

TERTÚLIA CCP TRABALHO E CONHAQUE

MUTANT DESIGN

-DIALOGUE, CONFLICT AND
PRACTICES IN TRANSFORMATION

© Clube da Criatividade
Portugal

SPONSOR **antalis**™

DESISTO (PT) MUCHO (ES)

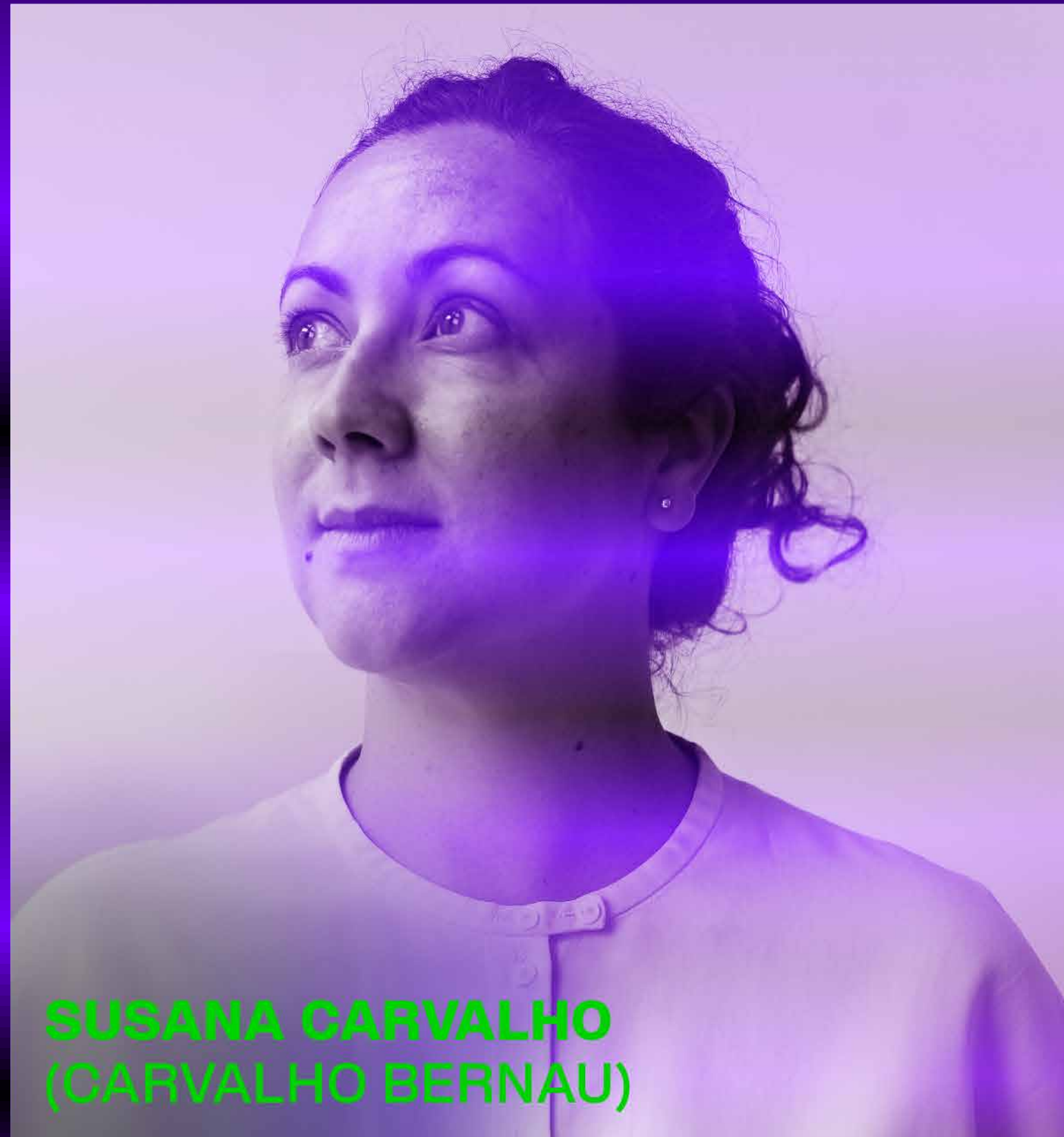
MODERATOR

SUSANA CARVALHO
(CARVALHO BERNAU)



Overview

How does design practice adapt and transform in the face of constant cultural, technological and social challenges? “Mutant Design: Dialogue, Conflict and Practices in Transformation” was the theme of the second CCP Talk in Porto. Based on the premise that design evolves through dialogue between ideas, contexts and practices, but also through confrontation with limits, tensions and change, the conversation focused on the evolution of the designer’s role: from problem solving to narrative building, from niche curation to defining strategies for major brands, and on the impact of artificial intelligence on the future of the profession.



SUSANA CARVALHO
(CARVALHO BERNAU)



MARGARIDA BORGES
RICARDO MARTINS
(DESISTO)



MARC CATALÀ
(MUCHO)

MODERATOR + SPEAKERS



MARGARIDA BORGES
RICARDO MARTINS

CO-FOUNDERS AND DESIGNERS
DESISTO (LISBOA)

DESIGN AS RESISTANCE AND COMMUNITY / DESISTO

The session was opened by Susana Albuquerque, president of CCP, who celebrated the Club's return to Porto and revealed, first-hand, the initial details of the 28th CCP Festival, under the theme "Ambos os Dois / Both of us two" and visual identity by Studio Eduardo Aires. Pedro Mesquita, Vice-President of CCP, designer and curator of the event, joined her, leading the talk and introducing the guest speakers.

The talk began with the presentation by the founders of Desisto, Margarida Borges and Ricardo Martins, who shared the studio's trajectory and methodologies, highlighting some of their most irreverent projects.

In a national context marked by the economic and social crisis driven by the Troika, with few job prospects in Portugal, it was in Barcelona that Margarida Borges and Ricardo Martins began their professional journey and found a new home. The studio emerged as an escape from monotony, in 2013, in the vibrant and relaxed environment of the city where *"everyone met at exhibitions, studios organised ping-pong championships, people got to know each other*

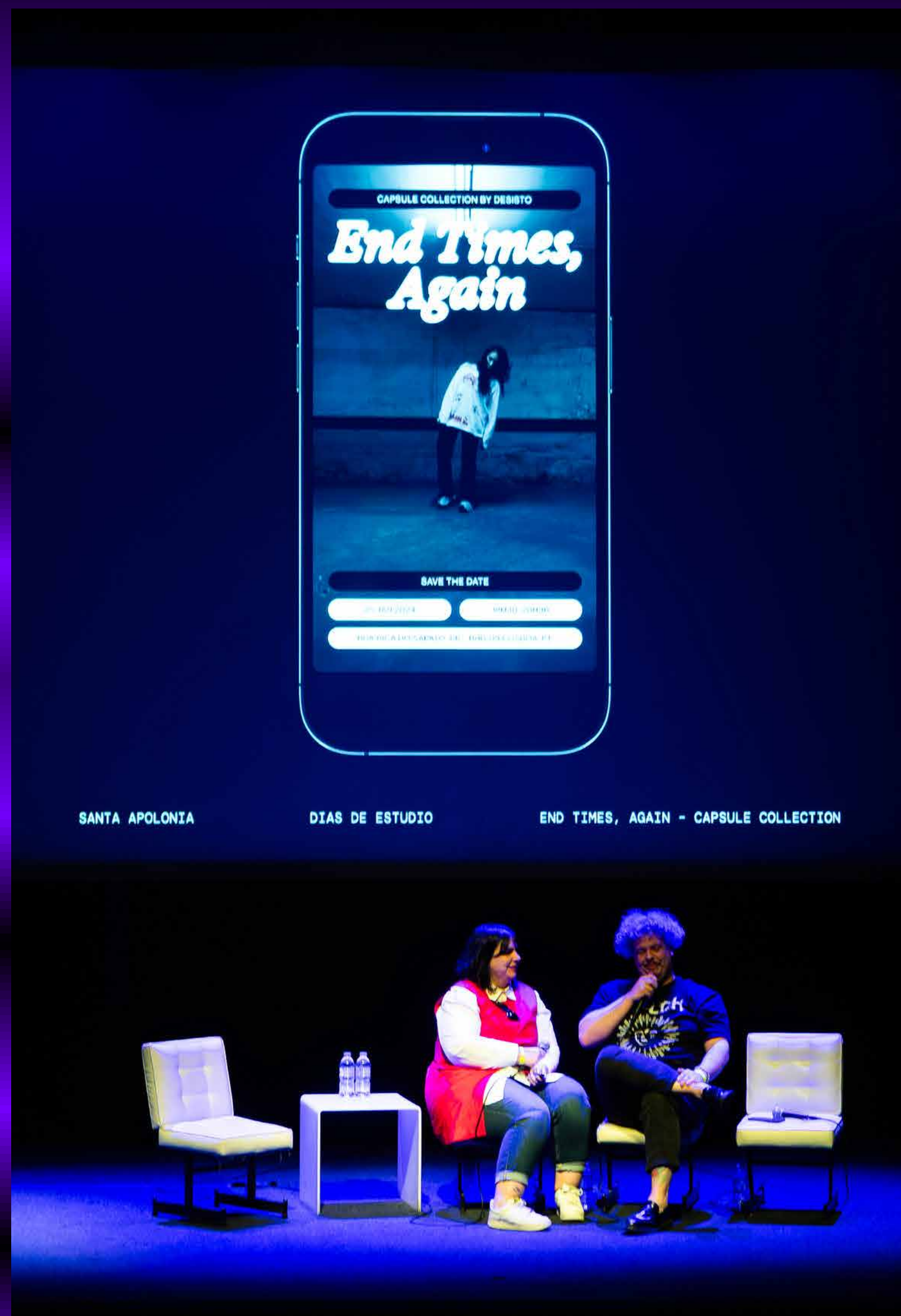
and it was, at the same time, something very horizontal”, as Margarida Borges recalls, highlighting the importance Barcelona had as a catalyst in the creation of Desisto. The designer also recalls the early years of the studio, marked by the punk context of Ricardo’s tours, combining his practice as a designer with that of a musician: *“every night we encountered different realities, we had the typical stall with fanzines, publications, records and cassettes for sale”*. **The studio has in its DNA a strong experimental, educational and research component that it preserves to this day and which has made it a reference in the national landscape.**

It was at the ArtsLibris editorial fair that the opportunity arose to take part in a residency at the Frans Masereel Centrum, a centre dedicated to printmaking methods that hosts artists from all over the world, where they refined risography — a technique they currently explore in their RISO printing lab.

Upon returning to Lisbon in 2015, Desisto positioned itself as a platform mainly dedicated to graphic design, with particular attention to typography and production quality, in an open-door approach to the community, through initiatives such as graphic talks and other cultural projects that intersect design with meaningful narratives.

Ricardo Martins highlights the importance of the studio’s working methodology: *“We work four days for clients and a fifth day for ourselves, in the hope that this day contaminates the others. This fifth day is spent on research, looking for new discourses, spent ‘wasting time’, because we believe wasting time is extremely important in order to gain new discourse and not to keep doing the same thing we have already seen, already know or have already done.”*

From the **Studio Days** came projects transversal to the studio, where all collaborators work together on a common project. The designers present three works resulting from these days, which allowed them to explore several new



techniques.

End Times, Again stemmed from research into *“end-of-the-world scenarios that never happened”* and resulted in a clothing and publication collection exploring error and collective fear — such as the Millennium Bug or Reddit prophecies. *“We found the idea of that slightly crooked continuity of the end of something delightful. It was very good for creating an identity with this idea of explosion and impact and placing ourselves in a position where we had to think about all this plurality within a project”*, explained Ricardo. *“This was all conceived from a horizontal perspective, where we created by making concessions among all of us”*, added Margarida.

The creation of the modular typeface **Brick** began with building letterforms using Lego pieces and culminated in the development of a complete type family through Glyphs software, which they learned to use collectively. With the aim of democratising the idea of typography, the project included an educational component and the exhibition *“To Play is to Resist Stasis”*, where the public could interact with the typeface in real time.

Finally, the exhibition **Risoma** gathered and mapped 50 risography

studios from around the world. The project demonstrated that this printing technique is, in fact, a pedagogical tool and a fertile space for error. *“Brick had a more external dimension to our studio, but with Risoma we received many schools, which was very interesting. When we started working with riso, risography practically didn’t exist in the Portuguese context, and now many schools have it, so there are many people interested and also many more Portuguese studios”*, they note.

As a result of these projects and in the search for their own path within Design, Margarida Borges and Ricardo Martins conclude that brands from completely different contexts sometimes end up seeking more experimental formats, making it interesting to *“understand this contamination”*.



MARC CATALÀ

**CO-FOUNDER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR
MUCHO, BARCELONA**

DESIGN IN FOUR MUTATIONS / MUCHO

Marc Català, co-founder and creative director of the studio Mucho, from Barcelona, begins by introducing an international-scale perspective, analysing design through the “Design Ladder”, presented in 2001 by the Danish Design Council: the first step is “non design”, the second step “design as form giving”, the third step “design as process” and at the highest step one reads “design as philosophy”. He concludes: *“A step to the next level is a mutation. I really like the idea of Mutant Design. I hope you are seeing a mutant today — which is me — and all of you are as well. Creatives are a bit like mutants.”*

He moves on to present four mutations that Mucho has gone through and what they have meant, as well as possible future mutations.

Design as Solution - the starting point. He brings as an example the project created for Aeroméxico, where the challenge was to resolve the brand line and its visual language. Català admits the toughness of the process: *“Working with such large companies and on large projects is always difficult and challenging. We have to do a series*

of things well just to solve the problem.” He reinforces the importance of thinking about the solution, bringing strategy and working with narrative.

He bridges to the second mutation: **Design as Narrative**. The moment when design gains meaning, bringing the example of the project for the Museum of Forbidden Art in Barcelona - El Prohibit - which, as the name itself indicates, featured provocative artworks. “It is forbidden to forbid”, an evocation of the May '68 happenings, was one of the client's core ideas, which Mucho sought to deconstruct: *“The project was not about eliminating prohibitions, but about understanding the limit of what is moral. And prohibiting is understanding where the limit lies, what to show, what to hide, what to tolerate, what, in fact, to forbid. A museum of forbidden art already proposes these contradictions. We needed to show these conflicting voices.”* Mucho collaborated with philosophers to understand the limits of morality and develop the narrative that unfolded in the exhibition space, with typefaces and rhetoric that, by contrasting, reflected this tension. It was in the idea brought by Michel Foucault in '75 (Discipline and Punish) that *“artworks reveal what is moral”* and that morality constructs power, that the design took shape and turned the museum space into a place of conversation. He highlights: *“This is narrative, a position that depends on the values and history of the brand. And that conversation is interesting, not only for designers, but also for clients.”*

Third mutation: **Designing a Studio**. *“Designing Mucho is probably the biggest design project I have ever done. It is the machine that enables everything else.”* For Català, creating the studio is building a community itself, with design as its foundation, involving designing teams, business models, physical spaces, choosing partners and managing egos. He reveals: *“We were founded in 2002 and today we work in more than 40 countries, we have a global team of 45 people who speak around 10 languages across 2 offices. For me, design is about having impact in the world in a more meaningful way.”*



He also reinforces that design involves building teams and a solid culture, highlighting the importance of bringing together committed people, with different perspectives and skills, offering them good conditions and a meaningful project that encourages participation and continuous growth. He emphasises the human and psychological dimension of teamwork, recognising that leading implies understanding and supporting individual development. Finally, he concludes that creating one's own culture is, in itself, an essential form of design.

Before moving on to the fourth and final mutation, the speaker reflects on the future and AI, with a provocative reflection on the value of human work: *“What used to be hard work has become easy. Things that were difficult or impossible to do have become feasible. The essential question is: what are we going to be paid for? Think about the things you would have liked to do but couldn't because of production or time, and seriously consider doing more of that, because that is what is valuable now.”* As previously difficult tasks become accessible, value shifts to what was once impossible or impractical, opening new opportunities to experiment, innovate and redefine the design market. For Marc Català, with AI - just like with

motion and code - design is becoming a new type of craft, *“a new game”*, and *“we are going to change as designers because the tools change and will change us”*. He considers that the main issue is no longer just technical execution, but redefining what constitutes outstanding work. If before it was associated with mastering complex skills, now, with processes being simplified, the ability to explore new possibilities and create value creatively becomes more relevant. On Creativity versus Automation, he considers that the trend is to automate creativity to reduce costs and increase efficiency, but that, in his view, *“the question for excellence is to create automation”*.

He reaches the final mutation, preceding AI: **Design as Philosophy**, centred on human connection. He brings the projects “The Visible and The”, created by Mucho and Pancho Tolchinsky - AI researcher, mathematician and cognitive scientist - in collaboration with OFFF, about *“the things that affect our perception and what aesthetic experience is”*, and also the publication “The Future of Design Education” with AGI, based on Socratic design to understand the future of design education. Marc Català presents an approach to design that intersects critical thinking, strategy and education, concluding that design should be understood as an expanded field, capable of going beyond traditional practice and contributing more deeply to culture and to how we relate to the world. Within this scope, the project More was born, a laboratory for all these ideas.

“I invite you to think of Design as something bigger.”





SUSANA CARVALHO

**DESIGNER AND CO-FOUNDER
ATELIER CARVALHO BERNAU**

ROUND TABLE: THE CONVERSATION BEGINS

The presentations are well received by the large audience of designers, creatives and curious attendees who fill the room at Cinema Passos Manuel, in Porto. The moderator of the conversation, Susana Carvalho, designer and co-founder of Atelier Carvalho Bernau, comes onto the stage.

The conversation begins with a reflection raised by the moderator on the role of community in Desisto's work: *"You are building a community around your work. Do you think that this type of practice and generosity is something that can make the profession more resilient?"*

Ricardo Martins responds by affirming design as an exercise in interdependence, where relationships and exchanges expand thinking and enrich the process. The sharing of experiences, points of view and doubts emerges as a space for continuous learning, countering the idea of an isolated practice.

Margarida Borges adds a biographical dimension to this



construction: having developed part of her path outside Portugal, returning implied a feeling of disconnection. The creation of a network — whether with suppliers, collaborators and other designers — became not just a choice, but a true “*survival mechanism*”: More than strategy, this openness also responds to a desire to break hierarchies and bring different agents of the practice closer together, creating more horizontal and accessible structures.

The conversation extends to the audience.

DEMOCRACY VS COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

Seb de la Guardia, creative director of Future Days and co-founder of Descomunal, questions Marc Català about Mucho’s *modus operandi* and asks him to explore his concept of “new democracy”.

Marc Català highlights the importance of collective intelligence, questioning the traditional democratic model of majority decision-making. For Català, this system, although functional, often



SEB DE LA GUARDIA

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR
FUTURE DAYS**

generates invisible tensions when one of the parties disagrees: *“In my experience in a partnership (there are three of us in Barcelona — now four globally) if there is a topic where two agree but one really disagrees, there is a lot of noise and negative energy. And we assume that for a majority to work, there has to be a minority, and that is a dichotomous way of thinking.”*

As an alternative, he proposes a model based on total understanding between participants to *“reach a place where everyone understands each other and realises why something may or may not work”* a slower, more demanding and sometimes uncomfortable process, but one that leads to more sustainable decisions. This “productive disagreement” thus becomes a form of collective intelligence.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: BETWEEN TOOL, RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Luísa Silva Gomes, lead designer at Onda Studio, addressing Marc Català, asks about the implementation of AI at Mucho - what they



LUÍSA SILVA GOMES

**LEAD DESIGNER
ONDA STUDIO**

are doing and how it is going.

Català shares that the current approach involves **structured experimentation**: one of the company's partners, Javier Lopez, dedicates part of his time exclusively to research in this area, then sharing that knowledge with the rest of the team. The results, for now, are diverse and inconclusive, reflecting a global scenario still under construction. He also underlines the need to deeply understand this new context, rather than ignore it. He concludes: *"We are more concerned with being able to use AI in project management, in making budgets or in many things that seem simpler. In the creative process, I want more people in the studio to use it, but I am more concerned with the idea of doing it in a structured way, because it still feels like a time of chaos."*

Susana Carvalho intervenes, stating that she oscillates between being very scared or not scared at all about the use of AI. On the one hand, she believes we can truly benefit from the machine to do better and faster tasks we do not want to do; on the other hand, her concern lies more with "the other side", namely the **ethics of AI use, both in terms of authorship and originality, as well as the enormous**



environmental impact of using these tools.

Ricardo Martins draws attention to the diversity of available tools, advocating for a **conscious and informed choice**. Instead of relying only on dominant platforms, such as ChatGPT or Midjourney, he suggests exploring more transparent or controllable alternatives, even if they require more effort, such as ComfyUI or Krea.

Margarida Borges reinforces the centrality of ethics, highlighting concerns about authorship, originality and aesthetic appropriation. She questions to what extent the use of these tools may compromise the designer's identity and dilute authorial practices: *"I think we should talk about how we can feed our ideas with artificial intelligence without compromising authorship, or understand whether we really want to design like that illustrator."*

The moderator also introduces a critical view on the current business model of AI platforms: *"We can all use these platforms mostly for free, but that will end. And then someone will make money from the ideas and work of all of us."*

In response, Marc Català challenges everyone to think about what it



RUI MASCARENHAS

**CONSULTOR WEB
LOBA**

means to “own” an idea. He also notes that one of the most relevant questions when discussing AI concerns the nature of aesthetic experience. More than the ability to generate images or formal solutions, it is important to understand what makes an experience meaningful — something that the machine, by itself, can hardly achieve: *“A lot of this is temporary, we will get tired very quickly because it is mediocre.”* He suggests that much of AI-generated output may quickly become indistinguishable, in contrast with sensitive experiences that continue to be created through the human gaze.

On the other hand, Ricardo Martins notes that, despite all these tools growing, he wonders whether AI might be the next mini-disc: *“the mini-disc was going to be the future and it wasn’t.”*

Marc Català adds another perspective, given the speed of AI’s evolution, that humans may not be able to keep up: *“The only possible state of change is the one we can absorb. If it completely saturates us, there is no change.”*

From the audience, Rui Mascarenhas, web consultant at Loba and



NUNA QUEIRÓS

**DESIGN STUDENT
FBAUP**

manager at Maus Hábitos, takes the floor, introducing the fundamental distinction between creating rules and executing them: *“Design is also about creating rules and creating a visual grammar that we have to implement across hundreds of materials.”* Regarding the use of AI in design, he adds: *“There is this question of teaching AI to produce new things based on our rules. For me, AI follows rules, it does not create them. It can process the theory of relativity, but it cannot create the effect that Newton created”,* highlighting the limitation of these tools in generating new grammars. In this sense, he concludes that the designer’s role may increasingly lie in defining these structures, which can then be technologically amplified. *“Each studio and each project will have its own agent, in a way,”* he suggests, noting that ecological issues are also his main concern, making it essential to create efficient prompts and *“not just talk to the machine, wasting water and energy on stupid questions.”*

To close the debate, the moderator gives the floor back to the audience.

The speed of technological evolution raises a final question, from Nuna Queirós, a design student at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the



University of Porto: will it be possible to absorb these changes (environmental and ethical) before feeling their impacts?

Marc Català suggests that human adaptability has limits and acknowledges that the effects may manifest before the tools themselves are fully assimilated, challenging everyone to think collectively about these issues.

Margarida Borges closes this reflection with a pragmatic note: artificial intelligence does not necessarily eliminate the practice of design, but transforms it. It can be integrated as a tool, combined with analogue processes and creatively reinterpreted. She also recalls that design has always been a mutable discipline, marked by successive technological changes. More than resistance, she proposes a broader reading: *“perhaps we do not need to look at this only through the lens of design, but rather from a political and human perspective.”*

The session ends with an invitation to continue collective reflection. Without definitive answers, the conversation highlights the need to question, experiment and discuss, recognising the complexity of the current moment and the active role of designers in shaping it.

TERTÚLIA CCP: “MUTANT DESIGN: DIALOGUE, CONFLICT AND PRACTICES IN TRANSFORMATION”

The talk took place on March 5 2026, at Passos Manuel in Porto, with brand sponsor Antalis. It was followed by a networking dinner at Maus Hábitos.

Thank you to all the participants:

Alexandre Monteiro, Alexandre Campelo, Alexandre Sousa, Alice Alves, Ana Serrazina, Ana Resende, Anastasia Potapenko, Artur Rebelo, Beatriz Barros, Beatriz Guedes, Bruna Rosas, Bruno Sousa, Carla Oliveira, Carla Castro Parada, Carol B, Carolina Peres, Catarina Vaz, Catarina Peixoto, Cátia Lima, Cláudia Castro, Daniel Bessa, Daniel Sousa, Diana Sousa, Diana Arrojado, Diogo Rapazote, Edgar Sprecher, Emanuel Barbosa, Estela Rebelo, Francisca Porto, Filipe Mesquita, Ines Perez, Inês Aires, Inês Nepomuceno, Joana Fatela, Joana Silva, Joana Babo, João Deus, João Martino, João Castro, José Bartolo, José Pedro, José Luis Vilar, Judite Mota, Júlia Vilaça, Juliana Mateos, Leonor Silva, Leonor Secca, Luisa Gomes, Macedo Cannatã, Mafalda Quintela, Marc Catalã, Margarida Borges, Margarida Tavares, Margarida Antunes, Maria Carneiro, Maria Chaves, Maria Dinis, Maria Carlos Cardeiro, Mariana Areia, Mariana Pinto Oliveira, Mariana Oliveira, Mariana Sofia Alves Cardoso, Mariana Cardoso, Marko Rosalline, Madalena Dinis, Miguel Ribeiro, Miguel Almeida, Minter Creative, Nilza Lello, Nuna Queirós, Nuno Cabeceiras, Paulo Maia, Pedro Mesquita, Pedro Serrão, Pedro Vareta, Pedro Campea, Raquel Piteira, Rayane Santos, Ricardo Martins, Ricardo Mendes, Rita Antunes, Rui Abreu, Rui Mascarenhas, Santiago Gabriel Quinteros, Sara Balonas, Seb de la Guardia, Serafim Mendes, Sérgio Alves, Sofia Noel Gouveia, Sofia Santos, Sofia Silva, Susana Nascimento, Susana Albuquerque, Susana Carvalho, Susana Martins, Thatiana Aquino, Tiago Campea, Tiago Barquinha.

Photography: João Queirós

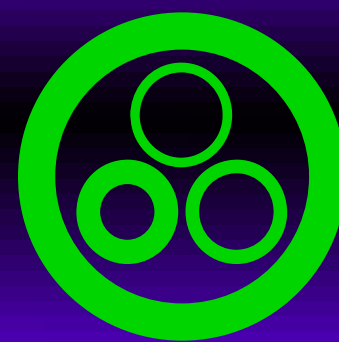
ORGANIZATION

© **Clube da Criatividade
Portugal**

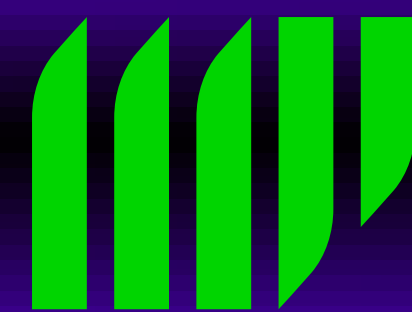
SPONSOR

antalis^{TEM}

THANKS



Passos Manual



MAUS HÁBITOS