

From Alfredo de Andrade to Álvaro Siza Intervention Works by Portuguese Architects in Preexisting Buildings in Italy

Architecture, Heritage, Conservation, Drawing, Reuse

/Abstract

Portuguese architectural culture is historically determined by its relations with Italy, which have intensified since the 16th century, both in education through the influence of treaties and study tours, and by the growing migration of Italian architects and artists working in Portugal and the colonies. However, there are fewer examples of Portuguese architects working in Italy, such as the exemplary cases of Alfredo de Andrade (1839–1915) and Álvaro Siza (1933–). With support on unpublished archival research and field work, this article proposes an analysis of intervention works in pre-existing buildings by Andrade and Siza in Italy, between the end of the 19th century and the 21st century. In both cases, drawing is the privileged instrument of research and design, along with a solid artistic and architectural culture that allows them to find sensible responses to the specificities of each context by respecting the historical layers and adding new elements within a delicate modernity in continuity with tradition.

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For centuries, architects have frequently migrated between Italy and Portugal. In particular, numerous generations of Italian architects have worked in Portugal since the sixteenth century. These include Francesco da Cremona (active in Portugal since 1525), Filippo Terzi (ca. 1520–1597), Niccolò Nasoni (1691–1773), Francesco Saverio Fabri (1761–?), Giovanni Carlo Galli Bibiena (1717–1760), Giuseppe Cinatti (1808–1867), Luigi Manini (1848–1936), and Nicola Bigaglia (ca. 1841–1908), among many others.¹ However, Portuguese architects working in Italy are scarcer, with some paradigmatic exceptions such as Alfredo de Andrade (Lisbon, 1939-Genoa,1915), a central figure in Italian monuments restoration between the late 19th and early 20th century. Hence, Andrade developed more than three hundred restorations of Italian monuments in northern Italy and was defined by Álvaro Siza (Matosinhos, 1933-) as the “most important Portuguese architect outside Portugal.”² The latter, winner of the Pritzker Prize (1992) and a key figure in world architecture, has also developed several interventions on pre-existing buildings with particular focus on southern Italy, such as the Church of Salemi (with Roberto Collovà), the Madre Museum (with Studio DAZ-Dumontet Antonini Zaske) or the Naples Metro (with Eduardo Souto de Moura), among others.

As Álvaro Siza states:

The cultural relationship between our two countries [Portugal and Italy] is centuries old, including in terms of architecture [...]. There have been many Italian architects in Portugal and many Portuguese who have built cities on layers of Roman foundations, and to experience, among other long journeys, the inevitable trip to Rome. These and other shared entanglements are engraved in Portuguese territory.³

“The Art of Being Portuguese” ⁴

Alfredo de Andrade and Álvaro Siza can be framed in the distinctive qualities that some writers and philosophers define as “being Portuguese,”⁵ namely the

1 For further details, see Francisco de Sousa Viterbo, *Dicionário histórico e documental dos arquitectos, engenheiros e construtores portugueses*, 3 vols. (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1988); Teresa Ferreira, “Arquitectos italianos em Portugal: o século XIX e o caso de Alfredo d’Andrade e Sebastiano C. Locati,” *Estudos Italianos em Portugal*, no. 2 (2007): 229–44; Teresa Ferreira, “Ville e villini: casas de arquitectos italianos no Portugal de Oitocentos,” *Estudos Italianos em Portugal*, no. 12 (2017): 237–53.

2 “The first time I heard about him [Alfredo de Andrade] was by Jacques Gubler, an architectural history professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Lausanne [...] I confess both embarrassment and a great sense of satisfaction. Later, by chance passing a little known and low-profile antique bookshop in Porto, I saw in its window an unexpected Italian book on architecture: *Alfredo d’Andrade: tutela e restauro* (Turin, 1981). I spoke about this with some of my architect friends. At least among this circle, not one of them had heard of Andrade. While the emigration of one of the leading protagonists in European architectonic culture might be regrettable, we should also identify the opportunities that he was thus able to gain in participating in a debate then fundamental to the evolution of architecture at an irreversible turning point in the dominant eclecticism towards the anticipation of universal modernism... that would also impact on Portugal.” Álvaro Siza, *Preface to Il Portogallo di Alfredo de Andrade: città, architettura, patrimonio*, by Teresa Cunha Ferreira (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2014), 17–19.

3 Álvaro Siza, “Lectio magistralis, laurea honoris causa all’Università Federico II di Napoli,” translated by Guido Giangregorio, in *Álvaro Siza in Italia: il Grand Tour 1976–2016*, ed. Roberto Cremascoli and Franco Moschini (Rome: Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, 2016), 209–11. All the translations into English were done by the authors.

4 Teixeira de Pascoais (pseud.), *Arte de ser português* (Porto: Renascença Portuguesa, 1915).

5 Teixeira de Pascoais (pseud.), *Arte de ser português*. Other authors explore this idea of a Portuguese ‘identity’, in particular Fernando Pessoa, José Mattoso.

great ability to adapt to other places, particularly their languages and culture, along with the curiosity or migrant nature which drives them to discover and travel worldwide.

This enormous capacity for adaptation is also one of the constants of the Portuguese soul. The Portuguese adapt to climates, professions, cultures, languages and people in a truly exceptional way. The Portuguese have always been polyglots. Our classics almost all wrote in more than one language, and even people with little education often learn and speak a foreign language. But the ability to adapt is general and could be illustrated with countless examples. It is curious, however, that Portuguese adapts to another cultural environment so well that it seems to have been assimilated; but it returns to Portugal and in a short time it is no longer distinguishable from the others.⁶

In the same direction, Fernando Távora states:

the Portuguese is a migrant, from the origin of his population where, after various invasions, Christians, Muslims and Jews are mixed, to his relationship with his country, from where he leaves to improve the conditions he finds there, and to where he returns, disgusted at having achieved nothing or satisfied with his victory abroad.⁷

Both Andrade and Siza express a reflects a strong bond with their homeland expressing what Eduardo Lourenço defines as the

culturalist exaltation of the image of Portugal [...] in function of the imperial reality and vocation that for five hundred years were part of our historical activity, and whose memory, more or less intermittent, but never completely erased, constituted during that period the core of the image of Portugal that inwardly defined us.⁸

Hence, as Fernando Pessoa observed: “Whom who is Portuguese can live the narrowness of a single personality, a single nation, a single faith?”⁹; “The Portuguese people is, essentially, cosmopolitan. A true Portuguese has never truly been Portuguese: he has always been everything.”¹⁰

The analysis of the works of Andrade and Siza in Italy underlines their role as a valuable “link” in the relations between these two countries, while it highlights the broader theme of cultural relations between Italy and Portugal, which was a relevant factor cutting across Portuguese architectural history.

6 Jorge Dias, *Os elementos fundamentais da cultura portuguesa* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1950), 52–53.

7 Fernando Távora, “Emigração/Imigração: cultura arquitetónica portuguesa no mundo,” in *Portugal: arquitectura do século XX*, ed. Annette Becker, Ana Tostões, and Wilfred Wang (Munich and New York: Prestel, 1998), 143.

8 Eduardo Lourenço, *O labirinto da saudade*, 5th ed. (Lisbon: Gradiva, 2007), 42.

9 Fernando Pessoa, “Entrevista sobre arte e literatura portuguesas (1919–1921),” in *Fernando Pessoa: obra poética e em prosa*, ed. António Quadros, vol. 3 (Porto: Lello e Irmãos, 1986), 703.

10 Fernando Pessoa, “Entrevista sobre arte e literatura portuguesas (1919–1921),” in *Fernando Pessoa: crítica, ensaios, artigos e entrevistas*, ed. Fernando Cabral Martins (Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 2000), 149.

Drawing as a Research Tool

Alfredo de Andrade and Álvaro Siza are also united by using drawing as the preferred instrument for research and communication. As “cosa mentale”, drawing becomes a “spoken language”, which was fundamental for both architects in their systematic application as a tool for observation, analysis and design – “nulla dies sine lineae”.¹¹

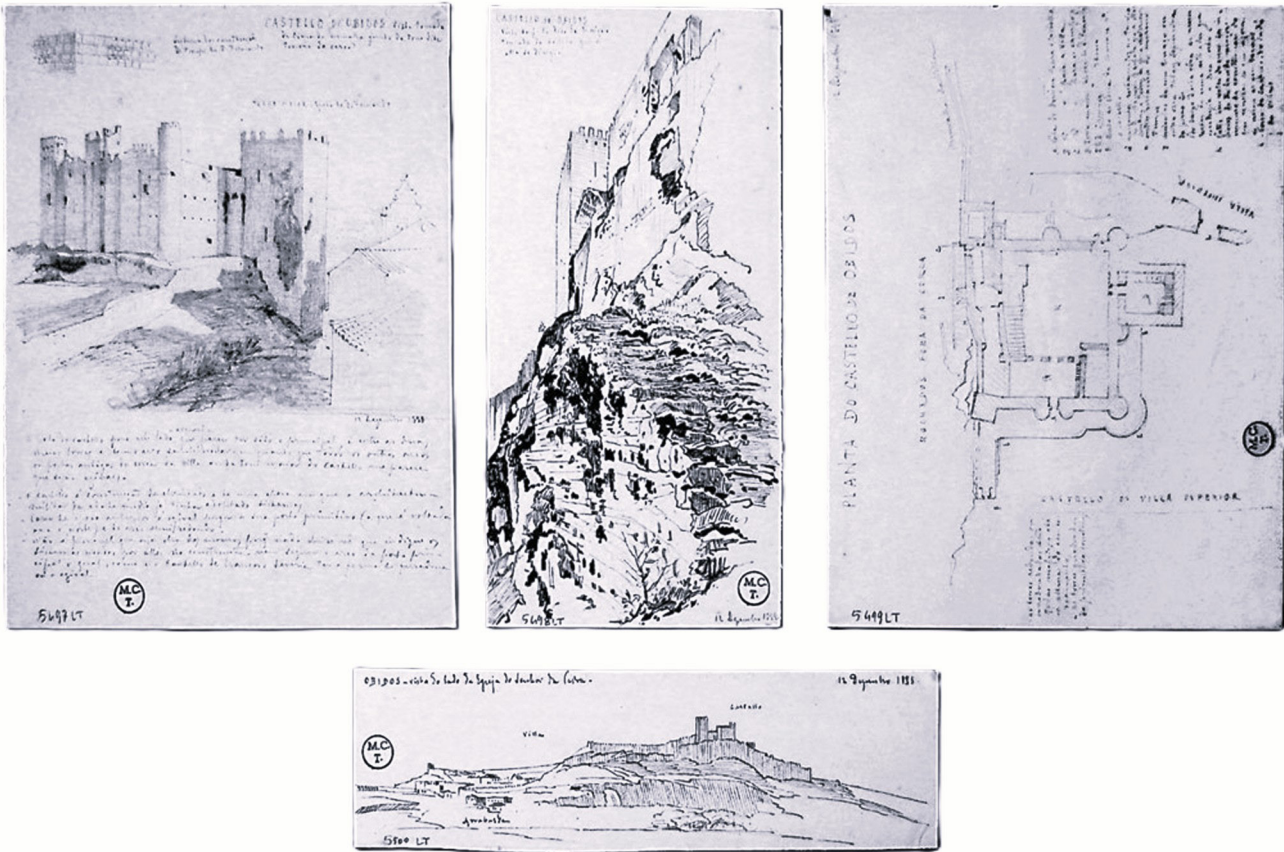
Referring to his close friend Andrade, Camillo Boito states:

One remarkable thing [...] is the way he draws. For him, drawing is not a graceful, conventional exercise: it is the simplest, quickest and most complete reproduction of an object. Everything serves him. He takes what he finds at hand. So much does it make him draw in a tiny album with the sharp point of a pencil or a letter sheet with the fine steel pencil, as it makes him draw with carpenter’s pencil, brush or embers over a massive sheet, over a wall or on the ground.¹²

In the same perspective, Álvaro Siza refers to drawing as the “desire for intelligence,”¹³ exploring it as an “essential tool to observe, understand and learn how to design.”¹⁴ Through his freehand sketches, Siza explores spatial dimensions, light and the relationship between architecture and context. The act of drawing, therefore, becomes a medium for continuous reflection, thereby facilitating the translation of intuitive concepts into construction.¹⁵ [Figg. 1, 2a-2b]

Interventions in Pre-existences by Alfredo de Andrade in Northern Italy

Alfredo de Andrade (1839-1915), “architect and painter”¹⁶, as he liked to refer to himself, was a leading figure in the late 19th and early 20th century in Italy, where he held significant public positions¹⁷ and left behind a substantial body of built works in the regions of Piedmont, Liguria and Valle d’Aosta. Having maintained a continuous relationship with Portugal from his childhood through to his death, Andrade left behind sources that enable us to broaden our understanding of his training and education, the study trips that he made, his network of



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relationships, as well as his outputs across different fields – painting, teaching, restoration and architecture.

Alfredo de Andrade had deep admiration for E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879) and was very close to Camillo Boito (1836–1914), which was both publicly affirmed and reflected in the enormous exchange of correspondence: “we are the Siamese twins of the High Council; it would take surgery to separate us.”¹⁸ The two architects were united in their search, both for a new architectural expression to overcome “eclecticism” and for the definition of a “modern” concept for restoration. With a “case by case” approach which cannot be generalised, Andrade developed relevant interventions in Italian monuments, such as the Porta Soprana in Genova (1882–1914) where he deployed a stylistic reconstruction supported on historical documents and liberated the building from the houses in the surroundings, the Torre del Pailleron in Aosta (1889-1892) where I applies more directly the theories of Camillo Boito,¹⁹ or his residence at the Pavone Castel (1885–1915) in Piedmont which will be further developed in this article [Figg. 3a-3b-3c].

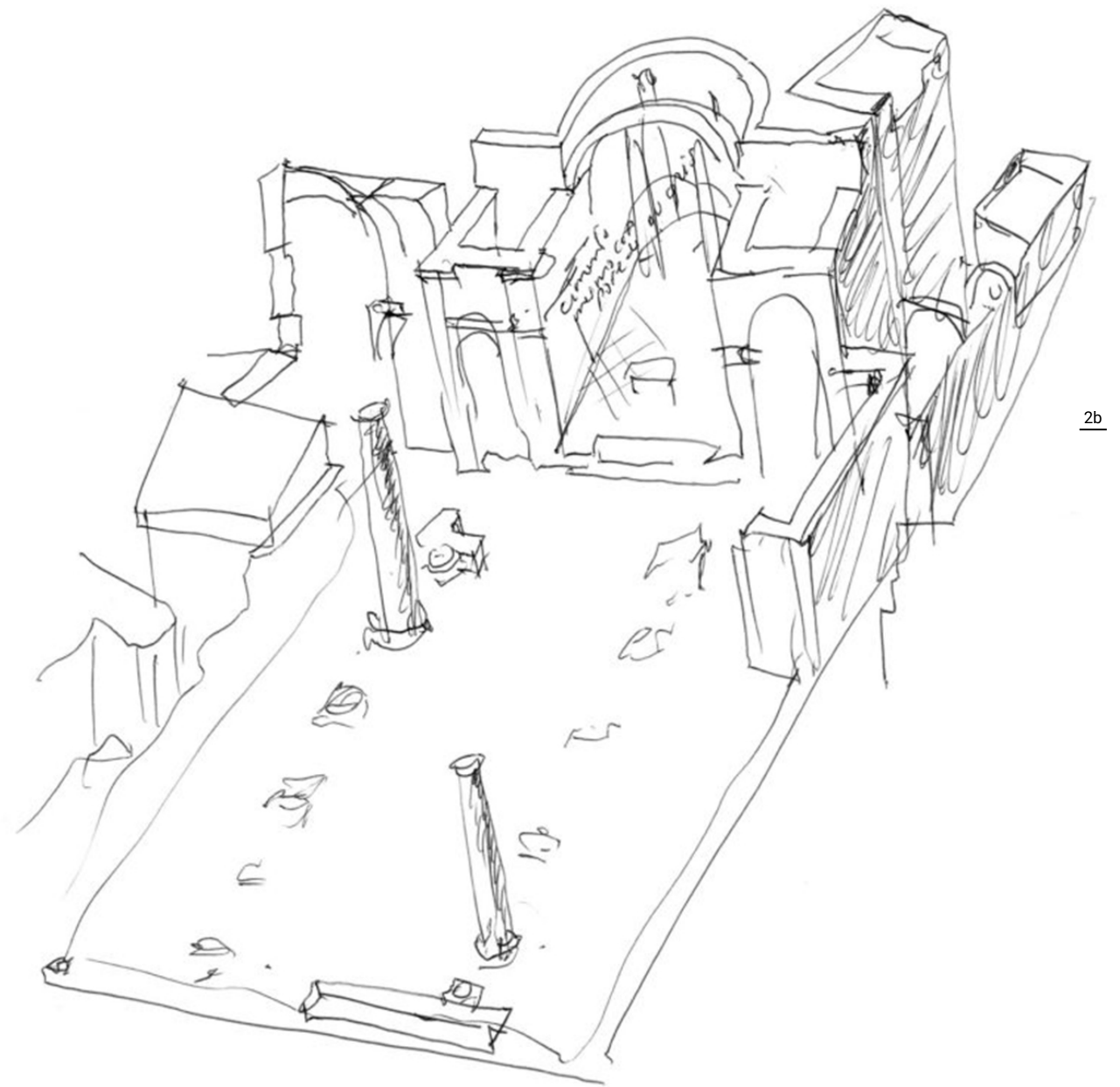
Fig. 1
Alfredo de Andrade, Castello de Obidos, 1891 (Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Torino)
Figg. 2a-2b
Álvaro Siza, drawings of Machu Picchu (1995) and of the Re-construction of Chiesa Madre in Salemi (1991)

11 Motto on the cover of Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Histoire d’un dessinateur: comment on apprend à dessiner* (Paris: Hetzel, 1879).
12 Camillo Boito, “Gli ammaestramenti della prima esposizione italiana di architettura,” in *Questioni pratiche di belle arti: restauri, concorsi, legislazione, professione, insegnamento*, ed. Ulrico Hoepli (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1893), 390–93.
13 Álvaro Siza, “Construir uma casa,” in *Obras e projectos*, ed. Pedro de Llano and Carlos Castanheira (Santiago de Compostela: Centro Galego de Arte Contemporânea and Electa Espanha, 1995), 61.
14 Alexandre Alves Costa, *Introdução ao estudo da história da arquitectura portuguesa: outros textos sobre arquitectura portuguesa*, 2nd ed. (Porto: FAUP Publications, 2007), 51.
15 Among others, see Álvaro Siza, *Álvaro Siza: obra e projeto, desenhos* (Porto: Museu de Serralves, 1992).
16 Alfredo d’Andrade, presentation to King Vittorio Emanuele II, 1869, quoted in *Marziano Bernardi and Vittorio Viale, Alfredo d’Andrade: la vita, l’opera e l’arte* (Turin: Società Piemontese d’Archeologia e di Belle Arti, 1957), 26.
17 Among others, he held the posts of director of Delegazione per la conservazione dei monumenti del Piemonte e della Liguria (from 1886) and of Ufficio Regionale per la Conservazione dei Monumenti del Piemonte e della Liguria (from 1891, subsequently, from 1907, soprintendente). In 1885, Andrade was nominated to the Commissione per l’Insegnamento artistico-industriale and, in 1904, member of the Commissione Centrale per le Antichità e Belle Arti (and later sitting on the Consiglio Superiore per le Antichità e Belle Arti). For further details, see Maria Grazia Cerri, Danila Biancolini Fea, and Liliana Pittarello, eds., *Alfredo d’Andrade: tutela e restauro* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1981).

18 Camillo Boito, letter to Alfredo d’Andrade, April 14, 1913, Private Archives of Andrade Family (APFA), Turin.
19 1. “Architectural monuments, when the necessity of laying hands on them is incontrovertibly demonstrated, should rather be consolidated than repaired, rather repaired than restored, avoiding in them with all study additions and renovations” [...] 2. the additions or renovations must be carried out with a different character from that of the monument, warning that, if possible, in the perspective appearance the new forms do not clash too much with its artistic appearance”. Camillo Boito, “Voto conclusivo della I sezione del IV Congresso degli ingegneri e architetti italiani” (Rome, 1883), 59–61.



2a



2b

Figg. 3a-3b-3c

Alfredo de Andrade, Porta Soprana in Genoa (1882-1914), Torre del Pallaron in Aosta (1889-1992), Pavone Castle in Piedmont (1885-1915), (photos by Teresa Cunha Ferreira, 2007)



3a



3b



3c

Pavone Castle (1885-1915).²⁰ Landscape and Pre-existence

The castle was founded in the 10th century and was modified and enlarged in the 11th, 15th and 16th centuries. It belonged to the bishops of Ivrea and is owned by Alfredo de Andrade. According to his son Ruy de Andrade, it was precisely its ‘picturesque’ character that convinced his parents to buy it:

The walls were of a rich, dull colour, extraordinarily suggestive. The richness and variety of the architectural, civilian, military and religious features that were on display represented a rich combination of architectural forms and motifs from different centuries.²¹

Located to the south-west of Ivrea, on the road between Turin and Aosta its character is further emphasised by its privileged position in the landscape, with a wide panorama over the neighbouring hills and the village in lower situation. According to his usual methodology, before ‘touching’ the building, Andrade studied it carefully, namely by consulting the few existing documentary sources, a necessary passage in the context of nineteenth-century philological culture. The scarcity of existing documentary sources was compensated by the direct study of the buildings, which has always been his preferred source: “But what the plans do not tell us, I learned from the building itself.”²²

Andrade also carries out one of his favourite ‘exercises’, the schematic illustration of the main phases of the castle’s historical-constructive evolution, which he calls ‘Storia delle Costruzioni del Castello di Pavone’. His methodological rigour is also illustrated in a booklet entitled *Primissimi progetti*²³ which shows his process of approaching the building: the geometric survey of the existing building, a careful ‘archaeological’ reading of the constructions, the technical-constructive typologies, the decorative details and an indication of the state of conservation. The surveys (authentic *rilievi per il restauro*) are already accompanied by indications on conservation work to be carried out.

The attention to detail and to specific conservation problems does not, however, detract from the overall vision and ‘image’ of the castle. In a series of sketches with “hypotheses, preliminary plans” he represents exterior views of the “how the castle might look like once restored”²⁴, followed by plans of the existing building with the functional allocation of spaces [Fig. 4a-4b].

20 For further details, see Teresa Cunha Ferreira, “Alfredo de Andrade (1839–1915) em Portugal: cidade, património e arquitectura” (PhD diss., Politecnico di Milano, 2009); Lucília Verdelho da Costa, *Alfredo de Andrade (1839–1915): da pintura à invenção do património*, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Editorial Vega, 1997).

21 Ruy d’Andrade, *Il castello di Pavone* (Lisbon: Ruy D’Andrade, 1956).

22 Alfredo de Andrade, quoted in Daniela Biancolini Fea, “Il castello di Pavone,” in Cerri et al., *Alfredo d’Andrade*, 311.

23 Alfredo de Andrade, “Primissimi progetti,” booklet in Private Archives of the Andrade Family (APFA), Turin.

24 Alfredo de Andrade, in the Private Archives of the Andrade Family (APFA), Turin.

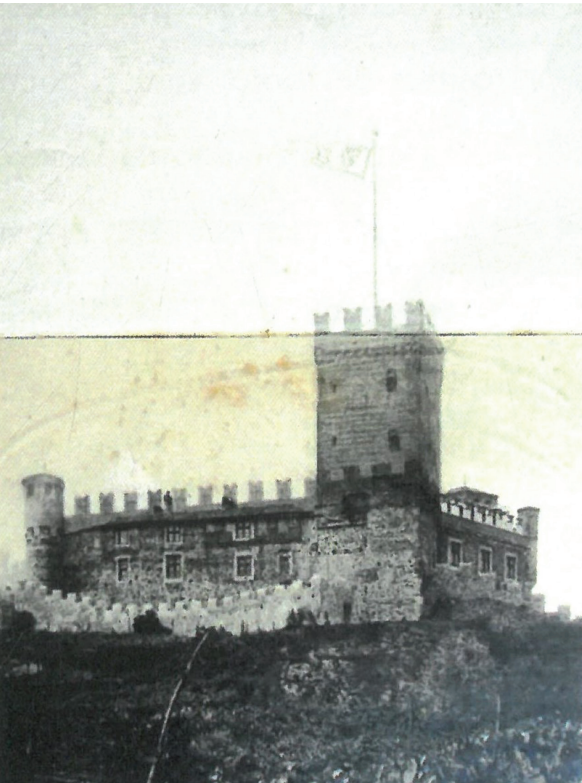
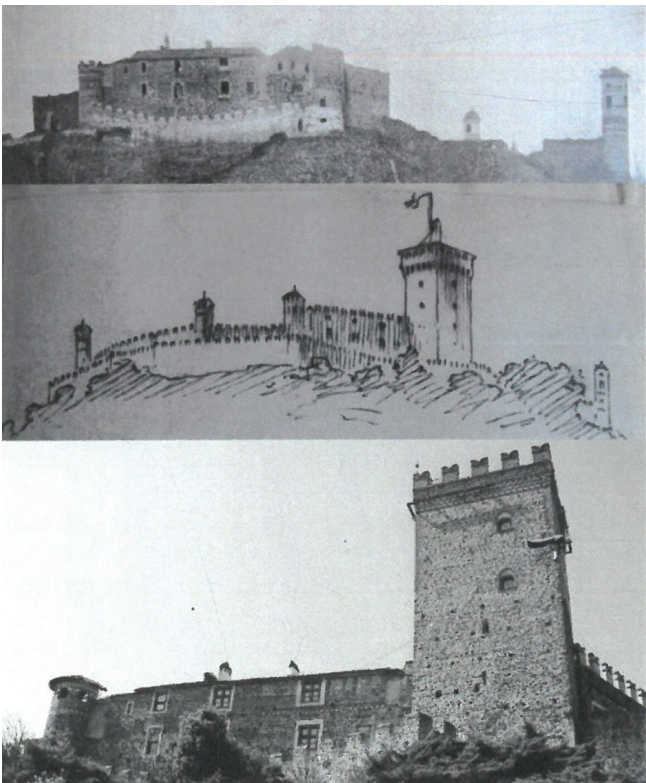
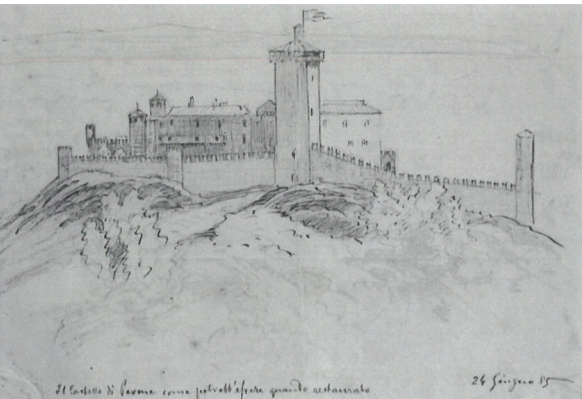


Fig. 4a-4b

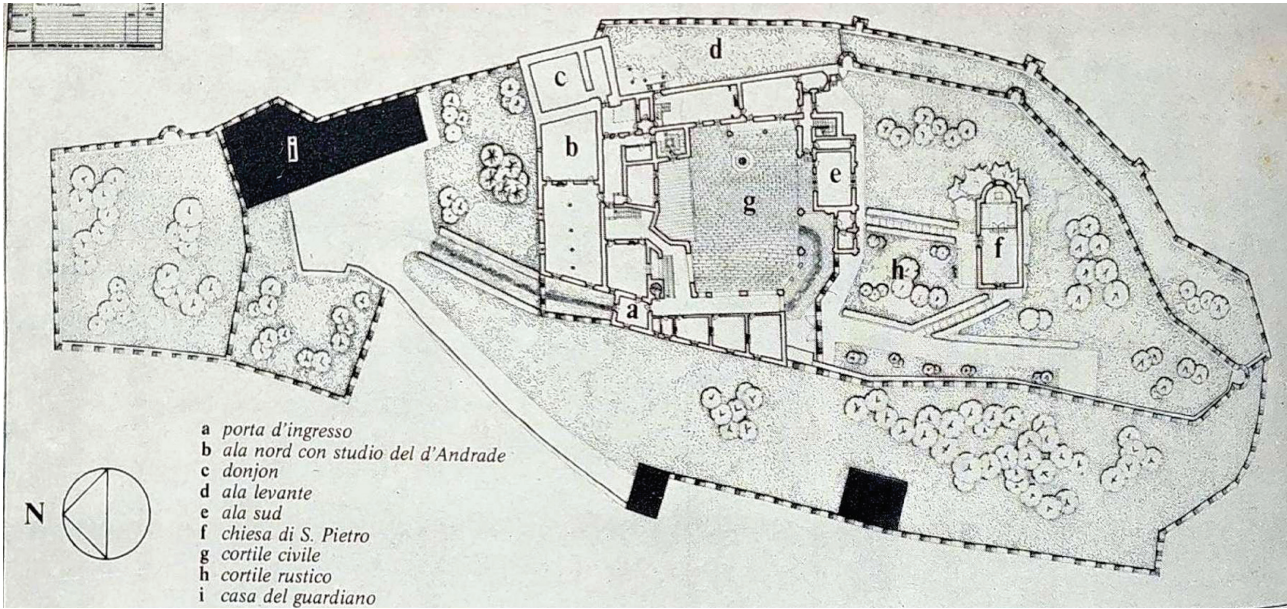
Alfredo de Andrade, Pavone Castle. Left: Drawing of the Pavone Castle. Right: “Il Castello come potrebbe essere quando restaurato”, 1885 (Private Archives of Andrade Family - APFA)

Fig. 5a-5b

Alfredo de Andrade, Pavone Castle. Left: East side, confrontation between the pre-existence, the project and the definitive construction. Right: Alfredo de Andrade, drawing on photograph, with representation of the additions to be made (in pencil) (Private Archives of Andrade Family - APFA)

Fig. 6

General Plan of Pavone Castle (G. Abrardi per la SBAAP)



Design Strategy

The interventions by Alfredo de Andrade in Pavone Castel for his own residence consisted of a laboratory for distinct operations ranging from consolidation, conservation, replacement, reconstruction and ex-novo additions. Given the long duration of the building site spanning thirty years, it became a personal laboratory for experimenting with techniques and a catalogue of various elements collected during his lifetime.

The syncretism resulting from the complex constructive stratigraphy and volumetric articulation is harmonised by the principle of ‘unity of style’ which, added to its position on the rock mass, gives the whole a scenographic and picturesque character: “the new part is fused with the old in a rare harmony of shapes, lines and colours, as only my father, who first became an architect and archaeologist, was a valiant landscape painter, could achieve.”²⁵

However, in Alfredo de Andrade’s mind, the additions and new bodies should have a different expression. In these, the new masonry is distinguished by a different construction typology (mixed stone with horizontal brick runs, without plaster). This construction solution is adopted both in the reconstruction of the donjon tower and in the new additions (south wing and east wing). The latter are designed in stile (16th century Piedmontese) and meet the functional and comfort needs of domestic spaces [Figg. 5a, 5b].

Despite the new additions to meet use requirements [Fig. 6], Andrade was concerned about the preservation of the pre-existing elements – “not a single stone was left standing that could be preserved”²⁶ – respecting the ‘archaeology of the buildings’ - namely elevations, battlements, staircases, windows, pieces of plaster - allowing a (stratigraphic) reading of the different phases of the building’s construction history [Figg. 7a, 7b]. In the interior, Alfredo de Andrade also took care to preserve, whenever possible, the old plaster – “scraped, scratched, lined with numerous writings”²⁷ – as a reminder of the previous generations that inhabited the castle.

This approach reflects a progressive philological attention to the building’s stratification, the differentiation of the new additions but in harmony between the new and the old, as in his own words “the new harmonizes with the old without conflict.”²⁸ Hence, the intervention in Pavone is an interesting example of Andrade’s restoration methodology, in his careful analysis of the pre-existing building, the preservation of its different phases of construction, the study of analogous examples and the harmonious relation between old and new [Figg. 8a-8b].

25 D’Andrade, *Il castello di Pavone*.
26 Francesco Carandini, *Il castello di Pavone: per le nozze d’argento di Alfredo de Andrade e Costanza Brocchi, castellani di Pavone*, November 27, 1900 (Cremona, 1900), 12.
27 D’Andrade, *Il castello di Pavone*.
28 Alfredo d’Andrade, “Cenni biografici miei,” Archivio di Stato di Torino (ASTo), Fondo d’Andrade, CP, B. 40, [1909?].



Interventions in Pre-existences by Álvaro Siza in Southern Italy

Although Siza’s professional activity is mainly rooted in Portugal, during his activity he has moved among several Italian cities, undertaking an articulated journey of knowledge and confrontation with the Italian architectural heritage, proposing projects and carrying out interventions. His presence in Italy, and particularly in Naples, is a very significant case study for understanding the adaptability and coherence of his poetics in complex and historically stratified urban contexts.

During those trips, guided by professor and old friend Francesco Venezia or other friends, I had the privilege of visiting Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Piscina Mirabilis, some of the city’s monuments and many places that Naples does not easily reveal.²⁹

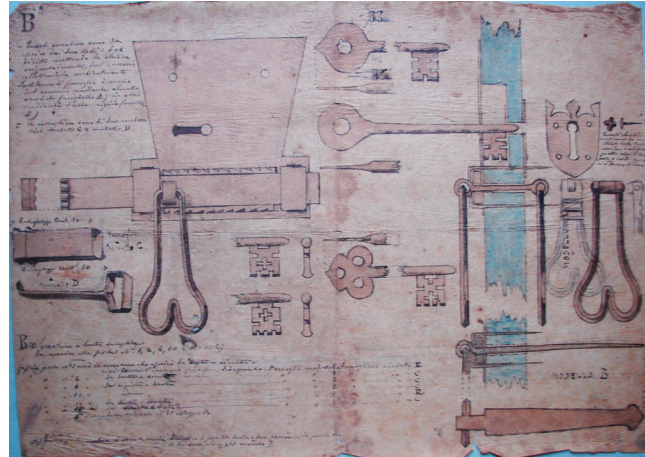
His major Italian projects include: ‘the reconstruction’ of the Mother Church of Salemi and the redesign of Alicia Square (1982–1998), the urban planning proposals for the city of Caserta (1983), the project for Campo di Marte at Giudecca Island (1985), the urban planning studies for the Pendino district and for the municipality of Monteruscello in Naples (1986–1987), both unrealized, the project for the Town Hall of Caorle (1995), the study for the Pietà Rondanini at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan (1999), the Museum of Contemporary Art Donna Regina in Naples (2003–2006), the project for the ‘Municipio’ station of the Naples subway with the arrangement of the square of the same name (2003–2015), the project for the Residential Complex in Gallarate (2012–2020) [Figg. 9a-9b-9c].³⁰ In Naples, which is notoriously difficult for the inclusion of contemporary architecture because of its historical density, chaotic vitality, and multiple contradictions, he has completed two major projects: the design of the Donnaregina Museum of Contemporary Art (MADRE) and the subway station

29 Siza, “Lectio magistralis,” 209–11.
30 Roberto Cremascoli and Francesco Moschini, eds., *Álvaro Siza in Italia: il Grand Tour 1976–2016* (Naples: Clean, 2016).

Fig. 7a-7b
Alfredo de Andrade, Pavone Castle, in the donjon you can clearly see the battlements of the mimetic reconstruction (with the same type of masonry as the lower part) and the elevation addition, distinguished by a new construction typology, with stone masonry and horizontal brick runs. This typology is also evident in the elevation of the body on the right, where it is possible to read reminiscences of window arches from previous phases, (photos by Teresa Cunha Ferreira, 2007)



8a



8b

with the redevelopment of Piazza Municipio.³¹ His interventions do not impose as self-referential gestures but are configured as outcomes of a process of listening to and interpreting historical permanences and urban dynamics, aimed at defining new architectural forms that arise from the pre-existence and fit into the urban fabric in a measured way. Siza's architecture never seeks to overpower, but to dialogue: with the landscape, with the memory of places, with the daily life that flows in public spaces.³² One of his main design principles is measurement, understood not only in a proportional sense but also as sensitivity to the identity of the place. In Naples, a layered and complex city, this translates into particular attention to human scale, the relationship between solids and voids, natural light and matter. His projects reflect a sober language of essential geometries and materials dialoguing with climate, color and texture of the city.³³

The Donnaregina Museum of Contemporary Art (MADRE) Project in Naples (2003-2005)

The project to restore and re-functionalize Palazzo Donnaregina to create the Museum of Contemporary Art was Álvaro Siza's first architectural intervention in Naples.³⁴

I think like this many times when I go back to the hotel, coming out of the old, solid building that I will turn into a museum. A palace limited by narrow, massive constructions, so that you cannot totally perceive its shape. These are space-building structures full of intimacy and mystery, conquering light from the half-light, pierced by huge doors, doors that reveal courtyards covered with plants, dust and old stones.³⁵

31 Marella Santangelo, ed., *Álvaro Siza e Napoli: affinità di Gabriele Basilico e Mimmo Jodice* (Naples: Electa, 2004).

32 Pasquale Miano, "Álvaro Siza e la città di Napoli," in *012 Álvaro Siza Premio Argan 2022*, ed. Bruna Di Palma and Fabrizio Toppetti (Gubbio: Ancsa Documenti, 2023), 70–71.

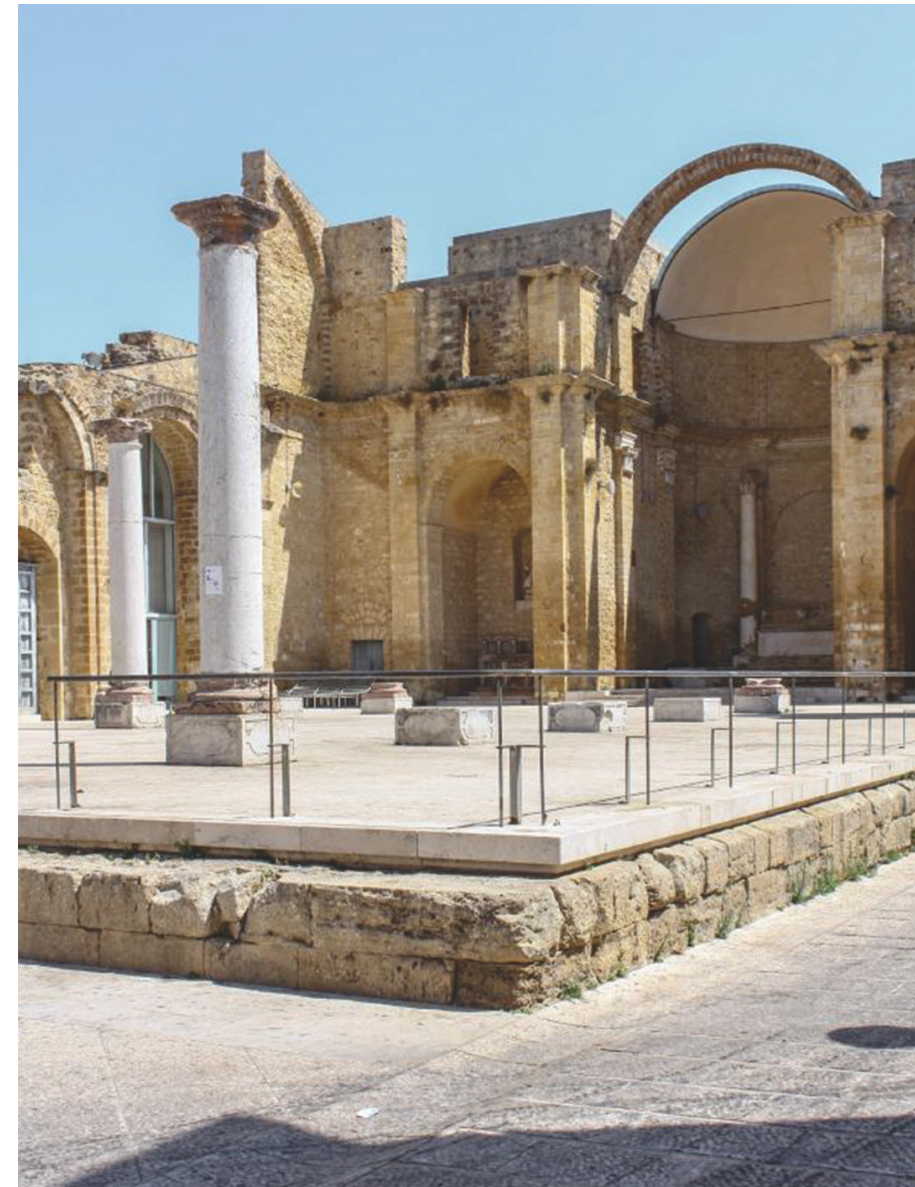
33 Valerio Ottavino, "Pensare costruendo: il cantiere come fase di concepimento dell'architettura tra auspici progettuali e incidenti di percorso" (PhD diss., Università di Roma "La Sapienza," 2021), 129–34.

34 The *Casabella's* attached insert on the works of Campania published the project: no. 737 (October 2005).

35 Siza, "Lectio magistralis," 209–11.

Fig. 8a-8b

Alfredo de Andrade, Pavone Castle, Drawings of studies and details (Private Archives of Andrade Family - APFA)



9a

Despite the apparent simplicity of the interventions, the project encountered relevant complexities, mainly due to the need to confront a stratified and articulated historical pre-existence. The intervention was based on a thorough analysis of the historical transformations and architectural specificities of the building, in order to understand its evolution over time, its spatial configuration, and its constructive complexity. This investigation was the prerequisite for assessing the building's capacity to accommodate new functions and meet contemporary museum needs, while safeguarding its historical, cultural and identity value.

The Historical and Architectural Pre-existence

Palazzo Donnaregina, in its present configuration is the result of the architectural stratifications that affected the ancient center of Naples, between the late 16th century and the 17th century, including the monastic insula of the Donnaregina convent. On the side of Via Settembrini, in particular, the building

Fig. 9a

Piazza Alicia and reconstruction Chiesa Madre in Salemi (Divisare, photo by Orazio Saluci, 2009)



9b

is located on the edge of the ancient Greek wall, the remains of which have emerged in the course of the work. The original nucleus, Palazzo Capano, of probable 17th-century date, included the building block on the south side, toward the Banco dei Pegni courtyard. In the mid-19th century, Palazzo Donnaregina was purchased by the Banco di Napoli and used as the headquarters of the Banco dei Pegni. Between 1845 and 1872 the building was enlarged with the addition of two wings and the arrangement of the front part on Via Settembrini, where the main entrance was placed with the creation of the *androne* and the two staircase blocks. In the twentieth century it underwent improper architectural transformations such as the creation of a raised atrium that occupied part of the upper courtyard and that of a reinforced concrete building volume on the side of the Church of Donnaregina that completely concealed, encompassing it inside, the ancient seventeenth-century facade of Palazzo Capano. Partitions and mezzanines were built that distorted the original typology, and the walls underwent the insertion of air conditioning systems without any respect for the structural and architectural integrity of the complex. After the 1980 earthquake,

Fig. 9b

Entrance to Donnaregina Museum of Contemporary Art (website Studio Dumontet, Napoli. <https://www.studiodumontet.it/portfolio/napoli-museo-madre/>. Accessed April 21, 2026).



9c

the building underwent structural reinforcements, only to be abandoned following the damage and static failures caused by the 2001 flood.

In 2003, the Campania Region bought the building, starting restoration work to create Museum of Contemporary Art on a project by Álvaro Siza assisted in the design and construction management by Studio DAZ Dumontet Antonini Zaske architetti associati in Naples [Fig. 10].³⁶

The Restoration and Functional Adaptation Project

In the project, special attention was paid to the study and understanding of the original structure of the building, the analysis of the historical and artistic stratifications of the subsoil, and archaeological findings. Visiting Naples and perceiving its vitality were essential moments in the development of the project

³⁶ "MADRE Museo di arte contemporanea Donna Regina," *Divisare*, 2010. <https://divisare.com/projects/120366-Álvaro-siza-vieira-michele-nastasi-amedeo-benestante-madre>. Accessed April 21, 2026.

Fig. 9c

Project of Piazza Municipio (photo by Laura De Riso, 2025)



10

that would consider the peculiarities of the city, its chaotic appearance, and the intense use of its public spaces.³⁷ Álvaro Siza, in his design, respected the complexity of the city, devoting himself to preserving the relationship of the Palace with the outside and with the living center of the city.³⁸

The numerous sketches he made reveal his intent to integrate with the urban fabric, to respect the building's historical layers, while introducing modern elements that do not impose themselves but blend with the existing environment [Fig. 11a-11b].

The restoration interventions were the result of a careful work of "subtraction," with the demolition of the erroneous architectural alterations that followed over the years. Instead, the evolutionary history of the building, its volume and spatial structure, and the original materials were preserved as much as possible, while having to respond to the new museum requirements.³⁹

The clear internal organization, the succession of well-formed rooms from a large courtyard, and the diversified size of the rooms were considered excellent starting requirements for a project to adapt an existing space for exhibition purposes. No movable panels or prefabricated structures were used, but the rooms themselves generate a natural magnetism between the space and the artworks [Fig. 12].⁴⁰

37 Olga Scotto di Vettimo, *MADRE: Museo d'arte contemporanea Donnarregina, guida breve* (Naples: Fondazione Donnarregina per le arti contemporanee, 2017).

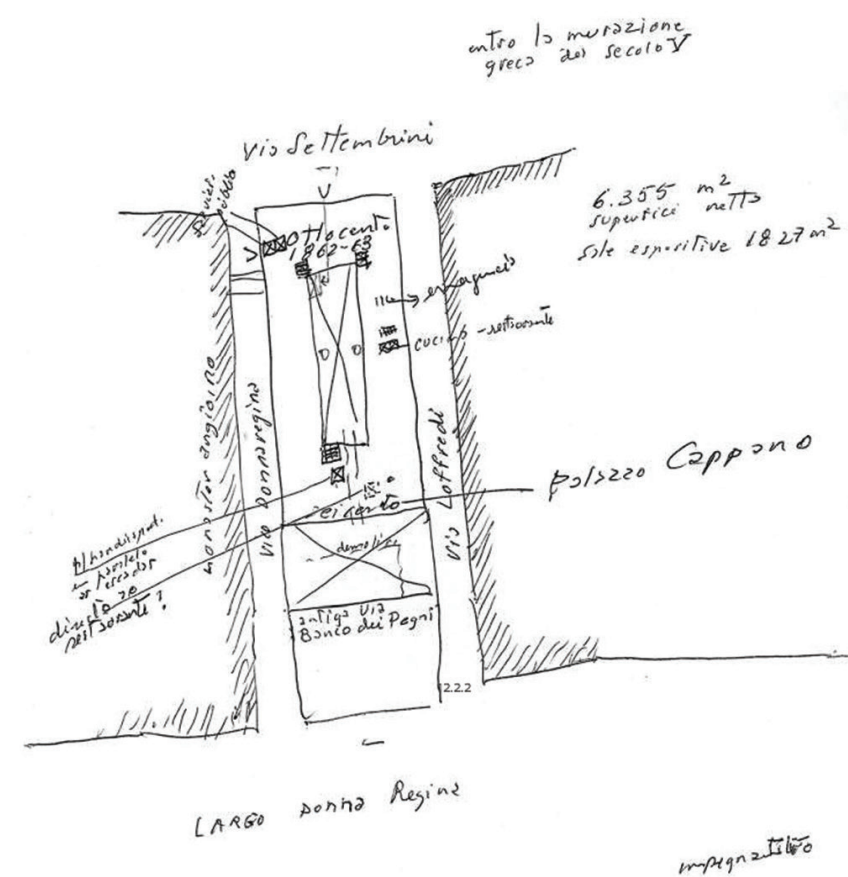
38 Annalisa Ferraro, "Il Madre – Museo d'arte contemporanea Donnarregina," *Nuova Meta: Parole & immagini, Rivista di critica delle arti* 29, no. 37 (2014).

39 Paolo Giardiello, "Museo d'arte di Donna Regina a Napoli," *D'A. D'Architettura*, no. 28 (December 2005): 134–37.

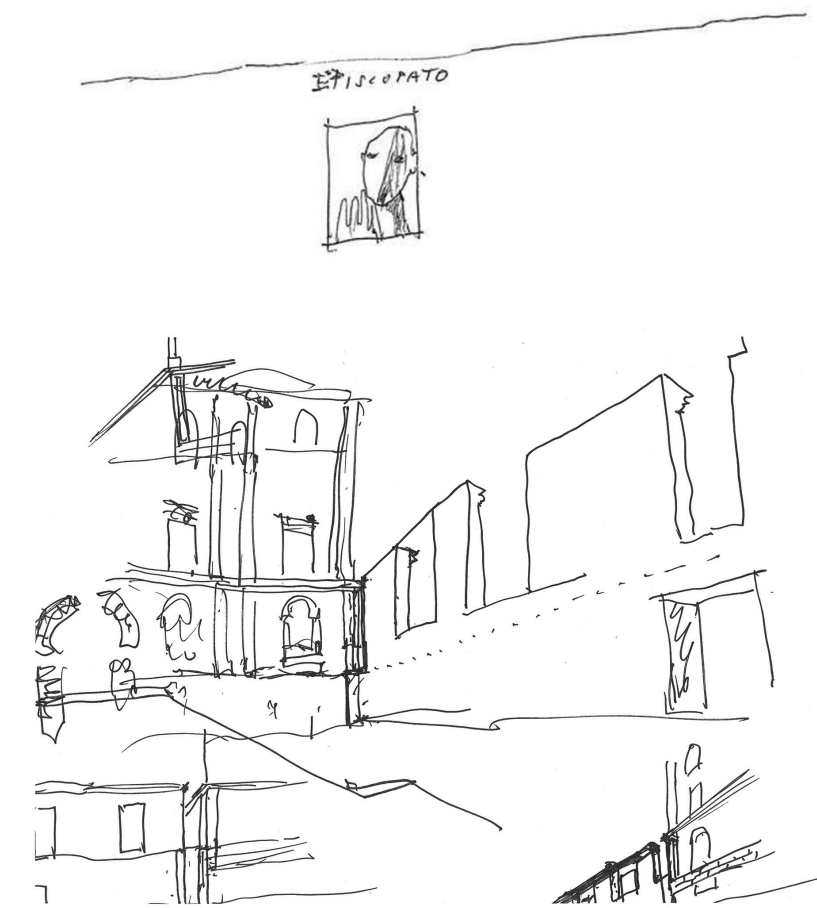
40 "Álvaro Siza e il restauro di Palazzo Donnarregina," video interview, *MADRE – Museo d'arte contemporanea Donnarregina*, March 27, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqD4Yejlz6Q>. Accessed April 21, 2026.

Fig. 10

Alvaro Siza and the architects from Studio DAZ Dumontet Antonini Zinke architetti associate in Naples at the construction site (photo courtesy of DAZ Studio Archive, 2003-2005)



11a



11b

Fig. 11a-11b

Project sketches made by Álvaro Siza depicting the study of historical stratifications and the crenelated boundary wall in the courtyard of Banco dei Pegni (website Studio Dumontet, Napoli. <https://www.studiodumontet.it/portfolio/napoli-museo-madre/>. Accessed April 21, 2026)



12

The exhibition spaces, developed on three levels around the central courtyard are divided into a succession of neutral rooms of varying sizes, completely plastered in white and without skirting boards, creating a perspective axis [Fig. 13a-13b].⁴¹ The block facing Via Settembrini on the various levels houses the services: ticket office, library, bookstore and administration.

A cafeteria and restaurant are located in the first-floor wing overlooking Via Loffredi, at the end of the sequence of exhibition rooms and separated from them by a steel bridge across the open atrium [Fig. 14a-14b].⁴²

The large central courtyard overlooked by the exhibition rooms was created through the demolition of the elevated volume built in the early 1900s that occupied about half of its surface area [Fig. 15a-15b].

Underneath the courtyard, with access from the ground floor immediately after the entrance hall, the large multipurpose hall/auditorium was obtained by excavation works. Completely undecorated, painted white, like the other rooms in the building, it has a structure made of large steel beams. Below the structural part, a sheet of plasterboard is attached, which, with the curtain, hides the lighting system [Fig. 16a-16b].

On the side of the Donnaregina Church (courtyard known as the Banco dei Pegni), the concrete building volume was demolished in its entirety, leaving the open space from which there is an unprecedented view of the Donnaregina

Fig. 12
Plan of the mezzanine floor of the building, showing the distribution of rooms around the central courtyard, the service block on Via Settembrini and the Banco dei Pegni courtyard (Dossier/general report Alvaro Siza project archive, 2003-2005)

41 Elvira Di Meo, "Un vascello di luce bianca nella Napoli barocca," *OF ARCH*, no. 92 (October 2006): 109–21.

42 "MADRE Museo di arte contemporanea Donna Regina," *Divisare*.



13a



13b

Fig. 13a-13b
Photos of the interior exhibition rooms (photos by Laura De Riso, 2025)



14a



14b

Church. The boundary wall was redesigned with the crenellated motif to relate to the imposing ribs of the adjacent Church. The ancient facade of Palazzo Capano was also unveiled with the remains of the original piperno portal [Fig. 17a-17b].⁴³ Great care was taken in the study of lighting and thermal systems, taking care to conceal all equipment from view to leave only the artists' works visible. In the exhibition rooms, vents for ventilation and lights are built into a suspended ceiling detached from the walls. Similarly, electrical outlets, acoustics and fire protection system are integrated into the plasterboard lining of the perimeter walls [Fig. 18a-18b].⁴⁴

43 Di Meo, "Un vascello di luce bianca," 109–21.

44 Dumontet Antonini Zask Architeti Associati, *MADRE Museo d'arte contemporanea di Napoli: progetto di restauro dell'edificio detto "Donnaregina," Dossier* (Naples: Studio DAZ, 2005).

Figg. 14a-14b

Top: photos of the steel jumper construction stages (photo courtesy of DAZ Studio Archive, 2003-2005). Down: photo of the current state (photo by Laura De Riso, 2025)



15a

Fig. 15a

Photo during the demolition of the concrete block made in the twentieth century in the central courtyard (photo courtesy of DAZ Studio Archive, 2003-2005)

Fig. 15b

Photo of the current state of the central courtyard (*Divisare*, photo by Michele Nastasi, Amedeo Benestante, 2010)



15b

Fig. 16a

Photo during the construction of the multipurpose hall below the central courtyard and interior photo of the multipurpose hall (photo courtesy of DAZ Studio Archive, 2003-2005)

Fig. 16b

Photo of the current state (photo by Laura De Riso, 2025)



16a



16b



17a



17b



18a



18b

The roof of the building consists of a non-accessible part with a roof garden made of white pebble carpet surrounded by mixed vegetation with the intention of hiding the large ducts and a part accessible through a new stone staircase from which one can enjoy the view of the ancient center of Naples with Vesuvius and the sea in the distance. Two concrete blocks, arranged on either side of the ancient clock serve to hide the air intakes. [Fig. 19]

In designing the Madre Museum in Naples, Álvaro Siza adopts an approach that is strongly rooted in respect for the city's urban context and the building's multiple layers. His interventions are guided by a desire for harmonious integration, rather than a desire for formal imposition. The result of three years of work, from 2003 to 2005, is a *progetto felice*⁴⁵ as Siza himself calls it, a work that restored compositional unity and formal elegance to the entire architectural organism.

Conclusions

Despite the almost one century spanning from their birth dates in Portugal, we may find several points of contact between Alfredo de Andrade and Álvaro Siza, such as the ability to adapt to different contexts and the use of drawing as a privileged tool. Also, they are the Portuguese architects with more built works in Italy and, among these, the majority are interventions in preexisting buildings.

The critical analysis of these works, with particular demonstrations though the intervention in the Pavone Castle in Piedmont and the MADRE Museum in Naples, allows us to extract some parallels between Andrade and Siza's approaches: the deep study of the existing before intervention (including direct surveys and observations through manual drawing); a circularity between past and present (operational history), where the study of the ancient fabric informs the design strategy; a strong sense of continuity with the character of buildings, the construction traditions and the introduction of a delicate modernity that can be seen in the details.

Moreover, both architects are united in their interventions by a "case-by-case" approach (including different operations from strict conservation to new additions, either with mimetic reconstruction or with the notoriety of new additions, the latter seeking always for harmony and continuity between new and old. Hence, "a new-old binary is not developed in a straightforward and simplistic form", embodying density and complexity to the interventions with respect to the historical layering of the building. This also endorses a pedagogical role towards the intervention in preexisting buildings where "each case is a non-generalizable circumstance" and is determined only by the "ethical compromise of a deep knowledge of the building to be transformed."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ "Álvaro Siza e il restauro di Palazzo Donnaregina," video interview.

⁴⁶ Alexandre Alves Costa, "O património entre a aposta arriscada e a confiança nascida da intimidade," *Jornal dos Arquitectos*, no. 213 (2003): 13.

Fig. 17a-17b

Left: photo of the crenellated wall built in the Pawnshop courtyard. Right: photo of the piperno portal of the original 17th century building after demolition operations (photo courtesy of DAZ Studio Archive, 2003-2005)

Fig. 18a-18b

Photos of construction details to hide the plant system (photos by Laura De Riso, 2025)



19

Also, these two architects contribute to the long history of migrations of architects between Italy and Portugal, being important links in the relations between the two countries. Hence, as Daniele Vitale states

architecture is also built through networks of analogies, through distant relationships that have always bound cities and buildings together. [...] cities arise not only from the singularity of places and the density of the land, but from intermingling and intertwining, from repetitions and recalls, from exchanges and echoes, from analogical relationships and imitative forms.⁴⁷

Fig. 19

Current state of the roof with the roof garden and the new access staircase (website Studio Dumontet, Napoli. <https://www.studiodumontet.it/portfolio/napoli-museo-madre/>. Accessed April 21, 2026)

⁴⁷ Dario Vitale, "Il viaggio dell'architettura," in *Architetture portoghesi: tre scritti sul Portogallo del 1984, 1987, 1999, Quaderni del dottorato in composizione architettonica* (Milan: Politecnico di Milano, 2002), 10.

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