

# KEEP IT SIM- PLE MAKE IT FAST!

AN APPROACH  
TO UNDERGROUND  
MUSIC SCENES (VOL. 4)  
2019

***Keep it Simple, Make it Fast!***

An approach to underground music scenes (vol. 4)

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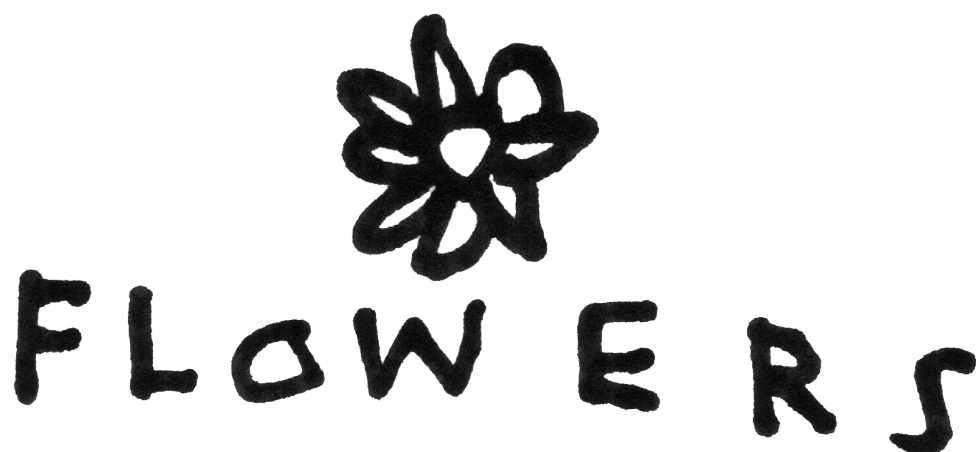
## 11.5. Laura Costa, biographical fragmentary 1910-1993 - contributions to a visual Portuguese feeric imagery for children during the *Estado Novo* and Beyond<sup>280</sup>

*Sérgio Costa Araújo*<sup>281</sup>

**A b s t r a c t**

The vast work of Laura Costa (1910-1993) represents today for Portugal an unparalleled historical document to reconstruct the visual system during *Estado Novo*, the period of the Portuguese dictatorship: 1933-1974. It also has the elements that will shape the deepest understanding of childhood throughout the Portuguese twentieth century and a mythological visuality developed by itself that marks till today the Portuguese feeric imagination. This communication-essay results from the first biographical approach ever made to this mysterious artist documented by the exhibition with the same name presented in the “Centro de Estudos Mário Cláudio” (Paredes de Coura, Portugal) between 17 of December 2016 – 1 July 2017).

**Keywords:** *Laura Costa, Estado Novo, Portugal.*



<sup>280</sup> This work is na english version of the Portuguese original text “Laura Costa, Fragmentário Biográfico 1910-1993 – contributos para um imaginário feérico português” edited by Centro Mário Cláudio in Paredes de Coura in 2017.

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Ten years separate two fairies from Laura Costa (LC). The first, in the fifties, represents one of its most iconic graphic interpretations. The fairy is presented to us with the contours of a French *edeldame* of the mid-fifteenth century. This fairy seems to echo, directly from the founding memories of the earliest fairies, almost as far back as the prehistory of humanity. The figure protrudes farewell of wings, will be because they are the exclusive equipment of the angels? The realism of the figure facilitates the identification of the observer with this character still half fairy, half princess, which the artist turns into an aristocratic fairy. She wears it in pink silk dress with a round skirt. On the body stand ermine shots and large openings on the sleeves muslin that also cover the veil that fits the cone-shaped hat. A bead of pearls surrounds the hat from the base to the top. A jewel at the neckline, armed with metal and gems, certainly points to the mysterious matter of the protective objects possessed by these enigmatic figures. Despite the seemingly realistic figure does not lose the ethereal character that a true fairy should possess. From France comes this *edeldame*, a country from which also comes one of the most influential texts that presents the evidence of its existence and its contours. Coincidences? The anonymous author, in this Arthurian text in prose of the thirteenth century, describes them in Lancelot du Lac. Nimue is the queen of the lake of Diana, Queen of Sicily, who ruled in the time of Virgil, and no woman like her loved the pleasures of the woods.... The lady who leads Lancelot to the lake is a fairy of the time when the maidens who possessed spells were called fairies. Maidens, nevertheless, whom the author equates to mature, manipulative and independent women, faithful custodians of the enchanting mysteries of herbs, metals and stones. This is the first of the LC fairies. In his right hand, the instrument par excellence of his labor, a magic wand crowned with a seven-pointed star. Let us fix our eyes on this star. The star, because it is septenary, intentionally exposes its properties as a magical source of enlightenment which, certainly for the believers of the abstruse formulas, will also include in itself the whole symbology of the number seven, the demands of the harmony of the world to the search of being in its entirety.

The other fairy emerges in full space age, is a creation of the sixties, the graphic line follows the elegance of an Audrey Hepburn wearing pants. The accessory on the head is directly interpreted by the lenses of the cosmic fashion of the sixties. This helmet, an obligatory accessory in road safety and, of course, also for the entire celestial highway, seems to have been poured directly from the sketches of the colorful stylist Emilio Pucci to the on-board staff of the Braniff airline in 1965. This fairy from the sixties also enveloped in ethereal matter, but wrapped up, even more than its predecessor, in the figure of an independent woman, a probable fruit of the then strengthening of the feminist movement, based on freedom and gender equality.

Its creator, or appealing already to the materialization of the forms and the way the artist was referenced in the press of the time - the designer is Laura Olinda Alves Costa. In the year of the implantation of the republic in Portugal she was born in the city of Oporto on December 15, 1910. The republic is feminine. It is not surprising, therefore, that the bust that represents her is that of a woman represented in a Phrygian cap on her head and bare-breasted. This emblematic representation marks the start of a contemporary look at women and, specifically, their place in the Portuguese Republic, which the illustration of the time helped to establish. With the republic, Oporto is renewed. It begins



Figure 11.5.1 – Publication cover detail “Laura Costa, Biographical Fragmentary 1910-1993 - Contributions to a Portuguese Fairy Imaginary” by Manuel Granja in 2017

<http://cemarioclaudio.blogspot.com/2017/06/laura-costa-cerimonia-de-encerramento.html>

the opening of *Avenida dos Aliados* and begins the construction of the new *Paços do Concelho*. Oporto breathes and LC is born in the district of *Vitória* at this unsubdued momentum. Granddaughter of António Bernardino Alves Costa (1845-1912), founder of the *Sociedade Nova Euterpe* and the emblematic *Ateneu Comercial do Porto*, grew up in an important family of the Portuguese bourgeoisie, republican and secular. LC is not baptized and thus remains until the age of 80. It grows in the city of Oporto where it develops its initial studies. Early awakens to the drawing and dates from 1920 the first. They stand out by the high number of colored drawings with crayon of girls from their circle of friends. The family is described as being very sober and LC, already grown, as being very frugal. She did not wear jewelry.

The first exhibition takes place at the 13th Salon of the Humorists of Porto in 1923. It takes place at the Retreat of the Helpless Girls, at Easter 1924. The President of the Organizing Committee, Licínio P. Perdigão, presenting the participating artists, gives an account of LC's artistic precocity: "The youngest of us all! 13 chirping springs! No masters, no outside drawing lessons, draws, paints, all ... all ... the devil! In the midst of dolls, rags, and study books, among the school friends, puppets, doll dresses, and microscopic dinners, appear natural and simple drawings, spontaneous and unpretentious *sarrabiscos* ... These are the ones she presents, with the indulgence that his age can demand."<sup>282</sup> This exhibition includes nine works, entitled suggestively: the Mascotte; the ancient Love; *Honny soit qui mal y pense*; o In School ... of Bitch; o *Una la Goya* ... *bada*; o Cupid Games; the first *enlêvo*; the Passenger, and, finally, *Ao Serão*.

Four years later, in 1927, she began to formalize his vocation, enrolling in higher studies in the Painting course of the Superior School of Fine Arts of Porto. Years later, she interrupted the course to join again later. It concludes in 1939 with a thesis based on a religious theme: the adoration of the Magi. The academic course is marked by the restlessness of the visionary. She becomes a student who practices a certain revolutionary militancy in the context of the fine arts of Porto where academic and naturalistic education still predominated. In 1929, together with his colleagues Domingos Alvarez, Augusto Gomes, Guilherme Camarinha, Reis Teixeira and Ventura Porfírio - who will later leave their mark on the Portuguese plastic arts, he formed the "+ além" a protest group that attacks the way teaching was commanded in the Fine Arts of Porto, which they consider dated, and which pronounced the arrival of modernism. That same year, in November, she exhibited with this group in the *Salão Silva Porto*. Caricaturist Adalberto Sampaio, a member of the "+ além" group and participant in this exhibition, signs the catalog of Laura Costa, dedicating her colleague a compliment to her "revolutionary" character, synonymous with her words "Maria da Fonte". Signs "of fellow cartoonist A. Sampaio". Add the design of his monogram with the indication of the year: 1929". They were all agitators. The group is presented by the organizing committee of the exhibition, composed by Joaquim Areal; Fernando Leão; Fortunato Cabral and Ventura Porfírio and called "some students of Fine Arts exhibit at Silva Porto", as "The artists who present themselves today are still students of Fine Arts. But their work has nothing to do with the School or with academism. They are executed by force, and therefore without excuses, absolutely freed from superior influences (...)"<sup>283</sup>

LC continues to draw attention to her restlessness: she is the first woman, at the Superior School of Fine Arts in Porto, to voluntarily attend optional lectures on male model drawing. Between 1929 and 1932, she attended classes at the

<sup>282</sup> Source: Catalog / *SALON dos HUMORISTAS* (1924), Porto.

<sup>283</sup> Source: *Some Fine Arts students exhibit at Silva Porto* (1929), Porto.

Faculty of Sciences of the University of Porto of General Mathematics, Applied Drawing to Biological Sciences, Descriptive Geometry, Rigorous Drawing and Typographical Design. On January 28, 1931, she participated in the Second Exhibition of the Students of the Fine Arts of Porto, inaugurated in the noble hall of the Ateneu Comercial do Porto.

The thirties are the first decade of great personal, academic and professional expansion. Even in the first half of this decade, invitations to illustrate short stories edited by “Lello & Irmão - Editores” (Oporto) emerge. During the second half of this decade, orders increase and date back to that time, for example, illustrations for the publishing house “Irmãos Bertrand” (Lisbon). Henrique Alves Costa (1910-1988) and his wife, Maria Helena Vieira Pinto Alves Costa (1914-1977), the filmmaker Manoel de Oliveira (1908-2015) and with the friend, an employee of the company “A Confidente”, José Ataíde, the group “5 pimpões”, that on the weekend travels the country in excursions, with cultural objectives, that arrive us today documented exhaustively by the photographic equipment, already at the time in the technological vanguard, of Manoel de Oliveira. In her travels she observes both the regional heritage and the local monumental dimension, in an already ethnographic record, which includes great interest, for example, for sacred art, and which was trained by attending the course of Painting in Fine Arts. These incursions that she will cultivate throughout his life will have contributed, certainly, to the conceptualization of elements that later incorporates in his work and whose product is one of the most significant marks that left us.

Still in the thirties, in July 1938, she participated in the “Exhibition of Students of the School of Fine Arts of Porto” with the painting “Heart of Jesus” that the edition of January 1st of July 31, describes as a canvas of “decorative composition, with well-treated figures, vivid colors, faded longs”. Painting that the edition of the Commerce of Porto of the same day also reproduces and that worth a medal of second classified to her, immediately after the medal of first classified attributed to Guilherme Camarinha by the work “Ascent of the Cross”.

Beginning in the 1930s and in the 1940s and 1950s, she develops regular and permanent teaching activities, mainly in the areas of drawing and painting. Of particular note are the collaborations at the *Colégio Nossa Senhora do Rosário* in Porto (the longest - 41 years, 1935 to 1977); the *Colégio da Boa Nova das Irmãs de Nossa Senhora da Consolação* of Matosinhos, from the forties; in an extension of the Rectory of the University of Porto (classes of painting of optional frequency for students of the University of Porto), already in the fifties and in the *Obra das Mães pela Educação Nacional* in the city of Oporto during the sixties. From the 1950s onwards, practically until the end of his life in the early nineties, which had been reformed, she promoted individual painting, drawing and watercolor lessons from home.

Parallel to teaching practice, popularity grows and orders increase exponentially. The great publishers look for the artist at a dizzying pace. From the thirties and throughout the following decades she edits his illustrations, adding to the two already mentioned, in volumes of the “Livraria Latina Editora”; of the “Livraria Figueirinhas”; of *Livraria Guimarães*; of the “Universal Literary Enterprise”; of the “Livraria Cruz”; of the “Bookstore Apostolate of the Press”; of “Porto Editora”; of the “Civilization Bookstore”; of “Editorial Infantil Majora” and in numerous editions of author, among others. Probably, due to the numerous re-editions, the volumes illustrated by the artist for several collections of short stories edited by “Majora”, mainly between the fifties and



sixties, are those that have contributed most to her durability in the Portuguese imagery of childhood and also, in the imaginary that the illustration of tales is concerned. Let's go back to the two fairies. In both, the passage of time is evident. The conceptibility, the way, the meaning behind the choices had changed. LC invariably ages, but she does not refuse to capture her *zeitgeist* in detail, contributing to her illustration, to molding it and also to anticipating it. What apparently remains is the movement of the illustrated figures and their theatrical effect. The artist scrupulously obeys to these two principles, will it be intentional? These two graphic interpretations of a fairy are part of a visual system of their own and reinforce a certain idea of fairy as a "smart maiden" who sometimes does not understand if she is still a young girl, child, or even a young adolescent. This duplicity, or rather, this game of ambiguities, marks a mark in the visual treatment that makes of the fairy tales in which simultaneously it raises and feminizes the personages.

Everything is movement. The characters are female and composed in the manner of woman-child / teenage woman, woman-woman? Quantitatively superior, they take the lead and act on the reality: they take care of their hair, play with the children, discover precious treasures, sew, spin and embroider, serve wine, take care of the homemade arrangements. Out of this universe, unusual women like the beautiful Samba who lives in an Angolan forest and who dedicate themselves to housework ... not infrequently another type: the princess-woman who sleeps and sleeps. Afterwards, the children: they guard the cattle, they tend the gardens, they study, they look for wood, they play to the top and the *Rapa*, they serve as messengers. The male figure is the rarest. Often wrapped in contours of apparition appears almost like a small footnote to these visual narratives in which women and children reign. Praying with a sword, sometimes deprived of any "apparatus" object, he often appears simply mounted on a beautiful hisser. It is still an inescapable figure. It appears at the end of the story, almost in a gesture of indulgent redemption of the artist of the then unjust and unfortunate course of the characters. Yet it does not fail to represent a tendentially immobile figure who at the last moment of history ends up being responsible for sealing a union that guarantees eternal happiness.



Figure 11.5.2 – Exhibition catalog of illustrator Laura Costa in 2017

Source: <http://cemarioclaudio.blogspot.com/2017/01/encontro-e-degustacao-com-o-chef-helio.html>

In the fairy-tale illustrations, these ethereal sides of her characters situate her in a way of illustrating in a register already distant from the Malthusian interpretation of this universe common to the Portuguese illustrators and illustrators who preceded it. On the contrary, the hyperbole that persecutes is the one of the minimalism, of the hygiene of the image that instrumentalizes in benefit of its narrative. It is through this that she traces the road which for the characters represents the way of all the temptations by which they advance in search of a meaning, perhaps coordinated for the dream, the final happy, crystalline final which these tales acquired mainly from the eighteenth century. And the fairies always return, in other formats, often disguised as old beggars assuming themselves as the right coordinate for the fulfillment of all desires. In this aspect, LC departs from visual interpretations of the horrific or burlesque fairy tales to stop in a dramatic approach in which often the rural poor or the urban poor receive a wand that they use to fulfill the desire for food and preference of a sumptuous banquet. Still, they are figures of fragile beauty, as if, as in some stories, they were made of material hardly resistant to the wilder conditions, such as sugar. In these compositions, it is notable that the ornament is reduced to the essential. Still, it does not cease to resort to vegetal, zoomorphic, anthropomorphic motifs to which it sometimes adds fanciful or marvelous details.

Fundamental cultural material to analyze the creative product of Laura Costa are the noble and royal figures who alternately dress Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, empire, baroque, rococo and romantic costumes, and sometimes even composed in a mix that assimilates elements from different times and that attributes to the characters composed by LC, and consequently to their work, a historical dimension. Unlike the higher social classes, the members of the people always dress in exquisite fashion, but almost always wear traditional Portuguese costumes. A subliminal message? Perhaps. Laura Costa continues. It distributes the elements in order to favor a certain visual argumentation of what is or is not elegant. Catapult the visual discourse for the high moral level and what will or will not be a moral action that the gesture drawn signals. Everything in these compositions is harmony. And in a similar process to which the texts compiled by the Grimm brothers were previously submitted, the graphic translation also obeys an obvious facelift, which, even without this process being conscious, the artist pushes the visual treatment of the tale to an elite taste, bourgeois. But you do not stop here. It questions a social condition through the way it dresses the character, thereby transforming the body into a fundamental element in itself to decode its universe. They are images reproduced massively, multiplied first in hardcover or soft cover editions, then through inevitable reprints directed, depending on the format and the collection, to a more or less well-to-do audience, thereby causing the same stories to circulate throughout the social scale. The more imaginative or poetic visual details also sharpen the mind of the child who lives in a house with poor living conditions to that of the child residing in a bourgeois, Portuguese apartment. In the gestural of faces, always the same coherent line and a revelation: expressions, potentially, of dormancy after ecstasy probably anchored in elements of the baroque movement, or even rococo, in which François Boucher's own expression of *La dormeuse* will be a seriously. LC is an educated illustrator with a background in painting. In the framing, LC again turns around and serves again the artistic *zeitgeist* to reverse the viewer's previously formatted look: the scene, far from being baroque, is first and foremost a product of minimalism that interests him then emerging



in the visual arts. The surrounding elements, as we have already mentioned, are reduced to the absolute minimum, transforming it into one of the elements that best configure the singularity of his work, one of its marks. And again, in these scenarios the human figure, feminine, continues to predominate, and even when accompanied by a male character, the center of the image is its stage.

She is recognized as a remarkable illustrator. It works even more, now night in and at dawn it is common to see from the exterior of the house the lights of the interior still light. She rents a house near the Sanctuary of *Bom Jesus do Monte*, in Tenões, Braga. She spends vacations and weekends there when she does not have painting, drawing, watercolor classes to develop. And also, the Easter period. Single till the end of life and she enchants all children, particularly those in the family. She made designs for them to paint and tracery paper. She took cousins and friends on cultural tours. She introduced conversation with everyone, it is said. She shared her immense knowledge about painting and it was rare the exhibition that they did not visit at the *Soares dos Reis* Museum. She made cheetah dresses for the children's doll dresses. She visited antique shops and bought pieces to restore. Took them to the movies. They saw "*Quo Vadis*" (1951). One of the cousins tells that he loved it, but LC with his enormous culture and way of communicating with the children deconstructed during the trip back, by tram, each of the falsities of the film. She came from a family of moviegoers, and particularly enjoyed the cinema of Visconti and Fellini and the French cinema very much in vogue at that time. Read Stendhal, the Brontë Sisters and so many others.

But back to the figures that mark her faerie legacy. It is clear that the first fairy, superimposed substantially on the second in the recent imaginary. It is the most classic vision and therefore the most deeply rooted in us. That is why this composition marks up to contemporaneity. Until the eighties of the twentieth century it was still common for girls to masquerade as fairy following this composition spread by LC. This is also evidence of the visual influence of LC illustration on Portuguese carnivalesque body culture and practice that derives directly from fairy tales. In this way it reinforces its role of *maga* of customs with the gift of inculcating habits without the consumer of this imaginary being aware. LC embodies this idea of the overwhelming power of design and illustration in the shaping of consumer trends. It materializes within us the appearance of these mysterious beings inhabiting tales that the observer unconsciously incorporates into the popular act of disguise. And the artist draws tirelessly, to be mass-printed and distributed profusely by mainland Portugal, islands and overseas territories. These images still circulate today in the thousands, especially those that illustrate collections of fairy tales, novels, toys, calendars, vinyl covers, catechisms, magazines, newspapers, almanacs, baby albums, holy cards, parchment leaves, school drawings, school books, advertising, postcards, catalogs, tinplate objects. The collections of children's books edited by "Editorial Infantil Majora": "*Pinto Calçudo*", "*Princesinha*", "*Varinha Mágica*" contributed remarkably to support this almost cannibalistic idea of imposing a graphic that imposes a concrete image of what should be a "fairy", a "princess", a "prince". And she makes the visual translation of these figures in an excellent way. A recurring observation of the former LC students is that they were seen for a long time, and soon after they passed as a teacher, having great competence for the drawing and for doing it in a unique way what would be reported as the "Laura Costa brand".

The cousins and godchildren, further emphasize the great culture of LC,

mention that she introduced them also in classical music, particularly in Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin. And in good manners, in the plastic arts and again the reference to film criticism. In the Salon of the Orfeão Clube they attended numerous concerts. It was of a great generosity to everyone.

It is problematic to encapsulate in a given discursive matrix a certain way of figuring. However, the whole discursive matrix is seconded by social changes that incite artistic creation. The ideological contamination of the illustrator's work during the period of the *Estado Novo* assumes contours that eventually sharpen the official narrative, by the graphic extension of a narrative-text that finds in the visual representation its mainstay of penetration in the less literate, quantitatively more expressive sectors. The contamination of the child universe with the discursive matrix of the *Estado Novo* eventually comes first with the construction of the propagandist "Portugal dos Pequenitos", first built between 1938 and 1940 which includes regional houses typical of each Portuguese region. Until the end of the fifties, the representations of Overseas Portugal from Africa to Macao, from Brazil to Timor, to the Portuguese State of India were added. In this way children are initiated into the idea of homeland and imperial nation. The iconography of the *Estado Novo* had its graphic treatment in the publications directed to the affiliated ones in the Portuguese youth almost always impregnated of subliminal messages of moral and religious inspiration. Laura Costa's more direct contribution to a visual culture of the *Estado Novo* will eventually be the recurrent feature of the traditional dress and regional folkloric traditions, notably from the north of the country, embodied in the playful choices in the families portrayed and in the ultra-sentimental mode as coexist in their numerous illustrations. In these boards, the graphic treatment that LC presents, even more profoundly than in the illustration of the fairy tales, two obvious dispositions: obliteration of the male figure and actions that take place in an outer space, even if next to the house. The presence of religious iconography is limited to the orders that require the approval of the ecclesiastical authority and which include for Majora Editions, illustrations for booklets that tell the story of *Fátima*, which mainly illustrate prayers such as the "Our Father", "Hail Mary" or the "Salve Regina". Even in these publications the male figure remains non-existent (in the "Our Father" is represented by the crucified Christ in a small crucifix) and in the scenes, his favorite *mise-en-scène* is the open space adorned with vegetal elements. Her brand is consistently repeated. In the initiatives favored by the regime, the artist participates in 1939, already in the final stretch of the Fine Arts Painting course, in an esthetic vacation mission in Alcobaça, directed by Prof. Luís Varela Aldemira, part of a program promoted by the *Estado Novo*, for the indoctrination of the artistic elites. In the forties, fifties and sixties does not fail to expose. She participates in the "independent exhibition", held in the *Salão do Coliseu do Porto* and in the "*O Primeiro de Janeiro*" Exhibition Hall in Coimbra, between 1944 and 1945. She also participates in the exhibition "The Arts at the Service of the Nation" at the Museum of Art Popular in the city of Lisbon in 1966. Despite the undeniable artistic and individual contribution of LC to the visual culture and to the imagery of the *Estado Novo* epoch, we know that it manifested its opposition to the regime permanently. During the 1940s, she was about to enter the Communist Party under the influence of a communist cousin, and two friends of Fine Arts, then sympathizers: Augusto Gomes and António Figueiredo. The most obvious connection of his circle of friends to the regime was that of Guilherme Duarte Camarinha, also a member

of the “+ além”. LC cannot be designated as a political activist although she is also surrounded by people linked to the *Movimento Unidade Democrática* (MUD) and family and friends linked to the *Cineclube*, a bastion in Oporto against the regime.

Her relations with the church may be paradigmatic of the particular way in which she related to the organizations, then powerful, and highly influential of the daily action of the citizens. Despite this contribution, the artist has always remained far from the church. She remains without being baptized, despite living with religious in various colleges where she teaches and that have never conditioned their popularity. The testimonies show a very strong connection between LC and the sisters, perhaps most of all their natural sympathy, their willingness to help, their great sense of humor and their curious intelligence. It will not be surprising, therefore, to take orders to illustrate catechisms which, according to the testimony of a parish priest, fascinated by the “feminine and maternal” traces of the illustrations. In the words of the same parish priest, from the Parish of the *Santo Sacramento* (Guerra Junqueiro Street, Porto), well before the age of 80, when she finally decided to baptize in the parish of *Nossa Senhora da Vitória*, she was already a person with “good feelings, deeply human and Christian”, whom he regularly visited and whom Laura Costa offered illustrations to illuminate the Catechesis Sheets<sup>284</sup>. Popularity that, he says, had a lot of expression among booksellers and publishers. LC was his friend. One of LC’s cousins assumes he does not understand the option for late baptism. He ventured that it might have been the influence of a highly religious inner maid and also of very religious friends and even of the nuns her friends. He justifies in her cousin’s words, and also the godmother, who had repeatedly heard throughout her education “to be against the church, does not mean that we do not go to see churches, at least churches as if they were works of art”. Family tradition that qualifies as radical republicanism and anti-clerical. And adds even more words from LC “We will not see the saints to worship them”<sup>285</sup>.

Listening to the testimonies and feeling the tenderness with which they talk about the “Laurinha”, as it was known, the images that surrounded the visual universe of the child of that time were passed on and passed not only by the books, but also by the special color covers, the editions for the Saint John’s day, a very important celebration in Oporto, and Christmas by Laura Costa for the “*Primeiro de Janeiro*” newspaper, which began to be printed in the early 1950s and continued until 1976, two years after the April revolution. They were also the magazines and schoolbooks and the postcards illustrated by LC for the Portuguese posts, highly collectible. Other outstanding objects of this universe are the illustrations of the boxes and the pieces of board games and that with them reaches its zenith of popularity between children and young people. The child immersed in the visual culture of the Estado Novo, was invariably immersed in the universe created by LC.

The artist’s dedication to the knowledge of national idiosyncrasies and what folklore / popular culture is all about astonishes. And the product of this are the well-informed representations of the characters in typical costumes. From the estate of the artist comes the evidence: heaps of photographs of lace, albums filled with lace samples made with thread of thickness and different colors, which follow the dozens, motives and various formats; magazine clippings, artist’s notebooks filled in with pencil drawings of traditional models - the whole body, in parts or only in the small detail, accompanied by numerous notes

**284** Interview with Monsenhor José Pereira Soares Jorge conducted by the author in 2017.

**285** Interview with Alexandre Alves Costa conducted by the author in 2016.

about the details of the city of Maia's traditional costumes, to Minho region.... LC made weekend excursions in the north of the country in search of the reasons she had researched and took a photographer with her to register them. She visited the most remote villages, knocked at the people's door, and asked them to open the chests to record what they still preserved. The photographer immortalized the play. There is a breathtaking work, in monograph format, by Laura Costa herself, on all this. Benjamin Ferreira highlights the great quality of this work from the methodological point of view that puts her at the level of an academic work. It is still waiting to be published. Is this the moment, with the renewed popularization of boyfriends' handkerchiefs from Minho? The growing interest in the work of this remarkable Portuguese artist? Ethnographic work gains prominence in the life of LC. In a committed way, she is dedicated to an intentional, serious and committed ethnographic work that leads to informed visual choices.

In the late sixties, unrest in the country with an impact on family life. Her cousin, Isabel Alves Costa, marries José Mário Branco and they both flee to Paris. LC watches them leave with sadness. She visited them a few times in Paris between 1969 and 1972. At Christmas, the political emigrants met and the cousin of LC and brother of Isabel Alves Costa, Alexandre Alves Costa, accompanies her on these trips. "It was the Louvre all day," he says longingly. They both enjoyed traveling.

In 1980, at age 70, she retired. Receive a very low pension and have some difficulties. Intensifies the lessons from home. It never ceases to practice its already institutionalized, realistic, delicate, traditional illustration where domesticity is emphasized together with a traditional family idea where adults and the elderly engage in craft activities and children of traditional games. In the Christmas illustrations, the manger and the tree take precedence. Father Christmas is always absent. The fairies disappear.

At the doors of the nineties LC accepts his latest order: dozens of drawings to decorate a large luxury hotel on *Avenida da Boavista* in Oporto. Produces with difficulty. Weakened health conditions because of the incessant exercise of creating that have always cultivated. Complete the order in the style that made her popular. Baptized only in the final stretch of her life, she builds an accomplice friendship with the priest of the Parish of the Sagrado Coração. Always available and generous, she reciprocates the priest's friendship by illuminating catechesis sheets with his timeless children-characters, who delight the catechumens and the parish community. This priest looks back and exclaims about this "formidable" figure: "she left us his example and his remarkable work!"<sup>286</sup> On October 16, 1993, Laura Costa, already without mobility, dies at her residence in Rua Padre Alexandre.

It is paradoxical that Laura Costa, 24 years after her disappearance, remains so little or nothing studied and, strangely, so scarcely mentioned in the official narrative of texts that propose to tell the history of design and illustration in Portugal of the twentieth century. It seems obvious to us that as long as Laura Costa's contribution is not included, this story will be fatally lacunar. In the opposite direction, the work remains still recognizable for an important part of the population and for all those with whom Laura Costa worked, was a relative, friend or teacher. The objects she illustrated remain abundantly in the commercial circuit of historical objects and, surprisingly, still in the personal estate of countless families. They are bought in potters, antique fairs and in the diverse online stores. Her work is represented in the collections of the José

Malhoa Museum in Caldas da Rainha, in the Municipal Museum Dr. Santos Rocha in Figueira da Foz, and in the Guerra Junqueiro House Museum in the city of Porto. The vast work of Laura Costa today represents for Portugal an unparalleled historical document to reconstruct the visual system of the Estado Novo. It also has the elements that will shape the deepest understanding of childhood throughout the Portuguese twentieth century and a mythological visuality developed by her that marks today the Portuguese feerie imagination.

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