



# Chapter 65

## The chapel of Pampulha and the church of águas, a possible relationship of brotherhood

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze two Catholic temples of the 20th century, one Brazilian and one Portuguese. These are the Pampulha Chapel, the first modern Brazilian church, and the Igreja de Águas, the first

church to be considered modern in Portugal. The Pampulha Chapel project is by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer and was inaugurated in 1943. The Igreja de Águas project, by the Portuguese architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, was inaugurated in 1957. Beyond the great distance of the church's inauguration date Brazilian for the Portuguese church, we can see points in common between them. Like the defense of modern religious architecture in their countries and a possible inspiration on the part of the Portuguese architect about modern Brazilian architecture. Relationships that we will discuss below. This article is part of a larger doctoral investigation, where the main focus is on proving a relationship between modern Brazilian religious architecture and modern Portuguese religious architecture.

**Keywords:** Modern Religious Architecture, Modern Churches, Brazil, Portugal.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Modern architecture in the Catholic religious field began in Brazil in the mid-1940s, with the construction of the São Francisco de Assis Church in Belo Horizonte. The work was carried out by architect Oscar Niemeyer, in response to a request made by the mayor of the city, at the time Juscelino Kubitschek, to be part of a set of buildings in a new neighborhood of the city.

In Portugal, there was an attempt at the end of the 1930s, with the Church of Nossa Senhora do Rosário de Fátima, in Lisbon, a project prepared by the architect Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, in the first phase of Portuguese modernism, a phase in which Portuguese architects were still knowing modern architecture and the political regime was not yet linked to the arts, giving architects a little freedom. But from the 1940s onwards, the Estado Novo imposed the so-called traditional Portuguese architecture. (PEREIRA apud REIS, 2003)

That lasted until the beginning of the '50s when then, the MRAR<sup>1</sup> – Movement for the Renewal of Religious Art, led by architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, this movement emerged through a group of architects dissatisfied with the direction that Portuguese architecture was taking, promoting an exhibition on contemporary religious architecture to present the new architecture to Portugal.

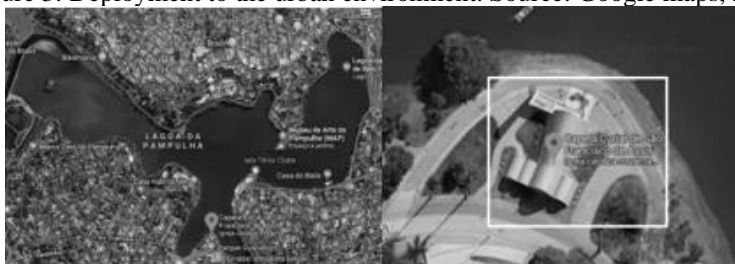
In this article, we will present the beginning of Brazilian modern religious architecture, with the first modern church, the Capela da Pampulha (1943), which generated many discussions between the Church and the architects, considered by the Church outside the liturgical standards. And the Igreja Paroquial de Águas (1957), considered the first modern Portuguese church, by the young architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, was already within the MRAR, which also generated some discussion by the community, which found it strange, because this proposal was breaking with what had been imposed until then. Portuguese traditional architecture.

Although one was inaugurated in 1943 and the other in 1957, with an interval of about 14 years, the two have common points in their projects, in addition to defending modern architecture for Catholic temples, through two great names of modern architecture in their respective countries, and that's what we'll be dealing with.

## 2 SÃO FRANCISCO DE ASSIS CHURCH OR PAMPULHA CHAPEL – BELO HORIZONTE

In the early 1940s, it was commissioned by the then-mayor of Belo Horizonte, Juscelino Kubitschek, to the architect, Oscar Niemeyer.<sup>2</sup>, an architectural complex, consisting of a casino, a ballroom, a yacht club, a hotel, and a church for a new neighborhood in the city, Pampulha, which would surround an artificial lake<sup>3</sup>.

Figure 3: Deployment to the urban environment. Source: Google maps, 2019



<sup>1</sup> In 1952, a movement for the renewal of religious architecture begins, with a group of young Catholic architects, led by the architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, unhappy with the lack of authenticity of Portuguese architecture, in 1953, they form the Exhibition of Religious Architecture Contemporary, which is exhibited in various places, initiated by Lisbon, in 1954 this movement consolidates and becomes the MRAR - Movement for the Renovation of Religious Art.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Niemeyer, (1907 – 2012) was born and died in Rio de Janeiro. Architect and urban planner, he graduated in 1934 from the National School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro, today UFRJ. When he was in the third year of the course, he did an internship with Lúcio Costa, thus collaborating on the project for the Ministry of Education and Health, currently Gustavo Capanema Palace, in Rio de Janeiro, with which he had the opportunity to work with the French architect Le Corbusier, being he a great influence on its architecture. His great individual work was the Pampulha complex in Belo Horizonte. In 1956, Niemeyer was invited by the new president of Brazil, Juscelino Kubitschek, to design the public buildings of the new Brazilian capital that would be built in the center of the country. He is considered one of the master architects of the development of modern architecture and worked until the end of his life, aged 104. He designed numerous notable works and won several national and international awards, one of the most famous names related to Brazilian modern architecture, knowledgeable like no one in his profession. Among his achievements are the Presidential Chapel, Cathedral of Brasília, Chapel N. S. de Fátima, and Institute of Theology of Brasília.

<sup>3</sup> Inside the complex, Casa JK was also built, a weekend house, requested by Juscelino to Oscar Niemeyer, today it has become a museum.

Of the entire complex, only the hotel was not built. The church of São Francisco de Assis was inaugurated in 1943, still unfinished, and the complex was built between 1942 and 1945. The Capela da Pampulha or Igreja São Francisco de Assis<sup>4</sup> it is the building that most differs from the others in the complex, given its unusual shape.

When you have a space that big, the natural solution is the curve, not the straight line. So I covered the church with curves. And the architecture became different. It became more connected to our country, lighter, more open, and closer to the old churches of Minas Gerais. (NIEMEYER apud MACIEL, 2007)

With its structure in self-supporting parabolic vaults<sup>5</sup> resulting from the progress of modern technology, a very different architectural expression was created, according to BRUAND (2012, p. 112). Lauro Cavalcanti (2001, p. 400), reports that reinforced concrete was used, for the first time, in all its plastic and structural potential.

Figure 1: Project drawings and perspective of the chapel. Source: [www.vivadecora.com.br/pro/arquitetura/igreja-da-pampulha/](http://www.vivadecora.com.br/pro/arquitetura/igreja-da-pampulha/), 2019.

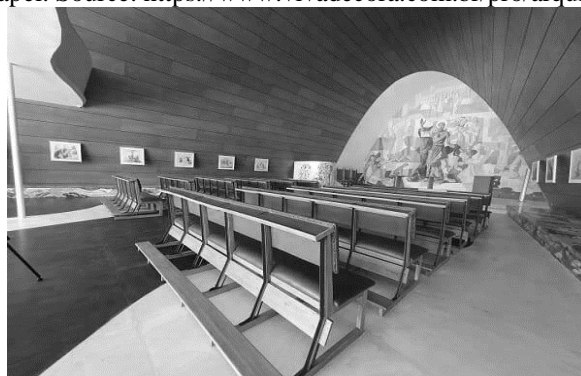


The nave narrows and declines from the façade towards the main altar, where it produces a sudden dilation of space, the result of the almost imperceptible opposite movement and a remarkable play of light that contrasts the dark wood cladding of the nave with a flooded choir. of light, the source of which is not visible. The rays of light, concentrated in the vast painting by Portinari, which occupies the entire back wall, fall from the lantern located at the intersection of the two parabolic vaults since the one covering the choir has a section a little wider than the end of the nave's vault. (BRUAND, 2012)

<sup>4</sup> The idea of the church being devoted to Saint Francis of Assisi comes from the mayor himself, who has a special appreciation for the saint.

<sup>5</sup> This type of structure had only been applied by engineers, such as the French Freyssinet, in the Orly hangars, and the Swiss Maillart, in its bridges with arched walls and the cement pavilion of the Swiss National Exhibition in Zurich in 1939. But as they were utilitarian works, the aesthetic effect was not essential here.

Figure 4: Internal view of the chapel. Source: <https://www.vivadecora.com.br/pro/arquitetura/igreja-da-pampulha/>, 2019.



The works of artists who were part of Niemeyer's team, connect perfectly with the architectural language chosen by the author. Breaking with everything that existed until then in the religious field.

Portinari's panels <sup>6</sup>, both the tiles and the interior – which eliminates the altarpiece, until then essential -, are also a break with the past, even though the tile on the external walls was already an old habit of our coast. (LEMOS, 1979, p. 749)

The mural was commissioned by Cândido Portinari, as he is an experienced artist. The experience acquired after making one of his famous paintings, "Café", which in 1935 received a second honorable mention at the International Exhibition of Modern Art at the Carnegie Institute in New York. (FARIAS, 2006, p. 152)

In addition to works by Cândido Portinari, such as tile panels, via-crucis, altar fresco, and external tile mural, the church also featured works by Paulo Werneck, with abstract mosaics on the outer sides of the roof, and Alfredo Ceschiatti, with bas-reliefs for the baptistery. (OLIVEIRA, 2018, p. 241)

Figure 2: Rear view. Source: <https://www.vivadecora.com.br/pro/arquitetura/igreja-da-pampulha/>, 2019.



But the construction of this church brought a lot of criticism, especially from the Archbishop of Belo Horizonte, Dom Antônio dos Santos Cabral, claiming that the building would have been requested by the State leaving aside the Church in its needs, a fact that displeased the ecclesiastical authorities; in addition, the government would have assigned an openly communist and atheist architect to design the

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<sup>6</sup> Cândido Portinari also participated in the work of the Ministry of Education and Health in Rio de Janeiro, together with Lúcio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, and other architects, which had the consultancy of Le Corbusier.

Capela da Pampulha project who, according to Catholics, would be considered incapable of channeling the divine inspiration necessary for the realization of the religious building. (SILVEIRA, 2011, p. 42)

On this subject, the Archbishop granted an interview to a Rio de Janeiro newspaper, *A Noite*, in which he confirms the non-participation of the Church in the design of the project and even though the work was private, not having been donated to the Church the land where it was built. chapel built.

It is an entirely private work. In which the clergy had not the slightest participation. My visits were made on a formal basis, as I could not apologize to the listeners. I hoped, however, that the interior of the church did not deviate from tradition and balance. But, over time, I painfully verified that the imagination of the artists was leading to the realization of a work that was said to be in praise of the pious Saint Francis in other ways. (CABRAL, 1945)

Still, in this same published article, Dom Cabral presents his point of view on the "architectural style" employed in the Brazilian church and what was being carried out in France, for example, one of the first countries to adopt the modern for its churches, showing that he was not unaware of what was happening in other countries concerning the architecture of new temples.

As for the architectural style, I repeat, there could be tolerance. In France, all religious constructions are obeying the technique of reinforced concrete. Truly revolutionary yet understandable style. Towers similar to those of radio station antennas, surmounted by the cross, and other initiatives, make these temples very modern, beautiful, and practical [...]. Why not tolerate the same here? But, from an antenna tower, ending with a cross, which well symbolizes the radiance of faith, to that of Pampulha, set up in reverse, representing nothing more than a good engineering calculation, there is an enormous difference. While the first throws itself into the air, looking for the light, raising the sacrosanct symbol of faith, the other seems to want to drill into the ground, in search of darkness [...]. (CABRAL, 1945)

For Dom Cabral, the management of the project exclusively by the politician, the architect, and the artists, made its acceptance as a legitimate religious space unfeasible. In addition, the aesthetic choices made by them were strictly aligned with the interests of the artists in dispute for "artistic evolution", placing the final result – "extravagant" and "fantasy" – against the sacred imperative of recollection.

As a result, the church was not accepted by the ecclesiastical authorities and was closed for almost 15 years, forcing Lúcio Costa to ask for the preventive listing of the chapel, due to its premature deterioration. A small excerpt from Lúcio Costa's opinion follows:

Considering the precocious state of ruin in which the Church of São Francisco de Assis, in Pampulha, in Belo Horizonte, is found, due to certain construction defects and the abandonment to which this building was relegated by municipal and ecclesiastical authorities; [...] considering, finally, that the exceptional value of this monument destined it to be inscribed, sooner or later, in the *Livros do Tombo*, as a national monument, and that therefore it would be criminal to see it ruined for lack of opportune preservation measures, to have to intervene later in the sense of a difficult and costly restoration, I have the honor to propose [...] the preventive listing of the Church of São Francisco de Assis, in Pampulha [...]. (COSTA, 1947, p. 1)

The Pampulha Chapel was finally consecrated in April 1959, by the then Archbishop Dom Resende Costa, who took over from Archbishop Dom Cabral, given his failing health. But for the church to be consecrated, it was requested that it be donated to the Archdiocesan Miter. And on February 6, 1959, the

law authorizing the donation of the Chapel of Pampulha was approved and sanctioned by the Municipality of Belo Horizonte. Dom Resende Costa made the following comment about the Church finally consecrating the chapel:

Today, since the canonical irregularities have been remedied and the new expressions of art, which were initially so shocking, are now generally accepted, there is no longer any reason to maintain the veto opposed at the time by Archbishop Antônio dos Santos Cabral to the church of São Francisco. (RESENDE COSTA, 1959)

But until reaching the consecration of the chapel, there was criticism from the ecclesiastical authorities who did not see this construction as a church, but rather as an art to be contemplated by visitors although there was, on the other hand, the defense by the architects of the new design phase of modern projects. (SILVEIRA, 2011, p. 39)

As presented by Friar Sebastião Tauzin, in his article published in the magazine *Vozes*, in 1949:

"[...] So I ask: When you enter the Pampulha Church, do you feel like praying? Do you think that many people when entering that church will feel like bending the knee and asking God for the forgiveness of their sins? In that church I can see very well visitors who are like art critics, rich ladies with extravagant clothes, examining the dog on the central panel with their lorgnettes, touristy appreciating the paintings on the *Via Sacra*, now amazed with admiration, now with indignation, or discussing whether what you see on the external tiles are turkeys or chickens, or stylized birds and if the triangle that forms the nose of São Francisco gives him a friendly, mystical or cruel look [...] In short, churches are not museums of rarities destined to a tiny elite of initiates. They are places where people gather to pray. [...] Is this what you saw?" (TAUZIN, 1949)

On the other hand, the architects Hardy Filho and Vasconcellos defended the architecture of the Pampulha chapel in an article published by the magazine *Arquitetura e Engenharia de Belo Horizonte*, in 1946, in which they discussed the contribution that this work brings to Brazilian modern architecture.

Today, when the world is heading towards a new stage of its evolution, when the Catholic Church takes to the field to take up arms in defense of a more just social order when the struggle between two divergent principles will lead our poor world to we know not what destiny, also the architecture of our churches, without abandoning the beautiful teachings of tradition and without submitting, however, to retrograde conception, must move forward. [...]

We see, in the Pampulha Church, a contribution to religious architecture. Research.

We live in the 20th century, we wear today's shoes, today's clothes, today's customs, and today's automobiles. Why not make an automobile in the 'bullock cart' style? Why Churches of Yesterday? If in the Romanesque era, it became Romanesque, if, in the Middle Ages, it became Gothic, if, in our colonial phase, the temple was built in its way, if in none of these eras did anyone try to imitate or copy older styles, why should we revive today? ghosts? The environment is different, the material is different, the systems are different, and the feeling is different – two wars – why the prison of the old?

The Pampulha Church is a church. As modern today as all the best temples of religion were in their times. [...]. (HARDY and VASCONCELOS, 1946)

The argument that equated the Pampulha Architectural Ensemble with the profane and, consequently, the unfeasibility of the existence of a sacred space worked on the logic of contamination, which gradually eased as the vector of contagion weakened until it disappeared, one of the points was the deactivation of the casino, as gambling was banned in Brazil, the city grew and encompassed its most intensified urban fabric.

### 3 PARISH CHURCH OF ÁGUAS, PENAMACOR/CASTELO BRANCO DISTRICT

The Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima de Águas, or as it is better known, Igreja de Águas, is one of the most important religious buildings in the history of Portuguese architecture in the 20th century. Designed by architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira<sup>7</sup>, was financed by the Megre family, more precisely, by the brothers Domingos and Maria de Lourdes Megre<sup>8</sup>, to replace the old one which was small and was no longer serving the community properly.

Figure 5: Perspective of the Igreja das Águas. Source: Canoso, 2016.



In the initial project, the three side chapels were not foreseen, but they were added, due to the Megre family; the chapel of São Domingos, in honor of Dr.º Domingos Megre; the chapel of Sr.ª de Lourdes, in honor of Sr.ª Lourdes Megre, and the Capela de São José, in memory of the father of the three Megre brothers. (CANOSO, 2016, p. 14)

The “modern language with an expressionist flavor”<sup>9</sup> of the new church, seeking an authentic meaning for Portuguese architecture, a situation that the population was not used to. For the author of the work, who was influenced by the Swiss churches he came to know from the *Werk* magazine, the plastic expression of the building, both outside and inside, was:

[...] the result of how the needs were faced and the means that were employed to satisfy them, all oriented towards a certain sense of composition. Consequence, therefore, in large part, of the organization given to the space, the satisfaction of certain physical requirements, and the construction processes and materials employed. (PEREIRA apud CUNHA, 2014, p. 105)

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<sup>7</sup> Nuno Teotónio Pereira, (1922-2016) was born and died in Lisbon. He graduated in Architecture, starting his studies at the Lisbon School of Fine Arts, however, in his last year, he transferred and completed the course in Porto, in 1949. He collaborated with the studio of Architect Carlos Ramos, between 1940 and 1943, and with Técnica, Revista de Engenharia dos Estudantes do Instituto Superior Técnico, from May 1943. While still a trainee architect, he participated in the 1st National Congress of Architecture in 1948, held in Lisbon. In addition to the various activities he developed throughout his career, he was the founder of MRAR – Movement for the Renewal of Religious Art. Being one of the most important architects of his generation. With the realization of several works, he received numerous awards and recognitions. Among his greatest achievements are some churches such as Igreja das Águas (Penamacor), Igreja do Sagrado Corações de Jesus (Lisbon), and Igreja da Nossa Senhora da Assunção (Almada).

<sup>8</sup> “[...] the brothers decided to contribute with an initial 2,000 Contos and with the land for the construction of the Church since they intended to leave a work to the parish.” Canoso, António (coord) – Igreja das Águas. Penamacor: City Hall of Penamacor, 2016, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> TOSTÕES apud CUNHA, 2014, p. 105.

Using the tools of rationality and modern functionality, where he integrated expression as one more function. He did not adopt the linear conception of the Modern Movement, nor any trace of revivalist traditionalism. For, "For Teotónio Pereira, a contemporary religious architecture 'would have to free itself from historicist stigmas'." (CANOSO, 2016, p. 32).

Architectural critic Ana Tostões considered it to be the:

First modern church built after the Church of Nossa Senhora de Fátima (Pardal Monteiro, Lisbon, 1938), and one of the first projects by a young architect for whom the architectural language has always gone hand in hand with the renewal of programs and civic commitment. (TOSTÕES apud CANOSO, 2016, p. 32)

And he also mentioned that the importance of this work was due to two concepts; the internal space and the integration space, proving to be an unusual innovation that announced the rejection of traditionalism and a critique of returning to the roots, respecting the characteristics of the place.

Whether in the internal space, the options for the shape of the assembly, the interior light and color, or the integration in the place, using granite materials in dialogue with the concrete, the large tile roof supported by metal trusses, such as the position of the churchyard partially walled, reflected the will to renovate without breaking, establishing a continuity that respected the character of the village. (TOSTÕES apud CANOSO, 2016, p. 32 and 33)

Another strong point of the project was the adaptation to the physical and cultural environment of the environment, which is present in the use of vernacular materials, in which the highlight is the baptismal font, in solid stone carved by the waters of the Ribeira de Alpreade, from where it was taken.

Figure 6: Baptistry, detail of the wall covered in ceramics and plants. Source: Canoso, 2016.



The constructive program chosen by the architect was composed of a trapezoidal plan, little used, consisting of two naves, the largest nave being the main one that converges to the chancel. The layout of the assembly is fan-shaped, favoring visibility and hearing conditions. The secondary side nave is narrow and lower, where it integrates the baptistry and the three side chapels, allowing circulation not directed towards the main nave. Outside, the main façade is finished in a truncated gable with three panels, the sides blind and the central one with a narthex, accessed by three recessed spans, and a wide rectilinear square of



glazed stonework. In contrast, the left side facade corresponds to the secondary nave, which is more modest, has openings to allow natural lighting of regular and relatively weak intensity, oriented from top to bottom and from back to front, in the main nave, while the chancel would be strongly illuminated by vertical lights allowing direct morning sunlight to penetrate, but without affecting the audience's eyes. (NOÉ, 2018)

Figure 7: Interior view. Source: Canoso, 2016.



Its interior features a "decorative stripping", intending to avoid the distraction of the faithful. It has a choir in the classic layout, partially over the narthex, and the structural lines converge to the chancel, protected by a web, with a raised floor, where, on the Gospel side, the masonry pulpit is arranged, an unusual position; the wall, where it was originally thought to paint a mural, was covered with ceramic plates and superimposed by an image of the Crucified One. The side chapels, inserted in delimited spaces in the secondary nave, so as not to interfere with the liturgical acts in the main nave, have the altar with the same orientation as the main altar, but this is purposely out of the viewing angle. The baptistery, next to the entrance, has the wall on the Gospel side covered with ceramic plaques and tesserae creating a recessed motif, rhythmized by Christological symbols, by António Lino, next to which is the baptismal font, a rocky outcrop with two natural cavities, extracted from the river. The bell tower with vertical lines, which in the draft was located next to the main façade and connected to the choir by a walkway, was transferred and isolated next to the northeast corner of the temple, and built with a simpler structure, hollow and torn by doors, in mismatched levels, giving access to the stair landings, arranged on both faces. And has a front courtyard, paved with parallelepipeds, with granite guides, arranged obliquely, with, at the northwest limit, a transept, in granite stonework, composed of a trunk-pyramidal truncated plinth, where the Latin cross, with quadrangular arms, is inserted. (NOÉ, 2018)

In addition to Nuno Teotónio Pereira, a team of artists and architects collaborated on this work, such as António Lino, who designed the ceramic panel for the baptistery wall; António Luís Paiva, who made the set of 12 paintings in polychrome wood forming the Via Sacra; Euclides Vaz, was responsible for the statuary; Frederico George, carried out the chromatic study, which materialized the proposal of a rich spatiality of meanings; Graziela Albino was responsible for decorating the tabernacle door and Jorge Vieira the Christ in bronze, placed in the background of the altar. (CANOSO, 2016, p. 42)

Nuno Teotónio Pereira's intention for the Church of Águas was to incorporate it into the great renovation movement of those times, both architecturally and artistically, but without a total rupture, so as not to be rejected by part of the population. However, this was not enough to ward off criticism of the church and its architecture. (CUNHA, 2014, p. 107)

This led the architect to write a text in 1951 to respond to “unfavorable criticism (...) directed mainly at the doctrine, the criteria, the principles that informed the project”. (PEREIRA apud CUNHA, 2014, p. 107 and 108) The text is very argumentative where the lack of understanding on the part of the population still attached to traditionalist architecture is mentioned. The population even compared it to other types of establishments, such as a cafe, a warehouse, and a cinema, except for a church.

And Nuno brings to the text the discussion that, if there were no variations, no progress in architecture, there would be no other typologies over time and religious architecture would be nothing more than Roman basilicas. And he argued that:

[...] to forbid churches the forms of contemporary architecture is the same as pretending not to be Christianity for today's men. Because, if houses, public buildings, customs, transport, even clothing change, why shouldn't churches change?” (PEREIRA apud CUNHA, 2014, p. 108)

After making these considerations, he tried to justify his project, which was designed to respect the locality and the community it would serve. And that its aspects were related to the functionality of the building and should not be seen in isolation, but as a whole, because what mattered was the view of the whole and, therefore, it would be seen as a church.

For Nuno Portas, the Igreja de Águas was not just a church, but could “be the landmark, the birth point of the churches that our Christian people deserve: an entirely Portuguese and simple art, entirely current, intimately Christian”. (PEREIRA apud CUNHA, 2014, p. 109)

And in the opinion of Ana Tostões, she was one:

Marco da modernização da arquitetura religiosa é nesta questão, de proposta de uma nova espacialidade significante, capaz de dar a dimensão da condição humana e o sentido do sobrenatural, que reside a importância maior, e transforma esta obra no modelo da arquitetura religiosa moderna portuguesa, cujo ponto de partida não foi o de um redutor funcionalismo, mas de uma aproximação ao contexto, às formas vernáculas, dentro da linha de pesquisa e entendimento da arquitetura moderna portuguesa. (TOSTÕES apud CANOSO, 2016, p. 38)

Para além disso, o entendimento que Nuno Teotónio Pereira tinha sobre a arquitetura moderna, dava-lhe provisão para discutir o assunto, sempre atento sobre a temática, lia tudo sobre o assunto, inclusive sobre a arquitetura moderna brasileira. Prova disso, está na carta escrita a Oscar Niemeyer, em 1947.

Where he declared his admiration for modern Brazilian architecture, which he became aware of through the book *Brazil Builds*, and international magazines that had been publishing about the new

Brazilian architecture. Considering Brazil, creator of the authentic and original architecture, “ linked to the People, rooted in the Earth and paced with the Epoch”<sup>10</sup>.

In addition to expressing his admiration for modern Brazilian architecture, Teotônio Pereira, in his letter, asks Oscar Niemeyer where he could obtain more information about the Pampulha Chapel project, as he would only have known about it through a small publication by the magazine L'Arqchitecture d' Aujourd' hui and a photograph published by Pencil Points.

I am greatly interested in the possibility of obtaining copies of plans, elevations, and sections, photographic or of any other kind, as well as reproductions of wall paintings by Portinari, that extraordinary painter who, with V., forms the pair that is conquering a place for Brazil of capital importance in the art of our days. (PEREIRA, 1947)

"I was working on the project for the Igreja das Águas", said Teotônio Pereira in an interview with Bárbara Reis, in 2003, and "I wanted to know more about Niemeyer's church". (PEREIRA apud REIS, 2003)

This implies that he was interested in having more knowledge about the modern religious architecture that was being developed in Brazil and we can even raise suspicions here about the mural painting that he would have liked to have done on the wall at the back of the altar of the Church of Águas, work that could have arisen from the idea of the mural created by Portinari in the Pampulha Chapel.

#### 4 CONSIDERATIONS

What we can consider, therefore, after presenting these two beautiful works and their contexts, is that in Brazil, this first moment of modern architecture applied to a Catholic temple was different. Oscar Niemeyer, a great name in Brazilian modern architecture, graduated in 1934 from the ENBA, in Rio de Janeiro, where, as a student, he went through Lucio Costa's attempt to modernize the teaching of architecture and later had contact with Le Corbusier, when they worked in the Ministry of Education and Health project, falling in love with modern architecture.

Invited by the mayor of Belo Horizonte, Juscelino Kubitschek, to design a complex for a new neighborhood of the city in modern parameters where a chapel was present, Oscar Niemeyer included the curve in all buildings, allowed by the malleability of reinforced concrete, making it a Brazilian characteristic in your projects. When it came to designing the chapel, Niemeyer's solution was to use the curve in a different way than other buildings. As it was considered a large space, he used the curve to cover the chapel, creating a different architecture, considered by him more connected to the country, lighter and hollow.

Its interior, also considered modern, had the altarpiece replaced by a large mural of Saint Francis of Assisi, the work of Cândido Portinari, little decoration, only pictures of the via crosses on the side walls,

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<sup>10</sup> CARTA de Nuno Teotônio Pereira a Oscar Niemeyer, 1947.

painted tiles on the outside, and low-relief sculpture in the baptistery inside the chapel itself. Another feature is that the assembly is very close to the altar.

But this work, which was so different from other existing churches, had no participation from the ecclesiastical authorities, being rejected after it was ready for considering it outside the liturgical standards and for having been a private work requested by the mayor of the city and built within a complex of buildings connected to profane life, which contained a casino, a ballroom, and others. Staying closed for almost 15 years.

After 4 years of its realization, as it was in a state of premature deterioration, Lúcio Costa requested the preventive listing of the chapel, being the first building to be listed a few years after its construction.

The chapel was consecrated only in 1959 when it was donated to Mitra Arquidiocesana. And also due to the expansion and modification of the city's social life, Pampulha was no longer a place for a profane life, but a neighborhood where many families lived there and needed a church to serve them.

The Igreja de Águas, as the Portuguese church is better known, was considered the first modern church built in Portugal and the first church designed by the architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, who began his studies at the Lisbon School of Fine Arts, but in In the last year, he transferred and graduated from the Porto School of Fine Arts in 1949, because at the first school, he faced teachers who did not accept modernity. Many students in Lisbon, at that time, did the same, since they found in the teaching of the Porto School a greater openness to the Modern Movement.

Because it is a rural church, located in a small village, the architect was very careful in carrying out this project, not only thinking about the functionality and rationality of the building but also the humanization of this environment, bringing vernacular materials to the work. , respecting the locality and its population. In an attempt to show the community that the church was part of that region.

Nuno did not adopt the linear conception of the Modern Movement for the Church of Águas, and neither did anything traditionalist. He tried to find a term, without a total rupture, so that the population would not be scared and reject it.

Even so, it did not escape negative criticism regarding the work, the community did not see it as a church, but Nuno made a point of explaining his project, and that architecture should be made referring to its time, otherwise, if there were no variations and no progress, there would be no other typologies over time.

In addition, Teotónio Pereira defended modern architecture. If houses, public buildings, transport, and even clothing could change, why not change churches? The same discourse in defense of modern Brazilian architecture was used by the architects Hardy Filho and Vasconcellos, when they wrote an article for the magazine *Arquitetura e Engenharia*, in 1946, already quoted here, defending the Pampulha Chapel.

Regarding the projects, despite one church being urban and the other rural, some points can be raised, and that can relate to these two churches. In 1947, Nuno Teotónio Pereira (25 years old), still an architecture student, wrote a letter to Oscar Niemeyer (40 years old), declaring his admiration for the new

Brazilian architecture, and also requesting more information about the Pampulha Chapel, such as plans, sections, photographs, details about Portinari's mural, implying that he was interested in modern Brazilian religious architecture.

What we find interesting here is that both churches have a trapezoidal plan, as already mentioned in the previous text, little used and Nuno Teotónio Pereira was interested in creating a mural (painting) on the altar, which may lead us to think that the idea may have arisen from his interest in the Pampulha Chapel.

Another point of interest that arises between these two churches is that in the text describing the interior of the Church of Águas, the author of the text says it presents a "decorative stripping", intending to avoid the distraction of the faithful. This situation is reversed in the Pampulha Chapel, where the ecclesiastical authorities accused Portinari's mural of being a distraction for the faithful. This may raise another suspicion with the non-execution of the mural in the Church of Águas.

The letter, which was written in 1947, was never delivered to Niemeyer at the time, due to an address error, and was returned 5 months later. This leads us to understand that if Nuno Teotónio Pereira obtained more information about the chapel, it was through other means. It was only delivered 56 years later, by the Order of Portuguese Architects, at the 2003 Annual Congress of the Institute of Brazilian Architects, in which Oscar Niemeyer, aged 96, was honored.

Therefore, through these two examples of modern religious architecture, one Brazilian and one Portuguese, we were able to find points in common, first, the discourse referring to the defense of modern architecture, by the architects and then a possible relationship of inspiration from Nuno Teotónio Pereira for the realization of the Águas Church, by Oscar Niemeyer, in the Pampulha Chapel project. Revealing to us that the modern religious architecture of Brazil and Portugal can indeed have their ties.

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