

ENGLISH

English translation by Paula Olmos

Siza. Suggestion or certainty

Miguel Angel Baldellou

This could be a good way to express the many questions raised by the work of the Portuguese architect during the later years.

The initial "uncertainty" present in his first projects disclosed before us a world of suggestions just in a moment when the international "taste masters" imposed their dictatorship. His architecture appeared as unclassifiable and, at the same time, as a mature and personal product. But his rather abundant production during the later years seems to be anchored in an evident formal ability which probably results in a loss of subtlety, once the former indecision overcome, which was precisely the main element of his personal poetic.

Clearly identifiable, his architecture has begun to produce somewhat trivial by-products for mass consumption of which our architect is the unconscious author. What could have been a desirable mannerism, a personal mode born out of the reflection over personal conflicts, a consequence of self-evolution, has resulted in a somewhat redundant sophistication probably due to the way in which the cultural consumption market works. His Santiago building is yet inspiring and even exciting, but we expect Alvaro Siza to express less certainty and take more risks, as his first works seemed to announce.

When, in 1967, the "Hogar y Arquitectura" magazine first published Alvaro Siza's works in Spain (Matosinhos, 1933), he was rapidly the subject of a general admiration which increased with the years and is now a kind of obsession among our country fellow architects.

This "Sizamania" was supported by the feeling that his architecture was something different, which could not be understood as belonging to dominant currents, apparently detached from any speculation, just expressive of its own premises, dissolved into the very site occupied by it and by it made remarkable. It was an exceptional architecture, in the best possible sense.

This first general curiosity (in many cases linked to a certain skepticism) was followed by excursions to the North of Portugal when the images of Siza's work began to be continuously published by the most internationally renowned architectural magazines. The initial confusion resulted in an immediate esteem which provoked the beginning of the students' pilgrimage to our neighbor country. Events went too fast. Siza climbed towards the highest crests and was soon

considered a living master.

His best virtues, those who made of Siza, beyond any doubt, the master of a generation, depended on his isolation, his local character, his connection with a particular time and place, even with a certain historical circumstance. Success and public acknowledgment began to shape his own poetic expression, directing it towards a certain general approach born as a synthesis of his different intentions. Thus, Alvaro Siza could be assimilated and identified as an internationally renowned architect. This process, a current one in the life of the "great masters", is always the beginning of a descent in the artist's creative strain. Attention is diverted from work by the very events, by the necessity to answer the questions of the media. This also implies that the artist must give an account of his works, explain them, and, thus, the particular solutions replace as justifications the more fundamental principles.

The public demands recognizable works by a renowned artist and he answers by imitating himself. Although Siza is always exceptional, even in this kind of commission, there are nevertheless unavoidable concessions and compromises. Our "cultural policies" (this kind of invasion of our cities pretending to enrich their heritage by transforming them into built museums) are mainly interested in architecture signed by a celebrated and, above all, recognizable author, suitable for a timely, politically significant, inauguration. This kind of commission avoids any risk. And the habit to avoid it causes reverie, a relaxed reverie in the best cases. And, in the worst, the triviality of emotions.

In the later years, Siza has been called by enlightened majors and smart public employees in search of a worthwhile political investment. A Pritzker Prize and an Architectural Golden Medal, among other distinctions, are sure guarantees. As names like Gehry, Isozaki or Meier. In the international architectural market, Siza has a high prized quotation. Architecture as a merchandise, object of cult and consumption necessarily loses its values.

Very soon, there will be no Spanish city without its Siza's, as no important museum without its Barcelo's, nor the young generations will resist the temptation of using one of master's recognizable gestures. This mechanism of constantly imitating Siza is common practice in our schools of architecture and a

kind of long term obsession in the Portuguese ones.

Although Siza's is a singular phenomenon, it is not an isolated or a casual one. It is the result of the kind of life typical of a remarkable architect integrated within a particular context prepared by older professionals whose labor made of Siza's case a "natural" one.

Up to the eighties, Siza was a somewhat local phenomenon whose quality enabled his international influence. From then on, continuous international commissions introduced "uncontrolled" elements in his work and attitude which altered his most esteemed virtues. The change in scale, the different relationships between project and site, the new "tempo" in the designing process are clearly visible, in my opinion, even in his drawings, which are more and more "posterior" and less "previous" to the project and works. This implied the growth of his office and a change in its working rhythm. This does not always mean a poorer quality but it is evident that many questions are solved by means of the current repertory.

An extraordinary exhibition of Siza's works recently hung in Santiago de Compostela (from the 4th April (the eve of the anniversary of the mythical Carnations' Revolution) to the 2nd July) became an opportunity to contemplate all his production. The exhibition was showed in his Santiago's building (this was almost the main appeal): The Galizan Center of Contemporary Art. The container was part of the contents and the experience was an exciting one. It was an occasion to reflect upon a long career, an occasion to discover the particularities of the different projects by contemplating a rather complete collection of plans, models, drawings and furniture (very few photographs). This material confirmed the impression produced by the Madrid exhibition of 1993: there is a clear tendency in Siza's work which can be traced up to the Berlin projects. The interesting catalogue published by Electa includes, together with texts by Pedro de Llano, Carlos Castanheira, Francisco Rei and Santiago Seara many of the Portuguese master's ideas, all belonging to the period inaugurated by that "Bonjour Tristesse".

The exhibition reveals how the recent dispersion has resulted in the search of new ways. The formerly so much attended "site's voices" have been replaced in the master's inspiration by a kind of "cultural recollection", even of cultures which are not the master's. From the point of view of the mere form, we can find echoes of the late Le Corbusier or Stuttgart's Stirling. Siza's sensibility, though, seems to integrate shallow influences with deeper experiences.

In terms of light and texture, Siza express himself, as any sculptor, carving the space with a changing dramatic sense. The inner and outer topographies shape an spatial sequence, making of the visit to any of his buildings an amazing rite.

Siza's present reverie contradicts his own previous mode, emerging from a pre-existing landscape, deliberately assumed and interpreted. His own will is now the master of his formal work, once emancipated from previous influences. But this implies a certain amount of arbitrariness and the loss of the liberty acquired in the process of freeing oneself.

This aleatory arbitrariness which has no apparent direction and is so linked to external factors, has been unfortunately transmitted to less skilled followers. The results are not good advertisers of the originals as they reveal their weaker points.

Symptoms of decadence are deplorable in any architect but pathetic in some. We need masters nowadays, not as authors of archetypes but as models of behavior. His "distractions" are, therefore, disturbing. Exigency is related to hope and to a certain role which, once assumed, cannot be abandoned.

I sincerely hope, but I am not very optimistic, a return to the old years in which Siza appeared as an uncontaminated hope, free and rigorous as an example of coherence and serenity.

Because, finally, his lessons are still present behind the fireworks of his most brilliant solutions. After the traces left on the beach (the signs of a certain moment, some even full of nostalgia, I think) it is still possible to notice the effort of one who, not long ago, opened a deep and precise furrow which has not been much trodden since then.

How is it possible to listen with ease the site's voices, which are just heard by a calm listener, when time urges us to return once we have arrived? What is the appropriate answer to an inquirer who does not listen back? How is it possible to transmit what is not even felt? How could indifference make of a trip, an experience?

What Siza created, the uncertainty of suggestion, cannot be upheld with appearances. It requires an inner strain which should not be interrupted by the noise of self-satisfaction, of trivial adulation, of concession.

Perhaps, an inner voyage, a reconstruction of a personal experience, probably a solitary experience, would deprive his architecture of additions, of external images, of hollow and well known clamors, so unnecessary, so inappropriate.

Domestic atmosphere. Oporto. A pre-tragical melancholy.

Manuel Mendes

Today, leaving aside "morriña" (longing) (either nostalgic or sour longing) and making our memory work hard, we will find that there is not much left of what was called "Oporto School". Just an evocation, a pretention, the image of an entity taken for the entity itself. The weak improvisation which gave birth to its disciplinary synthesis, the effort employed in the absorption of Oporto's Aura is now a heedless process in the mediocrity, fatigue or punishment of the "generalizing" breed which has taken the charge of the efficacy, durability, transmission and resisting empiricism. That is, along this period so full of changes and accelerations, the attachment to that Oporto's Aura tries to seek new routes increasing the possibilities while admitting in it some personal contributions. Thus, in this somewhat perverse process it may lose its own character, its own ambitions.

Thus, a vitiated atmosphere replaces a disciplinary corpus and any attempt to go farther falls into vague fissures and singularities, which are more "signs" of a school than "expression" of this school, in an irreversible move which bears no purpose of finding Beauty's absolute and definitive values and whose only premise is that "architecture as a contemporary discipline is characteristically a way of thinking which permits the interpretation of the physical environment (1)".

In Portugal, these later years have been characterized by an industrial and economic development fascinated by success which has dictated an apotheosis of production (2).

Quietness and concern about the future, which are the means of cultural diffusion have been hardly opposed by politics' quick and immediate ways. The national urban life, casual and multi-focal, determines a kind of living outside historical time characterized by "the triviality of the site in relation to Transport, of slow pace in relation to unbounded speed" (2), a kind of uncultivated discernment, uncivilized illiteracy born out of "the progressive and increasing emergency clearly perceived in public speeches, political and cultural expressions of folk and nationalist radicalism (3)".

According to Eduardo Lourenço, the change brought by revolution, which has a clear democratic legitimacy is not so completely legitimate in terms of culture (3).

The real country is rather different nowadays. Its inhabitants dwell near the coast in more or less urban environments, in suffocating streets and constrained by society. There is a kind of "composite" territory in which the opposition between country and city, market and community, school and illiteracy, modernity and archaism, future and past has no longer any sense. It is a real country which, fighting, in fact, against the original one, tries, nevertheless, to incorporate and perpetuate part of it. It distrusts any radicalism, defending even tradition, and tends to reproduce the vicious circle of mediocrity in misery and prosperity. That is why the cultural aristocrats despise it,

its plebeian character, and why the technocrats of progress feel desperate when trying to take the risks and have the initiatives required by their manual books. It is nevertheless our country, in which we have to live and work and which we have to understand (4).

Our tradition (catholic, inquisitorial, nostalgic, isolated by the Salazar's Regime) makes us live with values and mechanisms based on secrecy and the most typical way of transmission is, accordingly, a rudimentary and poor secret procedure of restricted circulation. This culture, ours, has never taken heed of what was going on in this our twentieth century and what made of it what it is now. In this culture of secrecy, ours, we live our everyday life with the conviction that we are destined to resist the images imposed by the others (5). Portugal is a country made of cities where people does not look at nor recognizes the others. There is a kind of self absorption in our society which contradicts its apparent cosmopolitan character. This happens in every social level, and paradoxically, it seems as though, in a time where information and media have achieved ubiquity, we were still determined to be "enthusiastically alone" (3). Ours is a strange society, so warm in everyday life and yet so poor in real collective endeavour, so humiliated, so innocent in front of its own entertainment, with so weak and self-indulging elites, when there is so much to hope, such enormous needs (6). A country made of cities with no rites defining its communities, no rural nor cosmopolitan festivities, "Portuguese cities long for the province, their lost land and Portuguese citizens are ashamed of their provincial origins and traditions" (5). That is why in this country there is always a mute suggestion/revelation of a permanently present past, timeless and anachronistic.

Therefore, although ignorance, exoticism and cultural autism are signs of a peripheral state, yet a less miserable and more progressive vocation makes us admit that Portugal's specific character achieves "the coexistence within Portuguese society of modern elements together with pre-modern and post-modern features, a dynamic and apparently durable coexistence" (7).

"The North has not only conquered the rest of the country, it also made of Lisbon, a capital city. Without the North, Portugal would have never existed. This is one of the reasons why there is a strong sense of identity in this part of the territory" (3). A discontinuous euphoria about a historical nostalgia, blind and exotic in its ignorance, this Northism/Portism exiles itself from modernity in a kind of everlasting anachronistic passage which entertains its leisure in evaluating and/or annulling its own artists and makers.

Along decades, the City has confirmed its centralism, fixing its bounds and structure, but the economic and demographic growth has not resulted in a theoretical model for the design of its territory and landscape: a

process/project which has been realized according to the variations in artificial time.

"...A healthy crowd conscience, a solid quality in behavior and relations, have made of this human group the basis of a typically ours unique great city. Have resulted in what I call Portuguese Social Classicism" (9).

"This wonderful simplicity, this intrinsic modesty have always presided the most significant events in this land. It is wild, and even brutal, but it is healthy, sincere, and it is our way!"

This particular attitude has provoked a process and determined a certain character: the radius-centralism which, once beyond the centre's perimeter, has concentrated the urban development around foundational axis; shaping the expansion according to the opening of different secondary roads, the development of peripheral rural areas, the consolidation of spontaneous groupings, the division into lots of old manors; the expansion has the character of a "regulation" of various circumstances between the different owners which has achieved the creation of a continuum made of fillings, additions, replacements, expansions and transformations and also marks of the particular breakages; evolution of a tertiary center which shows the periodical effort employed in the speculative appropriation of a land on which to build ambiguous and mixed types according to profitability; preservation of large characteristically rural areas within the city limits; conservation of industrial complexes, now isolated drops within the urban context; the heritage of industrialization (workers housing, the "isles") which can be found within densely occupied blocks, the object of hygienist and philanthropic public programmes; a renovated interest in real estate investment, public and private, in the conclusion of housing programmes directed to the middle and higher sectors of the bourgeoisie: the block of flats, the line block, the band block, the "villa" block and the association of typical units generating the sense of a district in which the streets penetrate the different lots and urban blocks. "Granite is composed of quartz, feldspar and mica but it is always granite. Each component must be pure in order that the resulting stone would have the beauty, hardship and nobleness of the isolated elements" (9).

Oporto's modern style, what was promoted and finally achieved to build its urban landscape, assumed a direct relation with the street, the 19th century types, the conventional rules and traditional construction. In fact it was much more related to a "mundane-ornamental" Rationalism than to "objective" Functionalism. It is not possible to talk about proto-rationalism, and even less of expressionism or purism. Once the charm of aperture surpassed, it should be considered a simplification or muscling of formal construction in strictly functional building programmes. A singular process of composite nature where the composing dynamism derived from a programme organizing discipline is combined with a clear concern about the building's or the complex's urban image (the facade, the dominion of concrete's structural concept. If the combination of arts and crafts, classicism and functionalism has been the fundamental appeal of Oporto's modern masters, this has been more due to the order and the functional and constructive harmony than to the use of

concepts as free design, flowing space or free play of volumes. The purification of form free from ornament, the aridity of the volumes, the significance of corners and planes, the disciplined openings over a neat and homogeneous colored surface, have been the translation of the architect's interpretation of a programme achieved by means of filtering it through the sophisticated knowledge of the architect.

A long period of conservatism and inertia has maintained a sense of permanence in Oporto's form, a sense of preservation or the capacity to integrate urban constructions inherited from the 19th century: a long process, a plot prolonged by the extensive and slow pace of time in a situation of mixed continuities, breakages and imitations. A process which has found the instruments and units of urban form and landscape in the very basis of the project, be it refurbishment or enlargement, renovation of a facade, a floor, a type or a model, alteration of structures or unification of pre-existing constructions. In this artificial heritage conservation, the morphological and architectural stability is not the result of effort, of resistance as there is a kind of agreement on the urban concept or at least on the proper strategies of the contemporary creative movement.

The last years have seen the rejection of any situation of political submission to the nation's whole. The people from Oporto have got rid of time and the city is now a modern town, according to a local politician. But it should be admitted that this development, the strategic autonomy of this urban modernization, so determined by economical or political greed and so keen on mute and deaf mimicry of what is dictated by exterior Empires, has achieved a urban culture with no sense of grandeur. Future is wasted in the happiness of short term: lack of any signs of study and problems imposed by the slow carving of time in the historical city's morphology; study understood as an act of culture a useful delay which will achieve the qualified modification of the urban space; cut down of the scale of a urban scene in a perverse, provincial like, operation against the character of the built city: its light, color, its rhythm and the way it is organized in plan and elevation, the way it occupies and divides the lots; systematic fill-in of empty urban sites by means of operations in which the relationship ground/construction/substructure is considered as a formal synthesis inducing barbarian effects, peripheral transformation of urban structure and landscape, more than experimentation over the unknown, reflection over the sense of community; in the process of urban construction, preeminence of the substructural service for traffic over the morphological significance of the public site.

Today, between the vertigo of periphery and the stability of the historical city, any thought about Oporto must be a disciplined reflection on the morphology of its human, physical, cultural, spatial and architectural landscape; a local and plural thought about the process of making a city, undertaken in the void intervals between continuity and rupture, tradition and modernity, convinced of the fact that its reality is the synthesis of diverse transformations occurred along the years, independently from the particular period; its contemporary quality is not made out of arbitrary historicism nor out of the

autistic representation of a circumstantial and rhetoric liberalism; to sum up, assuming that "its heritage will be just one, from past times up to the future" (10).

That is why the extension and efficacy of the issues "the city as architecture" or "the city as a work of art" place them beyond the reach of urban theory and practice as patent "rejections of easy dichotomies established between arguments pro and against preservation, pro and against respect and continuity of a historic building rule or between historic and modern city, center and periphery, city and country, artificial and natural, function and symbol and the simplification of the projects based on them" (11). A challenge, an appeal for the study of the city plan as a research work and endeavour suitable of being incorporated to the architect's fragmentary vocation and to the project's procedure: the specific character of urban design as the assumption of the dialectic relationship established between the study of the city's built form (relations between city form and architecture) and the action of a project, "presenting a global proposal which would modify the urban space and even the whole citizen, the 'urbes' and the 'civitas'" (11). All this from the assumption of the absence or impossibility of homogeneous basis which results in the possibility of working on the legitimacy of the project's process taking in account that, in the city "the crucial problem is how to investigate the ways to articulate so different elements, because a city is today a combination of very different fragments" (12); even more if we think that "modernity is a way to shape a sequence of moments in such a way that a high rate of contingency should be accepted" (13).

"We have linked the defamed image of Oporto's Architectural Course to the defamed image of the 25th april and we postpone a public self-criticism in order to undertake more urgent tasks", these are Alexandre Alves Costa's words pronounced in 1980, in a celebration and in the name of all his companions (14). And he added: "We want to combine imagination and Rationality. We affirm that imagination will not destroy rationality. Rationality is a critical faculty for analysis, we will make use of it as the foundation of the new idea, and we will make it grow. We should not just talk about the pleasure it is for us to be rational while at the same time abandoning this same rationality, forsaking ourselves. We, finally, entreat each pupil in this school to make of himself, with or without patience, an irreplaceable human being".

Today, the Faculty of Architecture acknowledges itself a follower of that disciplinary and educational project opened to Beaux Arts methods. Expression of the significance of design (conceived as practical intelligence in the investigation of the possible synthesis of the different building materials); in its course programme it tries to promote an education based in the practice of design: an orientation linked to structural/leveling centralism (matter and time) and connected with the real project's discipline to which, in an effort to condense a considerable quantity of knowledge, historical studies are added (particularly Portuguese) of the process of progressive autonomy of

building technique and urban planning. This first plan, the educational process proposed by it, has been maintained as a reproduction of professional practice which I find limitative for the pedagogic training experience and an obstacle for a balanced comprehension of the different studies/practice which make up our discipline, Architecture. It is a process which lulls the evaluation of the achieved evolution and commitment, particularly of the acquired corpus of knowledge, its translation into objects of study, and its significance, profundity, location and connections within the architect's curriculum; this process provokes the indetermination of the required education for a flexible architect: "to comprehend the diversity, acquire the capacity to act accordingly to the same logic in any circumstance" instead of "a way of thinking clearly identified with a certain language" (1).

Twenty years after the 25th april, now that we have accomplished those urgent tasks, the public self criticism has not yet appeared, it has been replaced by an exercise in drama. the "transformation into an educational project of a common wisdom supposedly present in the architectural world" (15) has been useful in the prolongation of the form and significance of a certain concept; it is, at the same time a romantic approach as it has "considered useless and even well known by everybody all that is suitable for teaching in architecture", specially as it has forsaken the many possible ways of architectural thinking. As we think that, along these years, time has modelled the bounds of the concept and freed the relation between boundary and concept (and as the problem is not exactly artistic imitation or graphic manipulation of languages, but instead the promotion of architectural learning and the general circulation of knowledge and experience), in the present circumstances of complete lack of agreement, the potentiality of the very concept brings us towards a process of revising the programme trying to revitalize its own identity hoping that it would admit something else than mere ornamental gestures. In the sixties and seventies the School's platform (thanks to the continuous connection school/studio and the complicity student-apprentice/master-architect) has probably been the most significant component in the perpetuation of Oporto's way, the clear expression of its tendency. But now, within the Portuguese context, the School has realized that it is not the exclusive agent of architectural education and that it has to share with other agents, platforms, other circuits and personages this task of the promotion of architecture. Therefore, the mentioned process of renovation must: assume the professional character of the school as an educational centre, promote research and services to the community taking in account the operative value of the different components in the architectural discipline, admitting the necessity of research for a correct scientific practice in architecture, and, thus, establish the minimum conditions for the accomplishment of an educational pedagogic and didactic system in which the principles or fragments of theory could be transmitted and assumed as basis, aims and above all as hypothesis; at the same time, the project conceived as the synthesis of research and design, of history and project process, certifies the importance of research which,

detached from the project achieves the completion of a theoretical and critical corpus which is the basis for any argumentation in the architectural discipline.

In this way, a weak present is an opportunity to make a useful approach to the school renovated proposals: the attempt to rebuild the system transforming it into a strong and resisting method that will last for years. Our old well known context, site, history and design preside, as the basis of a method, the mobility of meanings and the complexity of the building materials. How is it possible to cooperate in the creative fate of architecture as a physical imaginative structure without altering the very structure of architecture by the arbitrary and abusive manipulation of the complex materials which built it? How is it possible to support the liberalization of the artistic practice without rejecting one's own freedom in the concrete process of experience?

Contingency or nostalgia would permit the School to insist upon the reproduction of its idea of project as the transmission of a scaled gesture, as the instrumentalization of a certain poetic of formal falsehoods within its process/patrimony?

Circumstance or manifesto would permit the school to promote the basis of its Beaux arts approach, keeping at the same time the mentality of a more general intention which would combine the disciplined citizenship with an autobiographic design?

Not to be too dramatic, we can consider the "School of Oporto" as the work of a group of architects during the transitional 50's and 60', specially these later. These were brave people, resisting, some neighbors and other friends, but all trapped by the same obsessions in the school, in their studios, in their frenetic endeavour. And they were forced to learn with the exterior constraints imposed upon the free expression of citizenship, the free practice of architecture. "In addition to the group's intentions, more or less ideologically approached, there were other liberties, other significant voices which even astonished the "very varied architectural products produced in this period" (16). In this period of forced isolation "in which each one has been his own master, with no greater concern nor ambition than using the most domestic intellectual and material tools" (16). And they did not need a strong image as a signature. Each author's sensibility was enough to be recognized by his scaling and his particular use of certain touches and his appreciation of the diverse crafts.

Now that the tendency's solidarity is annulled, the strength of the school is based on their move in connection with the definition of the architect and the materials of traditional architecture, a definition rather close to "that of Alberti, in which function, construction and form try to be integrated" (17). But in this exposition there is not yet an autobiographical brilliance, nor unexpected subtleness in the conceptual play. It is rather the remembrance of a process/constellation of the ages of time and experience which, in an artisan like move, has concentrated the basic original knowledge in the reservoir of specific contributions, considered as works of "a modern artist, which is a person living under the sign of liberty, that is, under the sign of life" (18).

In the last decade, Oporto's process has insisted upon the attachment to tendency, to artistic or formal gesture, to aesthetic category or sensibility, to quality; attachment which, reflected as the image of a product, confuses the exemplification of the argument, its precepts and deference. Leaving aside the pathetic euphoria with which the centers have, in later years abused the peripheries expecting them to join the heroic cause and contribute to the academicist invocation or suggestion to the citadel, we should make clear that the "school of Oporto", the school of design, site and rigor, is not so youthful as it used to be. Rigor, design, site, construction, detached from their place, their culture and skill, are, in fact, distractions (isolated signs of no freedom), separated from a process of conceptual experience. Perhaps, this is the reason why it is so necessary to break with the cynical conservatism of orthodoxy, the trivial, mystifying and leveling fidelity, and embrace heterodoxy. "In the conviction that what is real is not just the head biting without hesitating, nor just the tail swallowed without resistance but the whole movement of biting and being bit, the circular passion for life in itself" (19).

In order to make circulate a useful circumstance we can aerate a similar circumstance, which does not mean that we assume any falsehood when talking about art; it is just a means to localize a territory, a body:

a. Singularities

Fernando Távora and Alvaro Siza are singular points of reference, structural poles in a "body with a non-linear identity", a body which becomes free through experiment and invention in a problematic confrontation between preservation and construction (a design attentive to time but not stuck in local resources and limitations).

"...Most of our architecture is rather plainly fighting to win, but is does not achieve it: it losses its references, it losses gravity, it does not attain the axis of earth, it does not attain the heart of man because it is so much absorbed in the painful and easy adventure of form for form's sake, in the success of images, in an empty eloquence, ornament instead of structure, falsehood instead of intelligence".

For F. Távora there cannot be a building without foundations as there is no tree without root: "but the foundations of a building should be more profound, more significant than its physical foundations; a new building must establish a dialogue with its neighbors, with its environment". That is why the "Portuguese identity and character", the "tradition/transmission of permanent things", "man" and "life" should be the basis of his idea of design and modernity; an idea which unfolds itself in a serene and rigorous reading of reality and its destiny; a reading which is immediately put into practice as method/process of transformation by his old settled culture.

History and design conceive the architectural act as an exercise in which they collaborate with the difficult grammar of preservation which should decide what is out of time and what belongs to it. F. Távora designs according to memory's rhythm: architecture is recovery and construction. In this sense, he designs as if stones were a manufactured object. In the temporal or

symbolic stability of architecture "history is not anymore a learned order but a real knowledge": architecture is conscious of its own age and thus it expresses it.

Convinced of the fact that "it is essential to add reflection and self assurance to design in order that the transformations based on their own environment should be serene, delicate, timeless", Alvaro Siza "does not try to change the world nor the city, not even architecture. He is a citizen of the world and does not acknowledge any title but he 'knows very well the limits of his own game and the uselessness of trying to obtain from today's architecture something else than what it may offer'".

The "circumstance" is the starting point in the designing process: "What should be done? introduce a maximum number of different materials, different forms, everything new around Germany, Holland or China. If one wants to enliven a culture, one should forget the vernacular, the traditional..." "One of the capacities which any architect should have is the capacity to contemplate. Not just what is material; visual perception is most important to architectural practice..." "Light is very important in the design. To offer the experience of light..." "drawing is a tool that works very well. Perhaps just because I like drawing..." "I would define imagination as the capacity to transform things already seen..." "the progressive and controlled development of form in and out of its own context is imagination and not discovering of some nonexistent..." "the essential problem is how to find ways to articulate different elements, because cities are nowadays made of very different fragments" (44).

"Architecture is a mental process" in which "architectural creation is born out of emotion, of emotion provoked by a certain moment and a certain place", and in which "the project and the construction process require from the authors that they would get rid of the emotion by means of progressive detachment but would transmit it complete and concealed" (45). A.Siza has developed works which belong to the present: the freely assumed option of preserving architecture (site, settlement and construction of the volume, interiors, light, time) is not detained by the rhetoric of materials or building details. The sketch is a rather operative tool in the process of exploring/fixing an idea; the idea of settlement, the taming of the site (should not be taken for trivial contextual design), always so significant in Siza's work is the basis on which he also tries the taming of the conceptual impact of the architectural work; the play of built volumes, when it is an inspired play becomes a discipline of formal elements which manages the spatial composition as if it were a formal continuum: complex geometries, perceived in the morphologic structure of the pre-existing elements: paths, voids, constructions, walls, openings.

As long as designing is learning the limits of evasion, "design is intelligence's constant desire", "architecture, the art of taming indecision".

b. Solidarity/Declination

Leaving aside generational associations, a significant part of the architectural works produced in Portugal in the later years have been signed by architects from the group

which we may define as "the movement with the strength of a school": a group which, taking in account the geographical and economic conditions of the region, the specific characteristics of the professional practice and the precepts of their own conceptual arguments, suggests a conscious use of the techniques of form and space modelling; a group of architects who make of the design, of the self assurance about their own tastes the basis of the continuity of their creation. It is an ample group which includes different aesthetic "sensibilities", which have Távora and Siza as close references in their understanding of architecture, but which, in the intimate process of design, generate the project's idea with an aura of tendency based on the recognition of the designing experience as a poetic capacity of the transformation of reality, on the prolongation of the idea of modernity up to an enlarged historical knowledge, conceived as the memory and order of architecture. A group which, in spite of the suggestion about the leveling of the creative system, recognizes the preeminence of design which justifies the artisan like relationship between autobiography and sense of necessity and produces cultural and disciplined links which determine the formal result. The individual synthesis is opened to new levels; new languages, new contents in a kind of agreement unconcerned about ties of continuity, which do not belong to a definite atmosphere or style in the operative process whose conventional rationality should generate the composition, the programme, the construction, and which should express itself in the positive reading of the meaning of "tradition" and "new", for the sake of pluralism in the variegated evolution of contemporary architecture.

With a sensibility more connected to what happens in the world of stones than to the world of formal ideas, its energy is determined by some premises: rejection of any fundamental idea or strict positioning in architecture; their sense of proposal, so present from their origins, is generated from the experience of the architectural act, away from any conceptual theory which could serve as manifesto; the attachment to certain parameters related to old and permanent values regarding form; the pragmatism of their idea of modification based on a domestic logic of composition (more concerned with plan than with volumetry), on the combination of a few technical innovations with artisan tradition, on the formal economy; the progressive reduction of their marginality operated by an also progressive triviality in their resources and formal effects; the respect for the conceptual impact of the architectural operation and its significance with a strategy based on the indifference for the fact that the architectural work is erected in an unfinished context which is the site; a tendency to conventional designing practice with the reproduction of formal procedures which do not belong to their own way of working.

Surprisingly enough, the production of these later years is significant because of its bent towards a local prolongation of architectural citizenship or because of its practical inclination towards the standardization of the architectural profession, without trying to alter the process of differentiation or effective expansion of its vocational discipline; a production of

enduring delay which does not imply exemplary cases but which bases its individuality precisely in this particular quality: we can say that it summarizes the culture of our own epoch, "its practice, its preferences, its taboos, a culture related to the idea of architecture, to the evolution of its professional practice and research "as a collective non heroic activity in which the individual contributions are just useful when there is a broad agreement on basic principles, that is, an ample group of procedures which can be considered universal" (20).

c. Confirmation

The decade has witnessed the confirmation of the normalization in architectural practice, even as an undefined movement, incongruous and perverse in a qualified generalization of the discipline which occupies the complete architectural panorama. A development blessed by the local recognition of architecture in periodical canonizations which acknowledge its corpus and foundation; normalization does not mean at all the end of colloquial automatism in the assumption of a territory or the verification of the results: once the strict resistance overcome by the citizenship of design, the promotion of an ingenuous generalization just results in ignorance and improvisation. Perhaps, that is the reason why the exciting fireworks of fashion are not satisfactory; with all that noise around, this uncomfortable situation is just pleasant to those who do not see or do not want to look at themselves.

Prudent in the rejection of modernity and at the same time not really determined by localism, tradition or style, some authors (Manuel Botelho, José Carvalho Gomes, C.Cortês/M.Vieira, Eduardo S. Moura, José M.Soaes) confirm their positions based on strategies which justify their form by means of the result of an idea in its process of materialization, the revelation of the objective quality, the self-reference of a progressive conceptual process, or the classical conception of architecture as an autonomous discipline ("objects for the creation of silence"). They have something acquired by the strength of a gesture, an artistic procedure, the obstinacy upon the arguments or the programmes, with the intention to rebuild the largest possible system or "archipelago of local rationalisms" (21).

d. Expectations

This geography of Oporto's architectural world should be completed by the yet scarce work of a group of recently graduated architects. And it seems that the general feature is the diffusion of the solidarity more than the opening of new vocational orientations. In the main urban centers, the scarce commissions market just liberates the little operations, the temporal installations and the architectural contests which are the minimum support for the experimentation of scales and categories in the material designing process towards a liberalization/circulation of new procedures free from any constraint or principle as imposed by a group. This narrow vision also seems to reveal a deep concern about the idea beyond the problems of pre-existing elements in the contemporary landscape, that is, there is no apparent courageous

intention to stop the disintegration of the urban buildup nor an absolute value of beauty.

"But remedy will not be found in delirium or fantasy, but in the determined will to reject a culture without subject nor memory. The dead gods will come back, the exigency of intelligibility, of conceptual consistency, the obsession of the Western world, will prevent the world to become nobody's land. And there will be a new century. Perhaps ours, but read backwards by the innocent who have escaped the funeral pleasures of the dominant discourse" (22).

I consider the 25th of April the most important event in my life of social concern. Not as yesterday's ideology or today's nostalgia, just as the possibility of change for change's sake, the right to change. If an hellenic city, the perfect city is probably utopia, that is, nowhere, let us built a place which is not completely opposed to it (23). Deliberately, the signs of the new energy tend to go back to the origins: forget the architecture of the world, except as good in its place and time and just reveal the determination to conceive and build architectures to meet the acknowledged demands, investigating the seeds of the obtained quality, pursuing brevity, accuracy and rigor in the conjunction of a dense and narrow system of materials and substructures which show and point out the primary emotion of building.

Some clues:

* The geographical distribution of the professionals has settled the practice of architecture. This distribution though has not provoked local particularities nor reluctance, concentration/circulation/expansion of the conceptual experience. The presence of artistic or disciplinary schemes should not prevent the relativism applied to design's eloquence, the translation of the individual creative gesture into a critical surveyance of one's heritage and synthesis: the nude quality of one's own conviction should have as main aim learning what is not known or what is thought to be just too well known, in order that an authoritarian and dogmatic good sense should not insist, with a Quixote like, patriot like stubbornness upon the image of any mirror.

* "O Portugal dos pequenitos" Portugal as the country of diminutive is over now. A certain way of inhabiting space and establishing social relations is over. With spatial expansion comes anonymity, and anonymity brings modernity about. Portugal is definitely embracing modernity" (24) and with it "a new scale".

* Alienation of any idea related to contextualism. What is pertinent now, the basic concern is not the particular way to belong to a certain place: "what is really appropriate to generate a project is an idea which works on a certain social or material context, on a specific form, but which is not a simple consequence of the pre existing elements" (1). Because a professional theorization of Oporto's atmosphere which is not just used as a premise or hypothesis is absurd.

* Rejection of any principle related to a particular local generation, school or formal tendency. The legitimacy of an eventual

professional solidarity is accepted not as an indefinite possibility or shapeless freedom but as the sign of vocational plurality in the architectural realm. The principles of design are possibly interchangeable values and norms which should be clarified by means of examining ruptures and agreements which make of individual experience a real collective workshop of timely and localized reason.

As the domestic atmosphere of Oporto is somewhat blurred, invisibility or enlightened blindness, the school goes through a state of "pre-tragic melancholy", tormented by the abandonment of the "work" to the course of the world: the truth is that the problem will not be found in the anxious invocation to past or in the attempt to define a form out of any time; "the question is how to find a concept of time in which there will be no contradiction between going forward and backwards. To conceive an action that would redeem the past; this will just be possible when past would be included within the present, when we would be capable of 'presenting' the past" (25).

NOTES

* A title based on the text "Portugal lives in a pre-tragic melancholy", an interview with José Gil, *Expresso* 18/02/1989. We have used fragments of an article published by the BAU magazine.

(1) Moneo, Rafael, "Conversaciones con Rafael Moneo", in "El Croquis" No. 64, Madrid, 1994.

(2) Coelho, Eduardo Prado, "La Desorientación", in "Público" 25/04/94.

(3) Lourenço, Eduardo, "Respuesta a una encuesta", in "Público" 25/04/94.

(4) Silva, Augusto Santos, "El país Real", part II, in "Público", 17/02/94.

(5) Ribeiro, António P., "Política de cultura: inversion y gestion", *Debate SEDES*, Oporto, 4/94.

(6) Gago, J. Mariano, "Respuesta a una encuesta", in "Público" 24/04/94.

(7) Santos, Boaventura S., "Once tesis por motivo de otro descubrimiento de Portugal", in "Via Latina".

(8) Gaspar, Jorge, "Las regiones Portuguesas", Lisboa, 1993.

(9) Torga, Miguel, "Oporto", in "Portugal", Coimbra, 1950.

(10) Távora, Fernando, "Texto", 12/04/94.

(11) Secchi, Bernardo, "I Progetti del Piano", in "Casabella" No. 563, 12/89.

(12) Siza, Alvaro, "Entrevista", in *AMC* No. 44, 02/1978.

(13) Jean François Lyotard, quoted by P. Varela Gomes in "Unidad" No. 3.

(14) ESBAP, October, 1980.

(15) Costa, Alexandre A., "Mostrar la Enseñanza de la Arquitectura", October 91, in "Paginas Blancas II", Oporto, 1992.

(16) De la Sota, Alejandro, "Sobre la Arquitectura Española", in "Arquitectura No. 292", Madrid.

(17) Mateo, J. Lluís, "Hacia el fin de Siglo", in "Quaderns" No. 164, Barcelona.

(18) Monteiro, Adolfo Casais, "El arte contra el Orden", in "Consideraciones Personales", Coimbra, Imprenta de la Universidad, 1933.

(19) Lourenço, Eduardo, "Heterodoxo". Coimbra, 1949.

(20) Secchi, Bernardo, "Urbanística Descriptiva", in "Casabella" No. 588, march 1992.

(21) Santos, Boaventura S., "Cuatro Cuestiones sobre el cambio de Clima", in "Revista crítica de la ciencias sociales" No. 24, 1988.

(22) Lourenço, Eduardo, "Nacionalistas y Extranjerados", in "Portugal y Europa. Identidad y diversidad", Oporto, Ediciones ASA, 1991.

(23) Coimbra de Matos, quoted by Carlos Amaral Dias.

(24) Gil, José, "Portugal vive en una melancolía pre-trágica", *Expresso*, 18/02/1989.

(25) Quetolas, Josep, "Sobre la forma del tiempo en la arquitectura de R. Moneo", in "El Croquis" No. 64, Madrid, 1994.

occupy the higher ones. They receive natural light from clerestory windows and conic skylights. To the west, the most exposed side, an undulating suspended wall tries to filter the violent sunlight and is, at the same time, a possible innovation within the building system imposed by the University: reinforced concrete frame and brickwork facades.

OFFICES BUILDING. Oliveira do Azemeis.

It is a refurbishment project to renovate a derelict school in the center of Oliveira do Azemeis, near the Bank built by Siza in the late 70's. The school consisted of a single storey building occupying the whole site and a three storey volume emerging from it. The aim was to transform the building into a retail complex located in the ground floor with offices in the higher levels. The project undertakes the necessary transformations to open new inner spaces required by the new use while keeping the basic structure: reinforcement of the concrete frame, demolition of several beams, reconstruction of the staircase, creation of ventilated courts and the enlargement of the second floor. But the complete reorganization of the building also implies the modification of the actual facades which will be clad with granite slabs up to the first floor. Our building will become part of an important sector in the city and, therefore, tries to find some references and contact points with its surrounding streets, but at the same time tries to keep the universal image of tertiary buildings.

LIBRARY OF FRANCE

The international contest for the design of the Library of France included a complex programme, not just because of the concentration of different functions but also due to the desired symbolic appearance of the future building. The location was a privileged one: the bank of River Seine, between the Ministry of Economy and the compact volume of the Sports Palace where an old and abandoned railroad permitted the extension of the city towards the river. The compact and homogeneous appearance of the building is the result as much of a personal decision in the designing process as a proper response to the programme's complexity. The main entrance is located at the head of the center and is an element matching in scale with the river and the new access avenue. Facing the city, a portico occupies the central part of the long facade. The inner orientation is determined by the existence of certain views and by the hierarchy imposed upon the exterior public spaces. The big conference halls can be independently gained from the new avenue and are located by the public terrace over the River Seine and the Library's gardens.

PARISH CHURCH AND CENTER.

Marco de Canaves.

The complex will be erected on a derelict lot in the outskirts of the consolidated city, over a rocky soil visible from the main road leading towards the city. The three blocks (the church with the funeral chapel, the auditorium and Sunday school and the parish priest's residence) are articulated with the pre-existing volumes, in such a way as to create a central court or piazza suitable for outdoors ceremonies. This piazza is perfectly linked to

the also renovated surrounding area and its pedestrian public walks by means of stairs and accesses. The church, the public and sacred building, is clearly identifiable in form (symmetric), height (two more levels than the rest of the complex) and materials (marble slabs, wood, granite and zinc), while the other blocks are much more integrated with the surrounding constructions.

The large and only nave of the church (16 m. high and 30 m. deep) is a long axial space with the entrance on one extreme (southeast) and the altar on the other (northeast). The entrance's opening (3 m. wide and 10 m. high) is placed on a square facade (side: 17,5 m.) divided into three parts by the advancement of the lateral bodies. The inner light is intended to divide the space into separate modules. It comes from three big portholes on the northeastern facade, a narrow opening, 16 m. long, on the southeastern one and a big skylight behind the chorus whose light reaches the funeral chapel under it which has just another opening facing the city road. From this road, the only visible part of the complex in the church's rear end whose wall descends to reach the ground, absorbing the hill's height in relation to the city.

RESTAURANT AND TEA HOUSE IN THE QUINTA DA MALAGUEIRA. Evora.

The restaurant is located on top of a hill within the Quinta da Malagueira; in this way, it is possible to contemplate, from it, the view of the whole district and the celebrated historical center of Evora.

The building takes advantage of the steeped site to create two levels, both accessible from outside: one occupied by the restaurant hall and the other by the kitchen and service rooms. The square restaurant hall (with a capacity of 80 seats) is divided into four different regular spaces whose autonomous character is enhanced by means of the structural and lighting systems. A staircase located in the restaurant's entrance, in the service and kitchen area, descends onto a lower platform (28 additional seats) and climbs up to the roof terrace (100 seats) with panoramic views over the city.

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART. Helsinki.

The site reserved for the international restricted contest for the design of the new Museum of Contemporary Art is very near the Parliament House, in an important junction between the city's different districts. The project, made in collaboration with Eduardo Souto de Moura faces the adjacent urban elements, taking in account Alvar Aalto's proposal for the Parliament's district. The building, occupying the complete site, has an organic behavior in front of the natural park and the channel behind it while presenting a urban facade towards the new square with a large portal and entrance. From the atrium, large skylit ramps lead towards the exhibition halls located in the upper levels. They are disposed around a larger central hall with a varying height going from 4m. to 9 m. The fluid spaces and the variations in light are achieved by means of the reproduction of a differently scaled but unique skylight conceived as a mechanism to collect and spread light in various ways, becoming a flexible system to organize different exhibits.

Álvaro Siza (1982-1995)

FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE. Oporto.

The new seat of the Faculty of Architecture in Oporto, with a capacity of 500 students, is located within the University precincts in Campo Alegre, in the sector called Polo 3, on a stepped site between the River Duero estuary, the Panoramica street and the Arrabida Bridge, one of the main accesses to the town. The complex is conceived as a kind of Acropolis whose elements are aligned according to the profiles of the site's topography, enhancing the landscape perspectives. The tiny volume of the new Eastern entrance and the old access located next to the boundary wall of the adjacent Quinta da Póvoa (site of the Carlos Ramos pavilion and the technical and administrative offices) are the vertex of a triangle which defines a double disposition: the line of long service buildings (administration, auditorium, library and semicircular exhibition hall), located to the North, which shelter the site from the traffic noise; and the four classroom buildings, opened to the South. These latter blocks, which include the teacher's offices on their ground floors, are all connected by underground passageways. The triangular platform between the two lines of buildings has, as a third bound, the beautiful stone wall

of the Quinta da Póvoa. On the platform, a half-opened piazzeta faces the surrounding landscape becoming the faculty's social center: the heart of the complex.

The gaps between the buildings are controlled spaces and articulate the whole complex by means of platforms and passageways which connect it to previous University buildings and to the delicate surrounding country houses.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. Aveiro.

The library acts as the entrance building to the new University located in the city's outskirts (a project in which the main Portuguese architects have collaborated) and its basic lines are determined by the surrounding natural sites and its relation with them. The new block is, on one hand, integrated in a platform of pre-existing University constructions and connected with them by means of two passageways and a bold canopy over the entrance and main facade. But, on the other, it is a building which decidedly faces the Aveiro Lake and its saltworks through the horizontal openings of its inner rooms. The book storage rooms are located in the lower levels, while the large reading halls

CARGALEIRO FOUNDATION. Lisboa

The project is part of a masterplan (designed by Siza) for the renovation of the area around the Praça de Espanha, one of the most complex and undefined districts within the capital city due to the presence of important substructures and to its being a significant transport junction. The complex will house very different activities. The Foundation is dedicated to one of the most important Portuguese ceramists, Manuel Cargaleiro. The project is conceived as an articulated series of aligned and rather closed blocks which complete a previous sequence of constructions. Our project's most significant feature is the creation of an inner court in the main block, a parallelepiped 31,5 m. high raised over pillars from which it is possible to contemplate the city.

The museum will house the permanent exhibition of the artist's works and can be visited by means of two large skylit ramps from which all the exhibit spaces are perceived. The book-shop and cafeteria are located in the lower levels, near the entrance and the court. The library, auditorium and offices which complete the museum's programme are placed in the vertical block accessible from the court and independently from the street.

LABORATORY, EXHIBITION HALL AND ACCOMMODATION BUILDING.**San Dona de Piave**

In 1992, Siza was commissioned to design an enlargement building for "Dimensione Fuoco Vetroveneto", a company dedicated to the production of artistic glass pieces and distribution of furniture and accessories designed by famous contemporary architects. Siza has solved the whole thing in a small building (around 3000 m²) within a triangular lot of the industrial area. The most characteristic features of the project are: the alignment with previous constructions, the erection of an enclosing wall and the creation of an inner green court. The building, moreover has to be connected with the less artistic spaces owned by the Venetian company. The project will be completed by the erection, in a nearby park, of a 7 m. high sculpture by Siza (his first work of this kind), which will be placed next to a work by Bruno Munari.

The building will also be the headquarters of the Circolo Architettura, a cultural society promoted by the owner of the company whose aims are the local development and diffusion

of architecture and quality design.

To this end, it will organize debates, exhibitions and periodical conferences on these issues. Just by the double height, skylit exhibition halls, an architectural library will be located which will include a complete archive of Alvaro Siza's works.

REVIGRES COMMERCIAL BUILDING.**Agueda**

The project, the administrative and exhibition center of a company dedicated to the production of floor tiles, is not very far from the same company's factories, next to a highway between Lisbon and Oporto. The formal significance of the building is based on its being an L-shaped play of basic forms: two parallelepipeds, one of which presents a truncated cone on its top. A square plan block raised over pillars houses the large exhibition hall with an enormous conic skylight over its pitched roof. This block is dedicated to product exhibition. The covered space under it is intended to receive the cars and trucks away from the pedestrian entrance to a double height vestibule with the bar and other services. From here, the visitor may enter the long rectangular building with the workshops on ground floor and the meeting room and offices on the first floor. These rooms are connected with the eastern terrace protected from the traffic noise.

FACULTY OF JOURNALISM.**Santiago de Compostela**

The University of Santiago de Compostela required a new Faculty of Journalism to be built to the North of its district, integrated with the other University buildings.

The main three storey block includes the classrooms and is a long building of 127 m. placed in the same direction as the nearby Faculty of Philology and adapted to the site's topography.

The middle transverse axis of the building bears the entrance, with a visible outside staircase and a large portico under the volume of the library's reading hall.

From the ample, double height vestibule, one may gain the north hallway leading to the new classrooms, the auditorium and, on the highest level, the teacher's offices.

The hallway is also the access to the three perpendicular buildings with the auditorium and the television and film studios.

These surround open courts looking over the rear Castela Avenue.

spaces, just left aside lots with no design.

Our site, adjacent to a small rural nucleus, is surrounded by social housing blocks and agricultural fields.

It is a trying project: it must assume the conditions of this particular area of the city.

The street's alignment and the choice of a volumetry which would match with that of the adjacent buildings are some characteristics which, together with the reduced dimensions of the programme, facilitate a sensible approach to the ground/building relationship. Our project unifies both: the first one becomes significant as the second acquires a neutral quality.

This important role played by the supporting ground is made rather apparent by the position of the building which enhances the site's bounds. That is why the building's design is also born out of the site's (re)design, in the sense that the distances and walking times determine the center's scale.

The organic relationship between the building and its site is mainly defined by the way they interfere in each other's domains. And also by the way in which, in the building's interior, there is a kind of compromise established with the surrounding gardens by means of the general arrangement: the vertical sequence, from the basement floor (a link to the ground), to the elevated rooms (work and service areas) and the upper crowning (roof terrace); and the horizontal

one, which establishes a spatial hierarchy with the best position regarding sunlight and exterior views conferred to the working areas.

This arrangement, visible in the volume's form, does not deny but reinforces the unitary character of the building's concept. The exterior facades are also interior facades. A thin metal membrane conforms them and creates a sense of continuity. The remembrance of the outside is always present while inside, through the vertical and horizontal paths to the different rooms where the cycle comes to an end in the actual visual return to the gardens.

The building's scale transcends the strict sense of its physical dimensions. The idea of a pavilion located in the middle of a garden is present in our modular design which tries to clarify the relationships between space and structure (between the resulting space and the surfaces which conform it).

The image of the building is that of its construction system.

To make a modular space means to sketch the basic lines of a text whose aim is just to inform within the bounds of a strictly architectural language, with no adjectives nor quotations.

The apparent abstract quality is finally dissolved into a compromise with Architecture, an intelligible and disciplined relationship established between, Site, Programme and Construction.

Architectural contest for the refurbishment project of the church and cloister of San Francisco's Convent**Location: Santarem**

Our aim has been to make of the church the main element in the whole group of buildings, by "clearing" up its front facade and creating a new small construction between the cloister and the temple which includes the center's reception area and makes visible the North facade. On the opposite side, a new platform will, in some way, reduce the importance of a small chapel which nowadays is rather an obstacle for fully admiring the monument's main facade.

The new East-West circulation creates a new axis at a lower level leading towards a small court which is a kind of foyer to the auditorium and restaurant and a possible secondary entrance to the church. This newly opened path (established only after the required archaeological research) becomes a kind of symbolic link between the medieval city and the new expansion area, creating an alternative route to the "31 de Janeiro" street just in the junction between the Republic's Garden and Santa Clara's Lane.

The Museum proper is placed in the cloister (to which we should add the temple's space, already a museum in itself) establishing the possibility of a connection with the city's new expansion area.

A new wood and glass tier system supported by a steel structure built over the existing level changes the aspect of the space. A gravel box occupies the cloister's central area and a new staircase simplifies the entrance to the cistern. The same mentioned

tier system is used within the temple to fill the gaps creating the possibility of visiting the church and its chapels while temporary exhibitions are hung.

A new ramp and staircase built in the aisle leads towards the upper platform of the High Chorus where the sepulchers of D. Fernando and Dña. Constancia will be placed, a small staircase/amphitheater projecting itself over the city acts as a veranda. The proposed circulation permits new views of the temple's space and leads the public towards the auditorium flat roof which can be used as an open terrace and another vantage point over the new city and Santa Clara's Church.

The Auditorium, located in the position of the old Main Chapel can be used independently. It has three levels: the lower floor, linked to the described circulation and the court, includes the entrance area (vestibule, ticket counter, cloakroom and small bar) and has a glass pavement supported by a steel structure which permits the vision of the archaeological remains under the building; the middle level accommodates the toilets and services; the upper floor includes the auditorium hall, whose box, orientated to the West according to the new axis, is located in the junction between the nave and the transept, with the High Chorus as a backdrop. The restaurant/cafe can also be used independently from the museum facilities and is located in the old kitchen and part of the Chapter Hall connected with the court from

Portugal's communications institute (I.C.P.) North I.C.P. Delegation

Architects: José Manuel Gigante/João Alvaro Rocha with Francisco Portugal y Gomes

Collaborators: Ana Sousa da Costa, Manuel Fernando Santos y Jorge Esteves

Location: Oporto

Project Date: 1993/94

The site is located in a peripheral area which is nowadays growing very quickly. The frail quality of the urban grid in this area is a consequence of the conflict between heterogeneous elements occupying it (agriculture, industry, services, housing). The lack of architectural value is also due to the poor quality of the intermediate

which the auditorium can be gained through a building including, in the lower level, the toilets and storage rooms and, in the upper floor, the manager's office and employers'

toilets and cloak rooms. The bookshop is also an information and complementary activities area and becomes a significant space being located in the center of the proposed complex.

Refurbishment and enlargement project for the museum of the "abate de Baçal"

Architects: Antonio Portugal and Manuel Maria Reis.

Location: Braganza

Collaborators: Paulo Freitas and Paula Ribas.

Construction Date: 1992/1994

The building of the old Bishop's Palace, after suffering various, not very successful, transformations to become a museum, remained a strange combination of heterogeneous elements. Since 1910 it had been used as headquarters for the National Republican Guard, as an archive for the Register Office, as local Archive and as a Library. Of the whole 18th century original building only the main facade, the staircase leading to the main floor and some wooden ceilings over the largest halls were left.

The new works are based on a two phases project including the rearrangement of the programme and spatial use and the restoration of the building's construction.

The first phase is intended to clarify the general distribution of the complex clearing up what will be free spaces for exhibition and making a foremost use of the original structural and partition elements in the building which should be the basis of the exhibition surface. With a clearly contemporary approach, we have tried to uncover and expose the intrinsic quality of the old elements and establish a harmonious relationship between them and the new pieces, the new forms and materials which are

the expression of the new uses and spatial conceptions.

The second phase includes the construction of a group of spaces around the new main entrance including a reception area and visitor's facilities, a gallery for temporary exhibits, a multi-functional hall and service areas related to technical aspects of the museum's operation. Although we have tried to make a design composed of very few elements, there is nevertheless a clear architectural intention in each space: the entrance, a triple height hall from which the existing facade is contemplated as a scenery; the bar, opened over the court which surrounds an existing tree or the skylit temporary exhibitions gallery.

As the museum's collection is also of an heterogeneous character the permanent exhibition's display system is intended to create by itself a coherent formal and material composition by means of a basic module and various basic structures which, by building up the exhibit's space, leave the existing walls as an abstract background which can be considered as part of the show. An independent vertical element is the basic cell which supports horizontal and vertical showcases of different sizes and proportions adapted to their location and the objects they are to contain; the basic slate panels and steel structure are combined with glass or black aluminum sheets and lighting when necessary.

reflect the capacity of certain elements to create a general rule which can be subsequently followed (repetition) or transgressed (exception).

To repeat means to better identify a unit, revealing its changing capacity always within the bounds of a certain rule which should include all allowed variations.

The other principle applied in their design is born out of the necessity to "carve" the territory. Thus, each element's design is part of the landscape's design and the expression of a relationship between the scale of the particular site and the scale of the whole territory. The exceptions confirm the basic identity of the unit, establishing the center's scale by creating references which should guide the approach to the site.

This basic elements of the design just described should account for the buildings spatial arrangement. To condense a complex structural and substructural programme means to build a space whose design is based on the intersection of the different data levels. Space is the main aim when its significance transcends that of the elements which create it. Our formal approach to the

project far from detaining us from further research by placing ourselves in front of pre-configured images, has afforded us the opportunity to achieve a formal synthesis which is the creative result of a balanced manipulation of the specific elements of our working programme.

Form is finally just the architectural expression of the project's conditions.

What is most precious for us in this project is the formal discourse presented by it, the idea which conforms it, its proposed interpretation of the bunch of conditions affecting it.

That is why the artistic quality of the project is mainly based on the possible route it suggests between idea and form.

This route can just be materialized when "the artist and man gets closer to himself, his own world, his reality, which is also the reality of the world discovered by him". (1)

(1) Antonio Ramos Rosa

NOTE: The pictures were taken from the scale model realized when we were working on the first scheme; they do not correspond with the final project.

Mechanical Engineering Department. University of Aveiro

Architect: Adalberto Dias.

Location: Aveiro

Collaborators: Arménio Teixeira, Carlos Veloso, Jaime Eusébio, Vítor Gama, José Miguelote.

Project date: 1992

Construction date: april 1995

The form, (a parallelepiped), the required alignments (those of the University Area), the material (earth) and the programme have all been dictated by the client: the University; the relationships established between these elements and the steel structure which materializes them have been chosen by us.

All the dependencies, labs and

classrooms face Northwest through a completely glazed facade which should not be attained by the sun rays. The block is rather closed to the Southeast, where the access to these rooms has been necessarily located due to their important size. The other two perpendicular facades of the parallelepiped bear the entrances, related in some way to the different accesses to the University District.

We have tried to give some significance to the meeting space, the bar, located on one of the extremes, next to the main entrance, exactly in the center of the future complex made up by our department and its expansion area to the Southeast.

National laboratory for veterinary research

Architects: João Alvaro Rocha/José Manuel Gigante with Francisco Portugal e Gomes

Location: Vairão/Vila do Conde

Collaborators: Manuel Fernando Santos, Ana Sousa da Costa, Maria João Lima, Jorge Esteves, Luís Tavares Pereira, Pedro Ruano de Castro, Roberta Albiero

Project Date: 1991/1993

Located in an open landscape surrounded by grown fields with scarce and dispersed groups of buildings, the present project, a large and complex programme, tries to approximate itself to this agrarian quality becoming one among the scattered constructions within the scenery.

Midway between spot and landscape the project tries to establish relationships with the different scales: unit, system, territory.

The different built elements which form it are intended to express a kind of permeability which balances the opposition between building and landscape (the way they meet, their respective nature and, at the same time the way they are perceived and interpreted).

This equilibrium which does not try to avoid the building's real dimensions, should also be the basis for the particular design of each piece whose formal expression must be coherent with the meaning of the whole complex.

The way each piece is conceived must

Santo Tirso's Municipal Library

Architects: Maria Manuel Pinto de Oliveira, Pedro Manuel Soares Mendo.

Location: Santo Tirso

Project Date: from May 1993 to October 1994

The site selected by Santo Tirso's Town Hall for the construction of its Library is located at the bottom of a small valley which is planned to become a urban park which will make part of a new expansion area.

The basic aim of the project is to build a volume which would be a backdrop to the green

extension, which could be connected with the more consolidated urban area and which would keep and enhance the land's profile.

To this purpose, we have designed a single storey building whose orientation corresponds to that of the site's carving and which is settled over the valley's slope. It consists of two different volumes in which the required programme is accommodated taking in account the possible views. The access, a path along a slate wall, recovers, in some way, a traditional local image.

Reconstruction of the fortress at "Praia de Paçô and surrounding area

Architect: Luis Teles.

Location: Viana do Castelo

Previous Sketches: 1995

These first sketches for the Reconstruction of the Fortress at "Praia de Paçô" and its surrounding area are the result of a series of conversations held with various institutions which are the lawful curators of the zone.

The masterplan includes the recovery of the fortress to be transformed into an open bar, the organization of a parking lot and the crossroads over the dunes and the construction of the auxiliary facilities required for the concession of the European "Blue Flag".

Our proposal for the Fortress is to build an terrace on the top part of the old construction creating the necessary conditions of privacy and wind protection.

To the arid quality of this space, due to the rough climate of the area, we add the image of a "wall" which is the source of protection and privacy. To the court, a

"trench" space rather depressing and with no relation with the exterior, we have added the image of a "tower" (which is opposed to the very nature of the site) connecting it with the terrace.

The exterior details, the walls and the new facilities building, aim at diminishing the negative visual impact of the parking lot.

New accesses to the beach have been added to those which already existed and which were natural paths carved by the rain water drainage systems.

The new building will accommodate the toilets and showers, first aid facilities, the environmental information bureau, a sheltered space for sportive anglers and the warden house. A better integration in the landscape is achieved by its being an underground structure. Just the rooms which cannot, lawfully, be located in a basement, as the warden's house and the center for environmental information emerge from this buried construction.

constructive materiality is something unavoidably linked to its image. S.João Theatre is a project developed according to the Romantic taste of the beginning of the century and clearly shows some ambiguities in the use of the new, then revolutionary, building techniques. In a period we could even call heroic, the necessity of self reassurance results in an ambiguous combination of materials under a powerful mask which equivocally conceals the doubts as well as the convictions (concrete replacing stone in ornamental elements, stone used as a tensile material as if it were concrete...)

The hall and the box might well be imitations, but it is the building's public image, its dignified presence as a definite urban element which determines its own environment, what

has afforded its designer, Marques da Silva, his fame as a "spatial organizer". We could also mention, in this respect, some parts within the building, profusely and imaginatively decorated halls in which the critics have just seen the contradiction with the international modernity of the time (...) To work upon old buildings, correcting and adapting them to new demands with the utmost respect is nowadays a favorite commission among architects. To work in S.João Theatre is not very different from working with any other historical building even more if we think that the project just consists of recovering the space for its original function, that is, the basic lines are already established. Apparently (just apparently, as it is not the real case) there is not much to do to achieve it.

Project for the new library at the superior school of technology and management of Viana do Castelo's Polytechnic institute

Architect: José Bernardo Távora

Collaborators: Eliana Castro, Paulo Lousinha, Pilar Paiva de Sousa, Nuno Monteiro, Desirée Pedro, and all students of architecture.

Project for a Library attached to a recently built School (anonymous project) which is placed in a perpendicular position to the main street. It refuses to assume its environment.

The now proposed building, 120 m. long, faces the Western beach and ocean, trying to

conceal the mentioned school and is limited to the East by the beautiful profile of Santa Lucia's Mountain. It comprises three linked volumes. The first one includes the triple height reading hall and deposit; the second one, the main entrance and research rooms; and the third one, the offices, management bureau and other service areas. It is, therefore, a new building which tries to avoid any contact with neighboring structures and conditions, up to concealing other architectural works.

Faculty of engineering. University of Oporto

Architects: Carlos Prata and José Carlos Portugal, architects with Antonio Portugal, Laura Tavares and Francisco Cunha.

Location: Oporto

Date: 1988/1989

75000 m2. A building area of seven and a half hectares. A very complex and strictly detailed programme. Twenty-one differentiated areas. Six engineering departments, a big auditorium, a big library and an area dedicated to social activities, everything within a unique structure. A complete territory changing rapidly, an extension with no urban character yet acquired.

These were the circumstances in which we had to show ourselves ambitious (or at least brave) enough to find a solution and submit it to the jury of an architectural contest. The enormous bulk of the project's complexity (its being, moreover, a rather uncommon programme) determined our basic approach to the design: "this is a building for a plan solution". We had never been so disciplined in following a certain design procedure; in fact, we did not work on any idea (partial or structural) which could not be interpreted as a strictly functional solution to our problem. The most significant clue was the assumption of the possibility to build a

synthesis starting with a simple addition. We had acquired a kind of methodical culture, a design tool, but, in this case, we realized for the first time that it was impossible to have an overall approach: the site, the programme, the idea. Pure alchemy. None of us was ever able to synthesize the Golden Three into a Holy Trinity. We just decided to begin by strictly complying with the programme, the needs (the aims?), and the giant began to acquire a form. We even assumed that we had to comply with the programme, even in a contest situation. We think, even now and specially in contests, that to avoid some problematic aspect pretending to find a satisfactory solution is cheating. We were, therefore, prisoners of our maxims and we had to assume the impossibility to "sketch" a conceptual solution, we had to solve every piece in our plan; and we finally felt comfortable in this kind of labor, it was for us a new infancy, another kind of freedom. We had never felt so necessarily confident in the well known motto: "a good plan always results in a good elevation". But we were sensible enough to replace the "results in" with a more prudent "permits" and worked on it. This is what we have done and have done well. Self abuse? No; just follow the imperative of our conscience.

Reabilitação Teatro Nacional Sao Joao

Architect: Joao Carrera

Location: Oporto

Project date: 1993

We congratulate the Cultural Secretariat of State for its happy decision to give back to the country such a beloved building as it is the S.João Theatre.

We also congratulate the institutions for this long deserved "rentree" of Master Marquês da Silva into public recognition (...)

This theatre, one of the last ones to present a proscenium box (commonly called Italian box), in a time when Tessenow and Appia

were already exploring other designs in Dresde, displayed in a rather expressive way previous traditions and experiences which made of it a qualified example of a certain "type" in dimensions, arrangement and design (...)

As most theatrical projects, it is an imitation. As any other good project it is just concerned with being a tool, a machine, a useful enclosure in which may take place the required and decisive activity (Aldo Rossi, Scientific Auto-biography). A theatre is, nevertheless, also an opportunity for spectacularity and its architectural and

Oporto's superior engineering institute (I.S.E.P.)

Architect: Virgínio Moutinho

The new building will house the Administrative services, Management Bureau, Public Sessions Hall, Social Areas, Museum,

General auxiliary Services and the Documentary Center, all belonging to Oporto's Superior Engineering Institute. It is located, together with a group of new buildings, within a lot which is planned to

become an expansion area (to the South) in order to improve the Institute's facilities. The proximity of the street and the necessity to build a formal entrance determines the broken form of the building and the creation of a concavity in the access area. It comprises two interconnected volumes which are different in form and size and which try to establish some kind of connection with previous adjacent constructions. It has a somewhat double orientation due to the fact that it is accessible either from outside or inside the Institute's precincts. It is not easy, therefore, to know which is the front

facade and which is the rear one. Moreover, the building presents a rather transparent Atrium level which is a visual and functional connection between the exterior and interior areas. The programme is very complete and includes very different functions. The public and representative spaces are located in the round block which has an evident architectural significance appropriate for these functions; services are located in the rectangular block. The Documentary Center is somewhat individualized in construction technique and image due to its two-fold character.

Faculty of engineering, University of Oporto

Architects: Carlos Prata and José Carlos Portugal, with Antonio Portugal, Laura Tavares and Francisco Cunha.

Project date: 1988/89

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Library and exhibition hall in the Crystal Palace's gardens.

Architect: Jorge Carvalho Oporto, 1994
Project date: 1994

The Crystal Palace's gardens are integrated within a green area spreading over a hill by the River Duero. The main part of the gardens occupies the highest part directly connected with the city. The gardens' marginal areas populate the slope of the hill towards the river. Outside the gardens proper, the green area spreads itself down the slope in the so

called Quinta da Macieirinha and Casa Tait gardens and continues down to the lower level forming empty terraces.

To the west, the higher plateau is bounded by the Tilias Avenue. The specific site designed for the project is located just by this side, at the beginning of the western slope. Our buildings will be, therefore, transitional elements between the urban character of the top gardens and the country like features of the hill where one may find the

Calle de Entre quintas, a narrow and winding street limited by the high stone walls of domestic gardens.

Our proposal is intended to establish a continuous sequence of green areas by building some low volumes under the level of the top of the trees. The height of the buildings and their location, away from the Calle de Entre quintas create a gradual transition between the plateau and the slope. On the other hand, this transition is defined by the different relationships established with each of the mentioned zones. The buildings' form and location determine the character of the exterior space next to the Tilias Avenue, connected with the public access and create a small garden to the west, next to the bar's open terrace over the grove.

The new buildings' programme is basically concerned with cultural diffusion and public education. According to these principles, we have made a symbolic proposal in which the serene character, the open and flexible relationship with the outside and the apparent accessibility of the construction means intellectual accessibility of the institution proper.

From the Tilias Avenue it is possible to perceive the western trees through the transparent buildings. The interior design tries to achieve a peaceful, almost domestic, atmosphere.

The required spaces have been distributed according to the desired interrelationships with the outside areas and natural lighting criteria.

The children's section occupies two blocks surrounding the children's garden, as if the little readers were using a bookshelf placed in their play rooms, thus relating book reading to play time.

In the main building, the adult readers' section is located at the same level as the Tilias Avenue permitting the view over the western woods through its transparent facades. In a traditional library light usually comes from above and there are no supposedly disturbing views of the outside, in order that the users would concentrate on

reading. In our case, the readers' desks are placed just by the windows and can be even brought out to the terrace in summer days.

The bar and the toilets are in a lower floor (the building's intermediate level) and can be used by the auditorium and exhibition hall public as well as by the library users. The bar takes advantage of an existing garden to the west to create an open terrace.

The exhibition halls, located in the basement, occupy structural modules which go through the whole height of the building to receive light from the roof skylights. The ceiling height in the center of these modules is therefore enormous in a most unexpected degree.

The entrance is located in a protruding volume of the main building looking over the most urban area of the Crystal Palace's gardens. From the vestibule, an horizontal axis leads to the library's main building while the vertical conveyors bring you to the lower levels. Just in front of the entrance there is a balcony over the western woods and the river. From this point it is possible to understand the spatial arrangement of the whole building as the library is fully visible as well as the bar and the gateway to the exhibition halls. The light coming from the roof skylights and the openings of the intermediate level, as well as the bar's open terrace and the didactic workshops visible from this point create an atmosphere of accessibility and participation which leads the visitor towards the exhibition halls.

The exterior finish chosen for the building is a high quality system of colored concrete slabs. It creates a perfectly smooth surface with large panels. The children's library basically consists of a very light steel structure supporting the large glazing and other light panels. The roof, visible from the highest platforms of the Palace's gardens, is Zinc.

Interior finishes: the corridors and exhibition halls are paved with the same concrete panels that cover the external facade. In the reading rooms, pavement is wood for a better acoustical performance.

Systems and Computers Engineering Institute. University of Aveiro

Architect: Bernardo Ferrão

Location: Aveiro

Collaborator: Miguel Pires Marques

Project's finishing date: October, 1992

Construction's finishing date: February, 1994

The buildings belonging to the INESC/Aveiro are located within the precincts of the University of Aveiro, in an area destined to the future extensions to the Departments of Electronics, Telecommunications and Biology. Ours is an ample lot located to the west of these buildings with a certain pitch in an east-west direction, lately used as an agricultural field and with an interesting view over the estuary and the saltworks. The orthogonal position of our building in relation

to the other department buildings and its rather low height (three storey), which takes advantage of the land's pitch, are the result not just of the desired connection with the Electronics and Telecommunications Department but also a way to preserve the actual view of the mentioned department from the estuary, to clear the designed expansion area for future constructions and to respect the landscape and environment.

The volume, the form and the location of the proposed building have determined, to a great extent, the organization of the programme, as the entrance is necessarily placed by the street and parking lot. Moreover, the two larger facades are completely different regarding solar exposure and lighting. The plan is, therefore, rather simple: while the

south facade bears all the working areas which will be more permanently occupied, the north part of the building accommodates the nucleus of facilities, staircases and elevators, which do not have special lighting needs. The West end of the long building, with views over the estuary is occupied by spaces dedicated

to cultural (auditorium) and social (bar) interchange. The facades are all solid brick masonry save for the bottom and top parts with a limestone plinth and coping. Windows, doors and large openings have varnished aluminum frames.

building and erecting another one with the same function and in the same place. This kind of approach, present in similar projects have helped us to take the basic decisions and establish the fundamental criteria when

choosing among the many architectural possibilities allowed by the initial conditions and coordinating the different aspects and many trades and crafts involved in our project.

Recovery and restoration of the "Esther de Carvalho" theater

Architect: José António Oliveira Bandeirinha
Collaborators: Fernando Fonseca, training architect and José Manuel Oliveira, student of architecture.

The building of the "Esther de Carvalho" theatre is the property of a cultural society devoted to the promotion and diffusion of drama not just within the village of Montemor-o-Velho but also around the whole region: the "Esther de Carvalho" Center for Theatrical initiation. The building, an old chapel, was converted into a theater in the second half of the 19th century. The lot occupied by it is located in the José Galvão street, which is the main street in Montemor-o-Velho's historical center. This area has grown around the castle's hill covering its western, eastern and southern slopes. The José Galvão street is the East-West axis of the district just at the bottom of the slope. Our building is therefore situated in a rather urban area. Its main facade is on the mentioned José Galvão street, its lateral limits are party walls and the rear elevation looks over a secondary lane which was, in older times, a parallel path to one of the channels traversing the River Mondego's valley and which used to drain its North bank (nowadays the channel is empty).

The bearing walls (the facades) are supported by old limestone foundations. But the building's most significant element is undoubtedly the ornamental woodwork covered by paintings.

The final image of the building is related to the neo-classical influence present in the strangely ambiguous theatrical architecture of the late century. It is, in fact, a building based on the canon of the so called Italian theaters, with a pit, a mezzanine level and a frieze of boxes surrounding the auditorium. The stage volume is not a visible element in the building's general form and this fact creates some problems in the adaptation of the scene to contemporary drama.

The building has, nevertheless, two interesting particularities: first of all the masterly play of scales, which makes you feel in a great 19th century theatre, when it is in fact a small building of just 200 m²; and secondly the incorporation of the vestibule to the spaces dedicated to social relations, a possible contradiction with the followed bourgeois model but a sensible adaptation to the rural atmosphere of this provincial theatre.

Project's general features

In this kind of project, the important thing is

not to comply with the particular commission but to provide the client with a possible model for the future use of the building. This model, obviously based on the real possibilities of the building and its owners, will be the primary criterion in taking the basic project decisions regarding the building's character as well as its constructive solution.

The "Esther de Carvalho" Theatre, due to its own characteristics cannot be understood as a contemporary theater capable of answering the complex demands of modern drama, neither is that the reason why their owners what to recover it. Its urban location and its being a fill-in building also prevents or at least makes very difficult any kind of enlargement. That is why we have chosen to give it almost a "museum" character, in order to make of it something like the official seat or headquarters of its owners' multiple theatrical activities and also a cultural center for the village of Montemor-o-Velho.

Thus, our work is reduced to a strict restoration which would preserve the building's artistic value with just the minimum modifications to adapt it to modern requirements in relation to comfort and security. We have studied different possibilities as the elevation of the stage or the complete occupation of the space under the pit. We have even considered the modification of the structural system of the boxes but we have always been in favor of diminishing the impact of our work and of conceiving the project as the result of a complex system of particular solutions to the customary problems of conservation and security.

Spatial modifications are concentrated on the outside of the theater's hall: the upper and lower foyers and the space under the pit. But we have had to admit two major transformations: the replacement of the actual staircase leading towards the second floor with another one which discreetly includes the access to the new public toilets and the renovation of the wing in order that it may incorporate the required technical devices for the theater's future use. These two modifications can be easily justified due to the little work involved and the improvement achieved.

Therefore, we can affirm that our project tries to give a strict solution to the necessity of preserving the "Esther de Carvalho" Theater, taking advantage of the works to provide it with the required security facilities. The project should, thus, be based on a sensible and prudent approach to the problematic border between preserving an old

Nespereira's firemen voluntary brigade headquarters

Architect: Manuel Botelho and Maria José Casanova
Location: Nespereira-Cinfães
Collaborators: Jane Considine, Manuel Roque, Rui Jorge, Antonio Simões, José Cunha.
Refurbishment project: 1993
Construction begun: 1995

We have decided to carve the mountain in order to erect the new volumes placing them on two platforms. Our aim has been to make clear how this carving/remodelling has been artificially accomplished to create the entrance's STREET (fissure) with a Tower which marks the particular site and increases its significance.

"Da Foz" Market

Architect: Graça Nieto Guimarães
Location: Rua de Diu, Oporto.
Collaborators: Julieta Oliveira and Pedro Gadanho, architects.
Project date: 1994

The character of its environment, the present remembrance of the old residential area and spa, and its intermediate position between the center's natural urban growth and the orthogonal grid of the "Foz Nova" and even the "de Diu" street (the area's main walk and axis) have determined the basic lines of our proposal, integrated in a definite but somewhat discontinuous urban context.

Its particular location in a completely defined corner lot with its mandatory chamfer, and the public character of the commission were also important factors. We assumed from the beginning that the exterior space should be integrated within the market and shopping mall through its two main axis and entrances.

The building or group of buildings create a sequence of different volumes and different

architectural languages which are not easily identifiable but whose main aim is to establish a strongly marked relationship between the outer and inner spaces, the traffic street and the pedestrian's path. The Market occupies a two-storey building with a covered walkway. Its inner space is conceived as an open, almost exterior marketplace. The shopping mall is located along the "Corte Real" street and just by a pedestrian's footpath created within the lot. A passageway located in the prolongation of the present building of the local community offices acts as a transversal connection for these galleries.

The extensive programme and the mentioned basic decisions have convinced us of the necessity to take down all the present buildings. We have tried, though, to make use of a similar architectural language taking in account the most current chamfer solutions found along the "de Diu" street. The necessity to occupy the whole lot and other considerations about the best possible system of accesses have persuaded us of the virtues of this kind of site's occupation.

Architectural contest for the reformation of the Muncipal Museum

Our proposal tries to take advantage of the particularities of the existing construction with the recovery of the main building for the most public functions included in the programme: reception area, shop, cafeteria, toilets,

secretarial and staff offices, reading hall and historical archive. This option permits the modification of the interior without taking down too many partitions what could deprive the old building of its character.

Thus, the main building creates a kind of transition between the public street and the rest of the dependencies. It is organized in the following way: Ground floor: Reception and shopping areas and cafeteria; First floor: offices, administrative staff and reading hall. The cafeteria and the reading hall look over court located to the South.

The larger spaces (permanent and temporary exhibition halls) are located in new constructions placed to the South and accessible through the main building's vestibule.

Projet

The atrium connected with the public areas is the entrance to the whole complex: the two levels in the old building, the exhibition halls and the auditorium. Thus, the reception and shop are located in front of the staircase; the cafeteria and toilets are placed between the stairs and the gallery, and through the gallery the exhibition halls, open court and auditorium are attained.

The cafeteria is a transitional area between the outside and inside and can be opened in fair days towards the court. In fact, the cafeteria can be used independently form the museum. A secondary entrance will be located by the Julio Maria de Sousa street.

The reading room can be gained from the vestibule and up the staircase. This room is connected with the exterior by means of a terrace facing South. The historical archive might as well make use of the building's roof as a terrace.

This coincidence of functions within the same building permits its autonomous use once organized the 90 m² exhibition hall on

the first floor. When the whole complex should be built, the new wings and dependencies of the museum will be connected by means of the old building.

The temporary and permanent exhibition halls will be located in a new building erected to the east of the old one. It is a two-storey building whose ground floor will be occupied by the temporary exhibition hall opened to the court under the ramp leading towards the permanent exhibition rooms. Thus, the court can be integrated and used as part of a temporary exhibit.

The permanent exhibition hall is located on the first floor and is accessible from the gallery by means of a ramp. It has two different zones: a skylit area of important height and the main and larger hall (crossing over the gallery) which is much more related to the urban surroundings of them museum by means of its views through the atrium and the main staircase.

The meeting rooms, inventory, janitor's dependencies and additional exhibit rooms are placed behind the permanent and temporary exhibition galleries. In order to obtain a more flexible use of these additional rooms we propose the division of the area for temporary exhibits, connecting one of the parts with this auxiliary spaces. This segregated areas can be independently gained from the entrance at the Luis De Camões Avenue and also from the inside through the Meeting room and Inventory area. These additional rooms, whose floor level is 80 cm. under the street's level occupy the space under the open air platform of the auditorium; the roof height does not exceed that of the wall built by the Luis de Camões Avenue.

The widespread belief about the aesthetics of the city being based on architectural homogeneity, on the continuity of ornamental style or the strict use of a certain formalistic rhetoric is contradicted by the fragmentary and variegated reality of our cities. An enormous number of operations have completely transformed, mutilated and compounded our cities for centuries. Different cultures have worked with the remains of the others and a healthy mix has been the basis of the supposedly definite character for which historical cities are celebrated and by which they captivate us.

We should recall as an example the urban design and architecture of the Venetian Piazza San Marcos: its marvelous design is not the result of a unitary style (there are many different ones represented in it), but the consequence of the sensible work of many people throughout history, all of them following the dictates of their own epoch. In fact, if the successive modifications of the city's architectural profile are undertaken with an intent sensibility, evaluating the environment, respecting the existing heritage and always with a proper sense of equilibrium between the different elements within the city, the new architectural works will soon be incorporated to the citizens' sentimental patrimony; because cities are built by time and the circumstances of each particular moment.

"I affirm...", wrote Borges in his notes to the story Palermo de Buenos Aires "...that new countries are the only ones to have a past; that is, an autobiographic remembrance of a past time; that is, they have living history. If time is succession, we must assume that a higher density of events means more time passed, and the most incredible number corresponds to this inconsequential part of the world... Why recover already dead destinies? I have not felt the light weight of time in Granada, under the shadow of its towers, hundreds of years older than fig trees, and I have, in Pampa and Triunvirato: insipid spot with its new anglo-saxon tiles and steaming furnaces".

Recently, a discussion has been raised in Granada about the work undertaken in its historic center by the celebrated Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza Vieira, winner of the architectural Pritzker Prize.

The event has been, due to the singularity of the spot, an occasion to discuss very different issues: landscaping questions, urban and architectural design, "nostalgia" and even politics. In any case, the different ideas about possible solutions to the architectural problems of the city have been exposed in an highly qualified architectural debate.

It is evident that cities, when facing such an important operation, usually suffer a vivid controversy between those supporting a misunderstood tradition and those in favor of renovation, the old and the new. The process, if badly opened, can result in a never ending discussion complicated by previous conflicts and misunderstandings which just obscure the situation without establishing any criterion for a rational aesthetic judgment. In our case, what seemed to began as pure demagoguery has been happily altered into a deeper and more valuable cultural debate. This will benefit the city as it presently has no solutions for its

historic center nor a specific policy regarding contemporary architecture.

Siza's work tries to give a solution to an uncompleted block facing a large square in which contemporary buildings are erected next to others from the 19th century, in a somewhat unfinished urban context. Siza's architectural proposal intends to weave a disjoined city, working with three pre-existing but completely different constructions.

The first one is a beautiful patio house of the late century, the second one, in the center, a recent, four storey building. Finally, the most significant of all three and the only one with a facade over the public space, is a 19th century house, several times refurbished in this century and known as Hotel Zaida.

Among other important questions, Siza had to confront three specific problems in this project, which were precisely those more disturbing and worrying for the population: first of all the appropriateness of preserving the old fabrics; secondly the kind of connection established between the city and the new Siza's building and finally the risk of concealing with the new construction the views of the Sierra Nevada.

We will analyze one by one all these points by explaining the project and the particular sensibility of its author.

The construction on which the Hotel Zaida stands is a 19th century fabric located in the "Barrio de la Virgen", at the end of a long and narrow urban block developed between the Walk built by the French troops and the River Darro. This part of the city, according to historical research works and the remaining images from the late century, was mainly occupied by residential buildings (traditional patio houses, two or three storey high, with a little turret on top, tiled pitched roof and the commonest materials...). Just a few buildings (as the Virgin's Church) stood out against an homogeneous scene.

This was the context in which the Zaida building stood, its only particularity consisting of its privileged position by the river bank, next to the Castañeda bridge. The remains from the 19th century are but the relics of a shipwreck, just memories of an old lost period. Continuous transformations have been undertaken during the last three decades and the now altered appearance of the district bears different scales, proportions and dimensions. New times, new habits incorporated by the city at the end of the 20th century. Not just new architectures (replacement of the traditional patio house with six, seven and even eight storey high blocks) but also new urban schemes with recent operations as the renovation of a nearby square.

The final result is what we have now: a building which is out of context and consequently out of the only environment in which it could be considered significant. Because the virtues of the old Hotel Zaida are not in its architecture but in its insertion within a characteristic urban area now destroyed. In this sense, the preservation of such a fabric with its walls, roofing and windows would be just an incoherent accumulation of old fragments, a kind of archaeological display with not the least intention. It would be the conscious preservation of an anecdote.

It is evident that a historical city and the parts which compose it may enter into a crisis. Because the changing environment

ÁLVARO SIZA IN GRANADA In favor of modern architecture in historical cities

*Juan Domingo Santos

There are some cities which, wrongly advised by an estimation of their architectural past, take a rigid stand in order to save the inherited image that, in a certain moment, made them famous and renowned. In this way, they just complicate their future, going beyond times, tendencies and styles and destroying with their fossil appearance any progressive notion of history.

Others, on the contrary, chose transformation, and adapt themselves to the new times, new uses and the new habits of their inhabitants; they add, to the old image, original quarters, incorporate certain designs, altering bit by bit their characteristic profiles.

In Granada's case, these two positions, permanently confronted, ("radical conservatism" against "planned evolution"), have determined (in some case obstructed) the city's natural development.

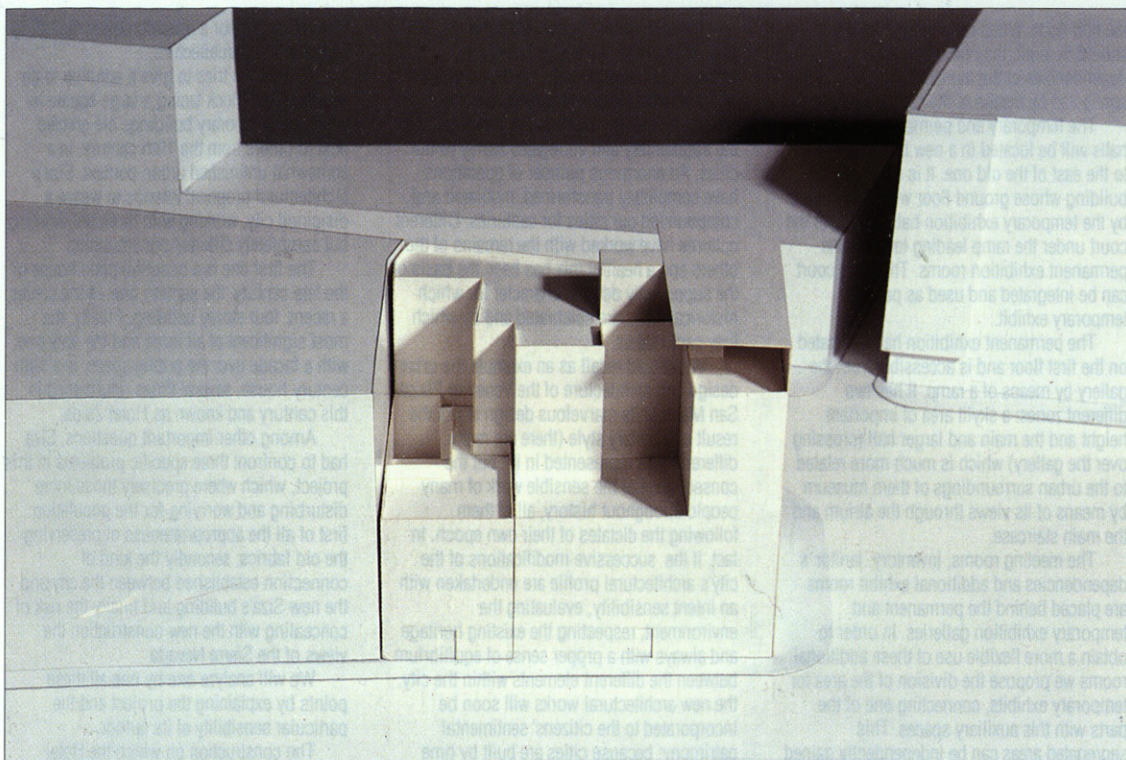
This situation is not a singular one. It happens in most cities (of course in all historic ones), as there is a general lack of agreement concerning urban planning and a similarly general alarm about these issues. Nobody seems to be certain about the means to preserve cities while, at the same time,

renovating them according to the new urban demands.

For the citizens, this conflict is rather evident: the mentioned instability can be appreciated in the apparent indecision, the lack of agreement about what should be built, preserved or transformed and the best way to undertake these operations. Distrust and skepticism before any transformation, any change undertaken in a historic district are the most usual attitudes among citizens.

This permanent rejection of modern things make us think that any work of this kind implies something else than mere architectural design and demands from the architect a humanistic approach: "Men remain tied to the buildings, streets and squares, and they preserve, once they have been pulled down, memories of their beloved places and fabrics".

This nostalgic position before the transformations undertaken in the city becomes a real conflict when the relationship between the old and modern city is considered, that is, when a decision must be taken about what should be preserved and what criterion should be followed in the election.



provokes some particular situations, as Zaida's, which cannot be preserved: "The history of our cities show us how these are permanently changing; if the process gets quicker or rather too slow, the consequence is disaster. We must respect the changing capacity of the city, because it is usually a most coherent and logical process. We shouldn't, on any account, try to give more than what is demanded by the circumstances." With these words, Siza reveals us his basic attitude before the city's dynamic capacity. The new changes should be imposed by the exigencies of the site's particular story: "My work is never capricious. You will just find sacrifice and a critical spirit in it".

The complex urban environment of this project has made possible, once more, Siza's compromise with ambiguity, transition and boundary problems, giving him the opportunity to display his sensibility for the site's particular traits and quality. Subsequently, Siza's building is a response to the problems of the city materialized in this particular point, demonstrating how the project's virtues are not based on its autonomy but on its incorporating certain elements connected to the site's attributes. "The project has different aims, as it usually happens in architecture. First of all, we must establish a dialogue with the surrounding modern constructions by introducing contemporary proportions and scaling; on the other side, we have tried to make out of the three buildings, a single traditional patio house and finally, recover the splendid view over the "Carmen de la Fundación Rodríguez-Acosta". This are the architect's commentaries on certain principles followed in the operation.

The new building is, moreover, a construction with a similar programme (Banks and shops on ground floor and housing in upper levels) to that of other surrounding buildings. It is a large volume

with the same height as the adjacent constructions except on the corner, with a broken skyline as that of other corner buildings in the area. It establishes a kind of dialogue with the adjacent, 19th century, building, with some details in strategic points. The large triple height opening, recessed in relation to the magnificent facade over the square makes of this later a kind of stage for the contemplation of the city, its fabric and the people passing by it.

The other two lateral facades have a different meaning and a different way to meet the surrounding constructions. For example, the boulevard's facade is a fragmentary design related to the orderly forms of the "Carmen de la Fundación Rodríguez-Acosta", visible from it. It also incorporates a magnificent 19th century house with two inner courts which is placed just by it. The building has a stone plinth following the street's alignment. The upper floors are recessed creating a ground floor access terrace from which the magnificent scene of the southern slope of the Alhambra can be contemplated.

The other lateral facade over the Carrera del Darro, is a more urban design with the same monotonous rhythm as the rest of the street. Its only singularity, a break in the rhythm, marks the old situation of the River, now an underground channelled stream.

Siza's reading of this environment takes also in account the streets' texture, proportion and scaling in relation to the built masses and the landscaping character of the city, combining old elements with a kind of nostalgia of the changing city. Today, we will just find fragments of past times.

According to Siza, the problem of incorporating modern architecture within this context consists of establishing a system of relations. His proposal tries to become a synthesis of compromises, of related interests in such a way that the new construction should find a proper

equilibrium. It is, therefore, a question of balance and restraint: "the architect must find the proper approach in each operation, which is a most difficult thing to do. I cannot make my buildings more significant that what their particular situation and urban context demands. I think that we must work peacefully... it is insane to permit personal ambition to destroy the balance of things."

Finally about the controversy of the new building concealing the views over the Sierra Nevada, Alvaro Siza affirms that the interesting thing about the view is that it is not always available... "it suddenly appears, in strategic points, and that is the reason of its strength. If we should permanently see the flowers and the mass of the woods, nature would be a bore. Each city has its own windows looking over the natural scene.

The vision of the city proposed by our architect is not a static perspective. This is a common feature, moreover, to the most enriching architectures of Granada. Who hasn't been amazed by the undulating design of the Albaicín discovering after an innocent corner the incredible panorama of the Alhambra, of the rich valley or just a snug spot?

In this part of the city, the view over the Sierra Nevada will be just possible from the highest point, the junction between the Recogidas Street and the "El Suizo" building. The vision disappears progressively while we enter the urban turmoil. The city is not made for static contemplation but for aesthetic and mobile observation. Siza's project does not conceal the view: it organizes, composes and surrounds a piece of landscape with the Sierra as a backdrop. The rest is just the combination of the city's images as seen by a contemporary look. The architecture of a city has the right to be completed with the utmost sensibility. That, we affirm.

* Alvaro Siza's collaborator in the Granada project.

The main building creates a kind of transition between the historic street and the rest of the development. It is organized in the following way: Ground floor: Reception and shop; first floor: administrative staff and reading hall; the staircase and the reading hall look over the courtyard to the South.

The larger spaces (patio and courtyard) are located in new temporary exhibition halls; the location in new permanent exhibition rooms. The building can be integrated and used as a permanent exhibition.

The permanent exhibition is located on the first floor and a staircase leads to the gallery by means of a ramp. The main staircase is located on the first floor and a staircase leads to the gallery by means of a ramp. The main staircase is located on the first floor and a staircase leads to the gallery by means of a ramp.

The entrance to the whole complex, the two levels in the old building, the exhibition hall and the auditorium. The exhibition hall is located in front of the staircase, the staircase and the gallery, and through the gallery the exhibition hall, open court and auditorium are situated.

The courtyard is a transitional area between the outside and inside and can be opened in two days towards the courtyard. In fact, the courtyard can be used independently from the museum. A secondary entrance will be located by the main entrance to the courtyard. The reading room can be gained from the vestibule and up the staircase. This room is connected with the exterior by means of a terrace facing South. The historical archive might as well make use of the building's roof as a terrace.

The coincidence of functions within the same building permits its autonomous use once organized the 90 m² exhibition hall on the first floor and the auditorium on the second floor.

There are some cities which wrongly evolved as an extension to their architectural past. A rigid stand in order to save the historical image that in a certain moment, made them famous and renowned in this way, they have complicated their future. Going beyond their boundaries and styles and designing with their local appearance and progressive vision to history.

Others, on the contrary, chose experimentation and adapt themselves to the new times, new uses and the new habits to their architecture, they add to the old image original features, modern ways and designs, giving it by their characteristic problem in Granada's case, three new solutions.

Temporarily controlled (architectural) conservation against gradual evolution (historical conservation) in some cases obstructed the city's natural development.

The situation is not a simple one. It happens in most cities (or almost in all). Historic conservation, as there is a greater risk of the architectural conservation, and a greater risk of the architectural conservation, and a greater risk of the architectural conservation.

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