

Letters to José Sidrim: graphy of affects in the Eclectic Belém

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes unpublished letters that communicate interests, feelings, and experiences arising from the relationship of architect José Sidrim (1881-1969) with notable characters from Belém, who hired him to design and build their residencies. In a pioneering way, the paper also transcribes important narratives for the social history of art and architectural historiography through three examples, including letters written by Guilherme Paiva (1926), Orlando Lima (1926) and Benedicto Passarinho (1927) and sent to Sidrim at the completion of the works. Based on the written culture and correspondence habits of the time, this paper aims to collect and analyze information related to the architectural practice, considering its social field, the profile of the architect, and the construction of an affective memory between the house owner, the architect, and the building itself. For this purpose, it investigates how these letters report experiences and rituals of the architectural practice in a period of artistic and political innovation, reflecting the economic panorama experienced by the city of Belém during this period. Beyond mere social products, the letters, as declarations, effective epistles, report

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the powerful impact of an architectural work in social memory and imaginary. From this writing of affects, this work aims to rebuild the image and ideology of a fragment of the nostalgic, modern, and idyllic Belém, as well as of its visual narrative and affective memory, based on the philosophical concepts postulated by Roland Barthes and Gilles Deleuze.

KEYWORDS: José Sidrim. Belém. Eclectic architecture. Letters. Affect. Letter transcription.

RESUMO: Este trabalho analisa cartas inéditas que comunicam interesses, sentimentos e experiências estabelecidas através do relacionamento do arquiteto José Sidrim (1881-1969) com nobres personalidades da cidade de Belém que o contrataram para projetar e construir suas residências. Transcreve, também ineditamente, os relatos importantes para a pesquisa historiográfica da arquitetura e da história social da arte formado por três exemplares: carta de Guilherme Paiva (1926), de Orlando Lima (1926) e de Benedicto Passarinho (1927), escritas e enviadas a Sidrim ao término das obras. Através da compreensão da cultura escrita e das práticas de correspondências da época, este trabalho objetiva coletar e analisar informações relativas ao exercício da arquitetura, considerando seu âmbito social, as características do ofício de arquiteto em sua época e a construção de uma memória afetiva entre o proprietário da casa, o arquiteto e a edificação. Investiga-se como os relatos destas cartas narram as vivências e rituais do modo de fazer arquitetura em um momento de inovação artística e política, reflexo direto do panorama econômico pelo qual a cidade então passava. As cartas provam-se relatos da dimensão dos impactos que a obra arquitetônica pode causar na memória e no imaginário social como declarações, epístolas afetivas, além de como produtos sociais. Conseqüentemente, a partir do manejo de conceitos de Roland Barthes e Gilles Deleuze, objetiva-se a reconstituição ideológica e imagética de um fragmento tanto da Belém nostálgica, moderna, de caráter idílico como de sua narrativa visual e de sua memória afetiva a partir de tal grafia dos afetos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: José Sidrim. Belém. Arquitetura eclética. Cartas. Afeto. Transcrição epistolar.

INTRODUCTION

Letters were used as a characteristic mean of communication among members of the elite in the early 20th century. The letters analyzed in this work communicate interests, feelings and experiences established through the relationship of architect José Sidrim (1881- 1969) with noble personalities from Belém who hired him to design and build their homes. Three letters were used as a documentary tool for the historiographical research of architecture and social history. The sample of letters addressed to the then exponent of Eclectic architecture in the city consists of a letter from Guilherme Paiva (1926), one from Orlando Lima (1926) and one from Benedicto Passarinho (1927), written and sent to Sidrim at the end of the works.

The architect was responsible for transforming the three palaces, here represented and analyzed through his respective letters, into symbols of modernity linked to Eclecticism. Over the years, the buildings became marks in the history of the city of Belém. Aware and eager for the ideal of modernity brought about by the architect's design, the authors of the letters expressed not only their gratitude for the completed work, an essential service for which they hired the architect, but also the satisfaction of establishing a social relationship with him.

The letters demonstrate the affection and esteem of the senders caused by the architectural work. Sometimes expressing concern with the economic and structural aspect of the work, other times, pointing out the magnitude of the building and work of José Sidrim. They allow us to reflect on the history of the architect's social position in Belém and the influence of his work on society. Through the understanding of the written culture and correspondence practices of the time, this work aims to collect and analyze information related to the practice of architecture, considering its social scope, the characteristics of the architect's profession in his/her time and the construction of an affective memory between the house owner, the architect and the building.

This paper investigates how these letters report experiences and rituals of the architectural practice in a period of innovation, reflecting the economic panorama experienced by the city of Belém during this period. Beyond mere social products, the letters, as declarations, effective epistles, report the powerful impact of an architectural work in social memory and imaginary. Consequently, this work aims to rebuild the image and ideology of a fragment of the nostalgic, modern, and idyllic Belém, as well as of its visual narrative and affective memory, from a writing of affects.

A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE ARCHITECT-ENGINEER

The hiring of architect José Sidrim for the development of the design and execution of the palaces covered in this paper is directly related to the prominent role played during his professional trajectory in the capital of the state of Pará. Sidrim was an architect and surveyor, responsible for the construction of some of the most prominent buildings in the 1920s in Belém.

Born in 1881, in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará, he moved to Belém at the age of 19, in search of a new perspective on life. Since the end of the 19th century, the city of Belém attracted numerous immigrants. It aroused the desire for a better life due to the results of the successful exploration and commercialization of rubber, placing the city in the spotlight on the national and international scene. When he arrived in Pará, the eldest son of the Sidrim family had only a Drawing course.³



Figure 1 – The Architect José Sidrim. Source: Matos (2017, cover).

After his arrival in Belém, Sidrim's professional trajectory was marked by his admission to the Municipality, a body that enabled him to establish important professional and personal connections. He began his work in 1903, but the first official records of his work at the body are from 1904, published in the Municipal Reports of the Administration of Antônio Lemos as Designer of the Works Section, also present in the reports of 1905, 1906, 1907 and 1908.⁴

It is worth noting that, in this period, working in the municipal administration allowed him to be in constant contact with what was most "modern" in technical and architectural production on a national and international scale. After occupying the position of Designer, José Sidrim took the position of Surveyor, when he joined the group that carried out the urbanization project for the neighborhood of Pedreira. Sidrim was responsible for surveying the entire length of the work and demarcating the street layout, in which he used an orthogonal grid, in line with the urban trend of the time.⁵

Another prominent factor in his life was his academic training, it was a distance education, primarily as an architect, through a correspondence course in architecture through the Italian consulate, probably from the University of Turin.⁶ In April 1924, Sidrim consolidates his studies with a second training, also through distance education, as an architect engineer by the Free School of Engineering of Rio de Janeiro.⁷

In addition to his distance academic training, first at an Italian institution and later at another in Rio de Janeiro, the library built by José Sidrim during these years deserves to be highlighted in the development of his technical training and as a reference framework for his own design compositions. Most of the collection is of European origin and demonstrates his alignment with the continent's architectural production. Without ever having left the country or even visited the then capital of Brazil, the architect knew the world through his books. Most of the works were gifts from friends or subscriptions to magazines and almanacs. As pointed out by Ana Léa Nassar Matos, many of the themes present in his collection demonstrate not only eclecticism as a style still in vogue in the second decade of the 20th century, but also the first discussions on the modern movement, such as the *Almanach d'Architecture Moderne: Collection de L'Esprit Nouveau*, by the architect Le Corbusier:

4. Ibid. (p. 45).

5. Gonsales (2005).

6. Matos (2017, p. 144). The city that hosts the institution in which the architect would have completed his training in architecture is still an assumption, supported by valid arguments. There is no concrete evidence to guarantee certainty about the city of Turin; it is possible that the training by correspondence was carried out in an institution in Genoa, as pointed out by Ana Léa Nassar Matos.

7. Ibid. (p. 149).

8. Ibid. (p. 158, our translation).

9. *O Paiz* (1925, p. 8, our translation), which reproduces excerpts from news published in the newspaper *Estado do Pará*.

10. Interview conducted by the authors by telephone with the architect's great-granddaughter, prof. dr. Ana Léa Nassar Matos, on May 17, 2019.

11. Matos (2017, p. 64).

From some books in the José Sidrim library, it was possible to identify some sources. For example, those dedicated by João Palma Muniz (1873 – 1927): *Nouvelles Annales de la Construction* (dedication: "To my compadre and friend J.L. Sidrim. 1926"); – three volumes of the *Encyclopédie du Siècle: L'Exposition de Paris de 1900* (dedication: "To the architect and engineer friend J. Sidrim. Souvenir of [incomprehensible for reading]. Palma Muniz"); and *Decoration in Civil Construction* (dedication: "To the architect and engineer J. Sidrim. And two other publications identified by the stamp of "Civil Engineer Joaquim Lator": the *Illustrated Catalogue of Macfarlane's Castings* and the fourth volume of *Nouvelles Annales de La Construction*.⁸

Despite the short period dedicated exclusively to the production of residences, the palaces are the works of greatest prominence and recognition by José Sidrim, either for the aesthetic and technical character of the design or for the role of transformation in the identity of the noble neighborhoods of Belém. The importance of the architect can be seen in the following news from the newspaper *O Paiz*, of Rio de Janeiro:

The "State of Pará" under the epigraph "Modernization of the city" publishes an interesting statistics of the buildings under construction, by architect José Sidrim.

In its beginning, it explains that during the current year there is a feverish and unusual activity of remodeling the city's urban perimeter, whose buildings in modern style, place Belém at the level of the advanced capitals.⁹

In 1931, José Sidrim decides to abandon civil construction due to problems with the specialized workforce, according to reports from his family.¹⁰ Other factors were also responsible for the architect leaving the market, such as the difficulty in meeting the initial budget for the works and the complicated logistics for importing materials, such as cement from England. It is important to mention that, during this period, Belém was already experiencing the negative impacts of the decline of the rubber-based economy. During the following years, until his death, he dedicated himself to living on his farm in Benfica, where he opened a pottery.¹¹

THE LETTERS: CHARACTERS, HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OBJECT AND TRANSCRIPTION

In this work, three letters written by clients who own homes built by the architect José Sidrim (1881-1969) are analyzed, considering their social and

affective reverberations. These letters were chosen as a historiographic and documental source due to the transdisciplinary perspective of their approach. From a phenomenological, literary and autobiographical point of view, it is possible to analyze symbols, nuances, images, imaginaries and affects. In the letters, there is strong subjectivity and literality that are important for the interpretation of affective social relations and the manipulation of images and words through affection.

Using letters as a historiographical object, together with the methodological concepts chosen in this work, enables a plural analysis of the fact. This makes it possible to escape from the hermeticism of other documentary sources interpreted as a fact, which allows "to rescue credible possibilities that express how people acted, thought, what they feared, what they wanted".¹² That is, "the facts narrated are not presented as facts that have happened, but as possibilities, as attitudes of behavior and sensitivity, endowed with credibility and significance".¹³

The three letters analyzed, addressed to José Sidrim, sent by Orlando Lima (1926), Guilherme Paiva (1926) and Benedicto Passarinho (1927), are from the collection of architect and historian Ana Léa Matos Nassar, author of the doctoral thesis in History entitled "José Sidrim (1881-1969): a chapter in the biography of Belém",¹⁴ the most important historiographical work on the life and work of the architect. The letters were published in her thesis, but the transcriptions and analysis according to the perspective proposed in this work are unpublished.

The authors of the letters, then owners of the houses built by Sidrim, were members of the city's intellectual and social elite at the time. The letters probably wouldn't have been written in a different social context.¹⁵ The choice of Sidrim as the architect who would design and build their houses and their deed – as a device of social protocol – reiterates the role that the owners had in society. We adopted the personal letters analyzed as "autobiographical artifacts":¹⁶

Artifacts, as they are intentionally produced from a certain communicative performativity. That is, they are written to selectively communicate information, feelings and forms of social treatment, being this selection consciously or unconsciously made. These are productions that act as social devices, showing mainly, in this case, not only the friendship relations between the senders and the recipient, but also the hierarchical, influence and power dynamics that the contracting-authors and the hired architect played in the elite society of Belém at the beginning of the 20th century.

Autobiographical, because they expose, when selecting their textual compositional tools, relevant characteristics of the author and his context, his affects, his temperament, his social position, his intellect, his erudition, his ethical and

12. Martins (2011, p. 68, our translation).

13. Ibid., loc. cit. (our translation).

14. Matos (2017).

15. As highlighted by Gómez and Sáez (2016, p. 185): "In summary, the social history of writing comes to us through a bifocal lens, which has on one of its faces the use of writing as an instrument of power and on the other the marks of private access to the ability to write by the popular classes".

16. Lima (2010, p. 213).

17. Nunes (2019).
18. Deleuze (1989, p. 161).
19. Deleuze and Guattari (1992, p. 227-228).
20. Barthes (2001).
21. Ibid., p. 165.

political positions, etc.¹⁷ The letters also show the way of looking at and interpreting the works from the client's point of view. It is observed that in each letter there is an emphasis on a certain item of the building, be it the aesthetic, financial or logistical aspects. The autobiographical device of the "writreadings" (both of the letters and of the architecture of the houses) will be better presented below.

We analyzed the letters under two theoretical frameworks: under the concept of "affect" by Gilles Deleuze – also addressed in the joint work with Félix Guattari – and "biographem" by Roland Barthes. Deleuze builds the concept of affect from Spinoza, when he understands it as an affirmative and compositional force of ideas. In the compositional structure of ideas and images, there is a dialectical flow of management and, in its intersections, there is affection:

The complete circuit thus includes the sensory shock, which raises us from the images to conscious thought, then the thinking in figures, which takes us back to the images and gives us an affective shock again. Making the two coexist, joining the highest degree of consciousness to the deepest level of the unconscious: this is the dialectical automaton.¹⁸

Affect, therefore, constitutes an essential gear in the operation of expression and in artistic processes, in their operative multiplicities and singularities:

It would be necessary to say of all art: the artist is a display of affections, inventor of affections, creator of affections, in relation to his percepts or the visions he gives us. It is not only in his work that he creates them, he gives them to us and makes us transform with him, he catches us in the compost.¹⁹

This same affection, when related to the writing of letters, which is the object of this work, is related to Barthes' vision of the love letter in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*:²⁰ "LETTER. This figure refers to the special dialectic of the love letter, both blank (encoded) and expressive (charged with longing to signify desire)".²¹ The letters function not only as private correspondence, but also as a public grant, a social protocol device of affectionate recognition for the work developed in that social context. On reading letters as social products, Gómez and Sáez highlight:

The conception of writing as an instrument of power and expression of the same social structure is parallel to Foucault's thesis on the *document/monument*, opposed to the inert matter of the positivists. From this perspective, the document/writing is studied as a "product of society, which manufactured them according to the power relations that held power in it. It is, to put it in other words, the product of a certain orientation of history". Words similar to those used by Jacques Le Goff when defining the document not only as a consequence of a given historical situation, but, above all, as its oriented product, that is, "the result of the effort made by historical societies to impose—willingly or not—an image of themselves on the future". By saying this in the words of Roger Chartier, the materials-documents obey construction procedures in which concepts and obsessions of their producers are used and where the rules of writing specific to the genre that marks the text are marked".²²

These letters contain many biographical details, what Barthes calls "biographemes", a concept first exposed in the preface to his work *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*²³ and taken up again in *La chambre claire*²⁴ (Camera Lucida). It is a writing tool guided by a selective process, read and written from biographical details:

Likewise, I like certain biographical traits that, in the life of a writer, enchant me as much as certain photographs; I called these traits 'biographemes'; Photography has the same relationship to History as the biographeme has to biography.²⁵

Regarding the decision to transcribe from paleographical and diplomatic criteria, this choice occurs because the dissemination and analysis of the text of the letters *per se* is facilitated by their consideration also as documentary objects of a historiographical character. Thus, emphasizing the social function of writing in a socio-historical approach²⁶ This paleographical and historiographical vision, which proposes the transcription presented alongside the image of the document, gained prominence in the 20th century, mainly with the works of Giorgio Cencetti,²⁷ István Hajnal,²⁸ Armando Petrucci and Alessandro Pratesi.²⁹ In the Portuguese transcriptions of the letters, we chose not to modernize or alter the written text (therefore, the English translation is modernized). Also in the Portuguese transcriptions, the transliterations, punctuations and orthographic choices remain as they are in the letters (*sic passim*), and can be observed in the images of the scans that accompany them. Only the signatures were replaced by indications, in square brackets, at the end of the letters.

22. Gómez and Sáez, *op. cit.*, p. 185-186, author's italics (our translation).

23. Barthes (2005).

24. Barthes (1980).

25. Barthes (1982, p. 30).

26. Gómez and Sáez, *op. cit.*

27. Cencetti (1948).

28. Hajnal (1934).

29. Petrucci and Pratesi (1998).

30. On the development in this historical period in Belém, we recommend: Sarges (2010); Castro (2010); Sarges and Lacerda (2016); Figueiredo (1997); Bahia (2016); Soares (2008); Alcântara, Brito and Sanjad (2016); Nunes (2017).

SOCIAL AND URBAN SCENARIO OF THE CITY OF BELÉM

The letters addressed to the architect José Sidrim were written in a period of transition in the city of Belém. To understand it, it is necessary to analyze the two decades that preceded the years 1925 and 1926, years of writing the letters.

The transition between the end of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century in the northern region of the country was marked by a golden period of development, the result of the successful exploration of rubber.³⁰ A large number of foreign companies invested in the capital, leading to the attraction of immigrants, the urbanization of the city center and the construction of public facilities and prominent buildings that mark the period known as the *Belle Époque*. *Paris n'América*, as the city of Belém was then called, had a direct relationship with the great European capitals in their cultural, social, ideological or economic flows.



Figure 2 – Avenida da República (currently Avenida Presidente Vargas) with Rua da Paciência (currently Rua Carlos Gomes). Liuz stone floor, rail for the electric tram, iron lamp post and the famous mango trees, symbolic trees of the city. Source: Belém da Saudade... (1998, p. 90).

31. Soares (2008, p. 52).

32. Castro (2010, p. 111).

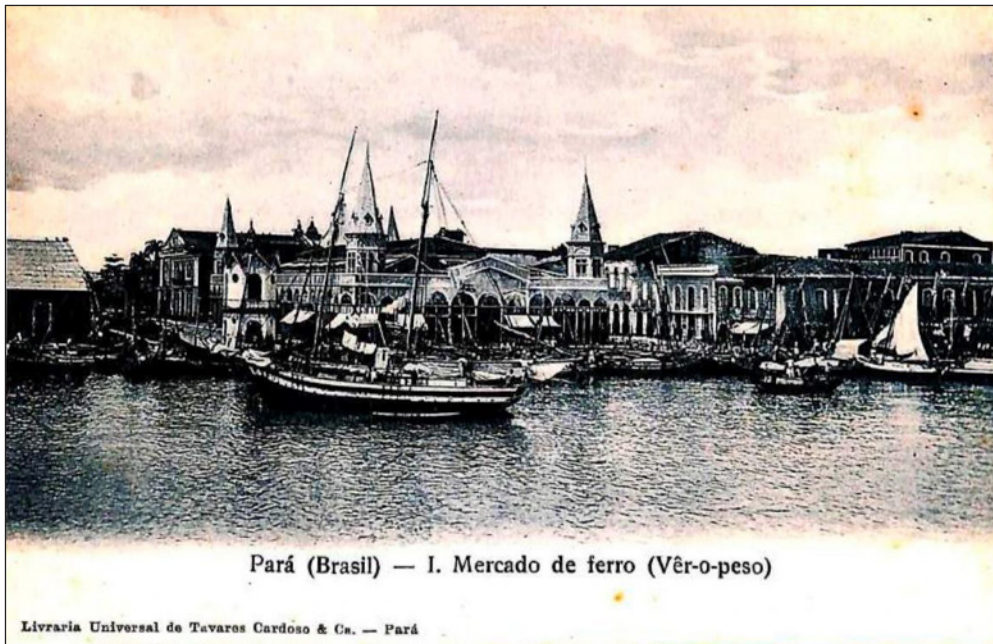


Figure 3 – *Ver-o-Peso* market and *Mercado de Ferro* dock. A very busy commercial hub at the time, surrounded by the headquarters of world representatives moved by the rubber trade. Source: *Belém da Saudade...* (1998, p. 50).

With the institution of the Republic, the urban landscape was rebuilt and, along with it, a new bourgeois society emerged. At this time, Eclecticism was adopted as the predominant architectural style of the elite, considered the symbol of modernity and progress in the region. It became the architectural expression of a society that sought affirmation and recognition, adopting, contradictorily, the aesthetics of the European past as a symbol of progress.

During the administration of Antônio Lemos (1897 to 1911), the historic center of the city was neglected and the investment was allocated to the port areas and their surroundings, as noted by historian Karol Gilet: “The urban planning adopted by Lemos opted for the abandonment of the historic center and for a remodeling of the area adjacent to the port, but it also decided to occupy unused areas, considered huge voids in the urban complex of Belém”.³¹ This political decision had certain benefits, but it also resulted in the low utilization of these areas, corroborating the period of recession that would settle in Belém in the following years. However, the influence of the re-Europeanization³² of social customs had already been installed in society.

It was in this context that the demand of the Pará bourgeoisie for a new way of living grew. The “living in the French style” was the style adopted by the elite and

33. The current word in Portuguese is “palacete”, from the French “palacette”, which means “little palace”. This architectural type is a condensed form of a palace, both in the spatial and functional ways, very specific to this historical and social context. We’ll use, however, the word “palace” on this article for better understanding.

34. Lemos (1999, p. 34, our translation).

35. Pereira (2007).

36. Lima, Nunes and Eiró (2018).

37. Paes Barreto (2018, p. 10).

38. Soares (2008, p. 108).

the palace³³ was the preferred architectural type due to its magnificence. Formally, they had more than one floor, with generous setbacks, gardens in highlights and environments for specific activities, symbolically demonstrating the bourgeois glamor consciously expressed in their architecture: “The palace PL is a rich novelty, rarely just with a floor ground floor, almost always providing for “living in the French style” and, above all, looking for a very large amount of accommodation to avoid, whenever possible, overlapping activities [...]”.³⁴

The choice of Eclecticism as the most used architectural style in palatial residences is related to the need to incorporate new programs and functions to the bourgeoisie’s then way of living. In the architectural productions of the professionals who worked in the period, in addition to the coexistence of techniques, programs and styles from the past and the present, the persistence of the colonial tradition together with the desire for modernization present in the imagination of bourgeois society is identified.³⁵ The predilection for Eclecticism in architecture, as well as the execution of hygienist works and the establishment of infrastructure on an urban scale, are essential symbols of the modernization of the city of Belém and the declared pride of the city’s development based on European ideals.³⁶

THE SOCIAL CIRCLE OF AUTHORS

Before analyzing the letters, it is important to understand the social relationship established by their authors and their motivations in choosing José Sidrim as an architect, as well as the palace type for their homes.

Orlando Lima, Guilherme Paiva and Benedicto Passarinho were prominent members of Belém society. Not only for their active participation in the city’s social life, but mainly for the professional recognition that they gained over the years. Among the similarities established by them, we identify the direct relationship with the European way of living, reflected in the characteristics of their homes. Orlando Lima and Guilherme Paiva carried out their academic training on the European continent. Benedicto enrolled his daughters in a renowned French boarding school (*Le Collège Féminin de Bouffémont*) on the outskirts of Paris and frequently spent time in France to visit the girls.³⁷

According to reports by Karol Gillet in the dissertation “The ways to live in Belém of Belle-Époque”,³⁸ the number of companies and professionals in the construction industry in Belém was large; however, most of them were just

engineers. In this sense, José Sidrim was one of the first professionals with specialized training in architecture by a European school that worked effectively during the 1920s in the capital of Pará. One of his contemporaries was the Italian architect Filinto Santoro, from the Royal Academy of Naples, author of designs for outstanding buildings in Belém. The architect José Castro Figueiredo was another name present in the city's architectural production, although his production is concentrated in the late nineteenth century, such as the Palace Faciola in 1895 and the *Instituto Paraense de Educandos Artífices*,³⁹ later named Instituto Lauro Sodré and, currently, the State Court of Justice.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

40. Oliveira (2015, p. 63).

However, as a distinctive fact mentioned by the authors-owners, the technical quality of José Sidrim's work is impressive. The rigor of all elements of his design executed by his team of professionals deserves to be highlighted. Thus, some architectural elements became prominent among his works, such as the sumptuous wooden staircase located in a prominent volume on the side façades of his palaces. Despite not having the habit of using precast architectural elements, the use of catalogs was recurrent in the choice of ceramics and tiles for homes, these commonly imported.

Another similarity established between the three owners was their active participation in the religious scene in Belém. In 1909, construction began on the current Basilica of Our Lady of Nazareth,⁴⁰ one of the most important religious buildings in the city. It was necessary to raise donations from several faithful to carry out the work; among them Orlando Lima, Guilherme Paiva and Benedicto Passarinho, all with stained glass windows in the church's side chapels in their honor (Figures 4, 5 and 6).



Figure 4 – Stained glass window dedicated to Orlando Lima, in the Basilica of Our Lady of Nazareth. Photo: Mateus Nunes.



Figure 5 – Stained glass window dedicated to Benedito and Aurélia Passarinho, in the Basilica of Our Lady of Nazareth. Photo: Mateus Nunes.



Figure 6 – Stained glass window dedicated to the family of Guilherme Paiva, in the Basilica of Our Lady of Nazareth. Photo: Mateus Nunes.

The architect José Sidrim carried out several private projects in the 1920s, who had engaged in institutional and public works at other times. The large number of contracts, especially residential, in addition to the recurrent presence in competitions, was essential for the prominence and importance of the architect at the time.

41. Matos (2017, p. 262).

42. In *Jornal Estado do Pará* (1914, p. 14 the names of the physician Orlando Lima and the engineer Guilherme Paiva are mentioned as paranyms of a ceremony of the Municipal Intendance.

LETTERS TO THE ARCHITECT AND THEIRS AUTHORS

Orlando Lima

Argemiro Orlando Pereira Lima was a gynecologist and obstetrician, member of the National Academy of Medicine, of the Academies of Letters of Pará and Amazonas, and director of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia de Belém.⁴¹ It is possible to notice the active participation of the doctor in the social life of the capital, mentioned in newspapers from the first half of the 20th century in various social and political events.⁴² The first contact with the architect and builder José Sidrim was during the construction of the Maternity and Children's Hospital of the institution where Orlando was director. With the strengthening of the relationship, the invitation to build the doctor's residence arose. Located in Travessa Dr. Moraes, in the neighborhood of Nazaré, a very urbanized area and where there are several palaces in the city.



Figure 7 – Palace Orlando Lima. In the foreground, habitable basement and windows on the first floor. In the background, access stairs to the social sector. Photo: Dulcilia Acatauassu Nunes.

Due to the reduced dimensions of the land on which the palace was built, when compared to the residential standards of the elite of Belém, the residence has one of its two sides semi-detached, in such a way that the separation occurs on only one side. With a complex needs program, it features a ground floor with a habitable basement and an upper floor, both with social, intimate and service environments. The ground floor comprises spaces for leisure, such as a library and billiards room, and a hall with direct connection to the first floor. Two small bedrooms in the intimate area and a space for laundry and ironing make up the basement. The floor above can be accessed through the side staircase, taking the visitor directly to the balcony, from which it is possible to access the living room, the dining room or a small vestibule. Kitchen, pantry and lunchroom are part of the service sector. In the intimate sector, three bedrooms, a dressing room, a bathroom and a small oratory complete the eclectic palace.

The oratory present in the residence demonstrates the religiosity of its residents. Orlando Lima's family was one of the financiers of the construction of Basilica of Our Lady of Nazareth, owning one of the fifty-four stained glass windows in the Church in his honor.

The letter, as the author himself reports, was written briefly, generically thanking, if compared to the other letters, more affectionate and detailed in their observation of the work of the architect Sidrim in the work of the residences. It was written on letterhead with its own elegant monogram (OL), a symbol of social distinction, certainly because of the flow of correspondence to members of the Academies of which he was a member and the outstanding role he played in society, Lima wrote:

Belém, March 2, 1926

Dear friend Mr. José Sidrim

Now that the construction of my house is finished and that everything is according to my wishes, it is my duty to send you my thanks, which I gladly do in these quick lines.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your system of work by administration that allows anyone who ventures to build on this land, now that materials vary in price at every moment, personally assess where money disappears, spending only what you want and be able to like.

Speed, care, competence, scruple, delicacy, these are the qualities I could recognize in you, especially when you finished building my building. Reiterating my thanks to you I embrace you very affectionately

[Signature of Orlando Lima]⁴³



Belem 2 de Março de 1926

Prezado amigo Sr. José Sidrim

Agora que terminou a construção da minha casa e que tudo
sabiu a medida dos meus desejos corre-me o dever de enviar-lhe
os meus melhores agradecimentos o que prazerosamente faço nes-
tas rapidas linhas.

Aproveito a oportunidade para felicitá-lo pelo seu systema
de trabalho por administração que permite a quem se aventura a
edificar nesta terra, agora que os materiais variam de preço a cada
momento, avaliar pessoalmente onde desaparece o dinheiro gastando
somente o que quizer e poder gastar.

Rapidez, cuidado, competência, escriptura, delicadeza eis as qua-
lidades que pude reconhecer-lhe principalmente ao terminar a edifi-
cação do meu predio. Reiterando-lhe os meus agradecimentos abraço-o
muito affectuosamente

Orlando Lima

Figure 8 – Letter from Orlando Lima to José Sidrim, March 2, 1926. Source: Ana Léa Nassar Matos archive.

Guilherme Paiva

Guilherme Paiva was a civil engineer, trained in Paris,⁴⁴ general manager of Port of Pará between 1916 and 1940⁴⁵ – one of the largest companies in Belém in the early 20th century, concessionaire of the city's port, where Sidrim also worked when he arrived in town. The palace that belonged to the engineer dates back to 1924, being the first among the three presented in this article to be built. The plot in which the building is located has large dimensions, ensuring distance on all sides and enabling the existence of a large garden in the background. In addition to the residence, the building has an annexed house that works as a garage and residence for employees. The presence of an annexed house in large houses is recurrent in the typology of palaces during the first decades of the 20th century.



Figure 9 – Front façade of the Palace Guilherme Paiva, highlighting the large front setback of the residence and the fluted glass of the arched windows. Photo: Armin Mathis.

Eclecticism, strongly influenced by the “Italian villages”,⁴⁶ is the style adopted for the palace, identified by the slope of the roofs and the use of materials such as *granilite*, colored glass in the windows, wood in the frames and apparent iron conductors. Characteristic of the neoclassical style, the play of volumes on the façades through the balconies is highlighted, as well as the

44. Matos (2017, p. 252).

45. At the headquarters of the current Companhia das Docas do Pará (CDP), formerly Port of Pará, there is a photograph of Guilherme Paiva on display in which the position of general manager and the period in which he held that position are described in the frame. We would like to thank Professor Marcia Nunes (UNAMA) for the kindness in intermediating the contact with CDP employees who allowed access to the photograph.

46. Among the residential stylistic currents that influenced Eclecticism in Brazil, those from France and Italy stand out (PATETTA, 1987, p. 13).

spans that receive different treatments depending on their degree of importance: the ground floor has straight lintels, the first floor has lintels in arched doorway, and the second floor, finally, has full-arch lintels.

The needs program is quite traditional to the standard of Eclectic residences. The ground floor acts as the male wing of the palace, destined to receive visitors and work, due to the presence of a games room, a living room and an office. The first floor features social environments such as a dining room, music room and balcony, as well as a spacious kitchen, pantry and lunchroom. The second floor, despite its large size, is exclusively for couples: it has only a bedroom, dressing room, living room and bathroom. A differential of this distribution program is a gazebo on the roof, a special request from the owner, with the purpose of observing the arrival of ships at the city's ports.

Paiva reiterates the spontaneous character in which he writes the letter (Figure 10), which we perceive to be different from the tone of the letter written by Orlando Lima (Figure 8). In addition, he addresses economics in construction: as a civil engineer and manager of Port of Pará for 24 years, the economic aspect of the works was certainly very important to him. This makes this praise also work as an explicit grant, a public recognition of the administrative competences of the architect José Sidrim. Paiva writes on Port of Pará letterhead, with the company logo strikethrough, making the document a personal rather than a professional letter. Paiva wrote:

August 24, 1926.

Illustrious Mr. Dr. José Sidrim,

Present.

When you hand me the keys to my new residence, located at Travessa Dr. Moraes nº 26, whose plan and construction obeyed your careful competence, it is with the greatest satisfaction that I thank you for your dedication in carrying out this work. The spontaneity with which I gladly address these lines gives you the most complete proof of my satisfaction, not only from the architectural point of view of the new building, which is recognized by everyone, but also with regard to the economy made in its construction. In fact, nothing else could be expected of your competence as a distinguished professional whose fame is increasingly asserted in our midst.

With my sincere thanks, please accept the affectionate greetings of the

Colleague, who greatly esteems you,

[Signature of Guilherme Paiva]⁴⁷

~~PORT OF PARÁ~~

CAIXA POSTAL No. 469

PARÁ.

BRAZIL.

24 de Agosto de 1926.

Illmº Snr. Dr. José Sidrim,

Presente.

No momento em que me são entregues por V.S. as chaves de minha nova residência, sita á Travessa Dr. Moraes nº 26, cujo plano e construção obedeceram á criteriosa competencia de V.S., é com a maior satisfação que venho lhe agradecer a dedicação com que he houve na realização dessa obra. A espontaneidade com que gostosamente lhe dirijo estas linhas lhe dá a prova mais cabal do meu contentamento, não só sob o ponto de vista architectural que apresenta o novo predio, o que é por todos reconhecido, como tambem no que diz respeito á economia realizada em sua construção. Aliás, outra coisa não se podia esperar de sua competencia como profissional distincto cuja fama cada vez mais se afirma em nosso meio.

Com os meus sinceros agradecimentos, queira aceitar as affectuosas saudações do

Collega que muito o estima,

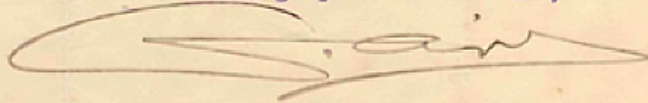


Figure 10: Letter from Guilherme Paiva to José Sidrim, August 24, 1926. Source: Ana Léa Nassar Matos archive.

48. "The Passarinho palace, where Dr. Getulio Vargas will be hosted, it is equipped with all amenities, there is a telegraphic room, with Morse and radio installations; a room for the press service and several offices for work. 18 telephones were installed in the various rooms of the palace. The entire building will be profusely lit. The façade is covered with electric lamps" (CORREIO DA MANHÃ, 1933, p. 13). The newspapers *Diário Carioca*, *O Jornal* and *Diário do Norte*, all from Rio de Janeiro, also published articles about the stay of the Head of the Provisional Government at Passarinho palace. Collection of this information on the *FAU UFPA Blog* (PALACETE PASSARINHO, 2016).

Benedicto Passarinho

Benedicto Passarinho, entrepreneur and pharmacist, is the owner of the last residence designed and built by José Sidrim and his team. The Palace Aurélia Passarinho, named in honor of Benedicto's wife, according to historian Augusto Meira Filho, is the architect's favorite. With the work completed in 1927, the building is located in the city's expansion area, on Av. Independência (currently Av. Magalhães Barata), in the São Brás district. Like the other characters presented here, Benedicto and his family also had a direct relationship with the European patterns of living, considering that during the period of construction of the residence, his two daughters were studying at a college in France. Aurélia and Benedicto were an important couple in the city's social scene. For this reason, they used the residence as a place to receive friends, celebrate important moments and host important personalities in the history of Pará and Brazil, such as then president Getúlio Vargas in September 1933.⁴⁸

The architect Sidrim, following the owners' wishes, made the initial design of the palace to house a complex program of needs and functions. In addition to the residence, it would also consist of a French garden and an annexed house whose objective would be to house the garage and the employees' rooms.

More sectorized than the previous ones, the house has a grade beam of approximately 70 cm that raises the ground floor to the first floor, consisting of the social and service sectors. In this, the presence of the vestibule receives the greatest prominence for being the first place in the residence and responsible for connecting the entire social sector. Finally, in the background, there is the service sector. On the upper, second and third floors, the intimate sector occupies almost all the space. The big difference of this palace is the use of a considerable part of its tiles imported from France, as well as all the bathroom fixtures and metals.

The letter's text shows less formality, which demonstrates a greater degree of admiration and friendship between the owner-author and the architect-builder. This friendship resulted in the delivery of a golden key of the Palace to Benedicto at the time of completion of the work (Figure 12).



Figure 11 – Palace Aurélia Passarinho, an eclectic residence with hydraulic tiles on the façade imported from France. Photo: Armin Mathis.

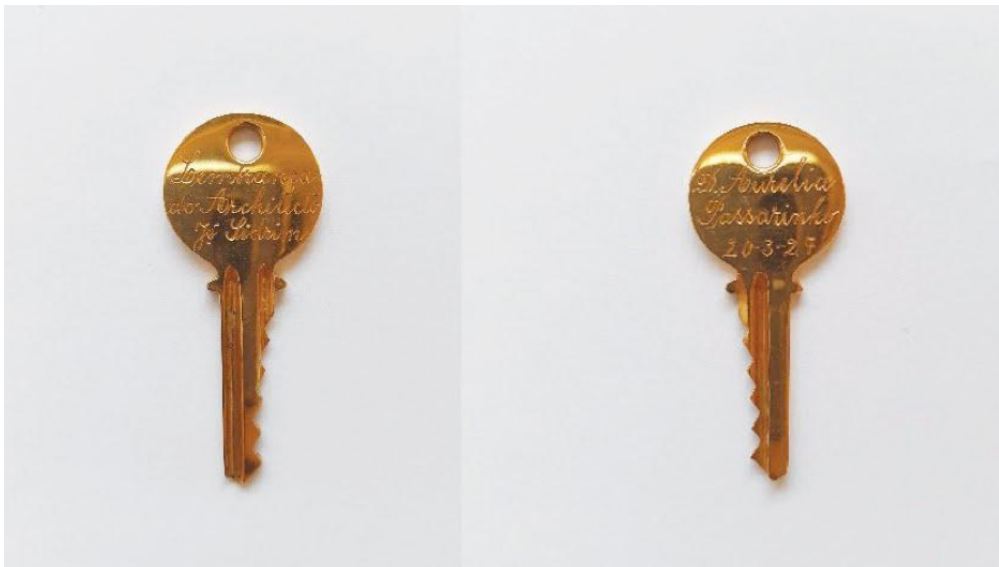


Figure 12 – Key given to the Passarinho family, with engraved writing “Remembrance of Architect Jé Sidrim” [“Lembrança do Architecto Jé Sidrim”] and “D. Aurelia Passarinho 20-3-1927”, still in the possession of the family. Photo: Pietra Paes Barreto.

In addition to gratitude to the architect, Benedicto also demonstrates his enchantment with the result delivered, above all, when dealing with the precision of Sidrim's work and his technical rigor in relation to the region's climatic problems. The entrepreneur continues his letter by pointing out his wife's thanks to the architect. Finally, the architect's dedication and affection for his work is highlighted.

One of the peculiarities of Benedicto Passarinho's letter is that the author does not only address aesthetic aspects, but also highlights the technical aspects of the design. He cites the architect's care in dealing rigorously with hygiene and environmental comfort issues. The architect knew how to adapt the design to European standards for the hot and humid climate of the Amazon by guaranteeing the presence of openings in all environments, providing cross ventilation.

Friend Dr. José Sidrim

Upon receiving the finished house at the Avenue Independencia No. 60, whose design and construction I have entrusted to your discretion and professional responsibility, I am pleased to bring you my thanks and praise that these lines can barely translate and that result from the integral and excellent performance of your commitment.

From the living room to the last room of the building, I didn't find a single defect, a single flaw, a single sin. The robustness of the foundations, the stereotomic exactness of the beams, the rigorously geometric balance of the framework, the rigid joints, the minutiae of the perfect finishes; the divisional layout meeting the requirements of hygiene and comfort pertinent to our climate, translate the rigorous technic.

The outline of the general appearance, from the arch to the base, the grace of the proportions, the elegant simplicity of the ornamental lines, the decorative motifs, the subtleties of the smallest details. Set in which you have taken advantage of all the expressive elements of architectonic harmony, – characterize the artist.

It can be seen in everything – moreover –, it can be felt the meticulous and patient care, the persevering effort, the affection you have for your art, the desire for the best, the love for perfection, the torture of researching the rhythms of beauty. Characteristic of your works marked by spirituality.

I am fully satisfied and, thus, the words that remain here do not represent a banal formula of courtesy, but are characterized by the sincerity due for many reasons.

My wife asks me to convey to you both her contentment and her praise.

Best regards,

Countryman and friend

Belém, 4/16/27 [Signature of Benedicto Cesar Santos Passarinho]⁴⁹

Amigo Dr. José Sidrim

Ao receber ultimada a casa No 60 á Avenida Independencia, cujo projecto e construçãõ confiei ao vosso criterio e responsabilidade profissionais, tenho o prazer de trazer-vos meus agradecimentos e louvores que mal podem estas linhas traduzir e que resultam do integral e optimo desempenho do vosso compromisso.

Desde a sala ao ultimo desvão do predio não encontrei um só defeito, uma só falha, um só peccado. A robustez dos alicerços, a exatidão estereotomica dos travessamentos, o equilibrio rigorosamente geometrico do arcabouço, a imapeavel inflexibilidade das arestas, as rigidas junções, as minucias dos remates perfectos; a disposiçãõ divisional attendendo as exigenciãs da Hygiene e do conforto pertinentes ao nosso clima, traduzem o tecnico rigoroso.

O traçado do aspecto geral, da fôrma á base, a graça das proporções, a elegante singeleza das linhas ornamentaes, os motivos decorativos, as subtilizas dos minimos promenores, conjuncto em que haveis aproveitado todos os elementos expressivos da harmonia architectonica , - caracterizam o artista.

Vê-se em tudo, - mais ainda - sente-se o meticoloso e paciente esmero e perseverante esforço, o carinho que tendes pela vossa arte, o ansio pelo melhor, o amor pela perfeição, a tortura da pesquisa dos rythmos da belleza - cunho dos vossos trabalhos assignalados de espiritualidade.

Estou plenamente satisfeito e assim, estas palavras que ahi ficam, não representam uma formula banal de cortezia mas caracterizam-se pela sinceridade devida por sobejas razões.

Minha esposa, pede para que vos signifique igualmente o seu contentamento e os seus elogios.

Com os meus melhores cumprimentos ,

Compatriota e amigo

Belem, 16/4/27

Benedicto Passarinho

Figure 13 – Letter from Benedicto Passarinho to José Sidrim, April 16, 1927. Source: Ana Léa Nassar Matos archive.

50. Waisman (2013, p. 48).

51. Deleuze (2015, p. 1).

52. Foucault (1986, p. 84).

53. Eiró (2014).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We chose to approach the repercussion of Sidrim's performance in the environment in which he lived through the discourse analysis of the letters, because such historiographical matrix allows us to include and analyze the historical, social and affective aspects that architecture can perform. We also highlight the linguistic character of the letters from their lexical and symbolic materiality. By operating and choosing the words, the author manipulates references that he has affectively listed and composes his personal reports in a similar way to what Sidrim operated in the fields of image and architectural object. Everything, then, is language – or "everything is a design", as Paulo Mendes da Rocha would say. We assume that the architectural effects – in this case, the letters – are on the same level as the architectural work itself, as they deal with precisely the same writing process as affects, whether they are images or words.

The fact that there are letters about architectural objects shows a turning point at which architecture becomes a field in the nature of language. This choice of methodological approach to the object from its phenomenological and subjective character allows us to understand the complex and ambiguous flow of semiological and communicative elements, in which language goes through a writreading (or writing-reading) process. Process in which one reads and writes at the same time – in which one reads writing or writes reading. Architecture, then, works in the same sense as writing-reading. Those who read the architectural work – as well as those who read a text or an image go through the phenomenological process of composing their experience of the object from their own experiences, references and personal affective parameters. Whoever composes the architectural (or historiographical⁵⁰) work does the same: operates in the creation of something of his/her own, from the reading of other works, texts and images. The communicational flow, including in the field of architecture, is a double vector so that the architectural effects are paradoxical, as they affirm both meanings at the same time.⁵¹

In this work, we do not propose an analysis of the final stages of the objects, nor of the grammar or rhetorical organization of the letters, nor of the ornamental compositions and structural elements of the residences. We propose an analysis of the modalities of enunciation,⁵² the compositional operations through memory, the movements of images and affections.⁵³ In addition to the architectural and temporal similarity between the three palaces, the fact that their owners wrote a letter to thank the architect José Sidrim, finally, demonstrates the social power of the word.

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