

**Lisboa Libraries  
Network**

*Section*

# People make the library

1<sup>st</sup> season > 2023

# People make the library

From October to December 2023, the **Lisbon Libraries** (BLX) had a weekly section on their social networks where they presented some projects and the people who made them happen: **People make the library** is the name of this section and is also the motto of BLX.

We'd like to thank all the people who gave everything for this programme, as well as the partner organisations and the teams of Lisbon's libraries.

## # ACQUISITIONS AND TECHNICAL SERVICES – SATT

### **Lisbon Libraries and the Carnide Solidarity Bookstore**

At the beginning of 2022, the Lisbon Public Libraries Network, through its Acquisitions and Technical Services (SATT) and the Cultural Boutique, joined hands in the name of the Carnide Solidarity Bookstore.

The coordinator of this very special bookstore, João Borges de Oliveira, explains that for this project, “as a bookstore that lives exclusively on donations from individuals, companies and others, collaboration with SATT was very important. This service regularly sends us dozens of books, which we then make available in our bookstore.”

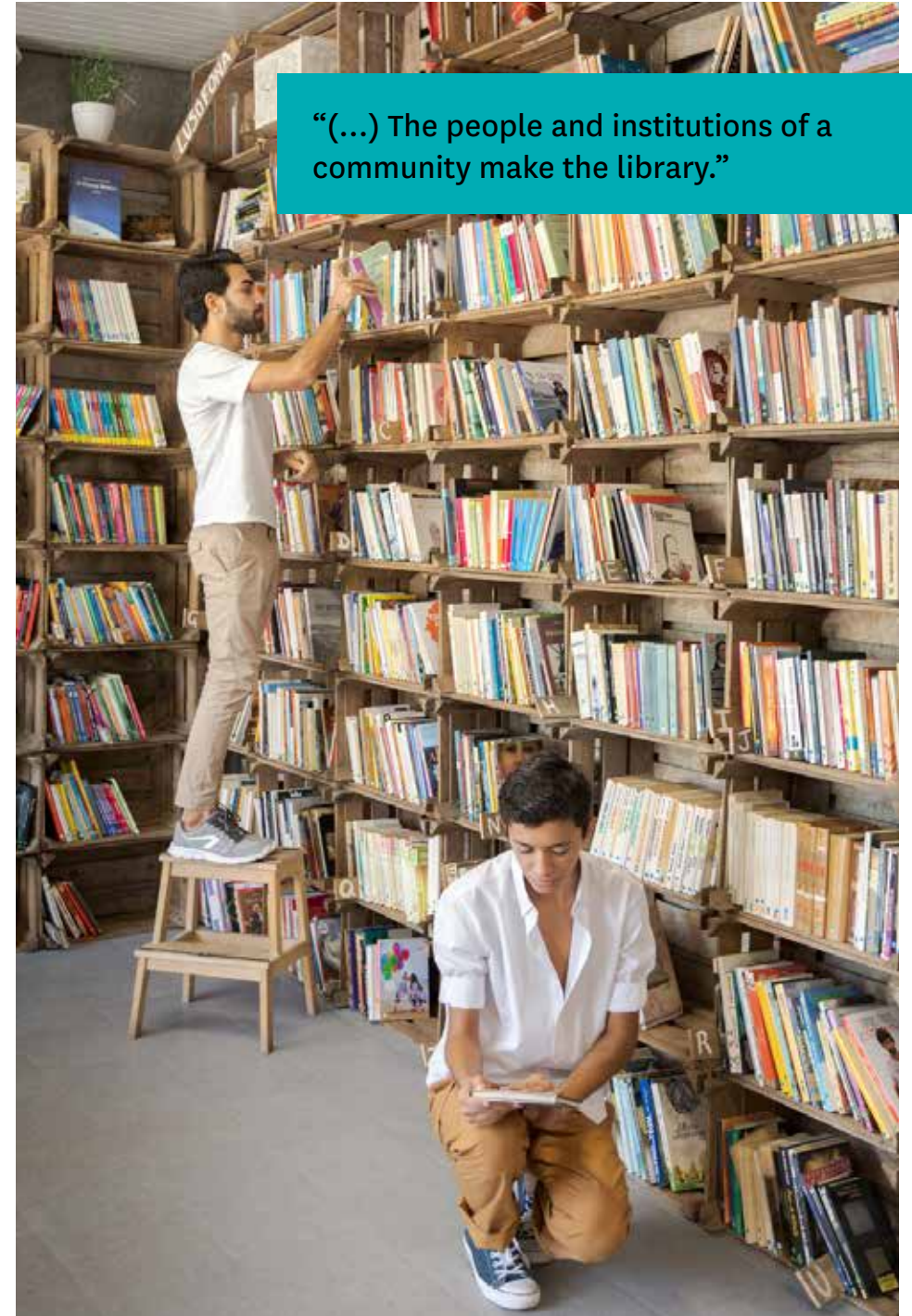
The books forwarded are mainly fiction, usually titles that are already available in large quantities in the BLX, and try to reach different age groups.

Paulo Quaresma, president of the Cultural Boutique, explains that “the proceeds from the sale of these books support various cultural projects organised by the Cultural Boutique, such as the empowerment of women with mental illnesses through art.”

“It’s the promotion of books and reading that unites these entities and the implementation of a circular economy that benefits everyone. The people and institutions of a community make the library.”



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## # ALCÂNTARA LIBRARY

# The Community Theatre of the Alcântara Library

Nicolle Sá and Vanda Dias have been part of this collective since January 2023 and say it has been a transformative experience.

Nicolle tells us: “I knew from the start that I was on to something special, something that would make me grow even more as a person and as an arts professional, allowing me to share what I know and absorb new experiences. For me, theatre is a powerful form of expression, capable of creating bonds and changing lives.”

In the testimonies of these two participants, you can see the importance they both attach to meeting and connecting with people of different ages, backgrounds, and professions, even more so for Nicolle, who is Brazilian and recently arrived in Portugal. She tells us that she has found “a real family here, where we support each other and celebrate individual and collective achievements”.

Vanda, on the other hand, mentions some practical aspects in which she has noticed a difference in her daily life, such as “improved ability to concentrate, discipline, appreciation of teamwork, empathy for others. The improvisation exercises helped me a lot to improve my ability to think quickly, which is so often needed in everyday life”.



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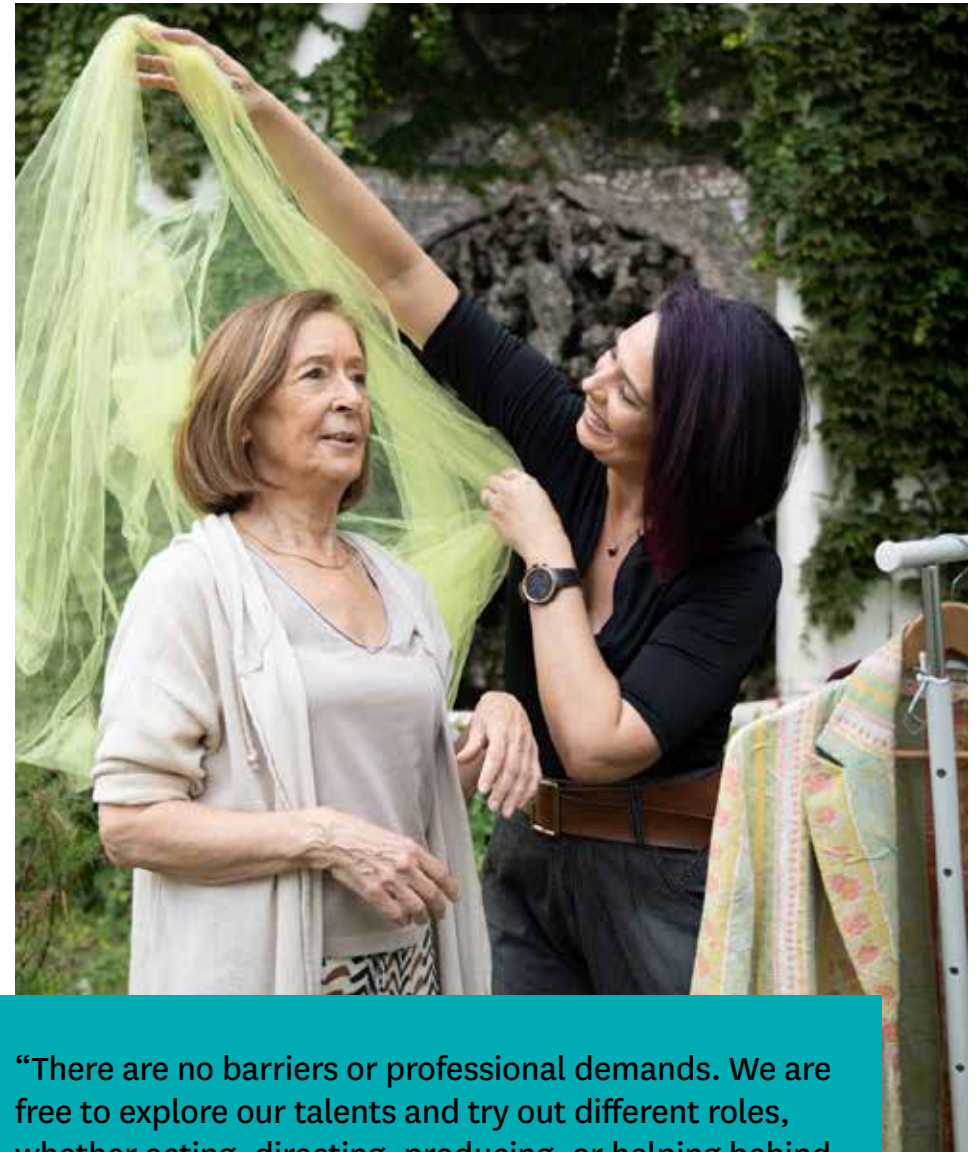
And how do you find the time for yet another commitment in the daily rush? In the end, is it worth it?

The answer is yes! Vanda “always leaves a session or rehearsal with the feeling that it was worth all the effort to be there for those hours” and Nicolle says it is “a breather in a week that is very busy”.

“There are no barriers or professional demands. We are free to explore our talents and try out different roles, whether acting, directing, producing, or helping behind the scenes.”

This is the Community Theatre of the Alcântara Library, promoted by Rastilho, under the artistic direction of David Silva.





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## # BELÉM LIBRARY

# An “Open Atelier” in the Belém Library

Between September 2022 and September 2023, the *Open Atelier* project took place at the Belém Library, an idea that involved experimenting with a process of sharing of a library space with artists from the surrounding community.

For a year, Bhya Sugai (artist and designer) and Tatiana Ferreira (ceramicist and cultural mediator) “resided” at the Belém Library, where they were able to develop their work “in a physical space that would not have been possible otherwise, given the lack of workspaces and *ateliers* with affordable rent,” says Tatiana.

This experience fostered the exchange of synergies between the artist duo, but it was also very important from an individual point of view. In Bhya’s words: “The space offered by the library gave me the opportunity to show my work to other people, creating a network of artists and creatives, and allowed me to develop work on a larger scale. It was essential for me to be where I am, with my own *atelier* and with new partnerships.”



“After this experience, the two artists were able to rent a new space, very close to the Belém Library, Estúdio Nuba (...)”





And what is this *atelier* ?

After this experience, the two artists were able to rent a new space, very close to the Belém Library, Estúdio Nuba, a creative studio that organises activities, projects, and workshops for creative and entrepreneurial people.

As residents at the Belém Library, the pair offered linocut workshops to the community and organised a meeting with other artists from the community to reflect on the role and importance of the library for the artistic community and what kind of actions they could build together.

“The space offered by the library gave me the opportunity to show my work to other people (...) It was essential for me to be where I am, with my own atelier and with new partnerships.”





## # CAMÕES LIBRARY

# Learning Portuguese at the Camões Library

From March to September 2023, Evelyn Pouey took part in two courses organised by the Camões Library: “I heard about the possibility of taking these courses at the library, which were not only free, but also had the advantage of being online. They were the ideal option for me and helped me with the first steps of my life in Lisbon.”

Evelyn is from Argentina and came to live in Portugal a few months ago, which “created the need and desire to learn the Portuguese language, so that I could get by in my daily activities and also to learn more about the culture and people of this wonderful place! Not only did we learn the language, but we also learned practical aspects about the culture and traditions of Portugal and Lisbon, which made me curious and interested to find out more!”

The Creative Conversation course impressed her the most, because “it allowed us to practise our communication skills by focusing on our experiences, dreams and feelings”.

When asked what impressed her most, Evelyn replied: “The group of people we met, from different places and with different mother tongues. It allowed us to share our experiences and support each other in this learning process, even without seeing each other in person”.





“I can say that taking part in this experience has given me the confidence and tools to communicate in my daily activities and to face the challenges of migrating to a country with a different language. For all these reasons, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have been part of this experience and I encourage anyone who is interested to take part!”



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## # CORUCHÉUS LIBRARY

### **Chi Kung classes at the Coruchéus Library**

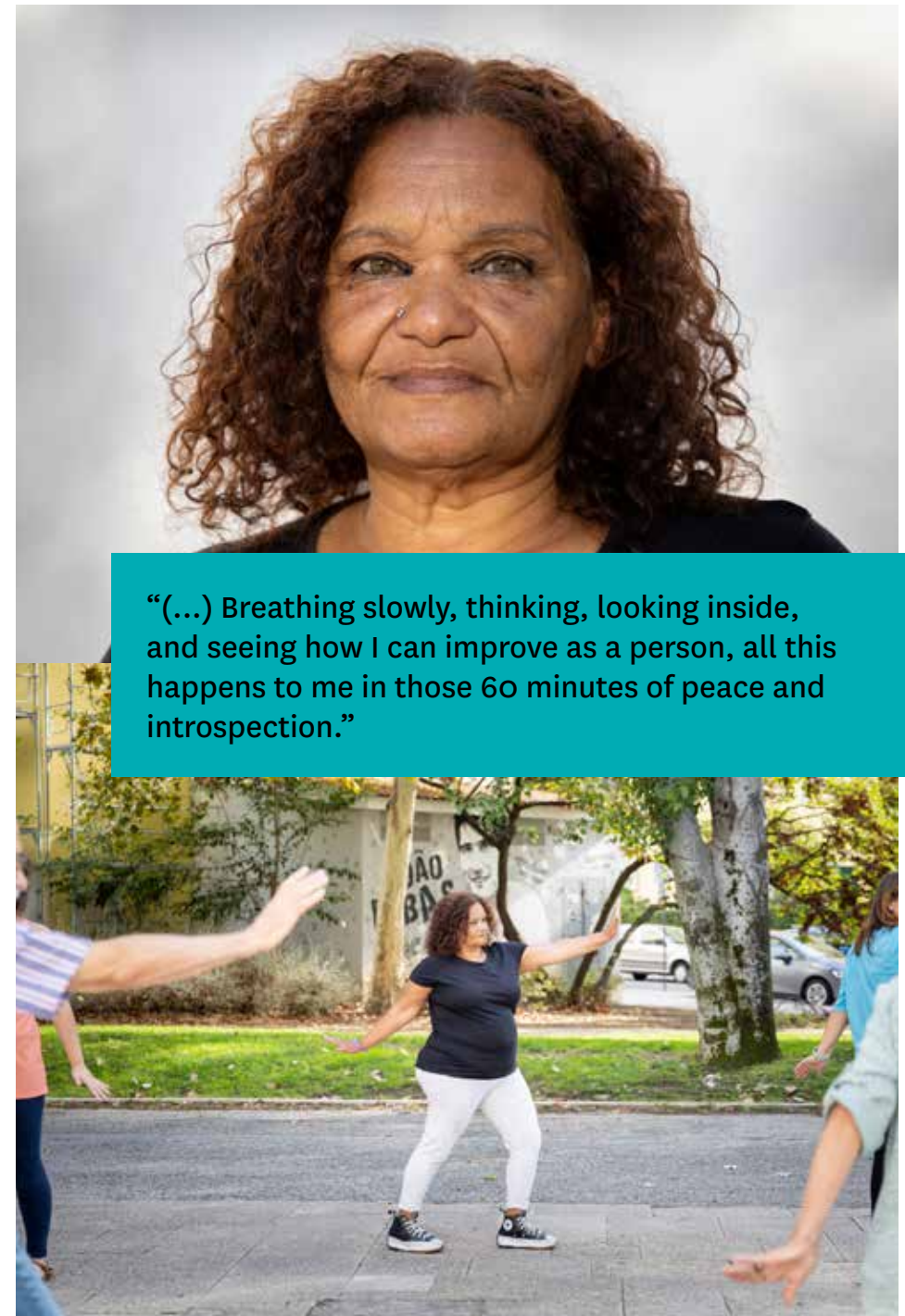
Since October 2022, *Chi Kung* classes have been held at the Coruchéus Library, thanks to the volunteer work of teacher Manuel Cristiano. One of the participants, Maria Flora Reis, tells us:

“I’ve always been an admirer and practitioner of oriental arts, such as *Shiatsu*, *Tai-Chi* and of course *Chi Kung*, so I regularly take part in this type of activity.

We all need to get to know our bodies better: our hands, our eyes, our muscles, our breathing... The practice of *Chi Kung* allows us to do all this and contributes to our physical, mental, and spiritual development.

Manuel Cristiano’s classes always leave me feeling refreshed and in harmony with myself. Breathing slowly, thinking, looking inside, and seeing how I can improve as a person, all this happens to me in those 60 minutes of peace and introspection.”

In view of this very positive experience, Flora gives us some advice... “practise *Chi Kung*, practise *Shiatsu*, practise *Tai-Chi*! It’s as good or better than going to the gym.”



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**“practise Chi Kung, practise Shiatsu, practise Tai-Chi! It’s as good or better than going to the gym.”**



## # LISBON PERIODICALS LIBRARY

# The Lisbon Periodicals Library Book Club

The Lisbon Periodicals Library has been running its book club since 2009.

Fernanda Vital has been attending these meetings for about a year. She has always loved reading, ever since she was a child, and she still has this “taste and practice”. She tells us that she found out about the club “through a friend who was already attending and I was so enthusiastic that I wanted to try it.”

Mariana Vilhena, a regular participant, says that it was “intellectual curiosity” that led her to join this book club. As for the books discussed, she says: “Some of the books I hadn’t read before, others I read just for the author, and I also had the opportunity to reread books I had already read and loved.” Still on the subject of the books on offer, Fernanda highlights one aspect that she considers a virtue: “the fact that they are all by Portuguese or Lusophone authors”.

When asked about the importance of these monthly sessions, both participants emphasised the commitment and the opportunity to discuss the chosen books with the group. Mariana says: “I really like this concept because the opinions of the different members help me to get to know the work better. The readings are enriched by the preparation of the topics by the interlocutor from the library”, Maria Helena Roldão.

We invite more people to attend these meetings!

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## # ITINERANT LIBRARY

# The Itinerant Library meets the community

Taking advantage of its mobility, a differentiating and complementary factor within the BLX Network, the Itinerant Library exists to better serve populations in the Lisbon area where there are fewer cultural facilities, reaching out to specific communities to promote access to books and encourage reading for all.

Almost a year ago, this library on wheels arrived at the Charneca-Galinheiras Social and Parish Centre and since then has been organising regular activities with the Day Centre's users.

Ana Chissende, socio-cultural animator, says that “it's been a very positive, beautiful, and rewarding experience! Catarina, Sandra and Luís have brought the books to us, allowing our users to travel in their imagination without leaving the Centre. We've had moments of memories, sharing, joy and laughter.”

The socio-cultural animator highlights the contribution of the Itinerant Library to a very special activity because of its intergenerational nature: “It allowed us to resume one of our activities that brings together the children of our kindergarten and the elderly, where the ‘grandparents’ tell stories to the ‘grandchildren’.”

“We thank the whole team and hope that they will stay with us for a long time!”



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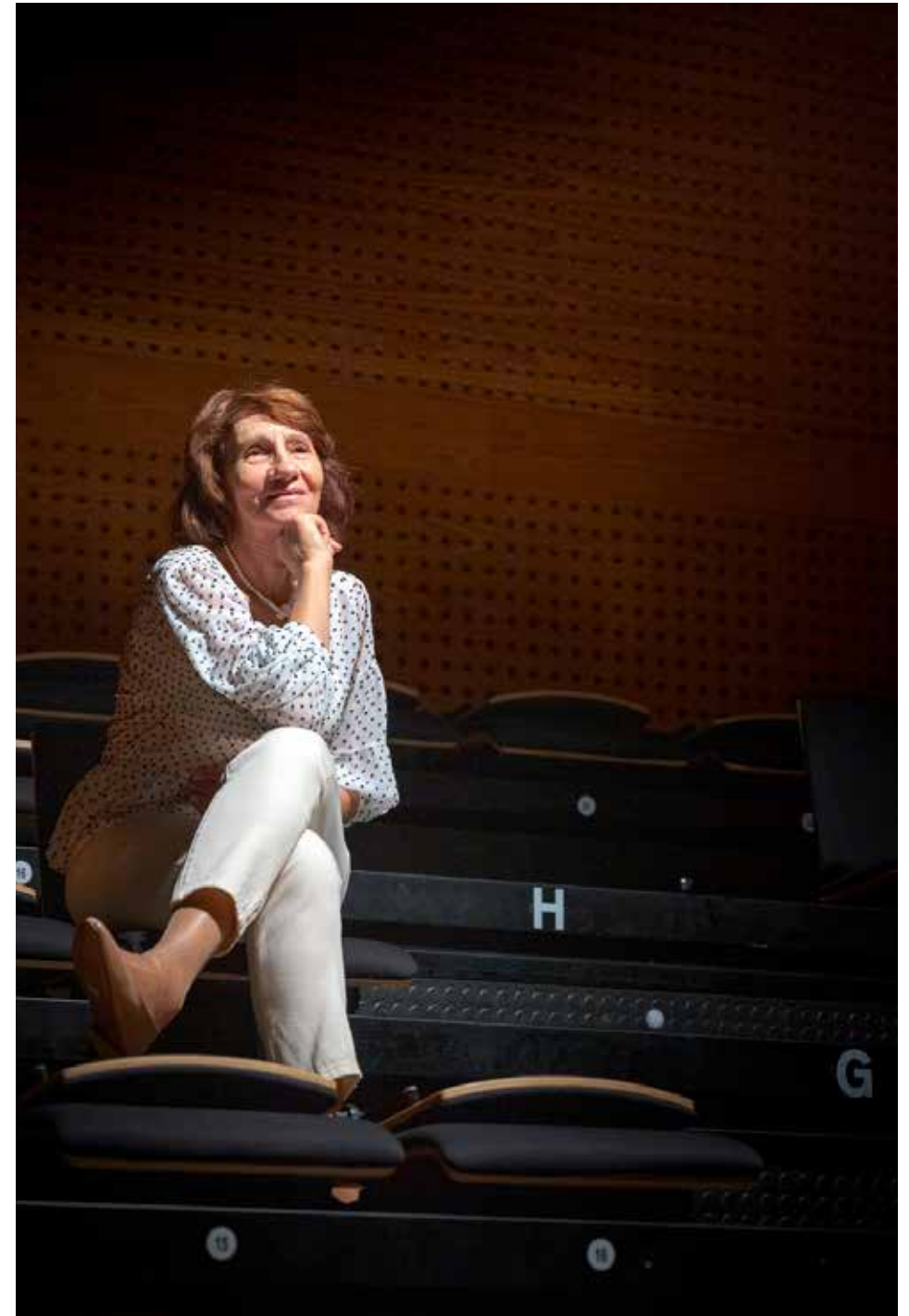
## # MARVILA LIBRARY

### Marvila Library, a “second home”

“It was like a film” is a participatory collaborative project produced by Artemrede, in partnership with the municipalities involved. At the Marvila Library, the project started in March 2022.

The project brought together an intergenerational group from four areas: Marvila (Lisbon), Vale da Amoreira (Moita), 2º Torrão (Almada) and Barreiro. What the participants had in common was the will and motivation to make a film with the choreographer Victor Hugo Pontes.

Cila Micaela, 73, lives in Marvila and took part in the project. She tells us about her experience: “I’ve always been very curious about how a film is made, the texts, the stories, the actresses and the acting. I never imagined that I would be part of the cast of a film in which first-timers of such different ages act opposite professionals. It was also surprising that it took so many days to shoot, so many repetitions to make a scene... you lose count when you hear ‘action/cuts’. All this to make a film that takes so little time and involves so many people. I’m very excited to see the result”. The film will be presented at the Marvila Library in March 2024.



Still on the subject of her local library, she reveals that it is her “second home”. Over the years she has been involved in other projects there, doing “things she never dreamed she could do”, and which have helped to build her confidence and self-esteem: “I was always shy and very reserved. I’m a different person now and people have even said to me: ‘Cila, you’ve changed!’ Taking part in these projects has been one of the best things that has happened to me in my life.”



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## # ORLANDO RIBEIRO LIBRARY

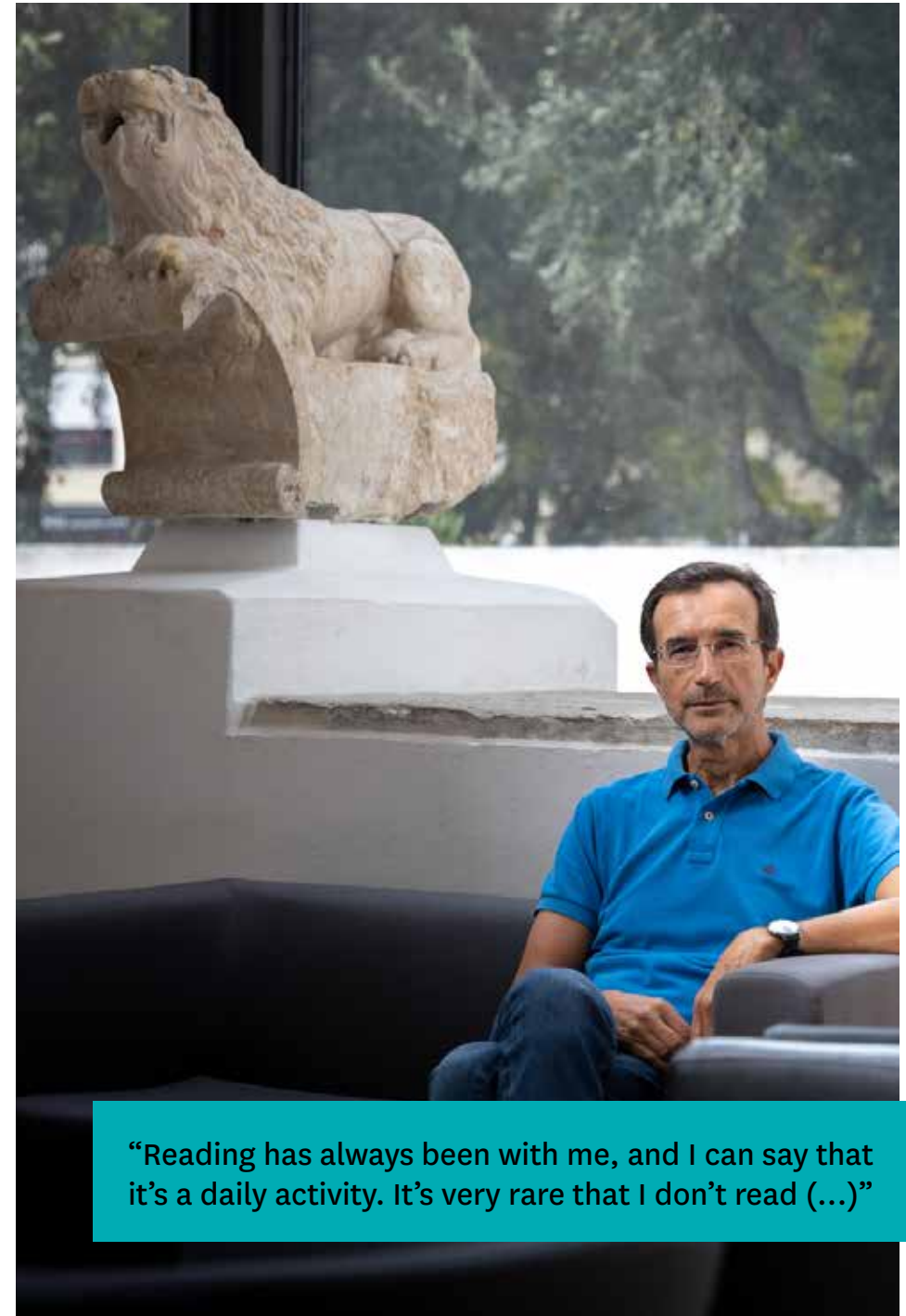
# The Orlando Ribeiro Library Book Club

It was in January 2022 that the Orlando Ribeiro Library started its book club, in which each participant informally shares their reading impressions, opinions and personal tastes. Carlos Ferreira has been part of this club since its inception and tells us why he joined:

“Reading has always been with me, and I can say that it’s a daily activity. It’s very rare that I don’t read for even five minutes when I go to bed. Sometimes I have the opportunity to discuss a particular book with my family (who, fortunately, all love to read) or friends (who don’t enjoy it so much anymore...), but almost always these readings are very far apart in time, so that the details and the liveliness of the exchange of ideas are lost. In the case of the book club, because everyone reads the same book at the same time, the discussion is much more lively, full of details and often with different points of view, which enriches it.”

When we talk about book clubs, the question almost always comes up: “What if I don’t like the book and I can’t finish it?”. Carlos tells us that this has happened to him:

“I’ve had the opportunity to read authors I didn’t know or who had never caught my attention, and sometimes there are pleasant surprises, other times I don’t even finish reading because I don’t like it, but even in those cases it’s interesting to hear the other participants’ points of view.”



“Reading has always been with me, and I can say that it’s a daily activity. It’s very rare that I don’t read (...)”



While in 2022 the reading suggestions were based on prize-winning books, this year the books were chosen according to the suggestions of the participants, who even met some of the authors whose works were selected, such as Catarina Gomes, Tânia Ganho and João Tordo.



“What if I don’t like the book and I can’t finish it?”.

## # PALÁCIO GALVEIAS LIBRARY

### **Creative Writing at the Palácio Galveias Library**

The Palácio Galveias Library is already well known for its regular activities that teach and encourage creative writing.

David Pedro and Leonor Costa are two regular participants and tell us how they found this meeting and learning space.

In Leonor's words, it all started with the Creative Writing Sessions on Feminism that took place in March 2023: "Since then I have attended other sessions, also organised by Adelaide Bernardo, and they have been moments of sharing and individual and collective enrichment. In the meantime, I've become a user of the Galveias Library. I believe that this type of initiative is very important in the fight against loneliness and in promoting connections between people. They also help to maintain a commitment to writing. Thank you!"

Long-time participant, David says: "When I first discovered the library's creative writing groups, I didn't hesitate to join. As someone who has always enjoyed creating his own stories, being surrounded by people who love writing as much or more than I do, and the spirit of mutual support that quickly develops among the participants, gave me a new lease of life."





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David also invites “all those who always wanted to write but never did, to join us!”. Who’s coming?





## # PENHA DE FRANÇA LIBRARY

# **Making the neighbourhood our home at the Penha de França Library**

*Making the neighbourhood our home* is a community project that is part of *The Europe Challenge* programme of the *European Cultural Foundation*, which aims to develop intergenerational links in the Penha de França neighbourhood, creating a network of solidarity and combating the isolation of the most vulnerable groups. Between March 2022 and July 2023, some of the project's activities took place at the Penha de França Library and left their mark on the community.

Maria Adelaide, or Pudi Tavares, as most people know her, immediately accepted the invitation to take part because she believes that “it’s important for the different generations to meet, to have more links. It’s good for the older generations and also for the children. It’s important to get along, to pass on values.”

Of her involvement in the project, she says that “it was great to meet nice and interesting people” and highlights the friendship she developed with a neighbour when they both took part in the “Tree of Encounters”, an “intergenerational picnic with writing, drawing and hands in the dirt”.



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Pudi also highlights the meeting that took place in July 2023 at the Maloca Cultural Association, which she says “opened up horizons” for her. This “Great Intergenerational Celebration” included a creative workshop for intergenerational exchange, a community laboratory for sharing experiences, and *ended with a dance.*

About going to the library, she says: “Coming to the library could ‘turn on the light’ for people to be interested in reading. The fact that the library hosts these activities helps people to read more!”



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Fotografia: João Barata/CML

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