

INTRODUCTION

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As stated by some authors, the interdisciplinary use of the term *frame*, supported by the so-called frame theory¹, leads to the assumption that “over the past few decades it has become a received notion that there is no human signifying act, no meaningful perception, cognition and communication without «frames» and that frames are practically everywhere”². In consequence, “(...) the term «frame» is at least as multifaceted in the specific reference to artefacts as in general cognitive sense (...)”³.

Considering this wide, interdisciplinary approach, in which frames play a central role, a serious debate of this issue calls for a comprehensive state of the art, including many different studies – namely, the works of Ortega y Gasset⁴, Jacques Derrida⁵, Erving Goffman⁶, Louis Marin⁷, Victor Stoichita⁸ and Werner Wolf⁹, among many others. Elli Doulikaridou, in a recent article entitled *Reframing Art History*, points out that “the «frame» is considered as a cognitive and structural element from the angle of visual semiotics. The frame has a functional value since it shows/presents/indicates – it is a sign of the index family, and provides the conditions of contemplation and critical reception of the object shown. In other words, it is an instrument of cognitive perception that encourages the articulation of visual elements and their appropriation by the viewer. But at the same time, when integrated within a system – or a complex visual environment such as a digital resource user interface (UI) – the frame becomes a nodal element. In other words, without shedding its previous qualities, the frame further enables a network of visual relations through visual perception”¹⁰. In this way, the author calls attention to the interface and to the role played by frames in the reception of a given image, extending this analysis to the digital realm. This particular aspect was also important for the development of the projects presented in this volume, authored by Inês Aguiar or Rosário Salema de Carvalho.

Azulejo frames, as understood in the context of the AzLab#14 conference¹¹, refer to the word *frame* as used in Art History¹². Border *azulejos* is the more “technical” and consecrated term to designate painted or outlined

1. GOFFMAN, Erving – *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974.
2. WOLF, Werner – “Introduction. Frames, Framings and Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media”. WOLF, Werner. BERNHART, Walter (ed.) – *Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media*. Amsterdam [u.a.]: Rodopi, 2006, 1.
3. Idem, *ibidem*, 8.
4. ORTEGA Y GASSET, Jose – “Meditations on the frame”. *Perspecta*, 26 (1990), 185-190.
5. DERRIDA, Jacques – *The truth in painting*, translated by G. Bennington and I. McLeod. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.
6. GOFFMAN, Erving – *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974.
7. MARIN, Louis – “Du cadre au décor ou la question de l’ornement dans la peinture”. *Rivista di Estetica* (1982), 16-35.
8. STOICHITA, Victor I. – *L’instauration du tableau*. Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1993.
9. WOLF, Werner. BERNHART, Walter (ed.) – *Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006.
10. DOULKARIDOU, Elli – “Reframing Art History”. *International Journal for Digital Art History*, 1, (2015), 69. Available at: <https://journals.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/dah/article/view/21638> (2015.09.02). doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.11588/dah.2015.1.21638.
11. The AzLab is a monthly seminar organised by the research group Az – Rede de Investigação em Azulejo, from the ARTIS – the Art History Institute of the Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa, in collaboration with the National Azulejo Museum. The aim of AzLab is to foster new analytical perspectives on issues related to *azulejo*, including the research, inventory, collecting, safeguarding, creation or dissemination of this art form. The idea of developing a research lab focused on *azulejos*, passing through the concept of experimental procedure associated with the lab spaces, is applied here to the discussion of work that is intended for promotion. Moreover, it also introduces a concept that is foreign to Art History, requiring therefore a multidisciplinary research. Every month, a new topic will be up for discussion, suggested by research projects, master and PhD theses, etc. Although national researchers and people connected to several institutions will be invited to collaborate, we will try, whenever possible, to enlist foreign researchers. The AzLab#14, devoted to “Azulejos and Frames”, was the 14th session of the seminar, and consisted of a special one-day conference (please see <https://blogazlab.wordpress.com/category/azulejos-and-frames/>).
12. Once more, the state of the art includes many different articles, among which MENDGEN, Eva (ed.) – *In Perfect Harmony: Picture + Frame, 1850-1920*. Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 1995; DURO, Paul – *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; MITCHELL, Paul. ROBERTS, Lynn – *A History of European Picture Frames*. London: Merrell Holberton, 1996.

tiles¹³ which, regardless of their shape, enclose a figurative, ornamental or patterned composition, just to mention the three main axes in the development of *azulejo* decorative motifs.

As in the wider context of frames studies, *azulejo* frames or borders are also regarded as areas of transition whose purpose is to separate or isolate, but which can also be used to join together and articulate different decorative elements. Moreover, frames can contribute to the appropriation and interpretation of the enclosed motifs, and constitute therefore a specific decorative element, endowed with a specific meaning. While it is true that frames stand for order, in the case of *azulejo* decorations this is to be understood in a much wider sense. In this context, frames also stand for integration, articulation and dialogue with other artistic modes of expression, often leading to global decorative solutions¹⁴.

The choice of the term *frames*, instead of *border tiles*, reflects the aim of opening *azulejo* studies to the more recent research perspectives and multidisciplinary debates surrounding the study of frames¹⁵.

At the same time, on a more practical note, museums worldwide have also devoted some attention to the frames included in their collections, cataloguing them and uploading the information on their websites. Although these processes are still in its infancy, good examples are the Yale Centre for British Art¹⁶ and the Royal Academy of Arts¹⁷. The website of the National Portrait Gallery, as a result of the exhibition *The Art of the Picture Frame*, organised by Jacob Simon in 1996, has also uploaded information concerning frames and including exhibition references, access to online collections and a database of British frame makers, articles and other publications¹⁸. This online resource is continuously updated and constitutes an important research tool, along with *The Frame Blog*, managed by Lynn Roberts¹⁹, where frames are promoted and debated, although within a more museological context. Another example worth mentioning is the exhibition *Frames: state of the art*, which took place at the Statens Museum for Kunst, in Copenhagen. Its catalogue, published in 2008, includes important theoretical contributions covering different aspects of frame studies²⁰.

The *AzLab#14: Azulejos and Frames* was born out of the meeting between the practical task of cataloguing *azulejos* and an in-depth research perspective, using the catalogued data as a means of studying an art form where the frames and the pictures they enclose are usually found together in their original locations, thus allowing for a contextualised interpretation of each decoration.

13. In these cases, the tiles' limiting role is not only physical but also visual.

14. It is worth noting that this issue also extends to painting, where frames were often designed in articulation with the spaces they were meant to decorate (BJERRE, Henrik – "Picture frames in the Royal Danish collections". *Frames. State of the Art*. Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2008. Available at [http://theframeblog.com/2015/08/09/frames-state-of-the-art-part-2-picture-frames-in-the-royal-danish-collections/\(2015.09.02\)](http://theframeblog.com/2015/08/09/frames-state-of-the-art-part-2-picture-frames-in-the-royal-danish-collections/(2015.09.02)), and were therefore closer to architecture than to painting (BISACCA, George. KANTER, Laurence B. – "Introduction". NEWBERY, Timothy J.. BISACCA, George. KANTER, Laurence B. (ed.) – *Italian Renaissance Frames*. Yale University Press, 11).

15. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the lectures presented in the following international conferences, along with the articles published in the proceedings: *Framings – Interdisciplinary Conference on Frames*, University of Copenhagen, 2013 (CARVALHO, Rosário Salema de – "Baroque azulejo's frames". *Framings*. Berlin: Logos Verlag Berlin, 2015, pp.193-210) and *Jeux et enjeux du cadre dans les systèmes décoratifs à l'époque moderne*, Paris, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, May 2014 (CARVALHO, Rosário Salema de – "The frames of Portuguese Baroque Azulejos", in print). The first one questioned the role of frames, extending "(...) the conceptual and material framework of interdisciplinarity between the Humanities, Social-and Communication Sciences (...) [to] contributions from art and media history and theory, philosophy and cultural studies, dance and theater studies, film theory and film semiotics, literature and music, communication science, visual and textile studies, and computer science" (*Framings – Interdisciplinary Conference on Frames*, University of Copenhagen, 2013). The second followed a different research direction, considering frames in their connection with modern day decorative systems. Finally, it should also be noted that in 2015 (May 15th), along with the exhibition *Frames in Focus: Sansovino Frames*, the National Gallery organised the Frame Study Day, with various lectures. A new conference is already scheduled for 2016, in Hamburg, entitled *Rahmen – Frames. Definitions of Function in the Pre-Modern Era*, aimed at debating the different theoretical approaches and their suitability for the study frames.

16. <http://collections.britishart.yale.edu>

17. <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk>

18. <http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/the-art-of-the-picture-frame.php>

19. <https://theframeblog.wordpress.com>

20. The J. Paul Getty Museum is currently hosting the exhibition "Louis Style: French Frames, 1610-1792" (open until January 3rd 2016).

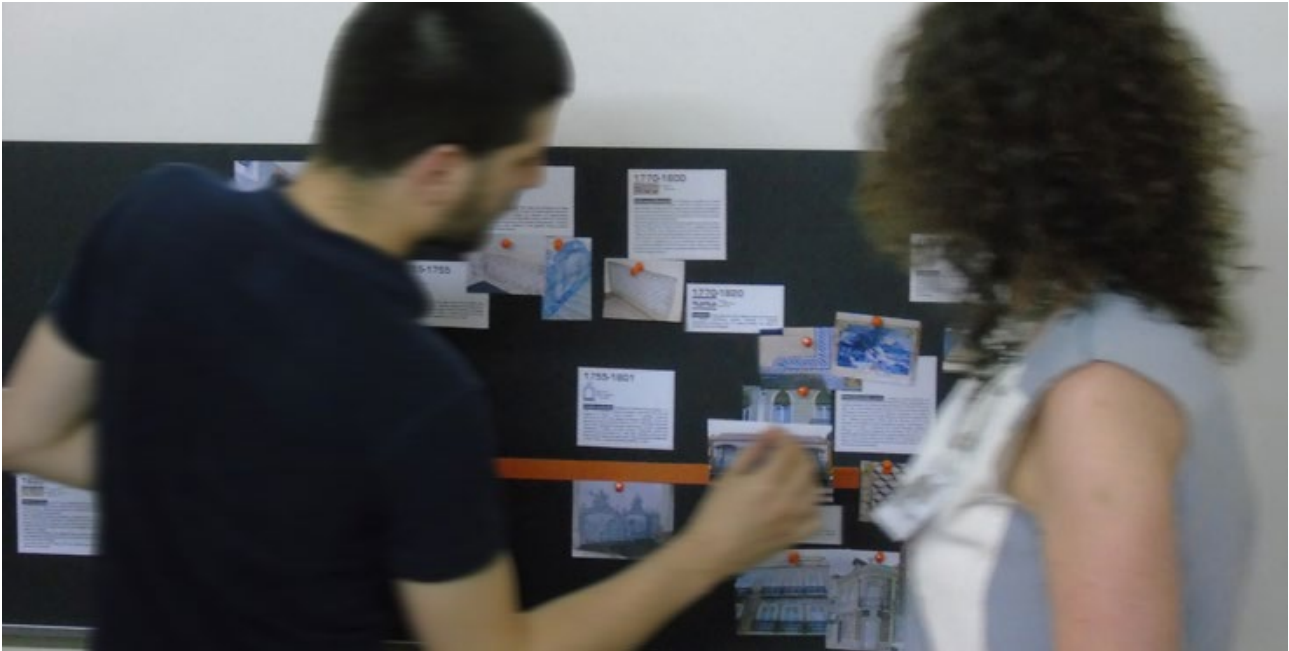


Fig.1 - Participants collaborating in the *azulejo* chronology during the AzLab#14 (photo by Ana Almeida)

Frames are no longer interpreted, today, in a merely functional manner, as purely separating elements, but rather as the media of a wide array of different meanings, active in the communication and perception of a given work. In the case of *azulejo* decorations, this comprehensive understanding is even more necessary, and tile coverings are usually regarded as complex communicational structures, integrated within global decorative systems.

The aim of the special *AzLab* session was to reveal the different frame types typical of the various periods of Portuguese *azulejo* history, and to determine how they influenced the construction of the spaces wherein they are located. The digital inventory of the *azulejo* heritage was also discussed, with a special emphasis on the issues of frame cataloguing and the adoption of a controlled vocabulary.

Even though not all of the contributions were included in the present volume, the following texts are nonetheless a good way of learning more about some of main historical trends of Portuguese *azulejo* frames. However, these texts do not cover the entire, five-century long history of Portuguese tile decorations. In order to bridge this gap, a small experimental project was launched through Facebook, consisting of a collaborative *azulejo* chronology. The followers of *Az Infinitum's* profile were asked to send images of frames and coverings still found in situ, which they considered significant or interesting. The images received were made available on Pinterest²¹, and it is still possible to contribute to each of the albums, organised according to the type or trend of each example, and following a chronological order.

This exercise has enabled us to recognise multiple frame types and to provide a brief description for each one, thus laying the ground for a global study of the entire history of Portuguese *azulejos*. Moreover, the systematisation achieved through specific projects and contributions will also allow, in the near future, to shed further light on the production and circulation of frame types, and to enrich our current understanding of the history of Portugal's *azulejo* tradition.

Generally speaking, it is presently known that the so-called *Hispano-Moresque azulejos* (late 15th century and the first half of the 16th century) already included borders and friezes used as finishing elements, although patterned

21. https://www.pinterest.com/az_redeazulejo



Fig.2 · The final collaborative *azulejo* chronology completed during the AzLab#14 (photo by Inês Aguiar)

azulejos could also be used for the same purpose. From the very beginning, frames have played a decisive role in creating architectural simulations and articulating the decorations with the surrounding space, a feature that would become a trademark of Portuguese *azulejo* decorations. The *maiolica* technique and the Renaissance and Mannerist periods (16th century) saw the autonomisation of this finishing element, in articulation with figurative or ornamental compositions. Chequered *azulejos* (late 16th century and early 17th century) are enclosed by friezes and clearly articulated with the architecture. 17th century decorations, on the other hand, are usually enclosed by one of three popular frame types, as noted in Inês Aguiar's text. With the increase of popularity of blue and white *azulejos* (1675-1750), frames became more complex – an issue addressed in Rosário Salema de Carvalho's and Ana Raquel Machado's contributions. During the Rococo period (1740-1760), divided into different stages, the separation between frame and representation is heightened not only by the shell-shaped motifs typical of this period, but also (and above all) by the colour scheme – frames become strongly polychrome and the figurative scenes are usually painted in blue and white or purple and white. Coimbra's tile production (18th century) is clearly distinguished from Lisbon's production both by the kind of painting and by the influence of the motifs found in Augsburg engravings, which led to more sinuous frames, "invading" the figurative sections. Although this interaction is typical of the so-called Great Joanine Production (1725-1750), developed in Lisbon's workshops, Coimbra's production stands out for the rhythm and asymmetry of its decorations. In the mid 18th century, in Lisbon, frames abandon the architectural simulations in favour of shell-shaped motifs, foliage, palm leaves, etc., displayed symmetrically, in an unusual decorative solution. With the onset of the Pombaline²² period, frames reacquire more traditional shapes and patterns, repeated later in 19th century façades, as argued in João Manuel Mimoso's contribution. During the Neoclassical period, frames become less full and less intricate, qualities that will only reappear in later revival movements, especially Neo-Baroque ones. Meanwhile, Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles are expressed above all through their frames, and Jorge Colaço's works are a good example of these trends, as shown in Patrícia Nóbrega's contribution. António Cota Fevereiro, on the other hand, argues that Art Nouveau tile decorations applied in buildings display an approach to frames influenced by the building itself and its façades. Finally, present day decorations, and the choice between using frames or rejecting them altogether, which has faced artists ever since the 1950s, is debated in Ana Almeida's And Inês Leitão's contributions.

22. This designation refers to the Marquis of Pombal, minister of king D. José I (1750-1777).

The collaborative chronology ended on the day scheduled for AzLab#14 (May 1st 2015), and the photos received via Facebook were printed and handed to the participants, who were asked to place them within the chronology [fig. 1, fig.2].

Finally, it is worth noting that the choice of English as the AzLab#14's official language, which will enable a wider circulation of this volume's contributions, led to a few translation issues, whose solution must be clarified. As seen above, the words *frame* and *border* translate the Portuguese word *emolduramento*, which stands for a "composition that encloses *azulejo* sections and/or coverings"²³. This concept, due to its wide scope, was used in replacement of the word *guarnição*, traditionally employed in Portuguese *azulejo* studies, but whose etymology, suggesting the idea of adornment or embellishment, was found to be unequally suited to all periods of Portuguese *azulejo* history. Moreover, the term *guarnição* was initially adopted in the context of patterned decorations, and does not reflect the specificities of figurative decorations, for example.

All previous attempts to create a controlled vocabulary for the field of *azulejo* studies²⁴ chose to separate these finishing elements according to their shape and use, dividing them into borders, edgings, friezes, corner tiles and end tiles.

These definitions were updated in 2014, in the *Azulejo in situ Inventory Guide*²⁵, and made available online. *Barra* is a kind of frame formed by two or three juxtaposing tiles; *cercadura* consists of a single row of tiles; a *friso* is formed by one third or one half of a tile; *cantos* are found at the beginning and end of the frames; and *cantoneiras* are used in wall edges.

In previous works published by ourselves or this research group, we have chosen to use English terms to designate these decorative elements: *barra* was translated as border, *cercadura* as edging, *friso* as frieze, *canto* as corner tile and *cantoneira* as end tile. However, it is easy to see that these terms are unable to convey the exact meaning of the Portuguese words: the use of the English word *frieze*, for instance, can prove misleading, due to its immediate association with architecture. For this reason, this volume has adopted a simpler solution, explained in the articles where this vocabulary is recurrently used. *Barras* were translated as *double azulejo frames*, *cercaduras* as *single azulejo frames* and *friezes* as *half or third azulejo frames*. As in the previous versions, *cantos* were translated as *corner azulejos*.

As we will see in the text concerning 18th century frames, a new term was added to the initial vocabulary – namely, mouldings, which stand for sinuous frames, designed together with the figurative sections.

On a final note, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Emmanuelle Delmas-Glass, who was generous enough to share her vast knowledge with all of the participants and authors. Furthermore, we would like to thank the National *Azulejo* Museum and its director, as well as highlight the Scientific Commission's decisive contribution to the success of AzLab#14 and the present volume, whose publication is also due to the support of ARTIS-IHA/FLUL, its director, Professor Vítor Serrão, and the editor of ARTISON, Professor Clara Moura Soares.

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23. CARVALHO, Rosário Salema de. PAIS, Alexandre. FIGUEIREDO, Ana Paula (coord.) – *Guia de Inventário de Azulejo in situ*. Lisboa: Az – Rede de Investigação em Azulejo (ARTIS - IHA/FLUL), Museu Nacional do Azulejo and Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana – Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico, 2014, 46. Available at < http://redeazulejo.fl.ul.pt/multimedia/File/guia_inventario_v1.pdf> (2015.09.02).
24. SIMÕES, João Miguel dos Santos – *Azulejaria em Portugal no século XVII*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1997 [1971] and MÂNTUA, Ana Anjos, et al – *Normas de Inventário – Artes Plásticas e Artes Decorativas – Cerâmica*. Lisboa: MC / IMC, 2007.
25. CARVALHO, Rosário Salema de. PAIS, Alexandre. FIGUEIREDO, Ana Paula, (coord.) – *Guia de Inventário de Azulejo in situ*. Lisboa: Az – Rede de Investigação em Azulejo (ARTIS - IHA/FLUL), Museu Nacional do Azulejo and Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana – Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico, 2014. Available at < http://redeazulejo.fl.ul.pt/multimedia/File/guia_inventario_v1.pdf> (2015.09.02).