



Workbook of Affinities

Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1 UpGranT Consortium

Section 2 Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI

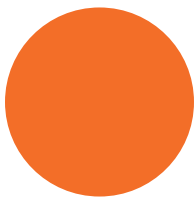
Section 3 Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP

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Section 5 Art Academy of Latvia · LMA

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Wall Atlas

The Grand Tour Wall Atlas retraces the essential markers of the four itineraries, from the conception phase to the Grand Tour implementation, through the intersection of *in situ* photographic insights from the different partners and archival images included in the dedicated booklet.

Images

- 1 Porto city centre UNESCO itinerary.
- 2 Porto Intermodal Terminal, Nuno Brandão Costa (2016-2021).
- 3 Time Out Market, Eduardo Souto de Moura (2016-2024).
- 4 S. Bento Metro Station, Álvaro Siza (2005).
- 5 Tower of the 24, Fernando Távora (1995-2003).
- 6 Gaia Cable Car Stations, Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos (2011-2012).
- 7 Porto territorial itinerary.
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- 12 Porto neighbourhood itinerary.
- 13 Boa Nova Tea House, Álvaro Siza (1957-1970).
- 14 Quinta da Conceição Municipal Park, Fernando Távora (1956-1960).
- 15 Matosinhos Municipality, Alcino Soutinho (1981-1989).
- 16 Seara Social Housing, João Álvaro Rocha (1995-2004).
- 17 Open Sculpture and Leça do Balio Monastery, Álvaro Siza (2018-2024).
- 18 Porto Serralves area itinerary.
- 19 Museum of Contemporary Art, Álvaro Siza (1991-1999).
- 20 Metro bus stops, Álvaro Siza (2024).

Credits

- 1, 3, 6, 7, 12, 14, 18 FAUP Team. Archive UpGranT.
- 2, 8, 11, 17 POLIMI Team. Archive UpGranT.
- 4 AUTH Team. Archive UpGranT.
- 9, 13, 19, 20 EKA Team. Archive UpGranT.
- 5 Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.
- 10 Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura. Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.
- 15 Archive Alcino Soutinho. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.
- 16 Archive João Álvaro Rocha. Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.

Three modern landscapes: measure, meaning and narrative

– Helder Casal Ribeiro, Sílvia Ramos

From the universe of the ‘Porto School’ Grand Tourists, the selection of three Exemplary Buildings takes into consideration their different circumstances, scales, programmes and the various calligraphies and languages they address. In terms of representativeness, the wide time range and geographic coverage of the case studies are also fundamental, as well as the availability of archival materials, with the objective of mapping and opening perspectives on the creative process by identifying the triggers and references encapsulated in the design. All these perspectives inform the construction of the readings present in the respective interpretive materials – architectural narratives, visual representations and models.

- House of the 24, Porto, 1995-2003, Fernando Távora.
- Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre, Marco de Canaveses, 1990-1996, Álvaro Siza.
- Carandá Market, Braga, 1980-2001, Eduardo Souto de Moura.

The three selected Exemplary Buildings are all public programmes – cultural, religious, and marketplace that sold fish, meat, and vegetables. The buildings were designed between 1980 and 2003, in three different regions of Northern Portugal (Douro, Tâmega/Sousa and Cávado), by Távora, Siza and Souto Moura, architects from different generations. Complementarily, the most recent case study to be completed (2003) is by the eldest of the three architects, and the youngest architect is the author of the building that first began to be designed (1980).

Travelling occupied a very special place in the cultural education of these three architects. Távora was the leading figure in motivating different groups of travellers, which included Siza and Souto de Moura. More than architectural affinities, the three architects have consistently shared a sense of culture and tradition, informed by planned travels over the years.

House of the 24: absolute geometric beauty

The Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva holds Fernando Távora’s Archive, namely the documentation on the House of the 24, which includes drawings, written files, photographs, and models, produced between 1995 and 2003. The process reveals a project developed to a high level of resolution, with a specific architectural intent, enabling clear analysis.

Among the drawings, there is one hand-drawn by Távora, in which he includes, side by side, a quotation from the Italian architect Giuseppe Terragni. On this sheet, an A1-sized tracing paper, arranged horizontally, the background is filled with small sketches, calculations and notes.

At the top, aligned with the A1 vertical axis, Távora draws a ceiling plan and a longitudinal section, along with the building’s two main façades and a detail of the interior stair. The five drawings are compactly arranged within a virtual rectangle organised in six sections. The free space in its lower right corner is dedicated to the Terragni quotation, again arranged in the interior of a virtual, well-recognised, geometric form.

Távora writes in Portuguese, by hand in ink and between double quotes “*It was necessary to draw our attention to a / rectangular form, to achieve the section of a particular rectangle that will underline, by / the harmonious relation of its measures, the entire / construction of the Monument with that value / of “Absolute” geometric beauty that is / prerogative of the exemplary architectures / of the great historical epochs*”, and he adds “Danteum 1938 / Giuseppe Terragni”.¹



Terragni’s quote reflects on the construction of the Monument, understood as an exemplary architecture of a great historical era, and on the problem of its proportions and measure. He suggests that a specific rectangular form with a particular ratio of its sides may yield absolute geometric beauty.

¹ Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva (PT_FIMS_FT_0290_pd0046).

Távora, in different small sketches in the background of his drawn sheet, studies this rectangular form. He studies three hypotheses: the double square, the root-2 rectangle, and the golden rectangle. From these three options, Távora selects the first hypothesis to proportion his Monument. From the façade to the ceiling and the interior staircase, all the elements in the composition correspond to submultiples of a square.

The House of the 24 referred to the 24 trades that governed the city, corresponding to the Tower-Building that housed the medieval city hall next to the cathedral tower.

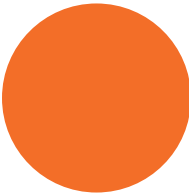
The commission was set on a historically sensitive site, with significant transformations in the 40’s, involving a complex dialogue between the buildings’ existing ruins, with different platforms, and the imposing 12th-century cathedral, with important alterations in the Gothic and Baroque periods. The historically charged site obliged Távora to visit the city’s archives to understand the urban setting and depict the surrounding constructions. Távora will find in a specific description the height of the pre-existing city hall, in palms, which he will transfer as a design theme into his proposal.

According to Távora, the main aim of the project was to transform the medieval ruin into a memorial of the city’s glorious past and history, through the conception of an architectural object with interior space that evokes the ancient tower, establishing a volumetric dialogue with the surrounding settings, namely the cathedral.

Távora’s design strategy was the opposite of simulating a medieval tower. Seeking to evoke it and unable to fully reconstruct its original form, the architect adopted a simple geometric shape with a square base for its plan and took into consideration the archaeological data on the conformation of the medieval outer walls to foreshadow the final volume of the Tower-Building, which can be broken down into a series of squares and rectangles generated from two overlapping squares. This volume, fitting into the surroundings and asserting itself in the city, was dimensioned using the palm as the main unit of measurement. The palm measure regulates the whole composition, as shown in all the drawings and registered in the building’s glazed façade.

Távora addresses Terragni and the Danteum project for Rome, approximately 60 years after its conception. In the Danteum, Távora finds support and sustenance for his conviction regarding the harmonic laws that regulate the composition of exemplary architectures, imbued with a sense of political mission and historic relevance, such as those of Ancient Rome. Both the House of the 24 and the Danteum are largely programme-less in a conventional sense, yet layered with a rich, complex compositional premise that bridges the gulf between abstraction and figuration. This implies a design based on a proportioning system defined by ideal geometries (such as the square and the golden rectangle in the case of the Danteum) and mathematical rules that will ground the projects in the same harmonic laws.

Távora never visited the Danteum in Rome, as it was never built. The architect may have experienced, in loco, the absolute geometric beauty of harmonious geometric rules during one of his first travels to Italy, where he visited some of Terragni’s built works.



² Archive Álvaro Siza. Col. Art Library - Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (AAS 002.90.1908.IC).

One of Távora’s first travels to Italy dates to 1948/1949. Távora was a young architect, recently employed by the Porto Municipality, travelling with his brother Bernardo Ferrão and a friend, Torcato Álvares Ribeiro, during the Portuguese fascist regime, with all its limitations and difficulties to travel. The journey began in Lisbon and had stops in Gibraltar and North Africa before reaching Italy, where he visited Palermo, Naples, Florence, Milan, Como, Turin, Bergamo, and Venice. In these cities, Távora experienced works of Italian Rationalism, namely Terragni and Lingeri, as well as buildings by Persico, Figini Pollini, Rogers, Muzio, Peressuti, and Bottoni.

Within the spirit of the future House of the 24, it is probable that Távora visited, in Como, the Casa del Fascio, as well as the Novocomum and the Parvulario Sant’Elia, by Terragni. The Milanese works of BBPR, particularly the writings of E.N. Rogers, set on an informed process of dialogue with the city’s traditional urban pattern, but without compromising their contemporary language, could also have inspired Távoras’ design options and themes.

Távora returned to Italy many times during his career, notably while designing the House of the 24. In 1999, the Basilica Palladiana in Vicenza organised a monographic exhibition on Siza’s work, which Fernando Távora visited, as shown in photos of the two architects strolling in Piazza dei Signori next to Palladio’s Loggia del Capitaniato, with the Basilica in the background.

Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre – a modern acropolis

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is the Portuguese institution that holds Álvaro Siza’s Archive for the Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre project in Marco de Canaveses (1989 – 1996). The documentation is extensive and includes not only visual elements, such as sketches, drawings, and photographs (also of models), but also textual elements that cover different phases of the project’s development and on-site implementation.

Among the documentation, the elements related to the Preliminary design, dated February 1992, stand out as an intermediate phase between the Initial study, dated August 1991, and the final detailed Design, dated November 1992 and January 1993. They are not as detailed in terms of material selection, structural systems, and construction solutions as the final design, but they are precise and synthetic in clarifying the overall design strategies, from the site plan and volumetric relationships to the character of the interior lighting.

In the corresponding descriptive report,² Siza explains the project’s details or fundamental features. In this text, with 4 A4 pages, 8 bullet points and a set of short paragraphs, stands out as a simple translation of a complex thought, using concise, clear language to convey a space of deep emotional and intellectual meaning, making it accessible and universally understandable. It is well known that not even Siza’s precise words are enough to fully express a project, as its full comprehension can only arise from the total space experience. However, the report, in its dryness, offers us the right concepts to construct our personal narrative.

The report addresses siting, programme, relationship with the existing fabric, access, urban setting, space depiction, and construction options. In confronting this content with the *in-situ* visit, three main design themes are heightened: the high ground public square, the double/curved wall, and the sense of monument within its measures and proportions.

The project was commissioned to Siza with a Preliminary Programme dated December 1989, which Siza addresses in detail. This document expressed the intention to build a full parish complex with a church, mortuary chapel,

catechism and youth activities centre, auditorium, priest’s residence, community space, and a small cafeteria.

The complex was to be located on a free plot in the centre of Marco de Canaveses, adjacent to one of its main avenues. This project site presented challenging contextual and topographic issues. Its borders were defined by buildings of different scales and purposes, and its main level was 4 meters above the main avenue and 2 meters below the secondary access street on the opposite side.

Siza’s main design option was to lay out a public square, girded by the parish centre in tension with the church’s main volume. The alignments, geometric relations and proportions come together in complementary shapes that define three clear moments. The auditorium and the parish facilities are conceived as a horizontal device that contains and regulates the site, articulating the ensemble volumetrically with the surrounding low constructions. In turn, the vertical volume of the church, set on the mortuary chapel, serves as the representative element of the public and sacred ensemble, particularly visible from the main avenue and integrated as a landmark into the urban landscape. Lastly, the public square mediates the two architectural bodies and articulates the surrounding levels, emphasising the church’s main entrance façade and its volumetric predominance, evoking a modern Acropolis.

In the church’s single nave, one of the most significant design features is the contrast between the continuous narrow opening on the southeast wall, at eye level, and the three large skylight openings on the opposite wall. These openings are also characterised by variable depths, taking advantage of the design decision to divide the wall into two surfaces and undulate the interior. The same strategy is used in a light-well behind the altar, simultaneously illuminating the mortuary chapel on the lower floor.

There is no record of Siza undertaking any specific travel for the Marco de Canaveses commission. However, the project reveals possible echoes of different references tested over the years by Siza during his many travels.

About a year before the church and parish centre were inaugurated, in 1995, Siza, along with Távora, took a grand tour to Finland, with a stop in Russia. A copy of this detailed travel itinerary is kept in Siza’s Archive in the Serralves Foundation. It was an 11-day tour, visiting 16 locations and around 35 architectural works, mostly by Alvar Aalto. The route was organised around the cities of Helsinki, Turku and Jyväskylä, where Siza had received the sixth Alvar Aalto Medal in 1988.

This was not the first Finnish travel that Siza undertook. It is well known that Siza travelled to Finland in 1968 as a student with a scholarship from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, visited Aalto’s works and met Alvar Aalto in person.

Therefore, when Siza received the commission, he had not only studied Alvar Aalto’s work through published bibliographies but had also experienced many of his buildings *in situ*, confirming much of what he was interpreting. We may find coincident compositional themes between Siza’s ensemble in Marco de Canaveses and Aalto’s siting of the Cross of the Plains Church and Parish Centre in Seinäjoki, with the public square shaped by parish facilities and the sacred volume, underlined through volumetric tensions.

At the same time, we may find coincident architectonic themes between Siza’s Santa Maria Church and Aalto’s Church of the Three Crosses

(Vuoksenniska church), which Siza visited in Imatra in 1995, namely the double undulated wall that induces the opposites of interior-exterior and surface-structure.

We can also detect architectonic references in Siza’s ensemble that go beyond Aalto. The long, narrow opening at the level of a parishioner’s gaze in Siza’s Church can conjure the Chiesa di S. Enrico in Bolgiano, by Ignazio Gardella, which plays with the same theme, while the tripartite main elevation may refer to Adolf Loos’ Steiner House or to the main threshold in the rationalist Santissima Annunziata Church in Sabaudia, by Gino Cancellotti, a theme which Álvaro Siza also evokes in other projects.

Carandá Market, Braga – an urban ruin garden

Casa da Arquitetura – Portuguese Centre for Architecture holds Eduardo Souto de Moura’s archive. Here, the documentation on the Carandá’s design process dates from two periods more than 20 years apart (1980-1984 and 1999-2001) and is organised into three files, corresponding to the three projects developed for the area: the municipal market (1980-1984), the associated cafeteria (1982-1984) and, in a second phase, the dance school and urban garden (1999-2001), into which the market had been transformed.³ For each project, these folders hold essentially sketches, drawings and photographs, together with photographed models.

In the archive, among the photographs of the market and the cafeteria, a sequence of three photos of a wooden model stands out.⁴ The photographs invariably show the two projects, in elevated views from south to north, with the market in the foreground and the cafeteria in the background. The difference between them highlights the two fundamental architectonic elements into which the projects can be broken down: the planes/walls that contain the market and the columns/pillars that support the cantilevered roof. The first photo shows the complete compact model; in the second, the roof is removed, along with the columns; in the third, the roof is placed upside down on the model, underscoring the project’s composition through the interplay between the systemised planes and the colonnade that supports the cantilevered roof.

The project’s original site was a longitudinal open rural estate situated between two urban nuclei, with some rural, abandoned structures, mostly in ruins, at its centre.

The main structure of the proposed market was set as a straight line linking the two extremes of the interrupted city, like a public covered passage or gallery, over 164m long, bringing the two settlements together. The cafeteria would complement the composition as an exception to the main structure by inhabiting the existing rural structures in an open dialogue with the new structure, overlapping the existing elements in aesthetic opposition.

Over 20 years, the popular municipal market and cafeteria were transformed by the same architect into an urban ruin garden. The market’s original programme was abandoned, while its structure, particularly the cantilevered roof, deteriorated, obliging an extensive intervention. This condition demanded its re-evaluation. Souto de Moura’s proposal was, instead of an extensive refurbishment, to use this unexpected opportunity to invert its use and scale by removing the roof and designing a walk-through garden with the colonnade’s ruins, and to accommodate, in a strategic way, new cultural programmes in the remaining space.

In this metamorphosis process, the granite walls and concrete columns persist and inform the present proposal, serving as main characteristics of

3 Souto Moura will design a Music School in an additional phase (2004-2010), which is not represented in the archive and, as such, not included in this reading.

4 Eduardo Souto de Moura Archive Col. Casa da Arquitectura – Portuguese Centre for Architecture (PT_CA_ESM_PA-003-02-3-0024, -0034, -0033).



Souto de Moura’s matrix, each referring to a specific architectonic reference in the architect’s works.

In the original design, the solid walls, detached from the building and conceived as planes extending into the landscape, suggest the plan’s composition as a modern neoplastic device. At the same time, the set of aligned columns/pillars that support the very long roof slab corresponds to a classical archetype, giving the building a timeless character.

Thus, the Carandá projects resembles in one hand the neoplastic component of the Mies van der Rohe’s project for the Brick Country House, in which the wall is a plane that organises space, and on the other hand Roman markets, like the Trajano Market, or the Greek stoas, like the Attalos Stoa – architectural structures with elongated porticos and colonnades, used simultaneously as shelters, commercial centres and meeting places.

Souto de Moura did not visit Mies van der Rohe’s Brick Country House, as it was never built. However, he certainly visited Mies’ later works in the United States, which are based on these early pieces, namely the Pavilion, which Souto de Moura visited in Barcelona, experiencing and validating *in situ* its compositional principles.

Souto de Moura cherishes the memory of a trip to Athens in which he simulated Mies’s visit to the Parthenon to study ancient Greece during the summer break at the Bauhaus. It is well known that Mies van der Rohe is one of his main references. Souto de Moura is an avid collector of publications on Mies van der Rohe and has carefully visited almost all of his buildings.

Additionally, Souto de Moura also identified Aldo Rossi’s writings, namely the text on Diocletian’s Palace in Split (293-305), as a reference for the Carandá Market inversion, in terms of programme, scale and significance.

When Eduardo Souto de Moura began his work on Carandá, he was a young 28-year-old architect. Távara had been his professor at ESBAP and, after the 1974 Revolution, Siza’s office offered him one of the first professional experiences.

Souto de Moura probably first experienced travelling to Athens through Távara’s travel logs while still a student. It is well known that Siza’s first Grand Tours took place in Távara’s office in *Palácio Atlântico*, or *Duque de Loulé*, or even at the Fine Arts School. Through Távara’s words and gestures, all the young architects in his inner circle learn about the places and the buildings he has visited. Later, Souto de Moura returned to Greece several times, including once with Távara, on a memorable occasion.

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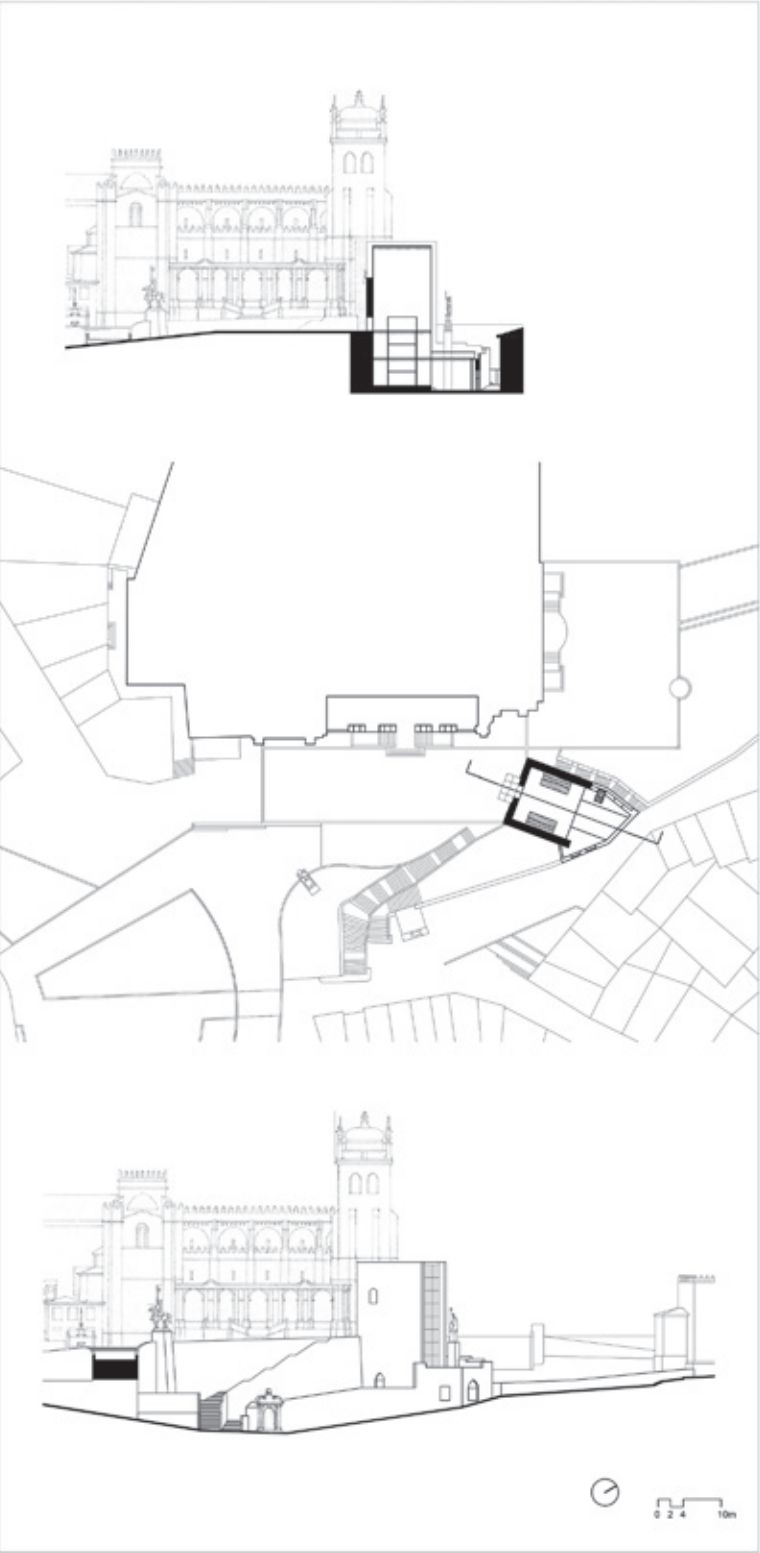
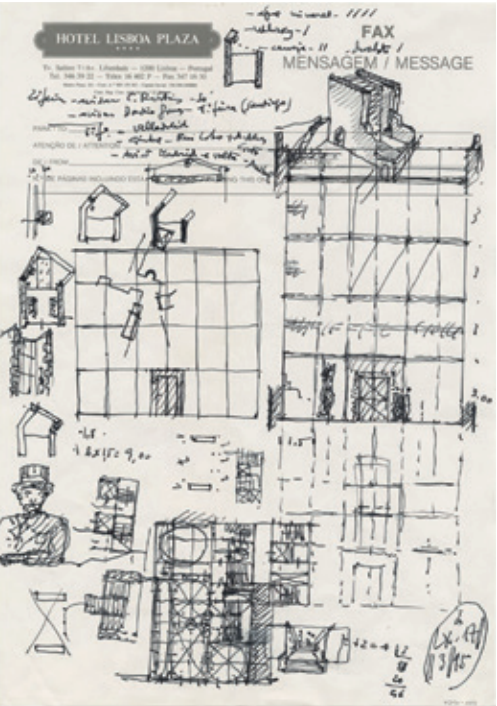
TRIGUEROS L. (ed.) (2000) - *Eduardo Souto de Moura*. Editorial Blau, Lisboa.



House of the 24:
absolute geometric beauty



1 Representative matter: first-floor plan, east elevation, and section redrawings; sketch by Fernando Távara.
FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive. Archive Fernando Távara. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.

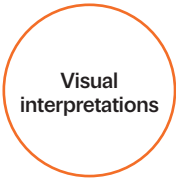


House of the 24:
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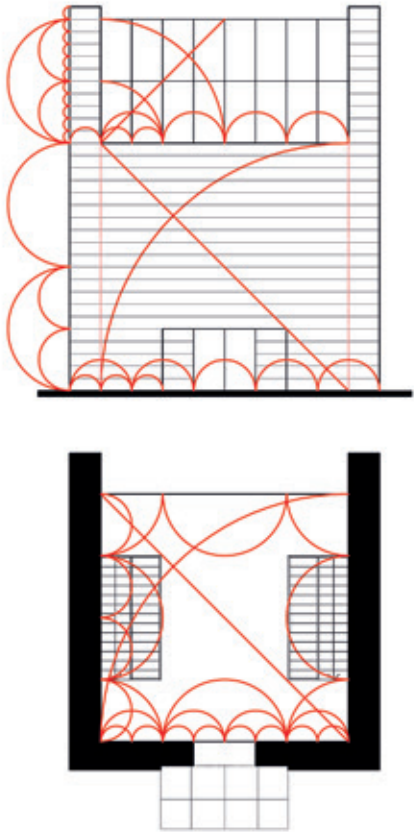
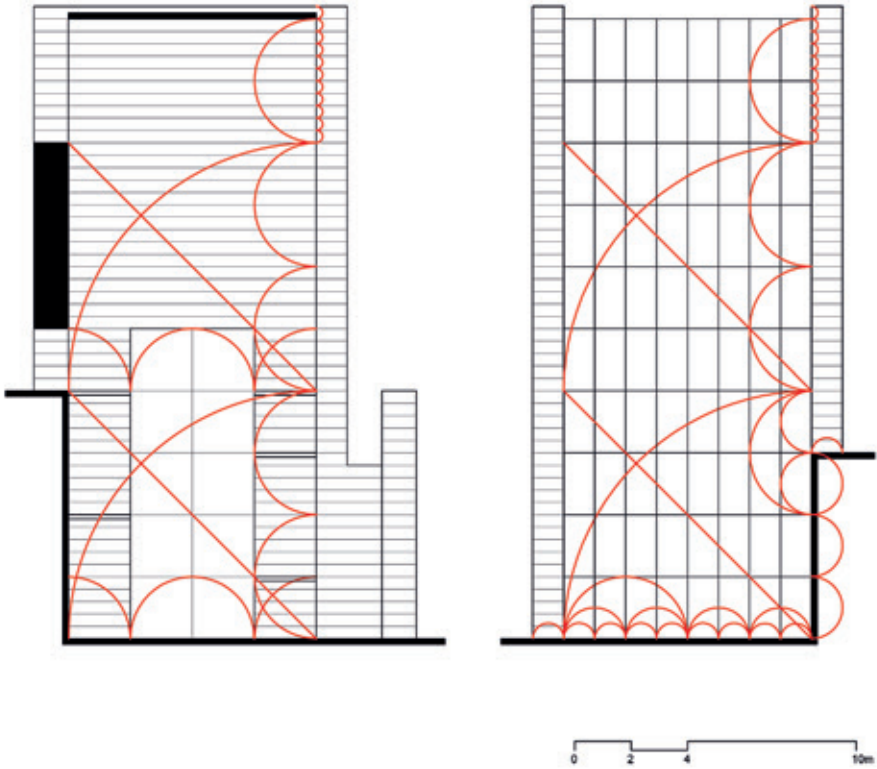
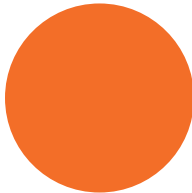
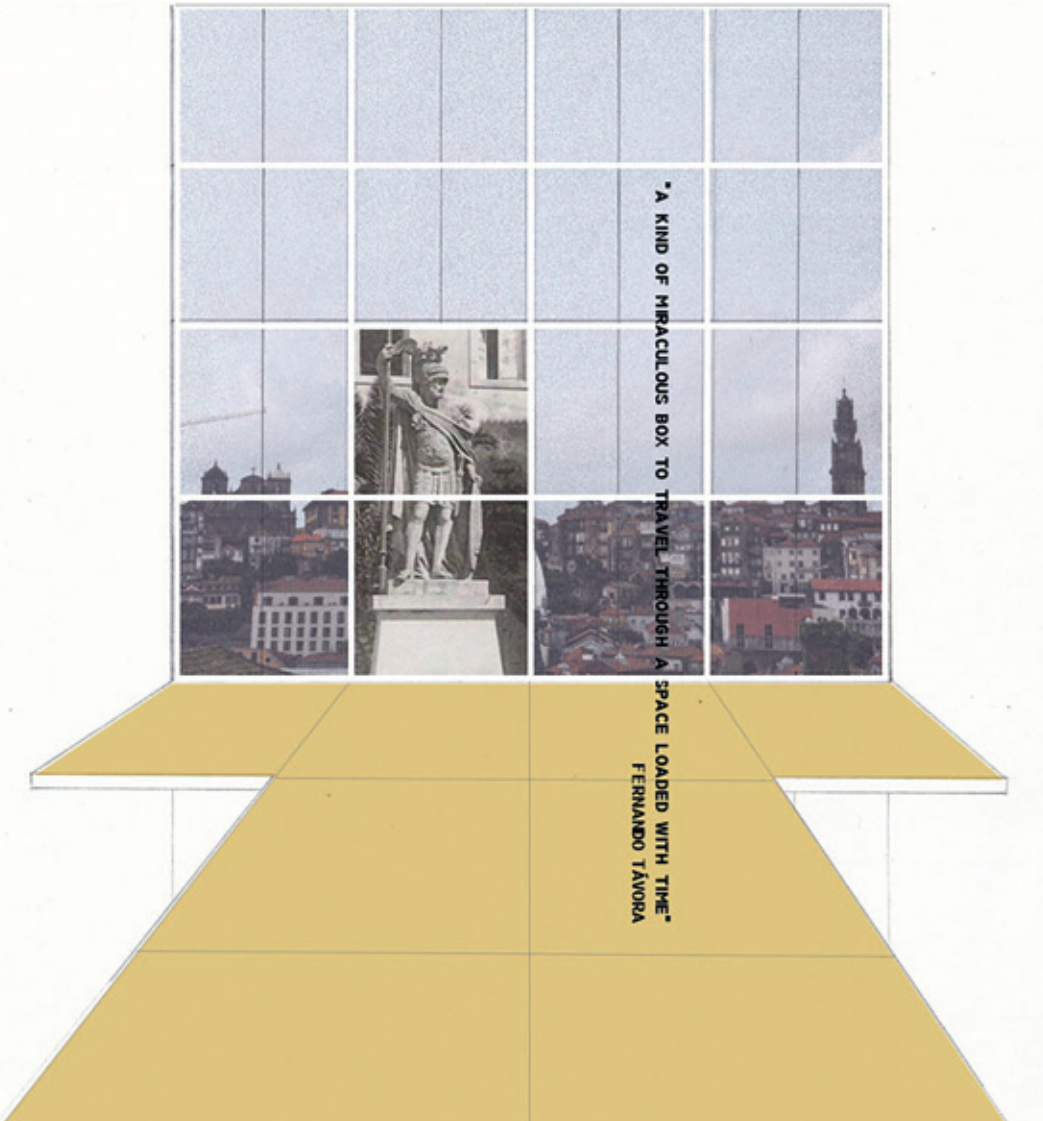


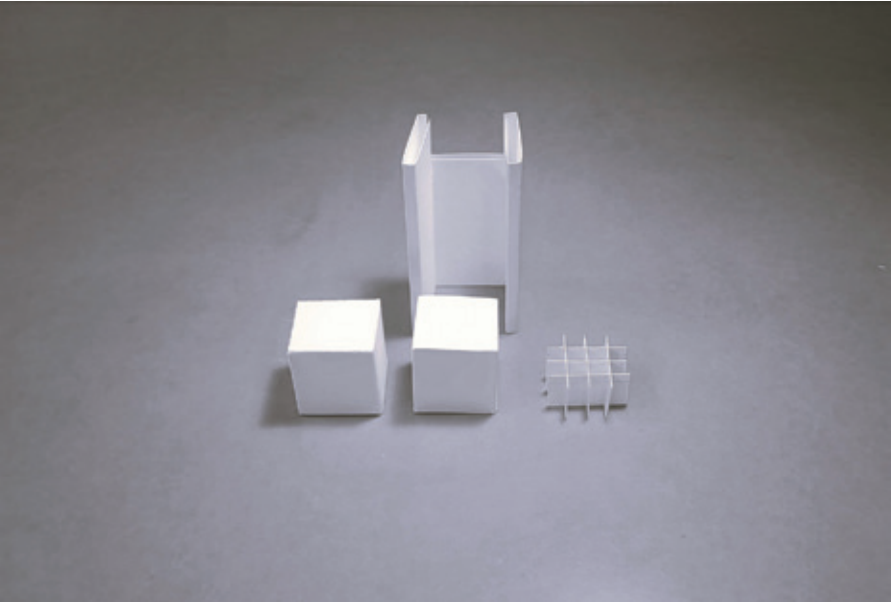
2 Multi-screen miraculous box: photomontage.
Readings developed with Anna Lopes, Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGrant IPL reload). FAUP Team. UpGrant Archive.
Written words by Fernando Távora, Project Report. Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.

House of the 24:
absolute geometric beauty

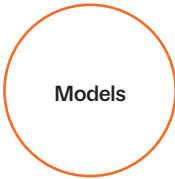


3 Latent geometric order: first-floor plan, east and west elevation, and section.
FAUP Team. UpGrant Archive.

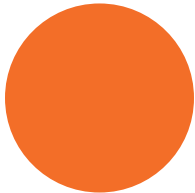
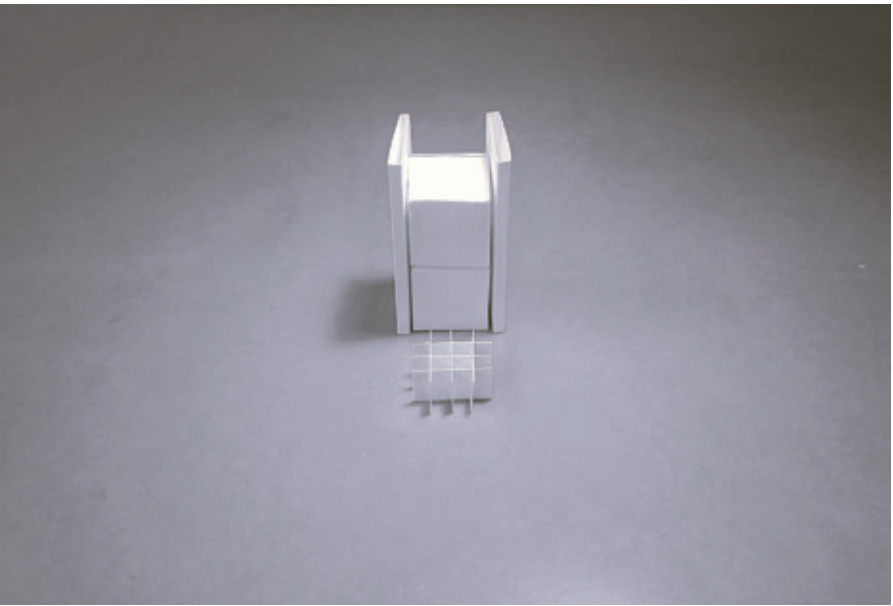
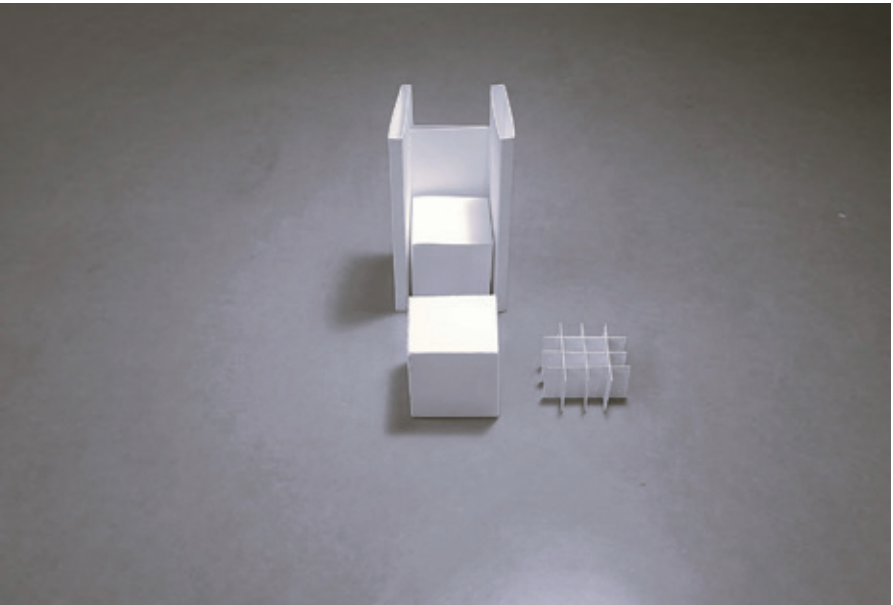




**House of the 24:
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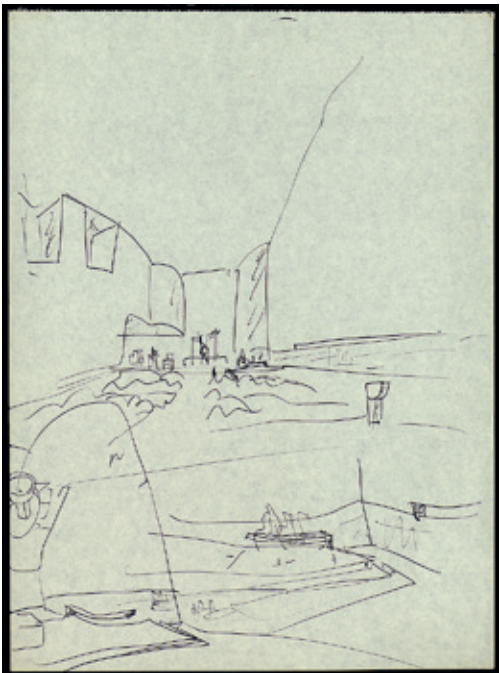
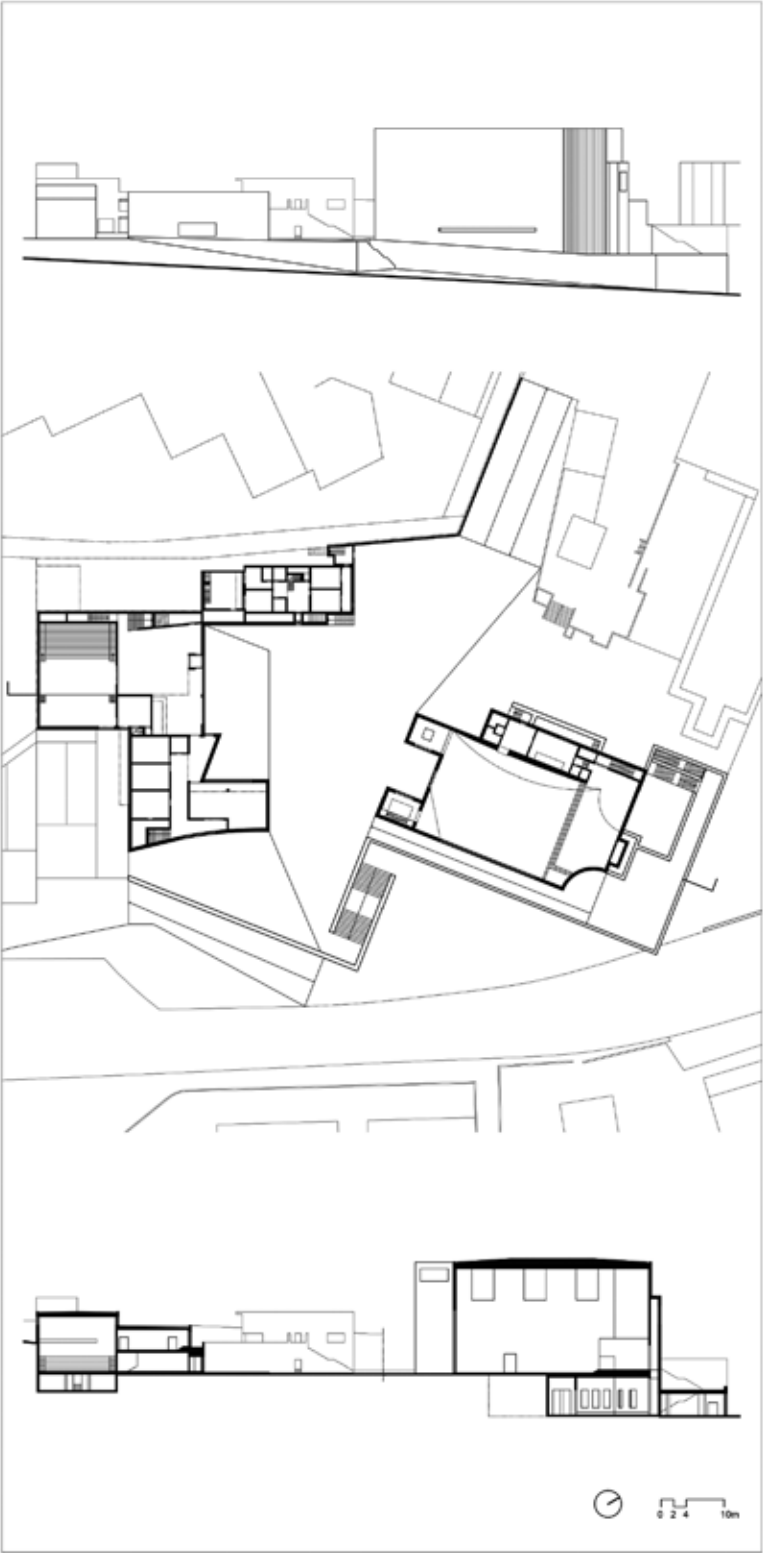
4 A symbolic modulated apparatus:
paper model.
Readings developed with Anna Lopes,
Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa
Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGrant IPL
reload). FAUP Team. UpGrant Archive.



**Santa Maria Church
and Parish Centre:
modern acropolis**



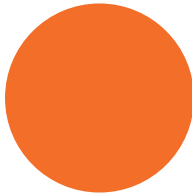
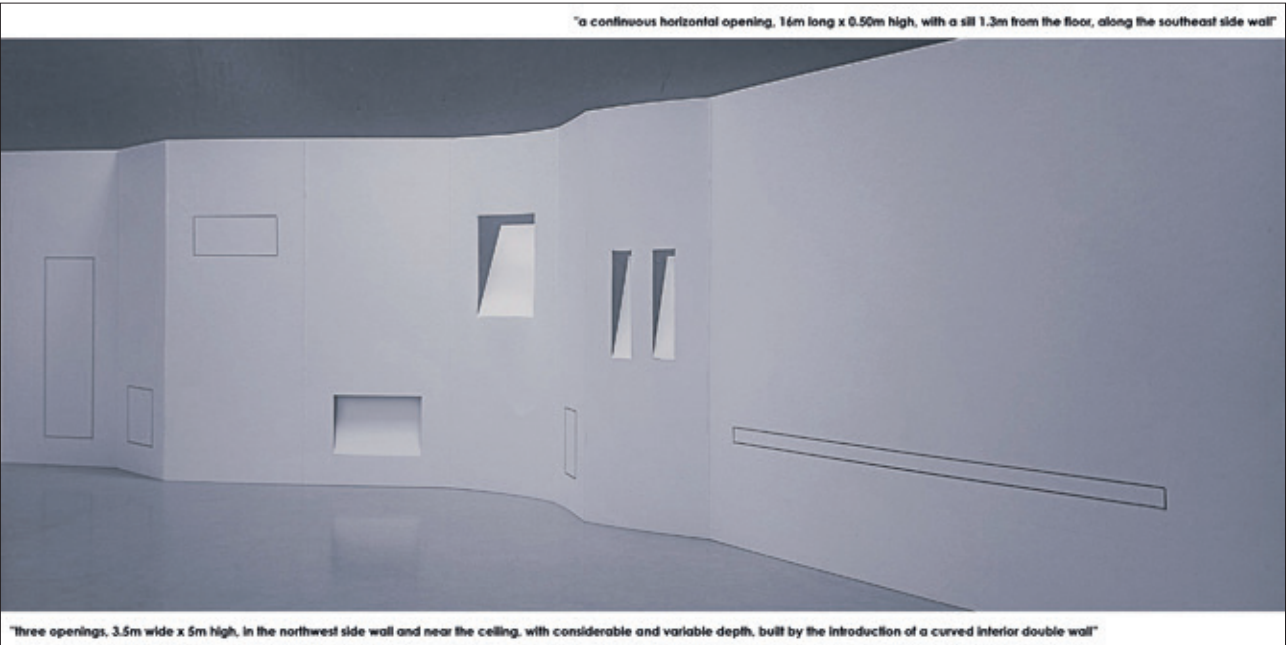
1 Representative matter:
ground-floor plan, east elevation,
and section redrawings; sketch by
Álvaro Siza.
FAUP Team. UpGrant Archive.
Archive Álvaro Siza. Col. Biblioteca
de Arte - Fundação Calouste
Gulbenkian.



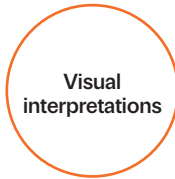
Santa Maria Church
and Parish Centre:
modern acropolis



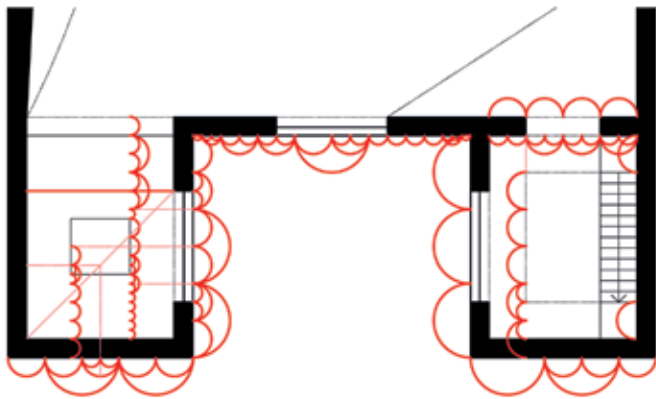
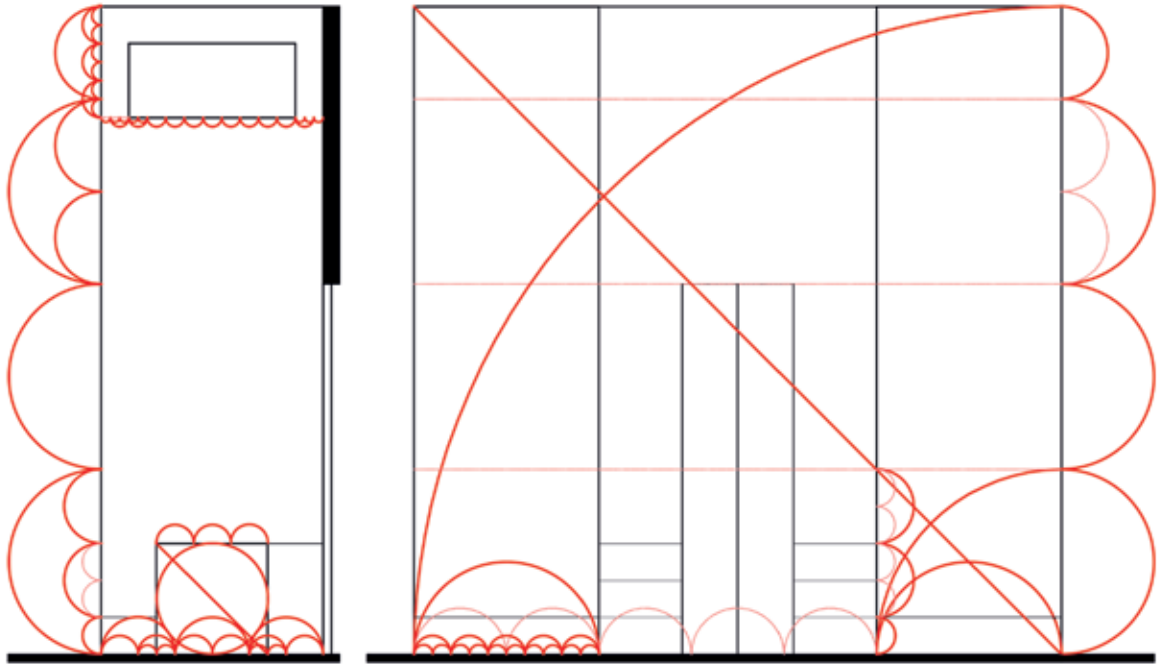
2 Collection of openings: cuts and trims.
Readings developed with Anna Lopes, Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGrant IPL reload). FAUP Team. UpGrant Archive.
Written words by Álvaro Siza, Project Report. Archive Álvaro Siza. Col. Biblioteca de Arte - Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.



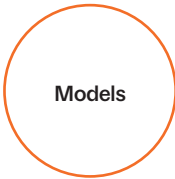
Santa Maria Church
and Parish Centre:
modern acropolis



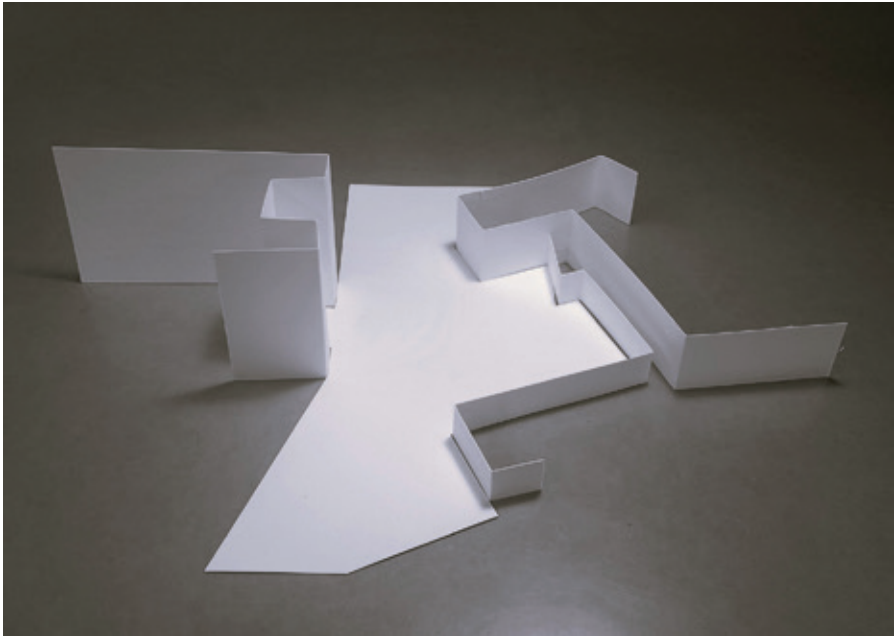
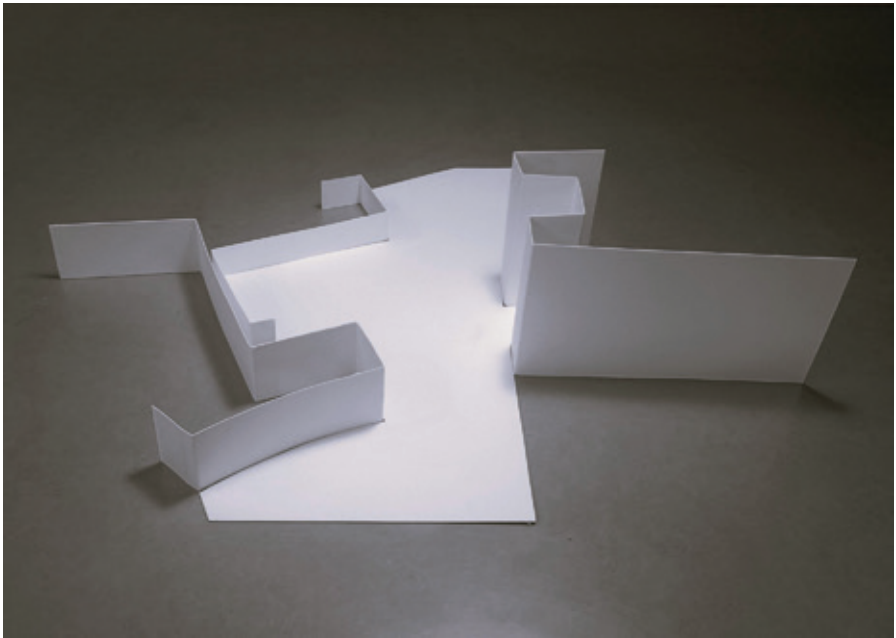
3 Latent geometric structure: east elevation and ground-floor plan
FAUP Team. UpGrant Archive.



Santa Maria Church
and Parish Centre:
modern acropolis



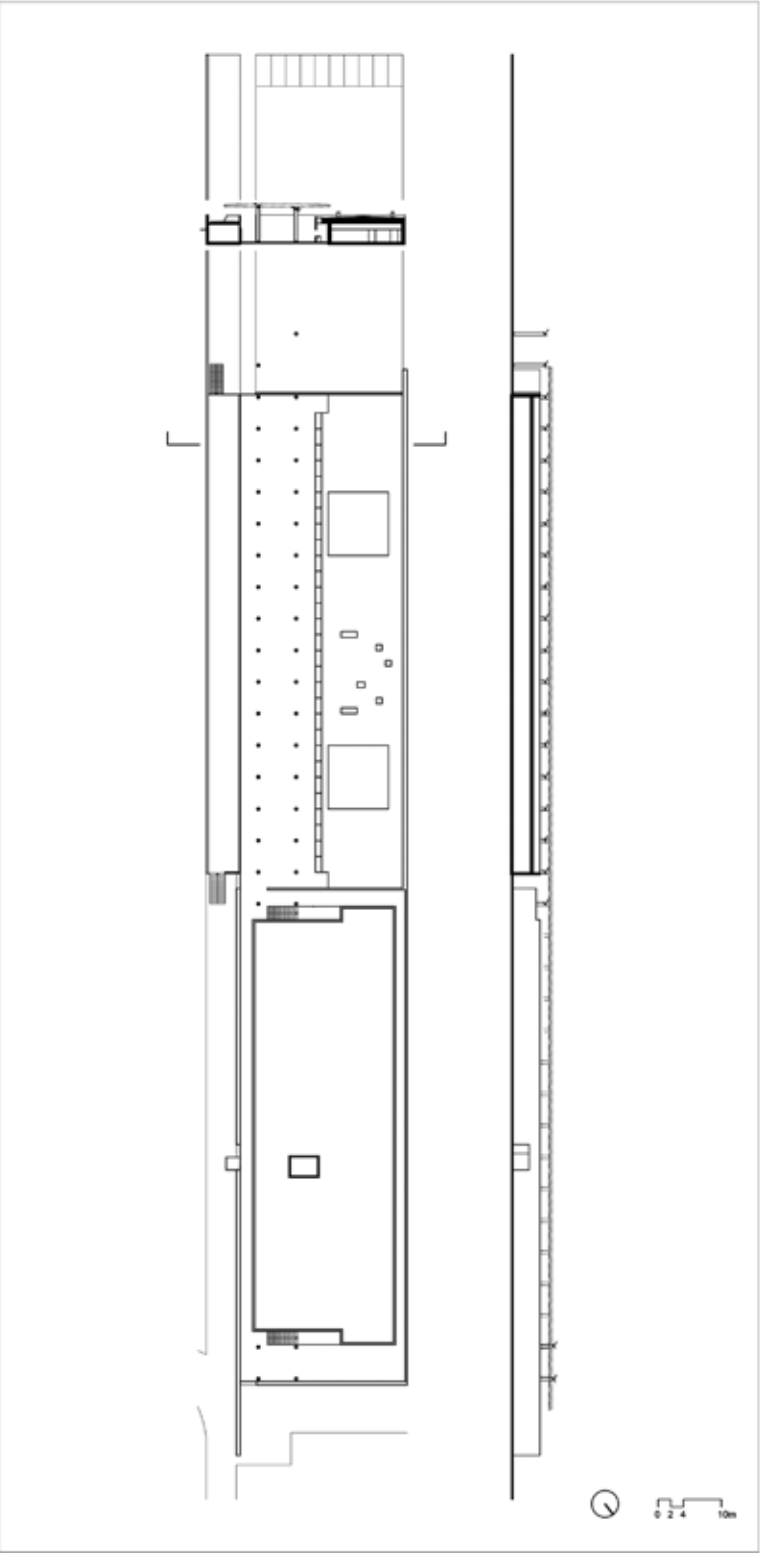
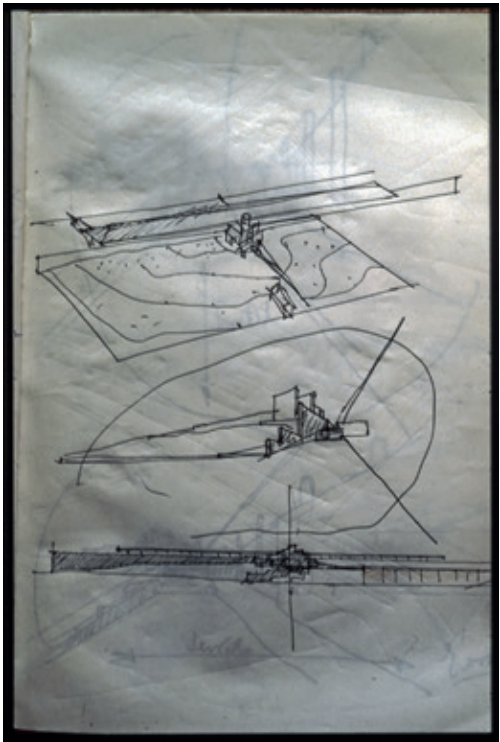
4 A public place trigger: paper model.
Readings developed with Anna Lopes, Hugo Pereira, Maria Gíão, Parisa Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGrant IPL reload). FAUP Team. UpGrant Archive.



Carandá Market, Braga:
urban ruin garden



1 Representative matter: roof-plan, north elevation, and transversal section redrawings (project phase 2004-2010); sketch by Eduardo Souto de Moura.
FAUP Team. UpGrant Archive.
Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura.
Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.



Carandá Market, Braga:

urban ruin garden

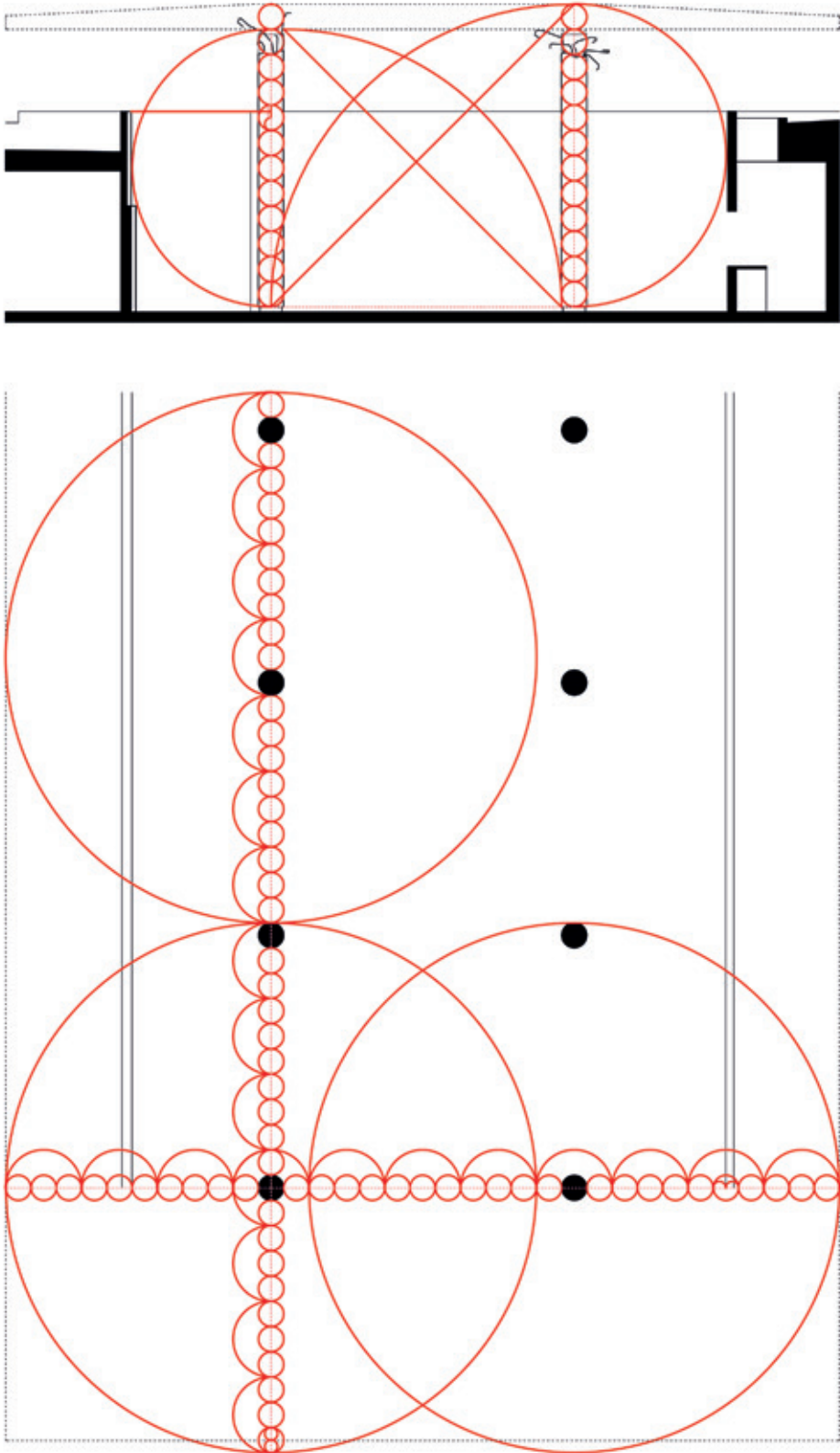
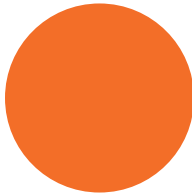
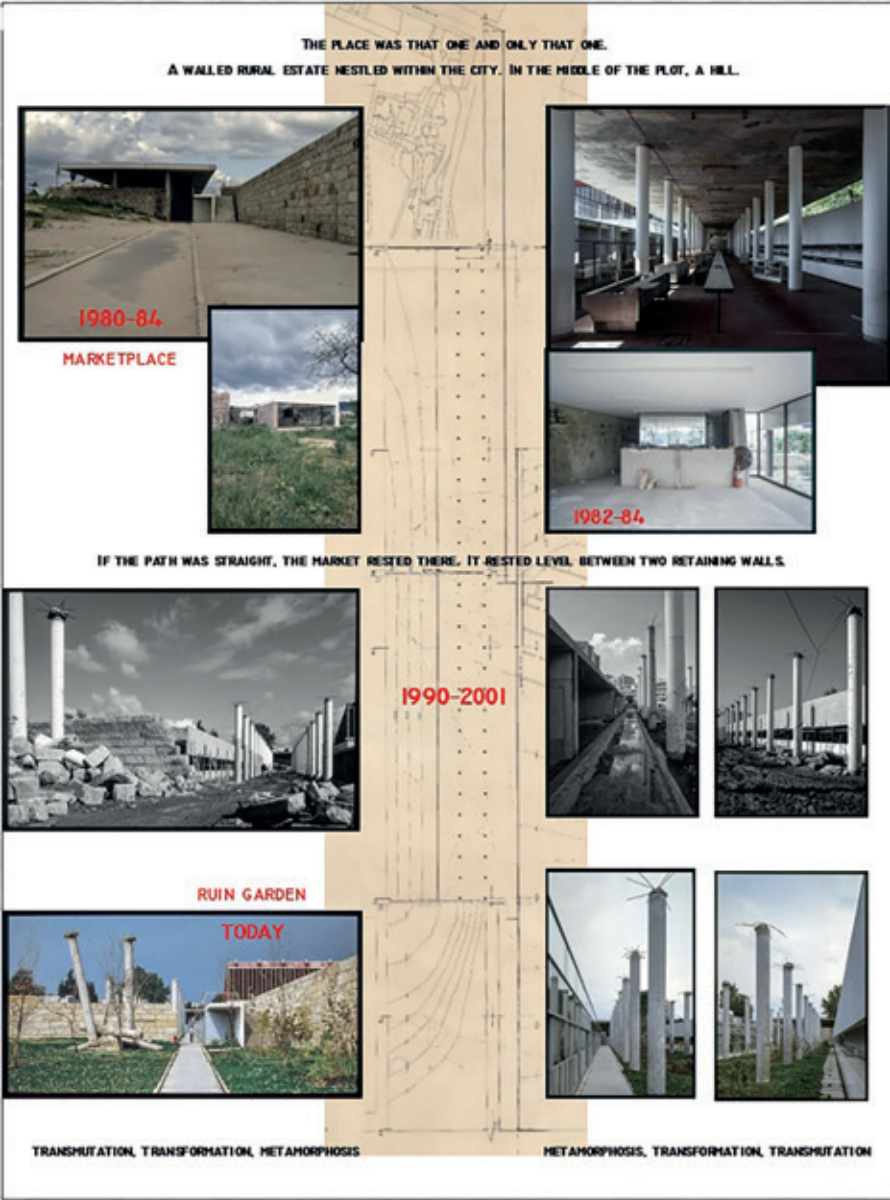


2 Transmutation, transformation, and metamorphosis: trailer or script. FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.

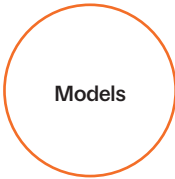
Written words by Eduardo Souto de Moura, Project notes. Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura. Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.

3 Latent geometric system: ground-floor plan and transversal section.

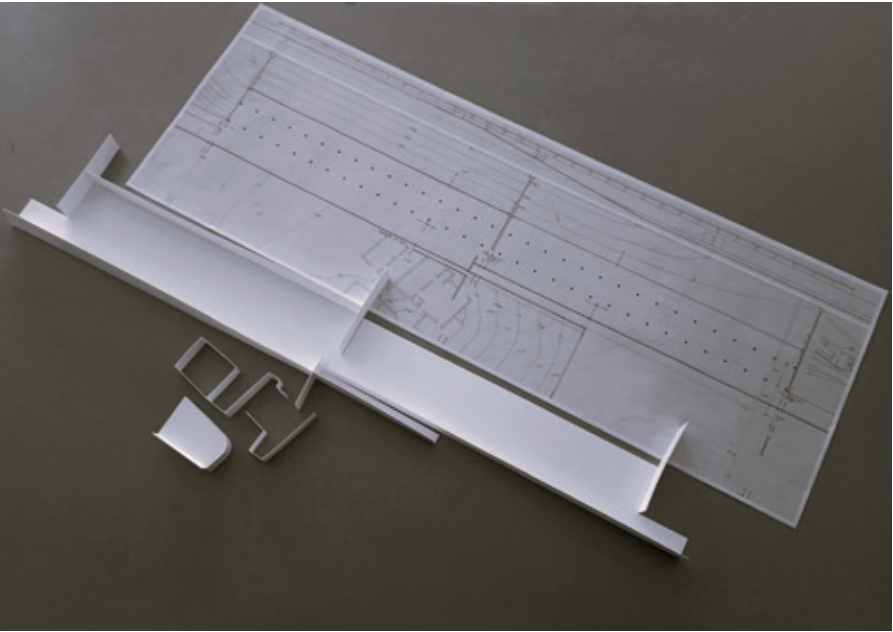
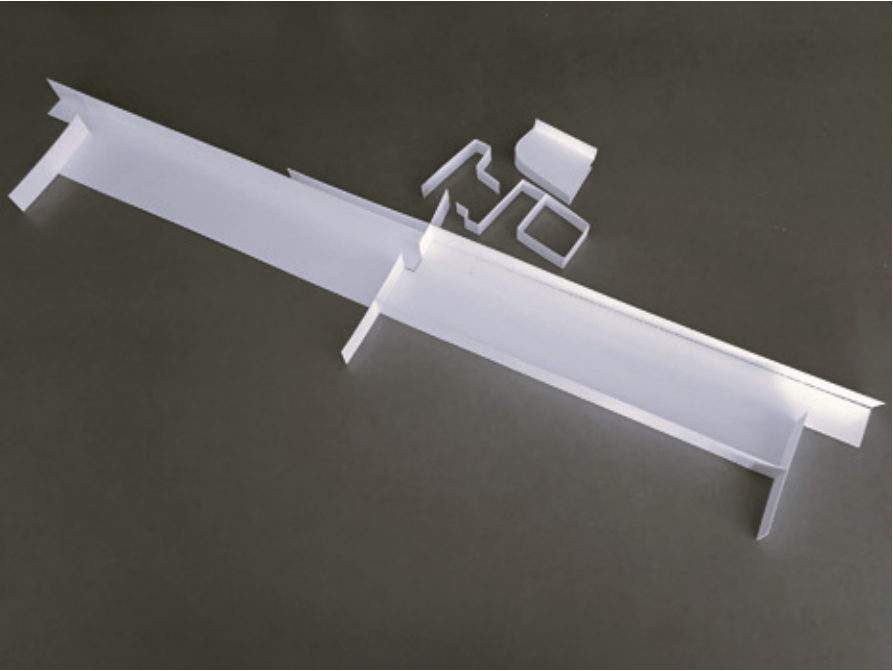
FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.



Carandá Market, Braga:
urban ruin garden



4 A modern neoplastic device:
paper model.
Readings developed with Anna Lopes,
Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa
Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGrAnT IPL
reload). FAUP Team. UpGrAnT Archive.



Travels with
Nuno Melo Sousa

– Silvia Ramos,
Helder Casal Ribeiro

Short conversations were organised with the oldest and the youngest architects from the Porto’s selection of the 10 Grand Tourists – Álvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto de Moura, and Nuno Melo Sousa.

The interview script addresses three major areas of concern – Foundational tours undertaken; Travels not realised and relevant even today; Itinerary for a contemporary Grand Tour (a suggestion for students) – to provide an updated reading on “learning by travelling” in Porto’s architecture practice.

The text for this publication was transcribed and translated from direct speech, seeking to preserve not only its meaning and intent but also its informal and spontaneous character.

“There are places I will never go. Due to laziness or boredom, or premature fatigue. But there are also landscapes or buildings I should have visited a long time ago” (Radić, 2019, p. 127).

Travel in Nuno Melo Sousa’s generation (born in 1988) is a commodity, socially available for exploration with relative ease. Portugal’s peripheral condition is no longer a decisive factor, and the distance between continents is significantly shortened.

Nuno’s curriculum clearly reveals the imprint travel has left on his personality, choices and architectural intent. For him, travel is confrontation, physical and mental, seen as an opportunity to go beyond one’s expectations, move away from one’s comfort zone. Travel is taken as a trigger to open perspectives, not to experience estrangement as an outsider, but rather to be embedded into the culture as a gateway towards personal insight or transformation.

The conversation with Nuno Melo Sousa began in the early afternoon on September 6, 2024.

1 Foundational travels undertaken
My most memorable tours are those that completely pulled the rug out from under my feet. Whenever I felt I was in a context that wasn’t natural to me or in an unexpected environment, I was constantly challenged to review my

expectations with the given reality. I had to overcome these obstacles in order to feel comfortable and at ease in that environment.

So, the first time I went out, apart from family trips to Spain, where the context was always very similar, was to England, where I attended summer camps to learn English. I remember it was quite a different atmosphere. I wasn’t studying architecture yet, and the difference I felt was in the texture. It was all made of bricks - the floor was in brick, which turned onto the wall, which was also brick.

This reality resurfaced in the Netherlands during my Erasmus. I remember being in Delft and realising that the ugly became less ugly because it was all part of the same brick mass. It was the same thing, so it seemed I forgave more. While here [Portugal], because we use different materials and there is a clear difference between the floor and wall surfaces, we are less forgiving due to the much greater contrast and complexity. So, this whole thing about the unity of material, mass, and texture had a great impact, a first learning experience.

Despite this contrast, within the logic of background and foreground, life in the Netherlands followed the same parameters as in Portugal. The shops opened at nine o’clock and closed at noon, then opened at two and closed at six.

4 Learning by
travel with...

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