

Casa Fernando Pessoa

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Casa
Fernando
Pessoa

MUSEU DE LITERATURA

On November 30, 1935, at the age of 47, Fernando Pessoa died unexpectedly, leaving a chest full of unpublished texts and a handful of project lists.

Since then, 90 years have elapsed, during which Fernando Pessoa has been heard through readers, editors, researchers, writers, translators, teachers and all kinds of artists.

In 2025, Casa Fernando Pessoa inaugurates the exhibition *The Eternal Ark: Fernando Pessoa and Posterity* with the intention of relaunching, on this celebratory date, some relevant questions: how did Pessoa survive the end of his life? What was discovered, after 1935, about his life and work? What do we, who came after Pessoa, know about him now that his contemporaries could not even begin to imagine? Would he consider that we would still be talking about him, 90 years along the road? What is the secret of his legacy's vitality?

Nine decades may seem like a long time – almost a century! – especially for those who study Fernando Pessoa at school. However, Pessoa's novelty continues to surprise, as his texts maintain a current appeal to readers, and new insights and controversies do not let his writings fade in past and distant times. Pessoa is of today.

In this exhibition, we call upon visitors to relate directly to the articles on display: posters can be taken home, to reread later on, to stick on the wall or to be gifted to someone. Books are for handling. Movies are for traveling back in time. Visitors of the exhibition will leave their mark: the piles of reproduced documents will lose height, as an effect of the passage of time. It is not about erasure, though – it is about going to other hands, eyes and places, in a process that will give this exhibition new meanings and new lives.

Clara Riso
DIRECTOR · CASA FERNANDO PESSOA



**27 NOV'25
to 6 DEC'26**

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

The eternal ark

Fernando Pessoa and posterity

**CURATORSHIP
AND CONTENT PRODUCTION**
Antonio Sáez Delgado

DESIGN AND INSTALLATION
Ilhas Studio

**CONTENT PRODUCTION
AND PROOFREAD**
Casa Fernando Pessoa

VIDEOS
RTP Archive

PROJECTION
Semente

**CONSTRUCTION
AND ASSEMBLY**
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Curator: **Antonio Sáez Delgado**

Marking the ninetieth anniversary of Fernando Pessoa's death, this exhibition proposes a journey through the unique way in which the writer is projected beyond his own existence. More than a tribute, it is a reflection on how his work — dispersed, enigmatic and almost infinite — became a posthumous device, a literary mechanism that continues to generate texts, interpretations and readers, long after the author's disappearance.

Since 1935, Fernando Pessoa's name no longer belongs solely to the man who signed it. It has become a living, editorial and public presence, which feeds on the famous ark where several thousand unpublished texts were kept by him. This ark, a material symbol of an endless archive, is also a metaphor for the way in which the author conceived literature itself: a network of voices, masks and versions that does not cease to multiply.

The exhibition presents three sections testifying to the various lives of Pessoa after Pessoa:

- *A Life That Does Not End in 1935* brings together biographies and studies on the writer's figure, showing how curiosity and fascination for his person continue to inspire new readings and mythologies.
- *A Work In Search Of a Canon* reveals the long and intricate process of editing his writings — from scattered fragments to organized volumes — and the essential role of critics and editors who, in trying to establish and anchor a legacy, participate in its incessant transformation.
- *An Author As Plural As The Universe* exposes Pessoa's multiple translations and international receptions, demonstrating how his writing has become truly planetary, even though it was born in Lisbon.

At the centre of the exhibition, a monumental and participatory installation stands, composed of thousands of reproductions of Pessoaan documents — some taken from the ark itself — that the visitor can touch, choose and take home. This installation, made of overlapping blocks of paper, works as a physical metaphor for Pessoa's ark: a textual body in permanent mutation.

As each visitor removes a fragment and transports it to another place, the installation changes, unravelling and remaking itself, like Pessoa's own archive, which never closes. The gesture of carrying a piece of paper is also an act of reading and continuity: a way of participating in the posthumous device that the author left in operation, consciously or not, when he accumulated the thousands of documents that time still deciphers nowadays.

In the end, the exhibition suggests that Fernando Pessoa did not just write a work — he built a posterity machine. His ark is a literary organism that spans the twentieth century and reaches to us alive, open and expanding. Every reader, every publisher, every visitor becomes part of this never-ending work: an *eternal ark*, where literature continues to reinvent its own future.

***I know not what
tomorrow will bring***

Fernando Pessoa

Perhaps one of the great fears of the deceased is that they will not exist in the future, in the memory of posterity. How do you get a place in History? And how does History decide who stays in and who stays out?

Although the History that Pessoa invented for its posterity is broadly disseminated, the truth is that poems, lists, texts and notes continue to be discovered and deciphered, even today. Pessoa knew that mystery is what feeds desire the most. Pessoa knew that you cannot give everything at once to the future, if the future is to continue in the future.

His desire for eternity was present in every thought. Therefore, his ark is a container of eternity. Like the Ark of the Covenant, Pessoa left the commandments for his posterity in his own object.

Each note left behind by Pessoa, in a conscious dialogue with the future, is proof of the way in which the poet transcends himself in time and space. Pessoa's work reached places far from his ark: he is studied worldwide, and his name is synonymous with boldness, brilliance, audacity and enormous capacity for invention and reinvention.

These details and stories were fundamental to fuel an idea of what the exhibition *The Eternal Ark: Fernando Pessoa and posterity* would be, both visually and spatially.

It is composed of a central block where posters are stacked – as if we were in a typography – with reproductions of the notes, texts and lists Pessoa left in his ark. The visitor is invited to edit clippings, being able to collect various pages and take them home.

Pessoa's name is consecrated to memory and posterity. Throughout the world, on bookshelves, but also on the walls of homes. With his boldness, Fernando Pessoa even makes us hope that death will not really erase us.