

The “Third Way”: Távora’s Method in Masterwork. The Reconstruction of Porto’s Old Municipal Tower, Known as “Casa dos 24”

Modernity, Fernando Távora, Third Way, Reconstruction, Casa dos 24

/Abstract

The reconstruction of the old municipal tower in Porto, known as Casa dos 24, is a project by Fernando Távora that exemplifies the ‘third way’ – a balance between modern and traditional architecture. Távora’s approach proposes an organic cohabitation between new and old, emphasizing the importance of preserving local culture and history while meeting present-day needs. The design process is influenced by historical, political, and cultural conditions, reflecting Távora’s interpretation of modernity. This project serves as a significant case of modern intervention in an ancient city, offering a method still relevant for similar issues today. The context of Porto’s urban development and historical significance adds depth to the project, emphasizing its role in the city’s evolution.

This article is excerpted from the writer’s doctoral thesis: “Un’antica torre e la sua ricostruzione. L’opera di Fernando Távora ed il superamento della modernità”, author: Arch. Antonio Telesforo; Tutors: Prof. Armando Dal Fabbro, Prof. Daniele Vitale, Arch. Antonio Esposito. Coordinator of the Doctorat Dept.: Prof. Luciano Semerani. University of Architecture of Venezia, IUAV, Dottorato di Ricerca in Composizione Architettonica. Cycle XX, 2004-2007.

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Architect, PhD

Antonio Telesforo, born in Bari in 1973 of an Italian father and Portuguese mother, studied architecture at the IUAV in Venice and completed his studies in 2000 at the Faculty of Architecture of the Politecnico di Bari. He has always been interested in the man-territory relationship and in particular in rural architecture in the Mediterranean area. In his degree thesis on Domestic Space in Islamic Architecture, he developed a project for the redevelopment of the Arab Quarter in Jerusalem, proposing a real operational programme that, based on respect for local culture and history, and on economic criteria, outlines the necessary steps from the moment of authorisation through to the procurement of materials and self-construction. In 2000-2002, he worked in Portugal at architects’ studios in Porto and began a collaboration with Professor Giovanni Leoni and Architect Antonio Esposito, for whom he conducted research on Portuguese architecture. Thus, he participated in the collection of elements for Electa’s monographs on the Masters of Porto Távora, Siza and Souto de Moura and interviewed young architects who were very promising at the time and are now internationally known. Between 2000 and 2009 he published articles on Portuguese architecture and some of his own projects in international journals. In 2009 he obtained his PhD in Architectural Composition at the IUAV in Venice, cycle XX, with the thesis “An old tower and its reconstruction – the work of Fernando Távora and the overcoming of Modernity”. Supervisor Prof. Armando dal Fabbro, Counter-Rapporteur Prof. Daniele Vitale, Tutor Arch. Antonio Esposito, PhD Coordinator Prof. Luciano Semerani.

The reconstruction of the old municipal tower in Porto, known as Casa dos 24 (1995-2003), is the project in which Fernando Távora demonstrates in the clearest and most concise manner the validity of the 'third way', a 'necessary compromise' between modern architecture, a radical response to current human needs, and traditional local (in his case Portuguese) architecture, which preserves the deep reasons for the culture and civilization of its people [Fig. 1, 2, 3].

The "third way", proposed by Távora himself in the essay "O Problema da Casa Portuguesa",¹ written in 1945 at the age of just 22, consists in considering that it is impossible for modern architecture to close with the past by starting again from scratch, but at the same time it is the rejection of the historicist and passatist attitude of other architects who do not consider the present time and take nostalgic refuge in a past that no longer exists, proposing anachronistic and inappropriate products.



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This project is specific, but dense. Loaded with significance for the genesis leading to its conception and construction. "Founding stone", as Siza says, for the vital potential it expresses and for the rule it proposes to heal the great urban wound, present for almost a century now, a wound that has led to Porto being called the "suspended city".²

Távora's intervention demonstrates the possibility of 'organic' and 'natural' cohabitation between new and old, between the memory of the place and its ambitions for the future, through the recovery of lost, or almost forgotten, values, relationships, and characteristics.

The House of 24 is the binding element of physical and temporal spaces. The pre-existence is made explicit as a historical and symbolic fact closely linked to the history of the city and as evidence of an ancient building culture, which, through reworking and updating, communicates the idea of a continuity of knowledge. These factors are the foundation for the proposal of a new element that fills a void projecting into the future with the aim of triggering a virtuous process of urban development and "restoration". A development that is consistent with today's needs, without forgetting a local scale and specificity, and evokes the image of a past that cannot and must not be erased.

In short, the House of 24 takes on the value of guardian of the 'spirit of the place'.

1 *O problema da casa portuguesa* was written by Fernando Távora in 1945 and printed in its final version in 1947 in the series "Quadernos de Arquitectura", Lisbon.

2 Sofia Coelho Thenaisie, *A Cidade em Suspensão, Projectos em torno da Sé do Porto (1934/2001)*. (Coimbra: CUC – Centro de Cultura Urbana Contemporânea, 2001).

Fig. 1
Fernando Távora and Antonio Telesforo in the studio on rua Aleixo in Porto, July 2001.



2 3

This act of design fits into the general framework of modern reflections on intervention in historic buildings, offering itself as one of the most important cases of 'modern' intervention in an ancient city, and indicating a road and method still valid today for solving similar problems.

A method that does not pursue a predefined, demiurgic formal objective but produces a synthetic form, a sum of significant elements assembled through rules found in the place and considered useful for the current project, which fits within the life of the place.

The project, once built, turns out to be an element that is new and ancient at the same time, relating to all the other elements of its physical and temporal surroundings and establishing a direct and necessary relationship of mutual dependence with them.

People, who enjoy the new space, can clearly understand the sense of the part and the whole in a narrow and broad sense, and develop in themselves a real sense of belonging to the place and history.

The Design Process

For Távora, the project is rooted in its own 'circumstance', i.e. the historical, political, social, and cultural conditions, combined with Távora's interpretation of these through the filter of a modernity closer to reality. The design process is a path made of study, knowledge, selection of information and opportunities. A path made up of advances, hesitations and sometimes retrocessions, aimed at

Fig. 2, 3
Porto, Casa dos 24 by Fernando Távora (photo by the author)



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making conscious and strong, but responsible and measured gestures. A journey in which responsibility sometimes forces silence because the architect's word is not always necessary, but it is enough for the place to express itself.

The set of issues addressed here allows an approximation to the Tavorian method, referred to as the 'third way'.

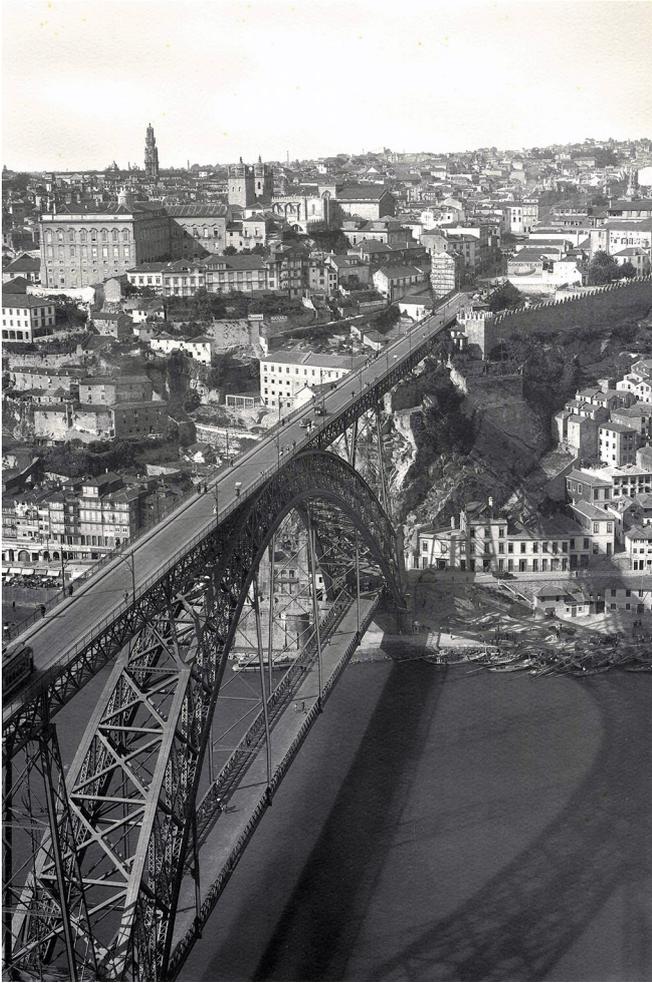
Urban Development of Porto

The ruin of the *Casa dos 24*, once the seat of the city's guilds, stands in Porto, a city that rose in the 5th century on a hill north of the mouth of the Douro River (Portugal) and developed in a bipolar fashion. Its 'upper' centre contains and represents the powers of the city, while its 'lower' part near the riverbank, the *ribeira*, is the site of trade that exploits the important river link to the interior of the country, and thus the Alto Douro.

In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the city of Porto extended beyond its walls, was enriched with new Baroque buildings, reflecting the ambitions of representation of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, and redefined its functional order with the construction of a railway station, the Rua Mouzinho da Silveira and the D. Luis I Bridge, connecting it to Lisbon [Fig. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8].

Notable among the Baroque interventions is the loggia built by the architect Nasoni on the north side of the Cathedral, an expression of the Curia's new focus on the new city centre, today Praça da Liberdade, and on the pilgrims who arrived at the Cathedral via the Calçada de Vandoma ascent [Fig. 9, 10, 11, 12].

Fig. 4
Porto early 1900s, Torre dos Clerigos (photo by Beleza).



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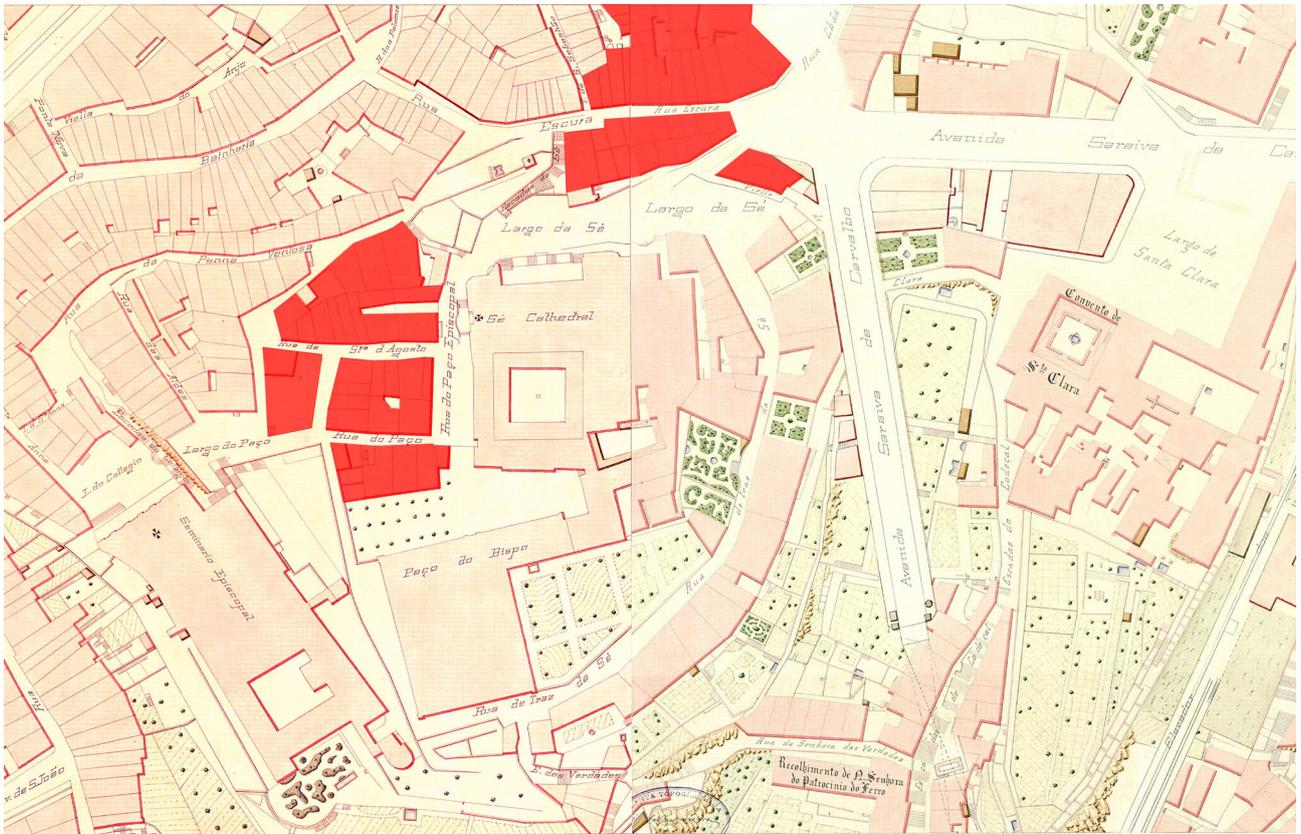
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Fig. 5
Porto early 1900s, Dom Luis
bridge (photo by Beleza).

Fig. 6
Porto early 1900s, Torre dos
Clerigos (photo by Beleza).

Fig. 7
Porto early 1900s, Avenida dos
Aliados (photo by Beleza).



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Fig. 8

Topographical map of the city of Porto at a scale of 1:500, surveyed under the direction of Augusto Gerardo Telles Ferreira, 1879-1892, merging sheets 259 and 280 (Arquivo da Câmara Municipal do Porto, sec XIII – Arquivo Histórico Casa do Infante). The first section of the so-called Avenida da Ponte (Av. Saraiva de Carvalho) is clearly visible. Buildings demolished in 1940 were highlighted in red.

Fig. 9

Nasoni Baroque Loggia 1736 (photo by Domingos Alvaio).



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Fig. 10

Cathedral of Porto 1940s (photo by Domingos Alvao).

Fig. 11

Cathedral of Porto (photo by Domingos Alvao).

Fig. 12

1940 Cathedral of Porto Rua Cha before demolitions (photo by Domingos Alvao).

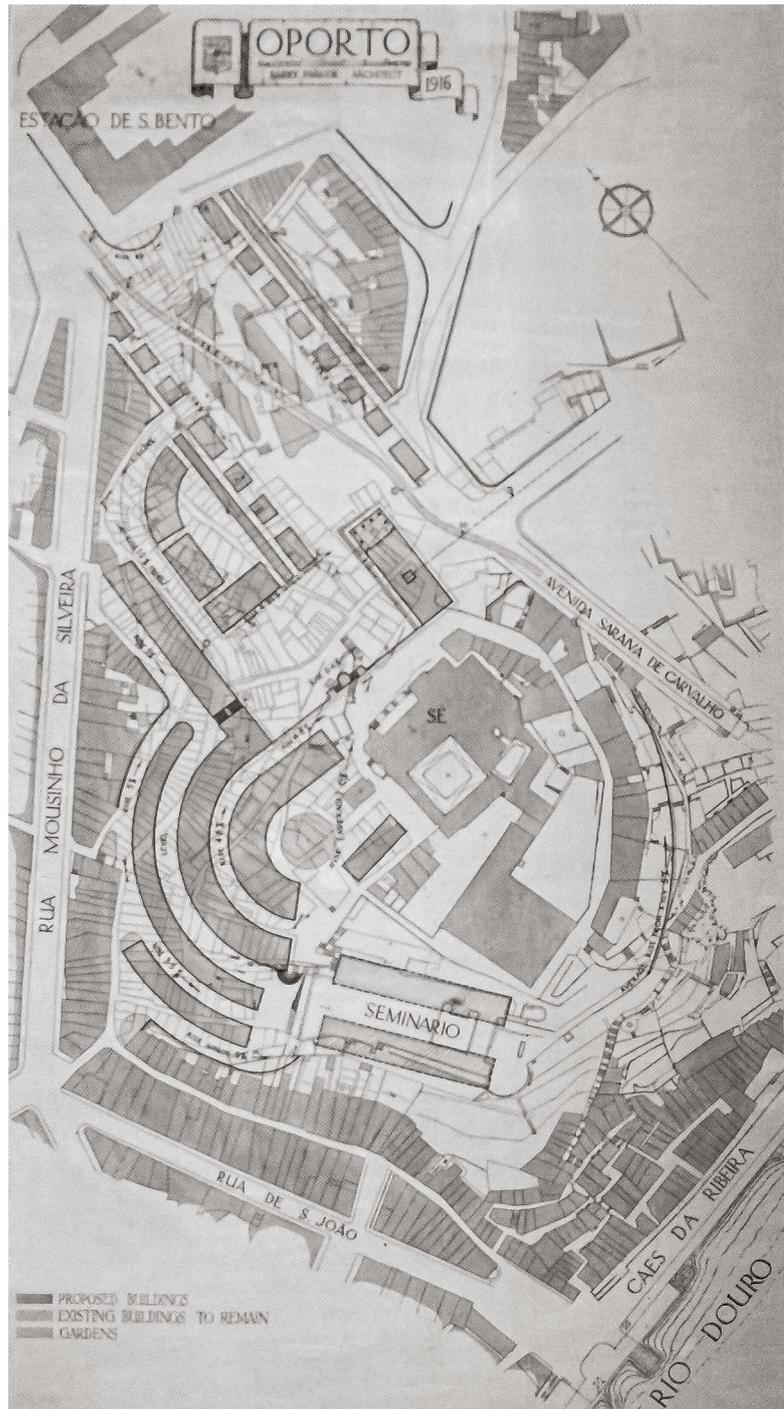
Plans for Avenida da Ponte

Starting in the early 1900s, the Municipality of Porto invited several international town planners to develop plans that would give the city a new image and provide it with functional links commensurate with the economic needs of the time.

Barry Parker proposed a hill-garden in 1916. Marcello Piacentini in 1939 and Giovanni Muzio in 1940 interpreted the Regime's requirement by giving the city a new and 'modern' image with their plans. In their hypothesis, the monuments are isolated and become the representation of the foundations of a national civilisation, and the problem of connecting the different levels of the area is solved with elevated viaducts. Although the municipality begins demolition work on several blocks, none of these plans are realised and the Avenida da Ponte area thus exhibits a wound to heal for decades [Fig. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21].

In 1955, Fernando Távora, working at the technical office of the Municipality of Porto, drew up a new plan that was very different from the previous ones. His project envisages only minor interventions. He facilitates the connection with the two streets to the east and maintains the old calçada of Vandoma that goes up towards the Nasoni loggia on the north side of the Cathedral. From the road junction an avenue, directed towards the station square, is flanked by green patches that allow the 'exposure' of the urban wound, but fill the urban void. Only two small public buildings appear among the trees, one of which serves as the City Museum. Four other buildings instead resolve and close the corners of the incomplete blocks with a 'modern' form that allows no misunderstandings.

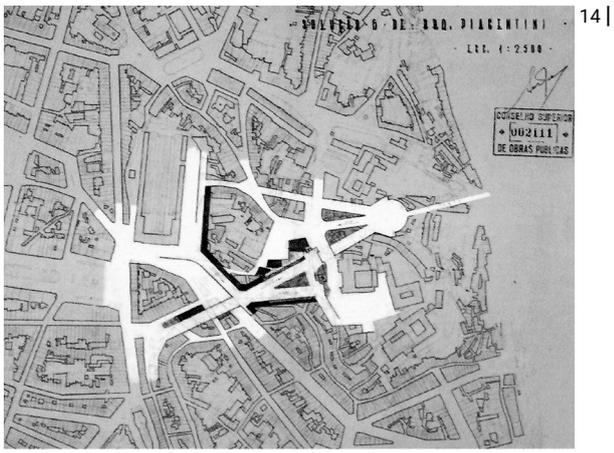
Távora's plan is appreciated in the municipality but not realised because the limited and unsaleable volumes make the operation too costly for the administration [Fig. 22, 23, 24].



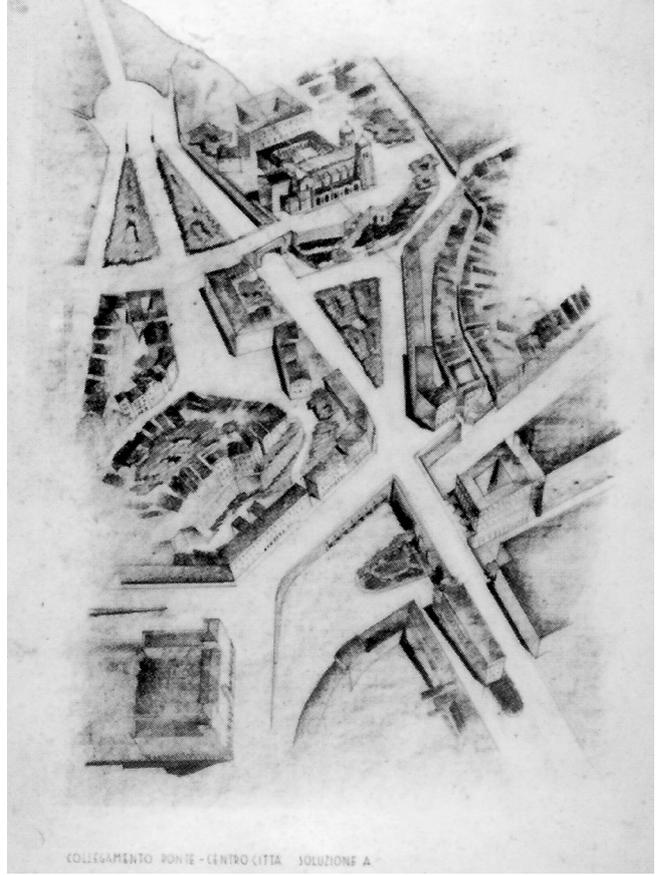
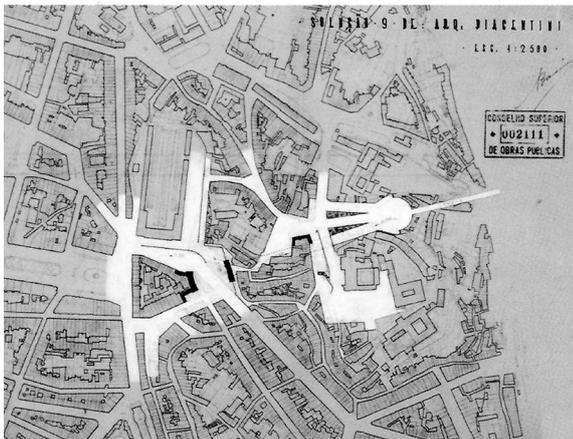
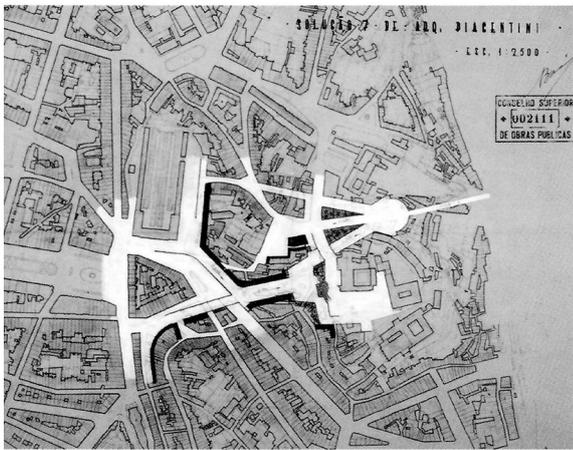
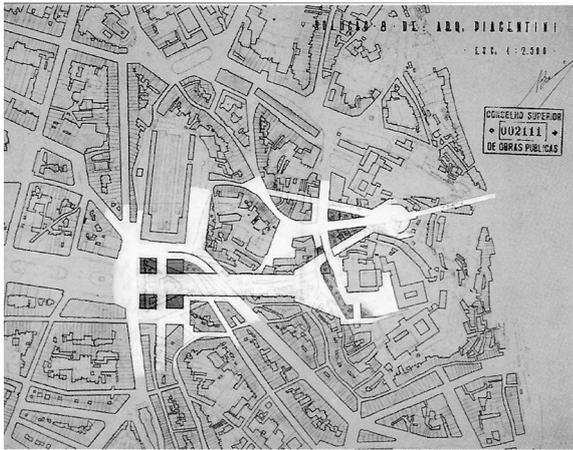
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Fig. 13

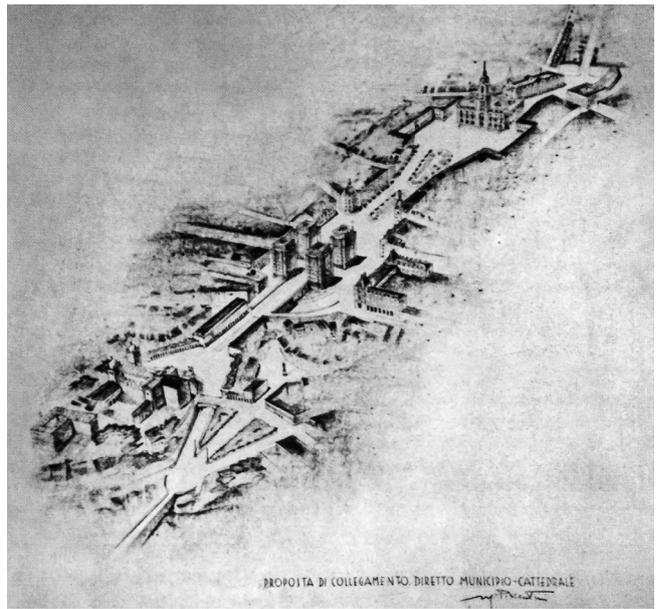
Barry Parker, plan of Avenida da Ponte, 1916.



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Fig. 14

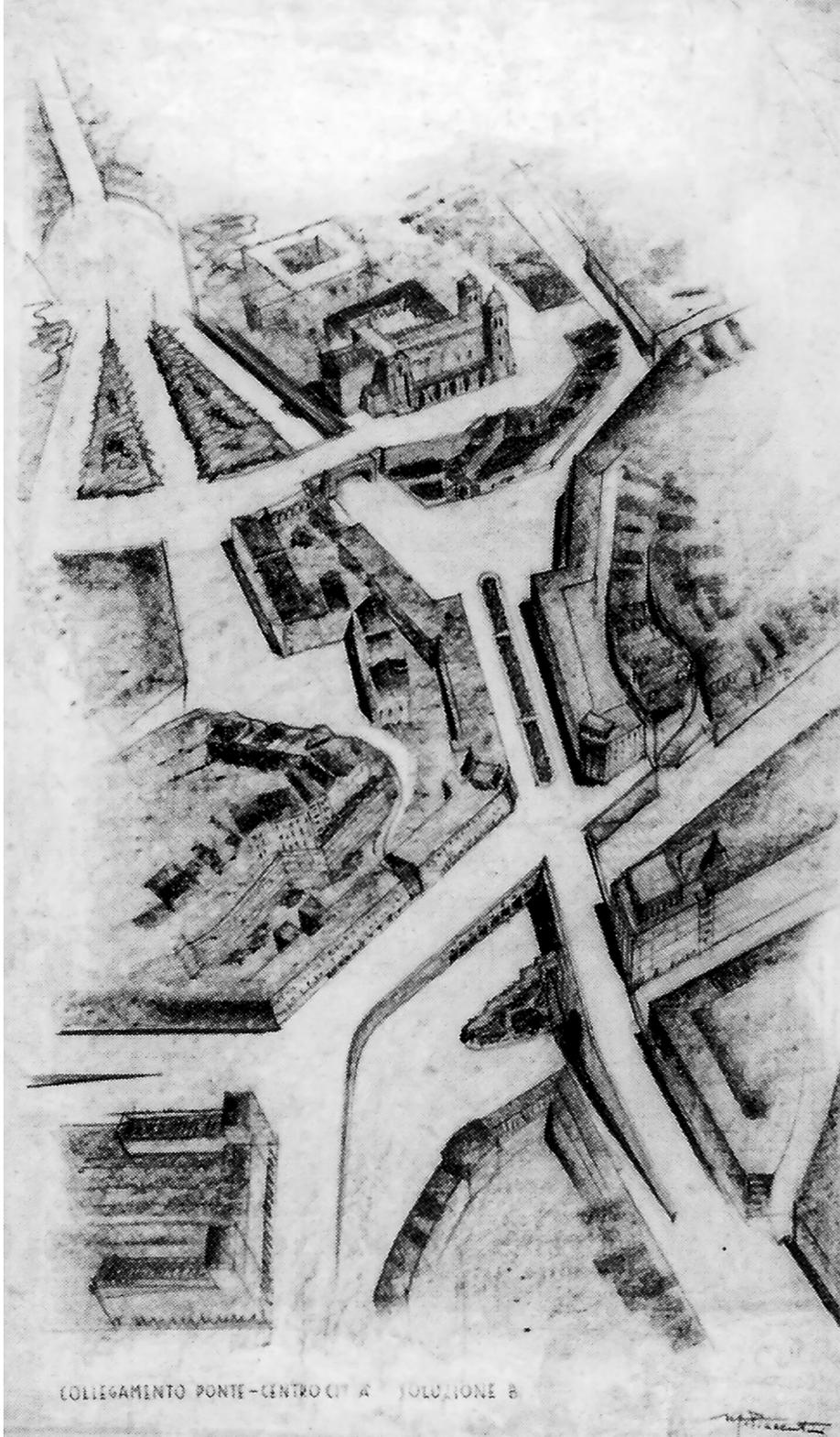
Marcello Piacentini, Avenida da Ponte, 1939, plan variants A, B, C and D.

Fig. 15

Marcello Piacentini, Avenida Ponte, 1939, plant variant A.

Fig. 16

Marcello Piacentini, Avenida Ponte, 1939, plant variant B.



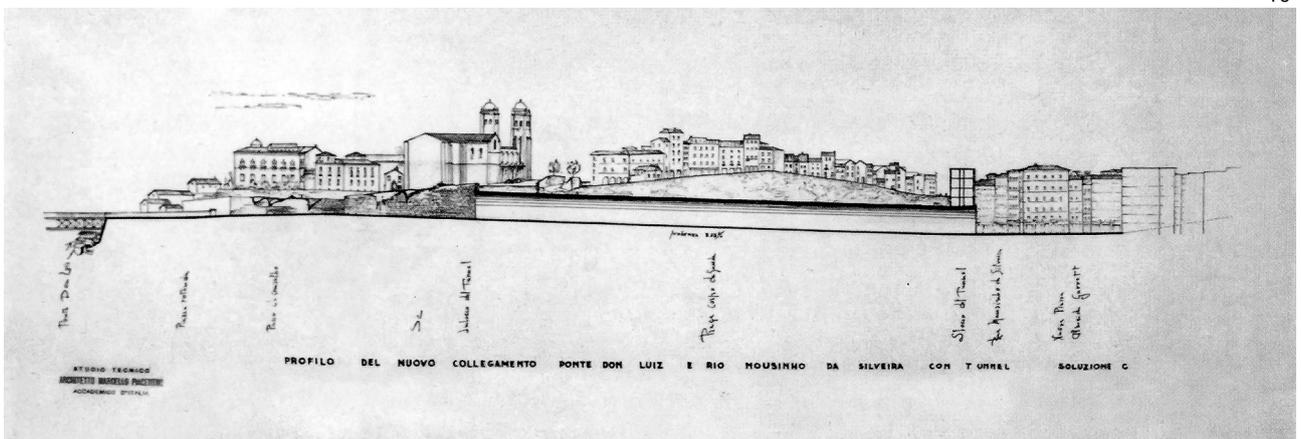
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Fig. 17

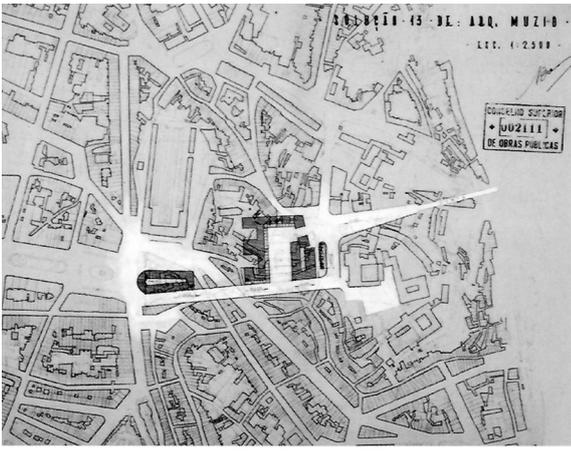
Marcello Piacentini, Avenida Ponte, 1939, plant variant C.

Fig. 18

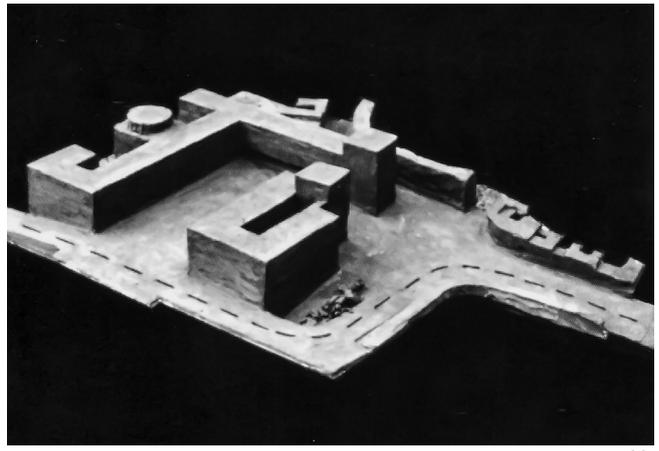
Marcello Piacentini, Avenida Ponte, 1939, plant variant D.



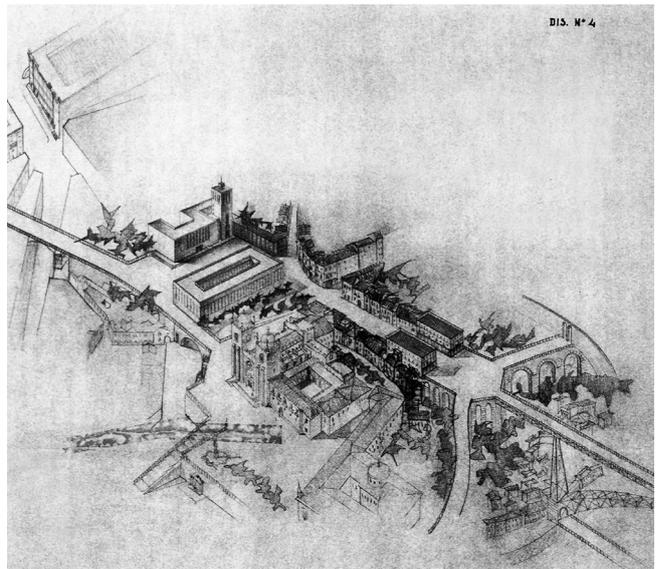
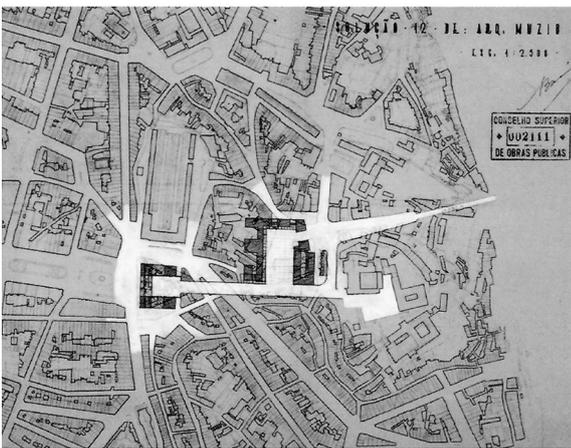
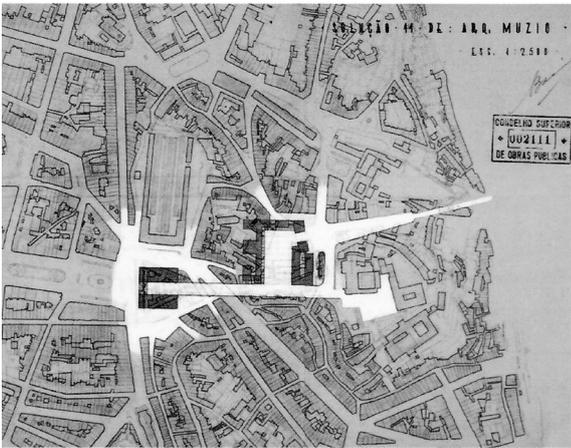
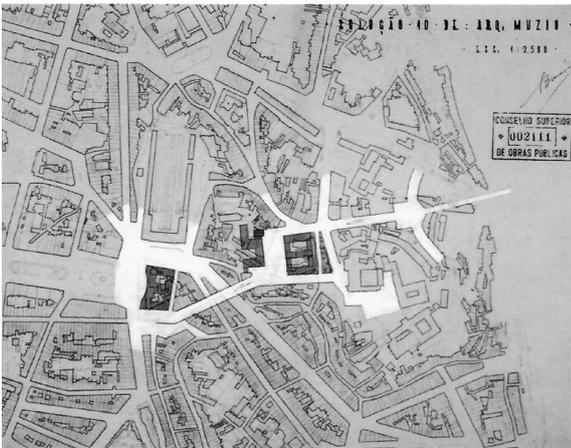
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Fig. 19

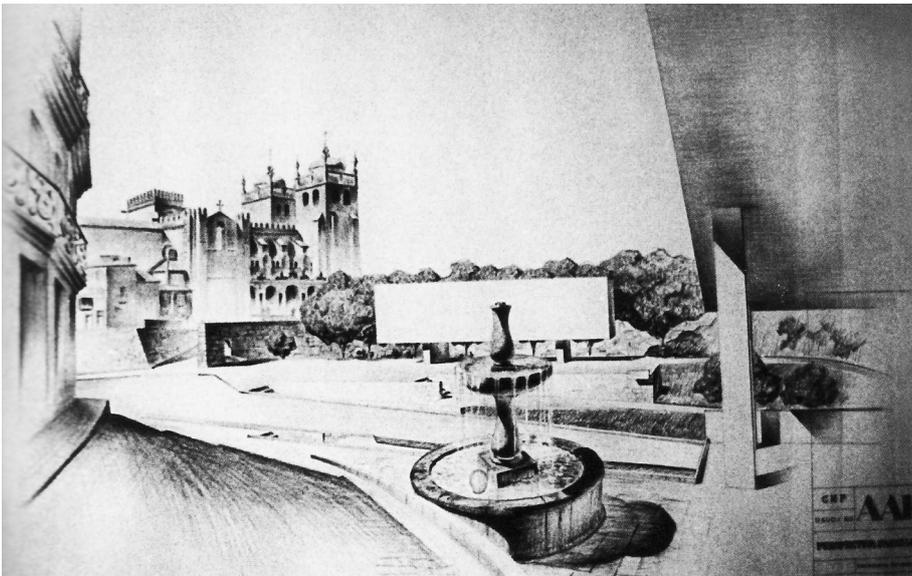
Giovanni Muzio, 1940, Avenida da Ponte, 1940, plan variants A, B, C and D.

Fig. 20

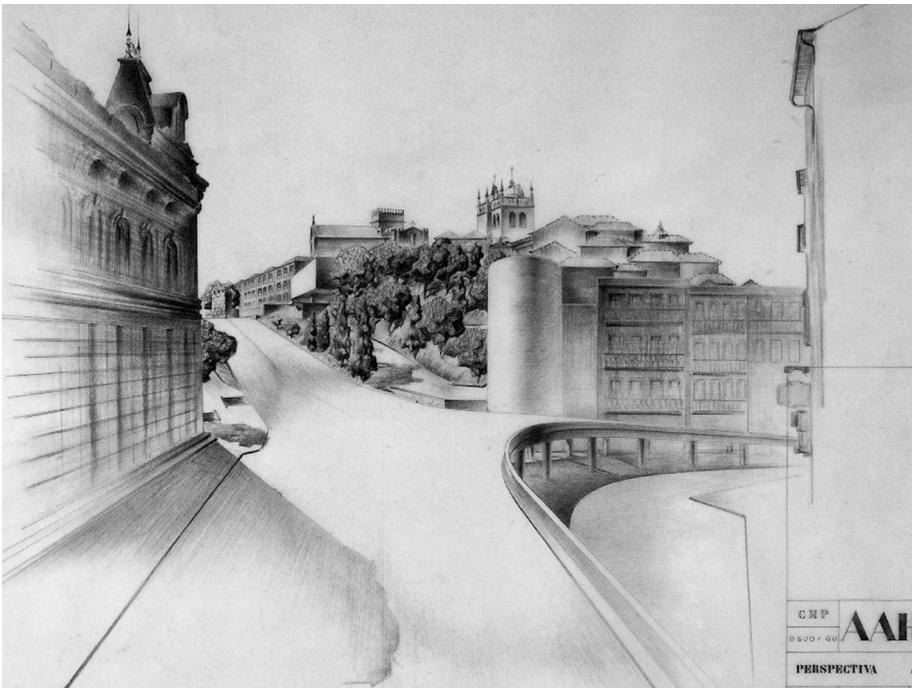
Giovanni Muzio, Avenida da Ponte, 1940, plant variant C.

Fig. 21

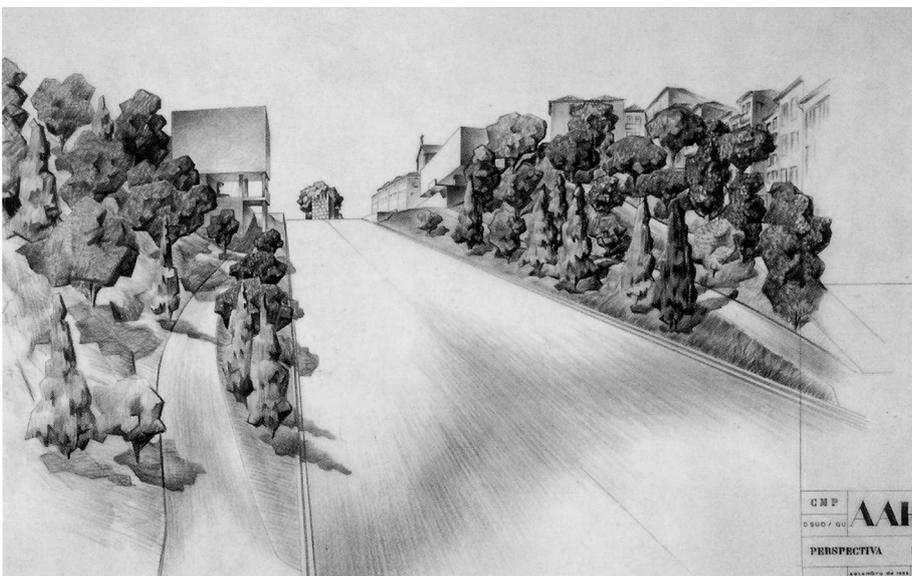
Giovanni Muzio, Avenida da Ponte, plant variant E.



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Fig. 22
Fernando Távora, Avenida da Ponte, 1955, perspective view (by Guveia Portuense).

Fig. 23, 24
Fernando Távora, Avenida da Ponte, 1955, perspective views.

Thus, the task passed to the French functionalist architect and urban planner Robert Auzelle in 1955, who surrounded himself with young local architects with whom he analysed the orographic-functional conditions and developed various projects. Prominent among these is the solution adopted by Luís Cunha³ (1962), whose 'Z' shaped building fills the urban void, as Alvaro Siza puts it, in a "somewhat schematic but intelligent way".⁴ The building mends the fabric and organises the road network in and out of the city, making the promenade architecturale more interesting [Fig. 25].

None of the plans produced by the group were approved, so Auzelle entrusted the task to the architect Alvaro Siza, then aged 33, who realised that the various projects were rejected by IPPAR, the equivalent of the Superintendency of Architectural and Artistic Heritage, precisely because they envisaged elevated viaducts and/or built-up volumes that would hide the view of the Cathedral from the S. Bento Station. The only possible way to avoid further criticism is therefore to envisage a single 10-storey building with parking on the rocky relief to the east, and to allocate the rest of the area to public greenery.

The intervention is not mimetic but follows the modern attitude by imposing its presence.

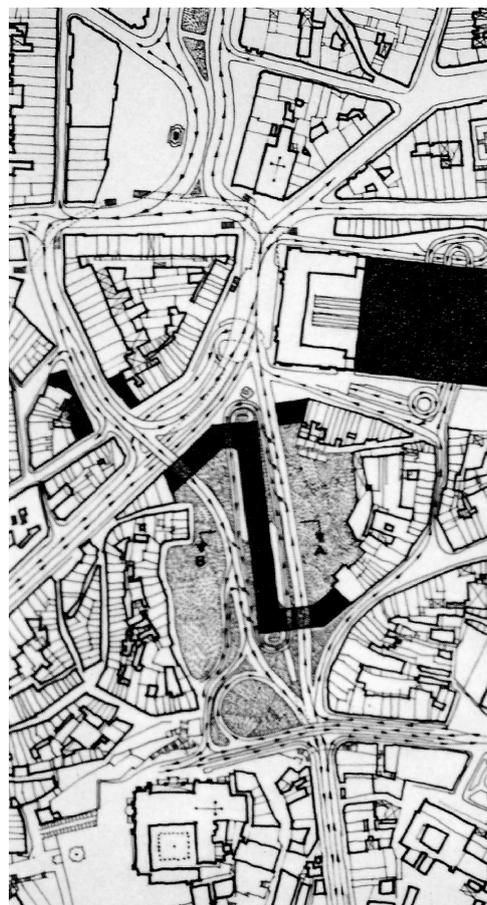
The façade of the building is entirely clad in mirrored glass to reflect the urban wound and emphasise the great violence suffered by the city. Siza thus establishes a relationship with a historical fact through the visual link between real and virtual image.

Siza does not propose an incorporation of the old, but a coexistence that allows the identity of each element to be maintained. Unity is given by juxtaposition.

It was only years later that Siza relied on "regulating layouts that emerge from the accidents of a cadastral history, from the geometry of subdivisions, or from the remains of walls that constitute a kind of archaeological plan on which new buildings are implanted".⁵

Thus, this project avoids the introduction of elevated viaducts and solves the circulation with a one-way system around the S. Bento station [Fig. 26, 27].

Siza's project was delivered immediately after the 1974 Carnation Revolution and the political upheaval caused a stalemate in Portugal that did not allow work to continue. This plan also failed to come to fruition, and in the following years municipal markets were built one after the other on the slope to the west



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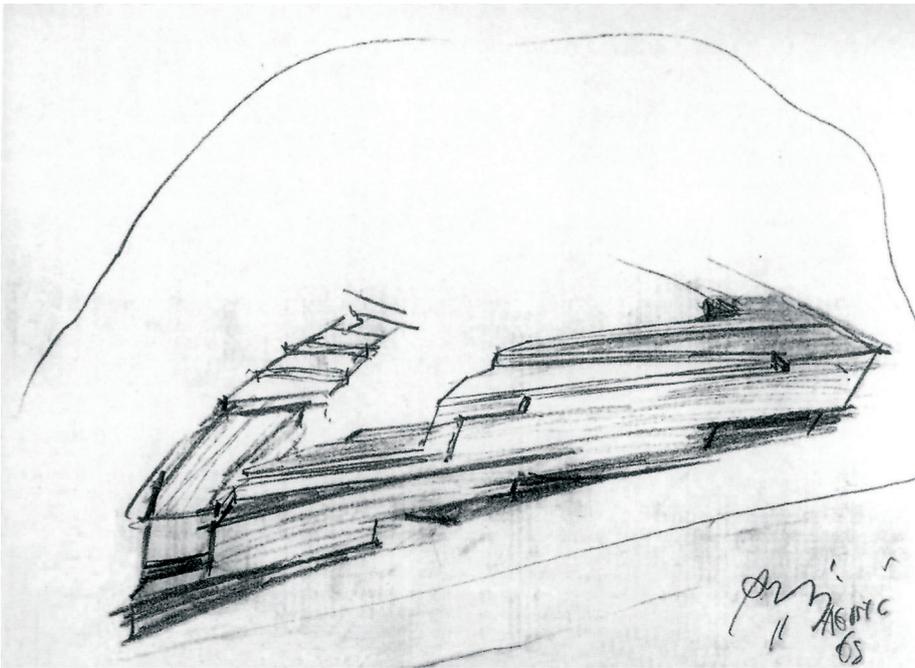
³ Luís Cunha (1933-2019), Porto architect, professor of Urbanism, at the time of the Auzelle Plan within the city's Urban Planning Department.

⁴ From an interview with Álvaro Siza in his studio in Porto conducted by the author (7 July 2007).

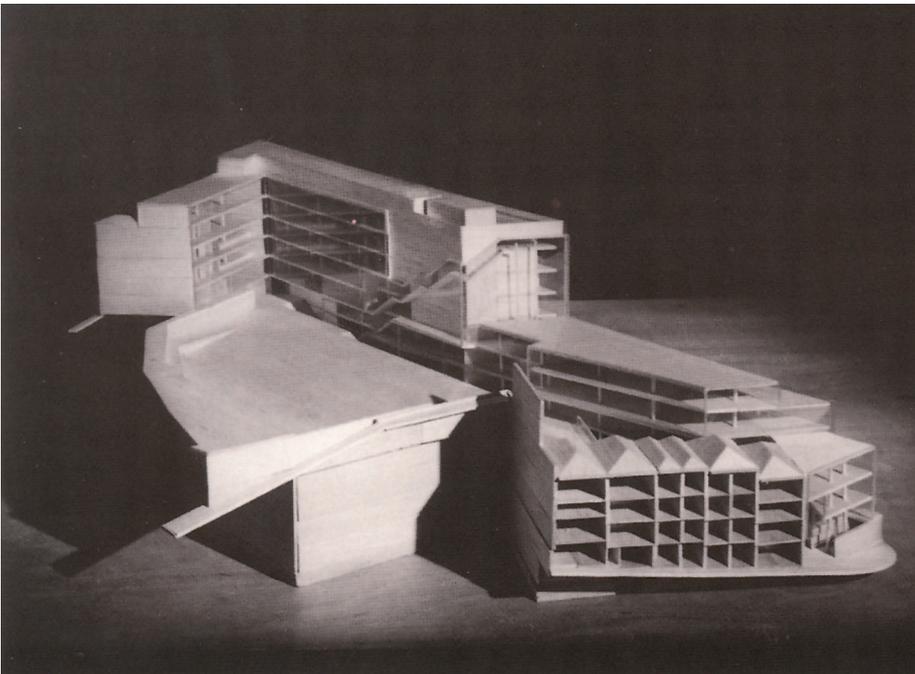
⁵ From an interview with Álvaro Siza in his studio in Porto conducted by the author (7 July 2007).

Fig. 25

Luís Cunha, Avenida da Ponte, 1962, planimetry.



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of the Avenida, which due to their size and the logic of the intervention failed to make sense of the area.

In 2000, after almost 30 years, Siza was once again in charge of the design of the area, which is practically unaltered and can therefore redesign it in the light of the city's changing conditions and current architectural theories.

Siza realises that the "foundation stone of his own plan" is already present in his master's design for the reconstruction of Casa dos 24, as readable in the project report.

Távora, with the tower project of 1995, resolves old urban planning issues. He understands the importance both historically and physically of the building,

Fig. 26-27

Alvaro Siza, Avenida da Ponte, 1962, sketch plan and maquette.

which is not only a memory of civil power as opposed to that of the city's bishop, but also the only immediate possibility of reconnecting the Cathedral with the historic urban fabric, the only way to give Porto, a medieval city, proportionate spaces, and volumes once again.

Siza understands and makes these arguments his own, and accepts the Avenida da Ponte as a historical fact on a par with the other elements of the area and the political and social context [Fig. 28, 29, 30].

Távora's and Siza's projects both contribute "to the reintegration of the Cathedral Hill into the historic centre, based on the study of the city's evolution and its small and large transformations, using historical documents, observing direct or indirect testimonies recorded in the area, and articulating this study with what is now a project".⁶

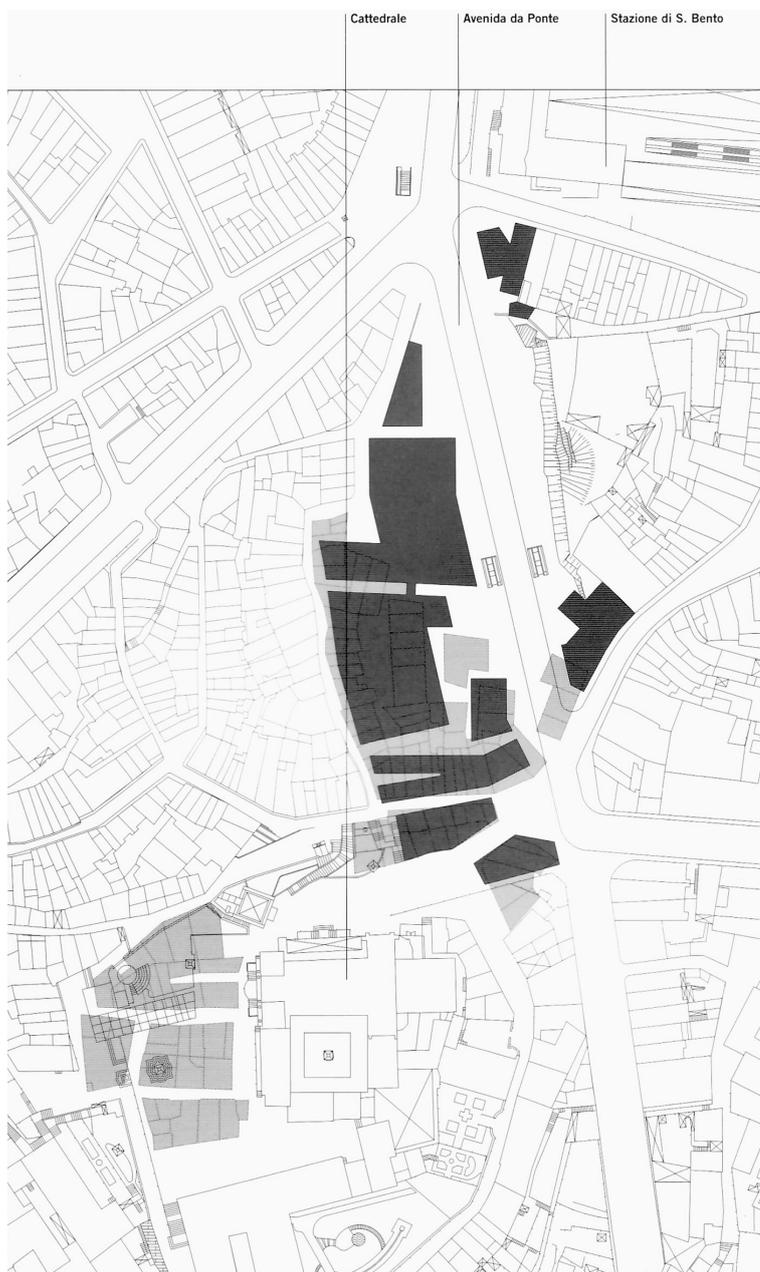
The two architects' approach to history is dialectical.

Archaeological analysis is the basis on which to develop a critique and a current response to the current needs of the place, hence of the city.

Siza's project allows, without historicism and without denying the needs of a contemporary city, the complex coexistence of architectural expressions from different epochs, amalgamating them through the 'spirit of place'. Siza thus assumes the modern Tavorian attitude. He uses all the means that his time makes available, considers all current issues, and produces a functional space in the broadest sense: of service to human sensibility.

He connects the new volumes with the torn urban fabric; he recovers, when useful, the historical layouts of the buildings existing before the demolitions of the 1930s; he regains the lost scale of this part of the city by producing paths in which solids and voids alternate; he proposes volumetric responses to the planimetric and typological rules of Porto.

Siza's project, therefore, stems from the history of the place and provides an interpretation of the city's values.

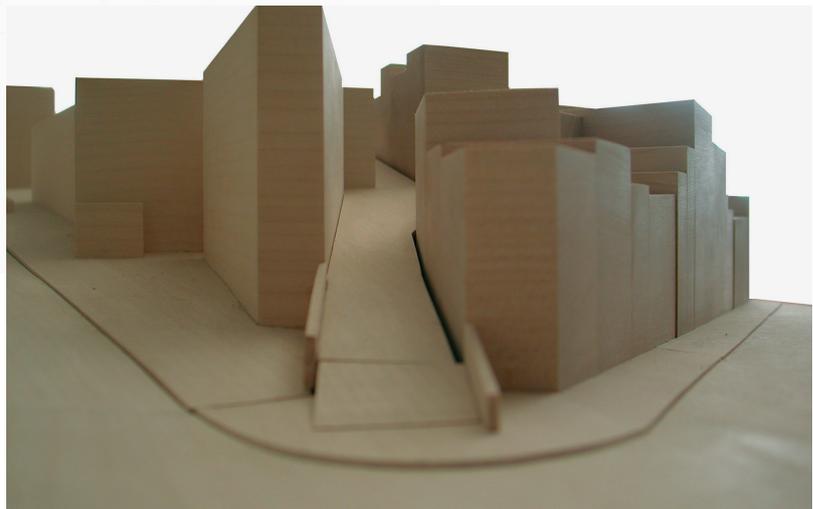
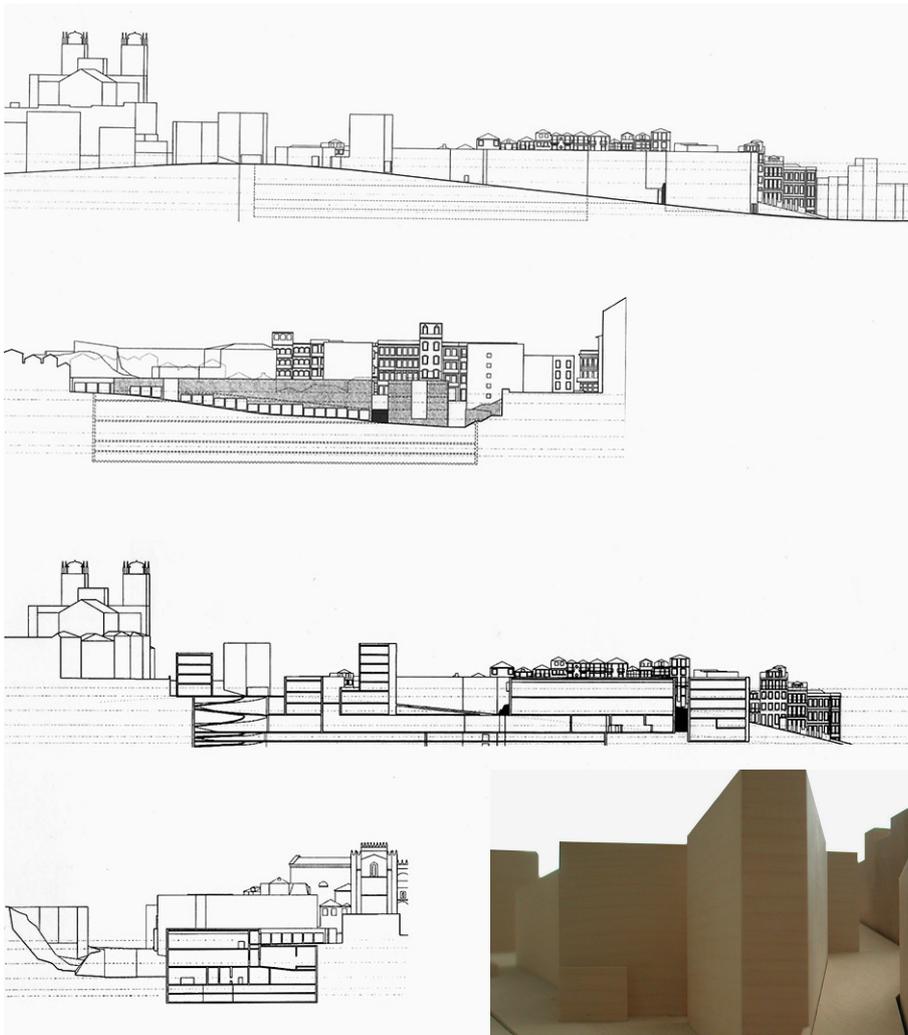


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Fig. 25

Alvaro Siza, Avenida da Ponte, 2001, planimetry.

⁶ From the project report by Álvaro Siza; see also: Manuel Graça Dias, *30 EXEMPLOS. Arquitectura Portuguesa no Virar do sec. XX* (Lisbon: Relógio d'Água Editores, 2004).



Távora's 1955 plan is drawn up at a time when CIAM's reflections were entering Portugal, producing in Portuguese architects, and in Távora himself who participated in it, a greater awareness of modernity, but also of its limits. Távora's aim is therefore to contextualize in order to give architecture its own, local, specific meaning. On the one hand he respects the indications of the Athens Charter, which requires the city to be equipped with large green spaces and efficient communication routes, and on the other hand he exposes the city's wound, thus telling its history, and provides new volumes that solve the problem of interrupted block corners and declare the modern intervention by seeking continuity with the ancient.

Siza's 2000 project, in comparison with the previous one of 1968, can develop a "real" physical-volumetric relationship with the context and history because now, as he writes in the project report, "it is no longer the time for demolitions to 'liberate' the monument, almost always betraying its character and emptying the urban space of meaning".

Thus it establishes deeper links with the lost spirit of the place: he proposes, with new volumes that fill the urban void, volumetric relations and visual

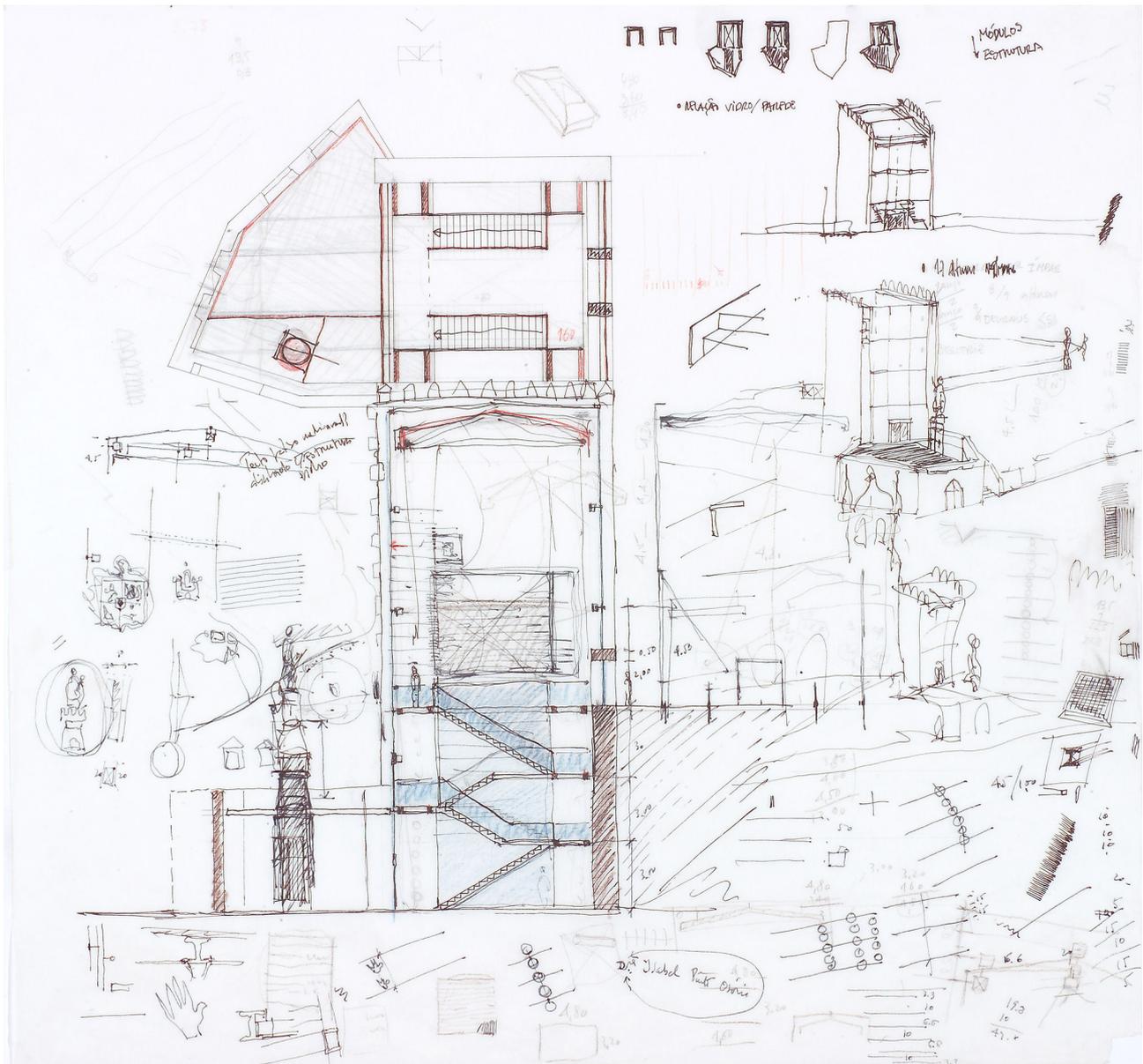
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Fig. 29

Alvaro Siza, Avenida da Ponte, 2001, section.

Fig. 30

Alvaro Siza, Avenida da Ponte, 2001, maquette.



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The transformations and plans that have taken place in the Avenida da Ponte area are the result of social changes and political ambitions. The sense of the work of Távora, Siza and Souto de Moura, who recently with Siza himself redesigned and reduced Avenida dos Aliados to the minimum, is precisely this: the recovery of the 'spirit of the place', hence of the city of Porto, and the dynamic sense of local history [Fig. 31, 32].

The Context, the Malleable "Matter" of Porto

For Távora and the architects of the School of Porto, each project is the result of a narrative and continuation of the same. A tale that begins with the description of a place understood as a living organism made up of a physical body with its own characteristics and a soul expressed by the people who inhabit it and transform it over time. The form of the project, therefore, is a response to life.

The first methodological step is to understand the essence of the city.

A granite city of accentuated relief, Porto's life and image have been marked throughout its history by four main mountainous reliefs around a fragile waterway; the reliefs of Sé (or Pentaventosa), Batalha, Olival, and Trindade. Its importance is measured not only by its physical and visual presence but also, by its symbolic value as places always sought and contested by power for their location.⁸

The anonymous architecture of the area, anonymous as opposed to the 'authorial' architecture so abundant, also called accompanying architecture, seems to us on the whole of good quality and clearly 'portuense'... and constitutes a beautiful architectural background for the Torre dos Clerigos... We believe that the presence of such anonymous architecture is efficient in its function of framing buildings of greater name and presence.⁹

This is how Fernando Távora describes the city in a report for a competition project for area West A in Porto. With just a few lines, relevant and local contents are identified and expressed. The orographic, socio-political, symbolic, and physical conditions of a city composed of elements arranged in a clear hierarchical order, and therefore necessary to each other.

Above all, however, Távora recognises a fundamental character of Porto, to be maintained and enhanced, and indicates the need for an urban balance, a continuous tension between its elements, fullness and emptiness, and physical and meaningful surges.

The 'characters' of the city, its significant elements, are revealed to the passer-by in a slow and sometimes sudden manner, through controlled traces and clear, limited perspectives.

The city possesses its own rhythm and time for observing urban spaces, offering an image that is never dispersive, in which man himself, the user, becomes the unit of measurement of space.

We expect the same principles to underpin the project for the reconstruction of the Casa dos 24.

The Tower's Past – The 'Archaeological' Study

Archival research provides Távora with a set of elements that, through critical analysis and selection, build the operational grid and produce a rule to follow within which the architect disappears, is annulled.

It is known that the building was there as early as 1330 and that it had been destroyed and rebuilt several times over the centuries. It had a height of 100

⁸ Manuel Mendes, ed., *Porto 2001: Regresso a Baixa, consulta para a requalificação da Baixa Portuense* (Porto: FAUP, 2000), 58. The quoted text is signed by Fernando Távora's team.

⁹ Mendes, *Porto 2001: Regresso a Baixa, consulta para a requalificação da Baixa Portuense*. With "authorial architecture" Távora refers to the institutional buildings present including the Church and the Torre dos Clerigos, the former Prisons, now the Museum of Photography, and the Faculty of Humanities.

palms and consisted mainly of two rooms. The first at the top, with access from the Cathedral Churchyard, was the hall for meetings of the Professional Orders, and the second at the bottom, with access from the street, was for public hearings.

It was the seat of the municipality, albeit with interruptions, “from the mid-15th century to 1784”.¹⁰ The Senate met there until the end of the 18th century, but the building, by then in ruins, was abandoned and used as a warehouse, thus losing its former prestige. It is then destroyed by fire in the 19th century.

The construction of this municipal building, only six metres from the Cathedral, was therefore always intended to reaffirm Royal power over the power of the Curia of Porto, and this is emphasised by Távora, who in his report to the project recalls that the tower is the first great symbol of civic power in the city; it is the site of the first institution.

Given that the building has been a place and representation of municipal power, the project proposes to transform it into a memorial of the long years of life and history of the city of Porto, through the creation of an architectural object that evokes the existing tower, in dialogue with the remaining buildings of the Cathedral and the current Historical Archive [the medieval tower reconstructed by Rogerio de Azevedo], possessing an interior space capable of moving its visitors by reminding them of such a glorious past.

The project assumes that the access through the Calçada de Vandoma will be ‘remodelled’ and that the entire area around the memorial will be redesigned to honour the most noble place in the city of Porto, in accordance with the project for the Avenida da Ponte by architect Álvaro Siza Vieira.¹¹

So, the reconstruction of the Civic Tower is for Távora first and foremost a commemorative act.

The State of the Ruin

The Tower, at the time of Távora’s commissioning, is a ruin without a roof, showing only the lower part of the perimeter walls [Fig. 33, 34, 35, 36]. The outline on the ground and the little archival information do not allow us to understand the shape of the original volume. What is certain is the consistency of the 3 septa embedded in the relief of the churchyard.

There is also an external, public staircase that leads from the street level to the upper level and points towards the Nasoni loggia.

¹⁰ rturo de Magalhães Basto, *A Sé do Porto. Documentos inéditos relativos à sua Igreja*, vol. II, (Porto: Edition Maranus, 1940), 269-271. See also archive documents: A.H.M.P., Índice Geral, N.2398 – Livro das Vistorias ou Vistos 1781, fl.41v°.

¹¹ Fernando Távora, from the report of the project (February 1996).



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Fig. 33, 34
Porto 1995, photographic survey (photo by Carlos Martins).



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Fig. 35, 36

Porto 1995, photographic survey (photo by Carlos Martins).

Humility and the strength of the project – The Távora method

Távora's objective is to regain the 'spirit of place' by representing the symbolic value of the opposition between civil and ecclesiastical power and physically reuniting the fabric of the city to restore its lost urban morphology.

The architect is asked to work with humility, listening to and respecting the building, but also treating it decisively because it cannot fail to show its strength.

The main objective of a modern intervention is the liberation of the meanings of the place; and "pre-existences are no longer reused as a datum, but before that they are the very matter of the method".¹²

The new building must also take responsibility for its own presence, and to do this it must find absolute rules that guarantee it will not be challenged.

"The more general, the more specific", the maxim often expressed by Távora, also and especially applies here. The rule of the palm, which Távora 'finds' and believes he can use profitably, establishes an absolute physical-temporal relationship that has to do with the specific place, and which finds analogies in other places and times.

It is man who establishes the rules of the place, verifies them, and then re-proposes them if he sees fit. So does Távora, following a 'natural' law [Fig. 37, 38].



38

Memory and the Characters of Urban Composition

Távora speaks of the need to introduce "a new reading of the most noble place in the city".

The evocation of time takes place through the co-presence of the Cathedral, the Nasoni loggia, the towers, the historical archive tower, the equestrian statue of Vimara Peres, the Pelourinho, a column reaffirming civil power, the tombstone of the Crusaders gathered there by King Don Afonso Henriques, and the small chapel in the street of S. Sebastiao.

With his intervention, Távora adds to these elements the new tower, a reconstruction of the old Palace of the Council of the Municipality of Porto, with a coat of arms of the city that reinforces its identity.

Fig. 37

Fernando Távora, Casa dos 24, Porto 1995, Planimetry on a scale of 1:500 with the lines highlighting the relationship between the salient elements of the urban scene; the project envisages the modification of the access routes from Avenida da Ponte with the meticulous annotation of the altimetrical heights; the following are shown in a more marked line the remains of the Primitive Walls (with the reconstructive hypothesis of part of the route in a dotted line), the equestrian statue of Vimara Peres in the arrangement by Carlos Ramos, the Pelourinho do Porto, the tower by Rogério de Azevedo (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 38

Fernando Távora, Casa dos 24, Porto 1995, maquette.

¹² Manuel Graça Dias, *30 Exemplos. Arquitectura Portuguesa no Virar do Seculo XX*, (Religio D'Agua Editores, 2004): 188.



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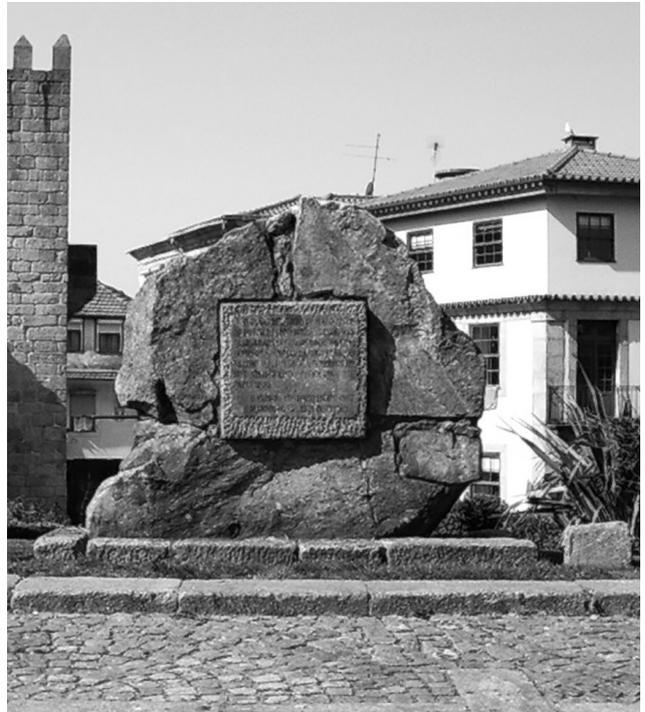
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Entering the building, closed in plan on three sides, one is surprised by the proximity of the statue of a Greek warrior, with a dragon on his head, placed just beyond the large glass window. This statue, called 'Porto', an allegory of the city itself, symbolically protects the medieval urban fabric, in the background, and the Torre dos Clerigos, an icon of Porto since its construction. The new building, therefore, through the large window is proposed as a physical and temporal binding element of memories of the city.

From the inside of the tower, on the right side for those entering through the churchyard door, one can see, on the granite facing blocks beyond the glass window, the bas-relief design of one palm for every 10 palms of height, a further historical reference that reveals the construction rule of the new building and recalls the original height of 100 palms.

Also on the south-east front, above the entrance door from the churchyard, is the inscription that has appeared on the coat of arms of the city of Porto since 1834: *ANTIGA MUI NOBRE SEMPRE LEAL E INVICTA CIDADE DO PORTO* [Fig. 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48].

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Fig. 39

Fernando Távora, Casa dos 24 and, loggia Nasoni calcada and Knight, Porto 1995, (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 40

Fernando Távora, Casa dos 24 and Cathedral, Porto 1995, (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 41

Don Pedro Memorial Stone on Churtyard (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 42

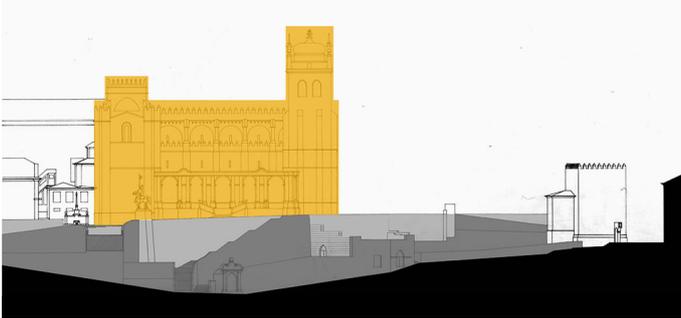
Chapel in S. Sebastiao street (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 43

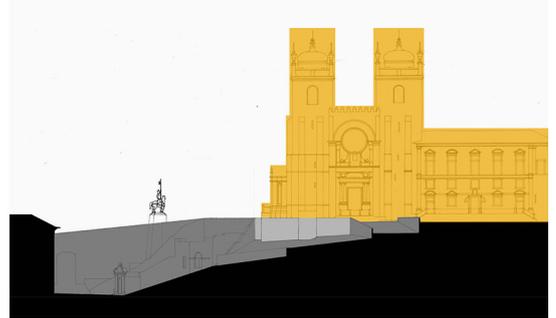
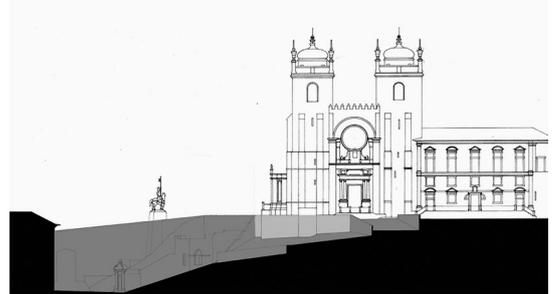
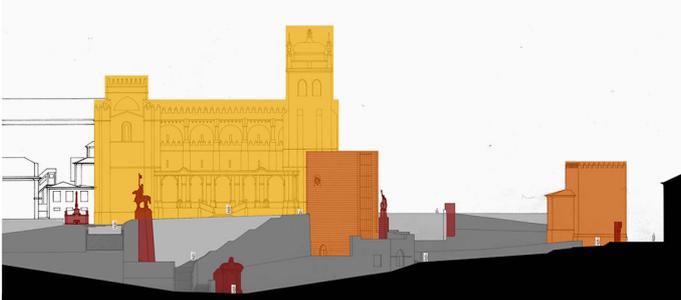
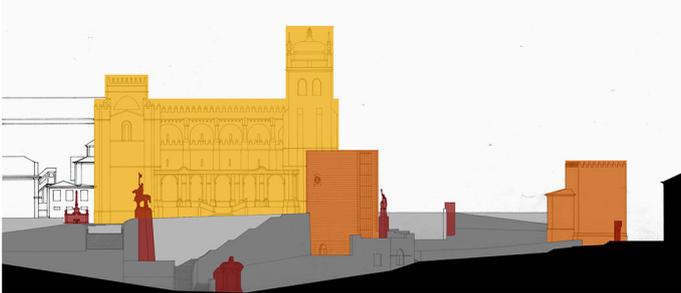
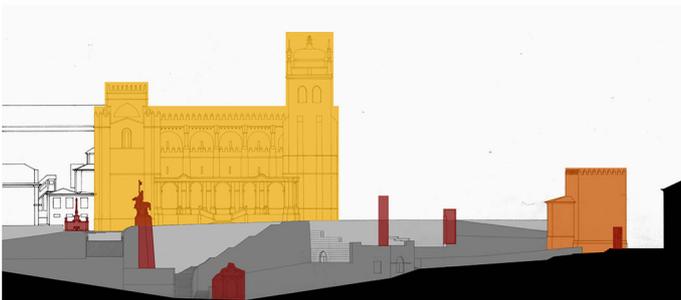
Fernando Távora, Casa dos 24, Porto 1995, churchyard door inscription (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



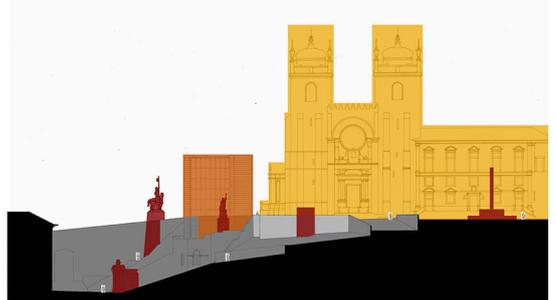
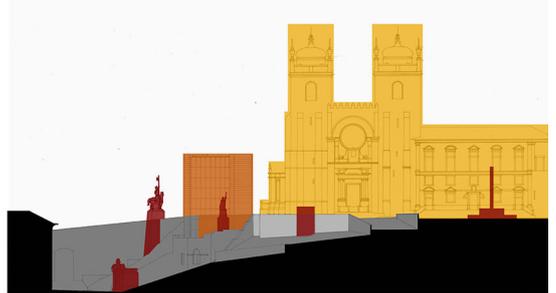
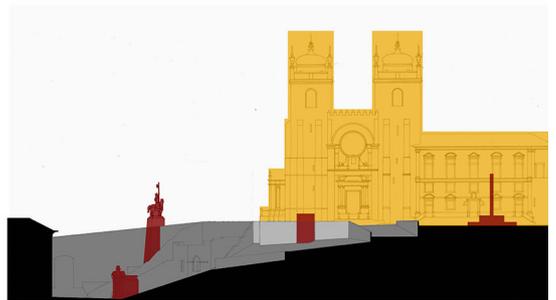
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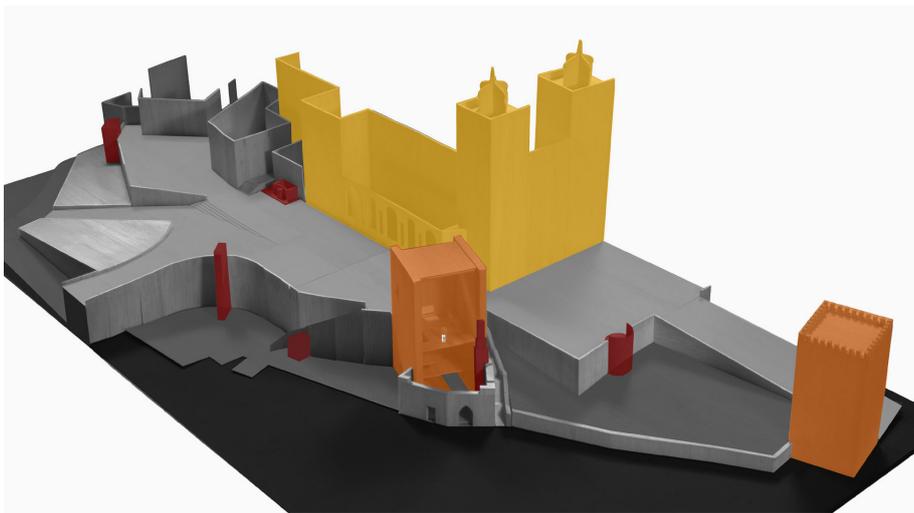


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The urban reconnection and compartmentalization of the route

The Tower with its intermediate height reunites the city with the Cathedral without detracting from its importance, rather enhancing it by contrast.

The volume of the new building also closes off certain views with the intention of compartmentalizing the route and suddenly revealing, in succession, the remarkable elements of the area. First, the Nasoni loggia, which as Távora explains is Baroque architecture that must be admired up close.

Crossing the threshold of the building at the level of the churchyard:

the glazed façade to the west will show a 'framing' of the city of Oporto with the *Torre dos Clerigos* in the background... The coffered roof in the intrados will be made of gold leaf... A statue of Porto with a masculine figure with a dragon on its head, which is currently in the *Palacio de Cristal*, will be placed in front of the glazed façade. On the north façade, a coat of arms from the last century will be placed on the palace, with Don Pedro's heart in the centre.

This is Távora's proposal, which thus seems to reinforce the memorial function he intends to confer on Casa dos 24. Thus it will be 'a beautiful thing' and more 'sacred'. The Town Hall is to be 'a place of recollection where people come in and make no noise.'¹³

The "Window" on the City's Time Frame

The tower, with three opaque sides and one totally transparent side, is a new hybrid space, at once closed and open, inside, and outside: it is a new terrace facing Porto, with a limited and controlled view, that connects different objects.

Its objective is the illustration of the city of Porto; but it is not enough to show it, it must be emphasised that it is being shown, it must be affirmed through visual contact and the evocation of memories; it must recall history, time.

¹³ Antonio Moura, "Memorial portuense na Sé", *Publico*, January 13, 1998.

Fig. 44, 45

Composition analyses by Antonio Telesforo (North view).

Fig. 46, 47

Composition analyses by Antonio Telesforo (West view).

Fig. 48

Composition analyses by Antonio Telesforo (model tower).

Távora inserts between the city and the observer a plane, an intermediate element: the statue with the name of the city: 'Portus'. The Greek warrior suddenly appears once he has crossed the threshold and confronts and intimidates the visitor, imposing his function as defender of the city. Behind him is the medieval fabric in constant transformation. In the background, to the top right, the statue of the warrior is counterbalanced by the Torre dos Clerigos, the city's icon for citizens and foreigners alike.

Távora claims he wanted to design a monument, a memorial that would excite the people, and particularly the citizen of Porto: "Portus, i.e. the statue of the Greek warrior, the coat of arms with the dragon and the castles, the inscription 'Antiga, mui Nobre sempre Leal e Invicta cidade do Porto', all contribute to this."

The tower fills a symbolic urban void, and above all asks the observer, in an 'apsidal' position, to participate. ty of Porto; but it is not enough to show it, it must be emphasised that it is being shown, it must be affirmed through visual contact and the evocation of memories; it must recall history, time.

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The tower fills a symbolic urban void, and above all asks the observer, in an 'apsidal' position, to participate [Fig. 49, 50, 51, 52].



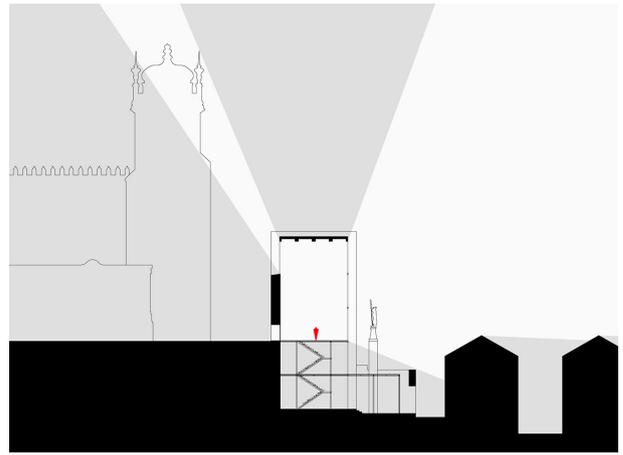
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Fig. 49

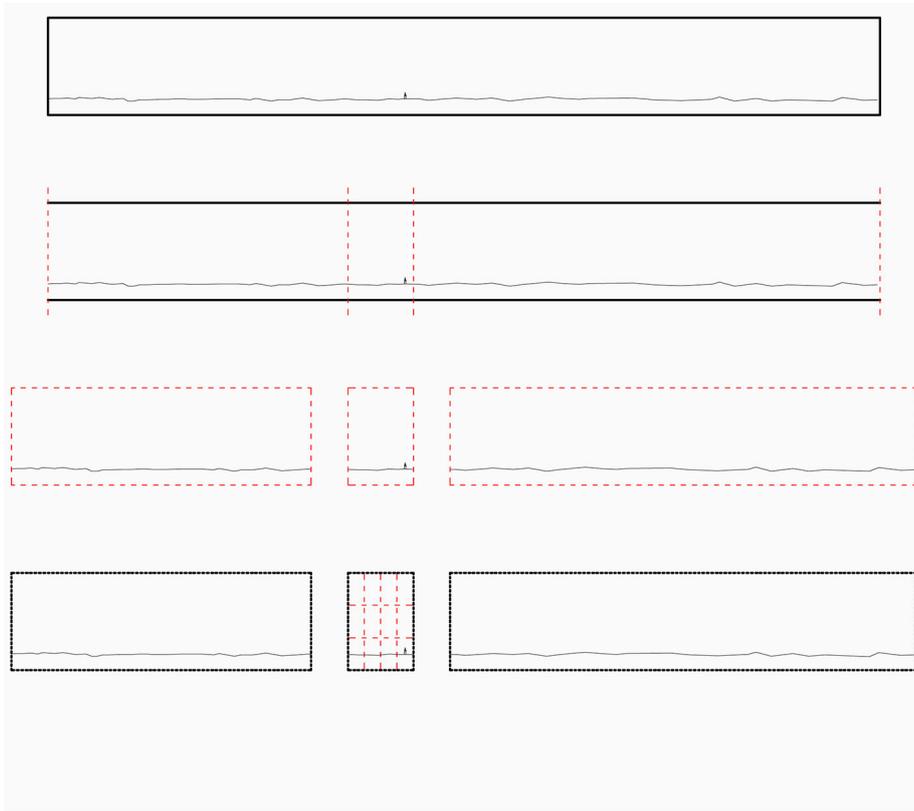
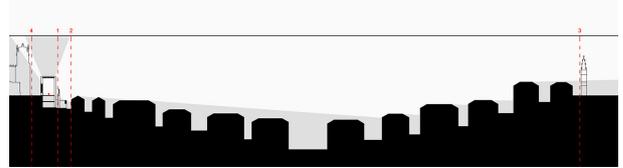
View of Porto Clerigos (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



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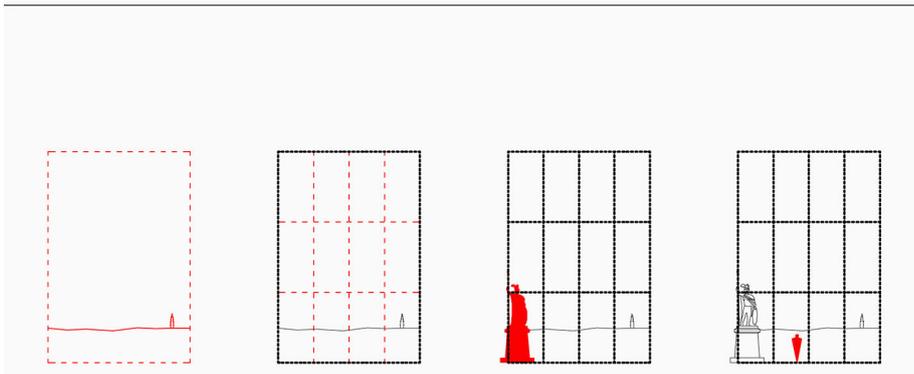


Fig. 50

Analyses views from Porto and Casa dos 24 (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2008).

Fig. 51

Analyses, views from Casa dos 24 (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2008).

Fig. 52

Analyses, views from Casa dos 24 (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2008).

The New Casa dos 24: a Window on History

The stained-glass window, together with the entire tower, is designed on the modular mesh of the palm, the unit of measurement of the ancients reused today, and becomes a virtual filter that measures space and inserts the constructive culture of the Porto man among the various characters.

The eastern side of the building, with a second stained glass window occupying only its last 20 palms of height, adds the Cathedral Sé to the narrative, displaying its north tower, and visually juxtaposes it with the gold-leafed coffered ceiling, a reminder of the illustrious past of the City's Hall of Corporations. Once again, the ancient local competition between civil power and the power of the Archbishopric is recalled.

The Rule of Construction: the Palm

Távora wanted to avoid creating a historical fake, as engineer Rogerio de Azevedo had done in the 1940s by dismantling and relocating the tower that currently stands at the base of the ramp in front of the churchyard. For Távora, as he wrote in 1952,

Modernity means the perfect integration of all the elements that can influence the realisation of any work, using all the means that can best lead to the realisation of a given end... Modernity manifests itself in the quality, in the appropriateness of the relations between the work and life.¹⁴

Archival research allows him to understand the history, reasons, and consistency of the ancient building. The survey and the archaeologists' studies provide no certain information regarding the exact volumetric conformation of the tower. The remains of the perimeter walls draw a plan with an irregular hexagonal perimeter, and the north side presents a discontinuity; therefore, it is not possible to precisely define the original perimeter of the volume, either on the ground or in elevation. Finally, the excavations do not reveal any useful information on the foundations of a possible western wall parallel to the eastern side embedded in the hill.

As mentioned above, the only certain information is the abstract measurement of 100 palms and the existence of two rooms and a storeroom. The upper room, covered with a coffered ceiling covered in gold leaf, has its floor level coplanar with that of the Sé's churchyard and the main entrance is oriented towards it; the lower room is slightly elevated with respect to the patio overlooking the street of São Sebastião; the storage room, on the other hand, is on a partially underground level.

Since the palm is not a constant measure in the history of architecture, Távora must establish its extent. The survey work shows that the difference in height

14 Fernando Távora, "O Porto e a arquitetura moderna", *Panorama*, no. 4 (1952).

on which the existing ruins stand is approximately 9.00 m, and that the eastern wall of the tower, the only one totally recessed into the hill, has almost the same measurement, 8.80 m. Since this dimension corresponds to approximately 40 palms, the architect decided to use the 22 cm palm.

The palm is considered useful for the project and becomes its rule, its generating element. All dimensions are therefore taken to its multiples: the lower room is given a height of 40 palms, while the upper room is, by subtraction from the total 100, 60 palms.

The measured external measurement of the walls is 11 metres, which corresponds exactly to 50 palms; therefore, the thickness of each of the two side walls, subtracting the 8.80 m of the internal side, is exactly 1.10 m, or 5 palms. Távora continues to use the palm also to design the new steel supporting structure and all the other elements of the project.

There is nothing mechanical about Távora's act. Starting from the palm, Távora manages to establish several physical, cultural and historical relationships; the use of this unit of measurement is considered strictly functional to the project because it is compatible with requirements of another nature.

The project is based on an ancient reference that recalls the local building tradition but never loses sight of the present moment in which the new building stands, its relationship to the urban scale, and the urban character of the medieval city prior to demolition.

Távora never works exclusively on one scale of the project, but rather thinks simultaneously on different levels. When he says, 'the more local, the more universal', he refers simultaneously to geographical, historical, cultural and constructive issues.

His sketch sheets, in this project but also in his other works, always show a co-presence of general plans, floor plans, sections and construction details. All levels must be united by the coherence of the idea. It is inevitable, therefore, that during the redrawing of a plan he dwells on a detail, and then from the detail he returns to the general. His work from the project to the building site is a continuous refinement, a continuous leap between all the various scales, a continuous verification of the reasons for the project up to the definition of the smallest detail in which the unity of the architecture must be read.

The designed building has the task of linking the past to the future by making it possible and facilitating life in the present. In this project the only physical cornerstone is, as we have said, the internal dimension of the eastern wall (8.80m) and the height difference (9.00m) on which the building stands.

This is the starting point for Távora, who defines and positions a pure volume, a parallelepiped with a square base and internal dimensions: 40 x 40 x 100 palms. The volume is structured and developed on a new virtual three-dimensional mesh with vertical and horizontal axes 10 palms, 2.20 m apart. The building builds itself, almost by itself, following its own law intimately rooted in its few remains; a law

before which the architect must bow with humility.¹⁵ This law, once discovered, can only be obeyed, and the architect is obliged to follow it and act as its guarantor. He must see to it that the conditions imposed by the site, the history, the building tradition to which the building bears witness are respected.

A new construction arises; new in terms of the moment in which it is realised, but ancient in terms of the rules that guide its realisation.

The building, according to Távora, is no longer useful architecture in the strict sense, but a monument in which the only activity to be performed is silent contemplation. "It will be 'a beautiful thing' and more 'sacred'. The 'House of the Municipality' is to be 'a place of recollection where people enter without making noise'.¹⁶

In order to follow this lofty objective, taking advantage of the absence of information on the fourth side, to the west, Távora closes the parallelepiped with a transparent diaphragm, a large glass window through which one can observe the old town with its dense urban fabric and the soaring Torre dos Clerigos on the hillside. "(The stained glass window) will offer the visitor a 'framing of Porto' with the Torre dos Clerigos and beyond".¹⁷ "Távora is thinking of two glass walls that will allow multiple views from various angles, inside and outside the House of 24".¹⁸

The total space in and around the tower thus presents a wealth of history and symbols. The building itself, the memorial, has no other function.

The theme of the uselessness of architecture is explicitly mentioned by Távora with complacency. As with the Quinta da Conceição project in Matosinhos, the building is there because it has to be there; it has to mark the presence of man and establish relations with the territory and history through the skillful application of a reworked construction technique.

The entire construction is guided by the virtual geometric mesh of the palm and the system of relationships required for the project. In section, the main reference height is given by the plane of the churchyard. From here the tower descends 40 palms and rises 60, for a total height of 100 [Fig. 53, 54, 55, 56].

15 Sotuo de Moura, about his renovation and transformation of the Convent of Santa Maria do Bouro into a pousada, recounts a conversation with Távora during a visit to the building site. The designer is perplexed by certain design choices, but the Maestro reassures him: 'see what you are about to do? You're about to destroy another monument... but the time will come when he will be in charge, and you won't have to do anything but go along with him'. Sotuo Moura later makes these words his own in a text Nexus, in which he re-proposes the concept by recalling the experience of the artist Beuys, who in 1974 lived for a week in a gallery in New York with a coyote; the animal is used as a metaphor for architecture: "To change means to follow an apprenticeship that must be slow, a serene disposition to face the rages, the moods, the energies of the animal, the 'coyote'. What you want is to tame it, to bring it to our side, and from that point follow it, because it is it that guides us. When a construction site is going well, we are not in charge, but it is he who (suggests) to us what we should do. Everything depends on a few chosen elements, few but effective, like Beuys' Coyote... Time, that counts for me... Remove the superfluous, which cannot be part of the story." (See Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni, *Eduardo Souto de Moura*. London: Phaidon, 2013). In many occasions Távora listens to the remains of the existing building in order to respond appropriately and not impositionally. Of all of them, I would point in particular to his House of Covilhã – for which he wrote a splendid text on the occasion of the publication of his monograph published by Blau and edited by A. Alves Costa, and reposed in the already quoted monograph by Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni –, and the park of the Quinta da Conceição in Matosinhos, Porto. In both cases, the project is not drawn at a desk, but is the result of long walks and reflections on site on the evolution of the project object and the small and large transformations to be made. The drawings are therefore only the transcription of decisions already made in the field.

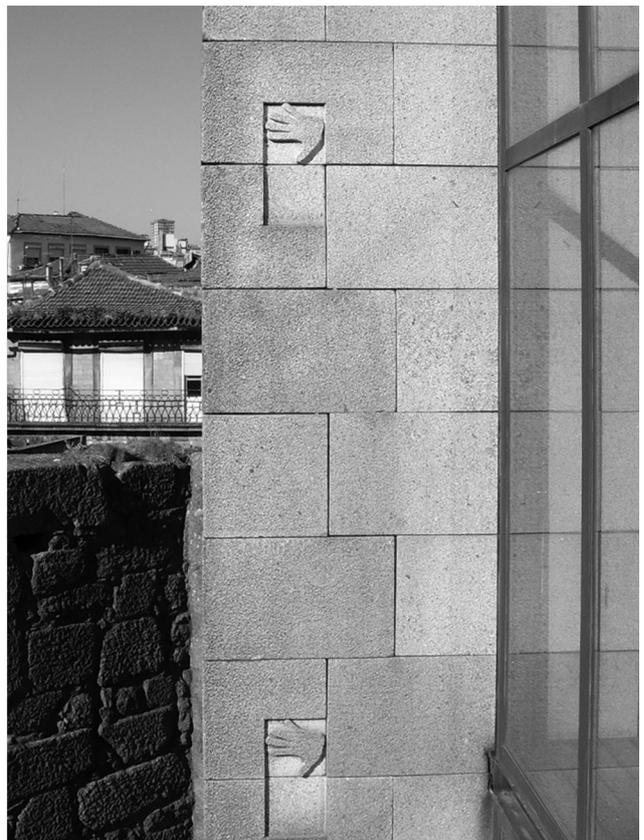
16 Fernando Távora, "Memorial Portuense na Sé", *Publico*, January, 13, 1998.

17 Távora, "Memorial Portuense na Sé".

18 Augusto Freiras de Sousa, "Távora projecta reconstrução da primeira Camara do Porto", *O primeiro de Janeiro*, April 22, 1999.



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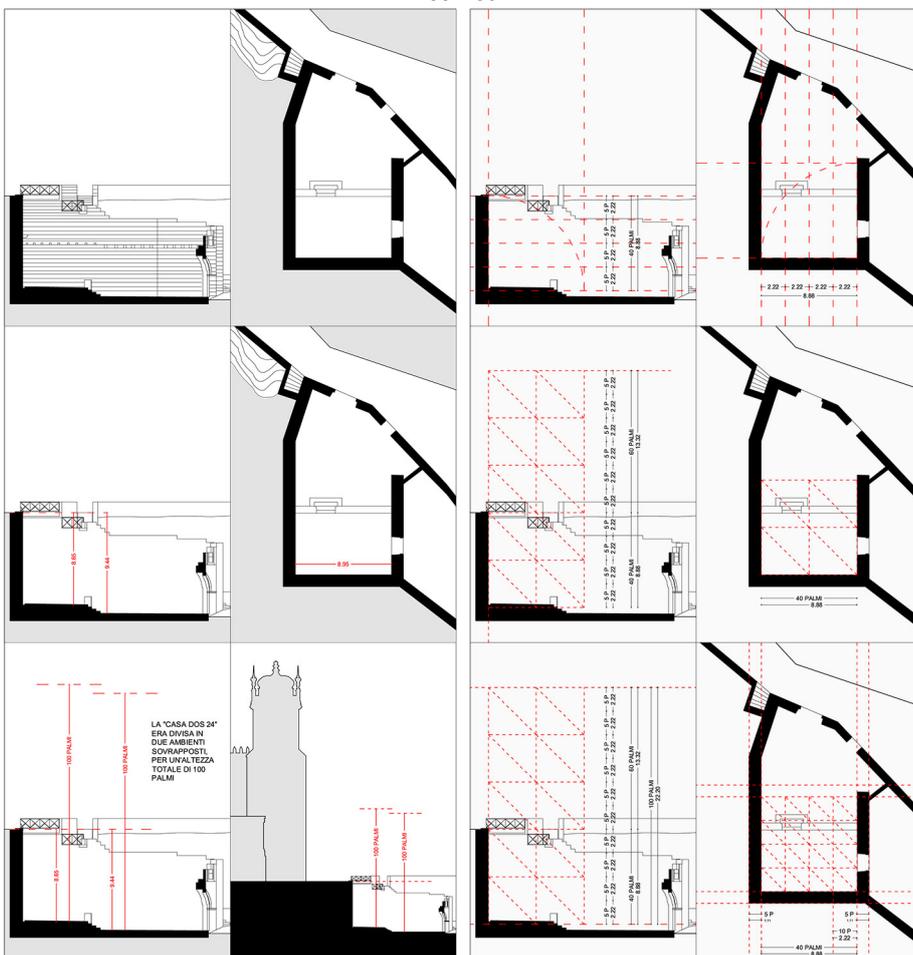


Fig. 53, 54

Casa dos 24, the palm grid (photo by Antonio Telsforo 2006)

Fig. 55

Analyses on building Survey (graphics by Antonio Telsforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 56

Analyses palm Grid (graphics by Antonio Telsforo 2005-2008).

The Palm Mesh also Defines the Structure of the New Building

The caisson of the self-supporting reinforced concrete roof with disposable metal formwork is designed on a 10 x 10-palm mesh [Fig. 57, 58, 59].

The new tower baffles consist of a reinforced concrete structure resting on and abutting the existing walls.

Starting from the pre-existing walls up to the level of the churchyard (40 palms from the lowest slab) the septa are made of solid reinforced concrete to act as a stabilizing curb. From that level, each septum continues with a thickness of 15 cm, aligned on the inner side, reinforced by vertical and horizontal ribs in axis with the mesh of the palm.

The ribs are infilled with solid brick, and insulation and granite cladding are applied.

The side walls are braced by the central wall also with ribs drawn from the reference mesh.

On the inner side of the right wall, for those entering through the churchyard door, beyond the stained-glass window, the stone blocks bear the mark of one palm every 10 palms in bas-relief. The architecture thus explains its construction rule and is measurable by the observer.

The Truth of Materials: the Sense of Gravity

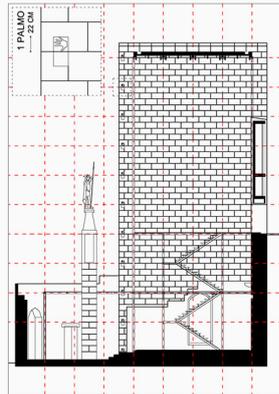
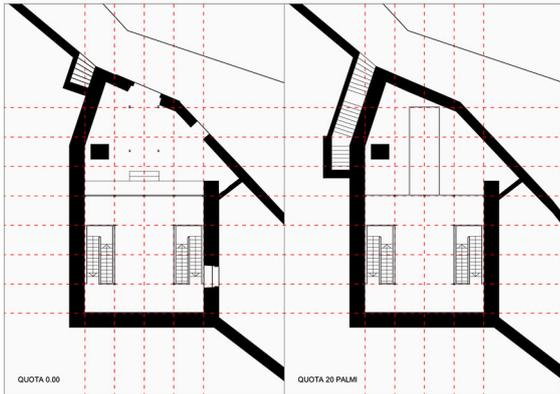
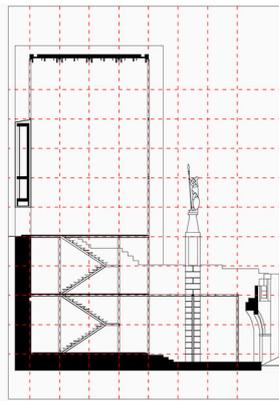
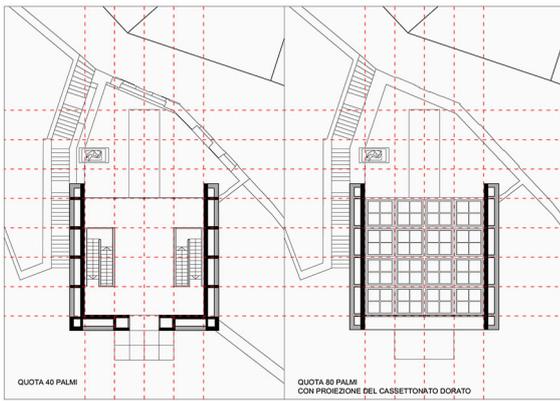
The first idea of the project consisted of a tower made of two opaque and two glass partitions. The roof was also transparent. The glazing was imagined to be made of tempered glass with a recessed supporting structure, not visible from the outside. But this hypothesis would have presented many technical problems. The beating sun would have necessitated the use of air conditioning and technology equal to that of Foster or others. This did not seem compatible with the original idea of simple architecture and construction. The building was not meant to be sophisticated.

This is how the idea of the roof matured: a roof covered with gold leaf in the soffit, an evocation of the old one, but with a design originated by the current design rule, the modular mesh in palms, and the new structure made with a steel disposable formwork.

One then opts for double-glazed windows for which very thick and conspicuous frames are required.¹⁹

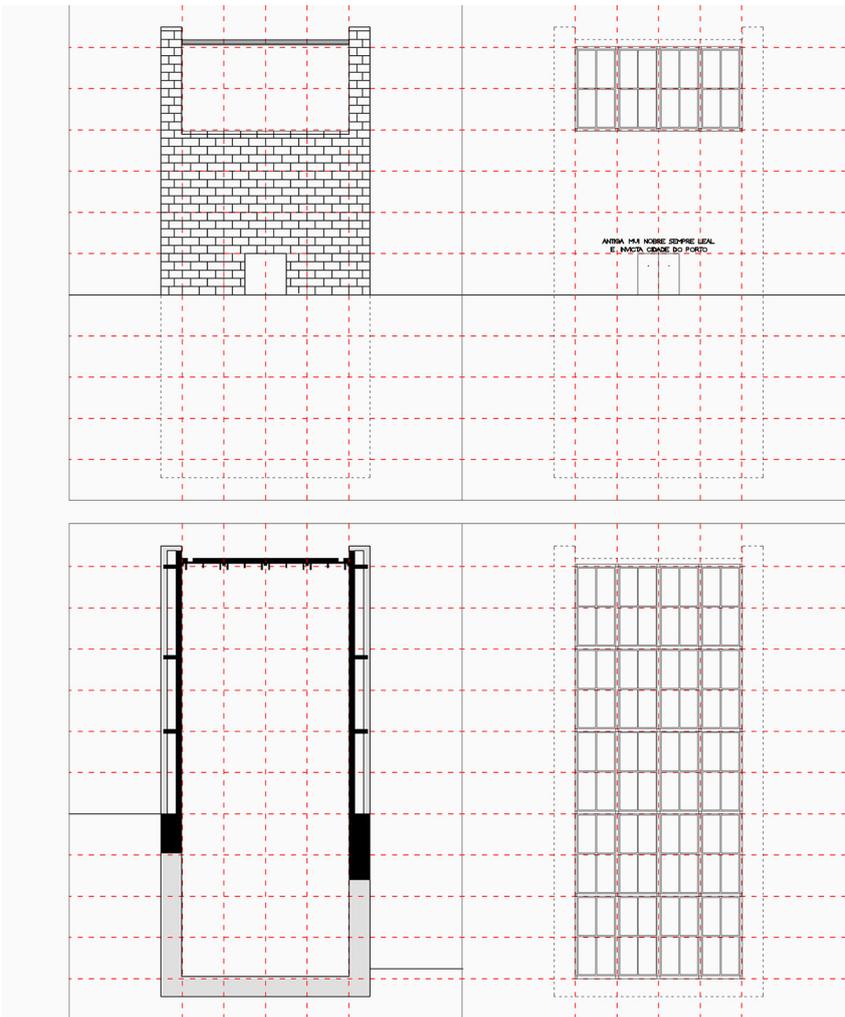
The construction once again takes on the demonstrative value of gravity and matter. As in Ofir's house (1957-58), to name but one of Távora's exemplary projects, the window frame is not denied, but rather its thickness gives weight to the transparent diaphragm, and guarantees a feeling of protection and comfort within the volume.

¹⁹ From an interview with Carlos Martins, conducted by the author in Porto (30 July 2006).



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58



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Fig. 57

Analyses palm plan (graphics by Antonio Telsforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 58

Analyses palm sections (graphics by Antonio Telsforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 59

Analyses palm facades (graphics by Antonio Telsforo 2005-2008).

It is decided to adopt double glazing for thermal reasons. But this needs frames, it can no longer flush as be assumed in the first design idea. The limit becomes a conceptual advantage; the large glass wall acquires shadows and gains density. Steel is a bit too rough for Távora, but he does not paint or finish it; he wants the material to reveal itself, to express itself: Korten steel, it wears out, corrodes [i.e. it expresses the passage of time]. For fixtures, brass is used, and for roofing, copper.²⁰

Távora does not forget time; he knows that this factor also contributes to giving an image to architecture, but above all it is the aim of architecture that, for a more or less limited time, it should accompany the life of a society: in an interview, it is Távora himself who emphasises that the window frames “with time, will have to acquire the colour of the monument to Willy Brandt, in the Avenida Marchal da Costa”.²¹

Once again, the material, with its own weight, does not produce an illusion, but is part of a construction of elements placed side by side and juxtaposed.

In his designs, Távora displays materials in their ‘natural’ colour and avoids painting them. In the *Casa dos 24*, pillars and glazing beams are made of steel, the window frames and staircase handrails are made of brass, and the roof is made of copper. The ceilings, which have no false ceiling, display their structure, also made of steel profiles, and are covered with a ‘resting’ floor made of wooden planks. The electrical connections are inserted in thin brass tubes left exposed.

With this radical use of materials, Távora describes to the user of architecture the human gestures of a slow and orderly construction by hierarchies established by the very nature of materials and their vocation in construction.

Távora wants the cladding of the tower to be the final finish. He covers the concrete with bush-hammered stone, with tight, rigorous joints, as was the case with medieval towers. But he avoids the ‘rustic’ image like that of the tower rebuilt by Rogerio de Azevedo in the 1940s.²²

So too, the ‘old’ load-bearing granite and the ‘new’ granite, which is visibly a cladding, describe the act of juxtaposing the new construction on the pre-existing one. The focus on the concept of gravity and building culture even prompts Távora to use stone spacers between the granite cladding slabs of the tower instead of the commonly used PVC ones.

The undisguised materials combine to describe the course and sedimentation of time. Architecture is designed to live and age.

Távora’s constructive attitude is a true praise of the material, its properties, the evolving construction technique, and of gravity as a natural binding force and instrument of the human act.

20 Fernando Távora in his report on the project.

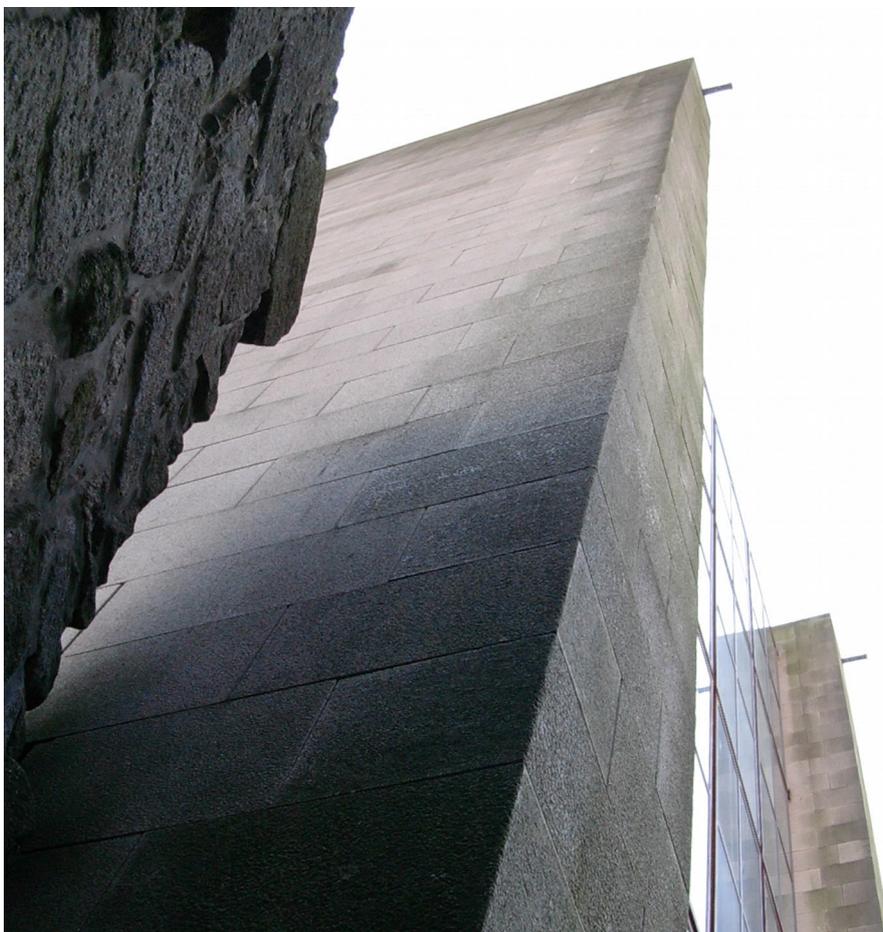
21 Távora, “Memorial Portuense na Sé”.

22 From an interview with Carlos Martins, conducted by the author in Porto (30 July 2006).



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The Casa dos 24, like the Tennis Pavilion at the Quinta da Conceição, has the function of a belvedere. It has the task of making man feel good by offering him shelter from the elements and proposing itself as a safe place in which to stop, rest, reflect. It is a place of contemplation that, by denouncing its physical solidity, brings man an intimate comfort [Fig. 60, 61, 62, 63, 64].



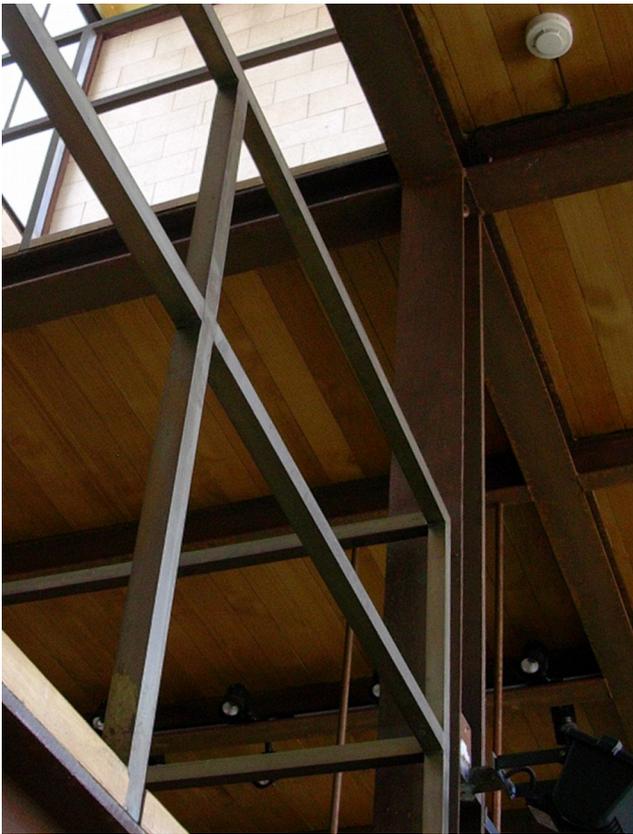
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Fig. 61

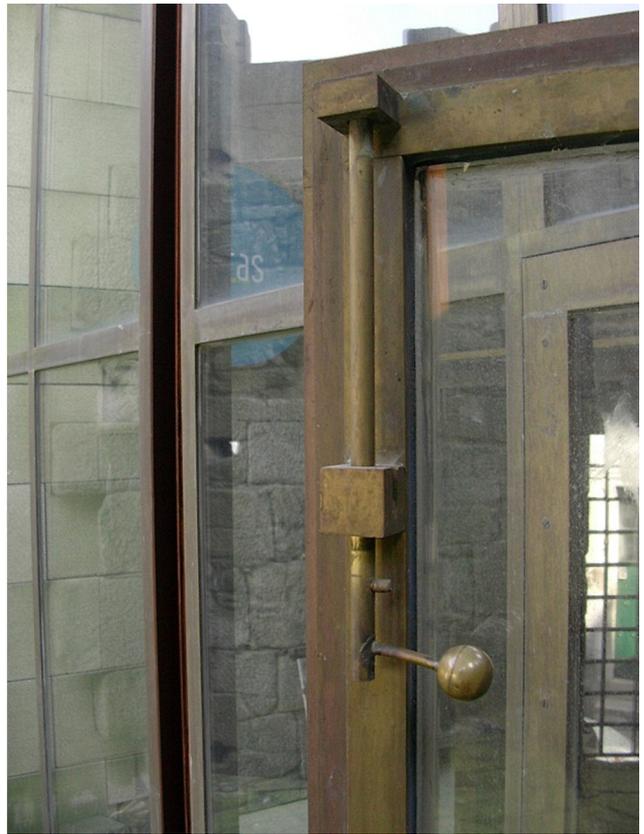
Gravity materials facade (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 62

Gravity materials granite stones (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



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Fig. 62
Materials view from lower
entrance (photo by Antonio
Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 63, 64
Material colors detail (photo by
Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

The Decor of Timeless Architecture

The modern attitude does not allow Távora to copy forms from the past that are not strictly necessary for the construction act or compatible with the economy, in a broad sense, of the work. The project is therefore devoid of gratuitous decoration.

The only formal enrichments are imposed by the significance they bring to the work: the bas-relief engraving of the palm and the phrase above the door (other inscriptions were planned inside the tower but were not realised); the coffered cover in gold leaf; the coat of arms of the City of Porto and the Greek soldier, 'Portus'.

In the first sketches, Távora also draws a crenellation for the tower, which is probably suggested to him by the commonplace 'mediaeval tower'. The same crenellation is then also shown on the corners of the 'interrupted' septa to denounce the incomplete information on the overall shape of the building. But this idea is abandoned, Távora probably considers it caricatural. Thus, once the generating rule of the project, the palm and the reference mesh, has been clarified, he realises that the septa need no further declaration of incompleteness. There are three sides, the fourth is missing.

Távora's sketch is a response to his need to give an appropriate conclusion to the tectonics of the construction, which has in the remains of the ancient walls its base, and in the 'suspended' roof its concluding element.

The tectonic aspect is also reiterated with the floor slab in the lower room, which is slightly raised above the level of the external floor.

The attack on the sky, which in medieval towers is constituted for defensive purposes by the battlements, is solved by Távora with the sole extrusion of the lateral septa, because the height of the 100 palms remains legible inside the building.

Carlos Martins reports that:

designing the coffered ceiling was very difficult. Távora wondered whether it was appropriate to take up the design of a medieval cassetonato. Discussing with engineer João Maria Sobreiro, he then felt the structural need to give mass and weight to the roof. Therefore, instead of hanging a cassetonato, a reinforced concrete slab was built with disposable steel coffered formwork, and they proceeded to give it a gold colour.²³

The coffered ceiling is the only architectural element that Távora decides to paint, because in this case there are profound reasons for him to do so.

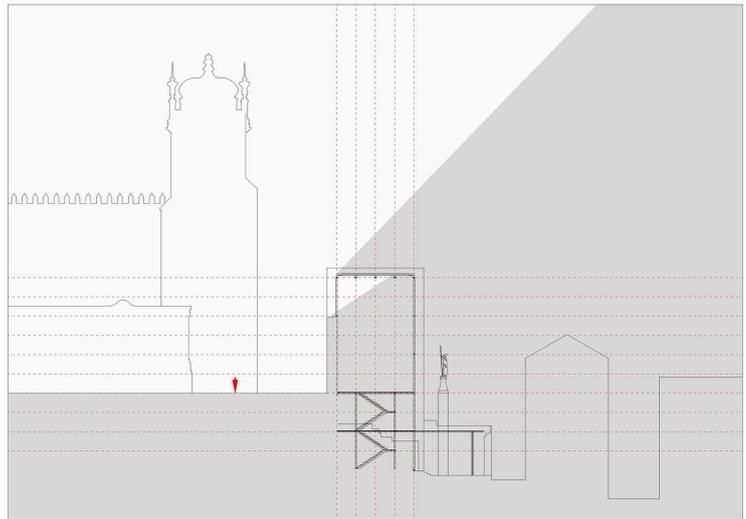
Távora does not want to affix decorative devices to the "modern" structure that would distort its reading, but the "memorial", by definition, is a symbolic place, so it is necessary to endow it with a certain "decorum". The solution of varnishing the intrados of the disposable coffered ceiling is therefore a synthesis that brings together answers to structural issues, but also to the instance of memory

²³ Fernando Távora in his report on the project.

through a recovery and transposition of the traditional practice of applying gold leaf to the artistic bas-reliefs of Portuguese churches and palaces.

Furthermore, the use of this decorative technique ensures that the new construction technology is readable.

The decoration of this architecture, therefore, is given by the simple expression of the materials and a few other elements that soberly tell its meaning [Fig. 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73].



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Fig. 65

Decoration view of ceiling outside inside (graphics by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 66

Decoration, golden ceiling (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 67

Decoration, elements (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 68

Decoration, view of ceiling (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 69

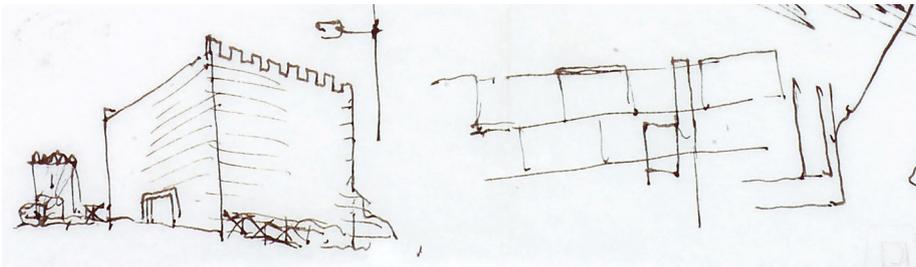
Decoration, the palm (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



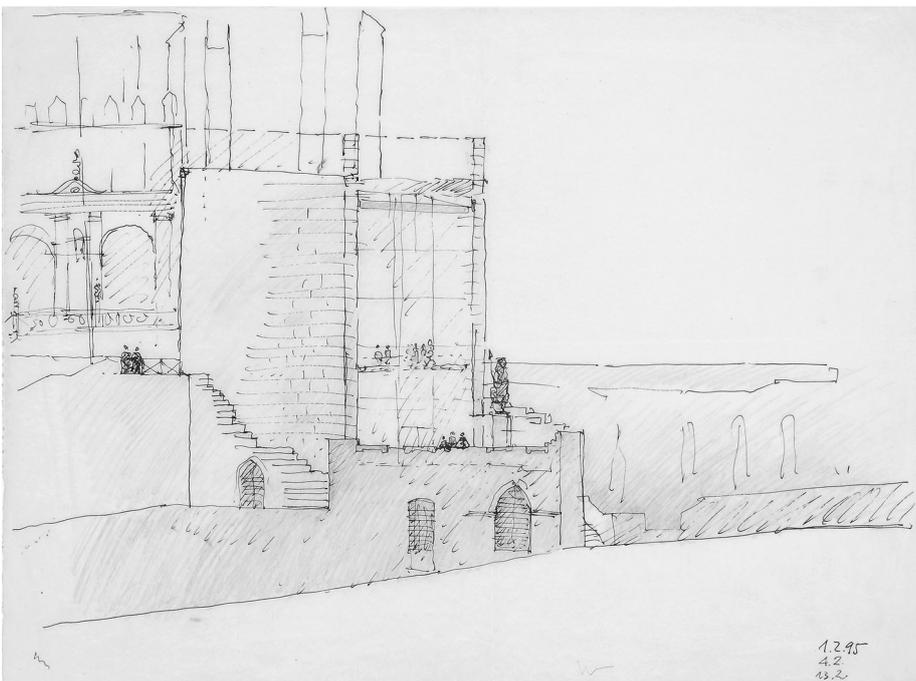
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Fig. 70

Decoration, portus the Greek soldier (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 71

Decoration gravity granite covering structure (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 72, 73

Decoration tower top sketches by Fernando Távora, 1995 (FIMS/AFT).

The following drawings, by the author, describe, through the decomposition of the elements, the analytical and compositional steps that Távora follows in the project for the reconstruction of the *Casa dos 24*.

The historic city has a void to fill.

A comparison of the floor plans of the historic city before and after the demolitions of the 1940s shows how the isolation of the cathedral makes the monument an extraneous body to the city. In its original conformation, the monastic complex dominates with its volumetric mass and its dimension is reinforced precisely by a direct and close comparison with the urban fabric. The relationships between solids and voids are thus easily mediated and measured by the presence of man, who walks through the space understanding the volumetric, functional, and representational hierarchies of architecture.

The historic *Calçada de Vandoma*, the ramp leading up to the Nasoni loggia on the north side of the cathedral, was 'constricted' between three-storey buildings, and ensured, with the variation of the street section, a slow and sequential reading of the spaces of this portuguese 'acropolis'.

They come to the observer in the following sequence: the *Largo* with the *Nasoni Loggia*, ending with the *Casa dos 24*; the *Sagrato*, accessed by crossing the narrow space between it and the Sé bell tower; a narrow street that contrasted the strength and size of the main façade of the ecclesiastical building with the low, minute façades of the dense urban fabric; and finally, the olive grove of the Archbishop's Palace, closed on three sides, but open towards the Douro river.

The Cathedral was only a few metres away from the buildings facing it; the pilgrim, or the simple traveller, was therefore severely restricted in his movements and could only observe the entire façade from a glimpse. And even the only panoramic view of the river, from the olive grove, was oriented and strongly limited by the building curtains of the monastic complex and the medieval urban fabric.

The demolitions of the 1940s produce a void that takes away the strength of a monument that no longer has the possibility of confronting the dimensions of the urban fabric. And the collapse of the *Casa dos 24*, due to static problems and lack of maintenance, accentuates its isolation and makes the space of the churchyard, with the *Largo* to the north and the olive grove to the south, a formless continuum. Under these conditions, man is too small to relate directly to the imposing building, and the space becomes disorienting.

With the reconstruction of the Municipal Tower, Távora divides the space of the Sacristy in two, and the width of the north loggia returns as a moment of approach to the Cathedral before the entrance to the Sacristy: a moment of transition in which the confrontation between the civic tower and the building of worship is re-proposed.

The volume of the new *Casa dos 24* brings the mass of the urban fabric closer to the Cathedral, and becomes an intermediate element between the latter and the sculptural elements (including a small pilgrims' fountain). The sequential

observation of the following drawings, with and without the new building, allows one to assess the need for the new volume.

Távora's architecture, while not seeking camouflage, seems to have always existed in that place and to have been necessary for its life. For the Portuguese master, the concept of opportunity and necessity for the place is the goal of every good architectural intervention, whether it is a renovation or a new construction.

The new *Casa dos 24* builds a physical link and historical references between the various objects-personages of the Cathedral Hill and gives them a clearer hierarchical role in the volumetric and symbolic whole.

The views from the open space of the Loggia and the Sagrato are limited, though not as they once were, and bring one closer to a portuguese and medieval way of reading space. The first is oriented towards the city centre, with the vertical elements of the Praça da Liberdade and the Sao Bento station, the second focuses on the panorama of the banks of the Douro.

The volume of *Casa dos 24* also has the architectural objective of pushing the visitor towards Nasoni's Baroque loggia, allowing him to observe it closely, as befits a non-classical architecture that flaunts its decorative details.

In the photographs here presented, it is evident how the churchyard becomes a horizontal plane for the display of the city's vertical objects. The same concept is forced and re-proposed in the recent re-modelling (this is a term used in Portugal and in the Porto school) of the Avenida dos Aliados by Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura.

If the last plan for Siza's Avenida da Ponte, which fills the urban void, were to be realised, the view of the broad north of the Sé would be further restricted. The repositioning of the volumes on the *Calçada de Vandoma* would also contribute to the valorisation of the Nasoni loggia and complete the general operation already suggested by Távora's project: the cathedral would again be hidden from those arriving from the Praça da Liberdade, only to be revealed at the end of the long climb. The entire site would also be enhanced through an architectural contrast that would not detract from the beauty of the mediaeval fabric, but rather highlight it by difference.

The relationship that links the objects-personalities of the analysed space continue inside the tower. Here inside, the visitor, the man, finds the spatial dimension of a further portuense terrace with a view framed by the building's partitions and roof. Upon entering, as soon as he crosses the threshold of the forecourt, the visitor is almost assaulted by the soldier, Porto, protecting the city and *Torre dos Clerigos* behind him. The view framed by the new building is the result of careful direction in which the soldier and the tower, the former positioned on the left and the latter silhouetted on the right on the horizon, are remarkable elements of a balanced photographic composition that has the city as its backdrop.

The visitor, sheltered in an apsidal space, is called in and put in the presence of so much history and the present. Raising his gaze, the gilded coffered roof



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Fig. 74

Vertical elements, sketch by Fernando Távora, 1995 (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 75

Vertical elements Aliados (photo by Marcelo Correia, 2006).

Fig. 76

Vertical elements, Cathedral from S. Bento (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

reminds him of the splendour of civic power, and a second, higher pane of glass, framing the bell tower of the cathedral itself, emphasises that this place has always been disputed between the two powers [Fig. 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89].



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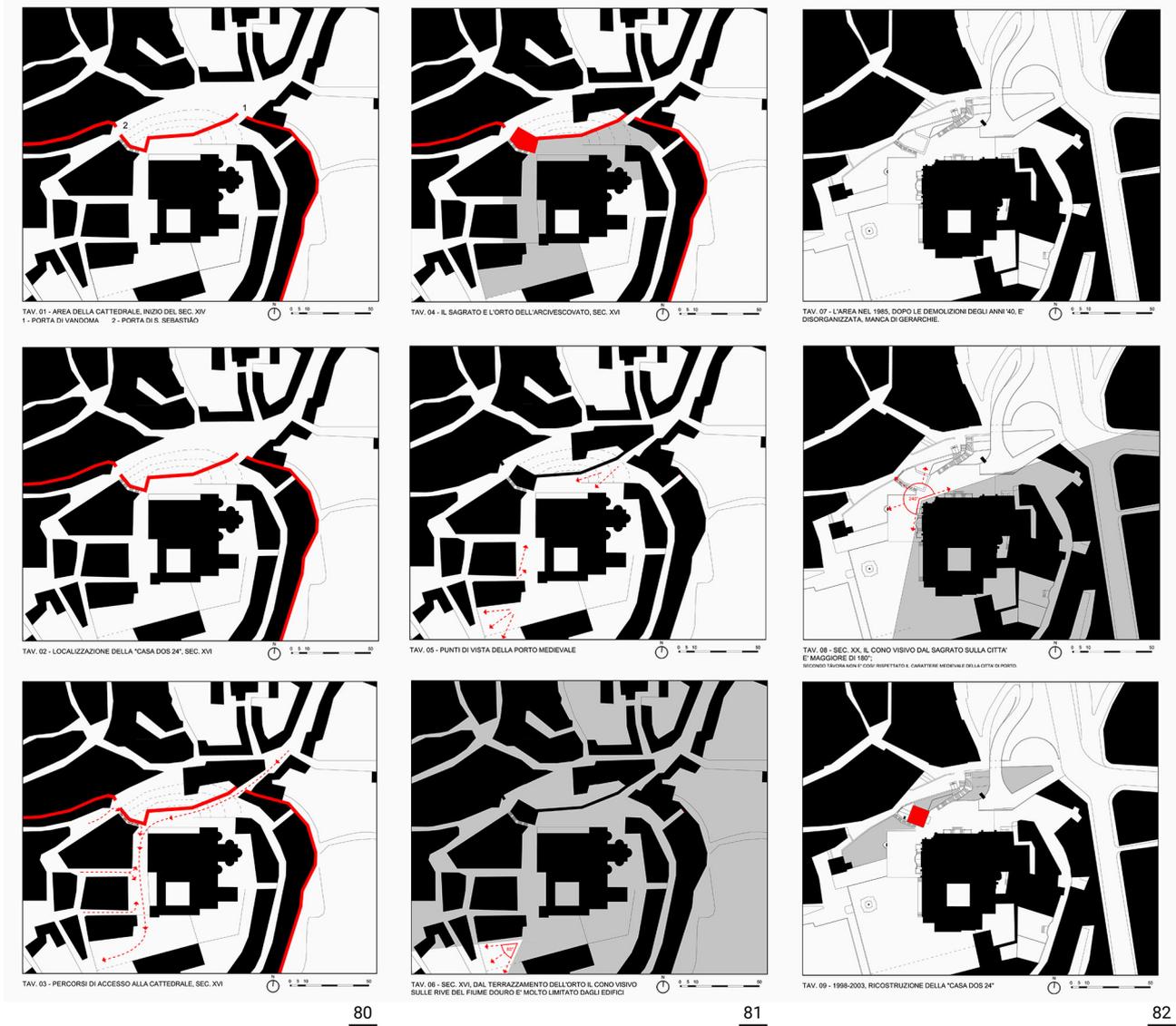
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Fig. 77

Vertical elements, cathedral slope (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).

Fig. 78, 79

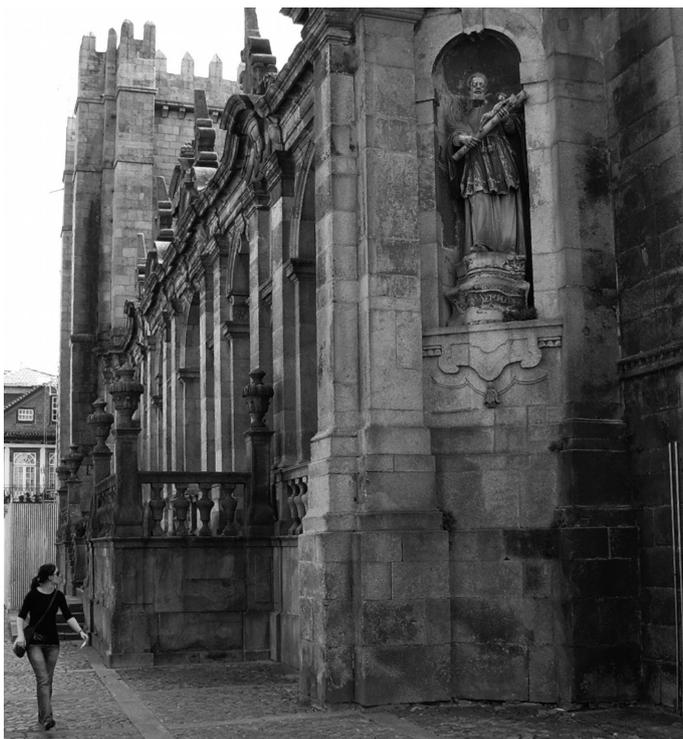
Vertical elements, churchyard (photos by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



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Fig. 80

Analyses promenade century XIV-XVI; Cathedral Area in the beginning of XIV century; Area of Casa dos 24 Tower; Walking to Cathedral in the XVI century (by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 81

Analyses promenade century XVI; "Casa dos 24" and Sagrat; point of views of Porto; "limited" view of Porto: the terrace (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 82

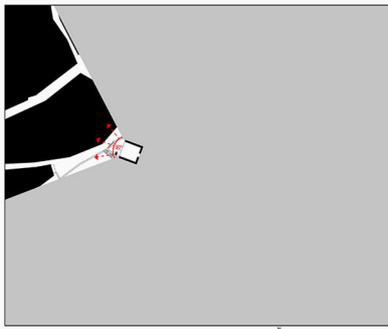
Analyses promenade century XX; 1985: the area after demolitions of 40's; 1985: open view of the Sagrat, more than 180°; 1998-2003: the area after the Reconstruction of Casa dos 24 (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 83

New São Sebastião access by "straight" Stairs, directed to Nasoni's Baroc Loggia (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



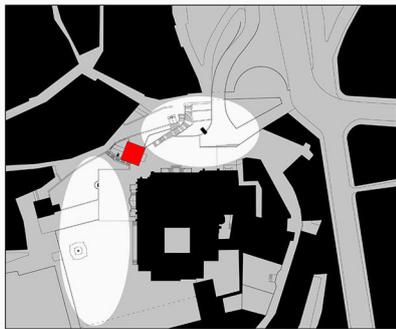
TAV. 10 - 1998-2003. CONFRONTO CON PLANIMETRIA DEL SEC. XVI



TAV. 13 - LA TORRE IN SE' COSTITUISCE UN NUOVO CONO VISIVI PER LA CITTÀ PORTO.



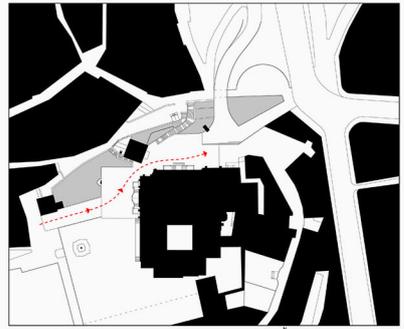
TAV. 16 - PERCORSO DI ACCESSO AL SAGRATO DA NORD. L'UNICA STRADA DI ACCESSO DA NORD HA FAVORISCILO IL SUO USO. PERMEANDO LA VISUALE E RENDENDO LA LOGGIA DEL NARON UNA SORPRESA PER CHI VI SI AVVICINASSE. LA TORRE COLLABORAVA A CREARE IL PROSPETTO.



TAV. 11 - 1998-2003. RICOSTRUZIONE DELLA "CASA DOS 24". IL RENDIMENTO DEL VOLUME DELLA TORRE APPROPRIANDO LO SPAZIO E COSTRUIENDO IL LIMITE DI ROLLA INTERIORE CHE LEGA LA CORTESIA ALLA LOGGIA DEL NARON. ALLA TORRE, ALLE STRADE, AI "PALCOBANDI".



TAV. 14 - RELAZIONI TRA GLI ELEMENTI DEL SAGRATO.



TAV. 17 - PERCORSO DI ACCESSO AL SAGRATO DA OVEST. LA TORRE CONTRIBUISCE A RISPETTARE IL PARCO DELLA CORTESIA E PERMETTENDO UN'OSSESSIVAZIONE PIÙ APPROPRIATA DELLA ARCHITETTURA BAROCCA DELLA LOGGIA DEL NARON.



TAV. 12 - CONI VISIVI CON IL REINSERIMENTO DELLA TORRE. L'AMBITO DEL CONO VISIVO SI RIVOLGE RAVVICINANDO LO SPAZIO AL CANTIERE PORTUANESE DELLE TERRAZZE CON VISTA ORIENTATA.



TAV. 15 - RISPETTO AGLI ACCESSI SECONDARI LA TORRE DIVENTA ELEMENTO DI INVITO E QUINTA.

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Fig. 84

Analyses promenade century XVI-XX; planimetric comparison XVI / XX century; 1998-2003; Proportion of the open spaces created with the reconstruction of the Casa dos 24; 1998-2003: "Limited" Views after the reconstruction of Casa dos 24 (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 85

Analyses promenade century XX after reconstruction; new "Limited" View (90°) of Porto from the inside of Casa dos 24; relationship between the "characters" of the Sagrat; relationship between the secondary accesses and Casa dos 24 (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 86

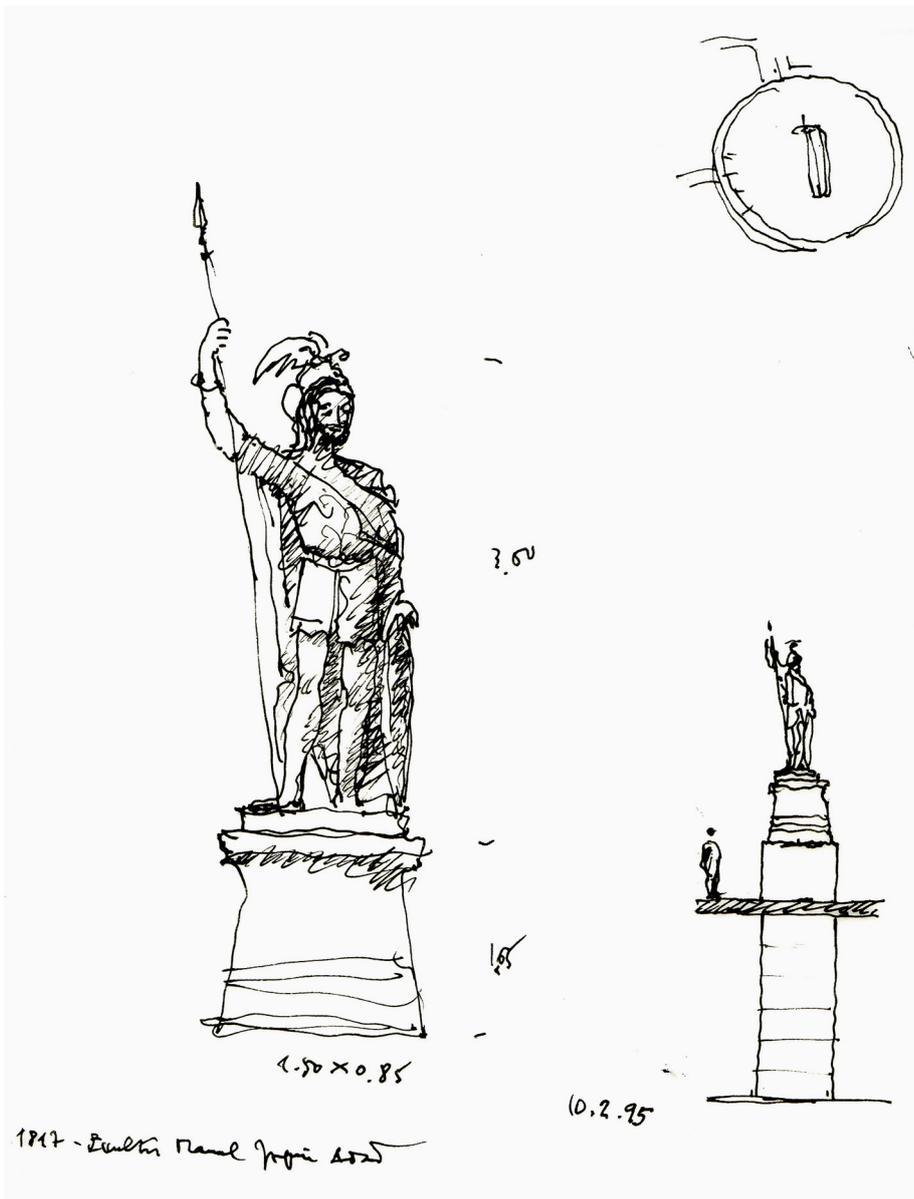
Analyses promenade century XX after reconstruction; access from Calçada de Vandoma and access from West (by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 87

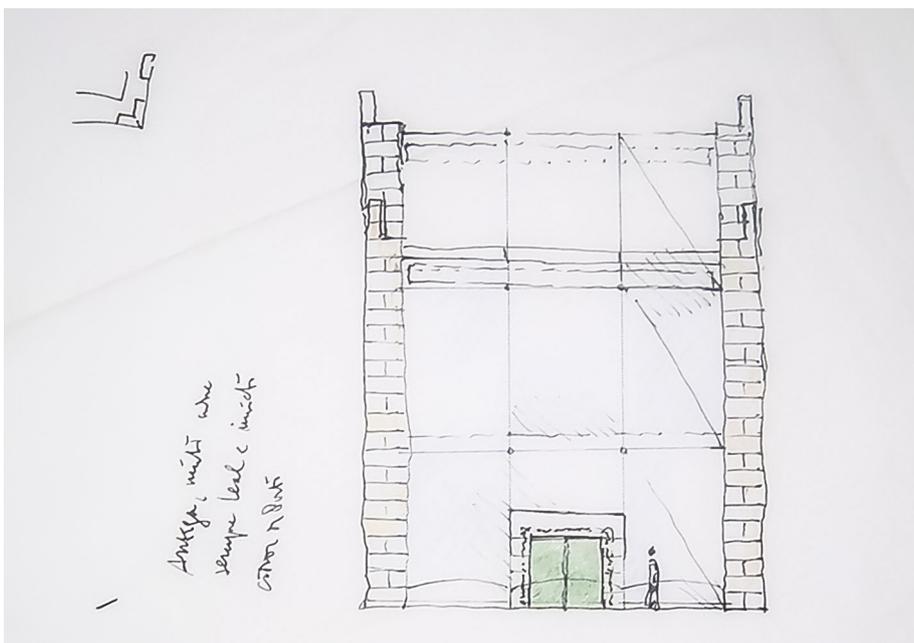
Loggia view (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006)



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Fig. 88

Sousa Alão's statue (1819) depicting the city of Porto in the form of a warrior, noting the dimensions and studying the positioning in relation to the main floor of the tower (FIMS/AFT, ref. 19950210).

Fig. 89

Study drawing of the west elevation of the tower with the hypothesis of placing the inscription 'Antiga, mui nobre, sempre leal e invicta Cidade do Porto' around the entrance portal (FIMS/AFT, ref. 19950424).

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