexts, from around 1880 to 1974, in prisons and other detention places around the country, were chosen from among several hundred, from the collections of public archives. They provided a counterpoint to the contemporary images. To underline this idea, the scenographer Peter Schulthess imagined the installation of a cube with the pictures, printed on translucent photographic material, illuminated from behind.

The cube was placed in the middle of room 4, which was later put into darkness.

Later, the translucent photographic material was placed in the space left open.
On the 4th side of the cube, further historical photographs were projected on a white screen. The photograph above (shot around 1940) shows an unknown inmate occupying the cell where once Camilo Castelo Branco was detained.

© Daniel Fink (both photographies)
Technical details about the exhibition

The vernissage on 8 September 2017 was attended by some 250 persons. Vernissage invitation card sent by mail.

Dr. Bernardino Castro and Dr. Daniel Fink presented, in Portuguese and in English, the exhibition project and its making. Dr. Celso Manata, Director general of the Directorate general of the Prison Service of Portugal spoke about the importance of information about the prison world for the population. The Director of Archives, Libraries and Books who wrapped up the opening speeches situated the project among other efforts to inform about the use and abuse of detention in Portuguese history.

The persons involved in the exhibition at the vernissage, in front of the first visitors, from left to right: Gilda Santos, Maria José Moutinho Santos, Silvestre Lacerda, Peter Schulthess, Luis Barbosa, Daniel Fink, Bernardino Castro, Celso Manata, Cândido da Agra, Paulo de Carvalho.

From 9 September to 3 December 2017, the exhibition was seen by 32’000 persons.
Three announced guided tours in Portuguese, German and English were organized by Luis Barbosa, Peter Schultheiss and Maria José Moutinho Santos. Furthermore, on request, several guided tours in Portuguese were carried out for special groups by Luis Barbosa and Maria José Moutinho Santos. Classes of university and secondary school students also visited the exhibition and photographer Luis Barbosa as well as professor Maria José Moutinho Santos were invited to make presentations to them; 

The photographer Luis Barbosa guides a tour through the exhibition on 9 September 2017.

Prof. Maria José Moutinho Santos guides a tour on the same day, 9 September 2009, through the room with the historical photographs of Portugal’s prisons (on the right, with her hand raised).

Organized by Dr. Daniel Fink, prof. Cândido da Agra and prof. Maria José Moutinho Santos, with the support of Gilda Santos and the staff of the CPF, the international conference with the above-mentioned title was held on 12 and 13 October 2017 at the CPF, in Porto. The conference was promoted by AICLP - Associação Internacional de Criminologia de Língua Portuguesa - with the support of the Universities of Porto and Lausanne, in Switzerland, as well as FCT - Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology.

The detailed program and the book of abstracts can be found on the website of the photoprisonproject.international.

Some 15 conferences were presented during two days, in Portuguese and in English, by speakers coming from Portugal, Spain, England, France and Switzerland. Historical, legal and cultural aspects of prisons, prison management and life in prison were treated.

In his conference, Dr. Fink (pictured right) compared, based on available statistics, the material infrastructure of Swiss and Portuguese prisons as well as the moral performance of the carceral system in both countries.

All participants in the portuguese prison photo project, from Bernardino Castro (CPF), Luis Barbosa and Peter Schulthess, the photographers, to prof. Maria José Moutinho Santos and prof. Cândido da Agra presented reflections on their contribution to the study of the Portuguese prison system and to photography.
Some 180 registered and paying participants, mainly from the University of Porto, but also from among the staff of prisons and probation services of Portugal, as well as from other European countries, attended the two days of the Conference.

The Proceedings of the Conference should be available in the second part of 2018, published by the CITCEM of the University of Porto, one of the supporting institutions of the conference.
Forthcoming activities

Sponsored by the University of Lausanne, a video was shot in mid-November 2017 with those involved in the exhibition project, featuring also the exhibition building and the exhibition itself. The video will be released in winter 2018.

Sponsored by the CITCEM of the University of Porto, the Proceedings of the international conference will be published in Autumn 2018.

Prof. Cândido da Agra launched, together with other staff of UP and doctoral students, a survey into the appreciation of the exhibition by visitors and its effect on their representations of prisons and prison life. Questionnaires were used as well as interviews conducted with visitors to understand the impact of the exhibition and of prison photography.

Sponsored by gefo.ch, a book, richly illustrated, presenting a comparative approach of prisons in Portugal and Switzerland will be published in autumn 2018. It shall contain four short texts about the prison systems, moral performance of prisons, former prisons and their current use, and on prison photography, in Portugal and Switzerland. An introduction will highlight the main differences and similarities. In a concluding chapter, the results of a survey of visitors and their understanding of the prison world as well as their appreciation of the exhibition at the CPF will be presented.

The organizers are maintaining contacts with different partners to check the availability of a further exhibition place in Portugal.

Invitation cards, in four languages, printed on cardboard, 4-folds.
© Daniel Fink. Preparatory work for the exhibition