

MARIA JOÃO NETO
(EDITOR)

MONSERRATE REVISITED

THE COOK COLLECTION IN PORTUGAL

200 YEARS SINCE THE BIRTH OF SIR FRANCIS COOK
PATRON AND ART COLLECTOR – 1817-2017



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Gregorio di Lorenzo, *Virgem e o Menino*, c. 1470

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Parques de Sintra
Monte da Lua

200 ANOS NASCIMENTO 200 ANOS
FRANCIS COOK



Palácio de Monserrate, Music Room,
ceiling detail.
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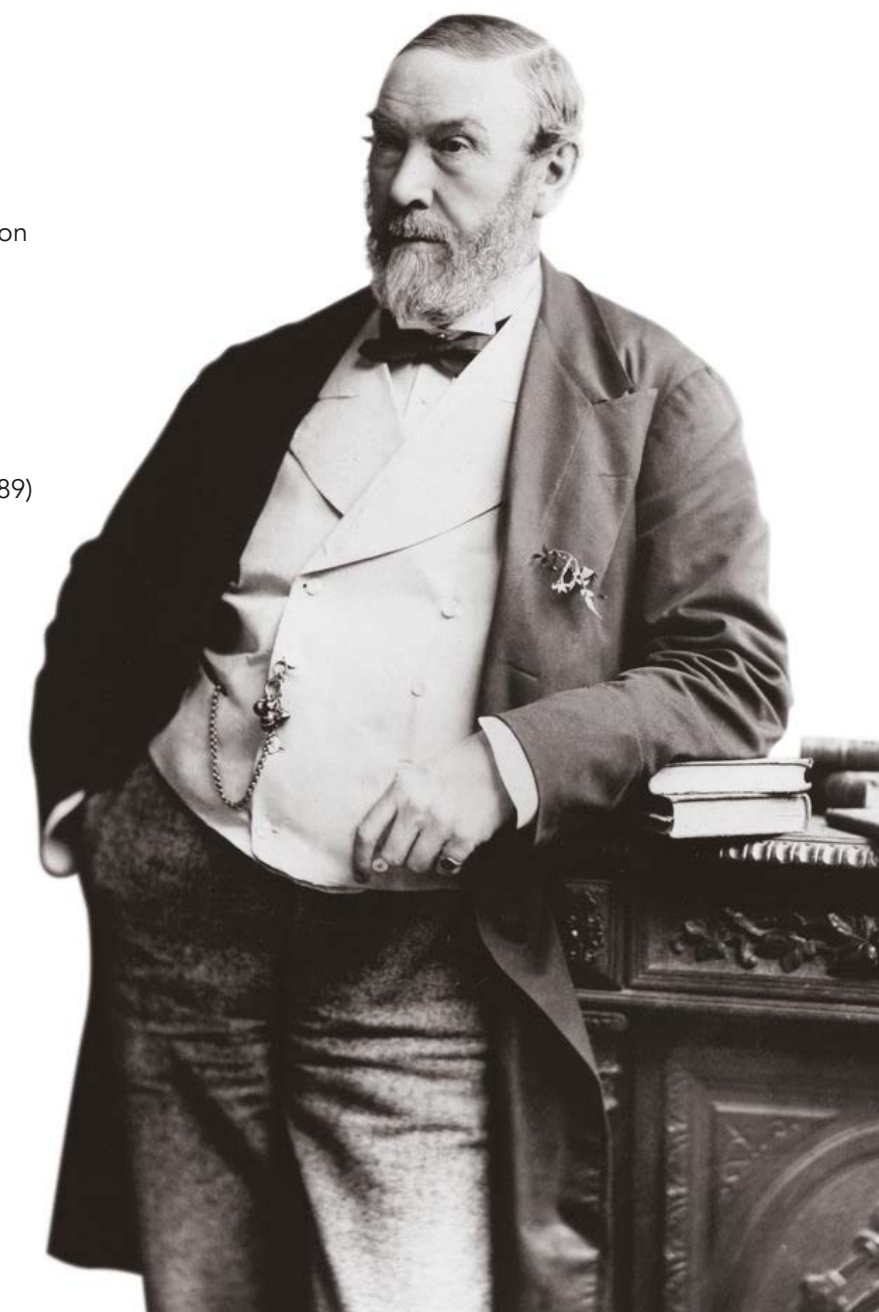
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António Nunes Pereira / Maria João Neto

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© PSML, João Krull, 2017.

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© Robin Briault | National Gallery of Art de Washington.





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© PSML, João Krull, 2017

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Silver Salver, cat. 35, detail.
© PSML, João Krull, 2017

ANTIGUIDADES LEILÃO

Hoje e dias seguintes das 14 às 19 e das 21 às 24 horas

do sumptuoso mobiliário antigo, famosas pinturas do séc. XVI, XVII e XVIII, raras porcelanas orientais das dinastias Ming e Thsing, preciosos jades, interessantes vidros antigos, um conjunto de magníficas esculturas de mármore e bronze, dignas de figurarem em museus, ricas tapeçarias ornamentais do séc. XVII, bordados e tecidos, belos lustres antigos de cristal e vidro de Venesa, bons tapetes persas e todo o recheio que guarnece em Sintra o

PALACIO DE MONSERRATE

Realizando-se o leilão no Palácio de Monserrate em Sintra e tendo este de ser entregue num curto lapso de tempo, somos obrigados a fazer esta sensacional venda, sem um catálogo em que, embora sucintamente se descrevessem algumas das admiráveis e maravilhosas peças que constituem este notável conjunto de arte. No entanto, estamos desde já à disposição dos nossos Ex.^{mos} Amigos e Clientes para lhes prestar todas as informações que desejem e facultar o exame das peças que lhes interessarem e que pelo seu número e qualidade se torna impossível discriminar em anúncio.

LEIRIA & NASCIMENTO, L.^{DA} — Casa Liquidadora

292, 1.º, Esq., Rua do Ouro — Telefone 2 9498

1946. MONSERRATE AT AUCTION

Hugo Xavier

"As the auction is to be held at Monserrate Palace in Sintra and the property is to be handed over in a short period of time, we are obliged to complete this sensational sale without even a succinct catalogue describing a number of the splendid, admirable pieces constituting this noteworthy art collection."

With this caveat, several newspapers announced the hurried sale by public auction in November 1946 of the artistic works collected by Sir Francis Cook (1817-1901) at the emblematic Sintra palace which he purchased and renovated to create a summer residence in the second half of the 19th century. In light of the declining family fortune, a consequence in part of World War I, his descendants had been attempting to sell the property and its contents since 1928, yet this sale did not take place until after World War II, which undermined the finances of the Cook family still further. The divestiture of the movable and immovable property accumulated by his great-grandfather fell to Francis Ferdinand Cook (1907-1978), having unsuccessfully sought its acquisition by the State, aware of its historical and artistic interest for the municipality of Sintra, as claimed by the local authority¹. In the absence of a decision from the government, and faced with the mortgages which had been taken out on the property, Francis Ferdinand eventually closed a deal with a Portuguese man of Hebrew ancestry, Saul de Salazar Moscoso Saragga (1894-1964)², a prominent trader and businessman responsible for the management of around 20 companies in different areas of activity at the time, including the antiques market³. Property investments, often in collaboration with others, represented a large part of his activities as a businessman.⁴

In 1946, the press announced that the sale included the palace and corresponding contents, speculating that a group of capitalists led by Saragga aimed to exploit the property as a luxury hotel development.⁵ In truth, only the purchase of the

Advertisement for the auction of the contents of Monserrate Palace published in the *Diário de Lisboa*, 9 November 1946.

¹ Maria João Neto, *Monserrate: a casa romântica de uma família inglesa* (Casal de Cambra, Caleidoscópio, 2015), 118-119; 122.

² José Maria Abecassis, *Genealogia hebraica: Portugal e Gibraltar sécs. xvii a xx*, vol. III (Lisboa, Gabay - Serfaty, 1991), 676-678.

³ According to a telephone interview with José Manuel Saragga, son of Saul Saragga, 24 August 2017.

⁴ In 1935, with Joaquim Fernandes, Saul Saragga purchased Cruz da Pedra Palace, the former convent of St. Anthony of Convalescence, at 125 Estrada de Benfica. Along with Jorge Soriano and António Maria Cardoso, he also owned Café Portugal, opened in 1938 in Praça D. Pedro IV (Rossio), with a remarkable design by Cristino da Silva. He also developed the residential building at 12-12C Avenida Casal Ribeiro with Fortunato Silva, which was designed by architect Fernando Silva, and awarded the Valmor Prize in 1946.

⁵ "O recheio artístico do Palácio de Monserrate está em leilão". *Diário de Lisboa*, 9 November 1946, 5.

Advertisement for the sale of the property published in *The Times*, 7 November 1929.

Saul Saragga and a relative next to Monserrate Palace, c. 1960. Photo Saragga Family.



⁶ Torre do Tombo National Archives, 2nd Notarial Office of Lisbon, Notary Dr. Mário Rodrigues, book 220 A, deed of 30 June 1947, fol. 9v-13.

⁷ José Alfredo da Costa Azevedo, *Velharias de Sintra*, vol. IV (Sintra: Sintra Municipal Council, 1982), 92-93 and Francisco Costa, *História da Quinta e Palácio de Monserrate* (Sintra: Sintra Municipal Council, 1985), 41.

immovable property would be agreed by means of a down payment, as the deeds were only signed on 30 June 1947, in the name of an individual rather than of a supposed group.⁶ Although the name of Saragga is traditionally linked to the purchase of the contents of the palace and the subsequent decision to auction them⁷, there is a lack of documentary evidence allowing the process to be clearly discerned. It is true, however, that it was deemed necessary to leave the palace empty with a view to selling the property and changing its use, which explains the urgency of the auction.

LEIRIA & NASCIMENTO AND THE ART MARKET IN PORTUGAL

The organisation of the auction was assigned to the Leiria & Nascimento Liquidation House, with the value of the contents previously estimated at 2,850,000\$00, a substantial amount considering the book value of the property, 6,500,000\$00⁸. Founded in 1882 under the name 'Bazar Católico' [Catholic Bazaar], and later coming to be known as 'Casa Liquidadora' [Liquidation House], for decades this company was administered by Maria Guilhermina de Jesus, known in the field as 'D. Guilhermina da Liquidadora' [Mrs. Guilhermina from the Liquidators]. In 1933, it began to be managed by the son, Mário Leiria, who went into partnership with João Filipe da Silva Nascimento (1891-1976), founding Leiria & Nascimento, which soon came to be considered "the largest and most important establishment of its kind in the whole country"⁹.

A prominent figure in the Portuguese art market in the 20th century, João Nascimento began working in a bank, before investing in the auction field, firstly as part of a partnership, and around 1945, as sole owner of Leiria & Nascimento. Nascimento was a shrewd businessman and became an expert in antiques, authoring 'Leitos e Camilhas Portugueses' [Portuguese Beds and Couches] (1950) and collaborating with Augusto Cardoso Pinto on 'Cadeiras Portuguesas' [Portuguese Chairs] (1952), reference works in the field of Portuguese antique furniture.

In an interview he gave in 1969, he recalled that when he arrived at the auction house, "it still had quite a popular feel, and it was I who slowly succeeded in modifying its working systems". At that time in Portugal, auctions were "a rather unprofessional activity, conducted in very different ways to those held abroad". He sought to implement these foreign models, taking particular care over the classification of the items for sale. "I can boast of having organised the majority of the best auctions in the country in recent years", he stated, giving the examples of Monserrate Palace as well as the Burnay (Lisbon) and Barros (Porto) collections, sold in 1936 and 1947 respectively¹⁰.

In the 1930s and 40s, the national art market experienced particular momentum as late 19th century Portuguese collections which had begun to be broken up were joined by individual pieces and collections originating firstly from Spain, following the Civil War, and later from the countries occupied by the Third Reich. Although Portugal acted as a gateway for many artworks whose final destination was the American continent, it is also true that a significant number of deals were negotiated within Portugal, with the contribution of dealers originally from the aforementioned countries who had settled in Portugal¹¹. Leiria & Nascimento was fully involved in this dynamic, organising sales of works arriving from abroad, particularly in the field of antique paintings. "In the times of war we are currently experiencing, public auctions hold the most unexpected surprises, bringing pieces onto the market that even the most ambitious collector could never hope to be able to acquire", wrote the auction house in 1942, in the introduction to one of its catalogues.¹²

⁸ Francisco Costa, *op. cit.*, 41.

⁹ "O comércio na Avenida da Liberdade. Casa Liquidadora. Antigo Bazar Católico. Importante agência de leilões". *Diário de Lisboa*, 9 January 1935, 8

¹⁰ Carlos Plantier, "João Nascimento. 'A maioria dos leilões são autênticas vigarices'". *O Século Ilustrado*, 26 June 1969, 29-31.

¹¹ These include Jacques Kugel, Moyses Milne, Elfride Marques Pereira, Eliezer Kamenesky, Raquel Sabat and Elena Ortega, among others. On this subject, see Ana Mântua, "As aquisições do Dr. Anastácio Gonçalves e o mercado de arte em Portugal de 1925 a 1965". *Museus palácios e mercados de arte* (Lisbon: Scribe, 2014), 70-80.

¹² *Catálogo de valiosas pinturas antigas do século xv ao xix para vender em leilão no dia 21 de Maio de 1942 às 17 horas sob a direcção de Leiria & Nascimento, L.^{da}*, 1.

THE MONSERRATE PALACE COLLECTION

The Monserrate Palace auction was the first large sale to be held in Portugal in the post-war period, taking place in the commercial context outlined above. The large number of pieces to be classified, as well as the short time allowed for the preparation of the auction, made it impossible to produce a catalogue, and the collection thus remains irretrievably undocumented. A photographic session of the palace interiors undertaken by Estúdios Mário Novais on the eve of the auction allows us to reconstruct the event today, and is key to identifying the works which are now spread across public and private collections. Close examination of the images reveals the existence of paper labels affixed to all of the pieces, containing the number of each lot to be auctioned.

When comparing these photographs to those resulting from earlier photographic sessions, particularly by English photographer David Knights-Whittome (1905), we can see not only changes to the decoration with some pieces moved to other locations, but also the absence of others, set aside and perhaps sold by the Cooks, or even by Saul Saragga, as they could not be placed in the auction. This was the case of a bust of Francis Cook which was displayed in the interspace of an indoor staircase, on a marble-topped table which was delicately decorated with Italian mosaic tiling. The bust remains in the possession of the Cook family, while the table belongs to the descendants of Saul Saragga, along with other pieces of the same origin¹³. Another piece sold prior to the auction was a marble plaque from the Italian Renaissance, with a relief depicting the Virgin and Child, considered to be one

¹³ This table is illustrated with a female bust in marble in Luis Miguel Veiga, *Um novo olhar sobre a Quinta de Monserrate (Sintra): o aproveitamento museológico e para outros fins culturais de um conjunto de edifícios e respectiva área envolvente* (Master's dissertation in Museology and Heritage, FCSH-UNL, 1999), 33, figs. 58 & 59.

Mário Novais, photographer, main staircase, 'Indian Room' and detail of auction label.
© Estúdio Mário Novais, BAFCG.



of the most relevant pieces in the Monserrate art collection (cat. 1). Attributed to the Florentine sculptor Gregorio di Lorenzo, this piece was classified as an item of national interest by the State¹⁴, and was recently acquired by Parques de Sintra – Monte da Lua, S. A.

With negligible numbers of acquisitions made by the descendants of Francis Cook, the collection to be auctioned was essentially the result of the collector's choices, revealing an eclectic taste tailored to the building, which featured a set of furniture in which Portuguese and Indo-Portuguese pieces stood alongside English, Anglo-Indian, Italian, French and Chinese items. Not all of these possessed the status of 'collector's item', due to the utilitarian, functional nature of some of the 19th century furniture, contributing to the domestic comfort of a summer residence. Nonetheless, the bulk of Francis Cook's art collections was kept in his Richmond residence on the outskirts of London, where he had a gallery built to exhibit the most prestigious pieces, particularly the pinacotheca considered to be one of the most representative to be held privately in England.¹⁵

He reserved a rather limited selection of paintings for Monserrate, the most notable of which were the altarpieces which decorated the dining room, particularly the set of statues featuring remarkable wooden, marble and alabaster reliefs. The close relationship between the collector and John Charles Robinson, author of a catalogue of the Italian sculpture collection at South Kensington Museum in London (the current Victoria & Albert Museum) who assisted in gathering works as superintendent of this museum, may explain the presence of some of these pieces in the collection.

¹⁴ Notice no. 53/2015, *Diário da República*, 2nd series, no. 61, 27 March 2015.

¹⁵ With regard to Sir Francis Cook's painting collection, see the text by John Somerville in this catalogue.



David Knights-Whittome, photographer, entrance hall (detail) with the bust of Sir Francis Cook, 1905.
© PSML.

Another noteworthy element was the set of ceramics, diverse in nature but containing two particularly significant groups: the Greek vases which, alongside other antiques in the collection, drew the attention of the German archaeologist Wilhelm Gurlitt in the 19th century¹⁶; and the Chinese porcelain pieces, which were either imported or created in the Chinese style. The collection to be put up for public auction was completed by a range of textiles, including European tapestries, Oriental rugs, and embroidered coverlets and wall coverings, as well as silverware, ancient weaponry, glassware and various exquisitely executed *objets d'art*.

Excluded from the auction, and sold en bloc separately, the library contained "4,500 rare, very rare and extremely rare books", including "the best collection of books on Classical Antiquity existing in Portugal"¹⁷. Thus read the advertisement published by the *Diário de Notícias* in December 1946, which also notes the presence of specimens of Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, Italian and German literature from the 15th to the 19th centuries, representing a total value of 200,000\$00. This collection was purchased by Alberto Nascimento, owner of the Livraria Barateira in Chiado, along with 129 architectural drawings of the palace which he attempted to sell to the State in 1950, without success¹⁸. In the end, the books were sold individually or in small lots, as were the drawings, and their current location is unknown.

THE AUCTION BUYERS

According to the advertisements published in the press, the auction was scheduled for Saturday 9 November "and the days to follow", from 2pm to 7pm and from 9pm to midnight, in what would have been a real marathon to present all of the lots. The *Diário de Lisboa* followed the event closely, reporting that it began at 3pm, although "numerous people, primarily those linked to the antiques trade" had arrived far earlier. It added that the auction had attracted "a large number of interested persons who had been admiring the pieces to be auctioned in the preceding days", including various private individuals, the most notable of whom was Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva (1900-1955).

The well-known banker and businessman had demonstrated an interest in antiques since his adolescence, particularly in the field of the so-called "decorative arts", and had become one of the most newsworthy collectors of the era. Less well-known, yet well-documented, was his commercial interest in this area, with his activities going beyond the mere common exchanges between collectors and market agents and extending to the funding of Portuguese and foreign antique dealers, establishment of partnerships for the purchase and sale of collections or individual pieces, and promotion of the appreciation of certain works which he compulsively collected, such as those of the painter Jean Pillement.¹⁹

¹⁶ Wilhelm Gurlitt, "Sammlung des Hrn. F. Cook zu Montserrat bei Cintra (Lissabon)" in *Archäologische Zeitung*, 1868, 86.

¹⁷ *Diário de Notícias*, 12 December 1946, 3.

¹⁸ Maria João Neto, *Monserrate: a casa romântica de uma família inglesa* (Casal de Cambra, Caleidoscópio, 2015), 123.

¹⁹ Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva's archive was stored at the History Centre of the Banco Espírito Santo, and contained various documents related to his commercial activity, which were consulted by the author in 2014.



In 1946, Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva was already planning to create a foundation intended to preserve and exhibit the works of Portuguese origin or related to Portugal which he had collected, maintaining in his possession the international core of his collection, which was rich in 18th century French art. The project began to be implemented the following year with the acquisition of Azurara Palace, located at Largo das Portas do Sol in Lisbon, where the Museum of Portuguese Decorative Arts opened in 1953, following restoration and adaptation works. A number of works from Monserrate were displayed at the Museum, in decorative environments designed by the owner himself, as was the case of several pieces of silverware and the large Indo-Portuguese table which continues to be exhibited in the Great Hall of the building today (cat. 23).

A great appreciator of Chinese porcelain created in the European style, owner of a large collection and author of studies in this field²⁰, he purchased a bowl and pair of bottle coolers decorated with the Orleans arms at the auction. These pieces could be found on the stove in the dining room at Monserrate from the 19th century onwards. Remaining in the possession of the collector's family and not forming part of the foundation's assets, they may be identified in old photographs of one of the family residences: Sobralinho Palace in Vila Franca de Xira.

Among those attending the auction, with the exception of the contingent of museum directors which we will discuss below, the *Diário de Lisboa* mentions the name "Dr. Costa Gomes", director of the Banco de Portugal, although it has not been possible to determine whether or not he made significant purchases. The Leiria & Nascimento which reappeared in 2011 under the name World Legend, but which closed down shortly after, did not preserve its old invoicing documents, making it very difficult to identify the buyers and the subsequent circulation of the works. Research undertaken by Maria João Neto has nonetheless revealed some names and the current location of some pieces, such as the large chandelier from the music room and the two Italian chests (*cassoni*) from the billiard room, purchased by Mário Baptista Coelho for a manor house on the outskirts of Braga, known as Paço de Palmeira, where they can still be found today.²¹

Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva with President Craveiro Lopes and Cardinal Cerejeira at the inauguration of the Museum of Portuguese Decorative Arts, 1953. On the right, a detail of the Indo-Portuguese table from Monserrate. © FRESS.

photographer, dining room (detail) with the pair of bottle coolers and Chinese porcelain bowl purchased by Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva. © Estúdio Mário Novais, BAFCG.

Chest (*cassoni*), carved wood, Italy, 16th century (?) in Paço de Palmeira (ed. Banco Português do Atlântico, 1983).

²⁰ Maria da Conceição Amaral e Hugo Xavier, "Sinais da China na coleção do Museu de Artes Decorativas Portuguesas", *Património Cultural Chinês em Portugal*, ed. Vítor Serrão and Luís Filipe Barreto (Lisbon: Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre, 2015), 157-163.

²¹ Maria João Neto, *Monserrate: a casa romântica de uma família inglesa* (Casal de Cambra, Caleidoscópio, 2015), 125.



António de Medeiros e Almeida at the wheel of a Morris Cowley, c. 1926. Medeiros e Almeida Foundation.

Invoice for the items purchased by António de Medeiros e Almeida at the 10 November 1946 session of the Monserrate auction. Archive of the Medeiros e Almeida Foundation.

CASA FUNDADA EM 1882		TELEFONE: 29498
CASA LIQUIDADORA		
ANTIGO BAZAR CATÓLICO		
LEIRIA & NASCIMENTO, L. ^{DA}		
AGÊNCIA DE LEILÕES		
Rua do Ouro, 292. 1. ^o Esq.		
11 de Novembro de 1946		
Sr. De Medeiros e Almeida		
559	Peças de bronze "Calvário", marcenaria (pedra)	115.777,77
491	Guardancho de madeira guardado de madeira	9.777,77
216	Quinta de bronze "Palácio episcopal de	
	Mansoura de	26.777,77
203	2 Jangos de bronze "Cavalos"	19.777,77
229	Sepulcro episcopal 4,50 x 3,50	28.777,77
497	4 Decoreiras de madeira "Sprockels"	36.777,77
477	Urna de água benta	4.777,77
658	Decorativos officina e esculpturas	70.777,77
659	Escultura frontal de pedra: Cristo, com dois copos	31.777,77
	pedra, pedras, pedras, pedras, pedras, etc.	4.777,77
		116
		272.107,77

Another of the auction buyers was António de Medeiros e Almeida (1895-1986), one of the most successful businessmen of the era in relation to the importation of cars and the launch of commercial aviation in Portugal, among other business ventures. He began to acquire antiques and artworks in the mid-1930s, primarily in order to furnish his first residence, and he moved to a large house in Rua Mouzinho da Silveira in 1946, at a time when his companies had reached "cruising speed" and were generating considerable profits²². At the end of the 1960s, his vocation as a collector firmly entrenched, he decided to create a house museum managed by a foundation bearing his name, created in 1972 and opened to the public posthumously in 2001.

The Medeiros e Almeida Foundation archive contains the invoices from Leiria & Nascimento linked to the purchases made by the collector at that time, with a total of 19 lots corresponding to around 50 pieces, for which he paid 577,610\$00. Among these were the partners desk and the array of arms from Monserrate library, as well as porcelains, silverware, bronzes, Oriental rugs, a large still life and four marble sculptures which were placed in niches in his new residence. But the main purchase made by António de Medeiros e Almeida was an alabaster retable which featured a relief depicting two scenes from the Passion of Christ (Calvary, Resurrection and Ascension), a 16th century piece considered to be one of the highlights of the auction, which was sold for 170,500\$00 including commission (cat. 2). Several months later, following a request from the government, he ceded the relief for the same price to the National Museum of Ancient Art, as part of a process which is relevant to examine here.

²² Maria de Ornelas Bruges de Lima Mayer, *Casa-Museu Medeiros e Almeida: o projeto de um homem. Da coleção privada a acervo público* (Master's dissertation in Museology, FCSH-UNL, 2016), 22.

THE RETABLE OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST

The significance of the Monserrate auction warranted the presence of the directors of some of the main museums in the country, which did not go unnoticed by the *Diário de Lisboa*, which reported attendance by João Couto from the National Museum of Ancient Art, Diogo de Macedo from the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Luís Keil from the National Coach Museum, Vasco Valente from the Soares dos Reis National Museum, and Mário Chicó from the Évora Regional Museum²³. These major figures in the world of museology and art history of the era were responsible for many of the decision-making processes regarding the purchases made by the State for the national museums and palaces. However, only one museum institution would take action to incorporate the aforementioned piece into its collections.

In a letter dated November 12, 1946 and addressed to the General Director for Higher Education and Fine Arts, the curator of the National Museum of Ancient Art, Augusto Cardoso Pinto, in the absence of its director, drew attention to a relief, considered to be an "exquisite work from the Italian Renaissance" (it was later revealed to be from northern Europe), which the museum was interested in purchasing "as its sculpture collection is poor and lacking in works representing foreign schools". The relief had recently been acquired at the auction "by a private individual", and the museum took "the initiative to exercise its right of preference"²⁴. This measure was provided for by Decree-Law no. 20.985 of 7 May 1932, in the section relating to the custody and protection of artworks and archaeological items, stipulating that "where the divestiture is carried out by public auction, the State may exercise its right of preference, provided that it does so within forty eight hours of the date of sale" (only § of Art. 7).

Two copies of this letter were sent to the General Director of the Exchequer on the same day, to be considered by the Minister of Finance, who gave the following opinion: "The piece in question is, according to the experts, exquisite, and the quantity for which it is sold cannot be considered excessive – quite the contrary. It is worthy of exhibition in our Museum of Ancient Art"²⁵. The Minister thus charged the General Director with writing to the owner to inform him of the museum's claim, which did not happen until December 21st of the same year²⁶. In his response, Medeiros e Almeida opposed the transfer of the piece, alleging that the legal provision invoked "allows the State to exercise, where relevant and within a 48 hour period, the right to preference to which it refers, but not to reserve it to later be considered by the supreme authority"²⁷.

The Minister of Finance, based on an opinion on the matter by the General Director, acknowledged in a ruling that "the fact that the payment could not be made within the legal deadline appears sufficient to invalidate the option" and decided to work

²³ "O recheio artístico do Palácio de Monserrate está em leilão". *Diário de Lisboa*, 9 November 1946, 5.

²⁴ Contemporary Archive of the Ministry of Finance, box 007, letter of 12 November 1946. I would like to thank Professor Maria João Neto for providing the documents contained within this archive.

²⁵ *Idem*, letter dated 12 November 1946.

²⁶ Archive of the Medeiros e Almeida Foundation, letter dated 21 December 1946.

²⁷ Contemporary Archive of the Ministry of Finance, box 007, letter dated 24 December 1946.

UMA PEÇA PRECIOSA PARA O MUSEU DE ARTE ANTIGA



O sr. António de Medeiros e Almeida adquiriu, no leilão do palácio de Monserrate, um baixo relevo de mármore, com assunto religioso, e que é um primoroso trabalho do Renascimento Italiano. Como se trata de uma peça de arte de alto interesse para o Museu de Arte Antiga, que não pôde exercer o direito de opção, o comprador resolveu cedê-la pelo preço do custo. Deste modo, o precioso espécime vai ingressar nas coleções do Museu de Arte Antiga, tendo a resolução do sr. Medeiros e Almeida tencido do sr. ministro das Finanças, palavras do mais alto apreço.

News story on the incorporation of the retablo of the Passion of Christ at the National Museum of Ancient Art. *O Século Ilustrado*, 12 April 1947.

²⁸ Archive of the Medeiros e Almeida Foundation, letter dated 07 March 1947.

²⁹ Contemporary Archive of the Ministry of Finance, box 007, letter dated 12 March 1947.

³⁰ “Uma peça preciosa para o Museu de Arte Antiga”. *O Século Ilustrado*, year I, no. 484, 12 April 1947.

³¹ Contemporary Archive of the Ministry of Finance, box 007, letter of 21 April 1947.

³² *Idem*, letter dated 25 April 1947.

³³ Giulia Rossi Vairo, “Crónica de um evento mundano: o leilão Burnay” *Henri Burnay: de banqueiro a colecionador* (Lisbon: IPM, 2003), 69.

³⁴ João Magalhães, “O leilão da coleção Barros”. Sep. journal *Museu*, IV series, no. 14 (Porto: Círculo Dr. José de Figueiredo, 2005), 171.

with the collector with the aim “of obtaining the sale of the object in question amicably, in conditions equivalent to the option which it is hoped may be agreed, given that the State has allocated the work to a museum”²⁸. Contacted again at the beginning of March 1947, Medeiros e Almeida expressed his satisfaction that his rights to the item had been acknowledged, communicating his concession of the piece for the cost price in name of the national interest, “despite the sacrifice which this represents for me”. However, he noted that, due to circumstances beyond his control, “the version that I abusively and unduly held onto the item which I had legitimately purchased has been publicised”, requesting that the conditions of the concession should be publicly clarified²⁹. Following a press release, in April 1947 *O Século Ilustrado* published news of the incorporation of the relief by the National Museum of Ancient Art, considering the collector’s gesture “worthy of the utmost appreciation from the Minister of Finance”³⁰.

Apparently unaware of the higher authorities’ failure to comply with the legal deadlines, the museum director, João Couto, protested the news in his capacity as a member of the National Education Board, stating that “the concession of the artwork to the State by the winning bidder was the result of the exercise of the legal provisions in force and not of an act of generosity”³¹. In a letter addressed to the General Director for Higher Education and Fine Arts, fearing that the right of preference would be challenged in the future, he even proposed the denial of the news, which was not followed up³². The bureaucratisation of payment processes by the State, rendering the operations of the treasury cumbersome, is what was actually at issue, compromising the use of the law.

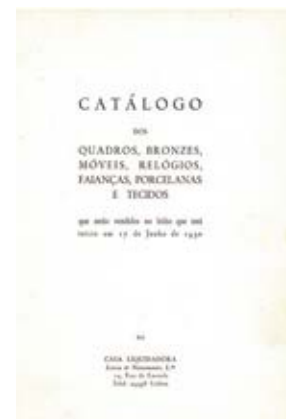
INCORPORATION AND DISPERSAL

Besides the complications surrounding the incorporation of the Monserrate relief into the collections of the National Museum of Ancient Art, it is also important to attempt to understand the reasons for this rather surgical approach to the auction, with the choice of a single piece among a number of other items of interest available in the collection. Other large public sales in the era saw significant purchases by the State, such as that of the Burnay collection in 1936, at which several dozen artworks intended for national museums and palaces were purchased for a sum of 2,165,000\$00³³, and the Barros collection, sold less than a year after the Monserrate auction, for which an expenditure of 1,000,000\$00 was authorised³⁴. Due to the lengthy period of time which was required to organise both sales, the museum representatives had sufficient time to undertake prior assessments and to draw up reports and lists of selected pieces, submitted firstly for consideration by the authorities, and later authorised by the Ministry of Finance. The urgency of the Monserrate auction, allowing the museum directors and curators to observe the

collection only during the short time in which the lots were displayed, hindered the development of a similar process.

Besides the retablo of the Passion of Christ, the National Museum of Ancient Art incorporated other pieces of the same origin over the years, by means of donations, deposits and purchases, as was the case of a small 15th century relief depicting Saint Catherine, most likely withdrawn from the 1946 auction due to a lack of buyers (cat. 3)³⁵. It was acquired at the same auction house in 1947, expanding the significant set of English medieval alabasters in the museum’s collection. Indeed, some of the pieces withdrawn or purchased by dealers to be resold appeared in other auctions held by Leiria & Nascimento, such as the large 16th century board depicting the Baptism of Christ which was attributed to Italian Andrea Sabatini, and which reappeared at the June 1950 sale. Its current whereabouts are unknown.³⁶

The dispersal of the works followed curious paths. The S. João de Brito School in Lisbon continues to hold the image of Saint Anthony which belonged to another distinguished resident of Monserrate, William Beckford, a devotee of the Portuguese miracle worker, and which Francis Cook purchased at an auction in London, placing it in his residence in Sintra (cat. 4). It was bequeathed to this educational establishment by the father of one of the pupils, who is likely to have purchased it at the 1946 sale³⁷. A Greek terracotta vase featuring the image of Achilles formed part of the large collection of Manuel Vinhas, a patron of the arts and businessman in the drinks sector, which may have been acquired on the Lisbon art market and not at the auction (cat. 43). This piece was studied and made public in 1959 by Maria Helena da Rocha Pereira, who publicised three other Greek vases from the Cook collection shortly after, which at that time belonged to the manager of the Fábrica de Loça de Sacavém, Leland H. Gilbert³⁸. In the 1970s, they were sold to the decorator and art dealer Joachim Mitnitzky, whose commercial premises were located in Chiado, and their current location is unknown.



³⁵ I am grateful to Anísio Franco and Maria João Vilhena Carvalho for identifying the pieces in the possession of the National Museum of Ancient Art.

³⁶ Lot 28 of the *Catálogo dos quadros, bronzes, móveis, relógios, faianças, porcelanas e tecidos que serão vendidos em leilão que terá início em 17 de Junho de 1950 na Casa Liquidadora Leiria & Nascimento, L.da.*, 10.

³⁷ According to José Alfredo da Costa Azevedo, the donor was Mário Ferreira da Conceição Silva, whose name he obtained upon writing to the school. José Alfredo da Costa Azevedo, *Velharias de Sintra*, vol. IV (Sintra: Sintra Municipal Council, 1982), 91. Maria Laura Bettencourt Pires notes that she also contacted the school, finding that the image was “donated by the father of the pupil Pedro Miguel de Quintela Emaz e Silva” who had “purchased it for 30,000 escudos in 1952, at an auction in Sintra”. Maria Laura Bettencourt Pires, *William Beckford e Portugal: uma visão diferente do homem e do escritor* (Lisbon: ed. 70, 1987), 219.

³⁸ Mara Helena da Rocha Pereira, “Notícia acerca de vasos gregos existentes em Portugal – II Parte”. *Humanitas* 11-12 (1959), 11-31 and “Notícia sobre Vasos Gregos existentes em Portugal – III Parte”. *Conimbriga* 1 (1959), 97-108.

Andrea Sabatini (attrib.), *Baptism of Christ*. In *Catálogo do leilão de 17 de junho de 1950*, Leiria & Nascimento.

Greek vases (Nolan amphoras and column kraters) from the Cook collection, published by M. H. da Rocha Pereira in 1959.

Returning to the acquisitions made by the National Museum of Ancient Art, we may highlight the large Islamic-style vase produced in southern Spain between the end of the 15th century and the 16th century, displaying similar characteristics to others discovered in Granada (cat. 46). It entered the museum as a deposit in 1956, made by Hagop Kevorkian, a respected archaeologist and collector of Armenian origin residing in New York, although the circumstances in which he acquired it are not known. Another ceramic item worthy of emphasis is the Chinese porcelain bottle which formed part of collector Francisco de Barros e Sá's legacy to the museum in 1981. This piece is characterised by a Chinese style which is different to that of the numerous imported porcelains found in Portuguese collections (cat. 37).

As noted in the overall description of the collection to be auctioned, it contained a significant number of pieces of this type, identifiable from photos dating back to the era and which, having been passed on to other owners, eventually

Aquariums, Chinese porcelain,
Qianlong empire (1736-1795).
© Cabral Moncada Leilões.

Mário Novais, photographer,
dining room (detail).
© Estúdio Mário Novais, BAFCG.



emerged onto the national art market, causing quite a sensation. This was the case of two aquariums with Doucai polychrome decoration, traded in November 2016 at Cabral Moncada Auctions which, tracking the Monserrate origin indicated by the sellers, published a 1946 image in its catalogue of the dining room at the palace where both items were placed³⁹. The jug sold in July 2017 at Correio Velho Palace underwent a similar process⁴⁰, coinciding fully with the image shown in a photograph of the billiard room, and featuring the same type of decoration as the aforementioned bottle displayed at the National Museum of Ancient Art. The greater appreciation for this type of artwork internationally, which has been driven in part by the purchasing power of Chinese buyers, is reflected in the prices attained, with new sales records set at both auction houses⁴¹. These are the most recent episodes in the dispersal of the Monserrate collection whose history we have attempted to relate, confirming the quality of the acquisitions made by Sir Francis Cook for his Sintra palace.

³⁹ Lots 425 and 426 of the auction *Antiguidades e obras de arte* [Antiques and artworks] held on 26 and 27 September 2016. (Lisbon: Scribe, 2016), 194-199.

⁴⁰ Lot 55 of the *Leilão de Antiguidades, arte moderna e contemporânea* [Auction of antiques, and modern and contemporary art] held on 12 and 13 July 2017 (Lisbon: Correio Velho Palace, 2017), 46-47.

⁴¹ The aquariums were sold for €640,000 (marked model) and €250,000 (non-marked model) respectively, while the jug attained €470,000. The auction house commission was added to these prices.

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David Knights-Whittome, photographer, Monserrate Palace, billiard room (detail), 1905.
© PSML;

Jug, Chinese porcelain, Qianlong empire (1736-1795).
© Correio Velho Palace.

