

# EXPANDED SUMMARY

*Not so Square nor so Round: Educational Trails and Sensitive Perceptions*

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## Introduction

The act of drawing is an act of thinking, the content of which goes beyond rationality. This paper was developed around that premise, starting from a historical document in the late 1930s, the “Geometry Notebook” belonging to the student-teacher Maria Altiva Costa in Uberaba, Minas Gerais, Brazil. This study aims to explore the material and evidential condition of this document, considering it a place for appreciating and constructing a sensitive view of the world. Through it, we follow traces of the history of a religious school focused on training teachers within the context of the *Escola Nova* (New School), the second phase of the modernist movement in Brazil, and the corresponding emphasis on doing, practicing and living together. Using a theoretical-methodological procedure and from a perspective of dialogue, we started with the intersection of the notebook with several other sources. The evidentiary process culminates by proposing a different way of looking at the old notebooks of a teaching considered formal and conservative.

The central document of the discussion belongs to the collection of the MCNSD, a French Catholic women’s religious order based in the city of Uberaba-MG since 1885. Among the objects and documents linked to the history of the Congregation, there are teaching materials, accounting and administrative records, several photo albums and school documents such as notebooks and report cards.

The paper is divided into the following parts: a brief history of the educational institution where Maria Altiva's drawing notebook was produced, then extensive pages that focus on considering what the pages of the “Geometry Notebook” lead us to perceive, think and discuss and, finally, how the educational trails led us to sensitive and, indeed, inspiring perceptions.

## Our Lady of Sorrows School of Uberaba (CNSD)..

The congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary of Monteils was founded in Bor in the Aveyron region of France in 1850 (Bichuette; Lopes, 1986) with an ecclesiastical vocation and dedicated to literacy. On the

initiative of the bishop of Goiás, Dom Cláudio José Gonçalves Ponce de Leão, in 1885, the CNSD was founded to offer basic education to the daughters of the local elite.

In 1906, the educational activities of the CNSD were expanded with the opening of the *Escola Normal*, a program designed to prepare teachers to work in primary schools throughout the country.

When Maria Altiva signed the sketchbook on November 30, 1937, the CNSD had just celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. In the first decades of the school's existence, the Dominican sisters had witnessed the Proclamation of the Republic, the period of the polarization of national politics between the states of Minas Gerais and São Paulo, the 1930 republican Revolution and the counter-coup, followed by the establishment of the *Estado Novo* under the control of the self-appointed president Getúlio Vargas (Sodré, 1977).

In Brazil, several educational reforms took place. The first, a republican reform, was called the Benjamin Constant Reform (1890). Later, at the dawn of the new century, the Eptácio Pessoa Code (1901) emerged and, in the following decade, the Rivadávia Correa Reform (1911) and the Carlos Maximiliano Reform (1915) and, subsequently, the João Luiz Alves and Rocha Vaz Reform of 1925. In addition to regulating primary education, these reforms were also attentive to secondary education, as stated by Palma Filho (2005).

The "Geometry Notebook" of 1937 by young Maria is a concrete testimony to the teaching and learning of that time, especially about geometric and free design at the CNSD in Uberaba and offers us elements for a sensitive reading that goes beyond the technique, the educational context of the moment, and reaches us these days through our retinas.

## Yellow pages, dashes and stains

The school drawing notebook has a greaseproof paper cover, front and back, and more sheets of newsprint. Everything is slightly yellowed and there are some stains that tell of the 85 years that have passed since its conception. The drawing sheets

are approximately A5 in size (148 x 210 mm), are arranged horizontally and are interspersed with sheets of tissue paper of the same size that protect the drawings. They are bound together in a booklet and reinforced with pink cord at two central points. There are eight sheets in the notebook.

Each sheet has two areas or two distinct stages. The first “stage” has no colors applied and consists of geometric shapes repeated in various positions. There are triangles, circles, cubes, polygons, polyhedrons, stars, shapes drawn with a compass, and then on to plane and spatial geometry. Few of the geometric shapes used contain shading or hatching. Other techniques that are still used today for drawing, using different pencils and graphite, are not identified. The second “stage” on all sheets is composed of drawings based on the geometric shapes under study, with greater or lesser evidence, proving that in addition to the information about the geometric shapes, there was also the requirement to transfer them to the composition, representing certain things easily associated with the shapes found in the first stage.

Four pages and their compositions were analyzed, considering the principles defended by the New School movement and the contemporary artistic styles of the notebook and experienced in Brazil, namely: modernism, futurism and cubism.

The works of Umberto Boccioni and Lyonel Feininger were used to analyze the figurative compositions in the Geometry Notebook studied.

## Conclusion

To conclude, leaving open other possibilities for reading and appreciating these yellowed pages of Maria Altiva's sketchbook, it is worth highlighting that its pages lead us to perceive, think about and dialogue concerning the combinations between systematized teaching and artistic, poetic possibilities.

On the one hand, the notebook indicates models of professional education organized in Brazilian education in a confessional school in Uberaba in the 1930s and even indicates what that education was, the ideology that generated it and the

society that received it at the crucial moment of rupture from a republican model to the democratic and even dictatorial model of the *Estado Novo*.

On the other hand, this notebook and the argumentative efforts contained in this paper allow for a glimpse into some of the educational trails and lead to sensitive and, indeed, inspiring perceptions for the present time so that it might be possible to harmonize the teaching of geometry with the teaching of art; to harmonize the concepts learned from mathematics and forms with subjective and poetic concepts about sea, sailboats, blue skies, flying birds, handmade treats and the flavours that exist in the mouth and in the heart. Perhaps in this way, not so much on land or in the sky, not so square or so round, the youth of the 21st Century can draw perfect geometric shapes and dream of sailboats gliding through the mists of the sea<sup>1</sup>.

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