

Né Santelmo doesn't like to be still. Part of her work process involves going for walks with her dogs, visiting a friend, seeing an exhibition or movie. This energy, these varied interests are visible in her work, not only for the different areas it explores, such as drawing, photography, scenography, music, and design, but also for the combination of techniques she uses. This experimentation is especially visible in the explorations she makes with photocopies, bringing together everyday objects with images of the classical arts, like a piece of lace with a baroque sculpture. But it is not just the search for unexpected relationships between materials and techniques that Né Santelmo explores in her working process; she is also interested in finding ways to collaborate with clients, printers, and colleagues around her, exploring the genuinely collaborative nature of design. What makes her work so interesting is precisely this interweaving of interests, materials, and directions. And it's also the reason why this work is not easy to categorize.

In the late 1970's—still a student at what was then called *Escola Superior de Belas-Artes do Porto*—Né Santelmo was part of an exceptional musical project that not only produced music, but also invented instruments, created costumes, and wrote essays, with its basis in an ethnographic project called *Vai de Roda* that investigated Portuguese cultural and musical heritage. Born in *Trás-os-Montes*, Né Santelmo's contribution began with a rigorous observation, based on drawing, landscapes and studies of the women from this region. Inspired by these women, she found the materials, colours and overlapping layers that she would then bring to the creation of costumes for the group. In the landscapes, she discovered the serenity and colours later used to create the sets. As is often the case, in Né Santelmo's creative process the solution for designing the cover of the first album came while she was manipulating the sketches to build the sets (themselves a response to a particular design problem, needing to be easily transportable for the group's upcoming international tour).

Soon after finishing the Graphic Design BA, Né Santelmo began collaborating with designer João Nunes with whom she designed several corporate identities, taking advantage of the moment when Portuguese companies began to engage graphic designers for their visual campaigns. Doors were also opened on a cultural level, and many musical and artistic projects flourished, leading to her involvement in creating record covers for bands such as *Requiem Pelo Vivos* and the iconic Porto band *Ban*.

These were some of the projects that marked the beginning of Né Santelmo's path in graphic design. This path, still being trod today, has been fruitful, with several moments of interest for the history of Portuguese design, but it has, above all, been a path taken freely, with an emphasis on experimentation and creativity, and a desire to learn and grow.

Ana Menezes was born in Coimbra in 1963. After graduating in the Drawing Course by *Cooperativa Árvore* in Porto in 1987, she started working with Né Santelmo and João Nunes. One of her works presented in the catalogue of the exhibition *Nitidez* shows an acute interest in drawing. In 1988 Ana Menezes started teaching Illustrations in the Fashion School CITEM and participated in the IV Graphic Design *Cerveira Bienal*.

Designers Ana Menezes and Né Santelmo decided to continue their collaboration further and, in 1990, founded the studio *Pã Design*. Interested in exploring the tactile possibilities of design, they took pleasure in exploring different materials in their projects and were enthusiastic adopters of technology—from photocopiers to a brand-new software called 'Photoshop'—as new means of image creation and manipulation. Managing a design studio in the pre-internet age, a large part of their social engagement was done by creating seasonal cards and printed portfolios they would send to clients which they took as opportunities to further explore the materialities of design. In one of those seasonal gifts, their clients received a set of instructions on how to assemble a carnival mask with nothing but the paper the instructions were written in.

The intertwined stories of *Pã Design*, Ana Menezes, Né Santelmo and João Nunes are a signal example of the difficulty that mixed and inconsistent authorship can cause for design history. The three designers have collaborated in a variety of configurations, variously signing as 'Atelier João Nunes', 'João Nunes and Né Santelmo', 'Ana Menezes, João Nunes and Né Santelmo', 'Pã Design', and—since 2004, when *Pã Design* and *Atelier João Nunes* joined forces—as 'Nunes e Pã'.

Though usually involving the same actors, the chequered record that this shape-shifting leaves behind causes a problem for the kind of stories that design history likes to tell, which can easily result in misattributions. In the course of this research, we came across a number of projects that during our education had been referred to—whether formally or informally—as being the work of just one of these designers, and found that they were in fact collaborations. This is not the fault of the attributions themselves (they are actually some of the most explicit attributions in the exhibition; with each individual participant usually named, as well as detailing whether they were responsible for design, photography, or both), but of how the telling and retelling of history sands down the rough edges of complex stories, allowing errors and omissions to creep in, and solidifying them into a story that all too often excludes the women involved.

*Isabel Duarte, 2021*