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ATLAS SEVEN

The first humans who felt the need to build refuges, taking possession of natural shelters or moulding the materials provided by nature, created – for the first time – a division in the exterior spatial continuum they inhabited. From the exposed, open universe, they subtracted a small part in search of refuge, a limited space in which they could momentarily experience a sense of control. In this way, they sought to bring about an ordered system amid the inexplicable chaos of their lives. This need to be apart from the world led them to build indoor spaces, literally walling themselves off from everything else, segmenting the world. Ever since, they have been constantly seeking to make it one again.

However generous, every indoor space conceived by mankind is a reduction of the world, which finds its complement in the vastness that lies beyond any door. While the door has always been an unambiguous instrument of closing out, of exclusion, of protection – demarcating a restricted indoor territory – it has also had the opposite function, of opening. The door, like other openings, is the embodiment of the human need for contact with the exterior. Human survival depends on transit between interior and exterior spaces. Indoor spaces which do not harbour life have no need for openings – what is kept in these spaces is to be kept forever.

The wideness sought by humans is not limited to control over the space which immediately surrounds them. As it discovers the immensity of the territory it inhabits, mankind is faced with the monumental scale

of its ignorance, and becomes aware of its limits – as well as a new freedom. Whereas the body is subject to the limitations of a small portion of space and its own mobility, the range of perception is another matter entirely. As is the case with certain other animals, mankind perceives and feels the world beyond its immediate surroundings. The senses provide a wider experience of the world.

Man's quest for a state of continuity, albeit an illusory one, is also reflected in architecture. Accordingly, the increasing widenness provided by openings observed over the course of the history of architecture is the architectural expression of an intrinsically human trait – embodying the desire and ability to reach beyond our own body, and a yearning to regain a lost unity.

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Building Views
www.buildingviews.net

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Publisher
Circo de Ideias

Printing and binding
Gráfica Maiadouro, S.A.

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Typeface: Neue Haas Grotesk, Tiempos Text
Paper: Symbol Tatami White, Oikos Extra White

Circo de Ideias
Porto, Portugal
www.circodeideias.pt

Jofebar S.A.
Perafita, Portugal
www.jofebar.com

ISBN: 978-989-99184-5-0
Legal Deposit: 428983/17

Printed in Portugal