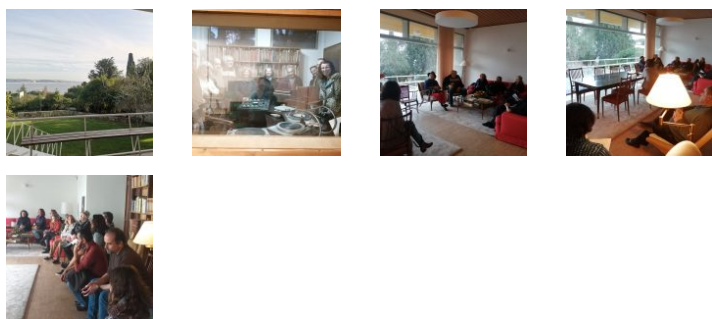




AT THE IGREJAS CAEIRO'S HOUSE-MUSEUM: SOUND, LISTENING, AND BODY

Anyone driving up from the center of Caxias, towards Alto do Lagoal, on a narrow but busy road, flanked by houses described as “luxury” or “prestigious” by real estate agents, will have a problem imagining the precarious, unpaved road that, at the end of the 1950s, connected this town in Oeiras with the new residents who settled there. A long, steep road, traveled daily by carts, bicycles, and vans that supplied wealthy families like the one of Francisco Igrejas Caeiro (1917-2012) and Irene Velez (1914-2014), who have lived on top of that privileged hill overlooking the Tejo River since 1959.

The Igrejas Caeiro residence, inaugurated in 1959, started to be built in 1957, on three very generous plots of land. The architect, Francisco Keil do Amaral, needed the space, view, and framing that could extend the friend-client's house into a privileged outdoor space that might expand the modernist lines and fluidity that had been designed for it, out of doors. The press comes to know the new home of the popular man of radio, theater, and cinema. They called it a “Hollywood-style villa”.

On the skyline, only Tejo River and the distant, unpopulated landscape of a south side that still had no bridge. The bridge, which before being named in honour of liberty day, celebrated the dictator who ordered its construction, would only begin to be built in 1962. Igrejas Caeiro saw it being built before his eyes, from his balcony and garden. The building colossus, in a city much emptier of people and houses than it is today, would make an echo coming from that promontory. But before the sound of infernal machines, of concrete and steel, coming from a narrowing river, the sound space in which Igrejas Caeiro moves is inhabited by what nature makes audible, the noise of one car or another that could have it, plus the commuter symphony brought by sailors and their transport, especially in the morning. In times of dictatorship, even in open houses – and Igrejas Caeiro's, for his personal characteristics and oppositionist ideology, was – the volume and freedom of men's voices are proportional to social inequalities. The formality and deference between those who serve and those who are served are quieter than the voices that are born, live and, from early on, coexist with freedom. Freedom is also the freedom of what is said and the thickness of the sound that comes out of one's mouth. Without strict volume control and with speeches that go beyond the service entrance, freedom is grounded with another sound matrix, by definition in stereo, with room for noise and dissonance. Very different from the institutional order of the 1950s and 1960s, which thrived on silence, encouraged secrecy, and proudly cultivated interdicts.

The tours I am currently conducting to this house, donated by Francisco Igrejas Caeiro to the Fundação Marquês de Pombal to become a home museum and a space for public use, benefit from a triad of variables to which we feel called as soon as we enter: the space (the house and its surroundings), time (the time experienced outside, which is faster, and the time in the house, which is more extended) and the body (that of the building that surrounds us and our own).

One of the highlights of the visit is a trip to Igrejas Caeiro's professional studio where the radio broadcaster recorded his programs, starting in 1959, broadcasted by Rádio Clube Português. We knew it from the beginning. A house of that architectural and aesthetic magnitude, with the capacity to have a radio studio, has an undeniable historical interest. And it also has an added visual attraction for children, who look at the past equipment as something from a parallel reality, or for older people, who learn from the inside how a radio reality that is in their memory works.

What the researcher-guide didn't expect was that the exercise of listening to the voice of the owner of the house visited, in the spacious living room of the house, with the curtains drawn to the Tejo River, would be so well received by all.

For those who research sound, there is perhaps an internalized inferiority complex, which is affiliated with the crystallized idea that radio is an ontological and historically held as an affective medium, listened to on a daily basis in the most varied equipment and platforms, but whose act of attentive listening is devalued or underutilized, especially for those who do not make it an aesthetic and research priority. This experience at Igrejas Caeiro's House showed us that, in a context privileged by the triad we mentioned – space/time/body –, listening is experienced as an extension and inalienable part of the visit.

I choose to start the visit with a moment of listening that allows us to better understand the work of the man who opens the doors of his house to us, ten years after his death. Furthermore, I was interested in showing some of the sound aesthetics of a time that is no longer ours, and of a radio station that is no longer the one we listen to today. I played an [interview that the host did with Natália Correia in 1957](#). The immediate reflex of listening, of the predisposition towards it, is given to us by the body of the person who visits us. There is a movement of comfort-seeking in the visitors, seated on the sofas and armchairs in Igrejas Caeiro's living room. A tightening of physical ties to a space that does not belong to us, but is especially so during the minutes that the radio conversation between interviewer and interviewee lasts.

Only a few visitors keep their eyes open. One can better grasp what cannot be seen with the naked eye when, through the eyes, the senses and the body find the free paths of imagination. What enters through the ears remains in darkness, which, far from being infertile pitch, is exactly the opposite: an unmistakable condition for light. Those who keep their eyes open, take them out of the house, towards the Tejo River that flows beyond the glass panes. The bodies loosen up in a sought-after comfort. Time runs slowly because the house allows it and the exercise of listening encourages it. But the more there is to visit leads me to interrupt the sound of the interview, which is over 30 minutes long. I invite visitors to do a listening exercise at home since the sound recording is available online. The reaction is one of annoyance in the eyes of some. The good manners of those who visit force some restraint and respect for those who guide them, but the grimace is of surprise and incomprehension. A voice says: “But we were enjoying it so much...”.

At the end of the session planned for the room, before going down to the radio studio, I make an attempt to understand to what extent the interruption of listening has bothered them. In general, the visitors understand my choice in order to make the visit as extensive as possible, and say that they will listen to the interview in its entirety at home. But there is one visitor who explains the basics of what happened to me: “It was the interruption of an immersion.

Listening requires time and space, desire and availability, body and imagination. And, that visitor knew it well, listening is a unique possibility of immersion, which demands total respect for its course. Interruption is always an amputation of the experience and the nascent meanings. It is a denial of the possibility of detecting, by listening, the expressive identity of the radio language, made of words, music, sonic effects, and silence. The imposed silence, which abruptly cuts off the sound, deprives the listener of an experience that enriches, transforms, produces, and restores meaning.

A visit to a house, be it a private house or a museum house, is made up of steps taken inside and outside. It is followed by the discovery, unexpected or expected, of physical spaces that open themselves to the visitor. But it is also a walking tour that, without diminishing the tangibility of the space, the uniqueness of the objects, and the beauty of the architecture, is done from the inside, with sound and silence as a compass.

Visiting a radio man's house is – should be – an unavoidable invitation to the knowledge and enjoyment of sound, where the audible whole, which is also time, space, and body, has to be the primary reason. Not a whim or mere illustrative element.

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Note: This micro-essay is born from our experience in curating the guided tours to the Casa-Museu Igrejas Caeiro, developed under the initiative “The Radio Days at the Caeiro Church”, between February 13 and 19, 2023. This program was promoted by the Municipality of Oeiras and the Marquês de Pombal Foundation, with production by the Poesia.FM collective. As a result, monthly visits were made to this space, managed and promoted by the Marques de Pombal Foundation, its owner. <https://www.fmarquesdepombal.pt/casa-museu-igrejas-caeiro>

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