

Assunção [Vitorino] Cordovil was born in Lisbon in 1947, into a large family. Determined to pursue her interest in drawing, after having first studied Secretarial training, Assunção Cordovil was able to join the Artistic Training course at the National Society of Fine Arts. One of two women in a class of four students, she was interested in an area that seemed to be creative and at the same time pragmatic.

From 1969 until 1972, Assunção Cordovil worked in the studio of the architect Sena da Silva, on several graphic projects including a school furniture project that he was developing in partnership with Leonor Álvares de Oliveira. From Sena da Silva's studio, she recalls that it was 'stimulating and a lot of fun'. There they developed film and enlarged the images and among many other projects, they assisted the organization of the First Design Exhibition of 1971. In this studio she met the designers Cristina Reis [see ERRATA-15] and Margarida Reis.

Encouraged by her friend Madalena Figueiredo—who would herself become a very important figure for design in Portugal through her determining role in the creation of the Designers Association—and along with Sena, Assunção Cordovil moved to Cooperativa Praxis in 1972, which she describes as 'an island in the middle of our society'. The Praxis cooperative was an experimental project, an association where fees and the distribution of work were openly discussed, that also had a competitive commercial presence in the market. At Praxis, she was a colleague of other designers such as Ana Filipa Tainha [see ERRATA-05], Maria José Beldock, Lurdes Ceirão and it was where she met the designer Alda Rosa [see ERRATA-08]. Of the associative nature

(that often resulted in long discussions about money), and the atmosphere of camaraderie, Assunção Cordovil appreciated the organized side of Praxis, where she learned how to make worksheets and budget design projects.

From 1978, and as a direct consequence of the country's financial outlook after the 25th of April, Praxis dissolved and Assunção began to work at the company Risco-Projectistas e Consultores de Design, SA, which architect Daciano da Costa had founded in 1974. In this design and architecture company, she had the opportunity to collaborate on various signage projects for theatres, hospitals, institutions, among others. From 1984 she became the coordinator of the graphic sector, until 2007, when it was dissolved. Since then, she is the manager of Ilha de Ideias, a design company she founded.

What could have been a thorn in her side, having studied secretarial training instead of Fine Arts, is actually what distinguishes Cordovil's approach as a designer. Her knowledge of financial and team management has made her an insightful designer, knowing the importance of asking 'the right questions' at the moment of client briefing, with the skills to then manage a team in order to maintain a healthy design firm. But this diversification of the role of 'designer' is problematic for design history to deal with. Assunção Cordovil's increased involvement in management roles, themselves an often undervalued and vital part of the design process, at the expense of more authorial involvement with the creation of design objects, has left a working legacy that is not easily assessed by an artefact-centred appreciation of design history. *Isabel Duarte, 2021*