

Museum of Brands: an exploratory reading of the collection through Design

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Abstract. This chapter proposes an exploratory reading of the Museum of Brands Collection, Caramulo, Portugal, based on an approach centered on the relationship between design and memory. The objects of consumption in Portugal in the 20th century that make up the collection are understood not only as historical testimonies of social life, but also as communicational artifacts of significant graphic and cultural relevance. Through an approach close to object criticism, we reflect on the formal and symbolic aspects of a small sample of graphic communication artifacts from the Sacor, Nestlé and Regina brands and use theoretical contributions in the field of Material Culture and Visual Culture for an understanding of the Design Culture that the Museum of Brands can leverage. The chapter contributes to disseminating the relevance of this distinctive project in the national and international museographic panorama, reinforces the institutional protocol and mission of the Museum of Brands and the Viseu School of Education, and also identifies possibilities for future research.

Keywords: Museum of Brands, Brands of memory, Design Culture.

1 Introduction

Our relationship with brands goes far beyond the economic imperative of consumption; it is emotional, social and identitarian. In a world full of graphic signs, where brands appear and disappear in large numbers and at a rapid pace, those that become iconic, that enter our imagination and persist, help us to build a common memory that we cling to as a guarantee of belonging [1]. Considering that design allows ideas to be communicably visible, brand design presents itself in this context as an important cultural mediator [2,3]. In this way, brands present themselves as mechanisms for re-signifying everyday life and allow us to establish new meanings and individual and collective experiences of desire, credibility and well-being, whether through nostalgia or shared values [4].

The collection at the Museu das Marcas, Artes Gráficas e Publicidade / Museu das Marcas (Museum of Brands, Graphic Arts and Advertising / Museum of Brands) brings

together an important and distinctive collection highlighting the brands that marked the 20th century in Portugal through consumer objects and graphic artifacts that rarely become collectible museum pieces

The Museu das Marcas, which is only digital for now, features a rich collection for design research, appeals to community participation, offers varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing, in line with the contemporary understanding of museums [5].

In this chapter we propose an approach centered on the relationship between design and memory, starting by contextualizing the Museu das Marcas and its associated collections. We present communication strategies, critically discussing, through objects from three brands in the collection (Sacor, Nestlé and Regina), formal aspects of design and the interest that these artifacts currently raise, namely the overlapping of symbolic value with functional value. We also mention the example of the Museum of Brands (London, UK), which we briefly discuss.

Considering the recontextualization of objects from the collection through the Museu das Marcas, we explored the concept of design culture against the backdrop of the assumptions of the expanded museum [6].

Through an exploratory research approach motivated by the desire to contribute critically to an institution under construction and recognizing the graphic interest of the Museu das Marcas collection, we propose in this contribution, an inaugural reading through Design with the aim of 1) disseminating the collection and mapping the ecosystem of graphic production and brand communication through consumer products in the 20th century in Portugal; 2) explore the interaction between design and collective memory; 3) analyze the contemporary significance of brand artefacts, questioning the convergence of symbolic and functional values of the objects in the collection; 4) critically examine the role of the Museu das Marcas as a fundamental contribution to the field of material and visual culture.

In line with the objectives of the Museu das Marcas, the aim is also to promote the museum and its collection within the framework of the institutional cooperation protocol established between the Museu das Marcas and the Escola Superior de Educação de Viseu (Viseu School of Education).

2 The Museum of Brands, Caramulo, Portugal

2.1 Context

Located in Caramulo (Viseu, Portugal), a picturesque mountain village renowned for its natural beauty and historical heritage, the Museu das Marcas, Artes Gráficas e Publicidade positions itself as an institution dedicated to preserving and promoting the material memory of Portuguese or international consumer brands in Portugal, with a special focus on the 20th century.

Although the Museu das Marcas has a founding link with the Museu do Caramulo (Museum of Caramulo) — a national cultural institution respected and recognised for its eclectic art collection (ancient, modern and contemporary) and its rare collection of classic cars — it operates as an independent museum with its own mission and identity.

Presenting itself as a place of memory, the Museu das Marcas was born in the digital environment with the launch of its official website: <https://museudasmarcas.pt>, which offers public access to a significant part of the collection and curatorial initiatives. The museum also has an active presence on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, interacting with a wide and diverse audience and promoting critical reflection on the cultural, economic and social dimensions of branding.

In the near future, the collection will be housed in its own physical space, further consolidating its role as a museological and educational institution. It aims to establish itself as a reference point for the study, conservation and dissemination of the history of brands in Portugal, making a significant contribution to contemporary museology and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

2.2 Associated Collections

The Museu das Marcas has its origins in the collection of Salvador Patrício Gouveia, its main driving force. Raised in a family of passionate collectors (of art, cars, toys, motorbikes and bicycles), he said in a conversation to prepare this article, "I've always been a collector". This spirit, together with a particular interest in graphic communication, design and advertising, created the perfect ecosystem for Salvador Patrício Gouveia to recognise at an early age the graphic interest of ordinary objects as a means of brand communication.

Created as a space for sharing, the Museu das Marcas searched for similar collections in Portugal to map the brands and consumer objects of the 20th century that are an important part of the national collective memory. As a result of the contacts and research carried out, the A Primorosa Collection, the Vida Portuguesa Collection, the Frederico Sanches da Cunha Collection, the Manuel Paula Collection, the Museu das Marcas Collection, the Museu do Caramulo Collection and the Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection are currently the associated collections of this project. The Museu das Marcas collection has been enriched by donations from individuals and companies from different sectors, which have been identified and catalogued.

2.3 Featured in the Collections

The Museu das Marcas Collection is an open project that invites the public (individuals, companies, private or public organisations) to donate packaging, products or advertising material from Portuguese or international consumer brands in Portugal, with a particular focus on the 20th century. The ambition to open its doors in a physical space has aroused the interest of the public, who can currently follow the collection via digital media [7-10], where the project has been very well received.

For now, around a thousand pieces have been catalogued, photographed and digitised, which is still a modest percentage of what the collection must show. As a recent project (since 2022), it has only reached a limited number of people, so it is expected to grow. The ability to mobilise the public, starting with the donation of artefacts, is essential to establish the collection base for the future curatorial treatment of the digital and physical museum project.

The donation of the Litografia de Portugal (Lithography of Portugal) to the Museu das Marcas is one of these important moments, confirming and reinforcing the graphic relevance (in terms of design, authors and printers) of the collection gathered there, which stands out on the national and international scene in the field of consumer brands.

As part of the dissemination strategy, and taking advantage of the link with the Museu do Caramulo, the partnership established with Google Arts & Culture [11] has allowed the Museu das Marcas to take high quality photographs of artefacts from its collection, and to be digitally present and shared in a space that brings together more than 2,000 cultural institutions from 80 countries, including the most prestigious art museums in the world.

Given the initial processing of the Museum of Brands collection, the selection and brief reading of the design elements, representational arguments and nostalgic activation of memory through brands that we bring to this document serves the exploratory purpose of publicising the project through the example of the diversity of artefacts available (packaging, labels, claims, posters, stickers, gifts). At this stage, Sacor, Nestlé and Regina have been identified by director Salvador Patricio Gouveia as the most relevant brands (among those already catalogued).

Sacor

Sacor was founded in 1938 and operated in the oil sector in Portugal, benefiting from the protectionist policies of the "Estado Novo" (Portuguese dictatorship), which guaranteed it 50% of the national market share, and by the end of the 1960s it had a network of around 800 service stations. The political and economic changes that followed 25 April 1974 (the date of the revolution that ended the dictatorship in Portugal) led to the nationalisation of the company, which in 1976 became Petrogal - Petróleos de Portugal EP [12].

The strategy of promoting the brand through advertising campaigns, lighting, packaging and gifts made it part of the national collective imagination. From the collection of the Museu das Marcas, Sacor provides an obvious link to the important car collection of the Museu do Caramulo.

The poster promoting the Sacor brand (Fig. 1) uses the geometric representation of shapes with volumetry through chromatic variation within the same tone and explores the idea of a journey across Portugal (through the built and natural heritage that stretches from the sea to the mountains), including a diverse fleet on a well-defined and safe path formed by the initial S. The poster promoting an event (Fig. 2) is based on symbolic elements of the city of Porto, in a symbiotic evocation of tradition and innovation (the Arrábida Bridge, inaugurated in the year of the event, 1963, with the largest arch in reinforced concrete, represents construction innovation; and the Clérigos Tower, an inescapable landmark in the city's history and the centrepiece of the composition, which allows a double reading of Oil Platform/Clérigos Tower due to the formal similarity and gestural graphic treatment). The advertisement associated with the strategic brand TAP Transportes Aéreos Portugueses (Fig. 3) uses a watercolour drawing to illustrate the campaign's headline and reinforces Sacor's proximity communication strategy by using the boarding pass provided to each passenger on TAP's Caravela VI-R jet as a support. Finally, the traditional Sacor engine oil can (Fig. 4) has its various sides

filled with graphic elements derived from the visual identity, but with typographical variations. This set is varied in terms of supports and graphics, but the colours green and red (the predominant colours of the national flag) are constant elements of communication.

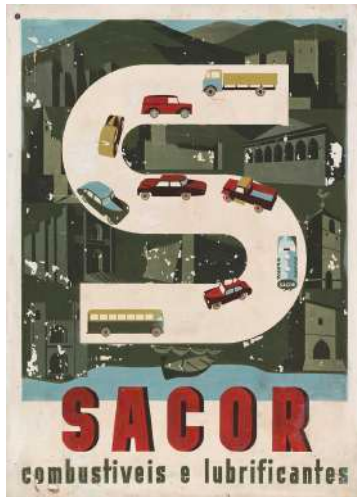


Fig. 1. Poster Sacor, 1950, Donated by Carlos Besse Peres, Museu do Caramulo Collection.



Fig. 2. Poster II Congresso Sacor, 1963, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection.



Fig. 3. TAP ticket with SACOR advertising, 1963, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection.



Fig. 4. Sacor engine oil can, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection.

Nestlé

Over 150 years old and present in 188 countries, the Swiss global brand Nestlé (registered in 1868) has been a part of our lives for as long as we can remember. Today it has a very diverse range of products and associated brands, but it was the invention of dairy milk by the pharmacist Henri Nestlé that began the story of the brand that changed infant nutrition around the world [13]. The innovation of this food product and the strategy of product diversification (initially the production of chocolate and condensed milk) led to the rapid conquest of international markets. It was in the 1920s that the brand was introduced in Portugal and began production through the Sociedade de Produtos Lácteos in Avanca, Aveiro [14].

Among the brand's advertising campaigns, the Nestlé Baby Contest (since 1935) had a major impact in Portugal, as in other countries, in terms of brand recognition and public loyalty [15]. Between the 1950s and 1960s, Nestlé launched iconic brands such as Nestum, Cerelac, Nescafé and Nesquik on the Portuguese market; in the following decades, Mokambo, Pensal, Estrelitas, Chocapic and, more recently, Nespresso, Nescafé Dolce Gusto, in a much wider portfolio that continues to grow and diversify, particularly through animal feed and specialised nutrition.

From the Museu das Marcas collection, we selected the Nestrovit Nestlé information booklet (Fig. 5), whose cover shows an illustration with an elegant layout, in soft tones and depicting a scene of maternal connection in a natural floral setting. The Milky Flour packaging (Fig. 6), printed in two colours, features the Nestlé graphic brand in the centre and, in addition to the product description, communicates the vitamin composition and instructions on how to use it in a very direct way, graphically reinforcing the message of instant preparation through the lines of movement typical of cartoons applied to the typography. The use of classic cartoon characters, or characters of their own, gave the brand a strong emotional connection with the children's audience. In the school calendar (Fig. 7), the brand uses the Cangurik scout to communicate an empathetic message of environmental awareness. Aimed at the young-adult audience, the Nescafé Nestlé label (Fig. 8) has the usual structure with text describing the product, how to use it and where it was produced, with the brand highlighted in yellow, red and black colours with gold accents as a way of positioning Nescafé Nestlé in the high quality/luxury product segment, even though it corresponds to a mass consumer product.



Fig. 5. Nestlé Nestrovit (food supplement) booklet, 1954, Illustration by Pizzi/Goni, Printed by Litografia de Portugal, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection.

Fig. 6. Nestlé milk flour packet, Prepared at the Sociedade de Produtos Lácteos, Avanca, Portugal, 1980s, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection.



Fig. 7. Nestlé Nesquik school timetable with Cangurik mascot, 1986 European Year of the Environment, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection



Fig. 8. Nescafé Decaffeinated Instant Coffee Packet, 1960s, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection

Regina

The almost century-old Regina, founded in 1927, is one of the Portuguese's favourite chocolate brands. The brand's communication strategy is based on simplicity and proximity, emphasising its national origin through headlines such as 'a pleasure proudly ours'. Some of its products, such as milk, hazelnut or fruit-flavoured chocolate bars, chocolate umbrellas, Easter almonds or the hole machine, have become iconic and part of the Portuguese collective memory. Regina, which even ceased production, was acquired and relaunched at the turn of the millennium by Imperial (owner of other emblematic national brands in the same sector such as Pintarolas, Jubileu and Pantagruel), which was recently acquired by the Spanish group Valor [16].

The Regina chocolate box (Fig. 9) explores the randomness of gambling as a way of interacting with the public for a moment, often involving different generations of consumers. This machine was a common sight in shops and fairs. Each hole dropped a coloured ball that identified the prize (a Regina product). It was a skilful way of presenting a constantly updated product range, while at the same time acting as an instrument to encourage repeat purchases. A simplified version of this chocolate box can still be found in shops such as A Vida Portuguesa. In 1963, for example, one of the products that could be obtained from this game was the milk chocolate bar (Fig.10), the wrapper of which identified the white colour of the corresponding ball. In the spirit of making shopping a fun experience, the Regina brand created numerous numbered collections for the chocolate bars (with typical Portuguese regional figures - Maria Helena mascot, Portuguese tourist destinations, models of cars, models of aeroplanes, Walt Disney cartoons, etc.), which stimulated the public's collecting impulse. The tins of cayenne, chocolates and drops are also an important means of promoting the brand, with graphics that vary between visual narratives using a clean design (Fig. 11) or a geometric typographic arrangement, in contrast to the cursive typography that characterises the visual identity (Fig. 12) of the Regina brand.



Fig. 9. Regina Punch Box, Chocolates, Drops, Bonbons, 1940s, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection

Fig. 10. Regina Milk Chocolate Wrapper from the Walt Disney Collection no. 184/63 (Pluto), White Ball from the Regina Punch Box, 1963, Printed by Litografia Vitória, Salvador Patrício Gouveia Collection



Fig. 11. Regina Cayenne Chocolates Can, 1030s, Printed by Litografia V^a Ferrão, Salvador Patricio Gouveia Collection.



Fig. 12. Regina fruit sweets packet, 1030s, Salvador Patricio Gouveia Collection.

2.4 The example of the Museum of Brands (London, UK)

Consumer historian Robert Opie established the Museum of Brands in 1984, following a successful exhibition in 1975 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, called *The Pack Age* [17]. The museum offers a nostalgic journey into British history through the consumer brands featured in the permanent exhibition 'Time Tunnel'. This exhibition features more than 12000 original objects, including packaging, toys, posters and household products, which offers a fascinating insight into life in the United Kingdom since Victorian times. In addition to the permanent exhibition, the museum hosts temporary exhibitions that look at the public's relationship with brands today, such as the annual exhibition of the most popular brands and products in British supermarkets. This is also a space open to the debate of ideas and research with the aim of educating the public about design particularly the themes of advertising and packaging. In the field of research, we highlight the 'Living Brands' project, a multi-sensory outreach programmed for people living with dementia and their carers designed to encourage reminiscing with the museum collection. artefacts.

As a way of promoting its activity and anticipating the experience in the physical space, the museum is present on social media and offers interaction with the public on its website through activities such as the Brand Challenge Quiz. The immersive virtual tour and access to the collection is also available on the Google Arts & Culture platform [18].

The London Museum of Brands and the Caramulo Museu das Marcas share the aim of preserving, reflecting and celebrating the history of brands and consumption, using everyday objects to tell broader stories about social, cultural and technological change.

3 Design Culture

The activity of design and its research must be understood beyond the technical and aesthetic domain, as it has a significant cultural dimension that this discussion seeks to highlight. Fallman [19] proposes that the cultural history of design should integrate interdisciplinary perspectives that include studies in the field of material culture, bringing Design closer to Anthropology and Sociology and, considering the analysis and interpretation of artifacts, also bringing it closer to the History of Art. In this sense, Material Culture Studies highlight the complex interactions between artefacts and human beings, emphasizing “the use and meanings of objects” [20(p. 4)]. It also helps to overcome dichotomies such as art/design, erudite/popular, allowing for an inclusive analysis that considers both established design icons and anonymous everyday objects [21].

Reflecting on the relationship between Design and Culture, Margolin [22] proposes that Design Studies should include its observation as a cultural expression - design in culture - and as a cultural agent - design as culture. The former (design in culture) assumes that design objects and systems reflect values, traditions, social needs and historical contexts, meaning that design arises from and is shaped by the culture in which it is produced. The second (design as culture) considers that design products can become cultural symbols, influence lifestyles or even create new social practices, thus shaping our behaviors, habits and perceptions, meaning that in addition to reflecting culture, design presents itself as culture and contributes to its construction.

It is also important to decode how we perceive these objects (three-dimensional, two-dimensional, physical and digital) and design systems. Berger [23] reminds us that looking is an act of choice and, in this sense, when we see, we are not just looking, we are reading the language of images (and objects). But in a world saturated with images, Mirzoeff [24,25] invites us to think about how we see, what we see, and how the act of seeing is linked to power, politics and identity, arguing that all visuality is constructed, meaning that the way we see the world is influenced by cultural values, ideologies and power structures. It is therefore important to be alert because Visual Culture can also be a tool of resistance and design can be critical, active and socially responsible, remaining a political act, never neutral.

Regarding the layers of reading, metaphors, cultural values and relationships we establish with objects, Appadurai [26] argues that an object is never just a form, but a symbolic interface with multiple meanings that depend on the cultural context and the way they are seen. The author argues that materiality is produced culturally, so objects don't have a fixed meaning, they become meaningful through the social practices and narratives that surround them, so it's not the thing itself that matters, but what it becomes in interaction with humans.

From the contributions of Margolin, Mirzoeff and Appadurai we can conclude that design actively participates in the construction of culture, influencing the way we see, feel and understand the world, and therefore objects, namely those found in the collection of the Museum of Brands, cannot be studied only in terms of visual characteristics and qualities, but interdisciplinary perspectives from Cultural Studies, Design Studies,

Image Studies, Anthropology and Visual Culture must be considered for a richer and more complete observation.

Regarding the collection under study, nostalgia is a good term for its presentation. We're talking about a "search for spontaneous and unpretentious voices - voices that belong to the idealized aura of a romanticized past (the crazy 1920s, the exuberant 1950s). Nostalgia, a key ingredient in increasing the market value of a vernacular style, is not a return to history, but a repackaging of history. It treats the past not as the roots of the present, but as a distant other" [27(p. 157)] and, at the same time, as a memory of something we miss and attracts us as a testimony to a perfect time.

Regarding memory brands, considering the Portuguese context, we can refer to the doctoral research by Pedro Carvalho de Almeida about Sanjo (since 1933) or by Nuno Coelho about Saboaria e Perfumaria Confiança (since 1894).

Memory and nostalgia motivate a transition from valuing the functional domain of objects to their symbolic valuation, or Brand valuation. The idea of the Brand as a territory of belonging, based on the human need to establish connections, is highlighted by Millman [28] who draws on various authors: Ollins states that a tribe is a brand, a religion is a brand; Postrel uses terms such as promise, consistency, continuity, associating the value of the Brand more with its meaning (the symbolic value) than with the attributes of a product or product line; Seth Godin speaks of brands as a possibility of materializing expectations; Swanson highlights the emotional dimension that underpins the Brand, stating that brands are totems, they provide us with narratives about our place in a given socio-cultural context and it is also this narrative dimension that Tom Peters underlines, saying that, as humans, we communicate through stories.

The interest that the Museu das Marcas has aroused among the public is related to the revaluation of the stories activated through the images and everyday objects of past generations - memory for some, fantasy for others - but which today help to build an idea of national identity. A revaluation of consumer objects that is not new and that, for example, in the 1960s and 1970s, in the fervor of the Pop movement through designers such as Milton Glaser of Push Pin Studio, combined elements of consumer culture, imposing itself as avant-garde and breaking with the rigidity of modernist grammar.

The Museu das Marcas collection can also be a starting point for a design project through the resignification and transcreation of contemporary designers and artists.

4 Conclusion

The exploratory reading of the Museu das Marcas collection, based on the communication artifacts that we brought to this document, confirms the relevance of design research focused on consumer products in Portugal in the 20th century. Contact with the collection allows us to validate the importance of its dissemination for the flourishing of a design culture capable of engaging new audiences. We are convinced that the symbolic graphic relevance of this collection justifies its inclusion in the national and international museographic panorama, thus allowing the preservation of the collective memory of consumption in Portugal and, from future readings, the possibility of resignification and transcreation from design, thus allowing innovation.

The brands that we are calling for in this contribution are the beginning of a sensitive observation [29] of possible readings of design which, as an example, can be based on specific criteria of the syntax of visual grammar (color, typography, grid, scale, movement, etc.), the identification and semantic interpretation of symbolic elements of representation (natural, cultural and patrimonial heritage, personalities, etc.) or the pragmatics of communication (effectiveness of the message, ideology, intersectionality, etc.). The potential of the Museu das Marcas collection as an object of study for research in design and other areas of knowledge such as anthropology, sociology and image theory is obvious. This repository of brand artifacts thus offers an opportunity to understand the different layers of meaning and design options that converge in these memory-activating objects and make us travel nostalgically back in time.

We also identified as a research challenge and opportunity the museographic design of the Museu das Marcas, which should be a living, interactive and immersive ecosystem in a digital and physical environment.

Considering this fertile field, we intend to continue studying the formal, symbolic and communicational aspects of this collection and the museography of the Museu das Marcas, based on design. The motivations for continuing this research are our personal research interests in the field of brands, the alignment with the museum's objectives - to study social history through the consumption of brands that have shaped our collective experience, contributing to the preservation of objects and generating specialized knowledge for future generations - and the intention to strengthen the institutional partnership between the Museu das Marcas do Caramulo and the Escola Superior de Educação de Viseu.

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