

The Álvaro Siza legacy

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1 Point of departure

Any appreciation of the architectural work of Álvaro Siza does not arise immediately. So has it always been – and so it always shall be – with *authentic architecture* (for the meanwhile, we shall leave the attempt, in a certain manner destined to failure, to try and explain just what is meant when talking about *quality architecture* between parentheses). The difficulties in the reception of Siza's work arise under various titles and span different dimensions, for example: its comprehension, appropriation, experimentation, domestication and, lastly, perhaps the most decisive of these qualities: the identification, thus, that process highly characteristic of art in general through which we identify, at a certain stage in our process of appreciation and aesthetic enjoyment, in the artefact that we have in front of us, a sensation that our vocabulary has long since attributed the word “empathy”. In general, given this highly intense cognitive experience, only silence and contemplation remain.

Despite this point of departure, long recognised only meekly by many, even within the field, the architecture of Siza never stops from surprising. Nowadays, on the contrary, there is an increasingly large and vocal number of persons, whether users, inhabitants, artists, curators, commissioners, contractors, decision-makers, politicians, and so forth, who recognise this and recognise themselves within this. Everybody, without exception, we would state, become surprised when observing and experimenting, fundamentally and most highly recommended, in physical and material contact with his works but also, given the existence of limitations, by visual contact through the images that today, more than ever before, provide for such perceptions. However, in the majority of cases, the *in loco* experience exceeds the conditional aesthetic enjoyment provided by images (whether fixed or in movement). Thus, Siza's body of work

gains a distinction in the Adolf Loos¹ test that posits that the architectural interiors of the works he designed and built would always be, in his own words, denigrated by the photographic representation of their spaces. According to Loos, this was a symptom of the real quality of any project and in contrast to the virtual quality enabled by pictorial, photographic or other forms of representation.

Thus, we start out from the beginning with a type of “principle” stating that nothing may replace, unless aiming to undermine the quality of the perception of the work, physically visiting and the experiences enabled by direct contact with the architectural works of Siza, even while, according to this author, such representations of works (and a still greater number of unbuilt plans and designs) may, nevertheless, still hold great documental and architectonic value.

Following a decision Siza took himself, the documental archive of his atelier – designs, sketches, scale models, correspondence, etcetera – has been delivered to four benchmark reference institutions, archive and document centres of international relevance: the Canadian Centre for Architecture (Montreal, Canada), the Serralves Foundation (in Oporto, Portugal), the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (in Lisbon, Portugal)

¹ “By photographs or reproductions, you cannot make any kind of judgements about my projects. I'm convinced that in the photographs, they appear miserable, without any effect.” Adolf Loos, “Acerca del Ahorro” (“Von der Sparsamkeit” originally published in *Wohnungskultur*, no. 2/3 in 1924) in *Escritos II* (Adolf Opel, Josep Quetglas, eds.), Madrid, El Croquis Editorial, 1993, p. 208, 209.

“As regards myself, I would tell you the following: a good building does not cause any impression when transposed into an image, in a photographic shot. My greatest pride is that my interiors are completely shorn of any effect in photography. That the inhabitants of my buildings do not recognise their own homes in photographs, (...). I have to reject the honour of being published in the different architectural journals. The satisfaction of vanity is denied to me.”

Adolf Loos, “Arquitectura” (“Architektur”, originally published in *Der Sturm*, 1910) in *Escritos II* (Adolf Opel, Josep Quetglas, eds.), Madrid, El Croquis Editorial, 1993, p. 28.

and Drawing Matter (Somerset, United Kingdom).² In turn, the built works of this architect feature around the world (from Mexico to China, to Italy and France, Spain and Portugal, in Berlin and the Hague, in Porto Alegre and in New York, in Barcelona and in Lisbon, in Chaves and in Setúbal, in Évora and in Viana do Castelo, in São Miguel de Seide and in Taipas, in Matosinhos and Oporto).

This amounts to built works of such relevance to the material History of Culture that they deserve safeguarding, whether the material conservation of not only the architectonic artefacts in their own right, the interiors with their domestic and collective usages, the public character of the respective interventions but also, and even more so, the urban and landscape character that the urban or territorial fragments that he designed trigger or help in rebuilding. The objective of this current essay thereby becomes conveying these qualities and, accordingly, defending and safeguarding the heritage of the architectonic *work* – physical and metaphysical, tangible and intangible – by Álvaro Siza.

2 The tangible legacy of Siza: artefact

The architectonic work of Siza is in no way, nor could it ever be, limited to the Portuguese territory, especially as one of his most decisive qualities is no other than what we may briefly describe as his capacity to intermingle with the environment into which he integrates. In Portugal, for example, Siza went about building real and concrete spaces, habited and lived in, recognised and recognisable – in sum, a world – whose appropriation and enjoyment imply a particular perspective on what architecture might and should be, in disciplinary terms, first and foremost, but also in more general terms within the framework of citizenship, thus about how our refuge might and should be, our house, individual or collective, private or public, through what might best be described as an ambience evoking a precise worldview.

2 This references the holding of documentation of the architectonic work of Álvaro Siza even while there are also other works held by the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Georges Pompidou Centre (Paris) and FIMS – the Marques da Silva Foundation Institute (Oporto).

Hence, the architecture of Siza simultaneously becomes material and idea, work and thought, construction and space, physical and meta-physical. In this interpretation of his work, arising from the material conditions of his work, there are the artefacts of his architecture: *his physical legacy*; to the extent that the worldview that Siza's work implies, there results a specific and determined *idea about how the built world*, artificial and humanised, *wants to be*. Therefore, within this framework, the material legacy of his built work is of extreme importance to understanding the idea of architecture that this represents (and that exceeds its autobiographic authorial value), all the while, and for overwhelming good reason, this also constitutes the only authentic and plausible proof of the real qualities that his works bear testimony to. The work of Siza correspondingly traces, right through its presence, a simultaneous trail of author-architect (his way of thinking and acting) but, and above all, a way of perceiving the world (and, consequently, transforming it) that to the extent this represents an unparalleled testimony of a time, also demands safeguarding in material terms. From our perspective, this also conveys the strongest argument in defence of the preservation of his built architecture or, expressed otherwise, the most obvious reason for its defence as heritage patrimony.

In this, we may say political sense, Siza's architecture literally expresses a built manifesto of *a time* and *a geography* with its epicentre in Portugal, above all when paying attention to a particular phase in his trajectory, and also as an *example of life*, in every facet of this popular saying: as a way of life and, furthermore, as a way of bestowing – on life – a place for it to happen, in a word, as a means of *constructing*. In this particular aspect, and to the extent that this fundamental purpose of the role of the architect draws on the tools and instruments of this millennium old profession of Architecture – implying choices and rejections, forcing the anthological selection of forms, contents, means and techniques and thereby discarding, or putting to one side, other forms, contents, means and techniques that the architect deliberately and critically rejects – the architecture of Siza constitutes a rare example of an *alternative worldview* (from the outset, spurning the *dominant* and *totalitarian* perspectives but, following greater evidence, alternative to whatever is riding the crest of the wave, the froth

of contemporary times and their fleeting agendas) that, for this same reason, the prevailing scarcity of *alternative* examples like his, cannot fail to mobilise and motivate us.

3 Intangible legacies of the work of Siza: atmosphere

The architectonic work of Siza reaches beyond his material legacy, thus, his built works. As Le Corbusier stated about himself, but also applying to Siza, *nothing is better transmittible than thought*.³ However, Siza wrote rather little when compared with his designs and drawings, that, in his case, represents the fundamental tool for his project research. Simultaneously, his writing, to a certain extent rare, is potentially highly important to decoding his entire body of work, hence, his project method and the results attained through the application of his method.

The method that we wish to reference should not be understood as some preference for a particular expressive choice in architecture but rather as a choice with a precise direction in search of a form and an atmosphere. These works always display certain similarities, specifically with something that existed before them, or something that preceded them, and, furthermore, the sense of oddness that may be elicited is very often counterbalanced by the creation of a particular ambience that, with time and the persistence of the author in striving to raise and construct his architecture, begins to become identifiable to us. For such reason, the work of Siza displays a particular configuration, thus, you may not say that some specific idea or method and that the final form are not important to the moment of architectonic experiencing that he proposes to us.

Furthermore, the strangeness that Siza's works can create, the surprise and even the shock that his presence can provoke, generates a complementary secondary effect, nurturing a *particular atmosphere* that he designs

3 "Rien n'est transmissible que la pensée" (Le Corbusier)

"The extract of the text that we are about to read was written by Le Corbusier a month before his death. This is his last written text. It may be read as an autobiography, as a spiritual testament or as a monologue by a man looking back in judgement of his work." (Note by the editor included in the edition detailed below).

Le Corbusier, *Œuvre complète*, Vol. 8 – *Les dernières Œuvres* (publié par Willy Boesiger), Zürich, Les Editions d'Architecture, 1995, p.168.

as a type of world apart, thus, as is said, an expression built out of a specific *worldview*, precise and simultaneously alternative. Our reencounter with the works of Siza evokes the typologies and scales of spaces, palettes of ably interwoven construction materials and finishings, abundant but not excessive natural and artificial lighting, tones of colours or their absence – the whites of Siza –, furniture that inhabits the spaces, ironworks that operate the architectural features and alongside their artefacts (for example, the windows and doors), the movements of the body and the carpentry, the colours and tones adopted by the seating furniture, the design of the protective rails or their absence, alongside the lighting fixtures, crown mouldings and all the other devices that Siza designs to inhabit his ceilings and their spaces, the stairs, steps and landings and, with particular mastery, openings for framing or lighting, in certain cases, designed as if framing a painted landscape.

Therefore, in Siza, thinking and action, theory and practice, advance in conjunction even when not seeming to be the case and both are essential to any decoding and mutual understanding. Hence, we are also here arriving at the point of putting to the test the importance of his theoretical legacy – an aspect to the work of Siza that might appear to us as leading to the dispensation of the material artefact – on the contrary, hence the indispensable nature of his built work undergoes reaffirmation. In the final instance, such works are able to confirm to us the methodological path taken by Siza, thus, these are built works that enable us to grasp and access the thinking of their author, the disciplinary dimension to his proposals but as well as the political facet to his interventions, what we may in a word reference as his particular *worldview*.

This clearly conveys the importance of the artefact in the works of Siza and the material value of his built architecture as a testimony to historical time and a valid means of coping with its passage. For such reason, the built work of Siza requires observing as the key to entering into his thinking and, above all, as proof and evidence of their physical, material and concrete properties without which, from our perspective, the metaphysical, intangible and ethereal dimensions would, over the course of time, become almost inaccessible.

4 The built legacy of Siza's work: artisanship

When we today visit any of Siza's work – and the rationale I shall be applying spans all of the different phases in his career, initial (1954–1976), intermediate (1977–1997) or maturity (post-1998) – there is a common-place that is astonishing as regards the physical commitment necessary to the construction that ended up being built, faced with the efforts necessary to achieve such a difficult result – and, simultaneously, now, after its completion, so obvious – and regarding the maintenance necessary as regards the marks that the passage of time always inflict on the artefact. It should be added that the works of Siza, with rare and honourable exceptions, are very often worn down by the effects of time even while, and surprisingly, this not only does not erase their spatial qualities but also does not prevent them from displaying all of their material qualities. On the contrary, it may even be stated that they are enhanced by the physical marks that beset them and with which they merge much as the human face is marked by the wrinkles of time. Nevertheless, the works of Siza, that may age fairly well in this sense, still need additional and specific cares, like any aged body, but never, as might otherwise appear, in any need of architectural renovation.

We may state that Siza's works gain with the marks of time, thus, with the wood dried in the sun, the concrete altered by the sea airs, the discolouration of the plaster and the pigments burned in the sun. Hence, within certain limitations, that which the materials themselves impose on the passage of now chronological time, the works of Siza require constant and continuous interventions on pain of annulling the effect of the hands that built them, the stonemason that placed the brick and smoothed the plaster, the carpenter who took the measurements for the beams to support the roof tiles or canvas, the coppersmith who turned the casings, the marble mason, the tile layer, the blacksmith who forged the irons, the craftsmen who tightened the screws on the iron pieces and completed the specific pieces that Siza redesigned, who applied plaster and, in the end, varnished and painted them. Therefore, this incorporates all those who, wisely, turned the designs Siza thought of into work and who endowed this built reality with the material value of *artisanship* and, consequently also that of craftsmen and artisans, often anonymous, sometimes “with

a name”, – whose technical-artistic know-how, to adopt one expression, collectively deserves safeguarding from extinction.

5 Tangible and intangible legacy of the work of Siza: style

In the field of architecture, the word most castigated by the passage of time, both within the scope of the artistic disciplines as well as outside of it – in particular, by the History of Art – perhaps represents the very word that we paradoxically need to rescue to explain the most unrivalled quality of Siza's work: *the style* – thereby considered in the singular and not the plural as Viollet-le-Duc explained to us.⁴ This author-architect, in order to provide us with a prewarning, states that there is style (in the singular) and there are styles (in the plural). From our perspective, and from his, only the style matters. The styles are the formal and epidermic characteristics that enable us to distinguish between schools and epochs, among other aspects. Nevertheless, according to Viollet-le-Duc, while we wish to refer to these characteristics, it becomes far more appropriate to reference “the Greek forms, the Roman forms, the Gothic forms”.

However, in the opinion of Viollet-le-Duc, the word style should never be turned into an adjective to speak of particular forms. What matters is the idea of *style* as an unsought consequence of the form *built* with the resources of the times prevailing but, and at the same time, with the capacity to stand autonomously from this same historical period, thereby acquiring that termed the *timeless value* of *authentic* works.

As may be surmised, our defence of the presence of *style* in the work of Siza does not extend beyond proposing and subsequently describing the boundaries of an eventual *Sizesco style*, hence, not implying the definition of any formal repertoire typical of his work. What we propose here therefore also does not set out in search of architecture in the *manner* of Siza nor even the identification of Siza's formal repertoire that may then be *simply imitated* as in the creative chain of Goethe – “Simple imitation (of Nature), Manner

4 Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, “Style” in “*L'Architecture et le Style*” (“Extraits du Dictionnaire de l'architecture française, réunis et présentés par Hubert Damisch”), Paris, Hermann, 1978 (1st ed. 1964), p. 185.

(or) Style”⁵. On the contrary, what we do propose is that the architecture of Siza, and particularly his built work (thus, his material legacy) may have achieved *the style* – this *species* of *statute*, of art in general and architecture in particular, that, as Ernesto Nathan Rogers declared, becomes determinate in crystalline architecture *just as water that does not have any particular flavour*⁶.

Goethe, for whom, as declared by Maria Filomena Molder, *originality was a poor value*, explains how the creative process of art arises from the simple imitation of nature, extends in its own manner and reaches its pinnacle in the *style*⁷. And it is this acceptance of the idea of style – brought down to our days by authors such as J.J.P. Oud⁸ and Theo van Doesburg⁹ – that we deem necessary to measure the qualities of the architecture of Álvaro Siza.

This idea is not new and has already been explored by Joana Couceiro – based on Goethe – in “*Chiado and Style*” and “*Siza and Style*”¹⁰ to defend a particular perspective on the Siza intervention in Chiado, following the devastation caused by the fire in Lisbon’s downtown district in 1988. This perspective strives to circumscribe an architecture simultaneously of its time and timeless, authorial and anonymous (as if such paradoxical possibilities were feasible which, in our opinion, such *work with style* demonstrates), thus an architecture that might be by any author but simultaneously can only be by the particular author who designed and built it, an architecture that

represents the logical result of a constructive initiative designed for construction (in the *Albertian* meaning of the term) and that hence gets left fatally open to poetic values. This thereby constitutes architecture marked by its own time, thus without imitations or false appearance (thus, without any attempt at historicism) but, on the other hand, without any intent of originality, the new for the sake of the new, searching for the unprecedented and, in this sense, unique and unrepeatable (thus, without any attempt at systematic vanguardism understood as a manifesto seeking permanent rupture). For such reason, *the style* is perfectly able to tolerate the coexistence of different formal expressions, specific to each historical period and precisely encapsulating this capacity to connect the distinctive ways in which the forms of the specific time bestow *character* and *energy*.

In our perspective, Fernando Távora – Siza’s master – explained the idea in another fashion, avoiding that castigated word style that he deliberately renounced before then, in our view, replacing it by affirming the same concept in his *permanent-modernity*¹¹.

6 Proof and evidence, the canon: impressive and impressing impressions

Having arrived at this point, it is well worth considering, with the greatest possible clarity, the substantive importance of the built legacy of Siza, in

5 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “*Simples Imitação da Natureza, Maneira, Estilo*” (“*Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil*”, 1789, translated by Maria Filomena Molder) in *A Metamorfose das Plantas* (Translation, Introduction, Notes and Appendices by Maria Filomena Molder), Lisbon, INCM, 1993, p. 62–65.

6 According to Ernesto Nathan Rogers, as Winckelmann stated – “*as pure water does not have any particular flavour*”.

Ernesto Nathan Rogers, “*El porqué de la decoración*” in *Experiencia de la Arquitectura*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1965 (1st ed. 1958), p. 83.

7 Maria Filomena Molder, “*Introdução*” in *A Metamorfose das Plantas*, op. cit., p. 9–29 (in particular on p. 10).

8 J.J.P. Oud, “*Mi Trayectoria en De Stijl*”, in *Mi Trayectoria en De Stijl* (selection, translation and introduction by Charo Crego), Valencia, Colegio Oficial de Aparejadores y Arquitectos Técnicos de Murcia, 1986, p. 27–50.

9 Theo van Doesburg, “*Volontà di stile*”, in *Scritti di Arte e di Architettura* (Sergio Polano, ed.), Rome, Officina Edizioni, 1979, p. 356.

10 Joana Couceiro, *Chiado e Estilo, a importância da noção de Estilo na construção do Chiado de Siza* (polycopied doctoral degree thesis), Oporto, FAUP, 2018. Available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/10216/118943>

Joana Couceiro, “*Siza e Estilo*” in *Álvaro Siza, in/disciplina* (Nuno Grande and Carles Muro, eds.), Oporto, Serralves, 2019, p. 42–61.

11 “*The modernity of an event is measured by the relationship it maintains with the conditions of its production. On the issue of Architecture and Urbanism, modernity means perfect integration of all the elements that may influence the undertaking of any work, using all of the means that best lead to the achievement of a particular goal. Modernity is expressed in the quality, the exactitude of the relationships between work and life. Different conditions lead to diverse solutions – but there should be a common nature to these relationships. The great works of Architecture and Urbanism were always modern to the extent that they exactly translated, thus, according to a perfect relationship, the surrounding conditions. There is a major common truth in all of these works – their modernity. The formal aspects that they display are a direct consequence of the variety of environments, every order of different conditions, but they themselves, in their diversity, enable the constant deduction of that termed modernity. St. Mark’s Square in Venice, is a typical example of formal diversity and permanent quality. Between the first and last building that compose this extraordinary urban organism, there are several centuries of difference, centuries that mean evolution, diversity, variety. Any of these buildings was modern and because they were all constant, modernity prevails in the set; it does not matter the style in which each one of them was built – what does matter, yes, is the similar attitude presiding over their design.*”

Fernando Távora, “*Arquitetura e Urbanismo, a lição das constantes*” (first published in *Lusíada, Revista Ilustrada de Cultura*, vol. 1, no. 2, November 1952) in *Teoria Geral da Organização do espaço. Arquitetura e Urbanismo, a lição das constantes* (Manuel Mendes, ed.), Oporto, FAUP publicações, 1993, p. 9–17.

particular the *canon* of works selected under the auspices of this present nomination to UNESCO. Within this scope, it is important to begin by referencing how, in accordance with our simplified reading, as such can only ever be, of Fernando Gil, who distinguished between the meanings of *proof* and *evidence* in Portuguese¹², in particular as regards *research* in *architecture*.

Thus, *evidence* is something that, as visible (entering within through the eyes, as various dictionaries describe), dispenses with *proof* (or *substantiation*), to the extent that *proof* is, on the contrary, in the field of that dependent on “subject to being proven” in order to *substantiate* its *existence* or *manifestation*. It is with this dual purpose of *recognising* the *evidence* and *gathering* some *proof*, which we analyse piece by piece, even while summarily, the cast of works selected within the scope of their heritagization.

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Siza started out on his professional career with a tender winning project: the Boa Nova Tea House (1958–63). The submission to the tender was made in the name of Fernando Távora and, according to the history, Távora indicated the location for the proposal prior to departing on a study visit to the United States. Therefore, this project is very openly and deeply marked by the architecture of Távora for whom Siza worked after having formerly been his student at the *Oporto School of Fine Arts*. Nevertheless, he was soon to distance himself from the path of his master, having reoriented his architectonic research in the direction of the difficult objective of *expressing* the *abstractive* – a designation the he first put into practice in the *experimental* Ocean Swimming Pool (1961–1966), *the work* in which the architectonic *I* of Siza, for the very first time, *emerges*. Nevertheless, this was not about some discovery of any new language but rather, and on the contrary, a return to the everlasting problems of architecture, such as scale, natural light, proportion, the material quality of surfaces, the means of displacing the body in space, the visually pure

12 In English, in the legal and scientific research contexts, “*evidence*” means *prova* in Portuguese. However, in the Portuguese language *prova* and *evidência* hold significantly different meanings with this attracting the interest of the Portuguese philosopher Fernando Gil, in particular. Cf. Fernando Gil, *Tratado da Evidência*, Lisbon, INCM, 1996 and Fernando Gil, *Modos de Evidência*, Lisbon, INCM, 2005.

and impure, the framing and the closure, the temperature of the air and the colours, protection from the winds and the sun, etcetera, in summary, everything that affects the senses. Furthermore, all of this with their own particular forms and atmosphere that shall mark not only his own architecture but also an entire generation of architects in the following order, in Oporto, in Portugal and worldwide.

The public reception of the Boa Nova Tea House was understandably highly consensual. Throughout some time, Siza was, above all, recognised for this unparalleled landmark on the Portuguese architectural panorama of those years. One day, hearing another of the reiterated comments in praise of his first work, as if its author had built nothing of significance since, Siza was to retort by recalling how he had actually, in the meantime, undertaken other projects.¹³

One year after the conclusion of the Tea House, Siza was commissioned to design a holiday home in Moledo – the Alves Costa House (1964–1971). Within the scope of this project, he was able to put into practice the design principle that had shadowed him since the outset – the idea that a home is, first and foremost, a device for the intimacy of its inhabitants. This represents a radical and alternative idea that leads to the homes of Siza always being, to a greater or lesser extent, introverted, thus, turned in upon themselves, almost always without street facing windows, even while never shying from participating in the construction of the city as a collective artefact, in constant critical reconstruction, which the domestic architecture of Siza undertakes by another means (especially volumetrically) and shunning the commonplaces of the *bourgeois house*. This contains a very *intimist* approach that may be perceived as a *manifesto* against the generally accepted idea of a home as an *isolated object*, with the main façade for representation, fitted with windows in order to be visible from

13 Specifically, as regards this episode, Siza started out in his monograph Álvaro Siza, Works & Projects 1954–1992 (José Paulo dos Santos, ed., introductions: Peter Testa & Kenneth Frampton), Barcelona, GG, 1992, p. 9:

“In a Lisbon hotel, I met an economist who was an admirer of my work. He said to me: I saw a publication about your restaurant in Matosinhos. It's very beautiful. Can I have your autograph? I gave him the autograph, and said: That restaurant is ancient now, an obsolete object in a degraded landscape (marvellous in 1958). It doesn't look it, he replied (perhaps offended). (...)”

the street and to view the street from the house, that is, we might say, *to see* and *be seen*. In the Alves Costa House, this alternative approach takes on particular relevance and constituting the founding and fundamental work in this “series”, in particular due to the informality of its interior divisions and the respective means of circulation and, most definitively, through the *intimist* patio established out of the specific architecture of the house and with the loose sand surface he had placed there as a dune appropriate to this latitude lending particular consistency. This house also displays a new feature distinguishing it from Siza’s first works: the woodwork was, unexpectedly, painted in the same white enamel applied to finish the exterior walls (on the interior the enamels and paint are warmer). This expressive option – the annulment, through means of painting, of the carpentry, the apparently natural aspect of varnished wood – is not some mere finishing touch. As an aesthetic option, this is essential to understanding the future path of the author heading, as already identified, in the direction of *abstraction* as the objective of projects.

In turn, the Bouça Housing Complex (1973–2006) provides an example that is notable across every facet, the simultaneous openness to *participation* as the project *method* in situations involving public initiatives to provide social houses and, at the same time, the *autonomy* of the architecture (in the face of the urgency of these problems, as Siza stated). This complex is, above all else, built testimony to how Architecture is always, in some form, with the greater or lesser means available, a question of *choice* in which the architectonic form and expression are not subject to referendum. Therefore, this Siza work thus becomes a lesson in democracy, not direct but nevertheless representative. In this sense, the project appears as highly symptomatic of the ongoing ideological debate of that period. Unfinished for many years (the first construction phase ran between 1973 and 1977), this public operation to provide housing, public spaces and infrastructures would be resumed at a later phase (2000–2006) and at that time facing accusations of *gentrification* through means of the reviewed process for completing the work. We believe we may affirm that the quality of construction was deepened coupled with the creation of an urban complex while losing the authentic architectonic neo-realism (photographs from this first period do appear like stills from an Italian

neo-realism film). Authentic is the History that tells how this operation in the wake of the Revolution when, facing criticism from the City Council President of that time as regards the painting red of the top, recessed storey, the Resident’s Association president stands up in defence of the architect explaining this was in homage to a well-known architect (Bruno Taut in his Berlin phase that Siza had referenced to the Resident’s Commission during his, *participated*, presentation of the project).

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When, in 1985, Siza was unanimously chosen by his colleagues to plan and supervise the construction of the future home of the “Porto School”, the unattainable quality of his work was perhaps not clear to all, something that winning the Pritzker Prize would achieve in 1992 alongside the corresponding international recognition. The installations of the then founded FAUP – the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Oporto – which thereby gained institutional autonomy from the Oporto Schools of Fine Arts – were relocated to an estate where the main property and its respective annexes had undergone refurbishment. Complementarily, Siza constructed a new pavilion with individual divisions for each of the six classrooms even while, in fact, there was a free and informal connection running between them. The U-shaped building closes in upon itself, with long blind walls facing out onto the exterior, punctually marked by openings or other types of feature (the bay window on the ground floor for example), alternatively turning to the garden to the south and as far as possible backing onto the walls, in particular, those delimiting the northern boundary of the Póvoa Estate.

The building, modest in the means incorporated, is rich in the relationships and the spaces created. This is thus a manifestation of the principle of the minimum energy for the maximum effect (spatial, above all). This unveils some of the expressive options that Siza does not wish to compromise as the themes of his own time, so to speak, that termed post-modern: garish colours, classical citations, irony, “ducks” and “decorated sheeds” (Venturi). The Carlos Ramos pavilion is white (both inside and outside), the window and door frames are in egg-white and there is little more to

add about the expressive virtual features of his architecture. Following the spaces, there are the details, the profile of the windows, the nooks and elevations with the anthropomorphic figures. This conveys a nod to the forms of the modern movement that, according to Siza, are autonomous of the “unforgiveable errors” of the post-modernists and, to this end, serve as authentic poetic material to Siza. Shortly after, when the “towers” and the “cat sleeping in the sun”¹⁴ that protect them (from the motorway embankment) were emerging, first in naked concrete, later finished in white plaster, the city received an unparalleled set for its *City of Architecture*. The “acropolis” of the “Porto School” stands out, in its deliberate and thorough whiteness, between the farmed slopes of the river with its right bank running southwards. The building is unique in its relationship with the landscape and the city onto which it literally opens without any walls or obstacles but which is also a lesson in architecture with its rules and counter-rules, its classroom spaces all equal but all different, in the detail, whether their solar orientation or their ceiling heights, their proportions or their spans, or in the distance to the soil, or the type and shape of the openings, or in their façades and their meeting place with the ground. The set also provides us at the end with a large, collective *plateau* – the patio – which involves and connects the entire school in a shared space generous in its sizes.

The Serralves Museum is a mysterious building emerging from the surrounding city and streets. At a time attributing great value to the iconic, architecture as a brand, Siza, in a counter-current, set out to return to the Ocean Swimming Pool, the building in which it was first necessary to submerge before then emerging. Access to the museum comes via an interruption in a wall, via a ramp that echoes to our footsteps and leads us to a gravel patio-yard. There, a bay window endows an intimate and domestic character on arriving at the museum. You enter the home, which in fact is a museum, and the inhabitant encounters a system of interconnections between rooms and corridors, as if any conventional museum of

art, thus, as in the origins of the very idea of a Museum based upon the Palace of Louvre, with its rooms, both large and small, interconnected in a Baroque “*en suite*”. In this project, Siza took his mastery of framing by window openings to the extreme. The garden is his theme in keeping with his naturally naturalist outlook. Siza was left in charge of framing and determining the point of view for selecting what our views would obtain. His windows in Serralves are exact incisions sliced into the walls. They are windows that are pictures for the museum, even prior to their painting. In the end, they are pictorial architecture or architectonic paintings. In the case of the zenith light (natural and artificial), the control is achieved by tables (which have, in the meanwhile, been celebrated as the watermark running through the author’s work) that Siza here inverted, very much in his own manner, to create a lighting device that simultaneously interweaves natural and artificial lighting.

The Church of Santa Maria (1990–1997) reflects the work in which Siza, most vehemently, leads us to question – what is this, what do I find myself here experiencing? Our *body* and the *space* of the church seem to repeat already seen solutions and with long experience in the History of Portuguese Architecture on spaces for liturgical celebrations. However, on entering into the interior, when the expectation was for our own enclosure towards the world, with a view to the introspection appropriate to spiritual activities, we are surprised by a framed fragment of the landscape that Siza cut into the wall that protects us from adverse weather. In our perspective, the author here returns to the ancestral architectonic gesture of the constructor who encloses the space to later occasionally reopen it. In this case, the horizontal window opens onto the unperturbed landscape of the mountains that surround the city, which does not provide us with any common place. On the contrary, Siza magisterially cuts the opening which returns us to the outer world as filtered by him. It is as if the architecture of Siza returns the sacred to what earthly life has corrupted in the world surrounding the church.

In building the Portuguese Pavillion for Expo 98 (1997–1998), on the battlefield that emerged among all of those national *showcases* (and, consequently, their alleged architectures, traditional and future), hence, the domain of

¹⁴ “In addition to the comfort that Távora introduces to his works, I like the ‘naturalness’ of the buildings of Siza: they look like cats sleeping in the sun.”
Eduardo Souto de Moura, “A ambição à Obra Anónima, numa conversa com Eduardo Souto de Moura”, (Eduardo Souto de Moura interviewed by Paulo Pais) in *Eduardo Souto de Moura*, Lisbon, Editorial Blau, 2000 (1st ed. 1994), p. 33.

the *iconic*, Siza, once again running against the trend, constructs a building that is simultaneously *monumental* and *domestic*, thus, designing an *urban artefact* – not iconic – that simultaneously strives to endow form on the *exceptional* that the city evokes. That called the *Pala* (Canopy) of the Pavilion of Portugal bestows the space for a public square, covered on a large scale while simultaneously preparing the arrival of the *monumental* dimension of the building, dedicated to the celebration of *events*, constructing alongside, the banal, repetitive and everyday ordinary, without which the *eventual* would not be able to emerge. Therefore, through a single building, Siza constructed a fragment of the entire city, hence, the *rule* and the *exception*, the *monument* and the *home*, the *common time* and the *festive time*, the *ordinary* and the *celebrative*. For this effect, he made recourse to a gantry with fine and high columns, typical of a certain monumental modern architecture, in order to withdraw them from their context, returning them, shorn of any ideological connotations, to the democratic, post-25 April Portugal. As a monumental solution, it appears as if Siza stepped back in time to what has been termed the *monumental order of Michelangelo* to the extent that, as a banal solution, as if Siza had regressed to the values of the Baroque city, simultaneously festive and austere. To close, this highlights how Siza expresses through his architecture the value of a basic premise to daily practices: without rules, the exception does not stand out, simultaneously any repeated exception annuls its own exceptional characteristic. There always remains his conviction that “repeating never is repeating”.¹⁵

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If Siza holds *reason*, his architecture, requiring the “imagining of the evidence”, then becomes, as a consequence, self-sufficient, thus not needing any substantiation. Given the almost universal appreciation among his peers, it nevertheless remains to prove his appropriateness to the real. For this, there is only the *long term* of his architecture. The architecture of Siza is either desirable or disturbing and thus only the heritage conservation of its evidence will be in a position to subject the works to the test of time.

¹⁵ Álvaro Siza, “*Repetir nunca é repetir*” in *Imaginar a Evidência* (preface by Vittorio Gregotti, text written by Guido Giangregorio in transcribing a statement by Siza in Portuguese given in his studio in Oporto), Lisbon, Edições 70, 2000 (1st ed.).

We need his built artefact to verify the longevity of his evidence (the architecture of Siza exists, is real, is there for us to remember his way of dealing with architecture) and not for any legitimization of his existence, given that architecture, like art, as is said, does not happen by referendum (which does not remove the scope and even the responsibility of standing up to the problems of the world). We need the material legacy of Siza to prove its capacity to withstand time, which does not mean anything other than paying the greatest of attention to ensuring its conservation. Therefore, this requires safeguarding his legacy and preserving it from extinction. This is what we here propose, through the heritage preservation of this first anthology of chosen works to which others shall naturally be added whenever duly demonstrating, as we judge, his capacity to continue making us emotional as regards his presence in the *world*.