

Maria Keil was born in 1914, in Sines. At the age of 15 she moved to Lisbon, alone, to study Fine Arts, and it was at the Escola de Belas Artes that she met Francisco Keil do Amaral, a future architect, whom she would marry in 1933 when she was 19 years old. Together they developed several projects, such as the one they did for Lisbon's subway stations in the 50s, when Maria Keil made the abstract and geometric tile panels that are today one of her most popular projects. Upon meeting Keil do Amaral, Maria also met an influential group of the time.

In 1936 Maria Keil began working at ETP Estúdio Técnico de Publicidade, founded by José Rocha, alongside people such as Ofélia Marques [see ERRATA-10], Selma Rocha, and Fred Kradolfer, among others. One of the publicity works she signed during her time at ETP was an advertisement for Pompadour girdles, and, to illustrate the slogan 'To wear the Pompadour girdle is to be twenty years old for your whole life', she drew an elegant but faceless woman, wearing a long dress and lurking behind a mask. The same topic would later be tackled by Keil's colleague at ETP, Bernardo Marques. In place of Keil's perspective, Marques presented three male characters—the doctor, the patriot and the travelled—contemplating women and explaining why women should wear a girdle. It is not clear whether either Keil or Marques would have had any input into the editorial content of these advertisements, but the difference of perspective and representation of women in each of their adverts for the same client is telling.

Maria Keil had a strong political position, and a direct relationship with women's movements. She designed the poster for the exhibition *Livros Escritos por Mulheres (Books written by Women)*, organized by Maria Lamas, a well-known feminist and activist, president of the National Council of Portuguese Women in 1947. This exhibition, which displayed around 3000 books written by women from all over the world, was censored and closed by PIDE mere days after opening for showing censored books. No extant version of the original poster has been found, but there is a

reproduction of it on the cover of the second issue of *Mulher* magazine, published by the National Council of Portuguese Women, which we present at the exhibition. She created the red poppy that symbolises the Democratic Movement of Women and, in 1975, designed a set of stamps commemorating the International Year of Women which represent active women working in four sectors of work: health, agriculture, education, and industry; underlining the constant struggle for equal participation in the workplace.

Despite having worked for the Salazar regime, in particular with the Secretariat for National Propaganda—for which she created the beautiful book *Lisboa*—Maria Keil's political position was against the regime. In addition to being arrested in 1953 for having gone to greet Maria Lamas at the airport (being persecuted by PIDE for her activism, Lamas was arrested for having participated in the World Congress of Women in Copenhagen), she was responsible in 1969 for the political poster *For a Free and Better Portugal-Vote CEUD* during the Marcelist elections, where change was a popular sentiment, though it would only arrive 6 years later. The cover she designed for Adriano Correia de Oliveira's record *Que Nunca Mais*, a year after the April Revolution, represents the release that the previous poster failed to achieve.

Conventional history, with its simple categories and labels, has difficulty documenting the work of women with multidisciplinary practices. Maria Keil's work has been documented mostly as illustration and tile design, consciously reducing her significant body of work in graphic design, such as the design of stamps, various book covers, the graphic arrangement of publications, numerous posters, record covers and advertisements. In an interview with Madalena Frago, Maria Keil confesses that her work in graphic arts was not 'well appreciated by other artists because (what they did) was not considered art, it was graphics, a commercial thing'. However, it was a work that continued throughout her life and until her death in 2012.

*Isabel Duarte, 2021*