

‘At ten I wanted to make book covers.’

Cândida Teresa Ruivo was born in 1955 in Portimão and, in 1962, moved to Nampula, in north-eastern Mozambique, with her father. Since her childhood, she was a compulsive reader, ‘that led me to a passion for books and their covers, which allowed me to foresee what was stored inside those stacks of sheets filled with thousands of small letters’. Motivated by a passion for drawing, reading and a taste for telling stories, Cândida Teresa Ruivo arrived in Lisbon in 1975, to study Sculpture in the Fine Arts School. Though the building was decrepit, she found a dynamic environment that smelled of change. ‘Life at ESBAL at that time felt like a good shock’. Not wanting to pursue an artistic career, Cândida Teresa Ruivo decided to leave sculpture and join the newly created Design course where she could ‘answer practical questions, with creativity, with drawing and... I could even make book covers’. A student of the first BA in Communication Design in Portugal, she started the course with about 14 colleagues and finished it with just five.

Being so close to the aftermath of the Carnation Revolution, associative movements had a significant place in society. Cândida Teresa Ruivo’s involvement with the Student Association would provide her with her first taste of an editorial environment as she participated in the production of their magazine *ArteOpinião*. This irreverent editorial project, encompassing 16 issues across four years, was designed by Cândida Teresa Ruivo and her colleagues Rui Cochofel, and Eduardo Coutinho, amongst others. Soon after finishing her degree, and informed by this editorial experience, she began working in newspapers, (including *PortugalHoje* and *Expresso*), until 1984 when, with a group of colleagues, she founded the iconic music weekly *BLITZ*.

When Cândida Teresa Ruivo started *BLITZ*, she recalls, ‘we were not sure it would be a successful publication, and we worked without knowing what to expect in the following week. For some reason, I got into the habit of putting the cover on the wall whenever we finished an issue. I only realized that we had been doing the *BLITZ* for a long time when one day I ran out of space on the walls to put more covers’. Contrary to Cândida Teresa Ruivo’s initial reservations, *BLITZ* was a

tremendously popular publication. As well as resonating with younger generations’ newfound sense of cultural and counter-cultural freedom, *BLITZ* was also one of few accessible windows to national and international music at a time when it was not easy to access such information beyond print. As a way of engaging directly with their audience, *BLITZ* created a section called *Pregões e Declarações* (Proclamations and Declarations)—a participatory chat where readers were invited to send in sentences to be printed. Of the sentences received, the editorial team would select and publish on the cover the sentence that best illustrated that week’s mood in the room, or an event worth noting. Cândida Teresa Ruivo initially volunteered to read the submissions and pick out a favourite to print each week. Underestimating the reach of the newspaper, what began as an easy task soon became a herculean effort, as the ever-increasing number of submissions from their burgeoning readership would pile up, culminating in entire postal sacks arriving at the *BLITZ* offices, containing nothing but reader submissions.

Cândida Teresa Ruivo directed *BLITZ* for 17 years, designing almost half of the thousand covers and countless features, listings, and other content, capturing a moment in the cultural development of the country, and reaching a vast and dedicated readership in the process. However, for design history’s insistence on progressional narratives, of one project leading to another, with a consistent style and varied portfolio, one project for almost two decades is not deemed enough for a designer to be considered relevant to history. After a long period of intense editorial work, Cândida Teresa Ruivo returned to school, first to undertake a master’s degree, and then becoming a teacher, an activity that she kept in parallel with her graphic design work. If it is true that she had been passionate about making newspapers, knowing their potential to connect with their young audience, she also quickly fell in love with the educational project, an activity that has continued until today and to which she works with great dedication. ‘I never made a cover for a book’, Cândida Teresa Ruivo says, but this should not prevent history recognising the significance of her career and work.

*Isabel Duarte, 2021*