

Domus Quieta. Facultas Certa: Dialoghi all’italiana nel Palacete Lambertini

Keywords

Nicola Bigaglia (1841–1908), Michel’angelo Lambertini (1862–1920), Palacete Lambertini, Italian Architecture in Portugal, Decorative Arts

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of Venetian architect Nicola Bigaglia (1841–1908) on Portuguese architecture, with particular emphasis on his celebrated Palacete Lambertini project. Invited to Portugal in 1880 to support the modernization of industrial education, Bigaglia made significant contributions to architecture and the decorative arts, fostering the adoption of *Art Nouveau* in Portugal. His projects, notably on Lisbon’s Avenida da Liberdade, incorporate Italian architectural elements blended with Portuguese sensibilities, as seen in his award-winning works such as Palácio Lima Mayer and Palacete Lambertini. Focusing on the Palacete Lambertini, a residence commissioned by the Italian-Portuguese musician Michel’angelo Lambertini, this article explores Bigaglia’s use of classical elements — including Serlian arches and culturally resonant inscriptions — to interpret how Italian architectural forms were adapted to express new meanings within the Portuguese context. Through detailed analysis of this mansion alongside comparisons with contemporary architectural trends, this study sheds light on the interplay between Bigaglia’s Italian heritage and his Portuguese surroundings, underscoring processes of cultural adaptation and the dialogue between designer and client identities. Marking the 120th anniversary of the Palacete Lambertini, this paper deepens our understanding of Italian architectural influence in Portugal and its evolving cultural significance.

Biography

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Domus Quiet. Facultas Certa: Italianate Dialogues in the Palacete Lambertini

Introduction

Michel'angelo Lambertini (1862-1920) was a pivotal figure in Portuguese music and culture at the turn of the 20th century¹. A true polymath, Lambertini combined his Italian heritage with a robust academic background in music, studying piano, harmony, and counterpoint at the National Conservatory in Lisbon. Building on his family's musical legacy, established by his grandfather Luigi Gioacchino Lambertini², a noted piano manufacturer from Bologna, and his father, Evaristo Lambertini³, a musician and instrument dealer, Michel'angelo expanded the 'Lambertini' business into publishing and music promotion while, simultaneously, assumed a role as a music critic, and publisher. He founded the Chamber Music Society in 1899 and the Great Portuguese Orchestra in 1906, advancing Lisbon's musical landscape. During the First Republic (1910-1926), Michel'angelo was appointed by the Portuguese government to set up a collection of musical instruments from palaces and religious institutions, which became the embryonic nucleus of a Musical Instrument Museum and is still extremely important today in the collection of the Portuguese National Music Museum.

2.1 Lambertini's legacy also includes a social circle of prominent artists and intellectuals, and a home designed by architect Nicola Bigaglia (1841-1908), symbolizing his sophisticated taste. This study focuses on this building, analyzing it formally and symbolically as a statement of Italian cultural identity within the Portuguese context. This Italianate site of encounter and dialogue also provides a framework for exploring the legacy of Nicola Bigaglia in Portugal – an architect of Italian origin whose work has been only minimally explored in Portuguese academic literature, leaving much still to be uncovered.

Originally from Venice and established in Portugal since the 19th century, Nicola Bigaglia was a prominent architect, educator, and artist. Although information about his personal life is scarce, Sousa Viterbo, a renowned Portuguese archeologist and historian contemporary to Bigaglia, points to the fact that Bigaglia's father was an architecture professor, and two of his brothers were also architects⁴. He was recruited around 1888 to contribute to Portugal's industrial education reform, joining other European specialists as an instructor in ornamental modeling. Bigaglia was respected for his architectural designs – primarily in Lisbon but also in projects like Casa de João Santiago in Leça da Palmeira – and was celebrated for his artistic talents as a draughtsman and

¹ Ana Cristina Brissos and Rui Vieira Nery, "Lambertini, Michel'angelo," in *Encyclopédia da Música em Portugal no século XX*, ed. S. Castelo-Branco (Círculo de Leitores/ Temas e Debates, 2010), 684. Note to the readers: all translations from Portuguese to English are by the authors.

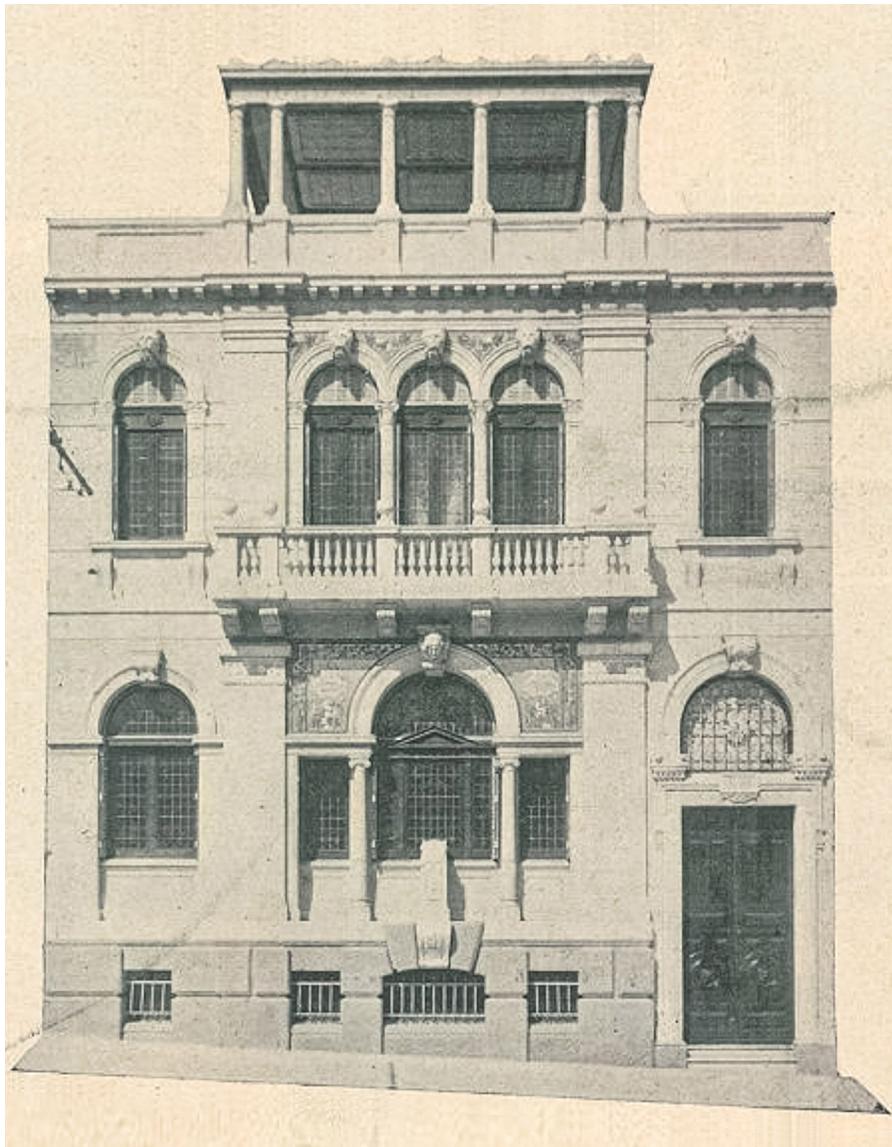
² Luigi Gioacchino Lambertini (1790-1864) emigrated from Bologna to Portugal in 1836 due to political reasons. He was a colleague of Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) at the Liceo Filarmonico. Although he studied piano, Luigi established himself in Lisbon as a piano manufacturer and not a performer, founding the renowned "Lambertini" company. Daniela Macchione, "Lambertini," in *Treccani Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, accessed October 1, 2024, at [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lambertini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)./](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lambertini_(Dizionario-Biografico)./)

³ Evaristo Lambertini (1827-1900), also studied piano like his father Luigi, extending his music studies to singing distinguishing himself as an accomplished performer. Since he came to Lisbon as a child, his music training took place at the National Conservatory in Lisbon. Daniela Macchione, "Lambertini," in *Treccani Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, accessed October 1, 2024, at [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lambertini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)./](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lambertini_(Dizionario-Biografico)./)

⁴ About Nicola Bigaglia's father, see: Sousa Viterbo, *Dicionário Histórico e Documental dos Architectos, Engenheiros e Constructores Portuguezes* (Imprensa Nacional, 1922), 250. One of Nicola's brothers, Pietro Bigaglia, was also in Portugal and is mentioned as a teacher, apart from being an architect. When Nicola passed away, Pietro finished one of his projects, as referred to by Sousa Viterbo, *Dicionário Histórico e Documental dos Architectos, Engenheiros e Constructores Portuguezes* (Imprensa Nacional, 1922), 253.

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Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini, main facade photograph between 1904 and 1906. *Ilustração Portugueza* (11 June 1906): 502.



watercolorist. His work embodies the convergence of Venetian artistry and Portuguese architectural traditions, leaving a lasting impression on both education and urban aesthetics.

In preparing this article, we employed a substantial theoretical foundation, consulting a range of historical sources such as early 20th-century periodicals, historiographical and bibliographic materials, and documents from the Lisbon Municipal Archive. Through data triangulation, we conducted an extensive survey of architectural projects by Nicola Bigaglia, tracing his activity throughout his nearly two-decade career in Portugal. Given the breadth and diversity of his work, which includes single-family homes, rental buildings, summer houses, baths, social welfare architecture, and theaters, this mapping is intended as a work-in-progress that contributes to the study of Bigaglia's architectural journey in Portugal.

Our research reveals that Bigaglia undertook both independent architectural projects and collaborative ventures, notably with fellow Italians Alfredo Coffino (1869-1925) on the residence of fellow countryman Angelo Izabella in Lisbon, and Luigi Manini (1848-1936) on Bussaco Palace Hotel, a commission from Portuguese Crown through Emídio Navarro (1844-1905). His portfolio also in-

cludes numerous interventions on pre-existing structures and interior decoration projects⁵. In addition to archival research, we conducted *in situ* visits to Palacete Lambertini on Avenida da Liberdade in Lisbon and Quinta de Santiago in Leça da Palmeira to collect images for study and analysis.

While references to Bigaglia's arrival alongside other international artists in the 1880s, as part of an educational reform led by Emídio Navarro, exist, details regarding Bigaglia's professional or personal life prior to his arrival remain sparse⁶. The most extensive Portuguese historiographical source on Bigaglia dates to 1922, a reference work documenting architects, engineers, and builders active in Portugal⁷. This text suggests that Bigaglia began his architectural career in Venice but provides no further detail, while offering a substantial record of his works in Portugal⁸, aligning with our findings at the Lisbon Municipal Archive from February to October 2024. However, we sadly observed that most of Bigaglia's single-family houses and income-generating buildings in Lisbon have been demolished, leaving few examples in the capital today⁹. This near eradication heightens the relevance of studying surviving works as a safeguard of Bigaglia's architectural legacy, a figure well-regarded in Portugal, as evidenced by his projects featured on the cover of the magazine *A Construção Moderna: Revista Quinzenal Ilustrada* ("Modern Construction: Biweekly Illustrated Magazine").

A Construção Moderna, published between 1900 and 1919, is acknowledged as Portugal's first specialized publication in this domain, aligning its program with similar international journals. Dedicated to the dissemination of technical, aesthetic, and scientific information in construction, it reflected a broader commitment, alongside awards and other initiatives, to elevate architectural quality in Portugal and to engage with the latest international trends. In this publication, we spotlight eight of Bigaglia's architectural works¹⁰. Six of these are grand, single-family residences (*palacetes*), while those commissioned by Manuel Motta Nogueira (1904) and M. F. da Costa Neves (1905) are rental buildings. The analysis of these buildings reveals that, particularly in the case of the latter, they were designed as residences for the elite. *A Construção Moderna* serves as an excellent resource for understanding Bigaglia's work and gaining insight into the contemporary construction landscape, as its articles are richly illustrated and provide substantial descriptions. The magazine also highlights the favorable reception of the architect's works, particularly through the reference to Casa João Borges Alves, described as possessing a "special aesthetic that bears the unmistakable mark of the artist who designed it". It further states: "for quite some time, to our disappointment, and undoubtedly to that of our readers as well, we have not included projects from our friend and distinguished architect, Mr. Nicola Bigaglia"¹¹. These statements clearly articulate the high regard in which Bigaglia's works were held by his contemporaries and the reading public of *A Construção Moderna*.

These architectural designs, which, according to the articles, do not necessitate extensive descriptions due to their inherent quality, also highlight functionality and a receptiveness to innovation. This is exemplified by the Casa de Santiago, the aforementioned countryside residence in Leça da Palmeira, which already featured gas installation and displayed a meticulous spatial distribution between service areas and family and reception zones. This characteristic is consistent across various projects of a more urban nature¹².

⁵ Although not the primary focus of this article, we would like to highlight two sites where decorative elements remain exceptionally well-preserved: Casa da Ínsua in Penalva do Castelo and Quinta de Santiago in Leça da Palmeira.

⁶ Teresa Cunha Ferreira, "Arquitectos italianos em Portugal: o século XIX e o caso de Alfredo D'Andrade e Sebastiano G. Locati," *Estudos Italianos em Portugal Nova Série*, no. 2 (2007): 240.

⁷ We refer to the already cited Sousa Viterbo, *Diccionario Historico*.

⁸ Viterbo, *Diccionario Historico*, 252.

⁹ Examples of demolished residences include the house of Mr. Guilherme Gomes Coelho, demolished in 1959 (Raquel Henriques da Silva, "As Avenidas Novas de Lisboa, 1900-1930 Vol. I," (Master diss., Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1985), 238); the house of Mr. Manuel Motta Nogueira, demolished in 1989 (António Francisco Arruda de Melo Cota Fevereiro, "José António Jorge Pinto, vida e obra," *Revista Arquitetura Lusitana*, no. 8 (2015): 81, <https://repositorio.ulisboa.pt/handle/10451/38285>); the house of Mr. Angelo Izabella, demolished in 1990 and the house of Mr. João Borges Alves, demolished in 1972 (António Francisco Arruda de Melo Cota Fevereiro, "Modernidade e Tradição: os traços arquitectónicos na Avenida Ressano Garcia no período entre 1904 a 1909," *ARTis On*, no. 13 (2022): 91-92, <https://doi.org/10.37935/ih.aon2022.0018>), among other buildings in the Avenida Duque d'Ávila área (Raquel Henriques da Silva, "As Avenidas Novas de Lisboa, 1900-1930 Vol. I," (Master diss., Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1985), 255).

¹⁰ We are referring to the projects for the following buildings: Casa Pires de Aguiar (no. 98, June 1903, p. 105), Casa Manuel Motta Nogueira (no. 118, January 1904, p. 265), Casa Marcelino Branco (no. 164, May 1905, p. 58), Casa M. F. Costa Neves (No. 165, May 1905, p. 65), Casa Pereira de Mattos (no. 175, August 1905, p. 145), Casa Angelo Izabella (no. 178, September 1905, p. 169), Casa Visconde da Lagoa (no. 198, September 1906, p. 41), and Casa João Borges Alves (no. 219, April 1907, p. 209).

¹¹ "Casa do Sr. João Borges Alves. Na Avenida Ressano Garcia. Projecto do arquitecto, sr. Nicola Bigaglia," *A Construção Moderna* no. 219 (April 10, 1907): 209.

¹² It is noteworthy that a posthumous article in the magazine still highlights a construction by Bigaglia, which we have not included due to its departure from the more urban typology of the Palacete Lambertini.

Two of Bigaglia's buildings still standing in Lisbon received the Prémio Valmor de Arquitetura¹³: Palácio Lima Mayer, now the Spanish Consulate, won first prize in 1902, and Palacete Lambertini received an honorable mention in 1904 – both located on Avenida da Liberdade. Notably, a residential building owned by Mr. Costa Neves and designed by Bigaglia in 1905 was awarded an honorable mention in the Prémio Valmor e Municipal de Arquitetura¹⁴ over a century later, in recognition of an extension by architects Frederico Valsassina and Manuel Aires Mateus. Another well-preserved example of Bigaglia's work is the Palacete Leitão, currently housing the Imam Ismaili institution.

Among studies on Bigaglia's architectural works, we highlight the research of Cota Fevereiro, whose recent publications analyze Bigaglia's projects within specific avenues in Lisbon and examine his influence on interior decoration and the introduction of *Art Nouveau* elements in Portugal¹⁵. Rui Afonso Santos also explores Bigaglia's interior designs at Palacete Lambertini, documenting *Art Nouveau*-inspired furniture¹⁶.

Regarding the architecture of Palacete Lambertini, the centerpiece of this article, Art historian Raquel Henriques da Silva provides valuable insights in the exhibition catalog *Michel'angelo Lambertini 1862-1920*. Silva proposes that the shared Italian heritage of Bigaglia and Lambertini may have motivated Lambertini to commission Bigaglia, suggesting that the building itself might serve as a homage to Venetian architecture¹⁷. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the Palácio Lima Mayer, recipient of the first Prémio Valmor, is situated directly across from the plot where Palacete Lambertini was later built. The construction request for Palacete Lambertini was filed on August 1901, shortly after the completion of Palácio Lima Mayer. Recently, Margarida Elias has reflected on the definition of *palacete* within the context of Lisbon's urban landscape between the 19th and 20th centuries in Portugal¹⁸, and is currently leading a research project that briefly references Palacete Lambertini as part of this heritage¹⁹.

Bigaglia's architectural projects are sporadically mentioned in dissertations and theses, such as those by Carina Silvestre²⁰ and Raquel David²¹, among others, as well as in monographs dedicated to specific buildings, including publications by the Museu Quinta de Santiago on the Casa de João Santiago in Leça da Palmeira²².

Though there are some references to Bigaglia's works outside Lisbon, a comprehensive, systematic study that synthesizes his multifaceted contributions as a teacher, draftsman, watercolorist, builder, and architect has yet to be published, despite his esteemed reputation as evidenced by articles in *A Construção Moderna* both during his lifetime and posthumously.

Italianate Dialogues at “Domus Quieta”

The establishment of the Palacete Lambertini along Avenida da Liberdade was not a trivial matter, given that this avenue, opened in the first half of the 1880s, infused the capital with a sense of prestige and quality, inspired by the boulevards of Paris that resulted from Haussmann's efforts during the reign of Napoleon III. Succeeding the 18th-century “Passeio Público” (Public Promenade), a prominent venue for social visibility in the following century, Avenida da Liberdade con-

¹³ The Prémio Valmor (Valmor Prize) was established in 1898 through the will of Fausto Queirós Guedes, the 2nd Viscount of Valmor. The prize aimed to promote the architectural quality of buildings in Lisbon, with the award divided equally between the property owner and the architect. First awarded in 1902, it quickly gained a prestigious standing within the national landscape. The prize became a significant incentive for architectural innovation and excellence, distinguishing itself as an important measure for recognizing and encouraging noteworthy contributions to urban and architectural development in the city. José Manuel Pedreira, *História crítica do Prémio Valmor* (Argumentum, 2018).

¹⁴ Thus named since 1982, when the Valmor Prize was associated with the Municipal Architecture Prize.

¹⁵ António Francisco Arruda de Melo Cota Fevereiro, “A Arte Nova em Lisboa,” *Cadernos do Arquivo Municipal – Lisboa e as Artes Decorativas: Obras, Artistas, Projetos* 2, no. 7 (2017): 237.

¹⁶ “[...] for the Palacete Lambertini, Bigaglia designed and executed the decoration of the vestibule and hall in a stripped-down, linear, and functional anti-historicist style that aligned with the principles of Art Nouveau.” Rui Afonso Santos, “O Design e a Decoração em Portugal, 1900-1994,” in *História da Arte Portuguesa*, ed. P. Pereira (Círculo de Leitores, 1995), 447.

¹⁷ Raquel Henriques da Silva, “A casa de Lambertini na Avenida da Liberdade,” in *Michel'angelo Lambertini: 1862-1920*, ed. A. P. Tudela and Carla Capelo Machado (Instituto Português de Museus – Museu da Música, 2002), 55-56.

¹⁸ Margarida Elias, “Palacetes em Lisboa entre o Século XIX e o início do Século XX: Âmbito e Contextos Sociais, Culturais e Artísticos,” *ARTis On*, no. 13 (2022): 67.

¹⁹ See the website: <https://osultimospalaciosdelisboa.weebly.com/palacete-lambertini.html>, last accessed January 15, 2025.

²⁰ Carina Carvalho Silvestre, “Arquitetura ou revolução: o processo de transformação da Avenida da Repúblia com consequência do Metropolitano de Lisboa (1888 a 2014).” Master dissertation, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (2014), 236.

²¹ Raquel Maria da Silva Fernandes David, “A ação cultural e mecenática de Fausto de Queirós Guedes, 2º Visconde de Valmor (1837-1898) e o Prémio Valmor de Arquitetura (1902-1943),” PhD dissertation, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa (2016), 285.

²² Alexandra C. P. Lima, Paulo D. Gomes and Manuel Araújo, *A Casa de Santiago em Vila Franca. Leça da Palmeira no final do século XIX* (Câmara Municipal de Matosinhos / Edições Afrontamento, 1996).

tinued to embody the concept of a social exhibition space, mirroring the integration of the latest comforts facilitated by technological and architectural progress:

On Avenida da Liberdade, which had been transformed into a social parade area and illuminated by electric lights since 1889, several 'palacetes' were built, each with a distinctly personalized character. These buildings often displayed clear revivalist elements, either drawing on Moorish traditions (...) or inspired by the Italian Renaissance, as exemplified by the Lambertini residence (c. 1900), designed by architect Nicola Bigaglia²³.

It is evident that the Avenida, along with its neighboring streets, was a site of architectural experimentation, showcasing the ambitions of patrons and the creative responses of architects. By embracing various pathways of eclecticism, the Avenida, marked by its French-influenced design, effectively merged tradition with innovation. Despite significant alterations over the course of the 20th century, it remains possible to observe how the architectures of the Pombaline legacy, which continue from the vicinity of Rossio and are represented by large, uniform frontages, alternate with rental buildings and single-family residences that seem to follow a distinct inspiration, characterized by a more cosmopolitan scale and French-derived design. This influence is notably evident in the Avenida Palace Hotel, designed by the architect José Luís Monteiro, a Paris-trained professional, at the inception of the Avenida in the 1880s.

Characterized by French-inspired eclecticism, as manifested in buildings designed by architects such as Ventura Terra and Norte Júnior, the Avenida, as previously discussed, was home to various architectural references, including those marked by a more pronounced Italianate language or hints of exoticism. Nonetheless, these multiple avenues provided space for the progressive incorporation of *Art Nouveau* innovations, predominantly influenced by the Franco-Belgian design ethos.

It is at this juncture that Bigaglia makes his entrance with the design for Lambertini. While it is crucial to acknowledge the alterations that define the built environment of the Avenida (and the Palacete itself), notably reflected in the structure of the former Hotel Vitória by Cassiano Branco from the 1930s, located to its left along the Avenida, one can readily discern how Bigaglia's architectural expression is imbued with Adriatic influences. In comparing it to the contiguous building on the right (door number 164), three key differences stand out: the more pronounced verticality imparted by the openings, the variety of ornamental styles (classical, French, and exotic) in the design elements, and the mansard roof. In contrast, Bigaglia offers a façade where verticality and horizontality are articulated in greater harmony through the design of the various components, featuring a distinct Italianate influence in the details and a roof concealed by a *loggia*²⁴. As we shall see, this very elegant design seems to combine the Palladian Venetian architecture with the lightness and verticality of Venetian gothic palazzi. It is also noteworthy that, almost simultaneously, and largely influenced by John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853), a Venetian Neogothic gradually emerged through the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century through Europe, the USA and Australia.

²³ Margarida Acciaiuoli, *Casas com escritos: uma história da habitação em Lisboa* (Bizâncio, 2015), 217.

²⁴ "In many buildings of the Italian Renaissance, roofs were flat or low-pitched. Their structure was commonly hidden behind balustrading, great cornices or parapets (low walls placed above the roof-line and often decorated)." Emily Cole, *Architectural Details – A Visual Guide to 5000 Years of Building Styles* (Ivy Press, 2002), 327.

On the other hand, it must be noted that, unlike other buildings along the Avenida that take advantage of corner locations (such as the Lima Mayer Palace) or possess multiple façades, the lot acquired by Lambertini, due to its dimensions, allowed for the enhancement of only the main façade and the rear façade facing the courtyard. One of the lateral walls was reduced to mere points of illumination and ventilation, as it faced a service lane. These constraints and the relatively limited size of the lot did not hinder the architect from exhibiting his skills and coherence. Once again, there seems to be a connection between space's limitations and Venetian Gothic palazzi, that were also restrained by narrow lots which tended to emphasize height, verticality and the openings in the building's main façade.

Bigaglia obtained the construction permit to begin work on the Palacete Lambertini in August 1901²⁵. However, five deadline extensions were required between November 1902 and December 1904. Finally, on December 17, 1904, Lambertini wrote to his friend José Relvas (1858-1929) saying that he was ready to welcome him, noting that the interior of his home was fully decorated and referring to the residence as "my museum"²⁶. This deep admiration Lambertini held for his home is generously revealed in a 1906 article from *Ilustração Portuguesa*, which refers to the space as a "nest of art"²⁷. The article highlights the various contributors to the interior decoration, praising the elegance and modernity of the design, as well as the quality and originality of the materials used. The initial design of the building included four levels: a semi-basement, ground floor, first floor, and a second floor with a *loggia*. The primary façade is distinguished by two pilasters on both the ground and first floors, which visually organize the building's central portion, underscoring structural and decorative elements that not only elevate the building's aesthetic but also place it within an Italianate architectural tradition. Key features include arched openings, limestone, wrought iron, and some vibrant decorative elements that invite closer inspection.

²⁵ Bigaglia was able to apply for the construction permit, as he was registered as a builder with the Lisbon City Council, holding professional registration number 91. António Francisco Arruada de Melo Cota Fevereiro, "A inovação arquitetónica nos Ateliers de Lisboa e Oeiras, entre 1867 a 1912," *Herança - Revista de História, Património e Cultura* 2 (2020): 92.

²⁶ Ana Paula Tudela, "Michel'angelo Lambertini e a criação de um museu instrumental em Lisboa – os finais da Monarquia e os primeiros dez anos da República," in *Michel'angelo Lambertini*, 180.

²⁷ Nullus, "Habitações Artísticas – A casa do sr. Miguel Angelo Lambertini," *Ilustração Portugueza* no. 16 (11 June 1906): 505.

²⁸ The Mantero family mausoleum, number 4920 in the Cemitério dos Prazeres in Lisbon, was also designed by Nicola Bigaglia and commissioned by Franco Mantero, of Genoese descent. This mausoleum also features a mosaic with gold tesserae. Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico, "Jazigo da Família Mantero."

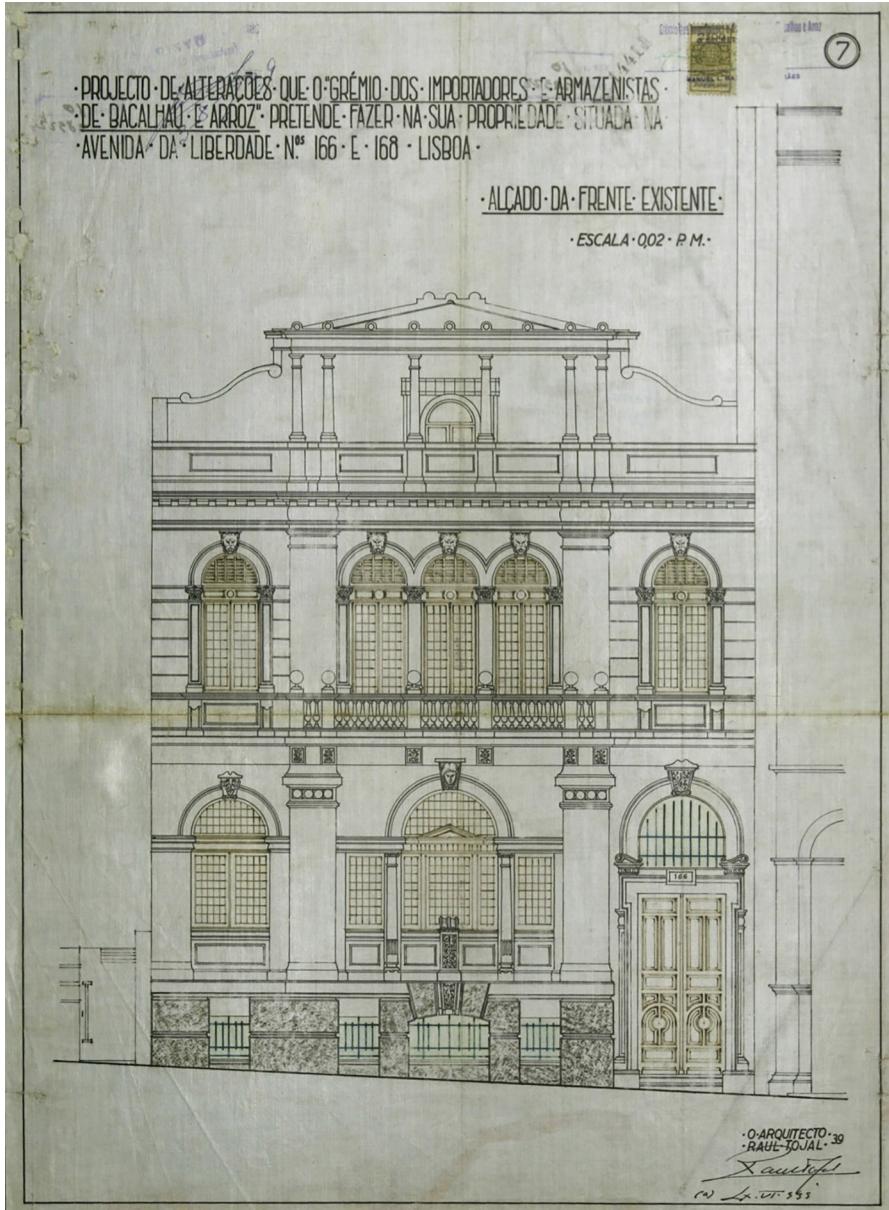
²⁹ Nullus, "Habitações Artísticas – A casa do sr. Miguel Angelo Lambertini," *Ilustração Portugueza* no. 16 (11 June 1906), 502. On Quinta de Santiago there are also several elements specially brought from Venice.

2.2

The semi-basement displays rusticated stonework, and its asymmetry is due to the slope of the avenue upon which it is situated. The ground floor is notable for its Venetian window (a Palladian, or Serlian, motif), flanked by two openings: on the left, a window with an arched transom, and on the right, a double-leaf door with rectangular lintel and jambs, an arch adorned with volutes, and a keystone inscribed with the building number. In the spandrels of the Venetian window, one finds brilliant mosaic tesserae of gold²⁸, framed by delicate vegetal motifs such as ivy leaves, white roses, and pomegranates. These mosaics came directly from Venice, as we can read in Nullus: "It could be described as a glimpse of Venice, with mosaics brought expressly from the Queen of the Adriatic to beautify a façade graced with charm, proportion, and harmony"²⁹.

Two cartouches bear the Latin inscription "Domus Quieta. Facultas Certa," meaning "Tranquil Home. Certain Fortune." This inscription reinforces the sense of peace and prosperity suggested by the plants depicted in the mosaic, as well as those decorating the plinth with olive branches and olives, and the acanthus leaf embellishments above the openings of the lateral sections. Of note is the mask featuring a female face above the arch of the Venetian window, a detail that may serve as either a purely decorative element or hold a deeper, currently unknown significance. Notably, the room to which the Venetian window belongs is the Music Room of the Palacete, a space

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Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini front elevation drawings (main façade), before architect Raul Tojal intervention for the Grémio dos Importadores e Armazenistas de Bacalhau e Arroz in 1939. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, 28322/DAG/PG/1939, 10.

that can be considered the heart of the house. In Louis XV style, this room features an erudite iconographic program by the renowned Portuguese painter José Malhoa (1855-1933), conceptually devised in collaboration with Lambertini and Relvas³⁰. Facing the street, this room still offers a privileged view over one of Lisbon's most distinguished avenues.

On the first floor, a balustraded balcony is positioned before a tripartite window that visually echoes the Venetian window below. Five lion heads crown the arched transoms of the openings, alongside composite columns and pilasters aligned with those of the loggia on the second floor. Lion heads, common as apotropaic or guardian figures in architectural ornamentation, also interestingly allude to Venice and Bologna, the cities of origin for the Bigaglia and Lambertini families, respectively.

While we cannot elucidate the specific meaning of these elements or offer a definitive iconological reading, it is apparent that there is a meticulous connection between the noble space designated for music and the elements that embellish it in the decorative scheme of the façade, as

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³⁰ Ana Ester Tavares and Hugo Barreira, "Michel'angelo Lambertini's music room: unveiling an iconographic programme," *Musica & Figura*, no. 10 (2024): 129.



2.3

Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini, main facade Venetian window, 2022. Photo by the authors.

2.4

Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini, main facade, 2022. Photo by the authors.

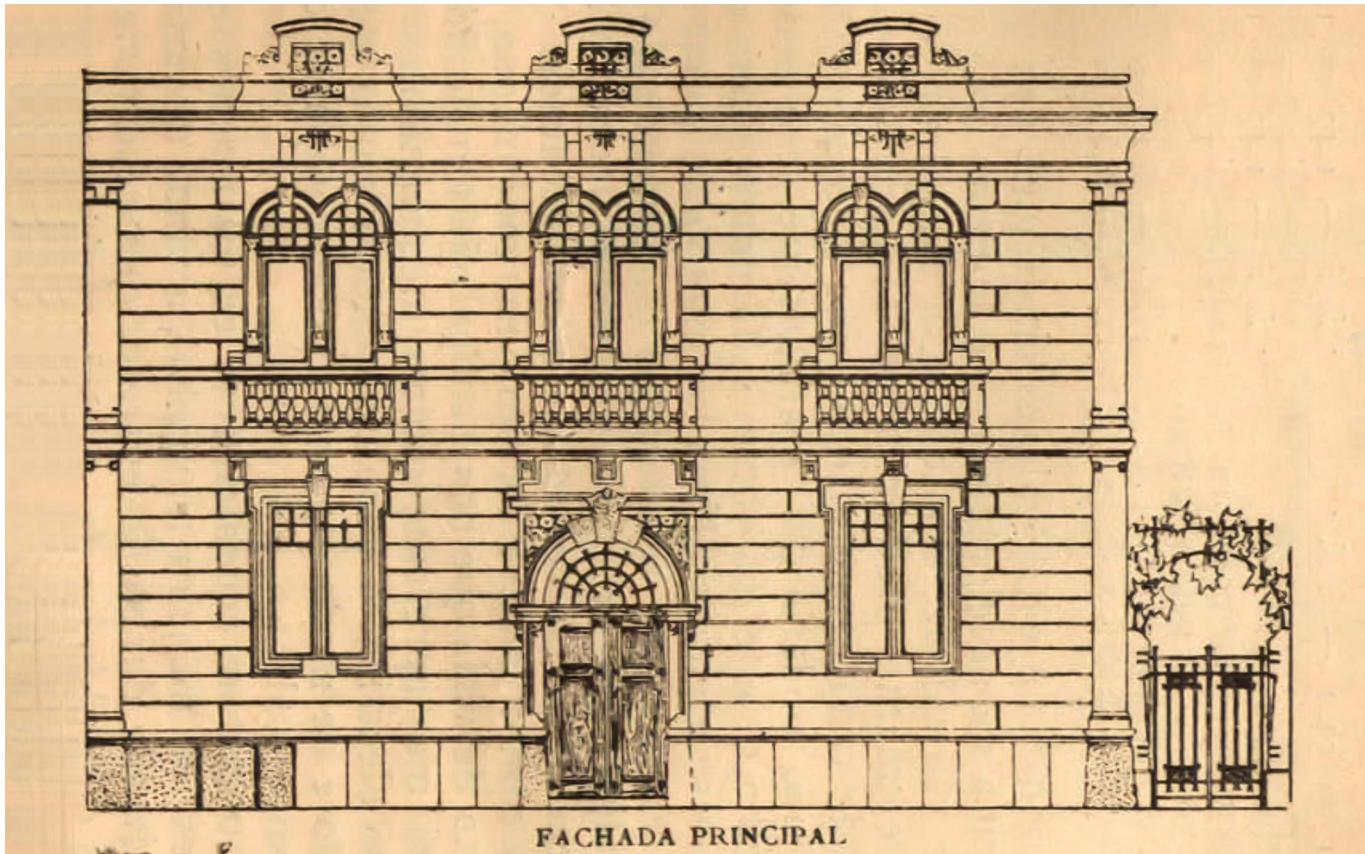
exemplified by the Venetian window and the mosaic. Notably, during this same period, Bigaglia was engaged in the Casa da Ínsua in Viseu³¹, where he would replicate the aphorism VITA HONESTA / FACULTAS CERTA / DOMUS QUIETA / DONA CAELESTIA in both a façade and a fireplace. Its presence in Bigaglia's work may indeed stem from his involvement at Ínsua, as the inscription had already appeared in the Chapel of Jesus by João de Cáceres (1486-1564)³². The design choice for the Palacete Lambertini may, in some respects, reflect an appropriation linked to the commercial and cultural promotional endeavors of its owner, thereby enhancing its attributes. Similarly, in the Casa de João de Santiago, constructed around the same time (1895) in Leça da Palmeira, one can similarly observe an abundance of Latin inscriptions and two features that draw parallels with the design later chosen for Lambertini: a simplified version of the Venetian window, with the wall surface adorned with tiles, marking the area designated as the owner's office, and the tower openings, which, in their horizontal alignment, resonate with the configuration of the loggia and the trinitarian rhythm characteristic of Lisbon's façade³³.

If, in the work for João de Santiago, Bigaglia appears to have had the opportunity for greater extravagance and invention – evident in the array of ornamental elements both exterior and interior designed to create environments based on the owner's initials and heraldry – in the Palacete Lambertini, the architect exhibits a more measured approach. However, he still manages to imbue each element and the composition with a pronounced authorial signature. It is also interesting to compare the materials used by Bigaglia in both houses. In Palacete Lambertini, Lisbon's limestone provides a feeling of lightness closer to original Venetian Gothic or Palladian solutions. In Quinta de Santiago, grey and harsh granite – the local stone – is used in all the openings and ornamental motives, combined with stained glass, in various motives, and with tile panels in place of mosaics in a more original interpretation of a Venetian revival combined within a broader eclecticism design.

³¹ Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico, "Casa da Ínsua / Solar dos Albuquerque".

³² Another reference to this aphorism is found on Miguel Leitão de Andrade's *Miscellanea*, originally printed in 1629. A new edition was published in Lisbon, in 1867 by Imprensa Nacional. On page 17 we can find a Portuguese translation "Vida honesta, / Casa quieta, / Comida certa, / Dões que o ceo deita", roughly translated as: "Honest living, / Quiet house, / Assured food, / Gifts provided by heaven." Andrade points out that the sentence could be found in "very old inscriptions" from "pagan times" on stones near Pedrógão Grande, Leiria.

³³ Alexandra C. P. Lima, Paulo D. Gomes and Manuel Araújo, *A Casa de Santiago em Vila Franca. Leça da Palmeira no final do século XIX* (Câmara Municipal de Matosinhos / Edições Afrontamento, 1996), 30-31.



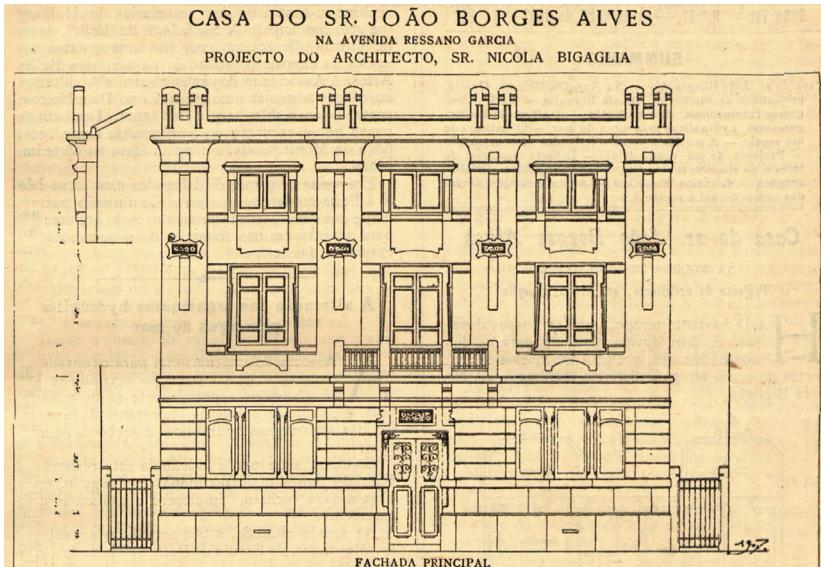
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Lisbon. Mr. Angelo Izabella residence. *A Construção Moderna* 178 (20 September 1905): 169.

The generous application of rustication at the base and its more restrained continuity in other elements recalls the Florentine *palazzi* and simultaneously the Palazzo Te in Mantua. In this context, Alberti's archetypal work, particularly in the Palazzo Rucellai, appears to integrate seamlessly with Giulio Romano's subsequent interpretations, offering a remarkable insight into the history of Italian architecture. In the full spirit of eclecticism, the canonical superimposition of orders is combined with a greater decorative exuberance, movement, and more slender proportions that transport us to the Venetian *palazzi*, as evidenced in the *loggia* or the pronounced openings of the balconies and tripartite rhythms. This fosters a connection to the exterior that is notably absent in their Florentine counterparts and closer to the Venetian Gothic revival spirit.

2.5 The Italianate character appears to be accentuated in works commissioned by Italian clients, such as the building designed for Angelo Izabella in 1905, in collaboration with Alfredo Coffino.

2.6 Here, the paneled openings of the ground floor and their counterparts of balcony and arch on the noble floor are clearly aligned with the Venetian matrix, also evoked in the abundant use of rustication and the corner pilasters. Although these elements are more diluted in an eclectic design, they are also present in the 1907 project for João Borges Alves published in *A Construção Moderna*, where the two rustication solutions of the elevated ground floor are combined with colossal double pilasters, simplified in the design of the capitals. This approach not only recalls Bigaglia's original influences but also their reinterpretation by the *Italian* scholars such as José da Costa e Silva, who adopts a similar solution in his design for the Real Teatro de São Carlos at the end of the 18th century, in an Italianate neoclassicism. In the 1907 project, which, based on the photographic representations available to us, reveals modifications in the constructed solution, there are still evocations of the proportions of the *loggia* in the attic openings and the tripartite rhythms on the ground floor, as well as the presence of plaques similar to those found on the

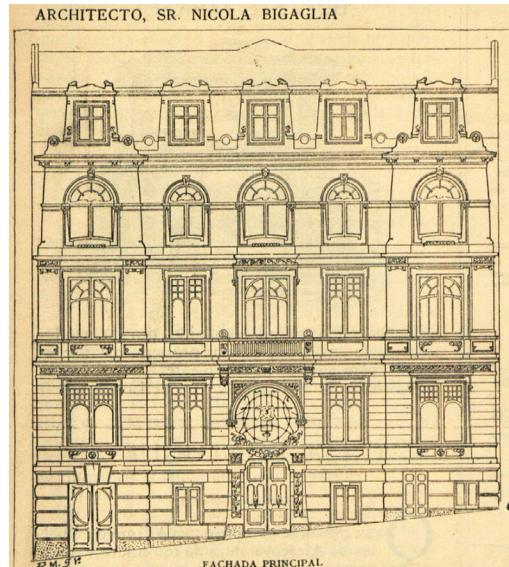


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Lisbon. Mr. João Borges Alves residence. *A Construção Moderna* 219 (10 April 1907): 209.

2.7

Lisbon. Mr. Costa Neves residence. *A Construção Moderna* 165 (10 May 1905): 65.



2.7

Palacete Lambertini. The elements of the entablature, which accentuate the pilasters, contribute to an overall façade appearance that once again references Venetian Gothic verticality.

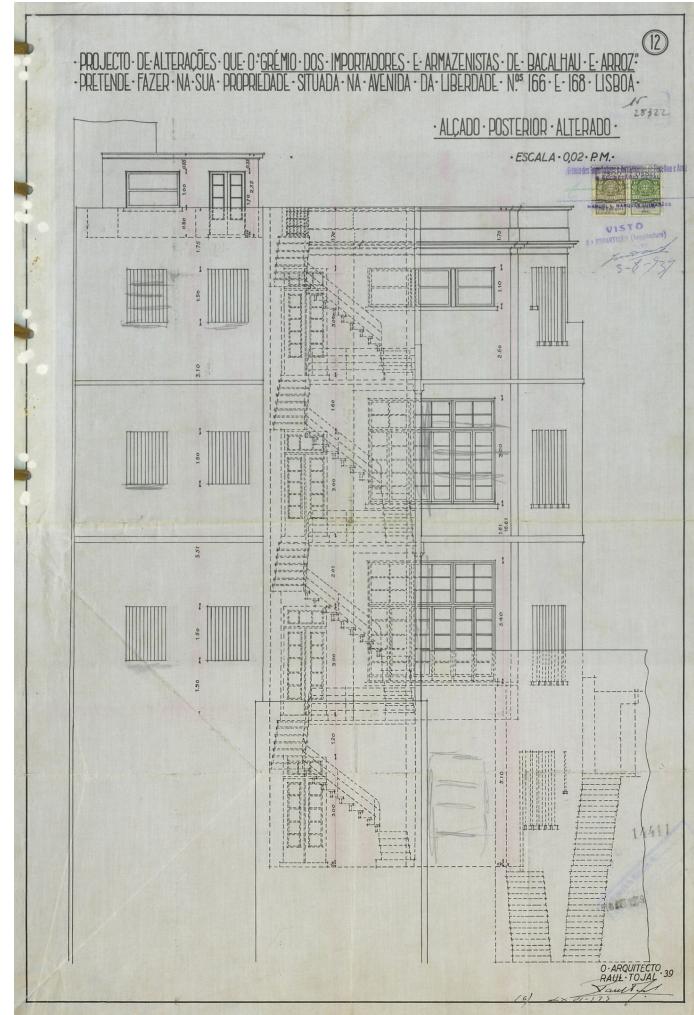
In the rental building designed for Costa Neves in 1905, Bigaglia employs a design approach that seems more eclectic and influenced by French aesthetics, as seen in the mansard roofs and the typological needs arising from the smaller size of the single-family homes. Nevertheless, the integration of various rustic masonry designs on the lower levels (some of which are similar to those found in the Palacete Lambertini) and the design of the window headers on the ground floor again evoke an Italian lineage. The ornamentation of the main openings imparts a somewhat exotic character, evoking a greater organic quality in the design that distances itself from the coldness often associated with the monumental eclecticism of the Beaux-Arts. The exotic character, in contrast with French eclecticism, is also close to Venetian Gothic revival designs. This tendency is also evident in the extension of the lateral bodies, characterized by robust pilasters, as well as in the solutions adopted for the dormer windows and the headers of the other openings. Here, as will be illustrated in the rear façade of the Palacete Lambertini, the organic nature of the Italianate design appears to intertwine with the influences of Franco-Belgian *Art Nouveau*, leading to a return to a nature less constrained by the dictates of classical orders.

The eclecticism and receptivity to cosmopolitan novelties of diverse origins are evident in the rear façade of the Lambertini project. Analyzing the construction process, which encompasses subsequent alterations that will be discussed later, reveals that the façade facing Avenida da Liberdade functioned as a façade that concealed a building characterized by varying heights and roof designs. This approach, which included a lobby intended to illuminate certain interior spaces and the staircase, was likely constrained by the narrow plot and limited placement, as previously mentioned. Consequently, as it distanced itself from areas that could not accommodate openings, Bigaglia recessed the side elevations and enhanced the rear façade with a bay window structure that spans the ground floor (of the music room) and the first floor. The slope of the lot facilitates the full development of the basement, which includes secondary access via a gallery and staircase.

The bay window structure, considerably ornamented in the original designs from 1901, appears to have been modified (or constructed differently) in accordance with subsequent alteration plans (1939), yet it would still retain a broad glazed surface that extends over two floors, providing access to the courtyard via galleries. Despite the differences in design, the connection to *Art Nouveau* persists, illustrating Bigaglia's flexibility and his mastery of a diverse array of solutions tailored to

2.8

³⁴ In Quinta de Santiago, the stained glass was brought from Venice.



enhance the intended environments. With the increased surface area for light, possibly enhanced by stained glass³⁴, the rear structure would harmonize with the design of some of the interiors, which are described as being in the *modern style*, in a more anglicized design recalling once again the universe of Ruskin and, specially of his disciple William Morris. In this manner, Lambertini's Italian assertion and familial heritage are harmonized with his inclination toward sophistication and the innovative architectural solutions.

Unfortunately, following the death of his wife, Maria Luciana Gomes (1861-1914), Michelangelo Lambertini decided to put the Palacete up for sale, along with several of its furnishings. In December 1915, the building was acquired by Elvira Martins Pereira de Carvalho (1872-1954), and later, in 1939, it was purchased by the Grémio dos Importadores e Armazenistas de Bacalhau e Arroz ("Guild of Importers and Wholesalers of Codfish and Rice").

The Grémio needed to make modifications to the building to accommodate its logistical requirements. The alteration process, which began in April 1939, would result in the transformation of the main façade, establishing the existing design, as well as the alteration of a substantial part of its interior, lateral façade, and rear elevation. Nevertheless, a review of the documentation presented to the City Hall by the Grémio, aligned with architect Raúl Tojal's (1900-1969) project, provides insight into the building as it was in 1939 – as previously mentioned – and reflects the contemporary understanding of Bigaglia's work.

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Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini rear elevation drawings, before architect Raul Tojal intervention for the Grémio dos Importadores e Armazenistas de Bacalhau e Arroz in 1939. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, 28322/DAG/PG/1939, 14.

2.9

Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini rear elevation drawings, first modification proposal by architect Raul Tojal intervention for the Grémio dos Importadores e Armazenistas de Bacalhau e Arroz in 1939. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, 28322/DAG/PG/1939, 15.

The initial process, abundant in drawn elements, attests to the plurality of solutions within the original building, which was already outside the possession of the Lambertini family and likely altered in the 1920s, although it was not possible to confirm the modifications attributed to Carlos Ramos through documentation³⁵. The interior elements, visible in some of the sections, correspond to the photographs we know from the *Ilustração Portuguesa* and other publications. The design of the existing façade, characterized by careful lines, highlights a detail absent from other representations: the loggia would be flanked by two wing-walls of Albertian inspiration, concealing the mentioned movement of the rear volumes in a new Italianate solution, which would enhance its horizontal aspect, although this was less pronounced from the Avenida due to the building's parapet. This procedure leads to an inspection that provides a clear and expressive appraisal of the existing design:

The inspected building is located at Avenida da Liberdade, no. 166, and consists of a basement, ground floor, and two upper floors. It is of good and solid construction, characteristically Italian, designed by the architect Nicola Bigaglia. The proposed works primarily involve internal alterations and the utilization of a portion of the lateral and rear yards to expand the facilities of the Grémio dos Importadores e Armazени-
stas de Bacalhau e Arroz, which is headquartered there. As the requested works will not compromise the stability of the property and will not affect the health or architectural aesthetics of the building, this Commission is of the opinion that the request presented should be granted³⁶.

The project, which involved the modification of the rear and lateral façades, as well as the expansion of the attic structure beyond the *loggia*, would have a more pronounced impact on the interior, which would undergo significant alterations and lose its existing ornamentation. The visit to the building revealed that the modernizing language, combining an industrial aesthetic with elegant design and attention to materials, would dictate the inevitable transformation of the interior of the Palacete. The project also included the installation of an elevator (still in existence) and a new staircase, illuminated by a square skylight integrated into the reinforced concrete slab that would cover the entire building. Similar to the interior, the interesting rear elevation would be completely altered, incorporating a modern service and emergency staircase that would connect all floors.

Although the inspection conducted in July 1939 approved the existing project, the Grémio submitted a new proposal in 1940. Referencing the prior project's approval, the revised design by Raúl Tojal included the addition of a new floor in the form of a *mezzanine*, situated between the first floor and the loggia, adhering to the design outlined in the 1939 modifications. The alterations, which were completed by approximately 1942, as indicated by our review of the documentation, would inevitably lead to a transformation of the façade.

The compromise solution proposed by Tojal would alter the proportions and, above all, the harmony between the horizontal and vertical elements that characterized Bigaglia's Italianate design,

³⁵ Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico, "Palacete Lambertini."

³⁶ Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Direção dos Serviços de Urbanização e Obras, Comissão Permanente de Vistorias. *AUTO DE VISTORIA*. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa 28322/DAG/PG/1939 (July 1939), 41.

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Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini front elevation drawings, first modification proposal by architect Raul Tojal for the Grémio dos Importadores e Armazenistas de Bacalhau e Arroz in 1939. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, 28322/DAG/PG/1939, 11.

slightly distancing the façade directed to the Avenida from its original Italian affiliations and statements. However, similar to the proposed alteration of the loggia structure, which would reinterpret the original cornice design into a new cornice that would conceal the terrace roof, the new structure would stem from Bigaglia's original design, thereby attempting to maintain a certain orthodoxy. The rhythm of the openings was replicated in the *mezzanine*, exhibiting a strong horizontal tension, particularly emphasized by the rustic detailing in the central section, which revisited, from an increasingly distant perspective, some solutions from the palazzi that Bigaglia had previously employed. The modest Corinthian order was combined with the composite order of the first floor, facilitating the transition to the Tuscan *loggia*.

From the written documentation and design elements, it can be deduced that the materials used would be like the originals, and that existing elements would be preserved or reconstructed with the incorporation of the new floor. Raúl Tojal's project, demonstrating meticulous attention to the façade, along with the assessment from the Lisbon City Hall, indicates that the quality, originality, and character of Bigaglia's design remained respected by successive generations, which would ultimately lead to its preservation. This sentiment was further reinforced by the rejection, in 1956–1957, of a new expansion project that would completely modify the building and its façade³⁷. Nonetheless, it should be noted that, as observed, many of Bigaglia's other works did not enjoy the same protection and were subject to decharacterization or destruction.

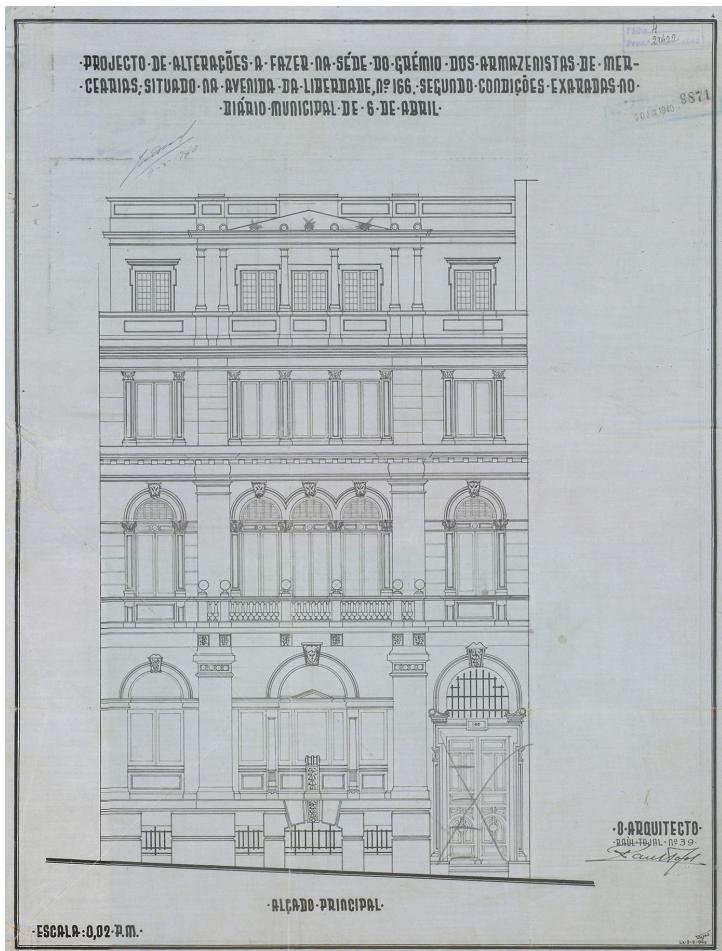
Conclusions

Nicola Bigaglia was a Venetian architect highly esteemed by the Portuguese during his twenty years in Portugal, where he developed a distinctive style that fused Italianate elements with more modernist tendencies, reflecting a period of political, industrial, and artistic transition. His extensive body of work includes commissions for clients of Italian descent, such as Franco Mataro, Angelo Izabella, and Michel'angelo Lambertini, as well as collaborations with fellow Italian architects who had also settled in Portugal. Although distanced from his homeland, Bigaglia succeeded in finding a community and establishing mutual understanding by adapting to the local context: while never relinquishing the distinct identity he infused into his projects, particularly in Palacete Lambertini.

Meanwhile, Michel'angelo Lambertini sought in this house the Italy of his ancestors, making it a space of affection and art that he called "his museum." He shared this with his closest friends but also opened it to the broader public through the press.

Over the years, the building has undergone numerous transformations to accommodate the diverse entities that have occupied it, yet it has consistently preserved the appreciation and recognition of its Italian character by Lisbon City Hall, which has endeavored to respect and maintain the integrity of the façade. Today, the structure houses a variety of luxury commercial establishments. Despite these changes, "Domus Quieta" retains the vision dreamed up by two Italians in Lisbon, enduring as one of the rare surviving testimonies to Bigaglia's work in Portugal.

³⁷ More detailed information can be retrieved at the Lisbon Municipal Archive: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa - Direção dos Serviços de Urbanização e Obras, *Obra no. 48184, Volume 2*. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa 48244/DAG/PG/1956, November 3, 1956 and also Câmara Municipal de Lisboa – Direção dos Serviços de Urbanização e Obras, *Obra no. 48184, Volume 2*, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa 9618/DAG/PG/1957. March 11, 1957.



2.11

Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini front elevation drawings, second modification proposal by architect Raul Tojal for the Grémio dos Importadores e Armazenistas de Bacalhau e Arroz in 1939. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, obra nº 48184, processo 20422/DAG/PG/1940, folha 4.

2.12

Lisbon. Palacete Lambertini, main facade photograph, 1966 ca. Mário Novais. In <https://lisboadeantigamente.blogspot.com/2017/07/>, last accessed October 2024.