



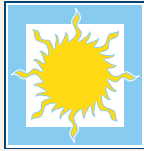
The Best in Heritage[®]

Dubrovnik, Croatia, 25 - 27 September 2014

13TH EDITION

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EUROPA NOSTRA
UNDER SPECIAL PATRONAGE OF ICOM





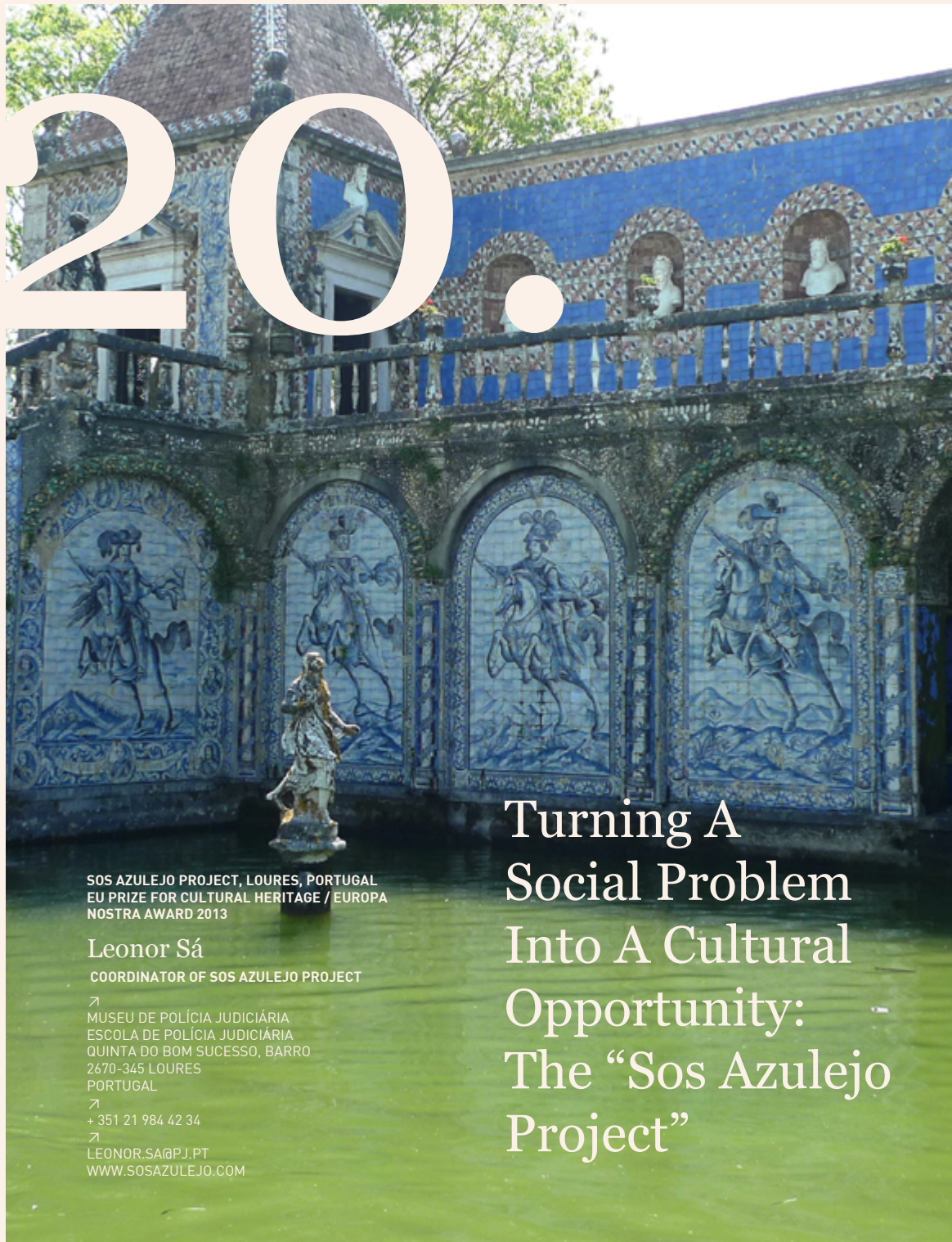
The Best in Heritage[®]

DUBROVNIK 25 - 27 SEPTEMBER 2014
13TH EDITION

*in partnership with Europa Nostra
under special patronage of ICOM*

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF KENNETH HUDSON OBE,
AND GEORGES HENRI RIVIERE





SOS AZULEJO PROJECT, LOURES, PORTUGAL
EU PRIZE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE / EUROPA
NOSTRA AWARD 2013

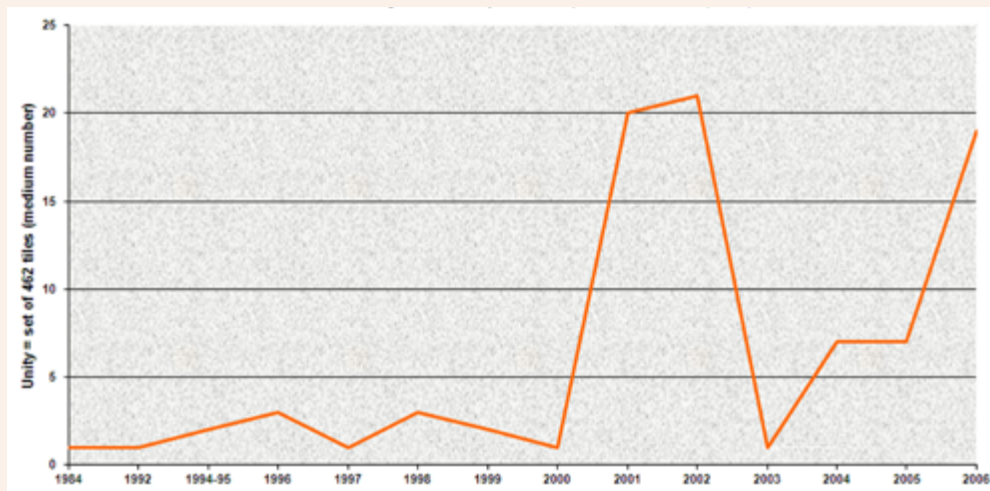
Leonor Sá

COORDINATOR OF SOS AZULEJO PROJECT

↗
MUSEU DE POLÍCIA JUDICIÁRIA
ESCOLA DE POLÍCIA JUDICIÁRIA
QUINTA DO BOM SUCESSO, BARRO
2670-345 LOURES
PORTUGAL

↗
+ 351 21 984 42 34
↗
LEONOR.SA@PJ.PT
WWW.SOSAZULEJO.COM

Turning A
Social Problem
Into A Cultural
Opportunity:
The “Sos Azulejo
Project”



Portuguese historic and artistic ceramic tiles stand out in the world's cultural heritage for their invaluable richness in quality, quantity, style, materials, and techniques. Portuguese architecture is known worldwide for its 'azulejos', which cover the exterior and interior walls of hundreds of thousands of Portuguese buildings, from convents, churches and palaces to hospitals, railway stations, schools, all sorts of public buildings and entire urban private housing blocks.

Because 'azulejos' are increasingly valued by art experts, historians and international antique dealers, they are getting more tempting for art and antiques burglars and traffickers – and the number of thefts has risen accordingly, especially in the area of Lisbon, as we can see in Chart 1.

This statistical data shows us the registered thefts of thousands of 'azulejos' in this geographical area, especially from the year 2000 onwards.

Curiously enough - and paradoxically - apart from some important referred exceptions, urban 'azulejos' seem not to be much valued

by ordinary Portuguese people and institutions. These tiles have been so permanently present in Portuguese everyday life, and for so many centuries, that the average citizen no longer especially notices or cares about them. The result is neglect, needless tile removal from walls, demolition of tile-covered buildings, vandalism and an endless quantity of tiled constructions which need conservation measures badly.

The Emergence Of “Sos Azulejo”

In 2007 the Portuguese Judiciary Police Museum (JPM) created the 'SOS Azulejo Project' in response to the above mentioned problems of theft and neglect, but also motivated by the following institutional and practical circumstances:

Firstly, the Portuguese Judiciary Police is the law enforcement agency in Portugal with the exclusive competence for crimes related to cultural heritage.

Secondly, the JPM possesses a collection of stolen historic tiles which have been recovered by the police but whose origin remains

unknown to this day. This collection has been exhibited on several occasions by the JPM, with educational purposes.

Linked to these educational purposes is the fact that the JPM chose 'Crime Prevention' as its 'museum mission', for crime prevention constitutes one of the explicit competences of the Judiciary Police, and is of direct interest and service to the community.

In this context, 'SOS Azulejo' was born as a 'crime prevention project', to protect Portuguese 'azulejos' from growing theft, trafficking and vandalism, but involving two other perspectives: 'preventive conservation' and 'raising people's awareness of the value of Portuguese historic tiles.'

This interdisciplinary approach meant an absolute need for partnerships. In 2007 the JPM signed protocols with the following prestigious Portuguese organisations (belonging to the former Ministry of Culture, Universities, a local authorities' Association and other police forces):

- Associação Nacional de Municípios Portugueses (ANMP)
- Direção Geral do Património Cultural (DGPC)
- Instituto Politécnico de Tomar (IPT)
- Rede Temática em Estudos de Azulejaria e Cerâmica João Miguel Santos Simões (RTEACJMSS), Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa (FLUL)
- Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR)
- Polícia de Segurança Pública (PSP).

'SOS Azulejo' has no budget and its functioning is light and flexible. Each Partner performs its specific skills within its institutional budget, giving the project a multidisciplinary performance capacity. Occasionally sponsors are enlisted for activities that cannot be covered by the Partners.

Short Summary Of The Main Sos Azulejo's Work And Results:

FOCUS 1: PREVENTING AND DETERRING THEFTS

The first visible 'SOS Azulejo' activity towards this goal consisted of disseminating systematised information and images of stolen figurative 'azulejos' through its website www.sosazulejo.com (and fb). Easy access to these images aims at:

- Making identification and recovery of stolen historic tiles easy;
- Making circulation of stolen historic tiles in the market difficult;
- Deterring this kind of crime for burglars and fences.

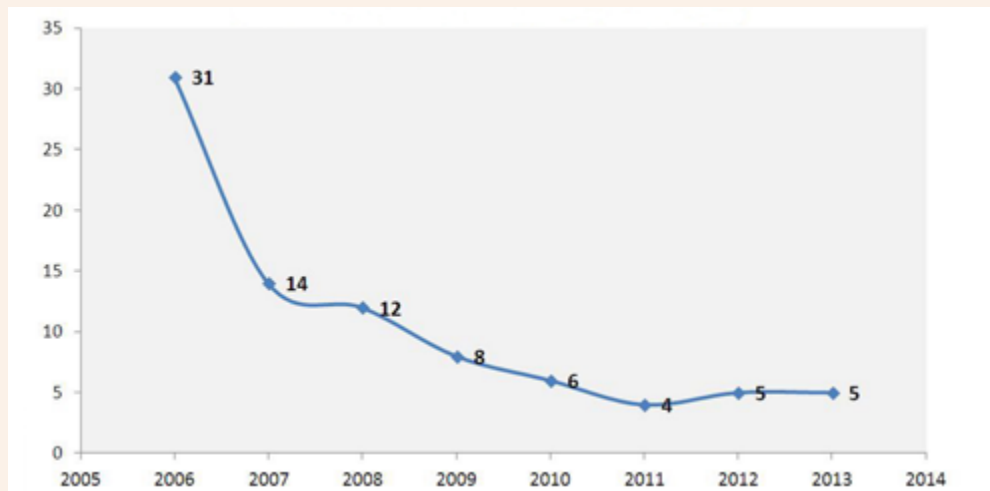
Indeed we have direct information that before 'SOS Azulejo', figurative stolen 'azulejos' circulated very easily in the market, art circuits and even state museums. After 'SOS Azulejo', this situation completely changed. Buyers in good faith – whether antique dealers, curators or other professionals – now have easily available information, and buyers in bad faith can no longer claim ignorance.

The results of this measure were immediate and encouraging. The very first day after the launching of the web site, a stolen tile panel was recognized and recovered. In the longer term, statistics concerning registered thefts of 'azulejos' are also very encouraging and show impressive measurable results (Chart 2).

Considering the fact that 'SOS Azulejo' was created in 2007, the chart shows there was a more than 80% decrease in the number of registered thefts of 'azulejos' to 2013.

FOCUS 2: PREVENTING NEGLECT AND DESTRUCTION

- Raising awareness of the local municipal authority of Lisbon (CML), which finally created a concrete municipal plan for the protection of Lisbon's azulejos in 2010.



- Proposing important measures to be incorporated in the new urbanism regulations of CML, prohibiting the demolition of tiled buildings' façades and the removal of 'azulejos' from the same façades. The acceptance of this proposition means a full 180 degree turn in the protection approach of Portuguese tiles' heritage.

Once this new regulation was put into effect in April 2013, 'SOS Azulejo' proposed its implementation in all Portuguese cities. Indeed, the introduction of this simple measure and input nationwide would have an enormous impact and output in terms of the global protection of the Portuguese tiles' heritage. We hope it will become a reality soon. It would also mean a solid basis to submit a proposal for Portuguese historic and artistic 'azulejos' to be considered for inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List.

FOCUS 3: DISSEMINATING AND AWARDED GOOD PRACTISES

Departing from a focus on negative information - theft, vandalism, degradation, - 'SOS Azulejo' soon realized the importance of enlarging its scope of activity, adding a positive

perspective to it. Consequently, it developed the following series of activities:

- Disseminating and encouraging good practices;

- Awarding academic studies, artists' and community actions: the Annual 'SOS Azulejo Awards' were created in 2010, allowing for publicly paying tribute to individuals and institutions whose remarkable work contributes not only for the safeguarding of the 'azulejos', but also for their study, dissemination, fruition and continuity in contemporary art.

- Last but not least, disseminating love for 'azulejos', especially in children: 'SCHOOL ACTION SOS AZULEJO' takes place every year in May, with the participation of schools at a nation-wide level. On this day various playful activities are performed by school-children related to the knowledge and manufacturing of 'azulejos'. We hope to turn this day into a 'National Day of Azulejos' in the near future.

In conclusion, we dare say that 'SOS Azulejo' is not made just of hopes - but also of positive concrete results.

