

***Notes on women's education at the firsts  
Arts and Crafts schools in Porto Alegre:  
poetics, technics and formation***

**Ana Carolina Cruz Acom<sup>1</sup>  
Joana Bosak de Figueiredo<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> PhD in Society, Culture and Borders (UNIOESTE). <http://lattes.cnpq.br/7164611825752287>, [anacarolinaa-com@gmail.com](mailto:anacarolinaa-com@gmail.com), <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7106-0401>

<sup>2</sup> PhD in Letters and Literature (UFGRS), Professor in the BA in History of Art at UFRGS. Author and translator

This article is the result of bibliographical research, through documents, articles, theses and dissertations, which focused on the history of the first high schools of arts and crafts and female training in Rio Grande do Sul. The research is an integral part of the inter-institutional project: *Escolas de Artes e Ofícios no Brasil: história, propostas formativas e continuidades na formação do Bacharelado em Design de Moda* in Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina (UDESC). The involves researchers from several public institutions and private from all over Brazil. The research theme in the project is the history and the teaching and learning processes developed in the Schools of Arts and Crafts in the country, and how the formation of higher education courses in Fashion takes place.

In general, the delimitation of themes refers to the region of each researcher and our research proposal started from Knowledge and practices in the regions of southern Brazil: arts and crafts between poetics, technique and professionalization. The process of teaching and learning manual skills and crafts is at the origin of studies on “training in fashion”, as well as studies on creation and the very concept of “modernity”. In this way, when we investigate in Porto Alegre, in the first half of the 20th century, the first signs of an education focused on manual arts and the production of clothing, ultimately; we find two main institutions: O *Instituto Parobé*, created around 1906, inside the School of Engineering, which in 1920 creates a female division, called (in 1929) as *Instituto de Educação Doméstica e Rural*, and later *Escola Técnica Feminina Senador Ernesto Dornelles* (1946).

When we observe the studies of other researchers on these institutions, we realize that, inevitably, the research deals with the history of female education in the south of the country, which must be understood as a result of interpretations, representations and power relations throughout the history of occupation and colonization of this “Continent”. Consequently, when verifying the curriculum, reports or newspaper excerpts, a post-critical approach on gender perceptions characteristic of the period becomes necessary.

The curriculum of the courses, then, has a double implication between technical training and training for the home – and this confusion of the technical trade of being, ultimately, a “housewife professional”, as one of the only alternatives for female training. According to reports from graduates, some parents did not authorize another study, but this was a desirable training, as a kind of “symbolic dowry”, to use a terminology that is close to the writings of Pierre Bourdieu (1996), on symbolic capital. There were also cases of less well-off families, in which there was a need for employment, and these trainings made it possible to work as governesses or milliners, or even the traditional “sewing for others” in order to supplement the family income.

The mark of positivism in this institutionalization of female domestic education can be seen in the writings of Auguste Comte (1978) in the 19th century. The woman should be the “tutelary angel”, “the queen of the home”, who morally educates her children. Comte

says that the angel must be equally invoked as a protector and as a model (COMTE, 1978). According to the author, the material conditions of the domestic constitution itself resulted from the moral and social destiny of the home in which the woman was responsible. Comte (1978) states that a woman's fundamental dual role was to be mother and wife, enclosed in her domestic sanctuary and ensuring the moral improvement of her husband and children. This role would be equivalent, in relation to the family, to that of the spiritual power in the State.

About the Escola Técnica Senador Ernesto Dornelles, the authors Guacira Louro and Dagmar Meyer (1993) pose the situation that: a technical school, of a professional nature, created with the proposal of training girls from the working classes, was conceived under the aegis of the imagination of the dominant groups, as the ultimate objective was to reconcile the talented craftswoman with the economical housewife. The authors present an article in the newspaper *Correio do Povo* about the school, in which the directors of the institution described the role of preparing women for the home and for the country: Here you learn to take care of the family and our tradition: and to give you an idea of our general teaching program, suffice it to say that a girl who does her internship here is absolutely capable of taking care of everything from simple home cooking to the most delicate works such as the making of artistic tapestry and fine metal sculpture work. In addition to being good housewives, our students, within their own homes, will be able to help with the domestic budget, working on industrial artifacts with an artistic presentation that, as we know, have great acceptance in the trade. This, in a way, fixes the woman within her own home, giving her a favorable climate where she can become attached to the family, as she feels useful when helping her husband and children, cooperating to give them more comfort. In this way, we will preserve our tradition, ensuring that our housewives do not have to leave their homes to carry out activities outside their homes. Furthermore – women thus have no need to compete by invading men's sectors.

The intention to train competent housewives was explicit in the educational ideals. The School would be a kind of internship before marriage, and the defense of following this training materialized all the elements of a gender construction. Training as a dressmaker, milliner, upholsterer or decorator represented important "symbolic gifts", which valued the girls in the "marriage market". We can see these impressions in the text by the famous writer and journalist of *Diário de Notícias* at the time, Josué Guimarães, on April 26, 1947. With the title: "Where a woman learns to be a perfect housewife: the idea, the story and the life of the female technical school".

Female education in Liceus, in Rio Grande do Sul, has been developed since the 19th century, but mainly under the aegis of the State, in the early 20th century. The bibliographic and documental research sought to find relationships between female education and

teaching in arts and crafts. The investigation showed the permanent mark of the curriculum aimed at training limited to the domestic horizon. Thus, in relations with literature and cinema, we perceive the maintenance of fixed patterns of behavior and female insertion, in which the issue of gender is always marked by domesticity and care for the house and children.

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