

A Travel in Fernando Távora's Travels.

(With Álvaro Siza, Alexandre Alves Costa, Fernando Barroso, Sérgio Fernandez, Alcino Soutinho, Manuel Mendes, José António Bandeirinha, Jorge Figueira, Francisco Barata, Eduardo Souto de Moura, 2013-2022)

Fernando Távora, Diary, Travel, Testimony, Gulbenkian Foundation

/Abstract

On the occasion of the collection of archive material for the drafting of the monograph A. Esposito, G. Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milan: Electa, 2005), I, at the time a member of the research group, was the direct recipient – during long sessions in his studio in Rua do Aleixo in Porto – of Fernando Távora's verbal reading of his *Diario di bordo*, the result of the 'round-the-world voyage' he undertook in 1960 thanks to a grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. The re-reading was accompanied by the author's comments and the recordings of these sessions are now deposited in the Archive of the Marques da Silva Foundation in Porto (AFIMS). A scholarship at the Gulbenkian Foundation in 2012 then allowed me to elaborate a first translation into Italian and an initial notation of the Diary, which flowed into the critical Italian edition published in 2022 (F. Távora, *Diario di bordo*, edited by A. Esposito, G. Leoni, R. Maddaluno, Siracusa: Letteraventidue 2023). In the course of this work, which spans over twenty years, the writer has had the opportunity not only to reflect on the central role of the journey in Távora's work, but also to discuss this theme with friends and colleagues of the Portuguese master, fellow travelers or witnesses of the accounts that Távora made part of both his teaching and his project activity. The following text provides both reflections elaborated over time and a summary of the conversations held.

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Travel will be indispensable to me. Because in order to know who we are and how we are, one must know who and how others are. In a world of communications, it is no longer possible to ignore others; on the contrary, it is indispensable to know them. Hence, our permanent desire for contacts with foreign countries, today easy, previously difficult and sometimes impossible.

To read, to travel, to observe, to know the how, to know who, what they are, what they do, what they think, what they say, where they come from, where others are headed. And what our people think of others. And what our people think of themselves.

Fernando Távora¹

This text concerns Fernando Távora (1923-2005), specifically his relationship with the practice of travelling. We will try to understand if there is a specific Tavorian sense of the journey, starting with some methodological considerations, then reflecting on the “most important journey of my life”, as Távora defines the “journey around the world” in 1960, to arrive at the account of some testimonies of those who travelled with Távora, either physically or through his stories. Through the words of the witnesses, an attempt will be made to understand what kind of traveller Távora was, what practices and tools he used to transform the experience of travelling into a condition of knowledge and a pedagogical tool. A collective narrative – the result of interviews held at different times and in different places – that reveals a relationship with travelling capable of naturally transforming the things of the world into objects of permanent knowledge. A relationship that also gives us a link with writing as a testimony to the experience so intense that, in some cases, the travel-writing relationship appears inverted, almost as if the journey were a pretext for writing, and not writing a consequence of the journey.

Invitation to Travel

The journey is a source of signification so general as to be practically universal. It is a model and metaphor of transformation, an experience of continuous change, familiar to all human beings from the moment they gain the ability to walk. A transformation that many times causes a change that wears down, reduces, strips away those who carry it out.²

Of journeys, one can identify a structure that repeats itself with few variations: departure, transit, and arrival.

Departure is a detachment, a very often painful separation from the social matrix, which helps to create the individual as an autonomous entity separate

¹ Fernando Távora, *Percurso. Roteiro* (Lisboa: CCB, 1993), 41.

² Eric J. Leed, *The traveller's mind. From the Odyssey to global tourism* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992), 14-15.

from the group to which he or she belongs. The nature and strength of the ties from which one departs define the intensity of the detachment: one almost always departs from a home, a space that by its very nature conforms to the body and its needs.

There are types of voyages that already envisage a return: these are the voyages of circumnavigation, different from those of exile and migration, which have as their intention the extension in space (conquest, exploration) and time (fame, reputation) of the ego as a social subject.

One might think that this type of travel, which we might call heroic, is the only form of travelling. The history of human mobility tells us of involuntary travel as the most perpetrated and narrated form. The journey in which departure is imposed on the traveller in general for failing to comply with a social norm (crime, disaster, violence). These are the one-way journeys, towards an exile, experienced as punishment or suffering, and which question identity because it is considered in its ambiguity to be the cause of its own evil.³

There is still an idea of the journey that goes beyond space and time where the traveller intends to find something that seems to have been lost or unjustly taken away along the way. The territory to be explored in this form of journey is consciousness, individual if we consider the artist/traveller as an individual, and collective if we consider a large audience. The work of art is the travelling subject himself, a stranger to the place he is travelling through.

He is the romantic traveller, who is not in search of a cultural pilgrimage, who does not proceed by analysing the landscape or comparing it with the ancient text. He takes no pleasure in the recognition or non-recognition of a distance from it: the goal of his journey is the perpetuation of an individual dream, in which the imaginary replaces the real.⁴

Arrival, unlike the previous moment of the journey, is a moment that does not exist, because it is protracted in time, but always represents a process of identification and incorporation to the place. The modalities of arrival are important because they reveal social ties and identifications in which the outsider or traveller is made a participant. The processes of inclusion are determined and managed by architectures: walls, gates, fences. These structures are the territorialisation of social relations.

However, as Leed points out, there is one part of the structure of the journey that does not find so much space in narratives: movement.

It seems to be very easy to recount the modes and rhythms, the consequences, the causes, but not the movement itself. In the travel diaries, the stages of the crossing are recorded very briefly, giving more space in the narrative to the places where they are going, where they have been, what they have seen, incidents, vicissitudes, reflections, but rarely is space given to the flows,

3 Leed, *The traveller's mind. From the Odyssey to global tourism*, 43-49.

4 Alain Corbin, *Le territoire du vide. L'Occident et le désir du rivage, 1750-1840* (Paris: Champs Historire, 1988).

movements, and ordinary pleasures. It is difficult, for example, to have texts that talk about descriptions of water rippling with the wind, changing clouds, working on the ship. It seems that moving without difficulty is not considered legitimate in being described. It is a phase of the journey that is not only interesting but also structuring in the process of constructing the traveller's identity.

We therefore understand that transit is not simply an interstitial experience but a true founding moment of the journey, with a structure and logic that produces consequences.

How is travel told? What is told about travel?

Claudio Magris, in the Italian edition of José Saramago's *Journey to Portugal*, comes to our aid in giving an interpretative reading to the writing of the journey, which by its very nature is ambivalent: on the one hand it refers to an intimate, personal narration of experiences made on the move, and on the other it is a tool for getting to know places and spaces both for those who make the experience and for those who read it in the writings afterwards. Magris writes that travelling is a kind of continuous preface to something that is yet to come. And on writing, he says that jotting down in the notebook the landscape that flees, falls apart, is recomposed, as one goes through it, and then returning to the writing to retouch, delete and rewrite those notes, is a work whose structure is very similar to travelling, because it represents a continuous shift from reality to paper and vice versa.⁵

Travel literature is vast and transversal across times and geographies, and this is not the place to draw a bibliographical map of it; what is of interest for the purposes of our narrative is to emphasise certain characteristics found in the writings of the journeys made by architects.

The architectural journey continues to play an unchallenged role in architectural culture and practice. Despite the access to an infinite amount of information about places and buildings, the direct relationship with the place as a destination but also as a pretext for an experience made on the move, continues to be indispensable. Contemporary journeys, in contrast to journeys far away in time, do not bring novelty or information, but represent the expression of a personal narrative of the architect.⁶

The relationship between architecture and the journey, and more specifically, the writing and the journey of architecture, has been the subject of much research, which has sought to bring into dialogue the perceptive phenomenon

5 "Travelling – in the world and on paper – is in itself a kind of continuous preface, a prologue to something that is always yet to come and is always just around the corner; setting off, stopping, coming back, packing and unpacking, jotting down in the notebook the landscape as it flees, crumbles, reassembles, as you go through it, like a film sequence with its fades and rearrangements, or like a face that changes over time. And then retouching, deleting, and rewriting those notes, in that continuous shift from reality to paper and vice versa that is writing, also in this sense very similar to travelling" Claudio Magris, "Vietato rompere nidi e scrivere prefazioni", in José Saramago, *Viaggio in Portogallo* (Feltrinelli, Milano, 2011), 9.

6 For a recent attempt to bring to light the mechanisms of the narrative of the architectural journey, see issue 196 of the journal "Engramma". The issue attempts, also provocatively, to question the myth of the architect's journey as an initiatory journey, as a pilgrimage or as a supreme source of creative inspiration. See: Fernanda De Maio, Christian Toson. "The architect's journey. Editorial", *The Engramma Review*, no. 196 (November 2022): 7-14.

of space in time and the need to leave a trace of it through the written word, commented on, supplemented, or negated by drawing.⁷

What we are interested in exploring, however, is what drawing fails to tell, as Alberto Ferlenga writes opening his texts with an image by Emilio Isgró, muffled, in which the place names have been erased, perhaps to make us reflect on the idea that what one really learns or feels on a journey cannot be reported except as a note or a reminder.⁸ What is important in architects' journeys is not reflected, Ferlenga continues, on paper, where at most there will be testimonies of partial impressions and confirmations of what one had set out to see. It is in the architect's mind that the important things will find a home and that they will find other life along paths that are not always traceable, because the journey provides revelations that testimonies, whether drawn or written, cannot fully express.

'The Most Important Journey of my Life'

The trip Távora refers to as the most important of his life is the one he made in 1960. The trip was financed in 1959 by a scholarship from the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, still today one of the greatest promoters of Portuguese culture and worthy of having contributed to its internationalisation process. During this trip, Távora wrote a diary. The *Diário de bordo* – as he writes with his own hand on the very first page –, given its nature as a private text not intended for publication, offers us the opportunity to grasp the structure of Távora's sense of the journey.⁹

In this specific journey, Távora seems to search for something that was not yet structured within himself, a need that makes him a type of traveller who is initially estranged from the territory he traverses, where the only thing that matters is not so much what he sees but himself. In Távora, in fact, the idea of the journey starts from a vital need to know himself to build an identity that is solid but open to the unforeseen vicissitudes of life. This can easily be seen in the part of the Gulbenkian journey spent in the United States, where he travels these lands in search of continuous confirmation of what he already knew and imagined, allowing himself little room for surprise.

7 See in this regard Adriana Bernieri's doctoral thesis entitled *La scala del Viaggio. Processes of recreating architecture* (2017) in which we find reflections on the texts of architects' journeys, such as Stefano Boeri's preface to Giancarlo de Carlo's *Travels in Greece* (Macerata: Quolibet, 2010), or that of Mario Botta in Jaques Gubler's *Motion, émotion. Architecture, movement and perception*, by Jaques Gubler (Milan: Christian Marinotti Edizioni, 2014). See also Anne Hultzsich who offers an interesting analysis of this dialogue between architecture and narrative through travel, in her *Architecture, Travellers and Writers. Constructing Histories of Perception 1640-1950* (London: LEGEND, 2014). Other publications on travel literature in architecture have explored the experience of travel more from the perspective of architectural practice, such as Craig Buckley and Pollyanna Rhee's, *Architect's Journeys: Building, Travelling, Thinking. Los viajes de los arquitectos: construir, viajar, pensar* (New York: GSAPP Books, 2011). Publications that certainly owe their methodology and comparative study to Luis Moreno Mansilla's doctoral thesis, *Apuntes de viaje al interior del tiempo*, (Barcelona: Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, 2001) which further increased interest in this type of research and analysis; one among many is the work *Travel, Space, Architecture* by Jilly Trajanau and Miodrag Mitrasinovic Architecture. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).

8 Alberto Ferlenga, "What drawing cannot tell", *The Engram Review*, no. 196 (November 2022): 15-21.

9 The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation was born in 1956 from the will of the Armenian oilman Calouste Gulbenkian to donate his legacy and art collection to the city of Lisbon from 1942 until 1955, the year of his death. The scholarship program began in 1958, and over the years numerous members of the architecture and arts world have benefited from these scholarships. In Távora's case, the initial intention was to travel only in United States, then following an invitation as a Portuguese representative of CIAM, the travel was extended to attend the World Design Conference (WoDeCO) in Tokyo. On the way back to Portugal he also visited Bangkok, Beirut, Cairo, Athens, among other places Fernando Távora, *Diário de 'Bordo' (1960)* (Porto: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012).

Despite this first part, the Gulbenkian journey is a pretext to test a corner of his perception of the world and to provide structures to the knowledge he built up during his learning and maturation process.

The journey to the American territory gives us the possibility to understand Távora's case in relationship and reaction with the dynamics of *arrival*, which is, as we have seen, a moment of incorporation to the place or exclusion from it. These specific dynamics are regulated by architecture, which represents the spatial manifestation of social relations.

As Leed says:

The events of arrival do not simply 'reproduce' harmonies and pre-established meanings of culture, they create them. They are not simply the setting up of a ritual, but the creation of evidence, of orderings by which the unknown is made known, belonging is defined, the 'stranger' is excluded. In fact, borders are created by those who cross them and are a legacy of a history of arrivals".¹⁰

And numerous are the architectures he visits that cause him a spatial relationship of exclusion rather than one of welcome and inclusion.

In his travels, Távora enacts an attitude that is characteristic of the traveller: recalling to a familiar base what is new or unknown, elements that are only perceived in relation to what is known, to reduce the uncertainty of what is not mastered. After all, travel diaries always deal with strangeness and Távora's case is no exception. In his 1960 *Diary of the Journey*, we find moments in which he recalls elements of "being Portuguese" as opposed to passages dedicated to the sense of foreignness. He describes himself in exile:

For an exile (actually here – in Mexico n.d.a. – I feel less like an exile because I have the feeling that I am in Spain and, therefore, just a hop away from Portugal" (24 April); or like a castaway: "Everything gave me the feeling that I was the only lonely person among the 8 million New Yorkers or among the more than 20 million who depend on the city. Sometimes I would hear a foreign language spoken – Spanish, Italian, French or German – but not a word in Portuguese – not even a life-board for this castaway." (6 March).

Or, again, he feels like an abandoned being:

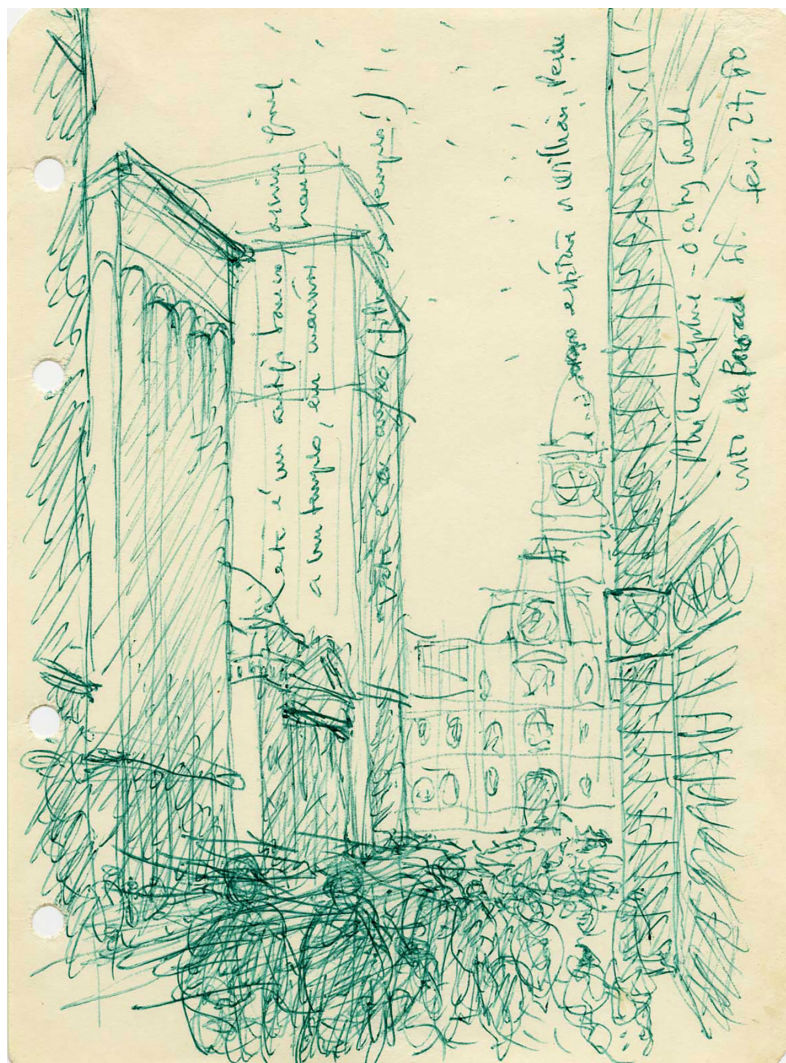
"I have to say that the professor and his wife were extraordinarily nice to me and that I was actually very touched by the professor's understanding of my situation as a derelict in this huge machine!" (30 March).

Távora also repeatedly describes his feeling of being somewhere else (24 February), a feeling that becomes more and more exhausting as the journey progresses, so much so that on 7 June he writes: "my stay away from home has become absolutely unbearable".

10 Leed, *The traveller's mind. From the Odyssey to global tourism*, 112-113.

Yet, questioning why he is in an elsewhere immediately builds a relationship with the space that surrounds him. Encountering that which is foreign provokes, on the one hand, a crisis of understanding of events and, on the other, a crisis of perception of one's own identity.

The "American machine", as Távora himself defines US society, is certainly the main source of alienation. See, for example, the passages dedicated to American dynamism, so far removed from Portuguese slowness (10 March), or the visit to the Ford assembly lines, an occasion for a severe account of the American mentality of work (4 April) or, again, the returning criticism of museums (7 April). Reflections, however, often accompanied by the doubt that he is mistaken (7 April) even if, between the novelty and surprise in the face of American society and the nostalgic comparison with Portugal, the favour goes, invariably, to the latter (18 March) [Fig. 1].



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This perspective changes when he arrives in Japan, where he recognises and surrenders to a superiority of civilisation, as a passage dated 15 May demonstrates:

We are little savages; we don't know how to sit, we don't know how to have a cup of tea, we don't know how to make proper reveries, we don't know the sequence of food, we don't know the topics of possible conversations, nor do we know how to rise above everyday problems. [Fig. 2]

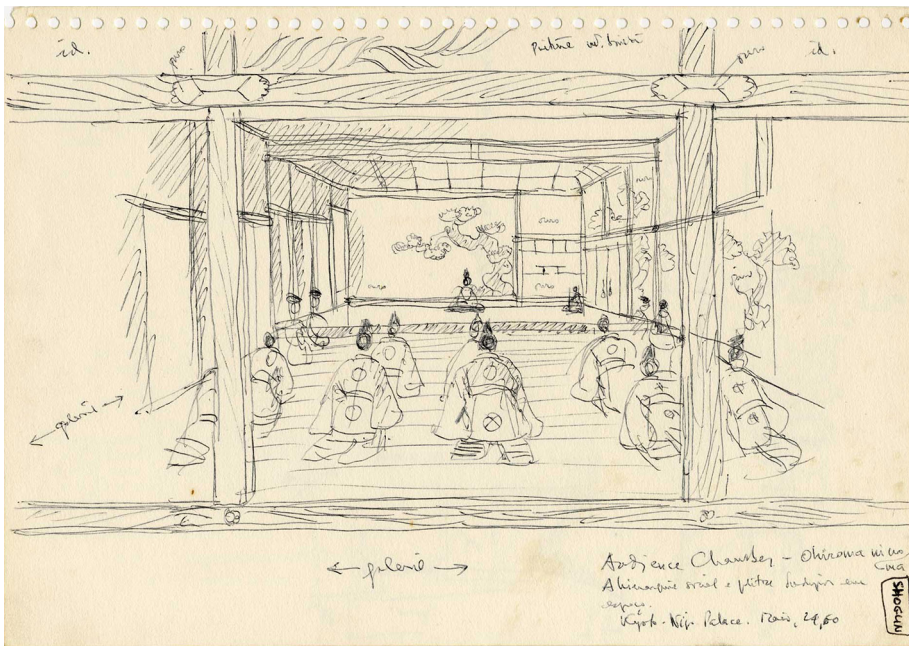
Over time, his habit of travelling transformed the moment of confrontation as a producer of estrangement into an ability to make the unfamiliar familiar. By defining and thus accepting differences and recognising similarities, he ensured that what was foreign to him could become the basis for future comparisons.¹¹

Távora understands that the exaggeration of differences, an attitude that often turns diversity into antithesis, is achieved through the removal of continuities, creating boundaries that separate and make contiguous what is by nature continuous: time and space.¹²

11 Leed, *The traveller's mind. From the Odyssey to global tourism*, 95.

12 Leed, *The traveller's mind. From the Odyssey to global tourism*, 115.

Fig. 1
Philadelphia – view from Broad Street 27.02.1960, bic pen, green, on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. 5000-119).



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Through the experience of travelling over time, his mind learns to move from the particular to a universal knowledge in which, after all, there are no foreigners, but one and only one humanity.

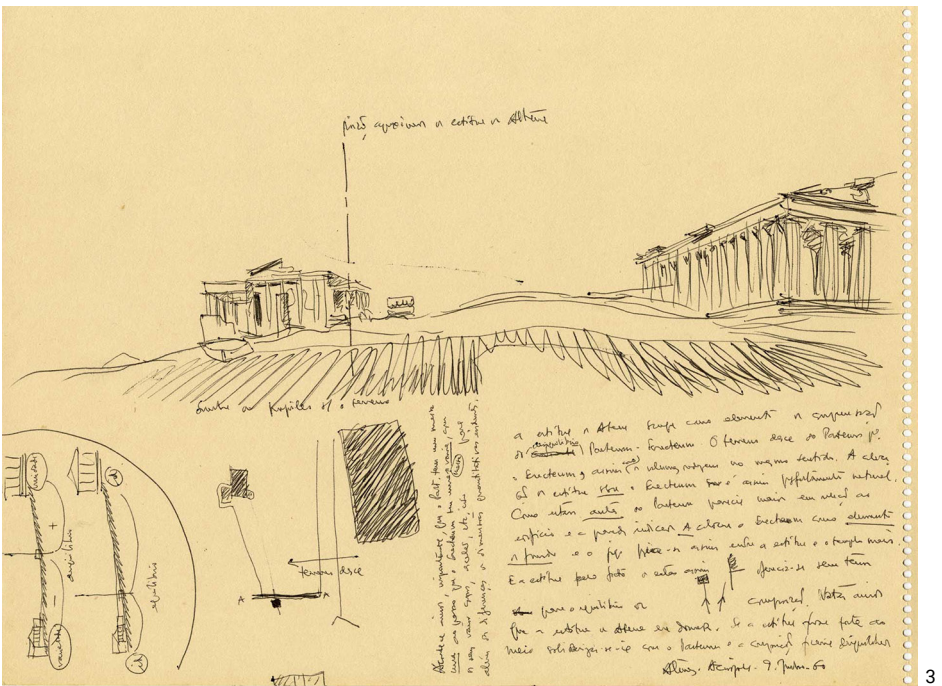
It is a perception that he begins to feel clearly for the first time when he visits Taliesin, a place that Távora describes as having such an integrating power “that the Creator himself would be annoyed” (9 April). The feeling forces him to step outside of measured time and confront the cosmic forces of the place, which exists beyond the contingent, beyond stone, beyond wood, beyond any form. And as place becomes universal space, time too loses measure and Távora feels weightlessly transported on a journey from ancient Greece to the Middle Ages.¹³

Here it is Távora himself who admits the difficulty of finding words so capacious as to be able to convey the great strength of that place and the feelings it arouses. In the end, almost as if to rid himself of a sense of inadequacy, he admits: “all this is little, very little, compared to everything I have thought”. It was a sort of revelation that showed him a path opposite to the paths traced by his masters, that distanced him from a rational, or traditional, idea of culture and architecture, and projected him into a world that needs to feel: “we all feel (and this is why I cried) that something is missing, that the machine is jamming, that the path is not exactly this, and that the years are passing” (9 April).

The last stop of the Gulbenkian journey is Athens [Fig. 3]. It is the conclusion, the moment of rest, the opportunity to recognise affinities in Greek culture. It is a prelude to feeling at home, the recognition of common Mediterranean roots to which Portugal, although geographically Atlantic, belongs (9 June). To Athens he acknowledges, with consoling relief, the ability to devote time to

13 Human time, Ricoeur writes, is not the subjective consciousness of time, nor is it the objective time of the cosmos, but something that lies at an intermediate distance between phenomenological and cosmological time. Human time is the time of the stories of our lives: it is narrated time, a time structured and articulated by the symbolic mediations of narratives. Time becomes human time to the extent that it is structured as a narrative mode. (Paul Ricoeur, *Tempo e racconto. La configurazione del tempo di finzione* (Jaca Book: Milano 1999), 279.

Fig. 2
Kyoto – Nijo Palace, Audience Chamber 24.05.1960, bic pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. VKyoto 0011).



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conversation, to free time from the constant pursuit of the useful and the practical. To Greek culture, he recognises that it has reached the pinnacle of perfection through its repeated, stubborn desire to improve technique, its relationship with place, making small variations of form to a single theme that accompanies the entire architectural experience of that civilisation. An experience not easy to grasp even for him, a cultured man. The experience of beauty is rarely complete but is intuitable, perceptible in certain fragments. Távora recognises his limit in the Acropolis: "I left the Theseion and slowly walked towards the Acropolis. I went back and forth, saw much, and understood little. This is not easy, partly because are ruins, partly because the beauty and grandeur are not as accessible as one sometimes imagines." (9 June) And so he reiterates, repeats the programme, relives, revises, returns to the places in the hope of the emergence of new insights into this ancient eternal beauty.

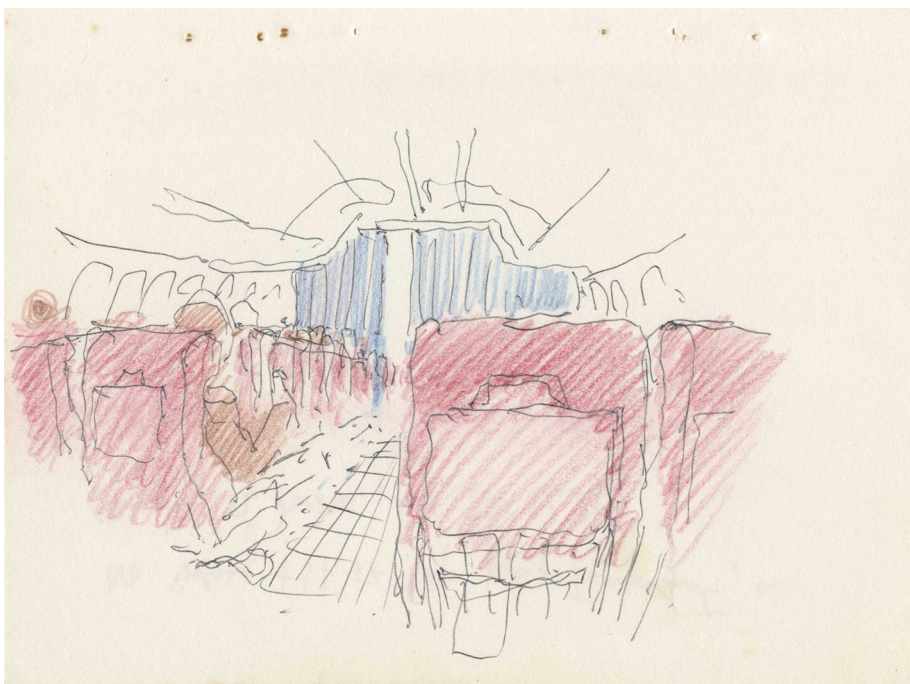
Referring to transit as a specific moment from the perceptual point of view of the journey, as a continuous change of place, contrary to what happens in departure and arrival where one separates from a place or re-joins a place, in transit it is the movement itself that becomes the element of perception [Fig. 4]. Says Leed, transit "governs perceptions of an objective world that are perceptions of passage, of a succession of views and images that continually unfurl before the observer".¹⁴

Movement implies the joint participation of perception, mind, and body.

And in fact Távora does not only travel with the mind, his travel narratives are above all tales of a body in motion. After all, the traveller's mind is not separate from the body and everything that is recorded as a change in ways of thinking, cultural habits, passes through and is also reflected in the sensations and

Fig. 3
Athens – Acrópoli 9.06.1960,
bic pen on paper (FIMS/AFT,
ref. VATenas-0003).

14 Leed, *The traveller's mind. From the Odyssey to global tourism*, 74-78.



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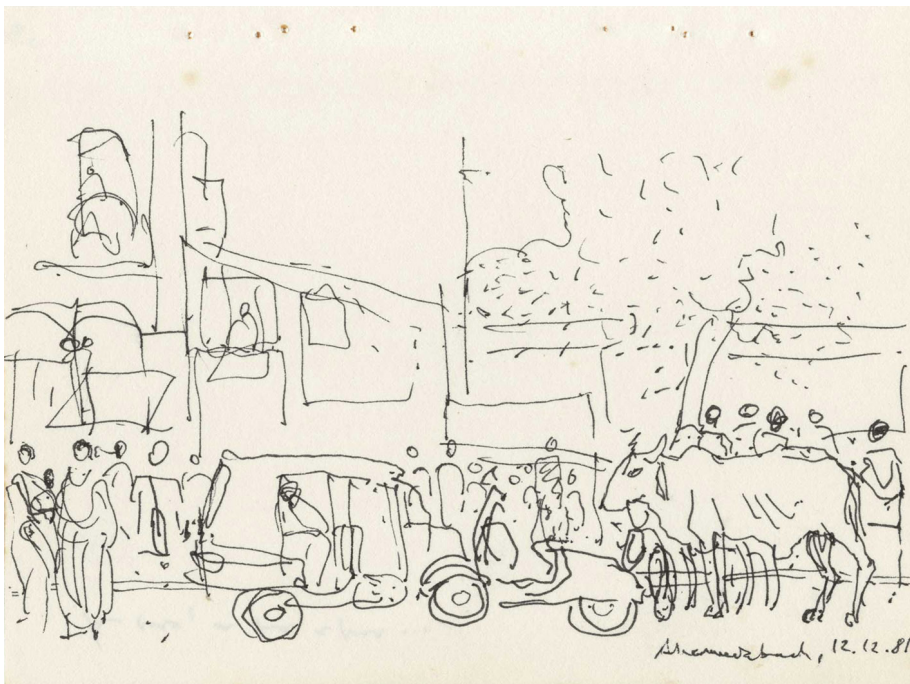
reactions of movement on the body. The order of transit in Távora, whether progressive or linear, is manifested and realised in its forms of walking, in its proceeding to the knowledge of spaces through the cadenced and certainly more strenuous mode of walking.

In the 1960 Diary there are numerous references to his way of experiencing space, for example when he visits American metropolises, where he emphasises the incompatibility between walking and their urban structure. In American cities, he says, no one knows how to walk (27 February), or he emphasises that walking does not correspond to a substantial advance in the cities: "I walk, I walk, the blocks pass me by, the streets pass me by, but the 346 always and still very far away" (29 February). As Giovanni Leoni writes in his text to the Italian edition of the Diary, for Távora the freedom of being able to walk is opposed to an American consumerist society that makes having a car an inescapable need, and when he sees a drive-in for the first time he notes that "if Americans could bring their cars into the kitchen and go to mass or to the cobbler's or to the bathroom by car they would certainly do so." (6 April)

This incompatibility between walking, observing, and reflecting only dissipates, in the 1960 journey, when he arrives in Athens where he encounters again the slow rhythm of thinking, in a spatiality designed for this to happen.

Through his travel writings, therefore, we can get in touch with the constructive process that helped form his reasoning about the world and views on things. Mental forms that result from an awareness of assuming the role of observer of the world, and its various contexts, even though mobility limits the view to brief moments. But these limits, which an experienced traveller like Távora knows, are overcome, through the need to make this point of view or this form of reason as lasting as possible. This reflection reminds us of two types of observers: those who only see and those who record what they see, those who consume what

Fig. 4
In the TAP Boeing, direction Frankfurt en route to Índia 27.11.1985, colour pencil on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. BViagem-01-0006f).



51

they see and those who transform what they see into a text or a photograph or a drawing. In Távora's case, seeing, observing, and witnessing are intertwined, making it impossible to distinguish the gestures in separate forms [Fig. 5].

The first legitimate criticism made when speaking of travel and the perception of experience is that those who travel have a necessarily superficial, poor, and exterior vision as opposed to the supposed depth of perception and understanding of phenomena of those within places. Claude Lévi Strauss, on the contrary, defended the traveller's vision, considering the limits of observation as a source of intellectual refinement. Movement connects the traveller to places but at the same time distances him, and this temporality of the perceptive moment allows him to develop reading techniques that enable him to perceive, through the surface of things, relationships, interiorities, and the meaning of events¹⁵ [Fig. 6, 9].

And this ability to look at the whole is a form of freedom that Távora is master of, and it allows him, as a traveller-observer, a new and authoritative analysis because of his objectivity. Simmel speaks of the freedom that an outsider has over the native, which allows him to objectively see the limits of situations because he is not blocked in his actions by habit, pity, and precedent.¹⁶

The study of the Diary also made it possible to understand Távora's relationship with writing and with travel writing in general.

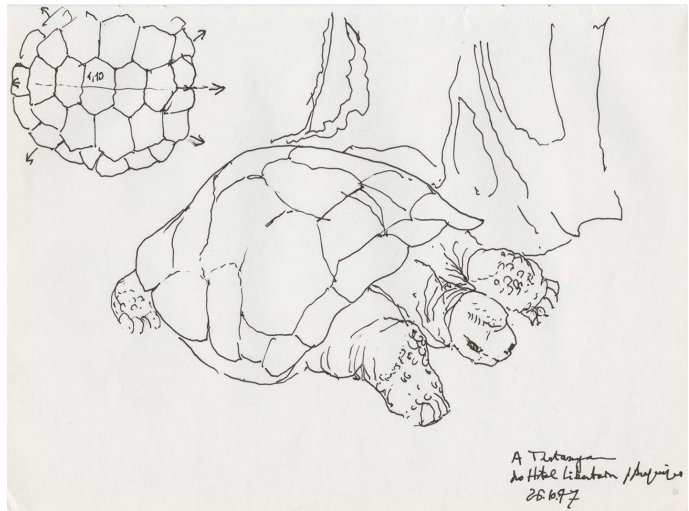
15 The native is unable to see the totality, because he is part of an interior, as Lévy-Strauss writes: "I have learned (...) how the even brief appearances of a city, a region or a culture, usefully exercise attention (...) and also allow us to perceive certain properties of the object that might have remained hidden for a long time" (Lévy-Strauss 1965, 60.) and also make it possible to perceive certain properties of the object that might ... have remained hidden for a long time" (Lévi-Strauss 1965, 60) It is as if the traveller has access to the completeness of the system, while the native has access to the particularity of operations and meanings. For the traveller, perceived reality is an "object" a "part" of a generality, which is to be understood from its "relations" to other parts of the system Leed, *The traveller's mind. From the Odyssey to global tourism*, 84-85.

16 Georg Simmel, *Sociology* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1989), 688.

Fig. 5

Índia – Ahmedabad: 'a rua, a rua, a rua...' 12.12.1985, pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. BViagem-01-0016f).

Távora encountered writing as a form to seek “unity in variety” from a very young age, as Manuel Mendes tells us (Mendes, “Ah che ansia umana di essere il fiume o la riva!” 2005, 350). Writing is for him the form for understanding being in the world. From 1942 to 1956, he regularly writes texts that move between the diaristic form of the emotional annotation of events, to deeper analyses of the structure of his thoughts and cultural phenomena. These are not writings, as Mendes informs us,¹⁷ that can be counted within the sphere of non-fiction, but even though it is open writing, without a sequence, it respects a structuring organisation that somehow repeats itself: the asking of questions, the thematic associations, the constant re-elaborations. An almost private conversation with himself, which only towards 1944-1946 manifests itself in a desire to devote himself to book projects for a history of architecture, town planning, a history of modern art.



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Even for the text of the *Diário de bordo*, one is faced with the difficulty of attributing a precise definition to it in terms of narrative structure, but even from this text Távora’s familiarity with diaristic writing emerges clearly, an intense practice used as a possibility to create a mental space to give order to one’s interiority.¹⁸ A form of writing that he had already experimented with on other occasions, for instance on his first trip to Europe (1947), from which he wrote and sent dozens of letters to his fiancée, informing her about his movements and feelings.¹⁹

The writing of these letters, through which Távora recounts the journey, restores a multiplication of moods, but also conveys an ability to recount the events of an important historical moment, the Europe of the immediate post-war period, without renouncing the level of intimist narration.

17 Fundamental to Távora’s diary activity and private papers is the work that Manuel Mendes has done over the years and still does. Manuel Mendes, a long-time lecturer of Architectural Theory at Faup, has been building an intense harmony of debate with Távora on didactics and architecture in general since the early 1970s. For this reason, he was the natural recipient and custodian of his private archive. He received the assignment directly from Távora to organise his writings, his books, his diaries, his notes, his records, an organisation that took place until 2003 in close relationship with architect Távora. See on this subject: Manuel Mendes, “Ah, what human anxiety to be the river or the shore!” in Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, Fernando Távora. *Opera completa*, (Electa: Milan, 2005): 344-345; Fernando Távora, “As raízes e os Frutos. Palavras desenhos obra 1937-2001.” In “*O Meu caso*” *Arquitetura, Imperativo ético do ser 1937-1947*, Manuel Mendes eds., Vol.1 *Caminhos da arquitetura. Arquitetura e circunstância*, Tomo I.I (Porto: CRC Press 2000); Fernando Távora, “*Minha casa*”, edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS-FAUP, 2015).

18 The narrative structure of the *Diary* is not easy to define because of the complexity that results from the combination of a handwritten text (an A6 format notebook of approximately 800 pages drafted daily) and two sketchbooks (one A4 format and the other A3 format) containing architectural sketches that are often richly annotated. Távora only began drafting the two sketchbooks when he arrived in Japan, thus in the final stretch of the trip. During the weeks spent in the USA, the few sketches drawn accompany the writing in the diary pages themselves. The clear separation between the written word and the annotated drawing distances the *Diary* from the more typical form of the travel notebook written by architects. One could say that the drawn notebooks follow this tradition while the diary developed in words approximates an inventory, aimed at the writing of a final report. A closer reading, however, reveals two narrative levels: the notes for the future report – listing numbers, dates, names, times, information; the narratives, composed of impressions, memories, feelings

19 Fernando Távora, “*Minha casa*”, edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS-FAUP, 2015), 38-39. We also refer to: Raffaella Maddaluno, *Fernando Távora: The deontology of the journey as a form of cultural and personal progress in Progress(es) – Theories and Practices* (Leiden: CRC Press; 2017), 75-80.

Fig. 6

Arequipa – “A Tartaruga do Hotel Libertador” 26.10.1997, BIC pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. VPeru-0016).

In these texts, as in the *Diary of the Gulbenkian Journey*, the writing expresses doubts about the real interest of what is noted down and uncertainties about his own intellectual identity, giving back not a representation of himself but a real state of mind that enables us to distinguish experiences, desires, memories, an inner time, in short, his own consciousness and identity. It is a process not always linear, because during the writing of both the letters and the *Diary*, there is an awareness of “talking about oneself”, which, contrary to autobiographical writing, disregards the narrative of life, and prefers the single event, the exceptional, the purposeless.²⁰

A feeling of modesty that in fact, in the case of the *Diary* will lead him not to hand over the report requested by the Gulbenkian grant, and in the case of the trip to Europe to demand that his fiancée return the letters. In addition to modesty, in both the Europe trip and the Gulbenkian trip, there is also, almost unconsciously, the fear of an excessive reworking of the events experienced. Távora writes his diary every day, noting down with journalistic rigour every event, every number, every name, with a self-discipline that seems to leave no room for time or memory. Távora fears this distant memory, he wants an orderly arrangement of data so that the task of transmission can be easier and more objective. He writes:

I would like, when I return to Portugal, to write some notes to the reflections I have collected during this time but I lack a lot of data because my memory does not retain everything and I have not written any notes. The only thing that might help me a little are the letters that I wrote to you each day, where well or badly, a lot or a little, the first impressions were recorded. You would not mind if I borrowed all these letters, with the certainty that I do not want to keep them forever? (...) I therefore ask you to reorder all my letters (they are all dated) so that you can give them to me as soon as we meet again. (Angoulême, 10-11.XI.1947)²¹

In Távora’s travel writings, it thus seems that the relationship between the journey and the diary is strangely inverted. The writing does not seem to be the chronicle of the journey, as Scrivano points out when referring to Celati’s diary. On the contrary, the journey serves the writing of the text, which is only the nearest destination on a journey in stages towards writing.²²

Travel Experience and Storytelling

In the years of his maturation and inner pacification that followed his journey around the world, Távora continued to use travelling abroad as a practice of experience that was indispensable for learning, and as a complement to

20 Fabrizio Scrivano, *Diary and narration* (Macerata: Quolibet, 2014): 22.

21 Manuel Mendes, “Uma porta pode ser um romance. Viagem pela Europa.” In Fernando Távora, “*Minha casa*”, ed. Manuel Mendes, (Porto: FIMS-FAUP, 2013), 61. Free translation by the author.

22 Scrivano, *Diary and narration*, 52.

the more general process of cultural elaboration, which is built through study, teaching, and professional activity. Travelling for him becomes a method for continuous updating both culturally and emotionally, for a complete education as a man and as an architect. It is almost impossible to make a list of the trips that Távora made in his life abroad, not counting those he made in Portuguese territory from early childhood. We can partly reconstruct his travel experiences either through his drawings, which continue to be an indispensable source of research, or through the diary writings that are made available for public consultation.²³ From these and through conversations with those who travelled with Távora, or listened to accounts of his travels, we are able to draw up a still incomplete list of his journeys.²⁴

From all these considerations and from the collective narrative extrapolated from the interviews that follow, certain themes emerge that, due to their characteristic repetitiveness, can be considered constants in Távora's way of travelling and in the way he conveys this experience.

The first that becomes clear is that the condition of travelling is for Távora natural, almost instinctive. By family tradition and by necessity he acquires this state of intermittence from an early age. The only thing that changes over time are the distances travelled and the destinations that take him from Portugal to the eastern and western edges of the world [Fig. 7]. Everything he observes and experiences, from places to architecture, from human beings and their habits, is not an end in itself, but almost through an awareness of his own self is related to his position in the world.

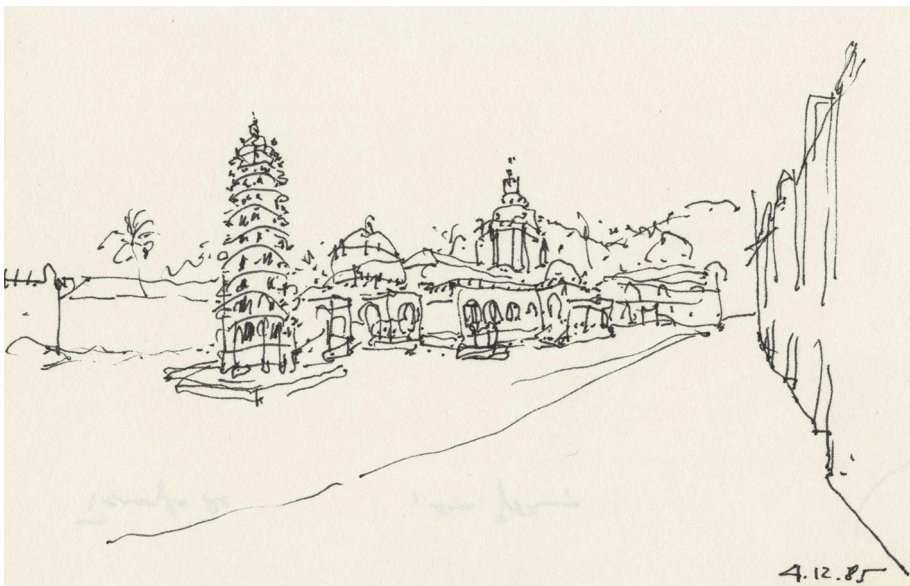
This attitude springs not from an excess of egocentric consideration, but from a natural practice in him of relating what is new and unknown to what is known. His ability to create by opposition allows him to draw a distance between himself and the world, which is necessary to approach it in a cultural and non-cultural

23 Manuel Mendes eds., *"O Meu caso" Arquitetura, Imperativo ético do ser 1937-1947, Vol.1 Caminhos da arquitetura. Arquitetura e circunstância, Tomo I.I* (Porto: CRC Press 2000).

24 The following is an initial sketchy reconstruction based on Távora's drawings and travel photos as well as the books he bought during his travels, all of which are preserved at AFIMS: **1942 SPAIN:** Toledo, Seville, Mérida, Granada, Santiago de Compostela. **1947 EUROPE,** by car – a Citroen – with of his brother Bernardo Ferrão and a friend: Guarda, Ávila, Madrid, Tarrega, Barcelona, Figuera, Narbonne, Lyon, Chambéry, Sisteron, Marseille, Cavalaire-sur-Mère, Cannes, Ventimiglia, Genoa, Grosseto, Rome, Naples, Florence, Bologna, Venice, Verona, Rovereto, Milan, Meiringen, Berne, Yverdon, Zurich, Nancy, Bastogne, Eindhoven, Delft, Rotterdam, Bruxelles, Antwerp, Mons, Paris, Angoulême, Lourdes, Bilbao; travel photographs in AFIMS. **1949 ITALY:** Palermo, Naples, Rome, Tivoli, Florence, Milan, Turin, Ivrea, Bergamo, Como, Venice; books in AFIMS: *Rassegna di pittura italiana contemporanea*, Fantoni: Venezia, 1949; *Lorenzo il Magnifico e le arti*, Palazzo Strozzi: Firenze, 1949; *La galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Cà d'Oro*, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato: Roma, 1949; drawings in AFIMS. **1951 HODDESDON:** CIAM. **1950 SPAIN;** drawing of Cordoba dated 04/21 in AFIMS. **1952 VENICE:** CIAM summer school at IUAV and International Congress of UNESCO Artists. **1953 AIX-EN-PROVENCE:** CIAM. **1956 DUBROVNIK:** CIAM. **1956 ITALY:** Milan, Venice, Florence, Arezzo, Siena, Orvieto, Assisi, Tivoli, Rome; books in AFIMS: Mario Salmi, *San Domenico et San Francesco d'Arezzo*, Del Turco Editore: Roma, 1956; Giuseppe Lugli, *Le forum romain Le palatin*, G. Bardi: Roma, 1956; Giocchino Mancini, *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este*, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Roma 1956; Salvatore Aurigemma, *La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli*, Chicca: Tivoli, 1956; Giovanni Cecchini, *Il pavimento della cattedrale di Siena*, Siena: Tip. La Galluzza, 1956; *La cattedrale di Orvieto*, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato: Roma 1956. **1959 OTTERLO:** CIAM. **1960 AROUND THE WORLD;** funded by Gulbenkian Foundation; *Diario de bordo* and drawings in AFIM. **1961 PARIS:** XXVI UNESCO Congress. **1962 PARIS:** 17th Congress of Architecture and Town Planning. **1964 LONDON;** drawing of the Elgin Marbles dated 6/6/ in AFIMS. **1962 ROYAUMONT:** Team X meeting. **1964 ITALY:** holiday with his wife, Venice, Milan, Florence, Siena, Assisi, Orvieto; drawings in AFIMS. **1967 PARIS;** drawing at Louvre Museum 12/01 in AFIMS. **1970 BARCELONA;** drawing dated 6/5/ in AFIMS. **1973 BRAZIL;** drawings in AFIMS. **1994 OLINDA;** drawing dated 28-29-30/10 in AFIMS; **1976 ATHENS;** drawings in AFIMS. **1985 INDIA;** drawings in AFIMS. **1985 SPAIN;** drawing of Corunhã dated 18/05 in AFIMS. **1990 MEXICO;** drawings in AFIMS. **1994 BRAZIL;** drawings in AFIMS. **1995 TURKEY:** Ankara (25/09), Priene (29/09), Istanbul (30/09), Myra (30/09); drawings in AFIMS. **1997 PERU:** Machupichu (25-29/10) drawings in AFIMS.



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Fig. 7

Olinda, on the road to the Church of Mercy, 29.10.1994 (FIMS/AFT, ref. VBrasil-0009f).

Fig. 8

Índia - Goa: Templo de [Shri Mangesh Devasthan]. 4.12.1985, pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. BViagem-01-0010f).

Fig. 9

Bodrum - 'the camel for the pleasure of tourists'. 20.09.1995, felt-tip pen and coloured pencil on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. VMyra-0004f).

way. Travel serves him to observe, to know, but also to reconsider, to re-evaluate, to distance, and in this process of criticism and demystification, architecture with its ideologies is no exception [Fig. 8].

Távora shared his travel experiences as an integral part of his pedagogical and project work. There are two possible ways: having listened to his travel stories or having shared the experience of travelling with him [Fig. 9].

Távora taught for many years *Theory of Architecture* at the FAUP in Porto and one of the constants of his lectures was to narrate his students what he had seen during his travels, adopting in his stories not a chronological sequence but a mixture of memories ordered according to the didactic need of the moment. And so, the excavations in Athens were brought closer to the ruins he had visited in Italy, or the experience of European landscapes complemented by the description of Taliesin's talking nature. His stories would also continue outside the classroom and linger on the desks of the atelier with his collaborators. In these cases, where experience is transmitted through storytelling, the listener uses imagination as a learning tool, while the storyteller uses memory. The concept of memory comes from *anamnesis*, which means reminiscence. It is an active function that starts from a multitude of sensations and moves towards a unity, understood through thought. *Anamnesis* means, literally, bringing images to mind. Remembrance (Mnéme) is, on the contrary, a passive function, the preservation of each sensation experienced, the physical recording of this sensation. Anamnesis is therefore to relive this feeling after an interval of time. And it is therefore possible to say, referring to the Platonic idea that learning is remembering, that the process of knowing does not come from experience alone, but also from remembering this experience.

All these concepts related to the form of experiencing reality and the way it becomes part of our consciousness, are linked to the theme of time. A 'measured', 'fixed' time of the event, and a 'lost' or 'forgotten' time of the memory of that event. And Távora creates two categories of time, a before and an *after*. There is the time he imprisons in the pages of his travel writings, which is measured, which is made up of numbers, names, dates. And it seems as if he intends to tell us that it is through 'measured', 'solid' time that architectural discipline is transmitted, that life is transmitted. But we understand that he does not manage to measure everything in his writings with the same ease, because there are incidents along the way, compressions, or enlargements of time, which have the effect of disengaging time from the linearity of experience, from consecution and therefore from measurability.

All this leads us to reflect on the transmission of the discipline of architecture, on what are the most appropriate forms of teaching an 'architecture lesson'. What does it mean, in architecture, to be a *master*? We could take two recognised forms to define its meaning. One can be a master by imitating a model: in this case, the master is simply a conduit that carries a wisdom



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that somehow does not belong to him. Or one can be a master by becoming an example: in this case transmission occurs through *Showing*, showing by doing or showing by telling.

Of Tavora, those who knew him remember the naturalness of being in things, a characteristic that allowed him to weave intense and authentic relationships with any person he met on his journey. An attitude that reflected an intense and all-embracing relationship with life, in its most banal and most cultured manifestations. And in this his knowledge of the world, culture entered not so much as a goal, but as a key to decoding it. He needed culture to be able to arrive at the laws that transversally united the geography of places, to construct a universal idea of time freed from chronology and anachronisms, and to recognise himself as part of a humanity understood as a whole community. This is why for him knowledge was never an instrument of division or prevarication, it represented a form of power, but for himself, because it gave him access to the knowledge of things.

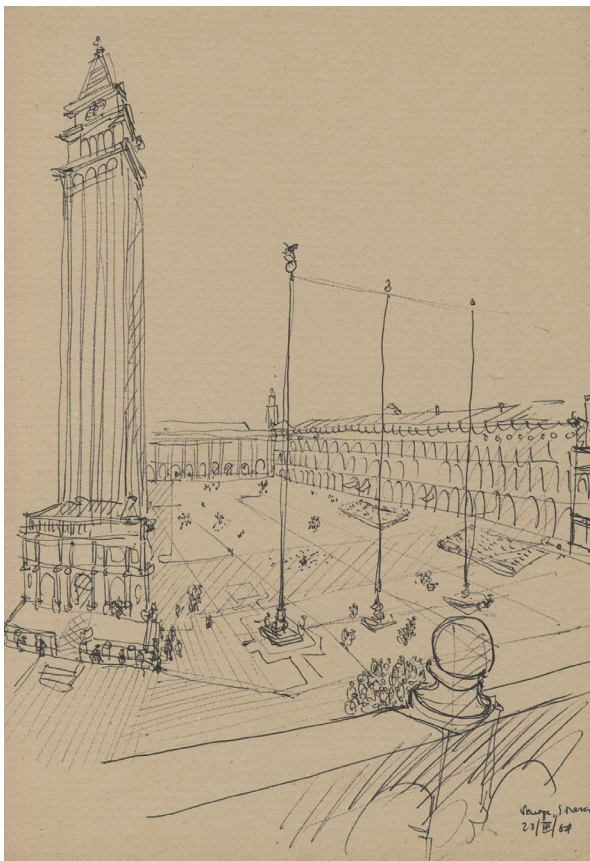
An idea of culture that he transferred to his students and collaborators with the awareness and kindness of one who knew he had received a privilege.

From the stories that follow we understand that he had no codified model to impose, but sought, through the naturalness of events and experiences, to teach people to pay attention to both the small things and the more marked events. Yet, this naturalness was not the result of a superficial attitude towards travelling, on the contrary, it was the fruit of an almost maniacal preparation for the journey: itineraries, places, architecture, everything was known beforehand and constituted a small baggage from which to begin the real experience. An experience didn't end with the journey but was transformed into another reality in the narratives of his travels.

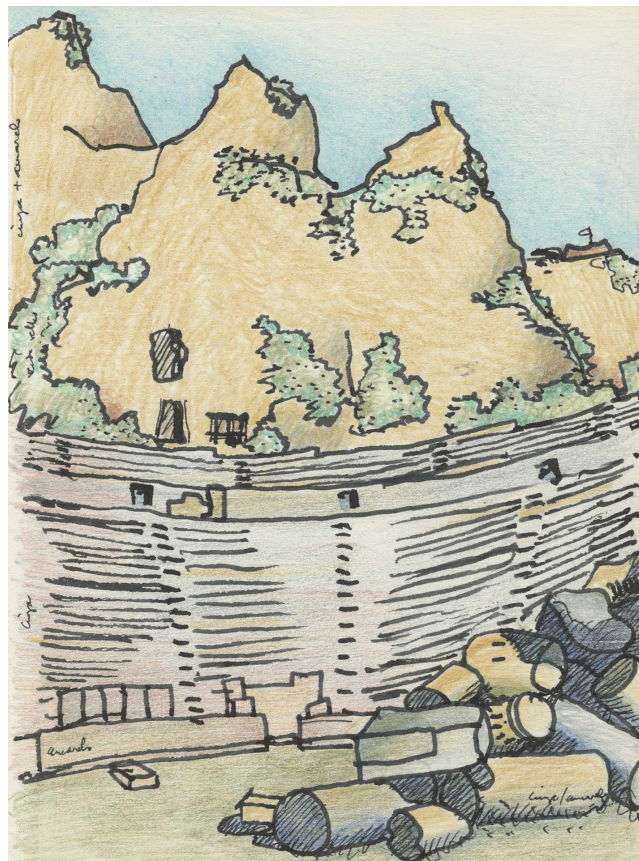
The narration of his journeys that he made in class or during the correction of a project in the atelier, was not intended to recount the episode itself, but

Fig. 10

Siena – Piazza Duomo (view of the column with the city symbol, the she-wolf of Siena)
29.03.1964, bic pen on paper
(FIMS/AFT, ref. VSiena-001).



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served to transfer through the pretext of that specific journey, a careful and profound reflection on a problem. He did not use chronology to narrate his travels, although he mastered the historical timeline with control and discipline, he knew the when of all the events that served to move through historical convention. His journeys, such as the Gulbenkian trip, reappeared between the lines of his stories, as evocations of moments that were functional to the teaching moment. However, despite his attempts to maintain an emotional distance from his travels, when transferring knowledge to his students, his fondness for certain places, such as Greece and Italy, was clear [Fig. 10, 11].

At a time when everyone was visiting northern Europe, as some of his students relate, he spoke enthusiastically and persistently about his travels to the Classics, told of the temples and their builders as if they were still current construction issues and themes. Hence the passion of many of his students for these destinations, which they visited probably with the same spirit and attention to things that Távora had [Fig. 12].

Architecture in these experiences was not the only object of knowledge, but a form of knowledge: it is always the world we observe, only sometimes we observe it through the lens of architecture.

The idea of travelling to get to know the world that he transmitted became so important that it became an almost obligatory and constant practice for students and professors in the Faculty of Architecture in Porto, where Távora taught for years.

Fig. 11
Venice, Piazza San Marco.
23.03.1964 Bic pen on paper,
(FIMS/AFT, ref. VVeniza-003).

Fig. 12
Theatre of Myra, Drawing
unsigned but dated, 21.09.1995
Marker and pencil on paper
(FIMS/AFT, ref. VMyra-0003f).

From Testimony to History

Remaining on the theme of the practices of knowledge transmission and the testimonial value of its experience, we should emphasise that the present text is also the culmination of a journey that began with the research work dedicated by the writer to Fernando Távora's *Diario de bordo*.

The *Diary*, kept by the author and preserved as a personal object, was not accessible for a long time and therefore did not immediately take the form of a testimony or an archive document. The private character of the *Diary* generated a growing reputation over time. Only on a few occasions had the author made it known to a small circle of friends, sharing a few pages, but a full reading in the presence of others had never taken place.

When the *Diary* was reopened by the author himself and in his presence, the experience had been transformed by the memory and the author's reading to the witness of his choice recalibrated the values and meaning of the events experienced. The manner chosen to make the text public for the first time is significant. In fact, the author did not simply entrust it to scholars, as happened at the same time for other archival documents, but forty years after it was written, opted for a rereading in the first person, aloud, allowing it to be recorded and accompanying it with his own comments.

This mode raised, during the drafting of the text, reflections relating to the nature and value of testimony, the theme of memory and how it is transmitted, and the process of transforming a private and personal object into an archive document.

The reading took place forty years after the journey, and this distance changed its meaning, updating the instantaneous annotation of events into a process, reading by voice, which is also instantaneous.

Through the reading, aimed at a first publication and prelude to subsequent publications, the figure of a witness, a listener and, through the recording authorised by Távora, of multiple, possible listeners was introduced into the genealogical chronology of the *Diary*. This passage activated a historiographic use of the object, which from an act of memory (first direct, then retraced verbally), re-entered the archive in the form of a document.²⁵

In the course of the reading, a groove was dug between the written page and the spoken narrative, the same one that is created between the *saying* and the utterance of each utterance. A gap that allowed the text to take a new autonomous path.

The recording of the reading – material fact and immaterial event at the same time – is now an archive document deposited at the Marquês da Silva Foundation in Porto. As such, the recording no longer has a chosen recipient and the witness, having fulfilled his or her task, can leave room for the figure

25 Paul Ricoeur, *La memoria, la storia, l'oblio*, (Milan: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2017): 226.

of the *Histor*. Placing the *Diary* object and its reading in the archive can contribute to the process of constructing the historical sources of Távora's work. The archive transformed the affective object into an objective document and represents the physical place that protects the traces left by the *Diary*. Hence each act of writing from the *Diary* moves the text – and its reading verbally – from the individual to the collective dimension.²⁶

The process of understanding the *Diary*, and the journey that produced it, led to the need to dialogue with some witnesses of Távora's life, field research that was structured as a sequence of interviews. These interviews gave rise to a collective narrative, the transcript of which forms part of this text. We chose to meet people, friends, students, colleagues, collaborators, who shared their travel experiences with Távora or witnessed his stories. They in turn told personal stories that intertwined with Távora's life stories.²⁷

In the interviews, one did not just collect memory, but contributed with one's presence and questions to create it. The telling of these stories was not an end but aimed at producing physical evidence: videos, recordings, transcripts, a final text.

The interview, as an instrument of investigation, has the advantage of creating a spatiality that is not that of a monologue, a narrator, and an audience, but is based on a dialogical bipolarity around an object that is usually a microphone or a video camera, thanks to which an 'observer' and an 'observed' can be distinguished.²⁸

In general, interviews situate the field of investigation in oral history, which by its very nature brings us back to the concrete, to the contingent, to the way in which people relate their personal experiences to their ideal of institution, to value systems and to the culture in which they live. And this world of theirs is not only intertwined with the world of Távora but also with the world of the questioner, because this kind of narration is the result of a listener but also of a specialised questioner, who has a project, who orients and directs in some way, creating a real space for the narration, which would be different if it were in the presence of another interviewer. This is why each of these interviews has two authors, the person asking the questions and the person answering, with one particularity: that once the dialogue has started, the distinction between these two roles is not always so clear.²⁹

26 Michel de Certeau writes: "The gesture that leads ideas back to places is (...) a historian's gesture. Understanding, for him, means analysing in terms of locatable productions the material that each method has first established according to its own criteria of pertinence" Michel de Certeau, *La scrittura della storia*, (Milan: Edizione JACA book, 2006): 60.

27 Personal stories, as Portelli says, have an autonomous existence in memory, and the contents of this memory are evoked and organised verbally in the interactive dialogue between the interviewee and the interviewer, i.e. between the source and the historian. Alessandro Portelli, *Oral histories. Tale, imagination, dialogue* (Rome: Donzelli, 2017): 59.

28 Personal stories, as Portelli says, have an autonomous existence in memory, and the contents of this memory are evoked and organised verbally in the interactive dialogue between the interviewee and the interviewer, i.e. between the source and the historian. See: Portelli, *Oral histories. Tale, imagination, dialogue*, 60.

29 Portelli, *Oral histories. Tale, imagination, dialogue*, 78.

Every single story collected was worthy of being told because it was not only part of a personal journey but also a piece of some important events in the history of Portuguese, and not only Portuguese, architecture in the second half of the 20th century.

Oral sources therefore force the historian to enter a relationship with the subjectivity of the narrator, and distinguishing what happened outside the narrator from what happened inside is not always an easy task. Indeed, interviews do not only inform us about the facts, but also about what those facts meant to those who experienced them. They tell us what they did, but also, for example, what they would have liked to do and failed to do because of judgments, second thoughts and changes of plan.³⁰

The dialogic mode implies being attentive to the relationship with the co-author, to his or her linguistic and cultural structure, to generate not just a chronicle but a true narrative. In interviews, the past and the present are intertwined. Evoking past events and experiences with Távora is a way of evoking the problems and events of the present. The conversations returned not only what happened in the past, how the professional or academic or personal relationship with Távora was born and grew, but also how the past acted and continued to act on the interviewee's lives.

Thus, the task in transcription was to simultaneously redefine the subjectivity and objectivity of the narrative, to reconstruct the ways in which memory, consciousness, and ideology constructed a sense of self in relation to the society in which these lives were formed.³¹

Although there is always a difference between the interviewer and the interviewee, a necessary boundary that contributes to the objectivity of the interview, this distance, which contains diversity, can be transformed in some moments into an experience of equality, into a sharing based on some common memories. And this limit, or boundary, allows the historian to explore the stories critically.

The interviews collected here, at least at the outset, were structured by imagining a frame of reference in which an attempt was made to lead the interviewee along specific channels of memory and experience. In fact, in each interview there came a point at which it was necessary to 'accept' the person, without forcing them to structure their narrative rigidly according to a scheme, but giving priority to what they wanted to say and leaving what they had left out for later with more specific and direct questions. The result was a personal narrative in which each person, while telling about Távora, was actually also telling about themselves and describing their temporal location and their specific narrative position.

30 Luisa Passerini, *History and subjectivity. Le fonti orali, la memoria* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1988): 226. The immateriality of things believed is as much history as the materiality of things happened. As Benjamin puts it, "a lived event is finite, or at least it is closed within the sphere of lived experience, whereas a remembered event is limitless, since it is only the key to everything that happened before and after it". See: Walter Benjamin, *Avant-garde and revolution* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973): 28.

31 Ronald Grele, "Introduction." In *Oral Histories. Tale, imagination, dialogue*, Alessandro Portelli ed., (Rome: Donzelli, 2007: IX-XVIII).

Then the dialogue performance had to be transformed into a written text, which had to be placed between a transcription and a critical text. This transition created quite a few problems, because whatever form of writing one aspired to, one could not forget that it had oral origins. The result would have been a text, yes, but the result of a performative narration.³²

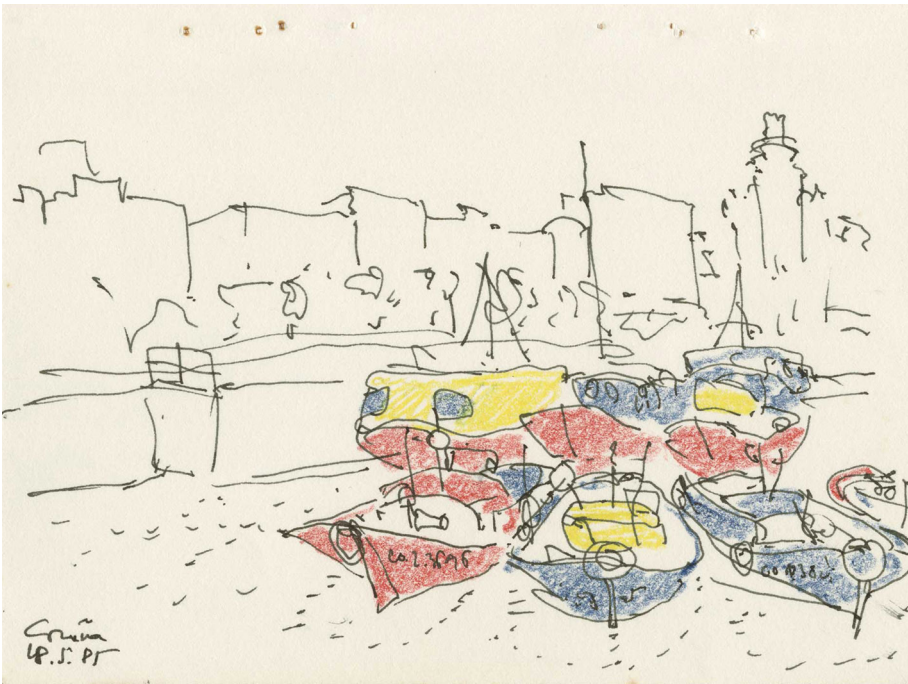
Therefore, the transition to writing did not exactly produce the original document, because just like translation, transcription is not a reproduction of the source document, but a representation, subject to a new grammar. It cannot be a faithful substitute because it would transform the oral performance into an unreadable written page.³³

This necessary freedom, however, had to suffer another manipulation also necessary at the time of writing the text, where it was decided to provide the answers of the interviewee and not the questions. What was lost in the transition? One loses, as one generally loses in any transcription of oral sources, the syntactics of the spoken language, such as the type of voice, the volume emission, the intonation. Despite all this, an attempt was made in the final text not to lose certain elements of the narrative of spoken language in order to preserve the rhetoric of the story, such as the discipline of tenses, metaphors, associations, the reconstruction of beginnings and endings, rhythm, and chronology.

The result is thus a choral narrative, in which we have invited the narrators and witnesses of parts of Fernando Távora's life to participate, inviting them from different times and places, in another space. We invited them to reflect on certain conditions of the journey that have become here in the text, narrative themes for discussion: the journey as a lesson in autonomy, the Gulbenkian journey, the journey as a pedagogical foundation, the journey as conviviality and ongoing formation.

32 Oral performance is unrepeatable, writing, on the other hand, is arranged in the fixity of the written word, it is made up of immobile texts, archives, libraries, a culture that finds it hard to relate to the concepts of forgetting, setting aside, discarding, typical of orality. This is why the two forms, orality and writing, seek support from each other. As Portelli states, each medium considers as a value what the other considers as a threat: orality arranges itself in time and tries to control it, writing arranges itself in space and in the immobility of its texts.

33 Gérard Genette, *Figures III. The discourse of the tale*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1972).



13 |

Witnesses³⁴

... the journey as a lesson in autonomy...

(Manuel Mendes)

...MM... The condition of travelling is something that has existed in Távora since the beginning of his life. We do not forget his origins, he was the son of a lady who came from the south of Portugal, and travelling between the north and south of Portugal was only natural. There are drawings of Távora as young as 12 that testify to these journeys, this sense of intermittence, of not staying in one place. A cult of moving, of shifting, belongs to him. Everything that had to do with his past, he remembered. When he first took me to his archive to introduce me to it, everything that appeared, perhaps without a precise location, he would remember it and comment on it, even if he had difficulty remembering the temporal location. He was a very curious person, with a great desire to live pleasantly, a great intellectual freedom, despite being forged by family conventions. He prayed twice a day, went to mass, life at home was very hard, very controlled, his father was a very strict figure. Mending his sisters' clothes, wearing out the soles of his shoes to the last, turning off the lights, these are episodes that Távora recounted and that marked him, from which he suffered. Then the suffering of his mother, then her absence and, on the other hand, a Spartan father and being brought up with maids. There was a cook to whom he always referred and whom he adored.

34 The interviews that produced the collective dialogue that follows were conducted at different times and respectively: Álvaro Siza (29 May 2013), Alexandre Alves Costa (10 July 2013), Fernando Barroso (10 July 2013), Sérgio Fernandez (10 July 2013), Alcino Soutinho (10 July 2013), Manuel Mendes (21 November 2013), António Bandeirinha (5 December 2013), Jorge Figueira (5 December 2013), Francisco Barata (14 May 2014), Edoardo Souto de Moura (July 2022).

Fig. 13
Coruña 18.05.1985, Pen and
coloured pencil on paper
(FIMS/AFT, ref. BViagem-01-
0002f).

Through his father's acquaintances he came into contact with many historians, from different areas, with those who championed the monarchist cause, for example João Gaspar Simões, who plays an important role in Távora's education. Some study trips dedicated to Portuguese culture are accompanied by him, trips in which they converse a lot. He has a very great influence on his art.

Basically, there is in Távora this sense of walking, of leaving the house, then over time the political cause and the Catholic faith join in, making travelling an instinct.

Travelling for Távora is always associated with a sense of discovery, at first with an attempt to understand Portuguese reality. Sometimes he organised camps, with Catholic or royalist youth. His first trips, therefore, had to do with getting to know the Portuguese territory, Lisbon, the South, the Alentejo, Chá architecture, some churches. He talks, referring to the time, mainly about religious architecture, I do not remember hearing him talk about civil architecture, maybe some houses. When he goes to CIAM in Dubrovnik with the Portuguese group, he says that no one would have paid attention to Portugal, as if he had an intrinsic need to create his own map, a distance of his own from these participations. He was marking a position, basically speaking to define himself. To distinguish himself from certain of his colleagues whom he jokingly called 'piristas', ugly people, meaning those who followed fashions, designing Breuer-style boxes, perhaps very pro-American. But he did this to make his creative space very clear, Le Corbusier was certainly a brilliant architect but he had to be able to be criticised, according to his point of view. An autonomy that was a kind of armour, personal, used to relate to what was around him, to measure it, after having observed it well, criticised it well, absorbed it well, and invented it, not re-invented it, invented it in his case. A kind of science, a gestalt. And this is the basis of his idea of travel.

So, one cannot make an isolated discourse on the journey, in his case, because everything was mixed in him.

After Távora's death, in deep crisis before the task of putting the material in his private archive in order, I realised that the 1947 travelogue is an epistolary diary, letters he sent to his fiancée. It is a diary that unites three dimensions: the discovery of the sentimental dimension of love – the discovery of the possibility, the confirmation of a love affair, the possibility of marriage and the related doubts – the involvement of his professional practice, and then the travel impressions. His fiancée was in Portugal, and he wrote her three four letters a day. Publishing this kind of document is very delicate because I did not want to clash with the love dimension, which requires respect: on the other hand, I wanted to bring back the dimension of the travel experience and I did not want to erase an important dimension of a journey that was a process of clarification of his person-space, which is closely connected to his professional space (in 1947 he is in strong disagreement with himself, he thinks he is not doing a good Portuguese architecture, he sees that there are

many regionalisms, his friends tell him how he has to do... and he wants to do other things). In the end, he seizes the pretext of a job his brother is doing designing a tunnel under the waterfront in Porto and that, for this project, he must make a trip to Europe. Távora joins his brother. The itinerary begins in Barcelona, then passes through the south of France, enters Italy via the Ligurian coast, sees Venice, and arrives no further south than Naples. And in each place, he writes. He writes in hotels, he writes in cars, he always writes... and always letters. He is not very specific regarding descriptions of architecture, he says what he has visited and sometimes does not add much more, he makes a few remarks about the landscape, especially in Switzerland, a country that particularly strikes him. In Italy he is interested in certain monuments, for example St Peter's. Then I think he goes to Luxembourg and Paris, from where he continues directly, not commenting any more. Already towards the end he begins to realise that the space of love is losing its meaning, it had started out as a kind of novel marked by nostalgia, by lack, and as this dimension becomes clearer, the fear increases, until at a certain point he makes a statement along the lines of "I can only marry architecture", indeed he says this on several occasions along the journey. And it becomes clear that it is a relationship destined to end, and it does, in fact, end about a year after the trip. So much so that, still during the trip, he explicitly asks the recipient of the letters to put them aside and lend them to him on his return because he needs to revise his travel notes, with the excuse of writing a book, which he obviously never wrote.

The country he visits before this trip is Spain, Seville, Toledo, Madrid, Santiago de Compostela. He goes there to meet friends involved in the monarchist cause. But he wanted to be an artist, a man of culture, and he participates in any ideological or political debate from a cultural perspective. Without this important assumption, one cannot understand what 'third way' means.

He also goes to the United States to confirm things he is already certain of, and he goes there with a whole series of doubts about America. He does not believe in America, he said that we have a lot to teach the Americans about what world culture is, that their buildings are copies. He goes there to confirm and to learn, but he doesn't go there with a sense of surprise, or rather, if we want to talk about surprise, we must always do so in relation to that autonomist condition he had. Everything is always in relation to an 'I': I am here, I exist, I know how to read and interpret all this. It is a condition of discovery, yes, but always starting from his being, always starting from what he has as certainty, as his own space to think, as autonomy.

(Jorge Figueira)

...JF... Távora is a man of sensory, physical experiences, he is a storyteller, able to switch easily from historical to personal narration. In class, he was able to transform intensely lived experiences into a cultural discourse. There is no

doubt that architecture is a spatial fact for him, but first and foremost it was life experience. What he conveyed had this phenomenological component, the smells, the circumstances, being in a place or not. The world of images for him could not replace the experiential world. His whole discourse is a discourse of journeys, it is a continuous narrative of displacements, small everyday displacements, and displacements along the great story. The temporal displacement goes from the small episode to the big episode in the big story of architecture. Without wishing to give any negative meaning to this statement, I would say that, rather than a theorist, Távora is a narrator of journeys.

...The Gulbenkian journey...

(Álvaro Siza)

...ÁS... The idea I have of the Gulbenkian trip is that he planned it meticulously, he prepared all the contacts he would later have, in the universities he went to, always with recommendations to get in touch with certain people. Recommendations that also came to him from reports here in Portugal. One of the professors he mentions often in the *Diary* and who helped him a lot in the organisation on the spot was Robert Smith, a scholar who had been in Porto for a long time. He also had contacts through the Embassy, and this enabled him to prepare for meetings that he considered important. Nothing came as a surprise, because he had read a lot and CIAM had helped prepare him. Then he did an incredible job, because he wrote every day. This shows a duality of his character because he was very spontaneous, not programmed, but on this occasion, he had a task to perform, which he knew was very important, and he completed everything thoroughly. Tremendous discipline.

The drawings in the *Diary* are wonderful. They reflect the atmosphere of the sites visited and, at the same time, are very analytical, with details, measurements. They reveal a characteristic of his: great intuition, great power to grasp, even visually, but, at the same time, a great rational, rigorous spirit, willing to learn. He had both qualities, and the drawings reflect this. Some of Aldo Rossi's writings come to mind for comparison, such as his *Scientific Autobiography*, a comparison by opposition because, in those pages, Rossi describes his memoirs but does not possess the same discipline of stopping time, of writing time down. Rossi says that there comes a time in life when it is necessary to lose oneself, to make a *voyage of perdition*, like Dante, but it seems that Távora, in his *Diary*, does not want to lose himself, or at least tries not to. I believe there was a moment when Távora realised that this journey was really the possibility of getting *lost*. He had a strict schedule, it was difficult to get lost, but the *Diary* shows a significant evolution, at the beginning there is a preoccupation with learning experiences, with the passage of time and the onset of a certain fatigue, the discourse takes on a broader scope and references to family, to nostalgia, appear punctually, because he was very attached not only to his family but to the whole environment in which he lived.

The *Diary* is an extraordinary human document. Távora never undertook to publish it, I think out of a kind of modesty, because it testifies to very intimate aspects, comments on private life. But he was like that, even in relation to magazines, not only did he not encourage the publication of his architecture, but he also almost didn't want it. He did not make the slightest effort to publicise his work, and even thought it was unfair. He thought it could be confused with a kind of cult of personality. His generation still had this modesty.

(Edoardo Souto de Moura)

...**ESM**... In the US, for example, he went not to study but to confirm his already formed impressions. At that time all architects, as a sort of post-graduate obligation, went to visit Paris or France, for Le Corbusier, and the more radical ones to Germany, to understand the Modern Movement. Távora displaced everyone and went to Japan because he realised that, not so much the Modern Movement itself, but the way architectural culture had arrived after the Second World War, was wrong. It was necessary to find another method, other convictions. Even before the *Diary* editions, I knew about his visit to Taliesin, his meeting with Kahn or Chermayeff.

(Francisco Barata)

...**FB**... Távora recounted that, at some point, he had felt the need to go outside, to see how architecture was taught elsewhere and, in the 1960s, the destination could only be the USA, where modernity in teaching and the profession was said to be. He left to see the change but was also driven by his interest in Wright, which complemented his passion for Le Corbusier. And Wright was the link to Japan.

For him, the Gulbenkian trip was not only important as a response to reflections, but a need also to change everyday life. He needed to reflect on himself, to resolve doubts, and that trip was a kind of retreat, alone, making completely different, hard experiences, and with the certainty that it would be an enriching trip, one that would also enrich us who were waiting for him in Portugal.

When he told it, it seemed to last a year.

Távora goes to the USA to confirm to himself that he is 100 per cent European. He does not like everyday life in the USA, even if he makes amusing architectural experiences. In the background is the lack of information and censorship that existed in Portugal. Any knowledge of architecture, for example, was on the original language texts, French, English, translations were forbidden. If information did not arrive, someone had to go and get it. He went to confirm what he already felt inside himself. The cultural and political limitations were so repressive and oppressive that he felt the need to go out and check.

Every Portuguese, in a country with a dictatorship that closed its borders, knew that to acquire certain knowledge and information, one had to leave the country and then return. This was the case for Távora. His account of the Gulbenkian trip

and the trips to Italy with his older brother gave me the desire to travel to Italy. Távora made me realise that visiting Italy was fundamental for an architect. And in his generation, going to Paris, Berlin, Brussels, was almost obligatory, many people of his age chose these destinations.

Going outside was necessary in order not to feel suffocated, but then these trips were necessary and helped us to get to know our reality better. Here is another lesson from Távora: it is important to go out and then come back. And also, that a journey must be redone, an itinerary retraced, even if only mentally. Because maturity and gaining experience makes us see things again with a different perspective.

(António Bandeirinha)

...AB... Távora once told me that the drawings he made for the Gulbenkian trip he was no longer able to replicate, because the right atmospheres were no longer created. He made many trips after that, in company, in groups, and there he could not always draw. He said it was necessary to be alone to be able to draw. Drawings are our company when we travel alone, he said, we draw naturally. As he drew, he tried to get to know the person or character who had built or thought up that architecture or object or work of art, tried to learn from him, even if it was a fictitious image. He did not follow a protocol, a sequence of gestures, because for him it was as natural as spending time with friends, spending an afternoon away from the studio, eating, breathing. The basic condition was that there should be naturalness and freedom, and when he had constraints, he tried to turn them into something natural, something pleasant. He couldn't do things out of obligation.

...MM... The Gulbenkian trip was, as always, one for which he had everything planned. A trip about which, however, he never reports explicitly, except on a few occasions. Everything is hinted at. The Diary gives me the feeling of being a collection of post-it notes, notes for a later text. The only real text in the Diary is Taliesin. And the pretext is Wright. In that meeting he brings together all the reflections, not only of architecture but of his life. He remains disarmed in front of a ruin, an abandoned place that evokes the memory of an enormous tragedy. He remains disarmed in front of a man who needs rebuild his life so many times, his love disasters. Taliesin is a kind of confrontation with the power of life, with the problem of life that is death, with what time does to life and what we try to stem. In those pages is the confrontation with death and in this idea of death he encompasses everything, America, the war, himself, his dramatic vision of the future. The pages are not written out of the blue, we know that he wrote little notes in the moment, but then he structured the text. Also, because he did not have the time, in the moment, to write. It has nothing to do with getting excited about Wright, about his architecture, it is just related to these universal thoughts, brought back to his life experience.

His interest in Japan also has to do with China, the East India Company, Macao, the Jesuits, an interest motivated by the Portuguese presence in this

culture. One can read, in these pages, a feeling of strong identity, its roots. See how he draws the roots of trees. He tells with drawing this dance between the artificial and the natural, very subtle, delicate, highly programmed. The precision in the details, the walls, the divisions of spaces, transparency, distances (a theme that would interest him throughout his life). Even in this journey it is always him, always him.

Távora did not speak openly about the Gulbenkian trip, I believe he constructed a mythological image of it, even mythologising himself to some extent. And I do not say this in a critical way. It was part of his project of sharing, of social complicity. He was an aristocrat, a conservative. He told me in an interview that he was the most rational person in the world and that by nature he could not deprive himself of things, he kept them all, out of a kind of rejection of the idea of instability. Instability in its broadest sense, instability of modernity, of couples, of life, he didn't want conflict. It is his specific condition, but it is precisely because of this specific condition that Távora is a kind of Vitruvius, of Le Corbusier. This condition gives him an extraordinary humanity, an openness that allows him to enter into relationships with everyone, while remaining true to himself.

...JF... I realised in retrospect, when I read the Diary, how strong the Gulbenkian journey was, a rigorous exercise, showing his disciplined side, not without a certain intimate connotation. When he recounted it – he was my professor in the second half of the 1980s – he was relatively enigmatic. Only reading the Diary showed me how intimate that journey was, how personal it was and how many consequences it produced in him as a professional and as a man, how much it shaped his personality and his knowledge of architecture. What interests me about that trip are the moments of rejection, the moments when he did not feel well, the way he viewed the American world with suspicion. For me, the Diary is an incredible document of how, not from the left, but from the perspective of a conservative, one comes to a rejection of American culture. We are used to thinking of the classic Cold War dichotomy between the liberal American view and communism, but Távora shows, in his undeniably conservative view, an unease at a world that is unravelling, an unravelling in terms of scale (see the pages on Washington), an unease in social relations, an unease at the mass presence of women in the social sphere (what he calls the secretaries). It is an important document of a man nourished by an ancient culture, deeply European, deeply Portuguese, reacting to the emergence of a world that is not yet the America of Kennedy or Bob Dylan, but towards which he feels a brutal, merciless gap. The America he finds is not Venturi's America, Kahn had not yet exploded, it is something that does not interest him, that adds nothing to him. Even if Venturi wouldn't have interested him anyway. I think Távora knew what he was getting into, but he is surprised by the magnitude of what he sees, the scale. The revision of the Modern Movement belongs more to countries of Latin culture, to South America, not to the United States or the English-speaking world. Távora understands that modern architecture, Le Corbusier, despite its value, the structure

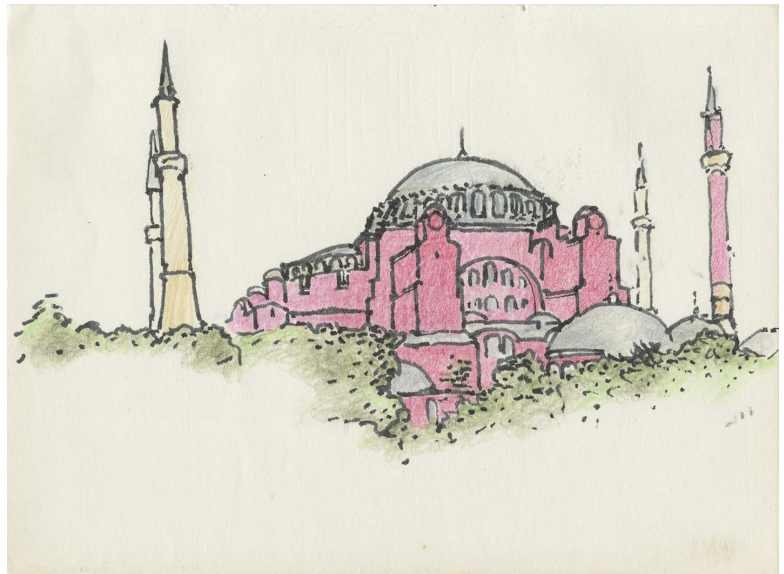
that had so excited many architects, is not enough for him, it does not excite him fully. The unease he feels in the contemporary world I think is already all there in the Gulbenkian journey, undefined, but it is already there.

The stage in Japan is not so interesting, because it is him with his traditions, he is not uncomfortable because he has history, ancient Portuguese culture, Wright on his side.

It is the opinion of many that he tried to forget about that trip, or at least it came out with time in a subliminal form. He never delivered a report of the trip, it is symptomatic, it remained in his unconscious.

... the journey as a pedagogical foundation...

...ÁS... Távora never spoke explicitly about travelling, because he had such a rich life, in terms of places and contacts, that he never had to refer to a single trip. Certainly, the Gulbenkian trip was fundamental in his formation. I was there to greet him on his departure, perhaps still a student. In the school he told us a lot about this trip, as was obvious, and it was a very influential experience in the reform of teaching that was taking place in those years. But I had never seen his travel notebooks. It was only when I wrote the introduction to the facsimile publication



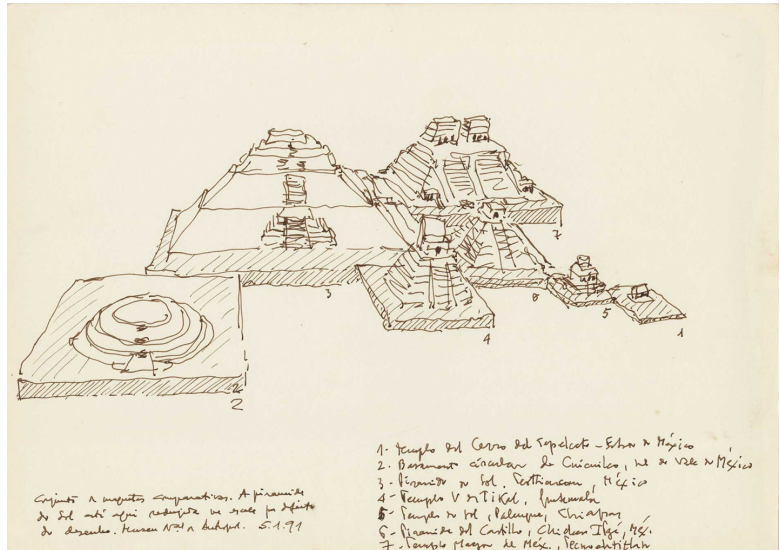
that I read the Diary in its entirety for the first time. Before that I had heard parts of it read, publicly, at school. I was at his side when, with great emotion, he read about his visit to Frank Lloyd Wright, to the Taliesin Mound. A knowledge of that trip shared with the students. His lectures were always very well structured, but the structure was not perceived, they appeared very open, very free, he would start talking about one topic and move on to others. A very punctual lesson organisation structure, but never suffocating, never rigid.

From reading the Diary you can see that he was looking for notions of planning, and it is understandable because at that time in our school planning was marginal, it almost did not exist. There was a historical slant on the city, a professor of urban planning who had trained in Paris, Moreira da Silva, but it was an outdated concept. Portugal was lagging behind; most cities did not have a Master Plan. That is why Távora took a great interest in the subject, to bring it to the School, continuing Director Carlos Ramos' commitment to bring knowledge to the School. In the Diary there are also many considerations about the architecture he sees, good and bad. But when he arrives in front of Wright, there he surrenders completely. That is why he left out many architectural things from the journey and focused on learning about the Faculty's orientation.

Fig. 14
Istanbul – Hagia Sophia,
perspective of the Blue Mosque
30.09.1995 Marker and colour-
ed pencil on paper (FIMS/AFT,
ref.VIstambul-0005f).

(Sérgio Fernandez)

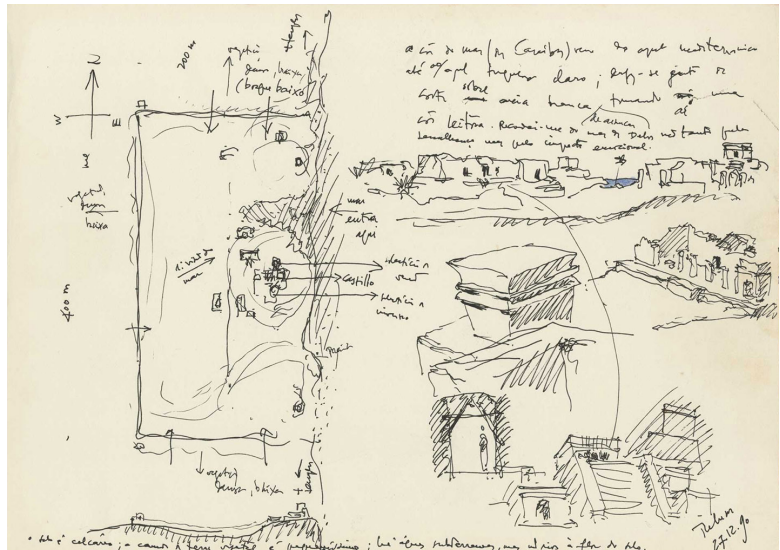
...SF... When Távora left for Lisbon, destination USA, I was there and the trip, at that time, seemed almost unthinkable. We said goodbye to him in a kind of celebration. The Gulbenkian trip would then reappear in his lectures, sometimes he would read extracts from the Diary and when he read the Wright part, he would cry, in front of the students. And then he would recount the little things, which were apparently trivial, but were the culture of the places. He was modest in his behaviour, but aware of his qualities. The transmission of knowledge for him was a kind of moral duty, he had to leave the achievements to others.



15

(Alexandre Alves Costa)

...AAC... His goal on the Gulbenkian trip was to return and bring back information and knowledge for the School. On that trip he was both student and professor. He prepared him very well, with incredible seriousness. After all, he was a very organised person, tidy, the archive, the objects he collected. The way he built his collection is incredible, an educated rationality. He tried to assemble a collection in which there was at least one work for every artist he thought was important in Portuguese culture. He certainly did not tell everything; he made a selection aimed at what he needed at that moment. He did not recount the journey itself, the journey for the sake of the journey, but the part of the journey he needed to argue at a given moment. He never said, for example, "I am going to give a lecture on my travels"; he used the trip as teaching material and never presented the Gulbenkian trip in its entirety.



16

Fig. 15
Mexico City "Set of comparative models. The Pyramid of the Sun is depicted on a reduced scale because of the drawing. National Museum of Anthropology' 5.01.1991, pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref VMéxico-0022).

Fig. 16
Tulum archaeological site 27.12.1990, pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref VMéxico-0002).

His lessons were very much based on the things he knew directly, and he had a very important quality, which was his ability to mix important and minute facts. He gave importance to temples or to a lady's shoes at the same time. He did not make distinctions of importance; he was very communicative but his communication was very simple. He taught us that everything has a relationship with the whole. There is no architecture on one side and life on the other, it is a whole. His lesson was to integrate architecture with life, a matter

of common sense, exactly the opposite of the star architect, which he considered ridiculous. Architecture was not a constant obsession for him. If you were in a restaurant, you thought about food, not architecture. This natural way of seeing things, common sense, simplicity, was his great lesson. At times, for those who did not know him well, he might even have seemed an uneducated person, because he did not intellectualise, he said that, by writing, he wanted to be understood even by children.

...SF... We also travelled a lot to Portugal. He had a very intense relationship with Portugal, in all his things there was Portugal. I remember a trip we used to take with students, to Tomar and Evora. And once Távora read a letter to King João de Castillo, the letter, made up, of an architect who was not being paid his fee.

...AAC... Távora adored Portuguese architecture, he spoke about it with great passion and always as if he was the author of each work. Or he would refer to the author of the work as my colleague, even if it was 16th century architecture. The monument was not a myth for him, if there was an error in an ancient architecture he would try to do better. He taught us that being ancient is not the same as being correct, and in this way, he showed that the problems faced in other eras were identical to those faced in contemporary architecture. He mixed epochs, he talked about the forms necessary to solve architectural problems. He was interested not so much in ancient things as in the architecture of all times. While he was not attracted to beautiful landscapes. He was not indifferent to them but was more interested in the *artificium*, in nature transformed by man.

I started teaching Portuguese architectural history because he insisted, he believed that we should create a discipline dedicated to the history of Portuguese architecture, because he believed there was a specificity. I knew nothing and he advised me not to read many books but to travel around Portugal. Sometimes he would go with me on these trips and during the lunch break he would draw on napkins, question me. He would make drawings and ask me which architecture they referred to. And, if I didn't answer, he would say "ah, you are still not properly prepared, you still have a lot of travelling to do!" He wouldn't say "studies", he would say "travels", and I travelled all over Portugal. He would force us.

I remember that once on one of these napkins he drew the entire architecture of an Italian architect who lived in Portugal. I keep that drawing religiously because it is a synthesis of all his work.

...ESM... In class Távora tried to talk about current issues and kept the nostalgic aspects to himself. But sometimes he used trips to criticise our designs, without great theoretical discourse, he explained by drawing on our drawings, with a Parker, and I still do the same with my students today. He would explain the proportions of the spaces, the functions, drawing big circles. By the end of the revision, the drawing, on which I had spent the night, was an amalgam of marks. But I understood what he wanted from my design. It was a gestural approach to form, not showing us the form but the correct proportions.

He would read excerpts from the *Diary* written on the Gulbenkian trip, sometimes, but very rarely. In fact, what he did most frequently was to read at home and then pass on the experience of the trip in class, he would refer to it to explain a theme. We students were not very interested because we were all 'revolutionaries'. There was only one group that found the experience interesting, but the others saw it as a reflection on the past and we were interested in the future, the radical future. I had not yet realised that that past was the basis for any future, that everything was in continuity, as Benjamin explains very well. We listened to him, he was an engaging person when he spoke, but the direct association between our expectations and what he was describing was not easy to understand. He gave a lecture on Greek sanctuaries, which was wonderful for its relation to contemporary architecture but, at the time, we did not understand it. Only now, when I design, do I understand the importance of Távora's teaching.

He was my professor in my first year, he changed me for life. My initiation into architecture was thanks to him. Then I met Siza, but I was already in my fourth year. With Siza, who is more introverted, I learnt by observing him. He designed, I observed without copying, the reference would have been too obvious. I tried to understand what his resources were at the moment of creating the project. Siza liked the Modern Movement, it is very Aalto-esque, very expressionist. Távora, who was the true modernist, taught me that the Modern Movement is a variant of Classicism. It was no coincidence that he explained Le Corbusier's house layouts by associating them with Renaissance palaces.

...FB... Távora taught us to be constantly alert whenever we moved. There did not have to be a specific objective of the journey, such as visiting a place. Távora gave importance to the journey as a movement towards that place. He suggested that we always travel with a tape measure in our pocket or know the size of our palm. Travelling is always a learning and always an experience of architecture. With him, I also learnt the importance of contact with people, from an emotional, affective perspective, for an architect a fundamental complement to learning from travelling. When you take a trip, he told us, you don't just look at or focus on architecture, it is a broader experience. He said there were days when one learned more by being away from a monument, avoiding the canonical approach to give attention to other things. He was interested in everyday life, people's tastes, food. He often compared architecture to cooking. Then he wanted to see paintings, sculptures, old objects, books, antiques.

Afterwards, even in class, he would never recount the route of the trip in sequence, but the experiences that the trip had enabled him to have. That is why the lesson of the journey was so important in our school, so much so that even today, in the second year of the design course, the most important moment is the organisation of the study trip, halfway through the academic year. The trip is so decisive that we professors notice a radical change in the relationship with the students, and in the students' relationship with architecture. There is a before and after of the trip. These are trips that we make by coach, sometimes we spend twenty-four hours together in the same vehicle, or in campsites, all together.

For Távora, teaching was as fundamental as architectural practice. Every journey was not only for him, but also had as its objective teaching, transmission. Learning and transmission cannot be separated in his case.

I, like everyone who worked with him, had more important teachings in his studio than I could have had in a university classroom. It's not that he lectured in the studio, but the first time I heard about Albini, Palazzo Rosso and Palazzo Bianco in Genoa was when I was working with him on a project for an exhibition in Porto. He gave me the idea that you can intervene on heritage in that way, which was not common here.

With the 'trip around the world', he managed to construct a discourse so learned, so rich, so seminal for younger and also so different professors. He created a group without having the intention to do so. A large group, which interpreted different parts of his rich, diverse, stimulating, attractive discourse, a discourse that was not only theoretical and disciplinary, which then characterised our School. But Távora did not create copies of himself.

... **AB...** When I was a student, I am talking about after 25 April, T. taught *Theory and History of Architecture*, his role in the School was felt, a ritual was perceived around him, his lectures were attended by assistants and other personalities.

The lesson started naturally but after a few minutes we were thrown into a world created by him, which fascinated us. He narrated and we were able to enter his stories. It was an elaborate memory, but not prepared in front of a mirror, a memory travelled over and over again, with intensity, and he then knew perfectly well how to use it to win us over.

Today I know that his lectures contained a lot, for example, about the Gulbenkian trip, even though I did not understand it at the time. I listened to his lectures and had no idea that in the background of what he said there was that journey. Nor did he refer to it in a direct form. He only talked about it if it was necessary to recount a specific episode and motivate the students, he did not use his specific experience. But many of his teachings were evidently related to the journeys: Taliesin was evident, Katsura was evident. He spoke about it in the terms described in the Diary, which I did not know at the time. But when I later read it, I resented his lessons. And not only that trip. The places he had visited he recounted in the form he had experienced during his visit. For an architect, the empirical clarification of space is fundamental.

In Távora's teaching, there is a direct relationship between travel and pedagogy, just as there is a direct relationship between architectural practice and pedagogy. During Távora's lectures, one could feel the presence of the experience of travel, and he conveyed to us the sense of travel as the foundation of teaching. But the reality, as in Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, was in the story, it was his experience told.

Constant in Távora's vision is the idea of a close and direct relationship between historical culture – in the traditional sense of the civilisation of time

– with pedagogy. He spoke of the powers of *petit histoire*. Even in teaching, Távora did not betray chronology, he did not seek anachronisms but a continuity without time scans, even though he knew the historiographical scans perfectly well and placed everything correctly in time. The funny part was that he told, for example, the pyramid of Saqqara by inventing an architect who was like us, who woke up, who drew, and so he had the ability to bring us closer to the protagonists and make us think that although they lived 5000 years ago, they were like us. The wonderful thing was his sense of humanity, in a double sense, the human being and humanity understood as a chain of knowledge. He believed in humanity, but not in an ideological way, he believed that there was a continuity in the world, a community of which we, as architects, with our designs, were part. It was not the centrality of Man desired by Humanism; it was a centrality of the community of humans. It never strayed far from the earth, from its bowels, from the matter of which we are made. And perhaps, in the end, architecture is this bond with the human, with matter.

...JF... The memories I have of him, as a student, is of a Távora interested in the classical world, in Greece, in Egypt. I have no recollection of him talking about America with the same enthusiasm with which he talked about the classical world, but I think it was a journey so imbued in his being that he had no need to externise it. In the text on the *Organisation of Space*, which he wrote in 1962, the writing loses its genuineness, there is a veil of pessimism, the tone of someone writing about something he already knows will not come to pass. Somewhat going against the intentions and the positive, revolutionary attitude that is typical of the School of Porto. It creates a gap, which is a bit of a political divide, between left-wingers who believe in evolution and a new man, and a more conservative vision tinged with cultural pessimism, to which Távora belongs. All this reaches its peak in SAAL. In the Diary there is cheerfulness, dialectics, while the text on the *Organisation of Space* is a mental operation, also one of suffering, but not the suffering of the pages of the *Diary* that imply a struggle, a playful space.

Travel as conviviality and lifelong education

...ÁS... I travelled a lot with Távora, for business or simply for pleasure and it was always an extraordinary occasion. It was a pleasure because he was always a person of good humour, great vitality, and love of life. For me, they are all unforgettable moments. Among the business trips, I particularly remember Macau. I had been invited for an assignment and asked Távora to accompany me, because the Macao project included new buildings but also an intervention on the old town, with very interesting parts. He worked mainly on the old city, together with Antonio Madureira. We organised an office in Hong Kong. Each time we went to Macau, we stayed about a fortnight and went there at least six times; therefore, I have many memories of those trips. During working hours, it was a stimulating experience in professional terms, during free time, at dinner and after dinner, it was an interesting and also fun conviviality.

But the trips were many, most often with a group of friends, Souto Moura, Eugenio Cavaca. Many were holiday trips, lasting up to a month, but with Távora the trips were never just holidays. I remember trips to Greece, Egypt, Colombia, many times to Brazil. Long before these I took part in a trip, of pupils and teachers, to Paris, in the 1950s, for a major Picasso exhibition, with a Gulbenkian grant. That was the pretext, but as was evident, we took advantage of this occasion to visit the city and the works of Le Corbusier. We later made trips to Finland, but I think already in the 1960s, to visit the work of Alvar Aalto. With the Portuguese Cultural Centre we went to India, visited Le Corbusier, then Bombay and Ahmedabad. For me it was the first time in India, he had already been there. In Delhi, we stayed for two or three days, we stayed in a hotel a bit far from the centre and early in the morning we took a taxi, actually small cars, small motorbikes I would say, in which a maximum of two people could get in. He noticed, when we got into the taxi, that the driver had turned off the meter and asked him to turn it back on, the man stopped and let us out. At our signals no taxi, after this episode, picked us up and we were left in the middle of a street, forced to walk; he commented "what a stupid thing I did, taxis are so cheap and we are walking!" We started walking, walking, we were far from the centre. Then we got to the centre and stopped in the Parliament area, there was a wide avenue with gardens. I stood on one side of the street, and he stood on the other side and suddenly, while I was there drawing, there were little monkeys next to me and I heard a loud bang. It was the mother monkey, who had jumped on my neck because she thought I might attack her cubs and Távora, seeing all this scene from across the road, was laughing. Hearing him later recount and comment on this scene was amusing.

What was interesting, beyond the banquet, was that he prepared the trips. He already had a knowledge base of places because he was a cultured person. Then he would study the guidebooks, the maps. When we visited Greece, for example, we visited the sanctuaries, from Crete to Mykonos, and he would arrive prepared on the routes, the buildings to see. When we got there, he would give us real



17



18

Fig. 17

Olinda, 'o pequeno almoço servido por Mara'; Casa de Janete e Acácio [B..] 29.10.1994, colour marker and pencil on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref.VBrasil-0008f).

Fig. 18

Arequipa – Church of St. Francis. 26.10.1997, Bic pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. VPeru-0015).

lessons. We would go to the sanctuary of Delphi, and he would comment on the building, the spatial organisation. Then, after the friendly lessons, we would go to the beach, with sleeping bags. Fun and learning were combined.

Once I was invited to Harvard for six months and at the end of the course it was customary to organise a critique session, in which the course holder invited a foreign professor. I invited Távora. On that occasion, with Peter Testa, we took a trip and went to Taliesin, which he knew well, renting a car. We slept in a house owned by Taliesin. It was November 1988.

(Alcino Soutinho)

...AS... The trip to Greece was an unforgettable one. Távora, although an aristocrat by birth, was as comfortable in the queen's salon as in the last of the taverns. He had an absolute ability to fit in. We rented a car and went on a historical tour. He already knew Greece very well and spoke about the places with great knowledge and culture but always with irony. He explained everything in accessible language. Each of us had the task of studying one of the architectures we would encounter and explaining it to all of us. My assigned task was Delphi.

Later we went to Egypt, then back to Greece. I don't want to say it was a sad trip, but you could feel that Távora was in his final phase, and we, a small group of friends, accompanied him in his desire to return to Greece. It was bad to realise that tourists had invaded Greece and taken it over.

...SF... The trip to Greece was extraordinary. We started to see Greece with him. It was ruins and he was reconstructing what was no longer there. We spent a whole night in front of the Acropolis, discussing the Parthenon, until dawn. He spoke as if he were Pericles. We reached such a point of exhaustion that we made a petition asking Távora not to visit ruins less than 20 cm high!

...AAC... But on those ruins we would then, on the spot, project hypotheses.

...FB... One of the reasons that led me, for example, to visit Greece, at a time when everyone preferred to go to London, Amsterdam, Germany, was the story Távora told me about her trip to Greece: the best way to get a good look at the Parthenon, passing through Stoá and continuing to the top. He changed my vision. He talked about the Greek landscapes, the Greek food, the Greek women, and he told it with such emotion that he was able to convince everyone to visit those places. And we would find ourselves postponing our classic trips to see Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, preferring Greece to have that complete experience that he told us about. He used to explain to us how crucial the playful part was in a trip as much as the learning.

...ESM... With Távora I made about 20 trips, more or less – Macao, China, Greece, the United States, Machu Picchu – although we planned more than we managed to make. Journeys with Távora and with Siza. Although sometimes I couldn't, sometimes Siza and sometimes Távora. But there were also the trips to

Portugal, the conferences we attended following this story of the School of Porto, when they invented the trilogy: Távora, Siza and me. An invention that makes me uncomfortable, that forces me to close a triangle in which I don't recognise myself but from which it is now difficult for me to escape because I am the one who comes after Siza. Instead, we are different. Távora was more versatile, a scholar, he did research, Siza more instinctive, more artistic, more gestural, and these are his innate qualities. Távora's architecture, while not underestimating his other qualities, was the result of study, research, a path. Not that Siza does not do research, but he disguises it with his artistic intensity.

For each trip, Távora would prepare thoroughly, study, go in depth and when we arrived at the locations, he would explain live. He explained and made analogies. He believed in a universal architecture, the Greeks, the Incas, the Chinese.

It was a trip to Macao for professional reasons but did not have much luck. Siza was in charge of the project for the expansion of the city, Távora the recovery of the old town. He wanted the height of the new buildings not to exceed the Jesuit monasteries and churches, considering a silhouette of the city that would give space to the new architecture without contrasting in height with the old. It was like forbidding people to drink water in the desert because they were all anxious about the new, they would never accept such a restriction. We had lunch together almost every day, we talked about architecture, and I remember the analogies he drew between Roman and Chinese houses, offering us the idea that there is a universal architecture, starting with the shadows of Plato's cave and then moving on to the archetypes. We never talked about it in these terms, we would have felt ridiculous, as if we professed a religious belief. But it was his vision, you could feel it.

When travelling Távora was interested in everything, antiques, gastronomy, he appreciated the world, textiles, silks, furniture, books, not just for their content but as objects. I remember that in his pockets he always had a small ivory sculpture, which he manipulated all the time, because with the grease of his hands it became softer, it created a kind of protective patina.

Many were private trips, and I can't tell you everything, of course. But I do remember one episode that affected me so much that I wrote a text. It was during the trip, a beautiful one, to Machu Pichu. Távora invited me to go with him and we had arranged to follow a route with some local guides who followed the Incas on foot, in the upper part, I don't know whether for security reasons or for greater control. The guides would accompany the tourists and carry their luggage and then leave it in organised camps where they would spend the night. At dawn they would arrive at Machu Pichu and it was impressive to see the motorcades of guides with tourists arriving from above chewing coca leaves. Távora had read the texts that spoke of the relationship of the stones with the position of the stars, the equinoxes, the solstices. We attended a ceremony, I don't remember if on a solstice or equinox, with a group of Americans. Távora proposed that we watch the sunrise, we did not set a time, we decided that we

would wake up early and that we would see each other there. And so it was, I woke up early, walked to the top and noticed that Távora was near a fountain, I do not remember if he was drawing or looking at a specific point. I commented with him how impressive the vastness of that landscape was, which only from that height could be perceived in all its dimension. Moreover, there had been a fire that had almost wiped out all the vegetation. He said to me: "Have you noticed what's behind you?". I answered him no. He was referring to a fountain, I went closer to see it, I heard a noise, a sound that was beautiful. I realised that it was partly a creation of nature, made of natural stone, and partly the work of the Incas, who had accompanied the path of the water with stone basins to collect and channel the water. Each basin had a different sound. Távora pointed out this marvel to me and said: "this is what architecture is".

They were also very pleasant trips, minus the last one. He was already ill, but he told us he wanted to return to Greece and we felt it was a form of farewell. We left Porto, arrived at Kos, and for the whole trip he did not say a word, a deep depressive state. Then we travelled through the Peloponnese, and he began to animate, explaining, conversing. He lectured a lot on Greek architecture, which was basically his great passion, passed on to the students and also to me. So much so that if I had to choose a historical period, I would choose this one, and the Parthenon as the architecture that interests me most: the object, the place, the landscape.

...**ÀS**... When I worked with Távora, I was with him many times to visit works on the construction site and his concern was always that I had a learning experience through the visit, because at that time there were not many trips to visit construction sites. For me, visiting the construction site with him was an opportunity, I listened to him, heard his comments, participated. Above all, I visited the works at Quinta de Conceição with him many times. Távora spent a lot of time at that construction site, on Sundays even, with a worker. Then I was working on the preliminary project of the swimming pool, and he saw me so involved, so committed, even suffering because I was a beginner, that one day he told me "maybe it is better if you do this project in your studio", and convinced the municipality to give me the job. But he always supported me in the critical moments of this project, advised me not to fixate on things, then he would go and talk to the mayor and always managed to solve everything. His good humour could convince everyone. When it was time to design the furniture, it took me a long time and they started to get nervous at the municipality, but he convinced them to wait by going to meetings every week to redress the balance. There was always a group of young architects with whom he shared the work and whom he supported.

(Fernando Barroso)

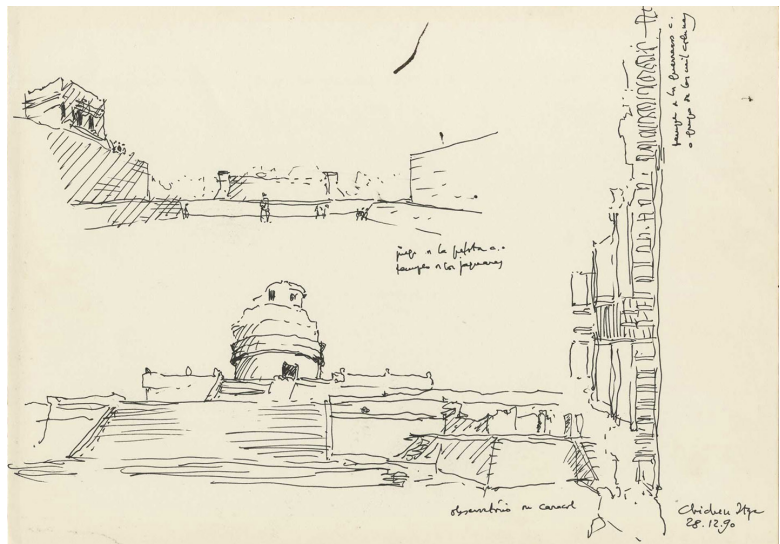
...**FBR**... Távora loved to tell his travel experiences to us in the studio, his was a very fluid form of storytelling, a reworked memory, he did not describe the experience, he put it in a context. He liked to share, the tablecloths of the tables

on which we dined were sheets where he drew memories. Being with him was a constant teaching.

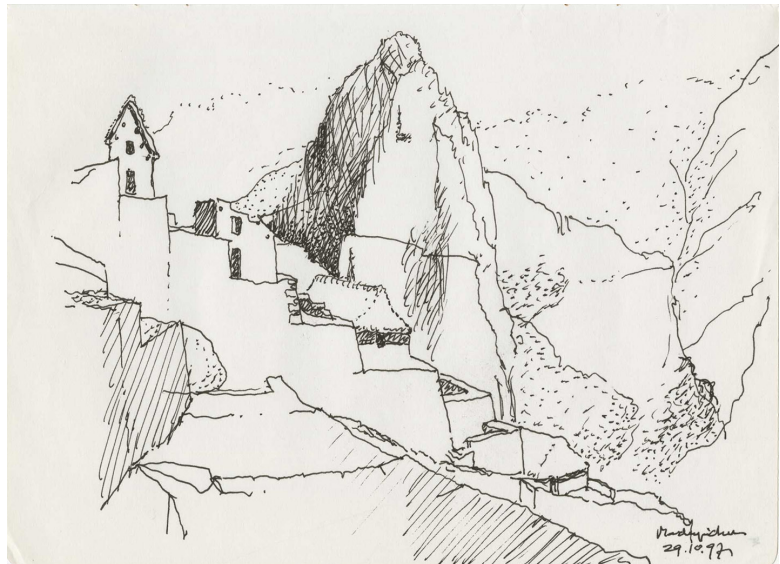
He went from one place to another with time jumps because he contextualised them in relation to something present. It was not telling for the sake of telling; it was a way of connecting everything. The 1960 journey was the great journey, but he could have made the same journey in his own city. The form of the story would have been the same, he was always a traveller, even when he walked the streets of his city, the way of seeing things was the same. He brought everything back to life experience and everything could be reported at the appropriate time.

He would refer to an episode and then explain the cultural aspect behind it. He would give a kind of lecture. Everything always related to life, explained in a non-educated way, simple words that hid big problems. Even when dealing with a design problem, he would always invite people not to dramatize, to take a tour of Porto to see how things had been solved. Then, starting from a problem related to a lock, or a moulding, he was able to tell how they had solved it in the past, because with a given shape, he would bring everything back to the practical use of details he had seen, perhaps, in a Greek temple.

...**AB**... Távora conceived architecture not as a separate field but as a form of knowledge of things, an open knowledge, which is not to be delimited. It is his vision of architecture that also depends on the journey. The Tavorian sense of the journey consists in transforming the places of the world into objects of permanent knowledge, not abstract knowledge. A knowledge oriented towards the practice of architectural design, not a simple architectural culture. Távora transformed every journey into a phenomenon of his creation. He would look at a table and not simply be interested in the shape or the table itself, he would think about who had designed it, under what circumstances it had been conceived. So, he would invent stories (it would be that Jesuit father...) and from the invented story he would come to tell the rest of the world, the knowledge of the world.



19



20

Fig. 19
Archaeological site of Chichen Itza 28.12.1990, pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref. VMéxico-0003).

Fig. 20
Perù – Machu Picchu Drawing unsigned, but dated, 29.10.1997, Bic pen on paper (FIMS/AFT, ref.VPeru-0019).

Biographies of interviewees

AS. Alcino Peixoto de Castro Soutinho (1930-2013) was a Portuguese architect, considered by national and international critics to be part of the 'School of Porto'. After graduating from the School of Fine Arts in Porto in 1957, the year in which he started working as a freelance architect, Alcino Soutinho obtained a scholarship from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1961 to pursue his studies in Museology in Italy. There he has contact with several Italian architects who influence him at the beginning of his career. At the same time, he worked for the Caixas da Previdência Foundation, for which he designed several housing estates in northern Portugal until 1971. Since 1973, he has taught at the School of Fine Arts in Porto and later at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto.

ASV. Alvaro Siza Vieira was born in Matosinhos (Porto) in 1933. After attending the Escola de Belas Artes in Porto (ESBAP) from 1949-1955, he worked in Fernando Távora's atelier from 1955 to 1958, collaborating on some fundamental projects such as The Municipal Park of the Quinta de Conceição e de Santiago in Matosinhos (1956). In 1983, he again collaborated with Távora on the project for the Avenida Almeida Ribeiro urban intervention plan in Macao. In 1993 he designed the building on Rua do Aleixo where he moved his Atelier to the second floor, while Fernando Távora moved to the third floor and Edoardo Souto de Moura to the first. With Távora he maintains a relationship of great friendship and respect, continuous inspiration, and learning. In 2012, he is among the organisers of the Fernando Távora Modernidade Permanente exhibition, integrated in the celebrations of Guimarães Capital Europeia da Cultura 2012. In 2013, he coordinated the publication of the anastatic version of the *Diário de bordo*.

AAC. Alexandre Vieira Pinto Alves Costa was born in Porto on 2 February 1939. In Porto he studied architecture at the School of Fine Arts in Porto, after which he did an internship at the National Civil Engineering Laboratory with Nuno Portas and graduated in architecture in 1966. In the 1960s, in addition to his education in architecture, he was actively involved in the political struggle against the fascist dictatorship. In 1972 he began his career in university teaching and in 1979 he was a member, with Távora, of the FAUP Architecture Course Establishment Committee.

EDS. Edoardo Souto de Moura was born in Porto in 1952. He graduated from the Escola de Belas Artes in Porto (ESBAP) in 1980 after having Távora as his "project" teacher in the second year, an experience that, as he

himself repeatedly recalls, changed his approach to architecture, understood not only as a theoretical speculation but as a practical discipline where drawing becomes a fundamental tool for the project.

FB. Fernando Barroso was born in 1950 in Vila Nova de Famalicão, he attended the Architecture course at the Escola Superior de Belas Artes in Porto (ESBAP) in 1976. He collaborated with Fernando Távora's architecture studio from 1979 until 2005.

FBF. Francisco José Barata Fernandes (Porto 1950-2018), graduated from ESBAP in 1975. He collaborated in Fernando Távora's atelier from 1971 to 1978. He began his academic activity in 1984, first at ESBAP and then, from 1985, at FAUP, associating his teaching activity with tasks of coordinating the Doctorate Course in Architecture and Heritage, or the Scientific Council.

JF. Jorge Figueira was born in Vila Real in 1965. He graduated in architecture from FAUP in 1992. He teaches History and Theory of Architecture in the Department of Architecture at the University of Coimbra and works as a critic and curator. He has dedicated numerous writings to the School of Porto and the figure of Fernando Távora.

JB. José António Bandeirinha was born in Coimbra in 1958. He graduated in architecture from ESBAP in 1983. In 1980 he was a student of Fernando Távora, whom he later joined in the Scientific Commission of the nascent Department of Arquitetura of the Faculty of Science and Technology of the University of Coimbra, of which he was Director and where he still teaches today.

MM. Manuel Mendes. Graduated from ESBAP in 1980 and PhD from FAUP in 2011, he was a long-time lecturer at the same School and a member of the research group "Architecture: theory, project, history" at CEAU-FAUP as well as the Centre for Documentation and Research in Architectural Culture (CICA) at the Marques da Silva Foundation (FIMS). Custodian, at Távora's own behest, of his private archives, he is currently working on a careful reorganisation and dissemination.

SF. Sérgio Leopoldo Fernandez Santos was born in Porto in 1937. He studied architecture at ESBAP and, while still a student, attended the CIAM in Otterlo in 1959. He was a long-time lecturer at ETSAB and at FAUP, where he also held important management positions and directed the FAUP Study Centre (1990-1997).

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