



HPA

Histories of Postwar Architecture

n.11 2022
vol.V

1923-2023 Fernando Távora at 100

edited by

José António Bandeirinha

Antonio Esposito

Giovanni Leoni

with Giovanni Bellucci

**Paula Abrunhosa
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Álvaro Siza
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Daniele Vitale**



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The curators would like to thank Bernardo and the entire Távora family for their kind cooperation and usual willingness to support any initiative that enhances their father's work.

Special thanks to Fundação Marques da Silva, Arquivo Fernando Távora for allowing the publication of the architect's drawings and graphic materials, marked FIMS/AFT.

Where not otherwise specified, Távora's drawings have been digitised by Giovanni Leoni and Antonio Esposito in the studio of architect Fernando Távora's studio, with his authorisation, during the researches aimed at the publication of the monograph published by Electa in 2005. At present, these reproductions continue to be used in order to publish further studies on the work and figure of architect Fernando Távora, with the consent of his heirs.

Cover picture: Fernando Távora at the atelier of the Rua Duque de Loulé, Porto 1958 (FIMS/AFT, Ref.3 4050).

In credit page: Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market (photo by Alessandra Chemollo).

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Álvaro Siza

The Continuous Construction of Memories

Contínua construção de Memórias de Amanhã

On 9 May 2003, the IUAV University of Venice, on an initiative proposed and supported by Francesco dal Co, awarded Fernando Távora with the Laurea Honoris Causa. The ceremony in the Sala dello Scrutinio of the Doge's Palace was conducted by the Rector Marino Folin. Three laudationes accompanied the ceremony held respectively by Carlo Magnani, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture (Fernando Távora, Casabella, no. 713 (July 2003): 6), Eduardo Souto de Moura (Fernando Távora e la natura delle cose naturali, Casabella, no. 713 (July 2003): 7) and Álvaro Siza ("Doutoramento em Veneza", in Álvaro Siza, 01 Textos, edited by Carlos Campos Morais (Porto: Civilização Editora, 2009): 293-295). The Lectio magistralis delivered by Távora is published in this issue of HPA.

In the text of his laudatio Siza refers, in succession, to the following works by Fernando Távora: the Holiday House in Ofir ("a small house... that suddenly materialised the imprecise intuitions of myself and those of my generation"); the Cedar School in Vila Nova de Gaia ("a public building on a sleepy periphery – an association of contemporaneity and continuity, of tradition and invention"); the Pousada of S. Marinha ("restoration of a convent restoration in which... the naturalness and heresy of a 'new architecture' emerged"), the Barredo recovery plan in Porto ("run-down neighbourhoods in Porto, a moment in which the architect's social responsibility was fully assumed"), the text O problema da Casa Portuguesa published in Porto in 1947 ("a revolutionary reunion with the past") and the tower built next to Porto Cathedral known as House of 24 ("a great little jewel").



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Your Excellency, the Rector of the IUAV University of Venezia

Mr President of the Faculty

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is no coincidence that the mythical Faculty of Architecture in Venice is honouring Fernando Távora by conferring on him the degree of Professor Honoris Causa.

This is a school where the teaching of architecture has always had History as its essential reference point; the History that has built a city where Western and Eastern cultures intersect, where the universality of architecture is affirmed with Andrea Palladio, where geographical specificity can be read in every House, in every street, in every arm of water; where minor architecture and sublime architecture – if it is legitimate to distinguish – have complemented each other over the centuries, mutually dependent, in an incomparably compact fabric. A city also made of dust and mud and golden mist, where you can breathe utopia and permanence, dream and adequacy.

The honour of saying a few words about the work and personality of Fernando Távora in this splendid Venetian venue overwhelms and moves me. Memories inevitably arise, but talking about Fernando Távora does not invite nostalgia but rather the awareness of the shared present and the appetite for the future.

The evidence of Fernando Távora's importance as a pedagogue, as a catalyst for renewing tendencies, within the Carlos Ramos School and afterwards, has somehow, I think, postponed attention to the Architect's work, of which he never wanted to be a herald; work that has therefore sometimes been referred to, always with respect, as an indispensable reference for understanding the evolution of Portuguese architecture.

If you look closely, Fernando Távora's not-so-easy work reveals itself to be universally contemporary in a country that was one of doldrums and suffocated anxiety. It reveals itself successively as an act of reflection, continuity and subversion in a counterpoint of projects "in a state of happiness" and suspended decomposition.

From this perspective, we can understand the complex coherence of the succession of projects and constructions carried out by the Architect and his diverse and passionate activities – from traveller to collector, from builder to educator. Activities that filled my youth (and the passing years) with continuous surprises and surprises.

First and foremost, I remember the tranquillity and patience with which any student's work was corrected, and then the enthusiastic sharing of experiences and discoveries, reporting on what was discussed at a CIAM meeting, the experience of a ZEN garden or the design of the Ronchamp door handle.

I remember the appearance of a small house, designed outside the studio and almost in secret, a house that suddenly materialised the imprecise intuitions of

myself and those of my generation, or a public building on a sleepy periphery – an association of contemporaneity and continuity, of tradition and invention.

Later on, I remember the restoration of a convent in which, based on rigorous archaeological research, the naturalness and heresy of a “new architecture” emerged, capable of keeping the building’s centuries-old History alive and visible, or the projects to restore run-down neighbourhoods in Porto, a moment in which the Architect’s social responsibility was fully assumed under adverse conditions, without calculation and at a cost.

I also remember the appearance of a small youth book – *A Casa Portuguesa* – a revolutionary reunion with the past, or a great little jewel, the redesign of the *House of 24*. And many other things I won’t say.

The recent *House of 24* project was built on the foundations of a medieval building that has disappeared, next to Porto Cathedral, from the few traces that remained and vague historical accounts, provoking immediate and violent controversy (always or almost always complete architecture generates estrangement and irritation).

Interviewed in the middle of the storm, Fernando Távora baffled everyone by simply saying: I was surprised myself.

I don’t know if he meant it or if it was ironic.

I dare say that, this time, I wasn’t surprised.

I knew before I saw the first strokes that a place like that and an accumulation of History like that, placed at its disposal, were ideal conditions for the emergence of something that old cities desperately need today: a sign of vitality, a challenge to courage in the face of timidity and conformism.

Fernando Távora engraved it in the heart of the city, an intimate and yet wide-open doorway between the past and what is to come.

This work, being recent, is not yet a memory; it will be, as a relevant moment in his career and teaching, as seen by this disciple of his: the continuous construction of *Tomorrow’s Memories*, *Memory* and open eyes and heart, serenity and desire, being instruments.

That work and that teaching are recognised and celebrated today.

Nothing could be more just and significant, as confirmed by the initiative of IUAV University of Venice.

I feel personally grateful, and in saying this, I feel that I am not alone.

29 April 2003

Álvaro Siza

Excelentíssimo Senhor Reitor do Instituto Universitário de Arquitectura de Venezia

Exmº Sr. Presidente da Faculdade

Senhoras e Senhores,

Não é um acaso ser a mítica Faculdade de Arquitectura de Venezia a honrar Fernando Távora, conferindo-lhe o grau de Professor Honoris Causa.

É esta uma Escola onde sempre o Ensino da Arquitectura manteve como referência essencial a História; a História que foi construindo uma cidade onde se cruzam culturas do ocidente e do oriente, onde a universalidade da Arquitectura se afirma com Andrea Palladio, onde a especificidade geográfica se lê em cada casa, em cada rua, em cada braço de água; onde a arquitectura menor e a sublime – se é legítimo distinguir – se complementam ao longo dos séculos, mutuamente dependentes, num tecido incomparavelmente compacto. Uma cidade feita também de pó e de lama e de névoa doirada, onde se respira utopia e permanência, sonho e adequação.



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A honra que me é concedida de pronunciar algumas palavras sobre a obra e a personalidade de Fernando Távora, neste espaço esplendido de Venezia, desvanece-me e emociona-me. Despertam as recordações, inevitavelmente; mas falar de Fernando Távora não convida à nostalgia, antes à consciência do presente partilhado e ao apetite do devir.

A evidência da importância de Fernando Távora como pedagogo, como catalisador de tendências renovadoras, no interior da Escola de Carlos Ramos e depois, foi de algum modo, julgo eu, adiando a atenção à obra do Arquitecto, da

Fig. 1

Drawing by Álvaro Siza signed with the dedication "For Fernando Távora", Assuan September 1984.

qual ele próprio nunca quis ser arauto; obra por isso e por vezes remetida, sempre com respeito, à condição de referência indispensável para compreender a evolução da Arquitectura Portuguesa.

A um olhar atento, a obra nada fácil de Fernando Távora revela-se universalmente contemporânea, num país que foi o de marasmo e de sufocada ansiedade. Revela-se sucessivamente como acto de reflexão, de continuidade e de subversão, num contraponto de projectos “em estado de felicidade” e de suspensas decomposições.

É nesta óptica que se pode entender a complexa coerência da sucessão de projectos e de construções realizados pelo Arquitecto e as suas diversas e apaixonadas actividades – do viajante ao coleccionador, do construtor ao pedagogo. Actividades que foram povoando a minha juventude (e o passar dos anos) de contínuas surpresas: de sobressaltos.

Recordo antes de tudo a tranquilidade e a paciência na correcção do trabalho de qualquer estudante; e logo a entusiástica partilha de experiências e de descobertas, o relato do que se debatia num encontro do CIAM, da experiência de um jardim ZEN ou do desenho do puxador de porta de Ronchamp.

Recordo o aparecimento de uma pequena casa, desenhada fora do estúdio e quase em segredo, uma casa que de súbito materializava as imprecisas intuições minhas e dos da minha geração; ou de um edifício público em adormecida periferia – associação de contemporaneidade a continuidade, de tradição e de invenção.

Recordo, mais tarde, a recuperação de um Convento em que, a partir de uma rigorosa pesquisa arqueológica, surge a naturalidade e a heresia de uma “nova arquitectura”, capaz de manter viva e expectante a História secular do edifício; ou os projectos de recuperação de bairros degradados do Porto, momento em que assume por inteiro e em condições adversas, sem cálculo e com custos, a responsabilidade social do Arquitecto.

Recordo ainda o aparecimento de um pequeno livro de juventude – *A Casa Portuguesa* – reencontro revolucionário com o passado; ou de uma grande pequena jóia, redesenho da *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro*. E muitas outras coisas que não digo.

O projecto recente da *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro* foi construído sobre os alicerces de um edifício medieval desaparecido, junto à Catedral do Porto, a partir dos poucos traços que restavam e de vagos relatos históricos, provocando imediata e violenta polémica (sempre ou quase sempre a arquitectura íntegra provoca estranheza e irritação).

Entrevistado no meio da tempestade, Fernando Távora desconcertou toda a gente, ao dizer simplesmente: Eu próprio me surpreendi.

Não sei se era sincero, ou se era uma ironia.

Atrevo-me a dizer que, desta vez, não houve para mim surpresa.

Sabia, antes de ver os primeiros riscos, que um lugar como aquele e uma acumulação de História como a daquele lugar, postos à sua disposição, eram condição ideal para o aparecimento de algo de que hoje as cidades antigas desesperadamente necessitam: um sinal de vitalidade, um desafio à coragem, face à timidez e ao conformismo.

Fernando Távora gravou-o bem fundo e no centro da cidade; entroncado e maciço vão – porta íntima e contudo escancarada entre o passado e o que há-de vir.

Sendo recente, não é esta obra ainda uma recordação; sê-lo-á, como momento relevante da sua obra e ensinamento, tal como os vê este discípulo: contínua construção de *Memórias de Amanhã*, sendo instrumentos *Memória* e olhos e coração abertos, serenidade e desejo.

Essa obra e esse ensinamento são hoje reconhecidos e celebrados.

Nada mais justo e significativo, como confirma a iniciativa do Instituto Universitário de Arquitectura de Veneza.

Sinto-me pessoalmente grato, e ao dizê-lo sinto que não estou só.

29 de Abril de 2003

Álvaro Siza

Manuel Mendes Interviews Fernando Távora.

Edifícios (1988)

Fernando Távora, Edifícios, Cedro School, Tradition in History, Notion of Modernity

/Abstract

The following text is an unpublished interview with Fernando Távora carried out in 1988 for *Edifícios*, the project of a magazine of systems, urbanism, and architecture, outlined by Eduardo Oliveira Fernandes, Alexandre Aves Costa, Manuel Mendes, and accompanied by Luís Marques, then a member of the staff of the Entity that held the title. The project was suspended by the decision of that Entity at the time of the development of Issue 1. At that time, the interview with Fernando Távora by Javier Frechilla, published in *Arquitectura* (COAM's magazine, no. 261, July-August 1986), was very much present. At the time of the interview for *Edifícios*, Fernando Távora's health problems, together with the inexperience of the interviewer, hindered the fluency of the discourse and the clarity of the exposition of the topics under discussion, thus diverting and suspending the ordinary course of the interview. In the transcription of the recordings, some of these moments are noted; the sign [...] records inaudible word(s) in the fixed text. (MM)

/Author

Manuel Mendes
Architect

Architect graduated (ESBAP, 1980), PhD (FAUP, 2011) and lecturer at ESBAP and FAUP in Architecture History and Theory subjects. He is a retired assistant professor at FAUP, where he was the head of the 2nd and 3rd-year Theory course named "Architecture Circumstance Manifesto" and "Writing Research Project", an option course for 4th and 5th-year Master students (MIARQ course). He is part of the research group "Architecture: Theory, Project, History" at CEAU-FAUP and of the Documentation and Research Center in Architectural Culture (CICA) of the Marques da Silva Foundation (FIMS). He has developed several researches in the field of 20th-century architecture – namely related to its Portuguese and Porto components –, regularly publishing written works in journals and books, such as: "Contemporary Portuguese Architecture, 1965-1985" (co-authored with Nuno Portas). Milan: Electa editrice, 1991; "baixa portuense" – pure representation (city culture and architecture, memory and design – 14 signs for the 'city to come') in *Porto 2001: Return to Downtown*. Porto: FAUP publications, 2000; "(In)forming modernity. Porto architectures, 1923-1943: morphologies, movements, metamorphoses". Porto: FAUP publications, 2001; "Ah, the human yearning to be river or quay!", in *Fernando Távora*. Milan: Electa, 2005. In the second semester of 2003, he conducted a survey of the written work of Nuno Portas, being editor and coordinator of the publication *Nuno Portas. Writings*, in three volumes, finalist work at the FAD Prize, Barcelona, 2005. He designed, programmed, and (co-) organized events related to the heritage and knowledge of architecture. Between 1992 and 2006, he reorganized and directed the Editorial Service of FAUP, editing and/or producing about fifty titles. Between 2001 and 2008, he was part of the Editorial Board of the Oporto University Publisher. In 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1996, he participated as a member of the Support Committee to the Jury in selecting architectural works for the European Prize for Architecture Mies van der Rohe Pavilion, Barcelona.

The family upbringing, the school education, and the notion of post-war architectural transformations are all themes that certainly allow us to approach your training process and your problems at the beginning of your career...

Just yesterday, I was asking myself, in those thoughts one has when driving a car, why did I choose to be an architect? Because there were very favorable conditions for me to have chosen a profession, a training, of an artistic nature. I have already discovered that the so-called ability to draw comes from my grandfather, who used to draw, sculpt, etc. My father always used to say he was a disaster, and I had proof of that several times. But he had a brother, called Fernando, who drew very well, and he inherited those qualities from my grandfather. My older brother, Bernardo, drew very, very well. So, there was a certain facility for drawing. On the other hand, my father was a man with a law degree, conservative in spirit, politically an integralist, and monarchist, which led him to be very interested in historical issues, cultural activities, visits that we made as a family, etc.

There was also an important factor: because of circumstances of family origin, there were several houses to which the family was connected. My uncle Fernando, my father's older brother, lived in a house by Nasoni: the house in Ramalde that I had known since I was a boy and a house that I often visited. The house in Sepins, where my father was from, although he wasn't born there, it was a house that belonged to my father's side; it was said to have the imprint of Machado de Castro, which was an endless source of sculptures and architecture from that region of Coimbra; it wasn't by him, but it had something to do with Machado de Castro. Still on my father's side, the house in Amoreira was a beautiful 18th century baroque house. On my mother's side, there was a 17th century house that I shared, a late 18th century house, neoclassical, and there was another set of houses. Then, there was a city that my mother and I were very connected to, which was the city of Guimarães.

And there was my brother Bernardo, the eldest, who was a civil engineer, who drew very well and did architectural projects, which I remember. I remember my father gave him a book by Raul Lino, and my brother did an architectural test for a chair in civil engineering, with a beautiful house that was very inspired, strongly inspired by a project by Raul Lino, in a lacustrine area in Minho. I remember that the dedication of the book to my brother, made by my father, said, "for my son Bernardo so that in his professional activity he always follows the lessons of the great masters".

And there was also this tradition on my mother's side, on the side of the Viscount of Pindela, the Count of Arnoso, the houses, etc... Well, there was really a series of favorable conditions for this type of training.

It was under these conditions that I went to the School, but with many reservations from my family environment. My brother advised my father that I should take a course in civil engineering, with the idea that, being an engineer, I would do the engineering project and the architectural project as well; being an architect, I would only do architecture because it was a secondary course; if



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I was an engineer, I would do what engineers did and what architects couldn't do because it was a higher course. This situation led me to make an effort: I stayed in seventh grade, which wasn't necessary at the time, and I also took the admission exams for the military studies, the Faculty of Engineering and the School of Fine Arts. I passed the three admissions; I went to my father and told him I wanted to be an architect. And I did the architecture course. And I really was an architect.

The training I had at the School was very consistent with my family background: quite conservative, although with some touches, from time to time, of the modern man that was Carlos Ramos, his lessons, but never very intense modernity, never very affected. The works of the 1st and 2nd year were works on classical themes, I still keep some of those works¹ and, therefore, let's say that the School did not force me. What forced me to have a modern education, which I tried to do, was, above all, the contact with colleagues who, at the time, were called Fernando Lanhas, Júlio Resende (older), Nadir Afonso, Júlio Pomar, etc. There was a group that I got on with there, some older and some younger, who created a climate of a certain progressivism. There was a certain political progressiveness, but not political in my case. I was never very close to those groups; I was well known and established; I wasn't as well-known as them because the police didn't allow dissembling, but it was known that I always had relations with those people. I also had relations with Delfim Amorim, who later went to Brazil, with Viana de Lima, with older people, some of whom were already outside the School [...] But perhaps the person with whom I had the closest relationship was with Lanhas, because we worked together, we even had an office after we finished the course. Lanhas was very curious and, despite everything, a little more advanced than me.

1 In the unedited version: I still have some of these exercises on the classic.

Fig. 1

Casa do Costeado, Guimarães, one of the Távora family's houses (FIMS/AFT).



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All this created some difficulties for me, not so much in my course, where I tried to do some things in a modern style, but I was weak. The training was quite loose, and things arrived very fresh; there wasn't much time to learn them except formally; the theoretical training was weak not very well founded². Everything was a bit empty, a bit absent, a bit formal. What I really tried to do was to ground my interests and understand why, why to make modern architecture, why relate architecture to urbanism, why relate architecture to society, in short, all those kinds of modern themes that weren't really dealt with much. Hence, for example, the complete reading of Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, something that nobody reads today but I did, the whole book annotated.

When I was in military service, in one of the periods in Vendas Novas, reading the whole Spengler was one of my entertainments. Why was that? Because Spengler, regardless of his concepts, does a wonderful thing, which consists of relating events, and I have always been concerned with knowing why things are in a certain way and what relations exist so that this table has this shape. Relationships that are not only formal but of all kinds, deep relationships of historical notion and sensibility. That is what I sought, and it upset my life a little because I became more demanding. As a student at the School, the things I did with the other students were actually a bit based on a book that arrived from Brazil. From Le Corbusier, when the first things started to appear.

Then in my professional life things got more complicated because I was more demanding. That's why, on the one hand, I had a major professional crisis. I stopped working, and for two years, I was incapable of doing any work, and I

2 In the recording: today, despite everything, we have a more solid structure, even if we complain about it.

Fig. 2

Fernando Távora and Carlos Ramos (FIMS/AFT).

even created some rather ridiculous situations, such as refusing work on the grounds that I had too much to do. I didn't have anything to do but I was almost completely incapable [...]

I was very interested in urbanism, although at school it was not a very interesting subject. My interest in urbanism came from this obsession with the totality of things.

My entrance to the Câmara (Municipality): I put in a word with the Câmara, introduced myself to the President and entered the Gabinete de Urbanização da Câmara (Town Planning Office), in fact this room we are in, on this floor. In town planning, design problems arose naturally. I never thought of town planning as a field in which drawing was not important, but one in which, despite everything, at least this is how I saw it, I would say it was a responsible drawing but one that was less recognizable, like architectural drawing was. And I started to take a great interest in urban planning problems. Here in the Gabinete de Urbanização, I had splendid contacts with the Director of the Office, the engineer José Miguel Resende, who was a man with whom I loved to discuss; we had discussions that started here in the morning and ended at 6, 7 p.m. in the Café Imperial, along the Praça da Batalha, Santo António, because I was a kid, I was a fierce character, I used to tease people a little out of curiosity.

And that's how I, with this familiar atmosphere, with this School and, afterwards, with the first times here in the Urbanization Office, became [...] or made my pedestal on which my professional practice is based.

Regarding your words, I remember the text that accompanied the presentation of the Cedro School. At a certain point, you say that, initially, architecture was, for you, something like a white virgin, something inaccessible, and then you discovered that architecture was something much more natural than anyone could do.

Yes. Because... initially it was ignorance, then it was sophistication, and then I filled the spirit with complications.

Just the other day, talking about a building that is under construction, I said *there is too much architecture*. Today I'm beginning to say that architecture has too much architecture. It seems paradoxical, but it's what I think, at least when I feel that architecture appears too much; there is a concept of architecture that goes beyond the concept of architecture in the proper sense, understood as decoration, as something added. So, in that first phase, I thought that architecture [was a mythical thing]. I didn't really know what it was, and then I saw it as something extremely complicated. Today, I see it more and more as a natural act. That's why sometimes I say that there's too much architecture, if I may be allowed the paradox because architecture should never be too much, but today it's a little bit decorative, a little bit effeminate... It is a theme that I have developed in my work for the school, that of architecture as

of any art. Architecture is so important, so important, so important that it's as important as the air. It's something that involves us completely, it's a kind of second nature. And so, as second nature, it is something in which everyone participates. That's why it must be, and really is, a natural event. That's why a kind of architectural culture must be very widespread, something that today is, I suppose, lost.

It's my idea that when a lady (I say a lady, not out of disrespect or because it's a stupid act) changes a white color to a pink or yellow in a room, she makes a strong act of architecture because she strongly alters the space of that room. And that, apparently, is a simple thing: go to a catalogue, change from white or yellow to red, red to blue... it doesn't matter, but it's an important act of architecture. These acts, normally, are not considered acts of architecture. So, there are acts that are acts of architecture and acts that are not acts of architecture. I believe there must be a process whereby every act of relative and variable importance is an act of architecture and, therefore, transforms the important acts into ordinary acts and gives more importance to those considered less important.

I suppose that specialism is one of the tragedies that exist today; people recognise it, and we are all victims of it. There is a specialism in architecture, "this man is an architect"; you need an architect for this, you don't need an architect for that. It is accepted, for example, that you can design roads. In Portugal, you make a diagram of the road, currently by IP (Infrastructures de Portugal), and I would like to know how many architects are connected to this very important work of creating a road in a completely new landscape, choice of landscape, integration in the terrain..., very few of course. Even how many architects are involved in urbanism itself and in many other works that are carried out every day. Very few people. Of course, you may say to me: "There are no architects for everything". No, there really aren't. But I also think that many of these architects are not interested in these jobs, partly because today the notion of architecture, in my opinion, is a little divinised. People think that certain jobs are not for architects; they're for other people.

The truth is that the awareness of architecture as a second nature should be more widespread in architectural culture. Everything is fine, apparently, but cutting down a tree or destroying a house changes a whole system, so there has to be a great sensitivity to the space in which we all participate.

In a way, one could say that in your training, particularly during that period of transition from school to professional practice, even if it is a problem that accompanies you throughout your experience, there is a kind of problematic encounter between the traditional aspects of architecture and the sense of modernity, of keeping up with progress, the evolution of the working techniques that the architect has at his disposal. At that time when you apparently felt more need to make modern architecture outside, especially in Europe,

there was something of the opposite. Architects, in a way, were debating how to associate the new with the values of tradition, the recovery of tradition in history. In what way is this not yet another contradiction in the world of conflicts that accompanied you in those years?

It is like this. Despite everything, in my case, I have the impression that the contrast between what I thought needed to evolve and the evolution that architecture was undergoing was never very serious. Despite everything, I integrated myself a little into that movement that was overtaking modern architecture/international architecture, and because of the contacts I had and even because I always had that little tail of a certain culture, a certain relationship with traditional things.

Interestingly, what I see is that nowadays I am more, how shall I say? More modern in the sense of going back to the sources. I explain. I find that, first of all, I had a very strong Corbusian education. Le Corbusier was the great man at that time. Secondly, no longer as a student, but as an assistant at the School there was a European Wrightian invasion, provoked by Zevi's dissemination who discovered in Wright perhaps a process of gaining a certain prestige as a critic. That was Zevi's big bombshell because he abandoned his Wright publicity and, in a sense, [moved away]³ a bit from European criticism. But in the meantime, there was a certain crisis in international architecture. The death of Le Corbusier, the incredible things that were said when the man died, some of them quite claudicating [?] and daring in relation to a man of that calibre. But the truth is that with the centenary, Le Corbusier comes back again. And I have a kind of, I wouldn't say, second childhood, second return to the figure of Le Corbusier, a return from the point of view of professional practice and the use of forms, naturally different from the one I had in the first phase, which was more direct. So, now more interpreted, perhaps more elaborate, but I return to [...].

In fact, I suppose it's not a personal case; I suppose it's a current trend, a certain revision of Le Corbusier, a certain recognition of Le Corbusier, and of new potentialities for the present moment. On the other hand, when a guy reaches the age of 65, as is my case, it is natural to have some nostalgia for childhood and that return, also in the formation of traditional values, naturally much more elaborate⁴. What I feel nowadays is that I'm doing perhaps the most interesting things a person can do, which I think it's wonderful to be able to say this, it probably doesn't happen... I mean, I don't feel old at all, I feel, on the contrary, completely fresh. Nor do I feel that this return to the first childhood, this second childhood, is a manifestation of dumbing down, senility. This at a time when it seems to me that part of architecture is suffering. Great architecture is always doing well because there are always some men of genius and talent.

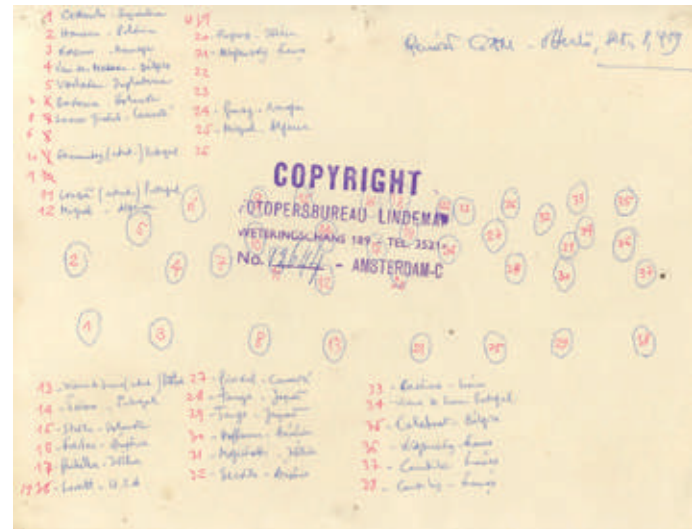
3 In the recording: he cancelled himself.

4 On the recording: In fact, I suppose it's not a personal thing; I suppose it's a current trend, a certain revision of Le Corbusier, and a certain recognition of Le Corbusier, and of new potential for the present moment, but also this elaboration of essential values of our tradition, that is, when one reaches – as is my case – the age of 65, on the one hand, it's natural for him to have some nostalgia for his childhood and this return (in the case of Le Corbusier) also in the case of this formation of traditional values, but it comes back naturally much more elaborate.



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They always do well, but I think that minor and current architecture is a bit of a mess because I think it's too formal, too formalist...

Earlier, you spoke about the relationship with colleagues for the understanding of the notion of modernity. Are there other types of relationships, that is, is there closer contact with other arts, is there closer contact with another knowledge, more markedly generational? Contacts with previous generations? Contacts with people from Lisbon, where, despite everything, perhaps the possibility of realization is a little wider? Or is this whole process a bit individual?

I'm a shy person; maybe I don't look like it, but I'm really a bit of a mess when it comes to relationships. For example, international congresses were never my specialty, even for language difficulties. From the point of view of relationships, I had great friends and many contacts, but I always had some limitations. But I understand that I had many contacts, trips, international congresses, and CIAMs, where if I didn't speak, I had the opportunity to listen, which is so metimes more important: knowing how to listen more than knowing how to speak.

The truth is that, despite everything, I have the impression that my training is very personal, bookish in the bad sense because I have always been concerned with acquiring books, reading the works that I find and consider most significant, etc. So, I think my training is quite well-founded. Apart from one thing that you might think I don't have because I'm a chatty and talkative man... which is a large, intimate, personal life of thought. I'm a person who thinks about things a lot. I have my moments, my evenings of reconsidering my life, my professional activity, my synthesis. I have written a lot, which is something that forces us to rethink, synthesize, etc. Professional practice itself forces us to do that and I have had quite an intense professional practice. I know that I am considered a

Fig. 3, 4

CIAM Congress XI, Otterlo 1959, group photograph featuring Fernando Távora, José Coderch, Arne Korsmo, Jaap Bakema, Ignazio Gardella, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, André Wogensky, Kenzo Tange, Vico Magistretti, Eduard Franz Sekler, Ralph Erskine, Georges Candillis and the Portuguese Sérgio Fernandez, Bento Lousá and Alfredo Viana de Lima and others (FIMS/AFT).

rather lazy professional, but I am not a lazy type in that sense. What I am is, on the one hand, a guy who is a little slow to decide things, which is a temperamental thing, something that goes beyond me, and, besides this, I am a man who likes to do things with a certain care, I am very careful in what I write, in what I do. I won't do things with a great quality, I do them with the quality that I can, but at least I try to do them with a certain rigour, a certain precision, a certain thoughtfulness; that is what I seek.

So, I suppose that this evolution was mostly at the expense of myself, now evidently interpreting others, knowing others.

Le Corbusier was a personality that marked you. Could you explain in which way Le Corbusier is a chosen one in your way of thinking and creating, or in which way Le Corbusier is a quasi-value of your intimacy? Which personalities have marked you more than Le Corbusier?

When I discovered, which was perhaps not right at the beginning, that Le Corbusier is an Occidental, he is a Mediterranean, French, obviously. I have even read, in these studies that have been done on Le Corbusier's adolescence, the explanation of his shift from a Swiss concept to a Mediterranean concept, the search for a Mediterranean concept as solving problems of a Swiss identity.

In Le Corbusier, there is something that touches me, obviously, which is the capacity for creation. That sense of Mediterranean, basically the so-called play of forms under the light, that definition he gives of architecture, is something I am really very sensitive to. It's not because it's a Nordic thing. The English, Arts and Crafts, and even a little Frank Lloyd Wright have interesting relationships with Nature. Equally important is a certain sobriety, richness but sobriety, which doesn't exist so much in Wright, whose forms are not sober; they are more human, more comfortable. This hardness, sometimes a little almost religious in Le Corbusier, for example, is something that touches me. And again, geometrical sense, a sense of geometry, the geometry of the right angle, also of a great firmness of the solutions.

There are a series of circumstances, which I suppose are particular to our Mediterranean architecture, to which I connect temperamentally; I connect perhaps as a Portuguese because the truth is that Le Corbusier is a Frenchman and a very strong Mediterranean; it was already known, but today it's documented. But it is that sense [...] it is that identity that Portuguese architecture does not have.

Portuguese architecture always has a flavour that Barata Feyo called *gaucherie*; Portuguese things always have a certain *gaucherie*. We see this in Brazil, in the things made in Brazil and in India, which really have those characteristics of the European thing, of the Mediterranean, but then there is always a personal touch, a little betrayal, or in the geometry, or in the rigour, or in the implantation, which in fact gives things a certain humanity. And that I feel I have in what I do...



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Obviously, I, for reasons of incapacity, would never achieve the power that Le Corbusier's works have, an emotional power. But it also seems to me that there is a certain Portugueseness that does not allow those things to be done by a Portuguese person. I have the impression that the Portuguese give things [...]. It is our so-called lyricism, a certain humanity, a certain presence of the person that, despite everything, despite the rigour, despite the geometry, appears in the things we do through the betrayal of labour, or through a certain professional incompetence or through a small difficulty that arose in the project, or through the client who presses a small change. That gives, in my opinion, a certain character to our things...

So, Le Corbusier is clearly the primary reference. Are there others? Wright?

Yes, then, over time, others appear. My passion for Frank Lloyd Wright is well known. When I was in the United States, I was highly impressed by what I saw. Just last year, in 1988, I was there with Siza, in part of Wright's houses in Oak Park, the Unitarian Chapel, and a number of works that we saw. We didn't happen to go to New York, we didn't see the Guggenheim. But we saw the Johnson factory, for example, very interesting works that I don't see as belonging to my family; I see them as interesting works by a stranger, just like the things made by the Mexicans, the wonderful Kahn, the Pyramid of the Sun, the Pyramid of the Moon, the Temple of [...], but we are light years away from that kind of thing.

Fig. 5

CIAM congress VIII, Hoddesdon 1951, Fernando Távora and Le Corbusier with Piero Bottoni, André Wogensky, Takamasa Yoshizaka, Le Corbusier, Kenzo Tange, Alfred Roth and others at CIAM (FIMS/AFT).

And in the field of theory, is there any text that, particularly in these years, has been something important?

No, I've never... Curiously enough, I've always been more interested in – how shall I put it? – the texts by architects. Texts that are never very theoretical, texts by architects as architects; the reading of the works and the reading of texts about the works, more than the reading of theoretical texts... I can't tell you... Of course, I have read something, but my theoretical training is based more on my own professional practice or on the professional practice of others and their texts, rather than through texts that are already theoretical in themselves.

I might go on to tell you that some of the texts that have moved me most as an architect are texts by Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier (of course), and Perret; texts written by architects themselves, generally based on their professional practice or as elements anticipating a genesis of a professional practice, directives for professional practice itself more than pure theoretical texts.

Still, about learning, training or the evolution of this training, I believe that an important training factor is travelling. You travel a lot and you have always made travelling a way of knowing, of acquiring knowledge. How is travelling thus an important instrument of knowledge? What role does it play in your relationship with the world?

What I think is important in travelling, with the difficulties that it brings, is the knowledge of new realities, not only of buildings but of people, behaviours, languages, climates and therefore, basically, the understanding of the building.

I am an architecture addicted. Although I say that there is too much architecture in things, the truth is that I am very much an architect, and I live very much obsessed with architecture. Curiously, I am a man who is not very interested in Nature. Even now, on this trip to Brazil, when I was able to visit the Amazon River, the Rio Negro, the forest, and such, it wasn't exactly the thing I was most sensitive to. I was much more sensitive, despite everything, to the cities and buildings. I'm not a great amateur in Nature, but this means that I'm a fan and addicted to architecture.

So, what interests me when travelling is identifying situations and re-understanding the relationships between things: why houses are like this, why people are like this as a consequence of houses, why cities are like this and what are the relationships between cities and houses. A whole system that defines the shape of a country, the shape of a city or a house; or why people dress like this or like that according to the climate. As far as it is possible to find, on the one hand, a system of relations, and on the other hand, the difference of situations.

I think this is interesting in our professional practice. No two situations are identical, even in our professional practice and in a small environment like the



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day life of any architect working in Oporto, which is my case, of one who, of course, doesn't go to work in New York, because he is not asked to; he works here in a small environment. Even so, the circumstances of each work are very different, and I think it's very interesting that definition of the circumstances, of the conditions of each work. It's fundamental, it gives the work its character, it gives the work its identity. That's why I used to say that I'm a bit slow because I like to delve into the conditions that determine the work, the conditions that allow a work, as I say, after a while, to change the colour of its eyes to the extent that it is the work itself that will command the architect. This means knowing the conditions, observing them, studying them, defining them and, in a certain sense, following them.

So that's kind of what I'm interested in on the trip.

Of those trips, is there an itinerary that has particularly marked you? Is there a particular passion for a particular city, for example?

No. Of course, I started by travelling a bit by chance, by circumstance: Spain, France, Italy, the United States, with a big grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation, Japan. But then I began to try to put my journeys in order, to understand my world with some exactness. Hence the trip I made with a group of colleagues to

Fig. 6

Fernando Távora in Rome, 1947 (FIMS/AFT).

Greece to understand the system that Fernando Pessoa called Greece-Rome-Christianity, since Christendom was closer to me in Europe. Of this system, Rome I already knew. Then, in Greece, I felt the need to go to Egypt to understand – this is something that is not clearly studied – the Egypt-Greece relationship. The contribution of Egypt to the formation of Greece and, therefore, to this axis of ours that generated all of us, to today's Europe, practically to today's world. [On the one hand,] the sense of the generation of the man that we are, on the other hand, the concern as a Portuguese and hence my going to India, for example, to look for something that has always moved me very much, which is our relations with the East, and now my going to Brazil.

So, what does it mean? It means, on the one hand, that I manage, I'm probably already in a financial position to structure the idea of the trip a little, to understand what the trip is for; on the other hand, the feeling that there's not enough time, that I have to choose my itineraries because I no longer have time to... But, in this scheme of things, I still have some itineraries to do, exactly to understand my world and understand myself, understand Portugal and understand all of this. And travelling, in that sense, is very useful because it's a total change of climate or, when it's not different, feeling why there's no change, as is the case in Brazil. It's exciting to change country, to travel I don't know how many hours by plane, travel thousands of kilometres, and meet people from Vila da Feira, Ponte de Lima or Viana do Castelo, speaking Portuguese that is very similar to ours.

Perhaps we could move on to a second theme, which has little to do with Portuguese architecture. Your commitment to understanding Portuguese architecture and its specificity is well known, architecture created in conditions that are quite distant from the major cultural centres. Can we speak of a specificity of Portuguese architecture? Are there any premises from which one can build a basis for the identity of that architecture?

Well, I am obsessed with saying yes, and more than Portuguese, because I mean one from the North and another from the South, for example. I say that these characters do not divide the country into coastal and inland areas, considering the vertical axis, because, well known and felt by all of us, is the fact that Portugal, being a relatively small country, is sensitively varied along its North-South axis, but [...]; on the other hand, because my knowledge of the South, Lisbon, etc., for me is always the entrance into a different world. Of course, it is relatively easy to say this and difficult to say what the elements of that North/South identity are, or, if we want a slightly broader level, of a national identity in relation to Europe, in relation to the world. But I think it exists because I see it with my own eyes. I arrive in India, and I see things that I only see in Portugal and that I confuse with things from Spain, our near neighbours. When I arrive in Brazil, I see Portuguese things that I do not confuse with things from Spanish America or from our neighbouring Spain, I do not confuse with Italian things, I do not confuse with French things, I do not confuse with English or German things.

I think that there really is a national identity. What I think is that the vision we have of it, or that I have, or most people have (by the way, I am not aware of any appropriate studies on this subject) is a bit sentimental, a bit of impression, of *feeling, of feeling*, and not properly documented. But, if there really is... or, going beyond architecture, if there really is a Portuguese man, I suppose there is in relation to the Spanish man, the Brazilian man, the American man. How can that Portuguese man not produce Portuguese architecture? I don't know about that... But if you ask, "What are the characteristics of Portuguese architecture?" That's more complicated. You know that Alexandre made an attempt that, in my opinion, suffers from some doubts. It's a subject I've talked a lot about with him. There is even something well-known, applied in Spain, *Variantes Castiços da Arquitectura Espanhola*, in which Goitia even tries to formally define some characteristics that he considers to be Spanish architecture, but which go all the way back to modernity; what would be interesting would be to know if there is any break at present.

I, for example, consider myself Portuguese. I have no doubt whatsoever. I swear on my chest that I am a Portuguese architect. "But why? Are you sure about that?", I'm sure. "How do you document?", document in the sense of writing a treatise on traditional Portuguese architecture, how do I correspond to that... It's a bit more than a feeling, but of which I'm absolutely sure. As Pessoa is a Portuguese poet, Antero de Quental is a Portuguese poet, Camões is a Portuguese poet, and Siza Vieira is a Portuguese architect. Why is Siza a Portuguese architect? It's even more complicated because I know I am; he's someone else; I can speak for myself, but I find it more difficult to speak for him. I think he's a Portuguese architect, although... You might say he's a Portuguese architect of the so-called Portuguese architects of a certain quality. I don't know if architecture in Portugal has ever reached the quality that it is reaching with him, which doesn't mean that it's not possible. The same thing happens with poetry. We have leading figures in universal poetry, recent ones, Camões, Pessoa, and a few others, and so we can also have leading figures in universal architecture, and Siza can be one of those. It's not the fact that he's a Portuguese man or that he creates Portuguese architecture that stops him from being...

Of course, if you ask him if he does Portuguese architecture voluntarily, he might say that he doesn't, I've heard that. This is a subject that is sickeningly treated everywhere. At the CIAM congress where Rogers presented the Velasca Tower, he gave Tange great praise, saying that Tange was starting his life; he was referring to the Government Palace in Tokyo, and Tange, acting disinterested (something that made a lot of impression on me) said "I don't pretend to be a Japanese architect, I just want to be a modern architect". Don't tell me that Tange is so naive and that he doesn't intend to be a Japanese architect and does not harm him. Now, sometimes, there's a certain coyness about it. I don't know what Siza would answer to this question; whether he intends to be a Portuguese architect, he might answer no. I don't know, but I think he is a Portuguese architect.

Is this idea of Portuguese architecture something that stems from a certain national nostalgia, or a nationality value, or an identity, or is it something that can be related to a Portuguese procedure? In a situation in which there is no in-depth historical research among architects, and they even show a certain lack of faith in that component within their disciplinary specificity, I wonder: isn't there a risk of valuing as specific or as a component for specificity of national architecture, the valuing of a certain primitivism, of elementalism resulting from a voluntarist accompaniment of the large centres, of their flourishing cultures? As a small centre, what is left for us to cultivate nostalgia for the Portuguese?

I think that the problem of identity is nowadays conscious, which means, as far as I am concerned, that it is indispensable. It's really a nostalgia.

Today it has been proved, finally, that this whole crazy movement of heritage, the whole movement of the creation of Europe, the Council of Europe, the European Community, etc., are basically a search for identities on a greater or lesser scale. Today, there is a great search for identities because it seems that we are in a world that is losing them, and curiously enough, the great national identities, the great regions and the small regions, I mean, the small identities, are starting to be cultivated. Regionalism, for example, today, on a national, regional scale, is also a cult of identity. It is likely that the fact of feeling this need may lead people to value minor factors as identity, factors that are even questionable in their quality. But I don't presume that what will give Portuguese architecture an identity are minor factors. Portuguese architecture has a certain character; why? Because it is timider, because it is more ignorant, because it is less modern, it doesn't contribute to the movement...

It does not contribute, but the great historians come here to study it ...

And I wonder, going back to the case of Siza, is Siza studied and so sought after because he is creating a model of international architecture? It is because he's a Portuguese architect. The case of Pessoa: Pessoa is a great poet, really. He's a man who says that to be Portuguese, you must be everything everywhere. This concept is that identity results from a great revelation, and national identity has to result, paradoxically, from knowing everything and everyone. Pessoa's heteronymy itself is a curious phenomenon of a type being identical to himself when he is many. This, paradoxically, is a need for identity. Heteronymy is a need for identity, for knowing oneself while being many and, moreover, for identifying oneself with situations that perhaps are not one's own, but which, in a diversified world of various identities, a type wants to be identical to others. This is possible.

I think that one of the interesting aspects of the modern world is a certain heteronymy that architects face in their professional practice. As is the case with poets and Pessoa's case is not unique, it is perhaps a more drawn-out case; several modern poets used heteronymy as a need for knowledge, and it follows that the historical factor has a certain importance as much for a varied identification as for recognition

of other identities, of meeting languages, contacts, etc. The truth is that this feeling exists today among architects when I recognise that Lisbon is not the same as Oporto, or Aveiro is not the same as Oporto, and I think I should use a language in Aveiro that I do not use in Oporto. When, for example (as happened to me in a building in Aveiro), an architect comes and says: "why don't you do this in exposed concrete?"; no, in Aveiro, I can't do it in exposed concrete because I think I should do concrete covered with marble or limestone, and that's what I did. But I can perhaps do fair-faced concrete in Oporto. Now, they tell me: "But what are these laws? Can you write a treaty?". I don't know.

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[MM – By the way we could continue the same theme, but particularise...

FT – Do you think it's worth?]

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We can perhaps specify a few things starting from your case. You share a certain renewal of architecture, you share references that integrate you in a European generation: Rogers (although you are a little older), Cano Lasso, Coderch, but the architecture they make is quite different from yours. This has something to do with these local conditions of professional practice, or with this condition of being Portuguese, which gives you a different intentionality?

I believe so. What I think is that it's maybe not as reasoned as that. I'm afraid of being vain by appearing to possess some things because I'll automatically be... other people from not having them... However, I know that I currently have within me a certain capacity for insertion and knowledge of situations that enable me to characterise the work and characterise the situations.

One reference you insist on, especially in your writings, is the constant reference to man, to the "house of man". Would you like to explain a little how the "house of man" reflects an affinity with local conditions and, at the same time, the attempt to find some universality?

I don't see any incompatibility – and I don't think we can see it – between a great universality that we all need to know and a strong identity. In fact, I suppose that is the thesis that Pessoa defends: finding identity in universality. And I think it is possible. I mean, we can't go back... Does this identity thing mean going back again to the small group, to the small region, to the small thing? It is not possible. We don't live in such a world; we live in a completely open world. I suppose that it is exactly this openness that is fatal, that implies that the "house of man" is, on the one hand, the world and, on the other hand, the house of man, the small house of man. I feel that this fact exists. You can say to me, "This one is crazy", because nobody would say this.

For example, this Porto/Lisbon problem. Nuno Portas tells me that this is all the same; everything is opening, and we are all the same. I don't think so; it is not about saying that we are better or worse, that is not the issue, or that we must be different. What I think is that we are equal, and I do not think it is a problem for us to cultivate this difference as long as it does not have the effect of creating enmities or problems of another order. I think it's possible to make that greatness compatible... because curiously enough, who are the architects who were all supposedly international, the top architectural standards in international architecture? Mr. Le Corbusier, Mr. Gropius, Mr. Mies van der Rohe. Gropius is 100% German, an international architect is German, he arrives in the United States and finds himself a bit of a mess, he becomes American, because the Americans put pressure on him, he gets rich and comes out an Americanised German. Mies van der Rohe...

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[MM I confess, possibly half of this..., it's my fault, I can't specify more objective questions..

FT I just get too scattered. The problem is writing this, you know? With the Spanish, despite everything, I concentrated more].

*

The idea of the “house of man” can also be associated with a suggestion of continuity. The propositional sense of the project is not inhibited by the permanent values of history, by the heritage of history; in a way, your work is more a poetics of ethics and less a poetics of invention. Nevertheless, your passion for Le Corbusier is immense. You often humbly say, “I don't have the capacity...”. It may be a problem of ability, but isn't it rather a problem of attitude?

There probably is... Sometimes I wonder what is conservative – I won't say reactionary –, ethically or intellectually, about what I do. This probably is because I was educated a bit in this... and the things you are educated with are very strong. There are terrible, sometimes brutal, reactions to that, a bit paradoxical, or there's a permanent return to that feeling; it's probable that there's something in that sense, but what can I do? I can't do anything else. That there is indeed a great ethical sense in what I do and in what I say, in what I think, above all, that is true. I often say, it's a moral problem. I reduce problems to moral problems, even my relations with clients, certain acceptances, certain commitments, problems of respect for others, problems of dialogue, of not exercising a certain power. But I recognise that ethics gives a certain character and gives a certain form to solutions.

How do problems arise, how do they evolve in the project's procedure? What is thought in the gestation of a form, in the resolution of a problem of space? What is it like? How do things start?

I'm not fast. And I see that it is only now, at the age of 60/65 – something I often say, and I don't say jokingly, to encourage people of my age who have

not yet achieved something because it may come later – that I begin, for example, to formally interpret a programmatic intention, or a client, or an environment; to solve a problem in terms of synthesis – of initial synthesis and not of subsequent additions. I see that, at this moment, I can conceive with a certain capacity for synthesis, with a certain integration of factors – it has always been my dream. The dream of a person who wants to give things a certain identity must be to know and to integrate and synthesise quickly and, as far as possible, to encompass all the conditioning factors. Of course, this requires a large mental mechanism and a certain amount of experience, and I feel that I am only now beginning to understand this. I have the impression that, at this moment, I can do this, integrating problems of form, problems of the client – the colour of the client's eyes, or whether the client varnishes his nails or not – and I really can do this today. I think I can. I can understand a place, understand a client, understand a programme, and conceive in terms of unity and of the whole and, above all, something that worries me, the character of things, the identity of the solution: to give the solution a natural form, the natural forms in that sense of their own identity. No two sheets are the same; no two people are the same. It is not that romantic theory that the artist never repeats himself...

Do you draw a lot? Does drawing play an important role?

I draw less than people think I do because I work so much intellectually. I do a big work of intellectual elaboration. I am not a person who moves very quickly into drawing, partly because I feel some responsibilities when drawing and I find it hard to draw things that I don't know if I am going to draw. I draw relatively little, and, in general, when I manage to draw things, they are already elaborated and schematised.

Today, there is a relatively strong tendency in architecture, namely in some discourse of architectural criticism, to value inspiration as a critical category of the project's discourse. Is inspiration anything that exists in your design process, in the process that seems to reveal a capacity to rationalise everything, all the factors that might be a motive for creation? Is inspiration something that tells you something? Is inspiration a product of knowledge?

Inspiration... not much, as that vague thing of the inspired artist. I like to understand why things are like that. And I think that what can be called inspiration or sensitivity, or this or that, has an incomprehensible pattern. They may not be under control at any given time, but then shows up. I often recognize that the explanation may appear a few years later. In fact, it happens to all of us. For example, critics and friends discover things that we didn't [...], didn't understand, didn't conceive intellectually; things called... I won't say a *posteriori*, but factors that entered the judgement and elaboration but that are not conscious. There are many factors that are not... and that evidently instinct or intuition integrates



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and then comes to be discovered. There are many things. I remember the Feira Market: after it was built there were some criticisms and things that I didn't give much thought to at the time. In the building of Aveiro, for example, there are a certain number of relationships; some were considered, and others I discovered later. I can say that when I go there, I discover new things.

So, there is some intellectual work that it is possible to reason about, and there is some work of instinct, of sensitivity. Is that inspiration? I don't know.

Throughout your path as an architect, the Campo Alegre Plan, the Vila da Feira Market, the Cedro School, the Aveiro projects, the Convento da Costa, Refóios, is there anything in that process that could be elected as a kind of constant a continuation? Are there factors that are interconnected and maintain a certain sense of continuity of research?

I think so; I think there is some apparent difference between the solutions, which, as far as I'm concerned, is more an attempt to identify each of them rather than the result of doing them differently. If you see any of those solutions, I think they have, in my humble opinion, a certain character of their own; they have their own image, they are easily identified.

I can quickly caricature the Feira Market, I can quickly caricature things from Aveiro (in a good way), or the Convent of Costa, which means that they are products – I think – with a certain strength, with a certain character. As proof, curiously, I can tell you that the Feira Market must have 5 or 6 children, similar markets. It's

Fig. 7

Fernando Távora on a building site (FIMS/AFT).

curious, it is a market that has left a deep impression on me, although it was also inspired by a market by Januário Godinho, the one in Ovar (when I was looking at markets, it was the market that impressed me most), but, despite everything, using it, I ran away from it more than the markets that came after did.

I think there is at least that continuity of identity. Some marks probably make works appreciably different from one another, but at the same time, unify them in that sense of there being an identity. Then, I think that there is in all of them something that is proper of what I do, which is a certain sobriety, that has to do with moral problems, problems of the economy, problems of containment, problems of not exaggerating, not theatricalizing solutions, not facilitating the temptation, or the theatricalization of solutions in order to obtain certain successes that are more or less reviewable, more or less sympathetic to the critics, etc. Not that criticism is bad and therefore considers these values, but because there are people who, despite everything, consider that this is important. I don't consider them important.

Then, for example, if we look at it from a formal point of view, I don't know, there's a certain... fatness of forms, a certain density of forms, which is something I do... I have hands like that; our works are similar to ours; there is something more that I think is common in all these works: it's a certain carnal expression, a certain sensuality I think there is. It's also something that I think is common, that has to do with me. And really that moral problem, of a certain moralism, of a certain...

Another aspect that seems important in your work, accompanying a certain unconcern with an aprioristic sense of invention, is the valorisation of composition. The new one sought a break with composition and insisted on an idea of process, and of project. Is composition an important aspect in your design process?

I suppose it is.

In the way I do things, I feel this, a certain absence of what is often talked about in modern architecture, a certain sense of dynamics of things... of ruptures that I don't have. My things are, in general, quite stable, quite calm, this is very characteristic of the whole composition and the whole classical concept. Why are they like that? I don't know. Or maybe because I have a vision... I mean, I must say that one of the things that concerns me in modern society is instability: I am very sensitive to this permanent instability of everything, the instability of families, the instability of marriage, the instability of fashions, of traffic. I am a person who... They might say to me: "You're a terrible reactionary; you're a devil's conservative". Maybe I am. I have a sense of progress that is probably not achievable in this world of tremendous instability.

I don't know if the composition doesn't come exactly from trying to stabilise situations a little. I am a man who always tries to stabilise situations; I don't try to aggravate situations.

In the sense of prolonging the life of situations? For example, in the Convent of Santa Marinha da Costa, the knowledge of its history to understand the life of the building to find a possibility of extension; the composition can have here something of a tool or drawing technique, for that concern of prolonging the life of things, an extension that contains the germ of transformation?

Yes, prolong, but prolong according to a certain concept.

How is it possible to prolong with something that predisposes a certain dynamic but rather is endowed with a certain instability? I suppose that is a position more of a reaction than of contribution; let's say it is a contribution in the negative, of trying to stabilise a situation. Today it is fashionable to defend the modern city in terms of rupture – the city is made of bits and pieces. I still haven't adapted to the city; I must live it because... but don't compare that city with the stable, traditional city, of the great composition; I can't, I can't stand that kind of city, the city of bits, the shattered city, rising here and there. If I am entrusted with a city, for a contribution, albeit of a small building for the city, I will try to stabilise the city and not aggravate it, creating new situations.

Now, there is a tendency to value eclecticism. There is more and more talk of artistic procedure in architecture, more and more talk of form, of decorated architecture, of fragmented architecture. If we speak more and more of form and less of space, is there a problem here, a crisis of vocation, an incapacity, or difficulty in renewing the skills of architecture?

Perhaps not so much in relation to theory, but in relation to practice, to the consequences of theory. I think that we are entering into an excessive fragmentation, an excessive personalization, I would even say a certain immorality of architecture, a certain shamelessness. It seems that this new theory or these new theories allow the practice of incompetence, the practice of meaninglessness, the practice of anti-social, the practice of immoral (almost). I think it is interesting that architecture acquires a character, something that has not been incompatible in so-called international architecture. Architecture has never been international. Even in the times when that theory existed, I don't think that happened. But today I understand perfectly well that one tries to identify architecture, that one tries to circumstantialise, to define the factors that can... in a certain form, in a certain moment. But I don't think that this allows everything. It allows the application of a concept that can be universalized. It is a universal concept, but it has to contain quality in itself.

What I don't see is that what is currently being done contains quality. For me, a large part of the solutions does not contain quality, which probably means that, if they do not contain quality, they do not fulfil this need for identification and characterization. What I see is a tremendous... I'm probably forcing this comment, thinking of the Portuguese situation, which, probably and despite everything, is sensibly different from many other situations in other countries. I tend to generalize, so I may be thinking too much about

what happens in Portugal. I think that what is happening in Portugal, from what I can see now, is a bit like that: this tendency towards fragmentation, towards decoration, towards the predominance of form over space, is not leading to anything; it is leading to a tremendous disorder, to a tremendous personalization of things, to a kind of anti-social architecture. That's what I see as the consequence...

In our specific case, that of Porto, it is argued that the architect is the specialist in non-specialisation. Although this concept is not very clear and not very theorised, it has been a good starting point. But to what extent does this territory of the architect not need to be revised in order to achieve an ever wider and more demanding involvement in objective intervention in the city? We are moving towards a progressive specialisation, even to deepen the materials that the architect works with or produces himself. For example, will the problems of the city be masterable in the same way as one masters a small building? The design exercise, the construction, the city, the theory, or the history, despite everything, do they not admit a certain specialism, do they not admit differences in the techniques, in the methods, in the objects, and therefore, also in terms of training, does this pose particular problems?

I have been thinking about this and I think that it might happen, that greater specialisation might be necessary. In fact, it really happens because theory is one thing, and practice is another. One verifies that of us in our professional action, each of us is led, either by himself or by the society that chooses him, to a certain nature of work and, therefore, this position of the generalist is a little theoretical. I, in fact, say that we are specialist generalists in architecture. What I generalise is the concept of architecture, from the door handle to the city, and, at that point, I think we are specialist generalists in architecture. But in practice, I suppose that's happening.

There are architects' solutions in which one feels, at certain levels of the project (for example, in the design of objects), a capacity but no professionalism. If the architect were a professional, he could..., but he is not.

You could also say that the contribution of a non-professional is interesting in the sense that the professional has a certain tendency to become bureaucratic. For example, design is loaded with this, with a confident professionalism and a certain amount of over-designing. It's a bit like what I was saying earlier about architecture – industrial design needs to be invaded by people who aren't designers to give it a certain freshness and take away that thing... It's a bit like what happens with landscaping – landscapers create landscaping that, for me, has too much landscape; we needed other people who were not landscapers, gardeners, architects, etc., who could change that a bit.

Because specialisation has this problem – people begin to acquire increasingly more decisive, cruder, more systematic, and more immortal techniques for solutions. There's a certain paradox here: on the one hand, specialisation

has a certain advantage because it dominates certain factors that a non-specialised practice doesn't; on the other hand, a non-professionalised practice, as long as it obviously involves relatively close subjects, such as landscaping, architecture, urbanism, industrial design. It's not a question of doing medicine or taking out teeth; that will be at a greater distance, but within this area, I think it's good to exchange pennants and experiences. Although I recognise that there is a certain... the problem itself... For instance, I defend that everyone should be able to do heritage restoration work. But then, when I start to think about it, I say that there are people who know little about this, which means that they make some mistakes, which means that some problems probably need to be investigated more deeply.

The truth is that we see in education some tendency towards specialisation, through masters, doctorates, post-graduate courses. We have already had this tendency in the School, in the 5th year, of 3 or 4 specialisations, although within the practice of architecture.

Teaching is an important facet of your professional life. In the paths that the Escola do Porto is taking, has there not been a certain imposition or a concern to make drawing the centre of our procedure? A centrality, maybe, that might contribute to a certain emptying of the creative synthesis of architecture, a centrality more for the problems of form and less for the impacts of that form. I'm asking if eventually, the questions of design have not distracted us from other important questions in the field of architecture: the architect's techniques, the production processes of the whole built system, and the problems of the city. Haven't we been going through some indecision about the problem of synthesis?

I don't know if this is the result of an excessive preoccupation with drawing or if drawing is something that is never enough. It won't be too much drawing, but there will be too few other subjects. You could say that the problem is the length of the course – it's 5 or 6 years, how are we going to do the subjects? I recognise that there is too much drawing, in a certain sense, in the sense that I was saying there is too much landscaping, or too much design, or too much architecture. But I think that drawing is never too much in the sense of a manifestation of intelligence, of a manifestation of creativity. What we do is design. We really are designers in the true sense. The fact that we are designers doesn't mean that we don't have to consider many other factors. Besides, there are bad designers, aren't there? Because drawing this way or that way doesn't mean drawing well. That is another problem; they are universal problems, and they have always been there. There is always one person's way of drawing; this is visible among us, and we know to which case I refer. That is fatal.

Not all people have enough personality, and it doesn't even matter because you can fall into the opposite: everyone wants to have their own personality, and we're doing a passing of models that doesn't matter at all – they are



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personalities that don't exist. What I say is that sometimes there is too much design. And what I feel about the Oporto School is that it is not about drawing too much. It may be some badly directed drawing, and, on the other hand, I really think that there are other constraints on drawing that are not only drawing but also missing, namely the problems of construction. How can you design without building? How can you build what you are drawing? **I think there is a certain lack of a sense of construction, and the sense of construction is really an indispensable sense both for drawing and for architecture. We are builders; without drawn construction, we don't exist.** We are designers and architectural theoreticians, but our profession is exercised in relation to engineers. The engineer builds, but the engineer, as an engineer, builds with solidity; he doesn't build with quality; we have to build with solidity, for that, we call the engineer, and, besides that, we have to build with quality and that quality naturally implies a great design quality So I think we in the school, and in Porto, are suffering from a bit too much design, but...

Let's say that in the teaching of architecture, there is a certain specificity, that of architecture, and emphasising the problems of drawing is done to sensitise the student to a method and not exactly to channel or to force a certain world of references, which evidently creates some problems of idea transmission. What do you think is important to emphasise?

Fig. 8

Fernando Távora and Alvaro Siza visiting the site where the Casa de Chã would be built in Boa Nova in the late 1950s (FIMS/AFT).

Drawing is firstly a process of creation and secondly a process of transmission. In the case of the architect, it is a process of transmission of knowledge – it is by drawing that we transmit our knowledge. I suppose that drawing should have these two clearly marked vectors: on the one hand, a vector of creation, of understanding the process of creation and the translation of the process of creation itself; and on the other hand, it should have a clarity that allows it to be a weapon, a service, an element of information of conception.

But the problem I would raise is how one associate, above all, how one makes it clear, in a teaching process, since drawing is above all an instrument or a technique – perhaps I like the term better – of artistic procedure, how does it go beyond a purely subjective development, and how does it associate information? Because there is information that does not match or that is not strictly restricted to drawing, and that is not experienced exclusively through drawing. How does one help the student to produce that synthesis between drawing and knowledge, and how does drawing itself become knowledge? I think this is a fundamental problem.

I don't know how that, from a teaching method point of view, can be achieved. You ask how it can be achieved...

The syllabus in the Faculty reflects a hegemony of the project; there is clearly a hegemony of project time in which the project professor is a kind of "Tarzan". For example, one figure I immediately remember is Gregotti. Gregotti is a man who has a very intense experience of the different components of the disciplinary territory, of history, of the city, of construction, of drawing and, at the same time, he short-circuits this with the arts, the sciences, thought, everything in the artistic movement; he is a man who travels a lot, who knows different realities, and all of this intersects, all of this is channelled towards an intense experience and into project work. Our school is somewhat restricted in terms of that experience. Apparently, there is a great companionship – I'm not saying there isn't – but it is a very centripetal, very autistic companionship. This apparently devalues or isolates us in relation to that process that wants to relate everything and, therefore, immediately puts us outside an important portion of experiences and information. If we want to channel into an artistic procedure, how does its process invigorate, how does it open up, how does it enrich itself, if we are very restricted, very individual, very aware of our own heritage? But at the same time, we want to open up, we want to reproduce, we want to transmit this idea of ours. How is this done? I mean, especially in a context where the student is more and more invaded by information, is more and more imbued with this spirit of plurality that today's times insinuate, doesn't a platform that starts from such an excessive valorization of its own heritage run the risk of limiting creative freedom? That is, of almost imposing a vision of architecture, of almost imposing an architectural procedure and, therefore, of hegemonizing, in a certain way, the creative sensibility of each one?

I wouldn't say that. I would say that if what you say happens, which is a certain hegemony of drawing, that is a certain vision of drawing and not a more global vision of architectural drawing... I suppose this happens by giving the design some... – that's what I suppose you feel – little consistency, a little foundation because it's a design that doesn't include – as I suppose it should – all the factors that should be introduced. I suppose it's a design that ends up being freer, easier to fake, less authentic, less conditioned, less pressured, less aware, and less intelligent.

The student, at this moment, is invaded with a great amount of information. This information, especially in a quality magazine, in a generic way, translates different artistic procedures and different foundations. What I ask is this: in a vision like ours, where, despite everything, we start from very precise references, doesn't a good part of the student's incapacity to assimilate or associate to his drawing procedure a procedure of fundamentals reflect this difficulty we have in grasping other information, in transmitting him the fundamentals that are associated to certain types of images? Doesn't this, deep down, raise the problem of transmission?

As far as I am concerned, this does not call into question the need for drawing. What does call into question is what kind of drawing and how to teach it. Basically, it's the method: how to teach drawing, what I suppose that leads to... I think that this would require a more integrated, more – how can I put it? – related so that drawing can, as far as possible, translate all the knowledge that the student should have into design and then into information. What happens is that drawing, if it is not grounded, filtered through the student, the school, etc., translates knowledge or information or interprets things that are false, the reasons for which the student does not understand; it is a bit like drawing for drawing's sake, it is a form for form's sake, not grounded form. I suppose that this is a difficult goal to achieve. The school is probably not enough; the student must also have a certain professional experience. I wouldn't say suitability, but it is something that has a lot to do – in my opinion – with the integration of teaching in the school. How do you teach the student in such a way that thematic – if he has one –, construction – if he has –, sociology – if he has –, urbanism – if he has one –, architecture obviously affects the quality and the conception of the drawing; and the drawing is the result of all this.

In many public interventions, namely student exams, academic exams, and colloquiums, the Architect remarks or confronts the problem: so, we saw this, we saw all these parameters, I appreciated it, and now? What future? Where do we stand? I would now like to ask a final question: how do you see the evolution of architecture at this moment? How do you see the situation of architecture today? How do you see the paths of architecture?

In Portugal? In general? I must say that I am more concerned about the Portuguese case because I am closer to it. In relation to Portuguese architecture,

I am concerned, but I am concerned in relation to what I see as the results in general, especially younger people, either because I am completely out of touch and not integrated, and ignorant, and out of date, or because it seems to me that architecture is – as was spoken of earlier – in a process of pulverisation that is not a process of socialisation. A pulverisation process that is, in my opinion, something like “every man for himself”. There’s a boat, people have fallen into the water, there’s no chance of getting back to the boat, and everyone sticks their arms out and tries to swim through small, pulverised works. I don’t really see it like that, apart, of course, from one or two cases that save the national honour. It is well known and recognised that Portugal only has a serious international accreditation in one case – also a curious case – which is that of Siza Vieira. **I often ask myself if Siza translates the national climate or not, if he has anything to do with the national climate.** I think he does, but I find it strange that other people don’t. We probably weren’t lucky enough to have more people of that quality. But a man who, despite everything, translates the national climate because he is alone because he is the only one; maybe he is the only one, maybe he is... We are in a rather strange situation: a great mediocrity of architects – I think –, especially in relation to the works that I see, then some architects of a certain reputation and really of quality, and then, finally, that figure that has become almost emblematic, recognised by all of us, as a figure of international standing.

But what worries me more than architecture, I must say, is architecture in its urbanism form because it seems to me that bad architecture cannot resist good urbanism; that is, good urbanism can do a lot with bad architecture. What seems to me is that we, despite everything, are still worse at the level of the association of buildings, at the level of town planning, than at the level of architecture. That’s what really worries me because I don’t see... And the level of town planning is a level that, for example from the School point of view, is way beyond us because there are other interests, there are other factors that obviously condition architecture, but which, despite everything, condition another scale more strongly – political factors, etc. They condition architecture, everyone knows, but they condition urbanism much more, and I don’t see any kind of concern about that. Nobody worries about that. The Architects’ Association itself I see as being concerned with architecture; I think it’s interesting, and I think it’s important, but I don’t see it being very concerned with urban planning problems. And although it organises some competitions, I would find it interesting that, just like these exhibitions related to architecture, they should also be related to urbanism problems, to measure the strengths of the country. The impression I have is that the country is in a state of serious formal decomposition. I don’t know how it will recover or how long it will take because I don’t know how much longer this situation will deteriorate. This is really my greatest concern now: I see that the country is “on the brink of ruin”, in a state of complete mediocrity, in terms of scale, human problems, etc.

Really, from the point of view of buildings, something is going to be done. There are many things that don’t interest me, don’t touch me, are of little significance, but they are small things. What really worries me a lot is the problem of

urbanism because the problem of urbanism includes all levels of achievements. When we talk about architecture, we talk about the architecture of architects and the architecture of architects, as you know, in Portugal is relatively scarce. If anything can control other, non-architectural architecture, the so-called 50, 60 or 80% or whatever they say there is, it must be urbanism, it has to be the general discipline that will condition that... And that general discipline, the awareness of the existence or absence of that discipline, I don't see it existing. What I see is that people say, "Ah, it's the situation, it's not possible, the country is undergoing a very big evolution, it's not possible, nothing is possible". I don't see that these are problems that are discussed in public; the scandals of the Ministry of Finance, or of the ministers, or of the Ministry of Health are discussed more. But really, if there's no scandal to the point that people can't take advantage of it to "make their own problems worse"... I don't see anyone else worrying about these kinds of problems, and that's something that really worries me.

Another thing that worries me is the problem of the mutual disinterest of schools among themselves, schools of architecture. And one thing that strikes me, as we are in a situation with some difficulties, with some problems, is the lack of interest that schools have for each other. The schools don't try to associate; they don't try to foster a certain number of relationships, to gather experience, to communicate experience. We live completely isolated. We are in a situation, Portugal is at this moment in a situation where each one takes care of his own life, and we expect God Our Lord, or Cavaco Silva, to take care of everybody. It is a kind of situation where people are satisfied but without much reason to be satisfied because deep down, nobody is satisfied and, at least in those areas that concern us most, things are worrying.

Anyway, we won't be here...

Alexandre Alves Costa

A Statement without Rhetoric About the Architect Fernando Távora

Depoimento sem retórica sobre o Arquiteto Fernando Távora

On 21 and 22 February 2024, the Department of Architecture of the University of Coimbra organised the international conference "Távora on Time 2", under the direction of José António Bandeirinha, Bruno Gil and Martinho Araújo. The following text – revised by the author – is the concluding speech by Alexandre Alves Costa that takes up the introductory themes of the exhibition "Fernando Távora: Pensameno Livre" organised, in the same period, by the Marques da Silva Foundation.



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For me, who has had a long and very close relationship with the architect Fernando Távora, the stories are many and, as I have written quite a few texts about him, I tend to mix genres, the autobiographical with the biographical or the essayistic.

I was never one of those who thought that research in architecture consisted of words, numbers, logic, words explaining words, the conscious mind separated from the body, presuming the truth by supposition, not experimenting, without going beyond one's own thoughts and readings and without returning, after thinking, to the scene, to the real context, to life.

I have only one certainty. Nothing I have said or will say is based on documentary evidence, which I have never been interested in. I lived alongside him, and I know his work. That's all.

And I know I'm going to repeat images, stories and practically everything I've said and written more than once.

In parenthesis, I want to confide in you that this year I discovered the existence of two new human rights, proposed by the Situationists in the 1960s, which are the right to make mistakes and the right to self-plagiarise. So, I took them from a methodological point of view, and this text I'm dedicating to you is no exception.

On the other hand, I'm incapable of taking a distanced view, given the permanent, daily force that the presence of his memory has on me. The same presence as his living persona who, I can say, has indelibly marked my personality, my education, my way of seeing the world and architecture. I would be very different, poor me, if I hadn't had this unique privilege.

I was his student, still hesitating between different methodological options in the foundation and realisation of the design process, in years of deep positive crisis at ESBAP. The attempt to impose the *Reforma Moderna do Ensino* (the so-called Reforma of '57, where I joined, voluntarily losing a year on the advice of Master Carlos Ramos), coinciding with the times when Modernism was in crisis, the times of the *Inquérito à Arquitetura Popular*, the Vila Feira Market and the House in Ofir, but also the times of technocratic illusions about the possibility of scientificising design methods.

And so, I oscillated between the end of neorealism and the redemptive hope in technology.

I distanced myself from Távora, who was elsewhere, reading Pessoa, Camões and Antero. I was looking for systems, he was running away from them. I among the pacifying orthodoxies, he among the disturbing heterodoxies.

It was around this time that I was arrested and then expelled from School.

And where was Fernando Távora still? At CIAM, in complicity with Team Ten, the Mediterranean or the Vaneickian, or designing in his studio.

I realised that he was marginalised at our school where, despite everything, the disciplinary autonomy of architecture was slowly being achieved among us and for him never forgotten.

I joined as an assistant in 1972 and, from that year on, my alliance with Távora was definitive and permanent. I was a kind of respectful disciple, and I discovered the richness and complexity of his character every day.

I realised that he trusted me and that gave me a certain self-confidence, I might even say a certain presumptuous audacity! The centrality I gained at the School was a kind of shadow of its own centrality.

It's true that he made the Oporto School, not alone, of course. We can't forget other contributions, probably the most important being that of Álvaro Siza who, in the mid-1970s, brought us the methodological formulations that underpinned a didactic approach that had been debated since the 1960s.

Távora recovered the idea that a school of architecture should live inseparably from disciplinary practice and in this he bridged the gap with Marques da Silva.

In fact, Architect Távora never abandoned the disciplinary practice of architecture, even in the troubled times of political radicalisation in the last years of fascism (which in our school became known as the refusal of drawing), whether outside the school, in his studio, or inside, in the exercises he carried, even, in the messages he gave about his thinking, in his wonderful and unforgettable Theory and History classes, which the students called Theory and Stories.

It can also be said that it was Távora who introduced History as an operative tool for design and not, as until then, only as an indispensable cultural basis for architects. He is essentially responsible for a history of architecture by and for architects. We owe him the conviction with which he began to distinguish the History of Art from the History of Architecture, which thus gained didactic and pedagogical autonomy.

I owe him (I don't even know if I owe him or if he owes me...) the invention of the History of Portuguese Architecture, a precursor subject that didn't exist in other architecture programmes.

This recalls the time when there were discussions about whether or not there would be a Portuguese architecture and an episode that happened to me that I'm going to tell you about.

One day, in Ponte do Lima, after visiting his work in Refóios and eating some *rojões* with *papas de sarrabulho*, the architect Fernando Távora, inebriated by the taste of the food and wine, said as if addressing himself: I think this food is really Portuguese. I realised, from what I knew of him, that this apparently trivial statement was only the beginning of a less trivial discourse. And it was.

"It's like architecture, if cooked that well. I'm referring, of course, to Portuguese architecture, which I try to recognise as having its own qualities, as I recognised in what we've just eaten."

"Moreover, if we go to Brazil and visit some cities with so-called colonial urban design and architecture, I immediately say to myself: this is just like Portugal."

"And I ask myself the reasons of these considerations. Is it the modelling of the voids, the scale or the construction system, the colour? We must investigate in order to give a scientific answer, as they now say. But I know it's Portuguese, just like in Guimarães or elsewhere. It may even be more Portuguese than its continental counterparts."

"And I know why, because it's neither scientific nor false at the same time, as Almada Negreiros would say: it's because it reminds me of my childhood."

"And I'll tell you something else, Alexandre, we're going to create a Chair at our school to be taught by architects that will be called History of Portuguese Architecture and not Architecture in Portugal, because the latter, with the exception of Siza, is always a little worse than the rest of the world, he said, smiling. And I think it's up to you to give it."

I didn't have any specific training in history, so I travelled, I studied, I had his indispensable help. At lunch he would draw pictures of ancient architectural works and ask me to identify them, their author and chronology. I'd take a chance: most of the time he'd say, always amicably, *"You're not ready yet..."*.

We put together a course, very interpretative, based on the rigorous data we were collecting from historians. The journey and the drawn record were an inseparable part of the students' learning and the drawings he himself had produced were the examples we gave the students. Architect Távora was responsible for all the encouragement and optimism with which we faced all the difficulties.

Learning to draw was central to the didactics that we reinvented at our school and the drawing teacher became a tyrant, a sort of drill sergeant. I imagine that this is what music teachers or athletic trainers will be like.

One of the mythical explanations for the origin of drawing is mentioned by Pliny in 77 AD: a young woman whom her lover is forced to abandon, draws the outline of his profile that the light of a lantern has projected against a wall, in order to keep a fairly faithful record of her lover's image.

"Drawing is learning to see, to see things and people being born, growing, developing, and dying. It is necessary to draw to take what you have seen inside you, which will remain in your memory for life", says the indefatigable draughtsman that was Le Corbusier. This is the recognition of the act of drawing as an exercise in knowledge.

But the most important thing was not the didactic aspects we've just summarised. Before that, it was our own learning experience, when we travelled through the hills and valleys discovering Portuguese architecture. Professor Távora used to tell me, to encourage me: *"travel! Travel and don't worry about books, they only serve to confirm what we've learnt in life."* I had in mind a kind of desire not to lose any of the invariants that would give our architecture its own identity. But it turned out the other way round and the drawing showed us how much simpler everything was when we put ourselves in the position of the master masons and understood the vicissitudes of realising their projects, vicissitudes that continue to this day.

I'll mention a few points.

Portuguese architecture, while not innovative, is a transformative reading of imported models and systems. Being a phenomenon of acculturation, it is in the way it interprets models and adapts them to our reality that we will find its specificity.

The sense of efficiency that characterises it is the result of recognising its own economic and social limitations and the urgency of its needs. Its process is based on a considerable sense of practicality and the ability to memorise and reuse experiences.

This generic character of Portuguese architecture can be seen in the way it understands and adapts to the terrain, as well as in the balanced use of the means available for construction, in the permanent aspiration to ensure continuity in the past and present, adapting models from the past to new situations or transforming them in contact with others, in a process without continuity solutions, appropriating and reinterpreting local and ancestral forms of culture. The result is an architecture that is often archaic and structurally conservative.

When we tried to understand the structural reasons for the specificity of Portuguese architecture, we were blazing a trail into the unknown and the first thing we did was to walk it.

We lived luminous days of astonishment and amazement.

Sometimes we ended our day in a shopping centre so that, in the atmosphere of the prevailing vulgarity, we wouldn't be forced to continue reflecting on everything we visited, with the duty, which never left us, to find reasons for everything, similarities and dissimilarities, sometimes confusing everything in an amalgam of contradictions where structural values went unnoticed.

In the fervour for the desired synthesis or syntheses, we would write down what seemed to us to be the generalisable qualities of the entire universe of buildings we were collecting. On many occasions, the critical interpretation of a building contained its opposite, its negation. We learnt how difficult it is in architecture to understand the essential and despise the superfluous, preventing it from taking precedence.

I know today how intensely I abused my right to make mistakes when I lined up so many invariants in Portuguese architecture, almost as many as the buildings I visited.

With Architect Távora, I made many unforgettable journeys through Portugal and Brazil, searching for identities and specificities. We went to Italy. I remember Michelangelo and Paolo Uccello, Visconti's Leopard, Galicia, León and Castile in search of the Pre-Romanesque, Paris, Ville Savoy and Versailles. We went to Greece, the beginning of everything. We went to Berlin and The Hague with Siza to see his work and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Domingos Tavares and I were with him on the founding committees of the Faculty of Porto and the schools of Coimbra and Guimarães. We took part in

some congresses together. Architect Távora used to say that we reminded him of the Russian delegation that had taken part in a congress in Porto years ago and whose members never split up. He called us “the Russians”.

Then for twenty years we travelled to Coimbra.

On the way out he travelled here awake and talkative. On the way back he slept all the time. From time to time, he would put his hand on my leg and ask: “*Are you all right, child?*” and I would reply: “*Yes, I am, Senhor Arquitecto.*” When we arrived at the toll station, he would systematically exclaim: “*We’ll be there in a moment!*”

One day, in preparation for my participation in a round table discussion on “*Colour in historic centres*”, which took place in Conímbriga with some of the best people in the world, I said to him in the car: “*I’m worried because I don’t know what I’m going to say at all.*” He instantly replied, “*You’re going to give a very simple speech. Just say this – with regard to the problem of colour in historic centres, it’s needed to be very careful...*” It was a success. Everyone agreed, except José Aguiar, who had drawn up lots of truly scientific studies for the purpose.

Such was his enormous wisdom without intellectual rhetoric. It was an immense culture, always applied with the same naturalness that the simple fact of living life had for him.

Shortly before his death, he told me: “*I already miss the trees, the bricklayers...*”

Yes, and it’s true that, as Sophia de Mello Breyner says, “*there was also a luminosity in him reminiscent of that of a stone cut by a needle.*”

In conclusion, I would like to apply to him what was written by someone else in 2011, albeit in a slightly different way, about another great Portuguese: Eduardo Lourenço.

He was a man as whole as granite or limestone, where his childhood was the yard in which he learnt the secret and luminous meanings of life. He was the Portuguese architecture who dared to look Portugal in the eye, without allowing the bitter ancestral ghosts to dictate his silences, sorrows, and fears. On the contrary, he has made them its closest companions.

Heterodox, like the timbre or a firebrand. Heterodox like the exhilarating uncertainty of the tides and the indomitable rebellion of the winds, Portuguese always.

And if, in the labyrinth where the saudade stirs and moves, there is room for a voice, may that voice be yours, an echo of the destiny of men when they never give up loving, building and asking questions.

Antero’s tumultuous freedom, a twin of the clarity of voices that announce everything when the time is ripe for revelation. And for Fernando Távora, any time is a time of revelation, brother to Vieira, Pessoa and Camões. In literature, the Portuguese modernists of the Orpheus group never considered any limits to their thinking, accepting all conditions without any problems of coherence, even those that strayed from reason. They are not free thinkers; they are citizens with a free thinking.

It is with them that Távora identifies himself and collects them attentively and passionately, as if seeking solidarity for his heterodoxy. And his passion for Fernando Pessoa is finally understood, in the common consideration of the unfolding of his personality through his heteronyms.

And he himself declares: *"I accept as an interesting theme that of how the unfolding of a character is possible, a theme that is not only possible but indispensable. The History of Portuguese Architecture is a history of the permanent unfolding of characters."*

We can only be grateful for the luminous web of surprising analogies to which he leads us.

There will always be more to know about a man like this than what is written and said, and what is born of him becomes restlessness in the echo of other voices. That's how it is and how it will always be in my voice.

Para mim, que tive uma vivência longa de relações muito próximas com o Arquiteto Fernando Távora, as histórias são muitas e, como além disso, tenho escrito bastantes textos sobre ele, tenho alguma tendência para misturar géneros, o autobiográfico com o biográfico ou o ensaístico.

Nunca fui dos que pensaram que investigação em arquitetura consistia em palavras, números, lógica, palavras a explicar palavras, a mente consciente separada do corpo, presumindo a verdade por suposições, não experimentando, sem ir além dos próprios pensamentos e leituras e sem retornar, depois de pensar, à cena ao contexto real, à vida.

Só tenho uma certeza. Nada do que disse ou direi tem fundamento em provas documentais que, para esta temática, nunca me interessaram. Vivi ao seu lado e conheço a sua obra. É tudo.

E sei que vou repetir imagens, histórias e praticamente tudo que já disse e escrevi mais do que uma vez.

Entre parêntesis quero confidenciar-vos que, este ano, descobri a existência de dois novos direitos do homem, propostos pelos situacionistas, nos anos sessenta, que são o direito a errar e o direito ao auto-plágio. Logo os assumi do ponto de vista metodológico, não sendo exceção este texto que vos dedico.

Por outro lado sou incapaz de ter uma visão distanciada, dada a força permanente, quotidiana, que tem a presença da sua memória em mim. A mesma presença que teve a sua personagem viva que, posso dizer, marcou indelevelmente a minha personalidade, a minha formação, a minha forma de ver o mundo e a arquitetura. Eu seria bem diferente, pobre de mim, se não tivesse tido este privilégio único.

Fui seu aluno, ainda hesitante entre diferentes opções metodológicas na fundamentação e concretização do processo da projeção, em anos de profunda crise positiva na ESBA. A tentativa de imposição da Reforma Moderna do Ensino (a chamada Reforma de 57, onde ingressei, perdendo voluntariamente um ano, a conselho do Mestre Carlos Ramos), coincidente com os tempos em que o Moderno entrava em crise, tempos do Inquérito à Arquitetura Popular, do Mercado da Vila Feira e da Casa de Ofir, mas tempo, também, das ilusões tecnocráticas sobre a possibilidade de uma cientificação dos métodos projetuais.

E, assim, oscilei entre o fim do neorealismo e a esperança redentora na tecnologia.

Afastei-me de Távora que andava noutros sítios, a ler Pessoa, Camões e Antero. Eu à procura de sistemas, ele a fugir a eles. Eu entre as ortodoxias pacificadoras e nas heterodoxias perturbadoras.

Foi por essa altura que fui preso e depois expulso da Escola.

E por onde andava, ainda, Fernando Távora? Pelos CIAM, na cumplicidade com os Team Ten mediterrânicos ou vaneickianos, ou a projetar no seu atelier.

Constato que estava secundarizado na nossa Escola onde, apesar de tudo, a autonomia disciplinar da arquitetura ia sendo uma conquista lenta entre nós e nele nunca esquecida.

Entrei como assistente em 1972 e, desde esse ano, a minha aliança com Távora foi definitiva e permanente. Fui uma espécie de seu seguidor respeitoso e fui descobrindo todos os dias a riqueza e complexidade da sua personagem.

Percebi que confiava em mim e isso deu-me alguma autoconfiança, posso até dizer algum atrevimento presunco! A centralidade que ganhei na Escola foi uma espécie de sombra da sua própria centralidade.

E verdade que fez a Escola do Porto, não sozinho, evidentemente. Não se podem esquecer outros contributos, sendo, provavelmente, o mais importante o de Alvaro Siza que nos trouxe, em meados dos 70 as formulações metodológicas que fundamentaram uma didática que estava a ser debatida desde os anos sessenta.

Távora recuperou a ideia de que uma escola de arquitetura deve viver indissociável da prática disciplinar e nisso fez a ponte com Marques da Silva.

De facto, o Arquitecto Távora, nunca abandonou, nem nos conturbados tempos da radicalização política dos últimos anos do fascismo (os que na nossa escola ficaram conhecidos pelos da recusa do desenho), nunca abandonou a prática disciplinar da arquitetura, seja fora da Escola, no seu atelier, ou dentro, nos exercícios que lançava ou, ainda, na notícia que ia dando do seu pensamento, nas suas maravilhosas e inesquecíveis aulas de Teoria e História, a que os alunos chamavam de Teoria e Histórias.

Pode dizer-se, ainda, que foi Távora que introduziu a História entendida como instrumento operativo para a projeção e não, como até ali, apenas como base

cultural indispensável para os arquitetos. A ele se deve, no essencial, uma história da arquitetura por e para arquitetos. A ele se deve a convicção com que passou a distinguir a História da Arte da História da Arquitetura que ganhou, por isso, autonomia didática e pedagógica.

A ele devo (nem sei se devo ou se é ele que me deve...) a invenção da História da Arquitetura Portuguesa, disciplina precursora, inexistente noutros cursos de arquitetura.

Essa constatação traz-me sempre à memória, o tempo em que se discutia se haveria ou não uma arquitetura portuguesa e um episódio que se passou comigo que vos vou contar.

Um dia, em Ponte do Lima, visitada a sua obra de Refóios e depois de uns rojões com papas de sarrabulho, o Arquiteto Fernando Távora, inebriado pelo gosto da comida e do vinho, afirmou como que dirigindo-se a si próprio: achei que esta comida é mesmo portuguesa. Percebi, pelo que conhecia dele, que esta afirmação, aparentemente trivial, era só o começo de um discurso menos trivial. E foi.

"É como a arquitetura, se for assim tão bem cozinhada. Refiro-me, obviamente, à arquitetura portuguesa, aquela a que procuro reconhecer qualidades próprias, como reconheci no que acabámos de comer."

"E digo mais, se formos ao Brasil e visitarmos algumas cidades de desenho urbano e arquiteturas, ditas coloniais, eu digo logo para mim mesmo: isto é como Portugal."

"E interrogo-me sobre as razões que me levam a esta consideração. Será a modelação dos vãos, será a escala ou o sistema construtivo, a cor? Temos que investigar para darmos uma resposta científica, como agora se diz. Mas eu sei que é portuguesa, como em Guimarães ou noutros lugares. Até é capaz de ser mais portuguesa do que as suas congéneres continentais."

"E eu sei porquê, não sendo científico nem falso ao mesmo tempo, como diria Almada Negreiros: é porque me faz lembrar a minha infância."

"E digo-lhe mais, Alexandre, vamos criar uma cadeira na nossa escola para ser lecionada por arquitetos que se vai chamar História da Arquitetura Portuguesa e não da Arquitetura em Portugal, porque esta, excetuando o Siza, é sempre um bocadinho pior que lá fora, disse ele, sorrindo. E acho que é você que a deve dar."

Eu não tinha nenhuma formação específica na área da História, por isso viajei, estudei, tive a sua indispensável ajuda. Ao almoço fazia desenhos de obras de arquitetura antiga e pedia-me que as identificasse, autor e cronologia. Eu ia arriscando: a maior parte das vezes dizia, sempre amigavelmente *"Você ainda não está preparado..."*

Montamos um curso, muito interpretativo, a partir de dados rigorosos que íamos colhendo dos historiadores. A viagem e o registo desenhado eram parte indissociável da aprendizagem dos estudantes e os desenhos que ele próprio produzira, eram os exemplos que nós dávamos aos alunos. Ao Arquiteto Távora

se ficaram a dever todos os estímulos e o otimismo com que encarava todas as dificuldades.

A aprendizagem do desenho foi central na didática que reinventamos na nossa escola e o professor de desenho transformou-se num tirano, espécie de sargento instrutor na recruta. Imagino que assim serão os professores de música ou os instrutores dos atletas.

Uma das explicações míticas para a origem do desenho é referida por Plínio em 77 dC: uma jovem que o amado se vê obrigado a abandonar, desenha o contorno do seu perfil que a luz de uma lanterna projetou contra uma parede, para assim guardar um registo bastante fiel da imagem do seu amante.

"Desenhar é aprender a ver, a ver nascer, crescer, desenvolver, morrer, as coisas e as gentes. É necessário desenhar para levar ao nosso interior aquilo que foi visto e que ficará inscrito na nossa memória para toda a vida", diz o infatigável desenhador que foi Le Corbusier. É a constatação do ato de desenhar como exercício de conhecimento.

Mas o mais importante, não foram os aspetos didáticos que acabamos de resumir. Antes disso, foi a nossa própria aprendizagem, quando andámos por montes e vales a descobrir a arquitetura portuguesa. O Professor Távora dizia-me, para me animar: *"viaje! Viaje e não se preocupe com os livros, eles só servem para confirmar o que aprendemos com a vida."* Eu tinha na mente uma espécie de desejo de não perder nenhuma das invariantes que desse uma identidade própria à nossa arquitetura. Mas correu ao contrário e o desenho foi mostrando como afinal tudo era mais simples, quando nos pusemos na posição dos mestres pedreiros e entendemos as vicissitudes da concretização dos seus projetos, vicissitudes que se mantêm até aos dias de hoje.

Adianto alguns aspetos:

A arquitetura portuguesa não sendo inovadora, constitui uma leitura transformadora face a modelos e sistemas importados. Sendo um fenómeno de aculturação, é na forma como interpreta os modelos e os adapta à nossa realidade que encontraremos a sua especificidade.

O sentido de eficácia que a caracteriza é resultado do reconhecimento das próprias limitações de natureza económica e social e da urgência das necessidades. O seu processo fundamenta-se num considerável sentido prático e capacidade de memorizar e reutilizar experiências.

Este carácter genérico da arquitetura portuguesa pode verificar-se na forma como entende e se adapta ao terreno, bem como no uso equilibrado dos meios disponíveis para a construção, na aspiração permanente em assegurar a continuidade passado presente, adequando os modelos do passado a novas situações ou transformando-os, em contacto com outros, num processo sem soluções de continuidade, apropriando-se e reinterpretando, ainda, formas locais e ancestrais de cultura. Como consequência, uma arquitetura tantas vezes arcaizante, estruturalmente conservadora.

Quando tentámos entender as razões estruturais da especificidade da arquitetura portuguesa, estávamos a abrir caminho no desconhecido e a primeira coisa que fizemos foi percorrê-lo.

Vivemos dias luminosos de assombramento e espanto.

Às vezes acabávamos o nosso dia num qualquer shopping para que, no meio da vulgaridade dominante, não sermos obrigados a continuar a refletir sobre tudo o que iam visitando, com o dever, que nunca nos deixava, de encontrar para tudo razões, semelhanças e dissemelhanças, por vezes confundindo tudo numa amálgama de contradições onde os valores estruturais passavam despercebidos.

No furor da almejada síntese ou sínteses íamos escrevendo o que nos parecia serem as qualidades generalizáveis a todo o universo dos edifícios que íamos recolhendo. Em muitas ocasiões a interpretação crítica de um edifício continha o seu contrário, a sua negação. Aprendemos como é difícil, em Arquitetura, entender o essencial e desprezar o supérfluo, evitando que ele possa tomar a primazia.

Sei, hoje, como abusei intensamente do direito de errar, quando alinhei tantas invariantes na Arquitetura Portuguesa, quase tantas quantos os edifícios que visitei.

Fiz, com o Arquiteto Távora, muitas inesquecíveis viagens, por Portugal e pelo Brasil, procurando identidades e especificidades. Fomos a Itália. Lembro Miguel Ângelo e Paolo Uccello, o Leopardo de Visconti, à Galiza, León e Castela na busca do Pré-Românico, à Paris, Ville Savoy e Versailles. Fomos à Grécia, princípio de tudo. Fomos a Berlim e a Haia, com o Siza, ver a sua obra e a queda do Muro de Berlim.

O Domingos Tavares e eu próprio estivemos com ele nas Comissões Instaladoras da Faculdade do Porto, e das escolas de Coimbra e de Guimarães. Participámos juntos em alguns Congressos. O Arquiteto Távora dizia que nós lhe fazíamos lembrar a delegação russa que tinha participado num congresso no Porto, há anos, e cujos elementos nunca se separavam. Chamava-nos "os russos".

Depois durante vinte anos viajamos para Coimbra.

Para cá, ele vinha desperto, falador. Para lá dormia o tempo todo. De vez em quando pousava a mão na minha perna e perguntava: "*Vais bem filha?*" e eu respondia "*Vou, sim, Senhor Arquiteto.*" Quando chegávamos à portagem ele exclamava sistematicamente: "*Chegamos num instante!*"

Um dia, para preparar a minha participação numa mesa redonda com tema "*A cor nos centros históricos*", que se realizou em Conímbriga, com algumas sumidades, disse-lhe, no carro: "*Estou aflito porque não sei de todo o que hei-de dizer.*" Instantaneamente ele respondeu-me "*Você vai fazer uma intervenção muito simples. Diz apenas isto – quanto ao problema da cor nos centros históricos, é preciso ter muito cuidado...*" Foi um sucesso. Todos concordaram menos o José Aguiar que tinha elaborado, para o efeito, imensos estudos, verdadeiramente científicos.

Era assim a sua enorme sabedoria sem retórica intelectual. Era uma imensa cultura, sempre aplicada com a mesma naturalidade que para ele tinha o simples facto de viver a vida.

Pouco tempo antes da sua morte disse-me: *“Já tenho saudades das árvores, dos pedreiros...”*

Sim, e é verdade que, como diz a Sophia de Mello Breyner, *“havia nele, também, uma luminosidade que lembra a da pedra talhada pelo pedreiro.”*

Apetece-me, para terminar, aplicar-lhe o que foi escrito por outrem, em 2011, embora de forma um pouco diferente, sobre outro grande português: Eduardo Lourenço.

Foi um homem inteiro como o granito ou o calcário onde a infância foi o terreiro em que aprendeu os sentidos secretos e fulgurantes da vida. Foi a Arquitetura Portuguesa que ousa olhar Portugal nos olhos, sem consentir que os amargos fantasmas ancestrais lhe ditem os silêncios, as mágoas e os medos. Pelo contrário, fez deles os seus mais próximos cúmplices.

Heterodoxo, como o timbre ou uma marca de fogo. Heterodoxo como a exaltante incerteza das marés e a indomável rebeldia dos ventos, Português sempre.

E se, no labirinto onde a saudade se agita e move, houver lugar para a voz, que essa voz seja a sua, eco do destino dos homens quando nunca desistem de amar, de construir, de perguntar.

De Antero a liberdade tumultuosa, gémeo da claridade das vozes que tudo anunciam quando o tempo é de revelação. E para Fernando Távora, qualquer tempo é de revelação, irmão de Vieira, de Pessoa e de Camões. Na literatura, os modernistas portugueses do grupo do Orfeu nunca consideraram algum limite para o seu pensamento, admitindo sem problemas de coerência todas as condições, mesmo as que se afastassem da razão. Não são livres pensadores, são cidadãos com um pensamento livre.

É com eles que Távora se identifica e os coleciona atenta e apaixonadamente, como que procurando uma solidariedade para a sua heterodoxia. E finalmente se entende a sua paixão por Fernando Pessoa, na consideração comum dos desdobramentos de personalidade pelos heterónimos.

E declara o próprio: *“Admito como tema interessante esse de como é possível o desdobramento de um personagem, tema não só possível como indispensável. A História da Arquitetura Portuguesa é uma história de permanentes desdobramentos de personagens.”*

Mais não podemos que reconhecidamente agradecer a luminosa teia de surpreendentes analogias a que ele nos conduz.

De um homem assim, há-de saber-se sempre mais do que aquilo que fica escrito e dito, e o muito que dele nasce torna-se inquietação, no eco de outras vozes. Assim é e será sempre na minha voz.

Outmoded Lesson

Outmoded Lesson, Fernando Távora, Didactics of Architecture, Drawing, Design Process

/Abstract

This text was taken from a notebook by Francisco Barata dated July 2012. According to Mariana Sá, who is carrying out doctoral research on the work of the architect who died prematurely in 2018, these are notes for a lecture that were part of the material that Barata was accumulating and elaborating in view of the Prova de Agregação at Faup, an academic task that was actually carried out in February 2016. It is therefore not a finished text, with defined terms and program, but rather a text under construction from which inserts and notes have been omitted, windows open to hypothetical developments, which it might be interesting to analyse elsewhere but which in this publication would make reading and understanding the underlying concepts difficult and not very fluent.

Having said this necessary premise, it is important to add that this lecture, despite the freedom of concatenation of thoughts typical of an outline in search of a definitive form, is structured around three clearly identified concepts: on the didactics of architecture, on drawing, on the design process. As a transversal background to the three concepts and the reflection that connects them, there is a central question: what path should Porto's school take, his school on the model and experience of which he reflects in the text, concluding, in the footsteps of Fernando Távora's teaching, that the task of every "good professor is to be able to select and transmit what remains of ancient knowledge, to create restlessness, to open debates, new doors, new paths".

/Author

Francisco Barata Fernandes
Architect, PhD

Francisco Barata Fernandes (Porto, 1950-2018), an architect trained at the School of Architecture in Porto (ESBAP), collaborated with Fernando Távora for several years before setting up his own professional practice. He was a lecturer at what in 1979 had become the Faculty of Architecture (FAUP) where he obtained his doctorate and held the roles of President of the Governing and Scientific Councils and Coordinator of the Doctorate course in Architecture and Architectural Heritage. He has been a visiting professor in several Faculties of Architecture in various European countries and in Brazil and has published works, projects, research and essays in many international journals. He was a member of the General Council of the Marques da Silva Foundation, at which – by decision of his wife Madalena Pinto da Silva, a participant in his research and professional and teaching activities – his archive is now, after his sudden death in 2018, kept.

I'd like my lesson to look "outmoded", and therefore always current and active! [...]

Depending on how you understand the work of architecture, the role of the architect and the discipline of architecture, this is how you organise your teaching. It's a collective work. All the examples I'm interested in are like this – from the Bauhaus to the Porto School, via the experiences of Milan, Barcelona, Glasgow, "Switzerland" – teamwork.

It's important to "explain" that the fact that we talk about the school-atelier relationship at our School doesn't actually mean that the school was a kind of office or vice versa. It means, above all, that the sense of "profession" was always present, perhaps as a "technical school", which means that a profession is taught. You don't teach architecture; you teach how to be an architect. In the same way you don't teach science, you teach what it means to be a scientist.

There are phrases with a peculiar sense of opportunity. A teacher saying that "Architecture is not taught, it is learnt" is a kind of emergency exit from a complicated situation. Firstly, if you learn, who teaches you? If you learn by yourself, then what are you doing at school?

This is also why the discipline has changed its name from Composition to Architecture to Project. This is a great improvement from the point of view of architectural theory and criticism, as well as the project itself. In the first case, the understanding of the architect's profession as an exercise in aesthetics of composition through drawing has been overcome, as an exercise in semiotics through the image and the work; on the other hand, the concept of Project has been enriched beyond the practical's vision, the techno-constructive and regulatory perspective to which the work of Architecture is linked.

Thus, it is easy to see how the choices of teaching model, pedagogical strategies and practices are decisive in the training of a new craftsman/artist, in the transmission of the knowledge of the profession. [...]

In this sense, it's important to say that at this School, the teaching of Project and not of Architecture presupposes years duly articulated and integrated. [...] This process has undergone adjustments, periodic and permanent venting, criticism, occasional manifestations of personal affirmation, growth crises, and phenomena inherent to the consolidation of Schools and not Academies. In these, there are always those who indicate the best direction to follow and those who follow it. In the Schools we try to clarify where we want to go and why, although we know there will always be several ways to do it. [...]

Design today corresponds not only to a vast field of options but also to a long journey of experimentation and critical reflection. Information technology presents new instrumental possibilities, new "processes" of thought/reasoning, and new supports for form and introduces new perspectives on this process. We are living in a critical moment. On the one hand, we have a huge supply of tools, new means, new clientele, new criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of design, new aesthetic standards. This does not mean,

as it always does in art, that previous products are outdated (unlike in science, where products go to the museum or the rubbish bin). This sense of the “eternal” continuity of the work of art – for those who realise the transcendence of this quality –, makes it a supreme responsibility to be able to pass on the knowledge that will allow this specific nature of the artistic and architectural fact to be perpetuated.

Drawing produced by computerised means, although initially confined to so-called “technical drawing”, has since the last decade expanded into other domains whose nature and boundaries are neither easy nor simple to characterise by discipline.

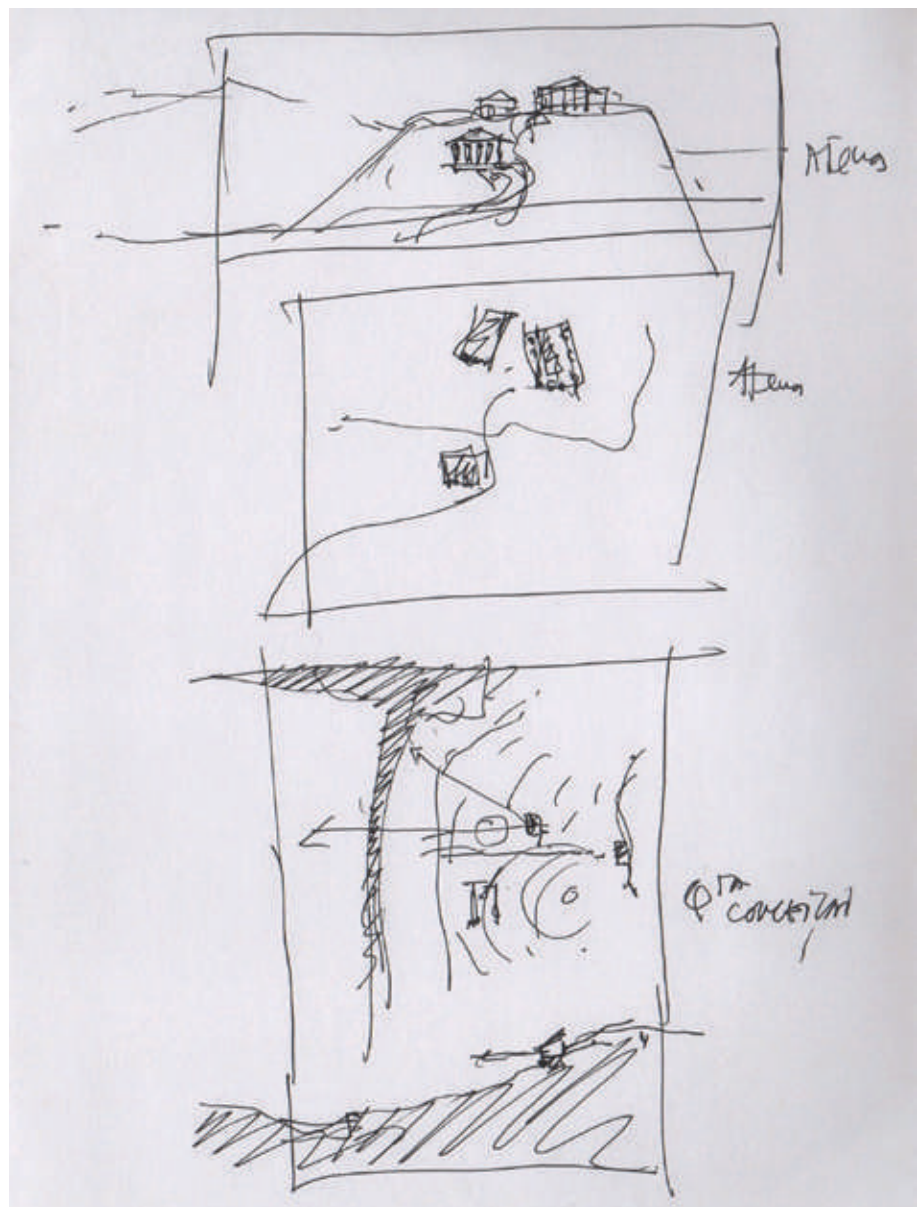
In the School’s 2nd year Project class, the drawing used in the project exercises continues to be carried out

without the aid of computerised means, as long as there is no properly structured thinking supported by a pedagogical practice proposal that maintains the integrated relationship between project and drawing that exceptional teachers of both subjects such as Alexandre Alves Costa and Alberto Carneiro (in the 2nd year) and Sergio Fernandez and Joaquim Vieira (in the 1st year) have laboriously and persistently managed to create.

The project process, which means a process of drawing, reflection, information and experimentation, always moves first and foremost (not in the final analysis) according to Man, the Man who inhabits; the Man who inhabits the house and the city.

By recognising the project process’s value, conditions are created to permanently improve the quality of the space organised for human habitation.

In schools that focus on the final product of the project, the discussion concentrates on the possibilities of variations and adjustments to the image of



1

Fig. 1

Francisco Barata, 2013 sketch from another notebook, in which the Acropolis of Athens in elevation and plan and the Quinta da Conceição in plan and section appear as explanatory examples of the ontological and didactic relationship between classical Greek architecture and contemporary architecture in Távora’s work and thought.

the form and the model of the form, taking second place to questions of programme control, constructive choices and the correct relationship with the place. In these circumstances, some of today's architectural theories that individualise or/ and autonomise certain architectural elements of the future work, appropriating and recreating a new concept of "skin", are of great opportunity. This is not an innovative aspect. Since the "Mannerist" period, once the typological matrix had been stabilised, work had been done on the "façade". In fact, the old expression "this is just a façade" has never been more appropriate than it is today for the architecture that is being built.

What matters to a good teacher is being able to select and pass on what remains of ancient knowledge. To create disquiet, open debate, new "doorways", new "paths".



2

Fig. 2

Francisco Barata, Bernardo José Ferrão (standing), Jorge Barros and Fernando Távora (seated) in a 1970s photo in front of a backdrop at a folk festival.

Ink on the Table...

Fernando Távora, Conversations, Tradition, Commemoration, Documentary Project

/Abstract

The text captures the memories of architect Távora and the deep connection his collaborators had with him. It describes their regular lunch gatherings, filled with laughter and meaningful conversations. The bond they shared extended beyond the professional realm and into a cherished friendship. After Távora's passing, his collaborators continued to honor his legacy through tradition and commemoration. The group, fondly referred to as Tavorianni, has sought to preserve Távora's memory and impact through gatherings and a documentary project to record the stories and experiences he left behind.

/Author

Pedro Pacheco
Architect

Born in Braga, Portugal, 1965. Graduated in Architecture from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto in 1991.

He worked as a trainee with Josep Llinás in Barcelona between 1990 and 1991, with Eduardo Souto Moura as his trainee supervisor. He collaborated with Fernando Távora in Porto between 1992 and 1996.

He formed a studio with José Adrião in Lisbon between 1996 and 2004, resuming their collaboration between 2013 and 2018.

He has been working in Lisbon since 1996. His work includes the Museu da Luz, part of the projects for the villages of Luz and Estrela, realised between 1998 and 2007 with Marie Clément.

He founded the Pedro Pacheco arquitectos studio in Lisbon in 2004. Since 2016, he has been working with José Aguiar in conservation and restoration on various heritage intervention projects, such as the work on the Muralhas de Monsaraz and the Juromenha Fortress.

He has been a visiting associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon since 2004 and an assistant professor at the Department of Architecture of the University of Évora since 2012.

Since 2016, he has been coordinating the curatorial project "Porta 14" in his architecture studio, an exhibition space for contemporary art as a platform for dialogue between art and architecture.



1

Almost weekly, or at least monthly, it was a ritual for architect Távora to go to lunch with his collaborators at the Ribatejo restaurant, just a few metres from the studio, just around the corner in Rua Duque de Loulé. The *bolinhos de bacalhau* with cod rice and the *tripas à moda do Porto*, accompanied by a good red wine, were the irresistible dishes that Távora loved, and so did we. The outdoor terrace, covered by a roof of vines, was the ideal cool place to spend the afternoon chatting. Távora surrounded us with stories of architecture and life, and the ink on the table spread out in a constellation of drawings that gave shape and expression to our conversations.

We felt part of a small family that was the engine of Távora's office, fascinated by sharing these moments and the incredible projects we were involved in. When Távora realised that lunch had been extended into the afternoon, he would smile and exclaim: "We're ruining all the work...". In fact, these magical moments were just the right recharge for us to return to the studio and our projects with full motivation and energy.

Távora was already about 70 years old, and the obvious status of master/apprentice faded for a moment; we felt like we were simultaneously standing on the shoulders of a giant and part of a strong friendship that was developing. Being a Távora collaborator meant being able to establish continuity with Távora's thinking, to extend the project's practices to his thinking, to his

Fig. 1

Detail of Fernando Távora's hand sketching a figure with a fountain pen.



2

modus operandi and thus learn, incorporate and integrate. Being part of a Távora project meant being permanently with Távora, accompanied by his intelligence, as an extension of his action.

This is how it happened at the Duque de Loulé, 98, 3º Esq studio throughout the 1990s, much due to the happy bond of friendship that grew between some of the collaborators who crossed paths during this period until 1996, when they moved to the new Aleixo offices, together with architects Álvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto Moura and Rogério Cavaca.

As employees left the studio, these lunches with Távora continued, taking place every year at Christmas time, still at Adega Ribatejo until it closed. It was a way of perpetuating what we had already built up very naturally over several years and continuing the unpredictable conversations with Távora. Conversations that already included other topics such as Távora's curiosity about what we were doing, what projects, what trips, what lives?

These lunches took place every year until Christmas 2003 when none of us expected it to be our last lunch with Távora. We remember this last moment at the Al Forno restaurant in Foz velha, next to the church of São João Baptista in Foz do Douro, Porto... Távora was always warm, made us feel like part of the family and the conversations flowed and the ink on the table kept flowing...

Fig. 2

Ribatejo Restaurant, Rua Alexandre Herculano, 219, Porto, 30/07/2002 (from left to right top: Alexandra Borges, Fernando Barroso, Pilar Paiva de Sousa, Pedro Pacheco; bottom: Catarina Magalhães, Susana Martins, Fernando Távora, Carlos Martins).

From then on, we all began a new cycle of life without Távora's presence, but with everything we had lived and shared with him... we had a natural bond.

Távora died in 2005, and nothing would be the same. The man, the architect, the teacher, the master who once claimed to be "Portuguese architecture", left behind a remarkable life's work, with multiple strands, ready to be studied. This man who lived his life to the full would now be celebrated by all those who had any contact with him and understood his message and the power of his greatness... continuing to stand on the shoulders of giants...

Over the last twenty years, this resilient and eternally passionate group has insisted on perpetuating the memory of Fernando Távora through meetings, gatherings, friendship, and the tradition of lunches – now at Buraco, in Rua do Bolhão, another of Távora's favourite restaurants – continuing to make the ink run on the table...

We spontaneously started calling ourselves *Tavorianni*, establishing our connection to Távora's studio and architecture.

Exactly twenty years after our last lunch with Fernando Távora, we came up with the idea of starting a documentary record of the countless stories that Távora left us... many are circumstantial and our own, others perhaps have a more universal dimension that we might be interested in sharing. This idea came about partly out of an interest in surveying and recording the various collaborators who worked in the studio of architect Fernando Távora and the respective projects they worked on. In this record, 'stories with Távora' become unavoidable. For now, we'll start with a more circumscribed record of the group of collaborators who worked at the Duque de Loulé office in the 1990s until its closure in 1996, where Fernando Távora had his office for 42 years (1954-1996).

May 2023

Fernando Távora: the Meaning of Time and the Reason of Things

Fernando Távora, Culture, Creativity, Drawing, Architectural and Philosophy

/Abstract

The text discusses the admiration and respect for Fernando Távora, focusing on his influence as an architect and philosopher. It emphasizes the importance of understanding Távora's thoughts and works in the context of his life and passions. The text also highlights Távora's emphasis on culture, creativity, and the ability to draw conclusions based on individual circumstances. Overall, it praises Távora's approach to architecture and philosophy as one that values learning, reflection, and purpose.

/Author

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Maria Madalena Ferreira Pinto da Silva graduated in Architecture from the Escola Superior Belas Artes Porto in 1985. She has been teaching at the Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto since 1989. Founding partner of FBF&MPS arquitectos studio (1999/2018), she is MNE/Portugal scholarship holder at Politecnico di Milano, OIKOS/Bologna and La Sapienza Roma (1984/85). She is a member of the winning team of the Universidade São Paulo-Universidade do Porto Cooperation (2011/14), CAPES-PVE Programme Fellow at USP-IAU, Brasil (2014), Visiting Teacher at the Department of Architecture, University of Bologna (2017/18), FCT Fellow at the Mantua Campus of the Politecnico di Milano (2017). She has carried out teaching and research activities at Faculties of Architecture in Germany, Brazil, Spain, Italy, England, Romania and Turkey. She is the author of texts translated into several languages.

I thank the organisers for the invitation to participate in this initiative that honours Fernando Távora on the centenary of his birth.

Talking about Fernando Távora is always a great joy, a great honour, but also a great responsibility. And I will certainly not add much to what has already been said about Fernando Távora.

For this tribute, I have thought or tried to present a thought based on a look at what surrounded and interested Fernando Távora (references, architecture, things, events, travels). I must say that every time new texts come to light, testimonies of his thought through new notes, my admiration grows.

I understand that all those who take care of his archives and libraries need time, just as we who want to understand his works and thought need time... Indeed, I think that these (works and thoughts) are not immediately understood, neither with a linear and chronologically considered reading, but perhaps with a glance that can connect distinct things and different periods. As Fernando Távora constructed it... a slow, integral and unified path...

Therefore, the feeling that persists is that one cannot know his position as an architect outside the framework of what his life and passions were. That is to say, Távora in the construction of each of his work desires and realises the creation of a set of multiple elements linked together, granting it the character of a sort of structure, of a system of thoughts endowed with meaning.

It has not been my intention to interpret the issues that can constitute a theoretical axis in Fernando Távora, but in confronting his thoughts, I have sought above all to understand how they were constituted, as an immanent and inseparable whole, fundamental pillars of his works and integral parts of his complex being and doing. Perhaps more than the search for a kind of cultural identity, Fernando Távora's thoughts on the world and life reflect a permanent questioning of the meaning of time and a tireless desire to understand the reason for things. As he states here referring to the strictly design issue, "the problem of composition and project is a problem of culture, of moral and intellectual formation, what matters is to understand the system of relations that binds the different levels of reality, the important thing is to know how to relate things".

Thoughts, works, objects that Fernando Távora, then or in the future, always wished could belong to everyone – a wish he expressed when, in 2001, he stated:

'Living is something that is priceless....

Priceless...

I will leave something extraordinary, I think it is great for me...

I leave everything here...

Everything you see here...

These trees, these paintings, these friendships, the bricklayer, the car-

penter, I don't know...

What I leave behind of people, of relationships, of friendships, of images, of texts, of, of...

About the work I did".¹

From the wealth he left to everyone, we understand that Fernando Távora was a cultured man. And a cultured man is not an erudite man.

The cultured man rejects the sterile and encyclopaedic condition of just wanting to know more, but, on the contrary, bases his knowledge on a purpose of action, on the dimension of doing and on the value of creativity.

Fernando Pessoa very correctly separates these two characteristics "The erudite reads and knows, the cultured man, in general, the more he reads the less certain he becomes... because a cultured man is one who naturally feels, or tries to feel, and does not draw conclusions, or when he does, it is according to his state of mind at that moment".²

It is precisely this ability to draw conclusions to the mood of the moment that is linked to the 'circumstance' that Távora conveys from Ortega y Gasset: "I am me and my circumstance, if I do not save it, I will not save myself".

To save the circumstance understood as the capacity and responsibility that man has, as a being who thinks and acts, to be able to change and transform the reality in which he lives so as not to be a victim of it. A primary lesson also in doing architecture, which Távora advocates when he concisely states "that the opposite is also true", a sort of formula that apparently admits everything, but which encapsulates the need for study, reflection and purpose, for a choice.

The permanent heterodoxy of his philosophy of life, teaching, design and architectural works has always allowed Fernando Távora to look carefully where circumstance, context, place in time and space are factors that inform and shape reason, idea and project. By distancing himself from immutable convictions, he moves away from "superficial creatures", those who, according to Pessoa, always have profound certainties.

This daily, slow and extensive learning, which he philosophically summed up as "nulla dies sine linea", was extolled in his lectures, in his conversations, in the elaboration of his projects, not forgetting, however, to emphasise the importance of intuition understood in the sense that Henri Bergson attributes to it, i.e. intuition as an intellectual faculty that ends up resorting to concepts to express itself, a sort of "self-conscious instinct, capable of reflecting on its object and understanding it".³

This perception of the importance of intuition, thus always leaving room for doubt and vacillation, essential states for every act of thought and action, has

1 Fernando Távora's testimony in the documentary 'Fernando Távora', RTP2, 23/12/2001.

2 Fernando Pessoa, *Sobre Portugal – Introdução ao Problema Nacional*, edited by Maria Isabel Rocheta, Maria Paula Morão, introdução organizada por Joel Serrão (Lisboa: Ática, 1979).

3 Nicola Abbagnano, *História da Filosofia*, vol. XII (Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1985).

been pedagogically put into practice in teaching and craft through a maieutic process of critique, allowing for a progressive and increasingly aware pertinence of intuition in the creative act, while not lacking the duty to experiment and verify it. A process in which, however, emotion and passion should unite, allowing flexibility and distancing from all normative pretensions, thus giving space to a personal and genuine thought.

“And it is this passion for Life that I passionately want to transmit. For he does not live who does not immerse himself permanently and passionately in the passion of Life” Távora used to say.

In this capacity to dazzle and marvel at life there was no lack of critical judgement, which encapsulated a desire for order, for a precise refinement in the face of things, in the face of the world. An order permanently subject to new revisions but which, in the need for its precision and essentiality, manifested itself at every moment as perpetual, as permanent.

Perhaps for this reason Fernando Távora was a great collector, one who fights against dispersion, choosing, uniting, organising, ordering a collection of fragments so that they can be recognised as a whole, as harmony and permanence.

In 2002, three years before his death, Fernando Távora confessed “... I collect everything. Mainly books on architecture and poetry, always around Pessoa. I am very interested in ancient architecture and even more so in Greek architecture. My D. Sebastião of architecture is Greek architecture. It is the gods who accompany me from up there. I have a large collection of Portuguese statues. I buy many things. I have a collection of books on classical Portuguese and French architecture. There are many things from the past that I should still buy and many things from the future that I would like to have ... Despite everything I have had a good life. My problem is that, necessarily, I am about to die” he concluded.

If collecting for many authors means precisely preserving in order to eternalise, that is, to go beyond death (a dimension of the future, let us say), others understand it as preserving the past, as saving history and for history.

A past that was, in Fernando Távora’s view, a “selected” past, “a past that the present needs to know”, not to commemorate it, but to interpret and prepare for it, to create the future, as Lucien Febvre pointed out.

If Le Corbusier confessed, paradoxically for some, that he had only one master: the past; and only one discipline: the study of the past, Fernando Távora said “when I thought I would become a great modernist, when I really thought I was a modernist, I was far from being able to be or capable of being one because my modernism was not in my blood, because it was a result of my schooling and not a result of my education”. At this point, allow me to refer to Rogers, quoting him: “He is just as deluded who believes that culture based on knowledge of data is enough to guarantee creation, as he who thinks he can do without it: the difficulty lies precisely in establishing the dynamic balance between these antinomic tendencies, so that the result (the synthesis) is always the affirmation

of a present open to future indications and not a critique, however active, of the past, nor, worse still, merely the verification of the past".⁴

In Fernando Távora too, therefore, the tension between memory and research is established in an apparently antagonistic process between the duty of memory and the ability to forget; "forgetting is a way of selecting. A way of remembering...", he said, remembering as a way of forgetting in order to remain present. It is, therefore, in the conscious choice of these two values, memory and forgetting, and their critical balance that Távora identifies the permanencies that enable him to connect the past to a creative future and endow it with temporality.

In his architectural work, Távora denies false memory, that which is based on the uncritical repetition of forms, just as he despises "the manipulation of memory through the collage of styles"; what Távora always sought, and what he always taught us, was that "... it is not History in the classical sense, as a discipline, that 'interested' but above all the historical view of problems. ... Basically, it is the introduction of time, the awareness of time. Today we are forced to work on many histories and geographies, in many times and spaces at the same time, and if we really want to understand them, we have to study them historically".

Fernando Távora founded and defended the knowledge of history as an architect's working tool and material for reflection, which integrates both a process of direct investigation and study and a project of perception and appreciation of creativity. Thus, and through this tension that tradition establishes with renewal, Távora allows himself to identify the fundamental facts and to distinguish them from transitory facts, those that, in themselves, do not have the capacity to be part of a new tradition or do not allow for an authentic historical continuity.

The simultaneous fascination for history and for the astonishing reality of things present, encapsulates Fernando Távora's permanent desire to "understand beings and things" and the discovery of their possible relationships, as a way of thinking and a faculty of feeling. He said: "There is one fundamental thing about studying as we understand it today: it is comparisons; and every comparison demands absence of partisanship, knowledge of cases about which no value judgement is made but one is considered in relation to the other; there are no more or less true facts or cases, absolute facts or cases, but facts present and evaluated by comparison, relatively".

Relating things will therefore be part of the relentless action of 'knowing how to see', as Alberto Caeiro put it, i.e. unpretentious but definitely exigent:

"The main thing is knowing how to see

Knowing how to see without thinking,

Knowing how to see when one sees,

And not thinking when one sees

Nor seeing when one's thinking.

⁴ Ernesto Nathan Rogers, *Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico* (Napoli: Guida Edizioni, 1990), 78.

But all this (what a shame we all wear a dressed-up soul!) –

All this demands serious looking into.

A thorough learning in how to unlearn”.⁵

Right from the archive and library of Fernando Távora, as his scholars confirm, emerges the almost methodological principle of the need to ‘relate’. In this regard, Ricardo Vasconcelos, one of his curators, states “there is no book that does not have a note, indications of other books, of things he had read, of drawings, of notes”.⁶

The development of his theoretical thought, based on or nourished by ideas from various fields of knowledge, was not, however, the product of meaningless mechanicality, but materialised in a net that Távora wove among the things he was knowing, operating, then, as a place of memory, tradition, project, tomorrow...

I will use, once again, the thought of Fernando Pessoa when he states “besides plebeianism, celebrity is a contradiction. A man of unknown genius can enjoy the soft voluptuousness of the contrast between his obscurity and his genius; and he can, thinking that he would be famous if he wanted to, measure his worth by his best measure, which is himself. Celebrity is irreparable. From her as from time no one turns back or contradicts himself. Every man who deserves to be famous knows that he is not worth it”.⁷

I would say, or think, that Fernando Távora never sought or fought to be famous. On the contrary, advocacy for the so-called “return to anonymous” in the field of architectural theory and practice was even a goal in his life. The way in which he tried to find in some others a reflection of his convictions, reinforced, in his own eyes, that particular anonymous character. The silent, stubborn path to a purpose, that of knowing and knowing himself, that of making sense of architecture, of being Portuguese, of life, were stronger than the desire to make himself known and allowed him great freedom and relative autonomy.

Today, we are witnessing an increasing underestimation of teaching and the profession of architecture at the expense of isolated research practices that swell the curricula, perhaps a consequence of a singular need for knowledge or even worse the result of an increasingly poor understanding of what architecture is or could be.

We observe, too passively, what seems to be consensual: that the contemporary city seeks its identity in the spectacularism or originality of certain buildings, and in the media coverage of these objects or of the authors who designed them.

⁵ From: Alberto Caeiro, “O Guardador de Rebanhos”, in Fernando Pessoa, *Poemas de Alberto Caeiro* (Lisboa: Ática, 1946) [Fernando Pessoa, *The Keeper of Sheep / O Guardador de Rebanhos* by Alberto Caeiro, bilingual edition, English translation by Edwin Honig and Susan M. Brown, (Riverdale-on-Hudson, New York: The Sheep Meadow Press, 1971)], 65.

⁶ “Fernando Távora, o arquiteto que encontrou Fernando Pessoa antes do tempo”. See: <https://espacodearquitetura.com/artigos/fernando-tavora-o-arquiteto-que-encontrou-fernando-pessoa-antes-do-tempo/>, (last view May 2024).

⁷ Fernando Pessoa, *Páginas Íntimas e de Auto-Interpretação* (Lisboa: Ática, 1966).

In this regard and facing the Portuguese reality, Fernando Távora stated: “the contemporary Portuguese cultural phenomenon, while presenting obvious positive and hopeful aspects, presents other – and perhaps more important – signs of a sad existence and a compromised future. We refer, in the context of our professional practice, to the problems of the quality of the space that surrounds us, normally addressed by disciplines such as architecture, town planning, or landscape (...), among us, today, there is no culture of the city as a work of art and the country is being destroyed, with an alarming speed, in the day after day of its construction”.⁸

To recognise Fernando Távora as a great thinker, with a global project of architecture and life, is to understand the timelessness of his work and, decisively, its disconcerting but increasingly appropriate topicality. And it represents, for us, his students, a great pride, but above all it designates the duty to perpetuate his teaching, his thought.

As his son José Bernardo Távora says:

“Fernando Távora was always a man ahead of his time. He had a horror of incompetence, stupidity, lack of education, mediocrity. But he did not say it or rarely said it. He forgot it by reading, writing, drawing. (...) Reading, writing, drawing, these were his real interests. And above all to have time to think (...) In the end he was a happy man, very happy, I am sure of it today”.⁹

Fernando Távora would also have been happy to be here, for this homage, and he would certainly have been thrilled, hiding it under some seductive and intelligent irony, but once back home, he would have gone to sit as always, in the silence of the night, in his little armchair to quietly read, write, draw... to think about architecture, life and the future.

Thank you

Madalena Pinto da Silva

Milan, 23 May 2023

⁸ Fernando Távora, “Prefácio”, in Bernardo Ferrão, *Projecto e Transformação Urbana do Porto na época dos Almas, 1758/1813: Uma contribuição para o estudo da cidade pombalina* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1997).

⁹ In José Bernardo Távora, “Fernando Távora: um homem de paixões, 1923-2005”, December 2017. See: <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:759887/PDF/> (last view May 2024).

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Daniele Vitale

Távora, the Days

Távora, i giorni

Fernando Távora, Variable Architecture, Journey, Arquitetura Regional Portuguesa, Diário de Bordo

/Abstract

The text highlights the life and work of Fernando Távora, reflecting on his calm demeanor but underlying restlessness. It delves into his travels, his conservative background, and his cautious opposition to the fascist regime. The abstract also touches on how Távora grappled with the modern architectural movement, his hybrid modernity, and his influence on the international architecture scene. Furthermore, it explores the significant themes and words – home, Portugal and Portuguese, region, people and popular – that shaped architectural research in Portugal between the 1930s and 1960s, emphasizing their symbolic value and relationship with other disciplines like ethnography and anthropology.

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He was born on 5 January 1945 in Muralto, Switzerland. He studied architecture at the Milan Polytechnic, where he graduated in 1969 with Aldo Rossi. He began his academic career in Milan as Rossi's assistant (1969-1971) and has been Professor of Architectural Composition since 1976 and Full Professor since 1987. He has taught at the Turin and Milan Polytechnics and at several European and American universities. With Ignazio Gardella, one of the masters of Italian architecture, he collaborated on several projects and worked with Aldo Rossi on two exhibitions at the 15th and 16th Milan Triennale. From 1978 to 1981, he was editor of 'Lotus international', one of the leading magazines of European architectural culture and was editor of editorial series. He was responsible for several national researches and carried out studies for various institutions, in particular the Council of Europe. From 1996 to 2000 he was a lecturer at the Doctorate in Architectural Composition in Venice and from 2000 to 2010 he was the coordinator of the Doctorate in Architectural Composition at the Politecnico di Milano. He is the author of numerous projects and built works. He lives and works in Milan.



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Portrait

He is calm in his gait, his speech, his manner, his thoughts that seem sure, and his work that seems to unfold like a thread in time. He has a serene breath. But behind, behind the tone and sobriety that the master must have, there is his walking in the wind, and it is a wind that bends, a path that is uncertain, a restless proceeding. Távora is reflective, trying to control the tumult of the times. The calm face, the firm mask conceal an uneasiness that is not shown. He has a profound identification with his own work and transmits it to others, to the younger ones who are lucky enough to meet him and work with him.

No one among Portuguese architects travelled as much as he did and got to know countries and people; and no one participated as consistently in the debate of what remained of modern architecture, starting with the CIAM. Manuel Mendes points this out. Távora's step and word became those of a witness.

He is an ancient character, like the Portugal to which he belongs, and has the depth of it. He is also (on a different level) a conservative; so is his family and environment; so is his father, a monarchist jurist; so is the small rural aristocracy from which he comes and which he carries within him, like a fund that gives security; so is the school he attends, from the beginning to the highest grades. He is a cautious opponent of the fascist regime despite its ferocious side and the nefariousness and crimes of which it is guilty. Writes Sergio Fernandez:

Educated in an environment in which the values of tradition were considered fundamental, even if retrograde, and in an aristocratic family, he was always inculcated with the importance of a direct relationship with historical references, with Portugal as a protective space to be valued, with the land as a vital support and a priority area of human action.¹

Portugal, the land. But the main problem with which Távora is measured and on which he is doubtfully working is the Modern: how to transpose it, at the very moment when it is unravelling and losing its own epic and heroism. It is the Modern at the time of the last CIAM, when, like leaves, the reference to the masters, which had been the real glue, falls away and only their prestige remains. The strong themes around which the movement had gathered and behind which it had hidden the diversity of its many worlds and languages fell away. But in that backward, isolated Portugal, out of touch with the world, a country into which one does not enter and from which one does not exist except with difficulty, locked in the grip of a regime that survives, modern architecture still has a role to play. There was none of the ambiguity of the Italian experience, where modern architects had hoped to become the choice for the regime. To be so in Portugal, both before and after a war that did not come there, was to stand behind an alternative flag to that of Salazar and Caetano.

¹ Sérgio Fernandez, "Fernando Távora a través de su obra", in Francisco Javier Gallego Roca, ed., *Renovación, Restauración y Recuperación Arquitectónica y Urbana en Portugal* (Granada. Universidad de Granada, 2003), 101.

Távora's modernity is hybrid, drawing on several experiences; it happens to 'get dirty' with improper references, even to neo-realism. It gains light and clarity in the works of various pupils and, first and foremost, of Siza, starting in the 1970s, when the shackles of the regime fell apart. Elsewhere, the legacy of the modern is overwhelmed. In Portugal with astonishment it is reborn, in a singular counter-song. It does so through theft, 'stealing' from different historical masters, from Oud, from Loos to Aalto, from others, in an original and arbitrary way, by elements and episodes, outside of an ideology, or with a fragile ideology. The new modernity is devoid of the myths of modernity, but wonderfully timeless and self-confident. In Portugal, an experience comes to life that will have extraordinary fortune on the international scene. Távora immediately comes first; not only among the Portuguese, but also outside, he is recognised as a father figure. It is the starting point of an unexpected development.

Themes and words

Between the 1930s and 1960s, architectural research in Portugal revolved around important themes and words, which have, above all, symbolic value. They are, among others, home (the dwelling place of men), Portugal and Portuguese (as a space of civilisation), region (as a sphere of geography and culture), people and popular (as an ethnic reality, but above all as a set of people that united history). On these, architecture meets other disciplines, and among them ethnography and anthropology, with which the relationship is contradictory but close. These are themes, rather than of true theory, of ideological construction. Ideology is not architecture but accompanies it, contradicts it and follows it. It does not explain it, but is necessary to it, like a lateral and choral commentary. We must not forget this when speaking of Távora: the two levels must not be confused. What he says and writes is important, but it is different from what he constructs and draws. The myth that has formed around him, and which surrounds him like a veil and a magical halo, is also important and moving. But it becomes criticism in order to bring to light what remains concealed, comparing, evaluating, and revealing. Criticism makes the work and the text richer and more ambiguous.

A casa portuguesa

Two texts on the Portuguese house came out in 1947: one by Keil do Amaral, a 1910 Lisbon architect of international culture and experience, and the other by a very young Távora in his early twenties. The comparison between the two texts is interesting because, although they are not homogeneous and the occasion is not similar, they express two different positions about the project.

Keil do Amaral was a prestigious figure and had already realised some of his important modern works. His article is published in the magazine *Arquitectura*

and is entitled “Uma iniciativa necessária”.² He invokes as indispensable the publication of a book that should collect and “classify” the “peculiar elements of Portuguese architecture in the different regions of the country”, in order to “find the basis for an honest, living and healthy regionalism. Exactly so: honest, alive and healthy”.

What is really interesting is to look, in each region, for the ways in which the inhabitants have managed to solve the different problems that the climate, the materials, the economy and the living conditions peculiar to the region have imposed on construction. Then, analyse to what extent the solutions are good and remain relevant, i.e. continue to be the most appropriate functionally and economically. This is a work of understanding that needs to be done.³

Portuguese architecture, in this discourse, has regional foundations. Its connection to human and material conditions is described in a conventional way. It also applies to the project: study and project are in continuity with each other, linked to each other. “Exactly so: in an honest, living and healthy way”, that is, with an uncertain connection.

Távora’s article appeared in a weekly in 1945 as a ‘niche’ text. Two years later, João Leal, an anthropologist who had a great influence on Portuguese culture, took it up and republished it.⁴ Leal was fascinated by Távora’s text and prefaced it with a beautiful introduction.

To understand the importance of the text, it must be brought back to the whole debate on home, regionalism, nationhood, folklore. It was, of course, not the whole debate, but an important part of it. The same applies to the works, the design, and the projects. I am not looking at the research that moved the debate forward, nor at the contrasting experiments in modern architecture: I am looking at the framework that Távora tried to oppose, and did so, rather than by clashing, by shifting the discourse. Keil do Amaral resorted to the arguments of a modest functionalism: climate and material conditions dictated choices and criteria to architecture. Keil do Amaral’s work was fortunately richer.

Távora also resorts to the themes of functionalism: “Architectural forms, in their authentic sense, are the result of the conditions imposed by the material according to function...”. But to functionalist determinism he adds an unprecedented naturalism. “A style is born from the people and the earth with the spontaneity and vitality of a flower. The people and the land find themselves in the style they created with that naivety and unconsciousness that characterise all heartfelt acts...”. Architecture is nature, it has the same enchantment and power. Nature does not need time, because it sinks into a time so distant that it cannot be told. Nature does not ruin because, as ruin, it is reborn. Nature cannot be

2 Francisco Keil do Amaral, “Uma iniciativa necessária”, *Arquitectura*, no. 14 (April 1947): 12-13.

3 Keil do Amaral, “Uma iniciativa necessária”.

4 Fernando Távora, “O Problema da Casa Portuguesa”, published in the weekly *ALÉO*, 10 November 1945; republished in expanded form in *Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1 (1947), with an introduction by Manuel João Leal, editor of the magazine.



false, because the form it has taken is incontrovertible. If architecture is nature, it has the absolute dimension of nature. Naturalism in architecture has ancient roots, but here it is revived in an unexpected way and with poetic enchantment. It flanks the functionalist argument; indeed, as far as it succeeds, it replaces and subverts it. Leal writes:

The country builds. The country builds a lot. The country builds more and more. Houses, factories, and schools are being built – in cities, towns, and villages. But how painful it is to realise that this enormous building activity has been disrupted in its expression and architecture. The construction process, in both its technical and financial aspects, is being adapted, albeit expensively. But the style 'born of the people and the earth with the spontaneity and life of a flower', the 'new character of the new conditions', do not appear. Basic preconceptions have undermined

Fig. 1

Fernando Távora, drawing of Álvaro Siza in: Bernardo Pinto de Almeida, *O que a luz ao cair deixa nas coisas*. Álvaro Siza, *desenhos* (Porto: Cooperativa Árvore, BPI, 2003).

even well-intentioned attempts to revive them. However, one road has not yet been beaten: the one indicated in this essay, and it is indeed the only one that can lead to the blossoming of a living Portuguese architecture. Its author, Fernando Távora, a finalist in architecture at the School of Fine Arts in Porto, points out with courage and conviction the present mistakes and the future's paths. "What is needed is serious, concise, well-oriented and realistic work", animated by a new spirit. Everything has to be redone, starting afresh.⁵

Popular

If we accept a scheme, two different meanings can be attributed to the notion of people. The first is unitary: "people" is linked to the idea of nation. It is a recognisable entity with contours, boundaries, and character. It has behind it a history and a struggle that has defined it, and can, but not always, be based on the unity of language. It carries a risk in its bosom, which is that of rhetorical deviation. It can be accompanied by an excess of identity desire that becomes fatal.

In the other notion, "people" is the set of subaltern classes (for us in Gramsci's sense). Society is supposed to be deeply divided and is internally divided, split, and rose by internal conflicts. It can also happen that a large part of it (as in Portugal it did) remains lost in a remote past, closed in a circle, bound to geography, estranged from events. It lives in isolation, communicating little with the outside world. It bears the signs of an archaic time to which it bears witness. It seems to us to draw it and offer it, as a residue from which to finally understand the present. It seems to be the deep layer of an archaeology of living together, but also of the material framework in which life took place. It becomes an object of research and study as if chasing a hidden root. That root, in illusion, can become the architecture of today.

The *Inquérito*, which is so important for Portuguese architecture, is a research that the regime promoted and financed, and the architects chorally conducted. The *Inquérito* is ambiguous about the notion of popular and people, as if both meanings were present and surfaced alternately. The first is congenial to the *Estado Novo*, which makes the idea of nation and people one of its weapons of offence and defence. The second emerges in much of the community of scholars working on research.

The official title of the research was *Arquitetura Regional Portuguesa*. Such was also to be the title of the publication that would gather the results in 1960, but the word Regional was ultimately replaced with *Popular: Arquitetura Popular Portuguesa*. It is not known who decided on the change and with what intentions, but it corresponded to a new centrality that the word Popular was assuming. What were its connotations? Popular stood first of all in opposition to "cultured",

⁵ João Leal, *Introduction, Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1 (1947): 3

because it indicated a spontaneous, implicit, uncodified culture. It was still in opposition to “individual”, because it presupposed a collective and anonymous dimension and an internal chorality. It alluded to a reality that tended to be static and remote, and was therefore related to another related word, “natural”. Finally, a choice that was not taken for granted, not declared and resounding: the popular was only rural and excluded the urban. It can be said that this has long been the case even in anthropologists’ studies: the popular referred only to mountains and the countryside. Yet the popular lived above all in the city.

But there had also been those who had studied that ‘great study’ from the inside and had come to surprising conclusions. Consulting the collected material, which was enormously larger than that published, one discovered that the clarity and sharpness of the book were based on very clear selection criteria. There was material included and material excluded. The pictures and drawings chosen generally referred to buildings that were clear in structure and made use of few materials, such as stone, wood and straw. The construction layout was elementary and based on the relationship between upright supporting elements and supported transverse elements. Views were often frontal. The views were often without people, and the buildings were uninhabited. The ‘popular’ coincided with misery, but here misery was excluded. The popular coincided with the provisional and the arranged, but here, the provisional was excluded. The detritus and the dirty were excluded. So were the contaminations of forms and materials and the arrangements of existing buildings. There were no shacks or dwellings in stables or pigsties. There was no emigrant house. If the aim was to unify architecture and life, only architecture remains in the book.

The *Inquérito* was gigantic, valuable and unparalleled research, but its abstractly scientific basis cracked, and its strong and precise ideological basis was revealed. The idea of popularity seemed to rest on vast knowledge, but it was also preventive, imagined, and full of thought. The regime, the *Estado Novo*, was rightly accused of wanting to construct a demonstrative study and of wanting to instrumentalise it to its own ends. But the study conducted with such passion by the architects also had a demonstrative will, albeit an otherwise worthy one. Passion and demonstration are sisters. Demonstrations are not all the same, and if that of the state was bland and reductive, that of the architects was noble in intent, moved by a will that had foundations in politics and art. That idealised popular, placed outside history and time, was, in the end, close to the primitive. It had the same power of imagination and thought for architects that the primitive had in the 20th century for the avant-garde in the field of art.

Even for Távora, the two notions of popular and modern, if they did not coincide, lived side by side. They had their distances, but one was nourishment for the other. “In *Inquérito* I could verify that my view of modern architecture was compatible with that world”.⁶ It was an idea, that of parallelism between pop-

⁶ Fernando Távora, “Interview with Távora by João Leal”, in Fernando Távora, *Minha Casa*, edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS, 2013), File [O].

ular and modern, which posed difficult problems for an architect, because the “purism” that the one seemed to propose was not that of the other. But it was an idea that had become contagious and had spread. It reached farce at times. Távora, in an interview with João Leal, recounted this episode: in a preliminary presentation of the results of the research to Salazar, the latter had exclaimed in front of an image: “How beautiful, it looks like modern architecture” to which he had replied: “but Mr Minister, the Inquérito is really confirming the existence of great similarities between popular and modern architecture”.⁷

Távora, in several of his writings and several of his notes, demonstrates as a man of travel that he is well aware that there is a popular other than what the Inquérito shows. There is a popular related to real life, to the disasters of society, to failures, ambitions, dreams, successes; there is, for example, around the country,

... in our days, the presence of the houses of returning emigrants – the so-called *maisons de rêve* – that are polluting our landscape, especially in the north and centre of the country, since, through kitsch forms, they intend to communicate the new social and economic status conquered abroad by their owners.⁸

Case by Case, Variable Architecture

I understand that today it is not easy, in these times, to be only conservative or to be only radical. Who is a radical? He is a man who does not do architecture, he does extraordinary things: and I do not do any. A conservative man is a man who does 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th century things; no, I don't do that either. And so, what I understand is that today people do variable architecture: and I think that is what we have to do, variable architecture from the point of view of the quality of each building. That is, to use in each building those times or qualities that are appropriate to that building.⁹

Each building therefore requires its own treatment. There is a fear, and it is that of canonisation and hardening; that of reducing the project's capacity to adhere to reality, to the point of falling into the unity of style. But even more, that of betraying an ethical principle of human understanding, for which the project must open up, understand, and become sympathetic; it must adapt to ways of thinking and feeling; follow the character and natural inclination of people, places and things. A project, rather than imposing, transposes. Távora explains this in one of his most intensely poetic texts, *Immigration/Emigration*, which is a portrait of Portugal, its history, its soul. The Portuguese in his history has always travelled: he has seen, he has listened, he has introjected what he has experienced, he has understood

⁷ From a 1996 interview by João Leal with Fernando Távora: João Leal, *Arquitectos, Engenheiros, Antropólogos. Estudos sobre arquitectura popular no século XX portugueses* (Porto: Fundação Marquês da Silva, 2008), 16.

⁸ Fernando Távora, *Imigração/Emigração*, Porto, 1997; transl. it. “Immigrazione/Emigration”, in Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2005), 300-301 (cit. from p. 301).

⁹ Quote from the transcript of the 23 December 2001 RTP (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal) documentary *Fernando Távora on the architect's life and work*, including an interview with him and testimonies by architects Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Álvaro Siza Vieira.

the diversity and distance of the worlds he has come into contact with, he has appropriated and reworked their stories, he has drawn awareness and sadness from them. It has accumulated a sense of the relativity of things.

We believe that the thinking behind contemporary Portuguese architecture, of its most representative sectors, does not forget, but rather practices, this tradition of ours: not imposing but sympathetic and understanding, capable of understanding people and their places, guaranteeing their buildings and spaces their identity and variety, as in a phenomenon of heteronymy in which the author demultiplies himself, not because of intellectual or other incapacities, but because of the principle of respect when deserved, to which we are indebted to our neighbour.¹⁰

An architecture – Távora seems to be saying on the basis of an ancient feeling – must proceed by resonance with what comes before and is around, with respect to the sense of place. There is an echo of Rogers' environmental pre-existences,¹¹ but made particular, scattered around the sites. The project must be inspired by the circumstances and their breath like a man directly experiencing them. Távora extends human qualities to architecture that architecture does not have. Heteronymy is that character of the language written and spoken by men, whereby two related beings, separated only by differences in gender and number, are called by etymologically distant words. A game of correspondences and non-correspondences. It is a game that is foreign to architecture. Architecture has a language or many languages of its own, formed over time and with its own internal structure. It can interpret and be ductile; it cannot dissolve what constitutes and governs it. Form in architecture must be thought of not from circumstance, but through form. A project is in itself affirmative; it can be affirmative in so many ways, but in any case it overlaps and imposes itself on a situation that is given. Távora seems to approach an ancient discussion, or an ancient paradox, which is that of an architecture that (going to extremes) defines itself case by case. But the paradox is beyond the work. Távora makes use of ancient knowledge and practice in his work, and he can play his music thanks to musical instruments and found canvas. To one absolute, that of naturalism, Távora adds another, that of architecture that loses its own system and thought and becomes a circumstance.

Writing, Diary

Távora was a man of few words. I do not know if he was a writer: he was not a writer if a writer has to write books. He only published one, *The Organisation of Space*,¹² to which he was obliged for reasons of his academic career. His texts,

10 Fernando Távora, "Imigração / Emigração. Cultura Arquitectónica Portuguesa no Mundo", in *Portugal. Arquitectura do Século XX*, edited by Annette Becker, Ana Tostões, Wilfried Wang, III, (Munich – New York: Prestel, 1998): 141-142. Also published in: Fernando Távora, "*Minha casa*", edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS-FAUP, 2013).

11 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei", *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 204 (February-March 1955): 3-6.

12 Fernando Távora, *Da organização do espaço*, edited by the author, 1962; with preface by Nuno Portas, Porto, 1982; Italian edition edited and translated by Carlotta Torricelli, Nottetempo, Milan, 2021.

linked to the need to express a thought, or due to circumstances or demands, have a short or intermediate measure. They are beautiful literature, beautiful in language, with the density and ambiguity that Portuguese has always had. They are difficult to translate, and translation loses them. In Portuguese, the line between prose and poetry is thinner, and Távora's writings are sometimes intensely poetic.

Books are the fruit of the will, but not only, because there are also books written for oneself. They can be truly secret, or they can be falsely private and only wait for the moment when they come to light. A diary, the word says it, is marked by days, and the thread that binds the pages is that of days. It can be a way of jotting down and stopping one's experience. But Távora's is a particular diary, because it is a *Diário de bordo*:¹³ that is, it is linked to a sea crossing and a journey that has a duration, a beginning and an end. It has a finite time. I don't think that when he wrote and drew it, he thought about the possibility of making it public: he thought about it later when someone asked him to. A diary can be linked to the chronicle, but a logbook is obligatory. Even the chronicle can sometimes become poetry.

But there is one point we cannot escape: the diary is a literary form with a history and a legacy that carries weight, beyond the awareness and desire of the writer. The weight is great. Every diary has within it all diaries, even for those who do not know or do not want to know. Architects' diaries inevitably carry within them the memory of the *Grand Tour*, of the journey to Italy, Greece, the Orient, Egypt, Africa; that of the pilgrimage towards classicism and the exotic. Even those modern architects carry within them not only the memory but the comparison with those precise ways of writing, telling, drawing, sketching, and composing the page.

The diaries of architects, painters, and sculptors, as well as of literati and others, are generally drawn because drawing is a way of knowing what belongs to them in particular. It also comes from an impulse to figure related to the mind and the hand. It changes the relationship with the text. Távora and Le Corbusier (the *Journey to the Orient, the Carnets*),¹⁴ so distant from each other, do, however, have in common the accompaniment of words and figures. But what differs from Távora in Le Corbusier is speed, conciseness and constructive will. Observation is already almost invention. The gaze is already inside the thing. Le Corbusier's drawings are immediate, Távora's accurate. The transition from observation to design in Távora occurs through filters and is slow in time. In Le Corbusier it happens through direct intuition.

¹³ Fernando Távora, *Diário de bordo*, facsimile edition with transcriptions in Portuguese and English, co-ordinated by Alvaro Siza, edited by Rita Marnoto, co-edited by Associação Casa da Arquitectura, Família Fernando Távora, Fundação Marquês da Silva, Fundação Cidade de Guimarães, Porto, 2012; ed. it, *Diario di bordo*, edited by Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, Raffaella Maddaluno. Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2022.

¹⁴ Le Corbusier, *Voyage d'orient – Carnets*, 6 vols. in slipcase, transcriptions and reproductions of the original moleskine notebooks, presentation by Giuliano Gresleri, published by Electa/Fondation Le Corbusier, Milan/Paris, 1987.

Travel Journals can be introspective, have a personal reflective dimension that leads one to measure oneself against existence and the self. It is a dimension that Távora's Diary has. In this it resembles Goethe's *Italian Journey*.¹⁵

Ritratto

È pacato l'andare, il parlare, il modo di porgere, il pensiero che pare sicuro, l'opera che sembra svolgersi come un filo nel tempo. Ha un respiro sereno. Ma dietro, dietro il tono e la sobrietà che deve avere il maestro, c'è il suo camminare nel vento, ed è un vento che piega, un cammino che è incerto, un procedere inquieto. È riflessivo Távora, cerca di controllare il tumulto dei tempi. Il volto tranquillo, la maschera ferma celano un disagio che non viene mostrato. Ha un'immedesimazione profonda nel proprio lavoro e la trasmette ad altri, ai più giovani che hanno la fortuna di incontrarlo e di lavorare con lui.

Nessuno, tra gli architetti portoghesi, ha viaggiato come lui e conosciuto paesi e persone; e nessuno ha partecipato con altrettanta continuità al dibattito di ciò che rimaneva dell'architettura moderna, a partire dai CIAM. Lo sottolinea Manuel Mendes. Quelli di Távora sono diventati il passo e la parola del testimone.

È un personaggio antico, come il Portogallo al quale appartiene, e ne ha la profondità. Ma è anche (su un piano diverso) un conservatore; lo sono la famiglia e l'ambiente; lo è il padre, un giurista monarchico; così la piccola aristocrazia rurale da cui viene e che porta dentro di sé, come un fondo che dà sicurezza; lo è la scuola che frequenta, dall'inizio sino ai gradi più alti. È un oppositore cauto del regime fascista, nonostante il suo lato feroce e le nefandezze e i delitti dei quali si macchia. Scrive Sergio Fernandez:

Educato in un ambiente in cui i valori della tradizione erano considerati fondamentali, anche se retrogradi, e in una famiglia aristocratica, gli fu sempre inculcata l'importanza di un rapporto diretto con riferimenti di carattere storico, con il Portogallo come spazio di protezione cui dare valore, con la terra come sostegno vitale e ambito prioritario dell'agire umano.¹⁶

Il Portogallo, la terra. Ma il principale problema con cui Távora si misura e sul quale con dubbio lavora è il moderno: come riceverlo, proprio nel momento nel quale si disfa e perde la propria epopea e il proprio eroismo. È il moderno al tempo degli ultimi CIAM, quando come foglie cade il riferimento ai maestri, che era stato

¹⁵ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Viaggio in Italia (1787)*, translated by Emilio Castellani, preface by Roberto Fertonani (Milano: i Meridiani, Mondadori, 1983).

¹⁶ Sérgio Fernandez, "Fernando Távora a través de su obra", in *Renovación, Restauración y Recuperación Arquitectónica y Urbana en Portugal*, edited by Francisco Javier Gallego Roca, (Granada. Universidad de Granada, 2003), 101.

il vero collante, e ne rimane soltanto il prestigio. Cadono i temi forti intorno a cui il Movimento si era raccolto e dietro i quali aveva nascosto la diversità dei suoi tanti mondi e dei suoi tanti linguaggi. Ma in quel Portogallo arretrato, isolato, fuori del mondo, in cui non si entra e da cui non si esce se non a fatica, chiuso nella morsa di un regime che sopravvive, l'architettura moderna ha ancora un ruolo da svolgere. Non c'è stata l'ambiguità dell'esperienza italiana, dove gli architetti moderni avevano sperato di diventare loro la scelta su cui il regime poteva puntare. Esserlo in Portogallo, sia prima che dopo una guerra che lì non arriva, significava schierarsi dietro una bandiera alternativa a quella di Caetano e di Salazar.

La modernità di Távora è ibrida, attinge a più esperienze; le capita di «sporcarsi» con riferimenti impropri, sino al neorealismo. Prende luce e chiarezza nelle opere di diversi allievi e prima di tutto di Siza, a partire dagli anni settanta, quando le catene del regime vanno in pezzi. Altrove l'eredità del moderno viene travolta. In Portogallo con stupore rinasce, in un singolare controcanto. Lo fa attraverso furti, "rubando" a diversi maestri storici, a Oud, a Loos a Aalto, ad altri ancora, in modo originale e arbitrario, per elementi ed episodi, al di fuori di un'ideologia, o con un'ideologia fragile. La nuova modernità è priva dei miti della modernità, ma meravigliosamente fuori tempo e sicura di sé. In Portogallo prende vita un'esperienza che nel panorama internazionale avrà straordinaria fortuna. Távora viene subito prima; non solo tra i portoghesi, ma anche all'esterno gli viene riconosciuta la figura del padre. È il punto di partenza di uno sviluppo inatteso.

Temi e parole

Tra gli anni Trenta e Sessanta, in Portogallo la ricerca di architettura ruota intorno a temi e parole importanti, ma che hanno soprattutto valore simbolico. Sono, tra gli altri, casa (la dimora degli uomini), Portogallo e portoghese (come spazio di civiltà), regione (come ambito di geografia e di cultura), popolo e popolare (come realtà etnica, ma soprattutto come insieme di genti che ha unito la storia). Su di essi, l'architettura incontra altre discipline, e tra esse l'etnografia e l'antropologia, con cui il rapporto è contraddittorio ma stretto. Sono temi, più che di vera teoria, di costruzione ideologica. L'ideologia non è l'architettura, ma l'accompagna, la contraddice e la segue. Non la spiega, ma le è necessaria, come un laterale e corale commento. Non dobbiamo dimenticarlo, parlando di Távora: i due piani non vanno confusi. Ciò che dice e che scrive è importante, ma è altro da ciò che costruisce e disegna. Anche il mito che intorno a lui si è formato, e che lo circonda come un velo e un magico alone, ha importanza e commuove. Ma si fa critica per portare alla luce ciò che rimane celato, confrontando, valutando, rivelando. La critica rende più ricchi e più ambigui l'opera e il testo.

A casa portuguesa

Nel 1947 escono due testi sul tema della casa portoghese: uno di Keil do Amaral, architetto di Lisbona del 1910, di cultura e esperienza internazionali;

l'altro di un giovanissimo Távora, appena ventitreenne. Perché il confronto tra i due testi è interessante? Perché, anche se non sono omogenei e non è simile l'occasione, esprimono due posizioni diverse sulla questione del progetto.

Keil do Amaral era figura di prestigio e aveva già realizzato alcune delle sue opere moderne importanti. Il suo articolo è pubblicato sulla rivista *Arquitectura* ed è intitolato "Uma iniciativa necessária".¹⁷ Invoca come indispensabile la pubblicazione di un libro che dovrebbe raccogliere e «classificare» gli «elementi peculiari dell'architettura portoghese nelle differenti regioni del paese», per «trovare le basi di un regionalismo onesto, vivo e salutare. Esattamente così: onesto, vivo e salutare».

Ciò che davvero interessa è cercare, in ogni regione, i modi in cui gli abitanti sono riusciti a risolvere i diversi problemi che il clima, i materiali, l'economia e le condizioni di vita proprie della regione, hanno imposto alle edificazioni. Poi, analizzare fino a che punto le soluzioni sono buone e conservano attualità, continuano cioè ad essere le più adeguate funzionalmente ed economicamente. È un lavoro di comprensione che deve essere svolto.¹⁸

L'architettura portoghese, in questo discorso, ha fondamenti regionali. Il suo nesso con le condizioni umane e materiali è descritto in modo convenzionale. Vale anche per il progetto: studio e progetto sono tra loro in continuità, l'uno all'altro legati. "Esattamente così: in modo onesto, vivo e salutare", cioè con un incerto legame.

L'articolo di Távora esce nel 1945 come testo «di nicchia» su un settimanale, e due anni dopo è ripreso e ripubblicato da Joao Leal, un antropologo che ha avuto grande peso nella cultura portoghese.¹⁹ Leal è affascinato dal testo di Távora e antepone un'introduzione molto bella.

Per capire l'importanza del testo, va riportato all'insieme del dibattito sulla casa, sul regionalismo, sulla nazione, sul folclore. Non era naturalmente tutto il dibattito, ma una sua parte importante. Vale lo stesso per le opere, il disegno, i progetti. Non guardo alle ricerche che pure spostavano la discussione in avanti, né alle sperimentazioni contrastate dell'architettura moderna: guardo al quadro a cui Távora cercava di opporsi, e lo faceva, più che scontrandosi, spostando il discorso. Keil do Amaral ricorreva agli argomenti di un funzionalismo modesto: clima e condizioni materiali dettavano all'architettura scelte e criteri. L'opera di Keil do Amaral era per fortuna più ricca.

Távora anche ricorre ai temi del funzionalismo: «le forme architettoniche, nel loro senso autentico, sono il risultato delle condizioni imposte dal materiale a seconda della funzione...». Ma al determinismo funzionalista aggiunge un

17 Francisco Keil do Amaral, "Uma iniciativa necessária", *Arquitectura*, no. 14 (April 1947): 12-13.

18 Keil do Amaral, "Uma iniciativa necessária".

19 Fernando Távora, "O Problema da Casa Portuguesa", pubblicato nel settimanale *ALÉO*, 10 November 1945; ripubblicato in forma ampliata in *Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1 (1947), con una introduzione di Manuel João Leal, direttore della rivista.

naturalismo inedito. «Uno stile nasce dal popolo e dalla terra con la spontaneità e la vitalità di un fiore. Il popolo e la terra si ritrovano nello stile che hanno creato con quell'ingenuità e incoscienza che caratterizzano tutti gli atti veramente sentiti...». L'architettura è natura, ne ha lo stesso incanto e la stessa potenza. La natura non ha bisogno del tempo, perché affonda in un tempo così lontano da non potere essere detto. La natura non rovina, perché come rovina rinasce. La natura non può essere falsa, perché è inoppugnabile la forma che ha preso. Se l'architettura è natura, della natura ha la dimensione assoluta. Il naturalismo in architettura ha radici antiche, ma qui viene riproposto in modo inaspettato e con incanto poetico. Affianca l'argomentare funzionalista; in realtà, per quanto riesce, lo sostituisce e sovverte. Scrive Leal:

Il Paese costruisce. Il Paese costruisce molto. Il Paese costruisce ogni volta di più. Si alzano case, fabbriche, scuole – in città, paesi, villaggi. Ma quanto dolore nel constatare che questa enorme attività costruttiva è stata stravolta nella sua espressione e nella sua architettura. Il processo di costruzione, sia nell'aspetto tecnico che finanziario, si adatta, anche se in modo costoso, alle esigenze. Ma lo stile "nato dal popolo e dalla terra con la spontaneità e la vita di un fiore", il "carattere nuovo delle nuove condizioni", questi non appaiono. Preconcetti di base hanno minato i tentativi, anche se ben intenzionati, di farli rinascere. Tuttavia una strada non è ancora stata battuta: quella indicata in questo saggio, ed è davvero l'unica che può portare al fiorire di un'architettura portoghese viva. Il suo autore, Fernando Távora, finalista in architettura alla Scuola di Belle Arti di Porto, sottolinea con coraggio e convinzione gli errori del presente e le strade del futuro. "Serve un lavoro serio, conciso, ben orientato e realista", animato da spirito nuovo. "Bisogna rifare tutto, ricominciando da capo".²⁰

Popolare

Se accettiamo uno schema, alla nozione di popolo si possono attribuire due significati differenti. Il primo è unitario: il popolo è legato all'idea di nazione. È un'entità riconoscibile, con dei contorni, dei confini, un carattere. Ha dietro di sé una storia e una lotta che l'ha definito, e può, ma non sempre, basarsi sull'unità della lingua. Porta un rischio in seno, che è quello della deviazione retorica. Può accompagnarsi a un eccesso di volontà identitaria che diviene funesto.

Nell'altra nozione, il popolo è l'insieme delle classi subalterne (per noi nell'accezione di Gramsci). Si suppone che la società sia attraversata da divisioni profonde e sia al suo interno divisa, spaccata, rosa da interni conflitti. Può anche accadere che una sua parte consistente (come in Portogallo è accaduto) rimanga perduta in un passato remoto, chiusa in un cerchio, legata alla geografia, estranea agli eventi. È vissuta isolata, comunicando poco all'esterno. Porta i segni di un tempo arcaico di cui è testimone. Pare a noi che lo disegni e lo offra, come un residuo da cui infine capire il presente. Pare lo strato profondo

²⁰ João Leal, *Introduzione, Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1 (1947): 3

di un'archeologia del vivere insieme, ma anche del quadro materiale in cui si è svolta la vita. Diventa oggetto di ricerca e di studio, come a inseguire una radice nascosta. Quella radice, nell'illusione, può diventare l'architettura di oggi.

L'Inquérito, che per l'architettura portoghese ha tanta importanza, è una ricerca che il regime ha promosso e finanziato, e gli architetti hanno coralmemente condotto. *L'Inquérito* è ambiguo sulla nozione di popolare e di popolo, come se entrambe le accezioni fossero presenti e affiorassero alterne. La prima è congegnale all'*Estado Novo*, che dell'idea di nazione e di popolo fa una delle sue armi di offesa e difesa. La seconda affiora in buona parte della comunità di studiosi che alla ricerca lavora.

Il titolo ufficiale della ricerca era *Arquitetura Regional Portuguesa*. Tale doveva essere anche il titolo della pubblicazione che nel 1960 ne avrebbe raccolto gli esiti, ma la parola *Regional* venne all'ultimo sostituita con *Popular: Arquitetura Popular Portuguesa*. Non si sa chi abbia deciso il cambiamento e con quali intenzioni, ma corrispondeva a una nuova centralità che la parola popolare veniva assumendo. Quali erano i suoi connotati? Popolare stava prima di tutto in opposizione a «colto», perché indicava una cultura spontanea, implicita, non codificata. Stava ancora in opposizione a «individuale», perché supponeva una dimensione collettiva e anonima e una interna corallità. Alludeva a una realtà tendenzialmente statica e remota, e dunque era parente di un'altra parola affine, «naturale». Infine una scelta non scontata, non dichiarata e clamorosa: il popolare era solo rurale ed escludeva l'urbano. Si può dire che da tempo era così anche negli studi degli antropologi: il popolare si riferiva solo a montagne e campagne. Eppure il popolo abitava soprattutto in città.

Ma c'era stato anche chi aveva studiato dall'interno quel «grande Studio» ed era arrivato a constatazioni sorprendenti. Consultando il materiale raccolto, enormemente più vasto di quello pubblicato, si scopriva che il nitore e la chiarezza del libro si basavano su criteri di selezione assai netti. C'era il materiale incluso e quello escluso. Le immagini e i disegni scelti si riferivano in genere a edifici chiari di struttura e che ricorrevano a pochi materiali, come pietra, legno e paglia. L'impianto costruttivo era elementare e basato sul rapporto tra elementi ritti di sostegno ed elementi traversi sostenuti. Le vedute erano spesso frontali. Le vedute erano spesso senza persone e gli edifici disabitati. Il popolare coincideva con la miseria, ma qui la miseria era esclusa. Il popolare coincideva con il provvisorio e l'arrangiato, ma qui il provvisorio era escluso. Era escluso il detrito e lo sporco. Così le contaminazioni di forme e materiali e le sistemazioni di edifici esistenti. Non esistevano baracche o abitazioni ricavate in stalle o porcili. La casa dell'emigrante non c'era. Se lo scopo era di unificare l'architettura e la vita, ecco che nel libro solo l'architettura rimane.

L'Inquérito era una ricerca gigantesca, preziosa e senza eguali, ma si incrinava la sua base astrattamente scientifica e si svelava una sua base ideologica forte e precisa. L'idea di popolare pareva poggiare su una conoscenza vasta, ma era anche preventiva, immaginata, piena di pensieri. Il regime,

l'Estado Novo, era stato giustamente accusato di volere costruire uno studio dimostrativo e di volerlo strumentalizzare ai suoi fini. Ma anche lo studio condotto con tanta passione dagli architetti aveva una volontà dimostrativa, sia pure altrimenti degna. Passione e dimostrazione sono sorelle. Le dimostrazioni non sono tutte eguali, e se quella dello stato era bieca e riduttiva, quella degli architetti era nobile negli intenti, mossa da una volontà che aveva fondamenta in politica e in arte. Quel popolare idealizzato, posto fuori della storia e del tempo, era alla fine vicino al primitivo. Aveva per gli architetti la stessa potenza immaginativa e di pensiero che il primitivo aveva avuto nel Novecento per le avanguardie nel campo dell'arte.

Anche per Távora, le due nozioni di popolare e moderno, se non coincidevano, vivevano accanto. Avevano le loro distanze, ma l'una era alimento dell'altra. «Nell'Inquérito io ho potuto verificare che il mio panorama di architettura moderna era compatibile con quel mondo».²¹ Era un'idea, quella del parallelismo tra popolare e moderno, che a un architetto poneva problemi difficili, perché il «purismo» che l'una sembrava proporre, non era quello dell'altra. Ma era un'idea che era diventata contagiosa e si era diffusa. Raggiungeva a volte la farsa. Távora, in una intervista rilasciata a Joao Leal, raccontava questo episodio: in una presentazione preliminare dei risultati della ricerca a Salazar, questi aveva esclamato davanti a un'immagine: «che bello, sembra architettura moderna»; e lui gli aveva risposto: «ma signor Ministro, l'Inquérito sta proprio confermando l'esistenza di grandi somiglianze tra l'architettura popolare e quella moderna».²²

Távora, in diversi suoi scritti e diverse sue note, dimostra da uomo di viaggi di sapere bene che c'è un popolare altro da quello che l'Inquérito mostra. C'è un popolare legato alla vita reale, ai disastri della società, ai fallimenti, alle ambizioni, ai sogni, ai successi; c'è ad esempio, in giro per il paese:

... ai giorni nostri, la presenza delle case degli emigranti di ritorno portoghesi – le cosiddette *maisons de rêve* – che stanno inquinando il nostro paesaggio soprattutto nelle zone al nord o al centro del paese, e che attraverso le loro forme kitsch, comunicano il nuovo status sociale ed economico dei proprietari, che hanno trovato all'estero il benessere che tanto desideravano.²³

Caso per caso, architettura variabile

Capisco che oggi non è facile, coi tempi che corrono, essere solo conservatore o essere solo radicale. Chi è un radicale? È un uomo che non fa architettura, fa cose straordinarie: e io non ne faccio. Un uomo conser-

21 Fernando Távora, "Intervista a João Leal", in Fernando Távora, *Minha Casa*, a cura di Manuel Mendes, (Porto: FIMS, 2013), File [O].

22 Da un'intervista del 1996 di João Leal a Fernando Távora; in João Leal, *Arquitectos, Engenheiros, Antropólogos. Estudos sobre arquitetura popular no século XX português* (Porto: Fundação Marquês da Silva, 2008), 16.

23 Fernando Távora, *Imigração/Emigração*, Porto, 1997; transl. it. "Immigrazione/Emigration", in Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2005), 300-301 (cit. from p. 301).

vatore è un uomo che fa cose del XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI secolo; no, anche questo non faccio. E dunque, ciò che capisco è che oggi la gente fa un'architettura variabile: e penso che sia questa che dobbiamo fare, un'architettura variabile dal punto di vista della qualità di ciascun edificio. Usare cioè in ciascun edificio quei tempi o quelle qualità che sono appropriate a quell'edificio.²⁴

Ogni edificio richiede dunque un trattamento proprio. C'è un timore, ed è quello della canonizzazione e dell'irrigidimento; quello di ridurre la capacità del progetto di aderire al reale, sino a cadere nell'unità dello stile. Ma ancora più, quello di tradire un principio etico di umana comprensione, per il quale il progetto deve aprirsi, capire, rendersi simpatetico; deve adattarsi ai modi di pensare e sentire; seguire il carattere e l'inclinazione naturale delle persone, dei luoghi, delle cose. Un progetto, più che imporre, recepisce. Lo spiega Távora in uno dei suoi testi più intensamente poetici, *Immigrazione / Emigrazione*, che è un ritratto del Portogallo, della sua storia, della sua anima. Il portoghese nella sua storia ha sempre viaggiato: ha visto, ha ascoltato, ha introiettato ciò di cui faceva esperienza, ha compreso la diversità e la lontananza dei mondi con cui è venuto a contatto, ne ha fatto proprie e rielaborato le storie, ne ha tratto consapevolezza e tristezza. Ha accumulato il senso della relatività delle cose.

Crediamo che il pensiero dell'architettura contemporanea portoghese, nei suoi settori più rappresentativi, non dimentichi, ma prima pratici questa nostra riferita tradizione, non impositiva ma simpatizzante e comprensiva, di considerazione degli uomini e dei loro luoghi, garantendo ai propri edifici e ai propri spazi l'identità e la varietà, come in un fenomeno di eteronomia in cui l'autore si demoltiplica, non per incapacità intellettuale o d'altro tipo, ma per il principio di rispetto, quando meritato, di cui siamo debitori agli altri.²⁵

Un'architettura – sembra dire Távora in base a un antico sentire – deve procedere per risonanze rispetto a ciò che viene prima e sta intorno, rispetto al senso dei luoghi. C'è un'eco delle preesistenze ambientali di Rogers,²⁶ ma rese particolari, disseminate nei siti. Il progetto deve ispirarsi alle circostanze e al loro respiro, come un uomo che direttamente le vive. Távora estende all'architettura una qualità umana che l'architettura non ha. Eteronomia significa ricevere la propria norma e il proprio criterio da fuori di sé. L'architettura ha una lingua o tante lingue, che si sono formate nel tempo e con una loro interna

24 Citazione tratta dal Documentario del 23 dicembre 2001 della RTP (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal), Fernando Távora, sulla vita e l'opera dell'architetto, inclusi una sua intervista e le testimonianze degli architetti Nuno Teotónio Pereira e Álvaro Siza Vieira.

25 Fernando Távora, "Imigração / Emigração. Cultura Arquitectónica Portuguesa no Mundo", in *Portugal. Arquitectura do Século XX*, edited by Annette Becker, Ana Tostões, Wilfried Wang, III, (Munich – New York: Prestel, 1998), 141-142. Testo pubblicato anche in: Fernando Távora, "Minha casa", a cura di Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS-FAUP, 2013). In Italia il testo è stato pubblicato in: Fernando Távora, "Immigrazione / emigrazione. Cultura architettonica portoghese nel mondo", *Casabella* no. 700 (maggio 2002): 6-7 e in Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2005), 300-330.

26 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei", in *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 204 (febbraio-marzo 1955): 3-6.

struttura. Può interpretare, essere duttile: non può dissolvere ciò che la costituisce e la regge. La forma va pensata non a partire dalla circostanza, ma attraverso la forma. Un progetto è di per sé affermativo; può esserlo in tanti modi, ma comunque si sovrappone e si impone a una situazione che è data. Távora sembra avvicinarsi a un'antica discussione, o a un antico paradosso, che è quello di un'architettura che (estremizzando) si definisce caso per caso. Ma il paradosso è oltre l'opera. Távora nei suoi lavori si vale di un sapere e di una pratica antichi, e può suonare la sua musica grazie agli strumenti musicali e ai canovacci trovati. A un assoluto, quello del naturalismo, Távora ne aggiunge un altro, quello dell'architettura che perde il proprio sistema e il proprio pensiero e si fa circostanza.

Scrittura, diario

Távora era uomo di poche parole. Non so se era scrittore: non lo era se uno scrittore deve scrivere libri. Ne ha pubblicato solo uno, *L'organizzazione dello spazio*,²⁷ cui era costretto per ragioni di carriera accademica. I suoi testi, legati alla necessità di esprimere un pensiero, o dovuti a circostanze o a richieste, hanno una misura breve o intermedia. Sono belli letterariamente, belli di lingua, con la densità e l'ambiguità che il Portoghese ha da sempre. Sono difficili da tradurre, e la traduzione li perde. In Portoghese il confine tra prosa e poesia è più sottile, e gli scritti di Távora sono a volte intensamente poetici.

I libri sono frutto di volontà, ma non solo, perché ci sono anche i libri scritti per sé. Possono essere davvero segreti, o essere falsamente privati e attendere solo il momento in cui venire alla luce. Un diario, lo dice la parola, è scandito dai giorni, e il filo che lega le pagine è quello dei giorni. Può essere un modo di annotare e di fermare la propria esperienza. Ma quello di Távora è un diario particolare, perché è un *Diario di bordo*:²⁸ è cioè legato alla traversata del mare e a un viaggio che ha una durata, un principio e una fine. Ha un tempo finito. Non credo che quando lo scriveva e lo disegnava pensasse alla possibilità di renderlo pubblico: lo ha pensato più tardi, quando qualcuno lo ha chiesto. Un diario può essere legato alla cronaca, ma lo è obbligatoriamente un diario di bordo. Anche la cronaca a volte può farsi poesia.

Ma c'è un punto al quale non possiamo sfuggire: il diario è una forma letteraria con una storia e un'eredità che hanno un peso, al di là della consapevolezza e del desiderio di colui che lo scrive. Il peso è grande. Ogni diario ha dentro di sé tutti i diari, anche per chi non lo sa o non lo vuole sapere. I diari degli architetti hanno dentro di sé, in modo inevitabile, la memoria del *Grand Tour*, del viaggio in Italia, in Grecia, in Oriente, in Egitto, in Africa; quella del

²⁷ Fernando Távora, *Da organização do espaço*, edited by the author, 1962; con prefazione di Nuno Portas, Porto, 1982; edizione italiana curata e tradotta da Carlotta Torricelli, Nottetempo, Milano, 2021.

²⁸ Fernando Távora, *Diário de bordo*, edizione in facsimile con trascrizioni in portoghese e in inglese, coordinata da Alvaro Siza, a cura di Rita Marnoto con Associação Casa da Arquitectura, Família Fernando Távora, Fundação Marqués da Silva, Fundação Cidade de Guimarães, Porto, 2012. Ed. it.: *Diario di bordo*, a cura di Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, Raffaella Maddaluno (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2022).

pellegrinaggio verso la classicità e verso l'esotico. Anche quelli degli architetti moderni portano in sé non solo il ricordo, ma il confronto con quei modi precisi di scrivere, raccontare, disegnare, schizzare, comporre la pagina.

I diari degli architetti, dei pittori, degli scultori, ma anche dei letterati e di altri, sono in genere disegnati, perché il disegno è un modo di conoscere che a loro in particolare appartiene. Viene anche da un impulso a figurare legato alla mente e alla mano. Cambia il rapporto col testo. Távora e Le Corbusier (il *Viaggio d'oriente, i Carnets*)²⁹, così lontani, hanno però in comune l'accompagnarsi di parole e figure. Ma di diverso da Távora Le Corbusier ha la velocità, la sommarietà e la volontà costruttiva. L'osservazione è già quasi invenzione. Lo sguardo è già interno alla cosa. I disegni di Le Corbusier sono immediati, quelli di Távora accurati. Il passaggio dall'osservazione al progetto in Távora avviene per filtri ed è lento nel tempo. In Le Corbusier avviene per intuizioni dirette.

I Diari di viaggio possono essere introspettivi, avere una dimensione riflessiva personale che porta a misurarsi con l'esistenza e con sé. È una dimensione che il Diario di Távora ha. Assomiglia in questo al *Viaggio in Italia* di Goethe.³⁰

²⁹ Le Corbusier, *Voyage d'orient – Carnets*, 6 voll. in cofanetto, trascrizioni e riproduzione delle moleskine originali, presentazione di Giuliano Gresleri, Editore Electa/Fondation Le Corbusier, Milano/Paris, 1987.

³⁰ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Viaggio in Italia (1787)*, traduzione di Emilio Castellani, prefazione di Roberto Fer-tonani (Milano: i Meridiani, Mondadori, 1983).

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Profession: Távora

Being Portuguese, Modernism, Pessimism, American Journey, Fernando Pessoa

/Abstract

It is the decadence that Oswald Spengler predicts for after 2000 that Fernando Távora already encounters at every step of his mythical American journey. It is this “cultural pessimism”, the matrix of “decline”, that marks his life forever, even if the “springtime” with which he was formed is omnipresent: Le Corbusier and Picasso, the modernists as baroque angels, the modernism that then fluttered and rebuilt his beloved Brazil; and Fernando Pessoa, who was decline and ascension in reverse order, with an entourage of heteronyms to deal with the complexities of life.

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We can see Fernando Távora's body of work as a map of the second half of the 20th century, full of intersections and crossings, "terceiras vias" (third way). The other map that is of interest now is the small Portuguese rectangle, in expanding, war, reflux, revolution and, finally, in a radical change of geocultural coordinates: from a colonial empire fallen into disgrace to a member of the sophisticated European club.

Távora lived through it all, and when he left on 13 February 1960 on a journey that took him to America, Mexico, Japan, Lebanon, Egypt and Greece, among other places, he was perfecting his vision of the world by antagonism (with America) and affection (the other destinations). His nervous system integrates the modernist avant-garde and classical traditions; "culturalism" and "progressivism", to quote Françoise Choay; an American lunch with Louis Kahn and the pyramids of Egypt, which Kahn reintroduced for the benefit of modern architects.

Classicism was replaced by modernism, as Le Corbusier explained in *Vers une Architecture* exactly 100 years ago. Távora understood this very well; it is inexorable, despite Kahn, of the retro choreographies of the 1980s and his own conservative instinct. The artistic violence of the avant-garde cultivates an infamous affinity with wars and dictatorships. The architects previously known as modern in the post-war period retreated; Le Corbusier designed Ronchamp and La Tourette; Team 10 spoke of "recreation" and "communities". Nevertheless, the 1960s and 1970s will be violent, albeit with a different subtlety. Terror remains in suspense; the term "cold war" explains everything. (There is no subtlety in Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution).

Távora stands between his famous family and the new family of the Escola de Belas-Artes do Porto. The "third way" that he proposed in 1945 with the publication of *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa* ["The Problem of the Portuguese House"] is not merely disciplinary or cultural, it is an early autobiography. In those years, there was a "springtime", to use the terms of the forgotten and cursed Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West*, which Távora read and referred to. Adapting the cyclical way Spengler organises history, from the 1960s onwards, "autumn" arrives on the way to "winter".

In the various stages of his journey in the United States of America, Távora sees the confirmation of this decline, the coming "winter". The economic prosperity, the technological inventions, and the social and cultural transformations that will Americanise everyday life are seen in reverse as a world in perdition. The "future" that Távora finds in America can be seen according to the biological matrix with which Spengler analyses the history of cultures: death as inescapable from birth.

It is the decadence that Spengler predicts for after 2000 that Távora already encounters at every step of his mythical journey. It is this "cultural pessimism", the matrix of "decline", that marks his life forever, even if the "springtime" with which he was formed is omnipresent: Le Corbusier and Picasso, the modernists

as baroque angels, the modernism that then fluttered and rebuilt his beloved Brazil; and Fernando Pessoa, who was decline and ascension in reverse order, with an entourage of heteronyms to deal with the complexities of life.

Yes, modernity is permanent in Távora, like a breath of spring in the “winter” in sight.

The difficult balance Fernando Távora pursued, achieved, lost and found again, in successive decades of work from *The Problem of the Portuguese House* to his last works at the beginning of the new century, is today a “foreign country”.

We can see his pathway as that of a tightrope walker – with his feet firmly on the ground; it should be emphasised – dealing with the centrifugal forces that the second half of the 20th century inexorably unleashed. Távora, in his destiny as a classical architect on his way to becoming modern, tries to integrate perspective into the Cubist picture, quickly realising that Cubism is something else; and that it must be safeguarded at all costs. The story begins to accelerate here.

It’s sad not to count on Távora these days. But it’s not hard to imagine that his cultural pessimism – which fuelled his enormous *joie de vivre* – would turn into an undisguised annoyance so much “artificial intelligence” or other; the intellectual diet of the “tribes”; compulsory penance; the regime of settling accounts.

The balance that Távora sought between tradition and modernity, between the aristocracy and the modern painter, between the pre-existence and the new architecture, looking for continuities and congruences, has been pulverised. The assumption that underpins the discussion today is that of imbalance, discontinuity and “cultural wars”. Távora is trained and executes and remains unbeatable in a sweet way of bringing disparate things to the same place at Quinta da Conceição, in Vila da Feira, in his classes. “Ser português” was his goal and his natural state. He sometimes externalises in the diary he wrote on the 1960 trip what is always implicit as the object of his thoughts: “how much I have thought about Portugal, how much I have translated into Portuguese what I have seen and heard here [...]”¹

What will the new travellers think about?

The 20th century in Portugal was traversed by this restlessness about “being Portuguese”, which goes back a long way and which in the 19th century gained expression in Garrett and Herculano; its poet was Fernando Pessoa, its thinker, Eduardo Lourenço, and its architect, Álvaro Siza. Eduardo Lourenço tells us that

¹ Fernando Távora, *Diário de “bordo”, 1960*, original manuscript (Porto: Fundação Marques da Silva/Arquivo Fernando Távora), fol. 148, FIMS/FT/5000-321.



1

Pessoa became “himself, in the cultural order, a kind of equivalent of Portugal.”² It’s the same with Lourenço and Siza.

Távora is an extraordinary connector of the supernatural mission of these personalities, allowing us to think about the intervals that separate them. When, in a text from April 1963, he describes architecture as “an event like any”, concluding in an epiphany that “the untouchable white virgin has become for me a manifestation of life”³, Távora seems to encapsulate years of doubts that the American trip probably exacerbated (or helped resolve on the contrary, “that which must be avoided at all costs”⁴). In any case, the idea of architecture as “terribly contingent, as attached to circumstance as a tree by its roots is attached to the earth”⁵ has Kahnian resonances, rather than ecological or ruralist ones. Or perhaps it’s Alberto Caeiro: “Let us be simple and calm/ Like the streams and the trees”.

2 Eduardo Lourenço, “Even today the Portuguese go around the world picking up the bones of the Empire”, *JA – Jornal Arquitectos*, no. 237 (October-November-December 2009): 48 (“Ser Português”, Collection and setting of the text by MGD, AVM, JF).

3 Fernando Távora, “Escola Primária do Cedro, Vila Nova de Gaia”, in Luiz Trigueiros, ed., *Fernando Távora* (Lisbon: Editorial Blau, 1993), 86-90.

4 Távora, *Diário de “bordo”*, (Fundação Marques da Silva/Arquivo Fernando Távora), fol. 266v, FIMS/FT/5000-564).

5 Távora, “Escola Primária do Cedro, Vila Nova de Gaia”, 90.

Fig. 1

Fernando Távora at the atelier of the Rua Duque de Loulé, Porto, [1958] (FIMS/AFT, Foto 4050).

However, “being Portuguese” will become more complex. At Távora’s request, Alexandre Alves Costa embarked on a great theoretical adventure: in a delicate dialogue with his own political biography, he dedicated himself to explaining “Portuguese architecture” to us, including the “sense or lack of sense of being Portuguese”.

Meanwhile, architecture was gaining prominence, which was very slowly recognized in the Land of Poets: “not only the Language but also Architecture and Portuguese Cities,” writes Alves Costa, measuring his words, allow us “some sense of belonging to a community built with as much injustice and suffering as effort and imagination.”⁶

Alves Costa’s work evolved from his anti-fascist and modern upbringing, from what the *Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular* [“Survey on Popular Architecture”] revealed, from the new cinema of the 1960s, from Siza’s increasingly unexpected work and, fundamentally, from his absolute confidence in Távora as “Portuguese architecture”. When he writes that Portuguese architecture “in a country divided by unifiable cultural values, found in the colonial territories a clear image that not only synthesizes, but also deepens, its structural tendencies”⁷ he eradicatestaches the tree from its root, he enters the poem. This radical decentering is possible in the context of nationalist, then post-nationalist history, in which Portugal, exacerbated or seen as depressing, is always considered extraordinary, against all appearances. As Lourenço writes: “Portugal, for Pessoa, is so oneiric, so mystical, so mythical, that he actually began by giving *Mensagem* the title of Portugal; he was the greatest mythmaker of the very idea of Portugal.”⁸

This idea of Portugal as an essay subject is a past beyond us. During the nationalism of the Estado Novo and the emancipation of Democracy, Portugal was the official enigma before and after European entry, even in coffee bars.

We can perhaps place the turning point at Expo’98, which had “The Oceans: a heritage for the future” as its theme. Expo’98 crossed the now unmentionable past – as a “commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese discoveries” – with the future that will increasingly reveal itself as belonging to “sustainability”.

“Being Portuguese” is no longer a problem; it will be solved, at a time when “tribes” are defined by other types of global and trendy identities, a bit like electric scooters came to solve traffic problems. But for a long time, it was a poetic, philosophical and existential challenge; “being Portuguese” could even be an “art”. The “mythical psychoanalysis of Portuguese destiny”, to quote Eduardo Lourenço, seemed indispensable in the face of the empire that had fallen, our overwhelming smallness and contemporary insignificance. Uncovered by the

6 Alexandre Alves Costa, *Sentido ou falta de sentido do ser português. Orações de Sapiência* (Porto: Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, 2016), 8.

7 Alves Costa, *Sentido ou falta de sentido do ser português*, 16-17.

8 Lourenço, “Even today the Portuguese go around the world picking up the bones of the Empire”, 48.



2

blunt post-colonial scrutiny, Portugal – now a member of the E.U. – is at the mercy of the mass tourism that has discovered the last secret (the second) of the Iberian Peninsula; finally lulled into the performance of numbers and museums that Távora used to have nightmares about, even at night, in the American Y.M.C.A.

As you can see, Fernando Távora's work and life allow us to think higher, critically, culturally and biographically. From the point of view of the history of architecture, it can be said that Távora follows Kahn, but no longer his disciples Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown; he follows Ernesto Rogers, but no longer Aldo Rossi or Team 10 – to speak of two fundamental geocultures of the 1960s-1980s. In any case, it's a difficult update, between the electric symbolism of Las Vegas and the shadows of the Modena Cemetery. Távora rediscovers himself in what he knows better than anyone and what the growing number of commissions in the heritage field allows him to recreate: Portuguese architecture. From this point of view, he is in the right place for a second time: the first was in the extraordinary works of the 1950s and 60s (Vila da Feira Market, Tennis Pavilion, Ofir House, Cedro Primary School), under the demand for the "third way"; the second began with the Pousada de Santa Marinha da Costa, in 1975, with the historical narrative coming to the

Fig. 2

Taliesin East, 9 April 1960, photo by Fernando Távora (FIMS/AFT, 0251-22-sld0005).



3

fore and modern architecture playing an instrumental role, whenever the new is required, without minimising it.

It could be said that there is a circularity in Távora's work, a homecoming in the classicising traits of some of his later works, as history takes over and the modern loses its aura of the ultimate architecture.

Research by the curatorial group of Fernando Távora. *Pensamento Livre* ["Free Thinking"], at the Marques da Silva Foundation, made it possible to go through the drawings and models that Távora and his skilled and loyal collaborators produced over the decades. The emotion felt was not only due to the historical importance of the projects, but also to the youth to which they transported us; to the tangential thickness of the sketch or tracing paper. The obsolescence of the media appeared like a ray of light. And among sheets of paper of all shapes and sizes, in drawings for every imaginable programme, in words that we could decipher with difficulty, a single profession emerged – the Távora Profession.

Fig. 3

Taliesin East, May 2011 (photo by the author)

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Fernando Távora

O problema da casa portuguesa

In November 1945, at only 23 years of age, Távora entered the national debate on the 'Portuguese house' by publishing an essay considered decisive in the construction of his identity as a designer: O problema da casa portuguesa. The essay, revised and expanded, inaugurated, two years later, the first series of the "Cadernos de Arquitectura", a series published in Lisbon, conceived by Manuel João Leal and Nuno Teotónio Pereira to disseminate the ideas of the Modern Movement in Portugal. The text is considered an initial formulation of the key idea of a 'third way': not an adherence tout court to the positions of the Modern Movement, not an acceptance of the regime's demands – celebratory monumentalism or the invention of a popular national style – but a search for a 'new realism' that combines design research on Portugal's specific conditions with an understanding of the innovations taking place on the international scene.



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Architecture is the art of matching the forms of a civilisation with its content.
W. LESCAZE

Architecture and archeology

It was felt at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the present that Portuguese architecture was losing what today is conventionally called its character, and that the perhaps decadent aspect that was manifesting itself in Portugal was merely a reflection of what was happening throughout Europe during this tremendous period, The problem presented itself to architects, and above all to the aesthetes, as a very serious one, because they were watching old and established forms disappear without being able to react to it with movements that would, if not resolve, at least diminish the crisis that was spreading so overwhelmingly. The romanticism still latent in these spirits determined them to look to the past for all the lessons to solve their problem, and here they are, armed with history, armed with a false interpretation of ancient architecture to resolve issues that are very present and very alive. A very superficial study of our past architecture and, in practice, the disconnected and illogical use of certain forms of that same architecture – this is the therapy used to cure the problem. A serious illness was treated by means of an even more serious illness and from the laudable intention of the reformers a sad reality was born. The *Casa â Antiga Portuguesa* (Old Portuguese House) which, within civil architecture and the daughter of this archaeological orientation, did not introduce anything new to Portugal; on the contrary, it delayed all possible development of our architecture¹.

While being laid abroad the foundations of the so-called Modern Architecture, or rather, of the only Architecture that we can be sincere about, Portuguese architects orientated their activities around the inglorious desire to create an Architecture that was local and independent in character, but not at all incompatible with the thinking, feeling and living of the world around them. It was, you could say, an architecture of archaeologists and never an architecture of architects. The major problems, certainly more the fault of the time than of the people, were not studied and, if nothing else, satisfactory solutions did not emerge; rather, if there was a beginning of chaos, it was tragically increased with yet another “style” that will be very difficult to banish from our architecture. Any style is born from the People and the Earth with the spontaneity and life of a flower; and the People and the Earth are present in the style they have created with that naivety and unconsciousness that characterise all truly meaningful acts, whether they are those of

This essay was first published in the weekly ALEQ on 10 November 1945. It is this article, now reworked and expanded by the author, that aptly inaugurates the publication of “Cadernos de Arquitectura”.

¹ We don't think it's necessary to define what we mean by an Old Portuguese House because, unfortunately, any reader will associate these words with a type of house, with certain characteristics of its own, a certain plainness and sweetness of form, a large number of useless details resulting in excessive picturesqueness, a complete lack of dignity and no sense of the realities of our world.

a man or a community, of a lifetime or of many generations. The reaction of the creators of the *Casa a antiga portuguesa* was therefore devoid of any real, living meaning.

False architecture

Through strange reasoning, it was established (that's the word) that our "traditional" architecture was characterised by a certain number of decorative motifs whose application would be sufficient to produce Portuguese houses. This gave rise to a new form of academism, whereby this attitude of mind means that Art can be codified into eternal forms, according to fixed and immutable rules. These men who believed so much in and were so attached to history were unable to reap any fruit from it, because history is worthwhile insofar as it can solve the problems of the present and insofar as it becomes an aid and not an obsession.

Architecture cannot and should not be subjected to motives, to more or less curious details, to archaeological trivia. The authors of these "Portuguese-style houses" forgot and still forget that the traditional forms of the whole art of building do not represent a decorative whim or a baroque manifestation. From the outset, and in their true sense, architectural forms result from the conditions imposed on the material by the function it is obliged to fulfil and also from the spirit of the person acting on the material. That is why in all good architecture there is a dominant logic, a deep reason in all its parts, an intimate and constant force that unifies and binds all the forms together, making each building a living body, an organism with its own soul and language.

However, the "Portuguese House" movement produced none of this, and we can say without fear that it was dominated by the architectural lie that characterises bad works and bad artists. If societies and people condemn lies, it's paradoxical – but significant – that a concept of architecture is being protected that is false, that doesn't correspond to any Portuguese truth and that as such should be banned entirely in the same way that we seek to eliminate from society any element that is harmful to it because it is a lie. We can say that there is an ethic in Architecture and if Man is the unit of the scale that measures it, the same qualities should be demanded of it as we all demand of the true Man, hence the conclusion that protecting the current concept of "Portuguese House" is legalised in a lie and the society that proceeds in this way, in any of its active forms, is a failed society.

Towards a Portuguese architecture of today

We are referring to the dangers that the past posed to the solution of the problems in question, especially given the way in which that past was used. Today's houses will have to be born of us, that is, they will have to represent our needs, result from our conditions and the whole series of

circumstances within which we live, in space and time. This being the case, the problem demands real and present solutions, solutions that will certainly lead us to very different results from those achieved so far in Portuguese architecture.

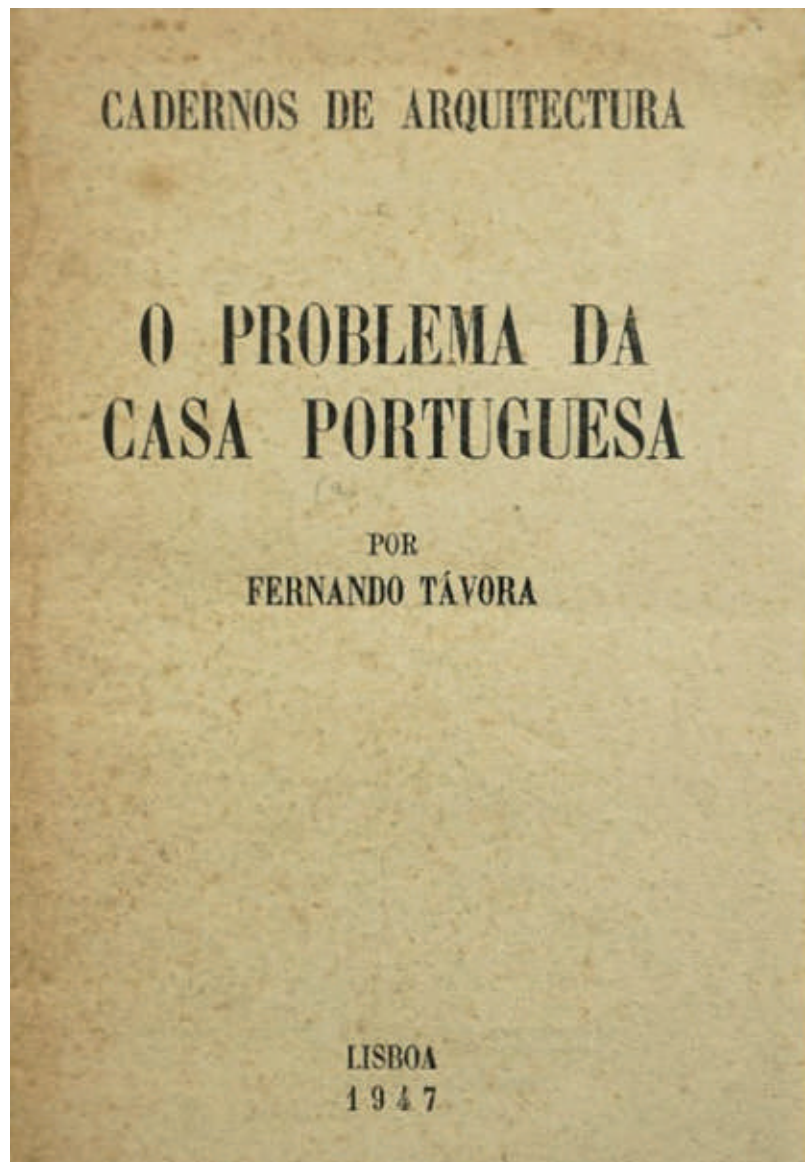
Vast horizons and fertile fields of possibilities open before us, whether we are young or old and armed with a new spirit, because everything has to be redone starting from the beginning. The work to be undertaken is so great that one might wonder if the realisation of its scale might not immediately invite us to give up.

We can all collaborate and it's wrong to think that only architects are responsible for resolving the case, or that the problem is merely aesthetic or formal. Architecture has something of everyone because it represents everyone, and it will be great, strong, and alive to the extent that everyone can see themselves in it as a mirror that reveals their qualities and defects. Collaboration will be required from the greatest number

so that the result can satisfy everyone; a serious, concise, well-orientated and realistic work is needed, the studies of which could perhaps be grouped into three orders: a) the Portuguese environment; b) existing Portuguese architecture; c) architecture and the possibilities of modern construction in the world.

a) In the study of the Portuguese environment, we should consider the two fundamental elements, Man and the Earth, in their present and historical development, mutually influencing each other and conditioning all Architecture that intends to be built within the Portuguese truth. They are the decisive factors to be studied in detail in all their manifestations and possibilities, and in those areas where they can directly affect architecture.

Conditions vary, Portuguese circumstances are different, today's men are not the same as yesterday's, nor are the means they use to get around or live, just as their social, political or economic ideas are different. If the degree of these variations is so great, why shouldn't the solutions to be found for today's Portuguese be different, much different? Why persist in staying when everything invites us to take a different path?



1

Fig. 1

Cover of *Cadernos de Arquitectura*, n. 1, 1947

b) The study of Portuguese architecture, or of construction in Portugal, has not been done. Some archaeologists have written about and dealt with our houses, but from what we know of them, none have given current meaning to their study, making it a collaborative element of the new architecture. The past is a prison that few know how to get rid of gracefully and productively; it's worth a lot, but we need to look at it not in terms of itself but in terms of ourselves.

It is essential that in the history of our old or popular houses we determine the conditions that created and developed them, whether they were the conditions of the Earth or the conditions of Man and study the ways in which materials were used and met the needs of the time. The popular house will provide us with great lessons when properly studied, because it is the most functional and the least fanciful, in a word, the one that is most in keeping with the new intentions. Today it is studied for its "picturesqueness" and stylised in exhibitions for nationals and foreigners: there is nothing to expect from this attitude, which leads to the dead end of the most complete negation that could have been reached.

c) We are men of an era, tragic perhaps, very sad perhaps, decadent even, but in which not everything is decay and ruin, and which does not feed exclusively on the remains left by other times. It's not hard to see a promising solidity in contemporary architecture; a new character emerges from new conditions and, because these conditions also affect us, Portuguese architecture should be rooted in them without fear of losing its "character". Individuality doesn't disappear like smoke, and if we possess it, we have nothing to lose by studying foreign architecture, otherwise it would be pointless to claim to speak of Portuguese architecture. It is neither fair nor reasonable for us to close ourselves off, in self-seeking ignorance, to the works of today's great masters, to the new construction processes, to a whole new kind of architecture that is full of vitality and strength.

We travel around our cities, we visit the countryside and villages, we look everywhere for a new expression in our architecture and the conclusion is always the same and always the same: in Portugal today, architecture is not being made and, even worse, we don't even want to make architecture.

The situation only allows for the alternative of either moving forward or stagnating in the chaos in which we find ourselves. Faced with this dilemma, we have decided to opt for the first position, with the firm hope that it is the only one possible for those who were born to add to the past something of the present and some possibilities for the future, for those for whom to live is to create something new, not out of the stupid desire to be different, but out of the imperative determination of life that does not allow any stoppage or any stagnation, otherwise posterity will not forgive us.

It would be frivolous to think, and this was one of the mistakes of the creators of the Old Portuguese House, that the new architecture will emerge in a few years and all the problems will be solved overnight. It is impossible for today's

men to see the complete result of their efforts, but great works and great realities belong not to individuals, but to a community made up not only of those present but also of those to come, and in this spirit we will be happy to know that future generations will obtain the solutions we dream of and collaborate on, without however having the prize of their complete realisation.

Porto, 1947

Designing with History: Intervention in Preexisting Buildings by Fernando Távora at the Dawn of the Third Way (1945-1962)

Fernando Távora, Portuguese Architecture, Adaptive Reuse, Heritage Buildings, Architectural Design

/Abstract

The period between 1945 and 1962 was extraordinarily productive for Fernando Távora, both in terms of theoretical reflection and architectural production. It is marked by the formulation and progressive practical implementation of the so-called third way. Despite the numerous studies on Távora's role in the Portuguese architectural scene during this period, the genesis of his thought and first experiences of architectural heritage intervention have not been thoroughly explored. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate a set of built and unbuilt works that were overlooked by previous publications, providing new perspectives on his early professional stages: *Casa de Carapeços* (1948), *Casa das Fidalgas* (1948-1954), *Casa da Foz* (Távora's own house, 1954), *Casa de Além* (1956), the project for *the Convento de Monchique* (1957), and the renovation of the *Casa da Igreja* (1958-1961). These lesser-known seminal designs illustrate the evolution of the new design principles and methodological guidelines that were matured and enhanced in subsequent renovation works, which gained greater attention and pedagogical value. These works also reveal the influence of other contemporary architects, echo the theories of relevant philosophers and demonstrate an attempt to apply the concepts articulated in Fernando Távora's own essays.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

The period between 1945 and 1962 was incredibly fruitful for Fernando Távora, both in terms of theoretical reflection and architectural production, due to his receptivity and ability to synthesise a wide range of stimuli and influences that contributed to his intellectual maturity and professional development. As is well known, during this time he published the booklet *O problema da casa portuguesa* (1945 and 1947); he studied on his own through countless and varied readings; he participated involved in the dissemination of the Modern Movement and attended the *I Congresso Nacional de Arquitectura* (1948); he also attended the CIAM (1951-1959) and other modern architecture conferences (UIA, WoDeCo...); he met and was in contact with members of Team X and other relevant architects (Ernesto Rogers, Lúcio Costa, José A. Coderch, among others); he led one of the groups of the *Inquérito à arquitectura popular em Portugal* (1956-1961); he travelled throughout Portugal and Europe and even the world (1960); shortly after graduating as an architect from the Porto School of Fine Arts (1952), he began teaching at the same institution under the guidance of Carlos Ramos, supporting pedagogical renewal, promoting debate and encouraging his own reflection in texts such as *A lição das constantes* (1952) and *Da organização do espaço* (1962).

All this contributed to the theoretical foundation and, practical realisation of the so-called *third way*, that is, “an evolution of modern architecture with the capacity to identify with the tradition; a position that implied a certain distrust of some paths of modern architecture”¹, in other words, “a new direction in Portuguese Architecture, quite different from the ‘rationalist’ and ‘outmoded’ paths being debated”.² This ambition was expressed in highly influential works such as the *Casa de Ofir* (1957-1958), the park and tennis pavilion at *Quinta da Conceição* (1956-1960) or the *Escola Primária de Cedro* (1957-1959).

In short, this stage encompasses a series of vital, academic and professional milestones of the utmost relevance on the Portuguese scene, which have been studied and disseminated in numerous publications on the architect, especially after his death in 2005. However, there are still some aspects of his multifaceted personality that could be explored in greater depth, namely the development of an approach to built heritage intervention.

The balance between the desire for innovation and the sensitivity to tradition is reflected in paradigmatic new buildings such as those mentioned above, but also in the renovation of old constructions. It is precisely in intervention

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¹ Javier Frechilla, “Fernando Távora. Conversaciones en Oporto”, *Arquitectura*, no. 261 (July-August 1986): 22-28.

² Fernando Távora, “Memória de ante-projecto. Escola Primária de Cedro”, in José António Bandeirinha, *Fernando Távora. Modernidade permanente* (Guimarães: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012), 232.

designs that the search for a synthesis between apparently antagonistic concepts – past and present, tradition and avant-garde, local and global – takes on greater force and expressiveness. The ex-novo projects address these issues by evoking tradition through materials, spaces and forms reminiscent of vernacular architecture. In the renovation projects, however, this counterpoint moves from the allegorical level to the concrete experience of manipulating historical material. Therefore, the problem is no longer to build modern architecture sensitive to tradition, but to adapt old buildings to new aesthetics, functions and requirements, while preserving cultural identity.

Távora's aim was to create a dialectical interweaving of the old and the new, break away from the dichotomy between Romantic principles and stylistic restoration, but also from the orthodox postulates of modernism. His intention was to imbricate contemporary creation in the architectural pre-existence, with the support of a profound knowledge of history. In fact, Távora was never interested in the debate on heritage intervention in the terms in which it was being developed. Although he was familiar with the theories of architectural conservation (Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc, Giovanonni, Boito, etc.) he never felt committed to one position or another, nor he did uncritically accept international charters and recommendations. He chose a heterodox path, perhaps because these positions were based on the notion of heritage management as a kind of autonomous field of architecture, which prevented, directed, or limited the new creation. For him, any design, whether for a new building or a renovation, involved a transformation of a pre-existing context (be it an object or a space). It was therefore always a problem of creation, that had to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. As he stated, "the defence of heritage values is never a passive act of receiving and conserving, but a creative act of conceiving".³ For this reason, there should not be an *architecture of heritage*, hence his criticism of *specialisms* – paraphrasing Ortega y Gasset⁴ – and his firm defence of the architect as a "generalist specialist in architecture",⁵ with a broad and integrative vision.

His innovative approach to architectural heritage design has had an enormous impact in Portugal. Works such as the restoration and conversion of the *Santa Marinha da Costa Convent* into a *Pousada* (1972-1985), the refurbishment of the *Casa da Rua Nova* (1983-1985), the renovation and extension of the *Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis* (1987-2001) or the restoration of the *Palácio do Freixo* (1996-2003), among others, are now considered as undisputed benchmarks. These works are guided by solid principles and modus operandi founded on theoretical reflection and experimental practices developed in the 1950s. Before the works with greater recognition and dissemination, there are a number of little-known seminal designs of great interest, as they show the

3 Fernando Távora, "Memória descritiva", 1982, Plano geral de urbanização de Guimarães, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0207.

4 Távora invoked the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who, in chapter XII of his famous work *The Rebolt of the Masses* (1930), called "The Barbarism of Specialism", also criticised the narrowness of the specialist's field of vision, "who only knows well the small portion in which he is an active researcher".

5 Fernando Távora, "Encontro 'Para a Edifícios', entrevista por Manuel Mendes", in Fernando Távora, *"Minha casa". Uma porta pode ser um romance*, edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS/FAUP, 2013), [C]1-24.

development of new principles and methodological guidelines that were later matured and enhanced.

1.2. Aims and Methodology

This paper aims to develop investigation on a set of built and unbuilt works designed by Fernando Távora that were overlooked by the previous studies, in order to provide new interpretations on the significance on his approach to architectural renovation. These are barely published or even unpublished projects, which individually may not be of the greatest relevance, but taken together they reveal the roots of his ideas about design in heritage buildings. This article intends to provide new perspectives on his early professional period in the mid-20th century, when the concepts of the third way emerged. It also seeks to highlight the influence of other contemporary architects (such as Le Corbusier, Lúcio Costa, Ernesto N. Rogers), to show the impact of some philosophers (Ortega y Gasset, Benedetto Croce, António Sardinha), and to examine how these works reflect the ideas contained in his own writings.

The period studied is therefore limited by the publication dates of the manifesto *O problema da casa portuguesa* (1945)⁶ and the essay *Da organização do espaço* (1962)⁷. It was during this period that Távora was able to resolve his deep crisis of identity and creativity, give tangible form to his proposal for a third way (as an open solution to the crisis) and develop principles for intervention in pre-existing buildings. The selected case studies, presented in chronological order, are considered by the authors to be the most representative and illustrative of this evolution.

The methodology required a review of the literature on the subject, as well as extensive archival research in the architect's professional collection at the José Marques da Silva Foundation Institute (FIMS), complemented in other public archives. One of the main limitations is the scarcity of documentation on these early projects. This gap is filled by the collection of other sources, such as the oral testimonies of Távora's family, friends and collaborators who worked in his studio, which provide unique and original insights. In the case of completed projects, the buildings themselves constitute a fundamental resource, visited and exhaustively documented through architectural surveys, drawings and extensive photographic reports.

The following case studies are located in the broad geographical area of the Douro Litoral and Minho regions – with the exception the *Casa das Fidalgas* – and were developed within the time span between 1948 and 1961. The analysis is based on archival documentation and on the interpretation of the design

⁶ Fernando Távora, "O problema da casa portuguesa", *Aléo*, no. 9 (November 1945). This manifesto was later revised in *Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1 (1947).

⁷ Távora submitted the essay *Da Organização do Espaço* for the exams for Associate Professor in 1962. It was published in 1982, becoming a must-read text for incoming students at the FAUP. In this research, the consulted version was the Spanish edition: *Sobre la organización del espacio* (Universitat Politècnica de València / FIMS, 2014).

principles, framed within the wider context of Fernando Távora's personal research and career development. The design process is presented in chronological order, starting with the characterisation of the pre-existence, the interpretation of the design strategy, the examination of some relevant tectonic aspects and, finally, a brief allusion to critical repercussions.

2. INTERVENTIONS IN PRE-EXISTING BUILDINGS AT THE DAWN OF THE THIRD WAY

2.1. Hesitation and Oscillation in Távora's First Designs

Fernando Távora's last years at the School of Architecture (ESBAP), in the mid-1940s, were marked by the discovery of modern art, Picasso and Pessoa, but especially Le Corbusier, who emerged as a dazzling figure for his personality and extraordinary creative capacity. But the interest in the avant-garde grew just as strongly as a conflict between his antagonistic identities: a solid home culture (classical art, historical architecture, the value of permanence in aristocracy, rurality...) and modern culture (functionalism, technology, the break with the past...). In Távora's own words, it was, "a crisis caused by a certain incompatibility between a rationalist formation and a familiar, ambient one; and also, in a certain way, with a temperament that did not adapt to that formation".⁸

To soothe this conflict of identity, he turned to books, looking for answers to the theoretical concerns that the EBAP neglected. It was not until some years later that this attempt to integrate modernism into ancient buildings was effectively achieved "an inability to express graphically, in terms of space, of Architecture".⁹ Moreover, the multiplicity of references and languages provided by the eclectic training at the EBAP – with a solid academicist base, to which was added German and Italian fascist architecture, but also European rationalism and Brazilian modernism – caused great disorientation.¹⁰ He himself stated that modernism in his education was presented from a stylistic point of view.¹¹ All this is reflected in the ambiguity of his beginnings as a designer, with a succession of projects of very different nature and unequal interest.

The fascination he felt for Le Corbusier is clearly reflected in his first unbuilt proposals, such as the *Casa da Rua do Vilar* (or *Casa de Alcinda Guimarães*, 1946) or the *Creche de Tomar* (1947), which are closely related to the classical principles of the Modern Movement. The preliminary urban plan of Campo Alegre (1949) and the *Unidade Residencial de Ramalde* (1952-1960), developed at the Planning Department of the City Council, followed the Athens Charter as well. Other interesting built projects, such as the *Grupo Residencial*

⁸ Fernando Távora, "Entrevista", *Arquitectura*, no. 123 (1971): 150-154.

⁹ Távora, "Entrevista". See translation: Fernando Távora, "O meu caso" [diaristic text, 23/12/1944], in Fernando Távora, *Minha Casa* / *Prólogo*, edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS, 2013), [C3]_16-17.

¹⁰ Távora, "Entrevista", 150-154.

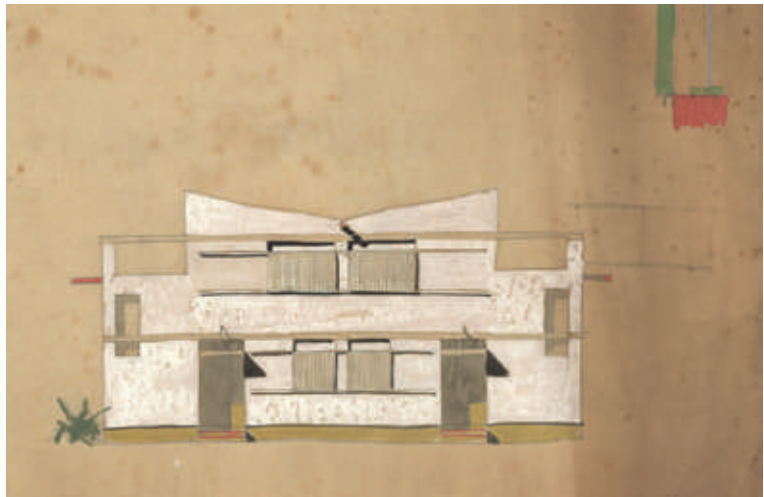
¹¹ Távora, "Entrevista", *Jornal de Letras* (24/5/1988) at Bernardo José Ferrão, "Tradição e modernidade na obra de Fernando Távora 1947/1987", in Luis Trigueiros, ed., *Fernando Távora* (Lisboa: Blau, 1993), 23-46.

dos Armazenistas de mercearias (1952-1953), the *Bloco de habitações na Avenida de Brasil* (1952-1954) also show a strong attachment to the Modern Movement.

Committed to renewing Portuguese architecture, Távora began to reflect on the application of modern design in pre-existing buildings. This was suggested, albeit experimentally, in the sketches for the *Casa Bernardo Távora* (1951) in Anadia. According to Francesco dal Conte, this unrealised project consisted of the interior remodelling and the reconstruction of a façade of an existing house. In addition to the simplicity of the forms and volumes, Fernando Távora resorted to regulating lines to define the proportions of the new façade.¹² This design approach – as well as the drawing itself – is strongly influenced by the cubist experiences of Le Corbusier.¹³ However, it was not until some years later that this attempt to integrate modernism into ancient buildings was effectively achieved. [Fig. 1, 2].

At the same time as these avant-garde projects, he also designed other modest works, without any apparent innovative formal pretensions, using conventional systems and materials from Távora's first documented project in the FIMS archive is the *Casa de Diogo Távora* (1946-1947),¹⁴ a new house of which he himself admitted that its external appearance "do not have any stylistic intention".¹⁵ It certainly does not show any relevant aspects beyond the conventions of the moment.

Shortly afterwards, he was commissioned to renovate and extend a farmhouse in Carapeços (1948), near Barcelos. The scarce documentation shows that the additions reproduce the forms and materials of the old house (built with masonry walls, timber-framed roof, traditional curved roof tiles, wooden joinery, traditional plastering, etc.). Not only did the young architect reject any



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¹² Francesco Dal Conte, "L'archivio Távora", in Antonio Espósito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora, opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2005), 337-339.

¹³ Despite some drawings of this project being published in the aforementioned book, no information has been found in the architect's archive.

¹⁴ Although Fernando Távora took on the role of designer, his first projects were developed under the responsibility of his elder brother, the civil engineer Bernardo Ferrão.

¹⁵ Fernando Távora, "Memória descritiva" da Casa Diogo Távora, 1946, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0001-pe, fl.2.

Fig. 1, 2

Casa Bernardo Távora. Study drawings by Fernando Távora, 1951, published in: Antonio Espósito and Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora, opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2005): 290.

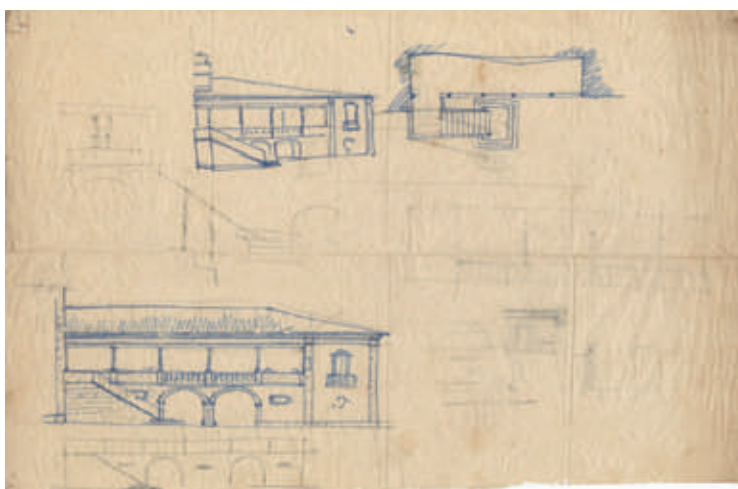
contemporary gesture, but he also intended the extension to mimic the pre-existence, as stipulated in the contract documents (special conditions for the mason):

...the walls and foundations will be built with the dimensions and appearance of the existing ones, so that the new part cannot be distinguished from the existing construction. The greatest care must be taken in the execution of this clause, especially with regard to corners, thresholds, lintels and openings in existing walls.¹⁶

2.2. Permanence in Classicism: Casa das Fidalgas (1948-1954)

The project that perhaps best represents this conservative facet of Fernando Távora's early career is the addition of a new veranda to the *Casa das Fidalgas*. The renovation of this 17th and 18th century manor house was his first significant intervention in historic architecture. However, he was already very used to this type of building, as his family owned several stately homes and he had been interested in discovering their history and forms since childhood.¹⁷

Much of the documentation on this work consists of the correspondence between the young Távora and the owner of the house, the engineer Pedro Brum da Silveira Pinto, who was probably a friend of the family. The letters reveal a shared interest in Portuguese history, art and architecture,¹⁸ as well as providing information on the chronology and circumstances of the design process. Távora visited the house for a few days in early 1948 to make a schematic survey, and over the course of several years Pedro da Silveira asked him for successive designs and alterations, which the architect followed up by letter [Fig. 3]. The work was extensive: the roof was replaced, some of the interiors were renovated, and a veranda was added to the façade facing the garden.



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¹⁶ Fernando Távora, "Caderno de encargos (condições gerais e condições especiais)", 1948, Casa de Carapeços, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0005-pe, fl. 1-5.

¹⁷ "...my mother had three or four old houses, (...) when I was 12 years old, I used to go to a house in Minho that had a tower, but there was also a house in the south that no had no tower and was a horizontal house. Our house was horizontal. All of that got me hooked on [wondering about] the reason for things". Fernando Agrasar, "Entrevista con Fernando Távora", in Ana Domínguez Laíño (ed.), *Fernando Távora* (Coruña: C.O.A.G., 2002), 12-13. See also: Fernando Távora, "Encontro para a *Edifícios*; entrevista por Manuel Mendes", in Fernando Távora, *Minha casa*. *Uma porta pode ser um romance*, edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS, 2013), [C]1-24.

The architect's recently published texts and drawings reflect that the architecture of manor houses was a constant theme of research and drawing in the 1940s. Távora sketched typological classifications of the wide variety of solutions according to morphological schemes and based on the composition, decoration and characteristics of their elements. See: Fernando Távora, *As raízes e os frutos, palavra, desenho, obra (1937-2001)*. *'O meu caso' Arquitectura, imperativo ético do ser 1937-1947*, edited by Manuel Mendes, tomo I.I, (Porto: FIMS/FAUP, 2020).

¹⁸ For example, in one of the letters he sent to Távora, Silveira included some drawings of a very specific moulded handrail and a sculptural finial of a 17th century staircase of the *Paço dos Condes-Duques* de Barcelos, which he wanted to reproduce in the house. See: "Correspondence sent by Pedro da Silveira to Fernando Távora", Casa das Fidalgas, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0058-pe.

Fig. 3

Casa das Fidalgas. Study drawings for the new veranda, ca. 1948 (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0058-0006).

The correspondence suggests that the owner played a very active role in the design, as evidenced by successive corrections to the sketches: "...I would prefer [the veranda] with only two arches, two side doors, six vaults, seven columns and the central railing replaced by stone".¹⁹ Both Távora's drawings and the client's appraisals reflect that they intended a design inspired by the existing verandas in the area, which they had visited and even surveyed.²⁰ Indeed, these open-air galleries are found in many 17th and 18th century Baroque palaces in northern Portugal, so this addition would "complete" and "perfect" the existing building, approaching an ideal model and also seeking a dialogue with the veranda of the neighbouring *Palácio de Santar*. The work was still in progress in 1954, when Silveira asked the architect for detailed solutions, questioning for the exact dimensions and proportions of the colonnade with reference to the classical models ("If you have the Vignola there, please see the *vera-efigie* of the Tuscan Order"²¹).

In this work, Fernando Távora adopted a traditionalist position, contrary to the ideas he had recently expressed in the essay *O problema da casa portuguesa* (1945 and 1947). He integrated the veranda into the mannerist aesthetic, refusing to introduce any architectural expression associated with Modernism. It is not clear whether this choice was due to the hesitation at the beginning of his career, or whether it was a deliberate attempt to achieve a homogeneous old image of the building.²² It is important to bear in mind that the intervention of the owner could also have a strong influence on the design and the result. It should not be ignored that Távora grew up in the context of aristocratic society and was therefore marked by a kind of cult of the past.

Whatever the case, the young Távora assumed the role of a Baroque architect. In a way, this exercise in revivalism anticipates the Violletian approach he would later adopt in some works practised later, which consisted of recreating the forms and atmospheres of historical architecture. The architect himself joked with his colleagues at the *Convento da Costa* when he decided to rebuild an old staircase: "we will be better Baroque architects than the Baroque architects";²³ he also said ironically that "the people who built it didn't know how, and I did it much

¹⁹ Casa das Fidalgas, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0058-pe, 4 July 1948, fl. 67-68.

²⁰ "We went to see the verandas around here and the beautiful veranda of the Misericórdia of Mangualde, whose spans range from 1.55, 1.82 and 2.15m. I must therefore ask you to please send me another sketch as soon as possible, with seven columns and six spans of 2.5m each". Casa das Fidalgas, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0058-pe, 22 July 1948, fl. 64.

²¹ Casa das Fidalgas, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0058-pe, 16 August 1954, fl. 10-11.

²² The reconstruction of the Palácio da Bacalhôa (near Setúbal), which Fernando Távora visited in 1944, may have been a point of reference for this commission. This visit gave him great pleasure: "My impressions are the best. When [Mrs. Scoville] bought it, the house was in a miserable state. The main veranda had fallen down, the low arches were broken and scattered, the roofs and ceilings were all ruined and suffering the attacks of time. (...) The current owner has done a remarkable job there, furnishing the house with great taste, and always taking care to respect what was done by the primitive lords of Bacalhôa. The renovation of the three bathrooms – which the house certainly never had –, the spiral staircases, the kitchens, the oratory, has been very successful". Fernando Távora, diaristic text, 2/1/1944 (AP2-p. Notas/fl. 52v), in Távora, *As raízes e os frutos, palavra*, 369.

²³ Carlos Moura Martins, in conversation with the authors (Porto, 3 September 2019). See: David Ordóñez-Castañón, Eleonora Fantini, "Conversa com Carlos Martins", in Teresa Ferreira, David Ordóñez Castañón, Eleonora Fantini, ed., *Novo/Antigo. Fernando Távora: conversas* (Porto: FAUP/FIMS/Afrontamento, 2023), 84-105.

better”.²⁴ His friend Sérgio Fernandez tells another similar anecdote, which happened after visiting the palaces of Santar (several years after the project). When Fernandez later met Távora, he said to him: “I went to see a very beautiful manor house, that had a fantastic veranda...”; to which Távora replied: “I appreciate your words very much! That 17th century veranda was made by me!”²⁵

This ability to design new classical architecture demonstrates a deep knowledge of history of art and construction. When he began designing the Santar veranda, at the age of 24, he was already an expert on Portuguese art and architecture. At the time, he had a varied and extensive collection of books that he had carefully read, and he had also acquired first-hand knowledge of historical buildings thanks to travelling since childhood with family friends and his father (an art enthusiast who took him to visit churches and palaces all over the country).²⁶

This work is certainly not the most representative of Fernando Távora’s best known architecture, as he avoided innovation and designed the new element as it could have been made in the 17th century. Perhaps for that reason this project has not been included in any of the main publications on the architect. It is, however, a great example of his ability to get on with the architectural languages of the past, a skill he would continue to exercise occasionally afterwards.²⁷

Pedro da Silveira, a staunch monarchist, died without issue in 1978 and left the *Casa das Fidalgas* to the head of the Portuguese royal house. Dom Duarte de Bragança, Duke of Viseu, lived in the house for many years until he gave it to the Santar Vila Jardim project. The building has recently undergone a major refurbishment to become a luxury hotel and spa.

2.3. A Bridge between Past and Future: Casa Fernando Távora (1954)

In the above cases, the commitment to modernity and the continuity in tradition followed separate and unconnected paths. Hence the renovation of the house in Rua Senhora da Luz represents a step forward in achieving a *third way*, a successful attempt to combine in the same building the preservation of the character of the old residence with the introduction of a more contemporary expression. What had to be made anew is neither mimicked in the old forms, nor is it conceived as a modern mask alien to what existed before. Modern design was palpable, but however limited to small, almost surgical operations, since the priority was to maintain the type-morphological matrix of the existing building.

This house, located at the seaside in Foz do Douro, with private access to the beach, was one of the villas built at the end of the 19th century to accommodate

24 Sérgio Fernandez, in conversation with the authors (Porto, 5 August 2019). See: David Ordóñez-Castañón, “Conversa com Sérgio Fernandez”, in Teresa Ferreira, David Ordóñez Castañón, Eleonora Fantini, ed., *Novo/Antigo. Fernando Távora: conversas* (Porto: FAUP/FIMS/Afrontamento, 2023), 42-59.

25 Ordóñez-Castañón, “Conversa com Sérgio Fernandez”.

26 Numerous youthful drawings and writings on Portugal’s historical architecture have been published in Távora, *As raízes e os frutos, palavra, desenho, obra (tomo I.I)*.

27 Another representative example is the neoclassical gate in Rua da Rainha Dona Estefânia, Porto, designed in 1970-71.



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the bourgeois families of Porto, who went to the coast for sea bathing. This fashion began at that time due to the spread of its medicinal benefits. The building corresponds to the common typology of a holiday rental house, with two floors, a central staircase and a corridor that runs along the building, giving access to several bedrooms. Fernando Távora inherited the house from his “Aunt Maria José”, whom he often visited during his childhood, taking advantage of the peace and inspiration of the sea to read, write and draw, so the building had a great emotional value for him.

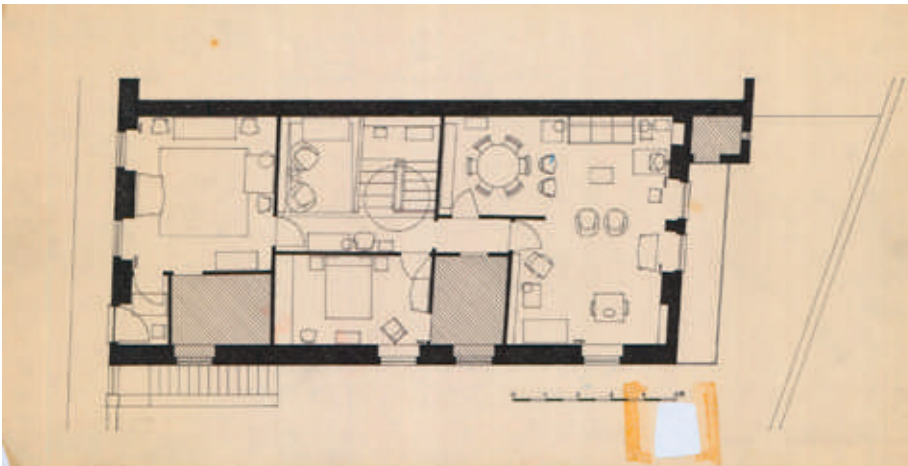
He undertook the first works in the early 1950s, and moved there permanently in 1954, after marrying Maria Luisa Menéres. The house was transformed at different times as new demands and economic possibilities emerged. In this sense, the architect himself considered it a “living organism”, flexible enough to adapt to changes within the family. Works were developed with only a few schematic sketches; instructions were given directly to the workers on site and common building materials and systems were used [Fig. 4, 5]. The aim was to maintain almost everything that existed: “the old windows and shutters,

Fig. 4

Casa Fernando Távora. Drawing of the west elevation (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0023-0003).

Fig. 5

Casa Fernando Távora. View of the north façade, 2007 (Luís Ferreira Alves, courtesy of José Bernardo Távora).



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the doors and trim, the floors, the staircase with its handrail”,²⁸ with punctual repairs where necessary, which go unnoticed, promoting a balance between the preservation of the “old meat” and the essential modern solutions.

One of these contemporary updates is the skylight that illuminates the staircase. Moreover, some partitions were removed to create larger rooms and a more open and fluid space, emphasizing a path that goes from the entrance over the street (“cold and noisy”) towards the common room in the back (“warm, bright and opening over the sea”) [Fig. 6]. Fernando Távora installed his first library and workspace in this room, so he designed a new frame for the window next to his desk (“the window of a lifetime”, according to his son), composed of two fixed panes of glass, in order to get more light and a better view. At the same time, he closed one of the windows facing the sea to avoid the unstable light from the west, and placed the showcase displaying his collection of ivoires in the niche thus created.

Indeed, the interior, the architect’s “physical and spiritual refuge”, faithfully reflects his varied vital and intellectual interests. Thus, although the house had only the basics when he arrived, it was gradually filled with a remarkable art collection, which combines ancient pieces (sculptures, tapestries, alabasters, porcelains, etc.) with some more contemporary ones, such as paintings by Júlio Resende. The eclecticism of this collection reflects his strong impulse to reconcile a firm anchorage in traditions and the need to seek a current sense in the avant-garde expressions, “just a bridge between past and future”.²⁹ In the same way, the furniture is a relaxed mix of old pieces (Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical) with others of modern design, such as the lamps by Álvaro Siza and other pieces designed by Távora himself, such as the sofa in the living room, or the dining room table and chairs. This diachronic interior design also demonstrates the architect’s interest and identification with the artistic manifestations of the Portuguese people throughout history, as well as confirming that the value given to the objects is not mainly based on their antiquity, but on their

²⁸ Fernando Távora, Maria Luísa Menéres, “Uma casa na Foz do Douro”, *Arquitectura & Decoração*, no. 6 (1969): 47-53.

²⁹ Távora, Menéres, “Uma casa na Foz do Douro”.

Fig. 6

Casa Fernando Távora. Plan (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0023-0001).

“authenticity and quality”, regardless of the as well as in which they were produced (an interpretation that can be directly extrapolated to his way of understanding the intervention in the architectures of the past) [Fig. 7, 8].

In summary, this modest renovation displays some of the characteristics of a personal *modus operandi* that would mature in subsequent renovations with greater impact. This house, in common with the later houses in Briteiros and Pardelhas, reflects: a subtle Modernism manifested in cautious gestures, an interior adapted to new lifestyles, respect for the typology, the use of traditional materials and the slow development of works, performed by local workers almost without any project drawings (what he would later call *cane architecture*³⁰). Despite its interest, this work had no significant presence in subsequent monographs and studies on Távora. It is worth mentioning, however, a complete report in an issue of the magazine *Arquitetura & Decoração* in 1969, which focused on the houses of several renowned Portuguese architects³¹. Fernando Távora lived in this house until his death. It has recently undergone significant alterations.



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2.4. “Continuity is Interesting when it is Verified”: Casa de Além (1956)

Shortly after the delicate transformation of his own house, Távora renovated another family house in Santo Estêvão de Barrosas (Lousada) for his in-laws. Although he followed the same guidelines of respect for the old, he carried out some daring modern operations that initially caused astonishment in the family, as they were considered too transgressive.

The *Casa de Além* was a small agricultural complex, comprising a house, a yard and outbuildings (the dryland, the caretaker’s house, the stables). The history of the estate is linked to one of the lineages of the Pachecos of Santo

30 Álvaro Siza explains the meaning of this concept: “In Portugal we use the expression *arquitectura de bengala* (cane architecture) to describe the way in which lines are drawn on the ground with a cane to make something clear. This was a common practice in the past, and I even used it myself to make myself understood in the building site”. Juan Domingo Santos, “El sentido de las cosas (una conversación con Álvaro Siza)”, *El Croquis*, no. 140 (2008): 6-62.

31 Távora, “Uma casa na Foz do Douro”, 47-53.

Fig. 7, 8

Casa Fernando Távora. Photographs of the interior of Fernando the house: passage room and living room, respectively (Gustavo Leitão, published in *Arquitetura & Decoração*, no. 6 1969, 47, 51).

Estêvão de Barrosas, whose genealogy is well documented.³² Although the original construction may date back to 1527, a simple reading of the walls allows us to distinguish several phases. Different landlords commissioned expansions and remodelling along the 17th and 18th centuries, as evidenced by the epigraphic remains.³³

The house consists of a compact and robust two floor volume, built with large granite blocks in sight and with few openings (of a square proportion and small size). The lower floor housed the cellar and the stables, being now an ample space where the kitchen and the living room are located. The dwelling itself occupied the upper floor, accessed through a porch attached to the east façade [Fig. 9, 10]. The housing includes a main room, two bedrooms and a bathroom. The wooden ceiling of the room, the carved wooden furniture, the façade of the yard, the ornate hardware or the slightly decorated porch columns are signs of social distinction of a humble rural gentry even if proud of its lineage. Were it not for these small ornamental motifs, the *Casa de Além* would be nothing more than a farmhouse dedicated to the cultivation of maize and livestock, similar to many others described in the *Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*, in which “there is not the slightest ostentation, on the contrary, everything is measured by the canons of a sober and dignified life, that extends in gestures, habits and markedly rustic objects”.³⁴



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When the works began the house was quite deteriorated, particularly the roof. However, the walls, floors and wooden ceilings had resisted and were in a good condition, so they could be preserved. Thus, the volume, the main structures and the exterior appearance of the house remained almost unchanged, and it was inside that the greatest transformations took place. The desire for continuity – to maintain the environment of a humble but proud nobility – manifests itself in the upper floor, where the old atmosphere of the noble house was preserved

³² Abílio Pacheco de Carvalho, *Pachecos: subsídios para a sua genealogia* (Lisboa: Editora Gráfica Portuguesa, 1985).

³³ Manuel Nunes & Paulo Lemos, “O livro ‘Pachecos’: contributos genealógicos para a arqueologia de Santo Estêvão de Barrosas (Lousada)”, *Lousada. Revista da Câmara Municipal de Lousada*, no. 133 (2015): 21-25.

³⁴ Associação dos Arquitectos Portugueses, *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* (Lisboa: Associação dos Arquitectos Portugueses, 2017 [1961]), 43.

Fig. 9, 10

Casa de Além. North façade and veranda (photo by David Ordóñez-Castañón).

and enhanced. Most of the original elements were preserved (such as the floors and wooden ceilings, the old doors and shutters, and even the baroque furniture). The changes made and the new elements, although with simplified lines, maintain the colour and materiality so as not to subvert the character of the space [Fig. 11].

This claim of continuity is manifested in one of the rare comments published on the work. The architect refers, on the one hand, to his awareness of the historical significance of the house and, on the other, to the satisfaction he enjoys from continuing with traditional techniques and labor. Távora is pleased with the fact that the work was carried out by artisans who inherited the knowledge, and even the blood, of those who intervened in the works centuries before:

...Many years ago, I made a house for my in-laws, one of the first things I did after I got married in 1954, which had been built by a mason, called Monteiro [...]. They were houses that had originated in a subdivision of the community in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. They were very small houses. Really, the man, the work he did, represented several generations of masons. So I had there as foreman a guy who was probably a great-great-great-grandson of the guy who had built the house. So this is real continuity and it is quite interesting when it happens, is it not? Continuity or even unrecognized capabilities, often even not conscious.³⁵

On the other hand, the ground floor underwent a radical transformation to create a domestic space according to the use and way of life of a new time. This is reflected in the unitary conception of space – an indisputable feature of the Modern Movement –, instead of traditional atomization, thus providing a greater sense of amplitude in this limited area, although suggesting fragmentation in various ways. The living area, the dining area and the kitchen are individualized by their topographic treatment, the arrangement of the furniture or their delimitation through low walls [Fig. 12].

In this context, there is an attractive contrast between the old materials and some elements of modern expression that indicate the contemporaneity of the design, such as the white and smooth volumes that define the sofa or delimit the kitchen. The fireplace – which was not executed – would also contribute



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Fig. 11

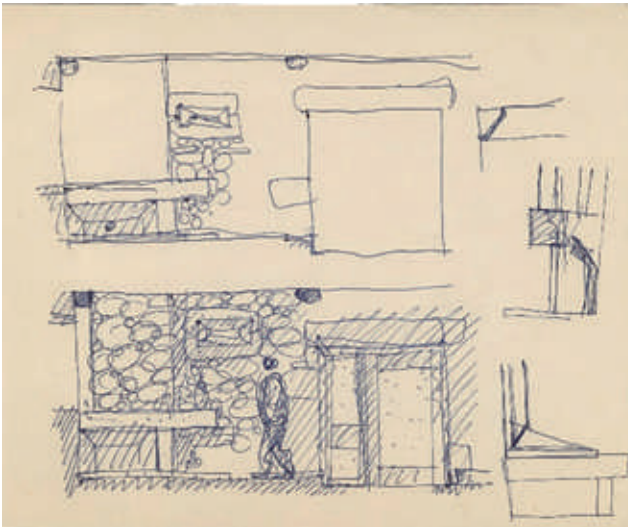
Casa de Além. Main room of the upper floor, which conserves the original shutters and wooden cupboards (photo by David Ordóñez-Castañón).

³⁵ João Leal, "Encontro 'Fernando Távora sobre o Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal", in Fernando Távora, *"Minha casa". Uma porta pode ser um romance*, edited by Manuel Mendes Porto: FIMS/FAUP, 2013): [O]1-20.

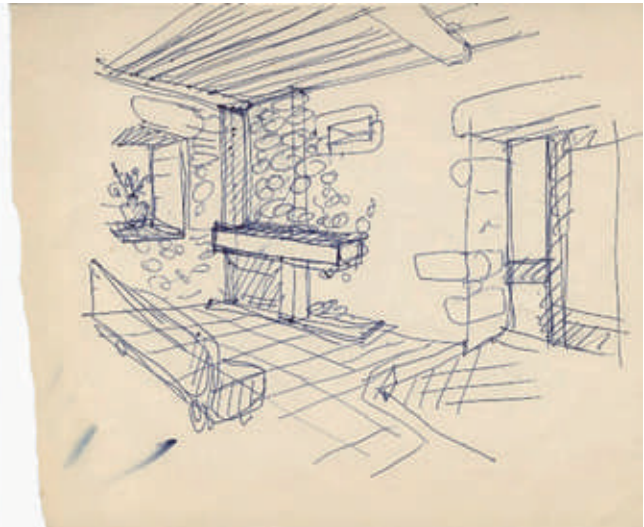


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to this contrapuntal relationship between new and old, as shown in the various sketches in which the architect studies several alternatives, seeking the right proportions and contrast between the white and smooth surfaces of the fireplace and the roughness of the masonry walls [Fig. 12, 13]. Moreover, as we



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have seen in the previous case, there is a relaxed mix of antique furniture with various pieces of avant-garde design – including two chairs of the Diamond series,³⁶ conceived in 1953 by Harry Bertoia –, as well as a sculptural spiral interior staircase connecting the two floors. Regarding the old doors and shutters, the architect overlapped a new exterior sheet, composed of a single large glazed panel mounted on a sturdy wooden frame painted of an intense red (originally

³⁶ This iconic chair represented cover of *Domus* magazine in May 1956, when the house was being renovated, and represented an innovation for its lightness and unique shape based on welded steel rods, a technique hitherto unusual in the production of comfort furniture. This piece, ethereal and delicate, contrasts with the heavy solid wooden furniture of the traditional house.

Fig. 12

Casa de Além. Casa de Além, ground floor (photo by David Ordóñez-Castañón).

Fig. 13, 14

Casa de Além. Fireplace studies, 1956 (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0065-pd0001 and 0065-pd0002).



with white rims). This practical solution enables the interior to be illuminated, protecting the original carpentry from the weather, retaining heat and bringing some freshness to the image of the building. With this eye-catching tonality, Távora manages to highlight the modernity of the intervention [Fig. 15].

In this approach to a “modern vernacular” the reference to Le Corbusier seems to be present again. Recall the set of houses designed in the early 1930s, such as the *Maison Mandrot* (1929-1932) or the *Maison Errazuriz* (1930), in which the rough aspect of traditional materials is combined with the sophistication of modern construction systems, the transparency of the glazed spans and the rationalist compositional grammar. This reference can also be filtered by Alfredo Viana de Lima, the most corbusian of the architects of Porto (with whom Távora went to the CIAM) and who also carried out in this period some intervention works in a rural context, such as the *Casa Dr. Olívio França* (São Pedro, Vila Verde, 1952) or the *Casa das Marinhas* (Marinhas, Esposende, 1953-1957). In fact, the original two-tone treatment of the carpentries of the *Casa de Além* can be related to the play of colours in Viana de Lima’s house.

Despite the introduction of contemporary systems and materials, this work displays careful repair of pre-existing elements, as shown by the delicate grafts performed on the old doors, the introduction of structural reinforcements or the replacement of deteriorated rafters. Thus, this work is halfway between the philological conservation of pre-existence and formal innovation. Távora rehearses here a creative relationship between the new and the old, combining the insertion of modern elements with the preservation of the house’s identity so as to overcome the traditional separation between new construction and restoration. Notwithstanding the undoubted interest of this renovation, it was not reviewed in other publications about the architect, nor did he himself endeavour to disseminate it.

Fig. 15

Casa de Além. Photograph taken in August 1972, showing the original colours of the window frames, painted white and red (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0065-foto0002).

2.5. Superimposed Modernism: Convento de Monchique (1957)

The bold gestures made in the *Casa de Além* anticipate other intervention projects in which modernity was introduced in a much more assertive manner, but not without profound respect for the spirit of the pre-existence. At the beginning of 1957, Fernando Távora drew up a preliminary project for the reconstruction of a ruined convent in Porto. The *Convento da Madre de Deus de Monchique* was made up of a series of constructions dating from the 15th, 16th and 17th century,³⁷ distributed around a central courtyard, with some remarkable pieces, such as the chapel portal, a Manueline portal and the main body of the convent, which held the refectory and the monks' cells. Despite its great heritage value, the whole complex was in a poor state of repair and had been converted for industrial use.

The project involved the transformation of the main wing into a group of dwellings for workers of different types and sizes. Távora was faced here with the issue of adaptive reuse of buildings of high significance, a challenge he met with great sensitivity at a time when heritage preservation was not a major priority. The architect himself considered this commission as tempting as it was difficult: "tempting because it is, it can be said, an innovative work in a building that is worthy of the greatest interest; difficult, because it is a matter of adapting an old building, with very specific characteristics that should be preserved, to a new function".³⁸

The apartments would be arranged transversely, served by external concrete galleries supported on corbels anchored to the existing walls. The sanitary facilities would be concentrated along the former central corridor of the building, freeing up the external space to facilitate light and views to the outside [Fig. 16, 17]. In this way, most of the existing openings would be preserved, and the few new ones would correspond to old built-in cupboards, (where there were already niches in the wall), with "dimensions that do not in any way detract from the spirit of the existing layout".³⁹

Indeed, this project foresees the importance that the comprehensive study of the past of the buildings would have in Fernando Távora's subsequent works. In the project report, the architect states that knowledge of the entire history of the convent was".⁴⁰

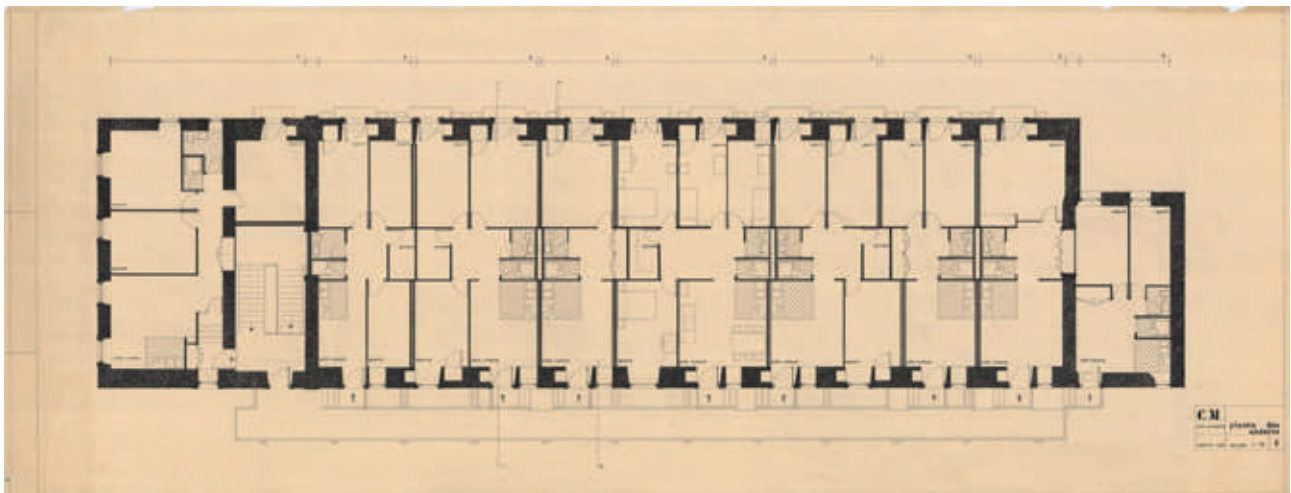
This interesting document also reflects his concern to restore the typological clarity of the building complex, removing, if necessary, any spurious construction that prevent a proper appreciation of the whole and the understanding of the historical processes. In this case, the general plan suggested "a dream that the authors could not hide: the reconstruction of the old courtyard of the Convent,

37 Tiago Trindade Cruz, "Património e Desenho Digital Metodologias e abordagens aplicadas ao convento de Monchique no Porto (a ruína, o demolido e o transformado)" (PhD Thesis, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2022).

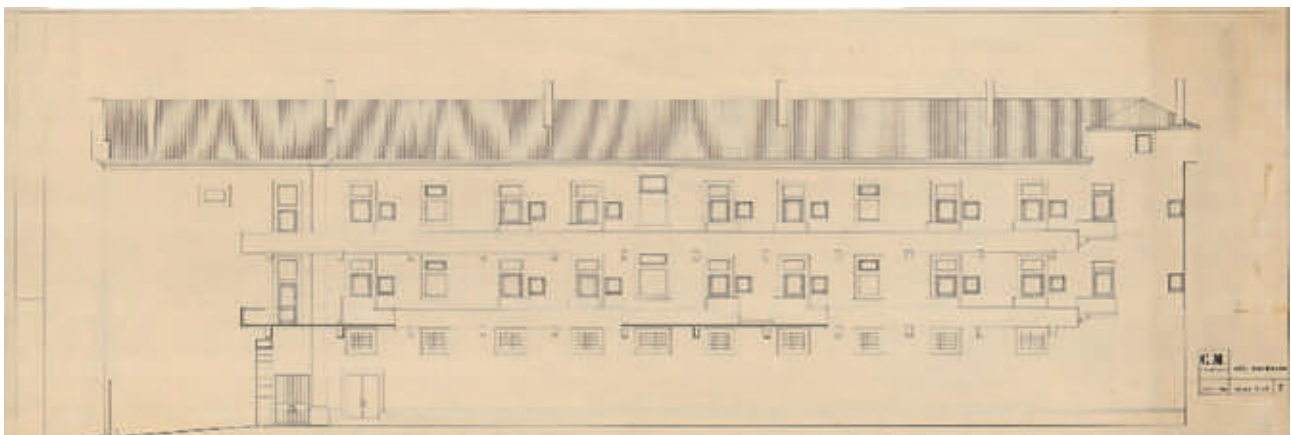
38 Fernando Távora, "Memória descritiva", 1957, Anteprojecto de recuperação e adaptação do Convento de Monchique, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0039-pe, fl. 9-13.

39 Távora, "Memória descritiva".

40 Távora, "Memória descritiva".



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with the Chapel in the background and a fountain in the centre, a reconstruction that poses the main difficulty, but is perfectly solvable, of demolishing the warehouses that currently occupy the surface of the same courtyard”.⁴¹

Thus, the architect argues that his choices are aimed at restoring the coherence of the monastic complex with the greatest respect for the existing structure, but at the same time, the proposed solutions respond to a language of strong modern affiliation. This is clearly visible in the northeast façade, which is superimposed by the new, markedly horizontal external corridor. In addition, the openings that were formerly covered by square windows would be enclosed by large panes of glass [Fig. 18].

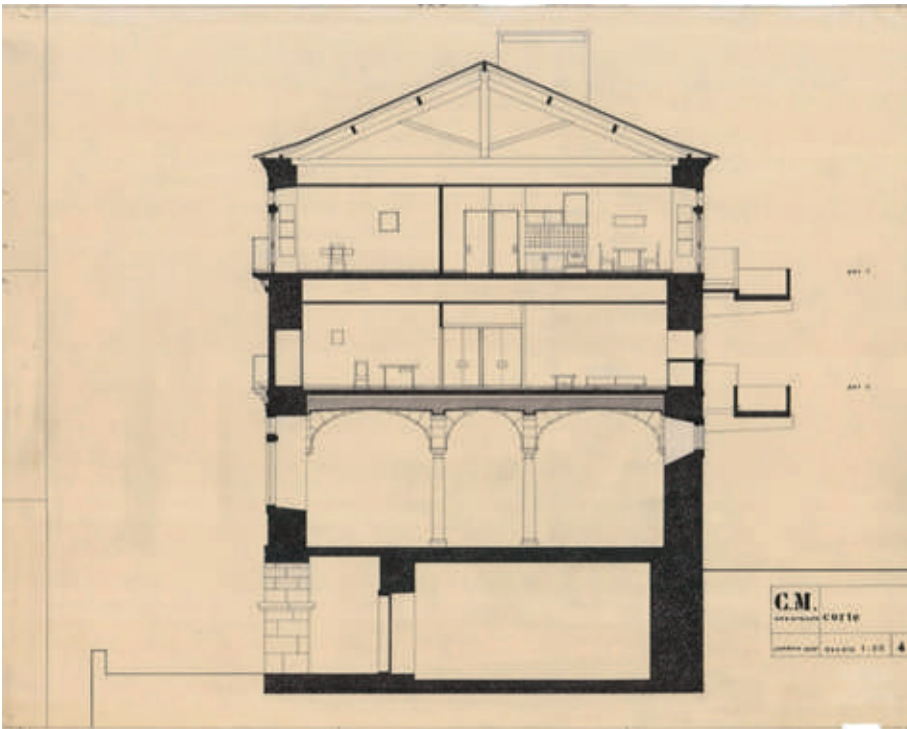
Moreover, while the spatial integrity of the old refectory was to be preserved, the upper floors – where, the old cells had already been lost – were to be deeply renovated. The work was to be extensive due to the state of conservation and the requirements of the new function. This meant that only the outer walls and some of the inner walls could be preserved.

Although this project was never completed and has not been included in any relevant publication on the architect, it represents an interesting precedent for other cases of adaptive reuse of monastic buildings by Fernando Távora, some

41 Távora, “Memória descritiva”.

Fig. 16, 17

Convento de Monchique. Plan and elevation of the preliminary project, 1957 (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0039-pd0003 and 0039-pd0007).



of them with such impact and importance and significance as the *Pousada da Costa* (1972-1989) and the *Escola Agrícola de Refóios de Lima* (1986-1993).

2.6. “A Healthy Restoration Criterion”: Casa da Igreja (1958-1961)

Following a similar approach, the renovation of the *Casa da Igreja*, in Mondim de Basto, brings together a set of design principles outlined in the previous works. This work, contemporary with other paradigmatic projects by the architect such as the Ofir House and the Cedro School, represents a firm step towards the materialisation of the sought-after third way, which aims to reconcile seemingly opposing concepts. In addition to this, Távora has sought to strike a balance between respect for the identity and main features of the old building with new requirements and an updated image. Even though this work has not been widely disseminated,⁴² it represents a valuable experience from an important period in the career of the architect.

The *Casa da Igreja* [House of the Church] is a manorial estate from the last quarter of the eighteenth century, on the site of a previous construction dating back to 1575. The building is organized in an “L” shape, on a sloping plot. It has a partially buried floor and a noble, residential floor, accessible by a staircase from the front garden. In the main façade, the rhythmic arrangement of the spans

⁴² This work has received little attention in architectural publications, except for a brief publication in a monographic issue edited by Nuno Portas, “Arquitecto Fernando Távora: 12 anos de actividade profissional”, *Arquitetura*, no. 71 (July 1961): 31. The authors have recently published several studies on this project: David Ordóñez-Castañón, Teresa Cunha Ferreira and Santiago Sánchez-Beitia, “Towards a new approach of architectural heritage intervention in Portugal: Fernando Távora and the refurbishment of the Casa da Igreja of Mondim de Basto (1958-1961)”, *WIT Transactions on the Built Environment*, no. 191 (2019): 187-198. <https://doi.org/10.2495/STR190161> See also David Ordóñez-Castañón, Teresa Cunha Ferreira, Santiago Sánchez-Beitia, “Adaptive reuse of manor houses: modernism and tradition in Fernando Távora’s approach for heritage renovation”, *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*, no. 3 (2021): 569-578 <https://doi.org/10.18280/ijstdp.160318>.

Fig. 18

Convento de Monchique. Section of the preliminary project, 1957 (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0039-pd0004).



and the horizontality of the elevation (emphasized by the eaves) are interrupted to the center by the arch of the portal to where the doors to access the three parts in which the residence is divided open: the chapel (to the center), the main house (to the south) and the auxiliary or guest house (to the north). In front of the main elevation there is a small topiary garden, featuring several decorative forms carved in boxwood and camellias [Fig. 19]. This technique was popularized in the noble gardens of the Terras de Basto in the mid-nineteenth century through the influence of the Pinto Basto sisters, raised in England, who introduced the style of vegetable sculptures typical of the English gardens.⁴³ In contrast, the backyard was a functional space, in which several tasks of domestic service and other agricultural works were carried out.

Távora was well acquainted with the manorial architecture of the area, having spent some seasons there during his youth⁴⁴, since his family maintained multiple bonds of kinship and friendship. In fact, there is a photograph from the 1940s showing a young Távora drawing the house. Years later, in 1958 – perhaps thanks to these bonds –, he was commissioned to renovate it.

The architect acknowledges having explored a model of intervention distinct from the usual, “a healthy criterion: neither denying the past nor intending to continue it by copying its forms”.⁴⁵ This statement expresses a resounding rejection of the stylistic restoration, which was still a common practice by the General Directorate of Buildings and National Monuments (which he himself practiced in previous works as shown in the *Casa das Fidalgas*). This sentence also recalls the claims expressed in the manifesto *O problema da Casa Portuguesa*, which refused the banal imitation of the past (the so-called “false architecture”). In this

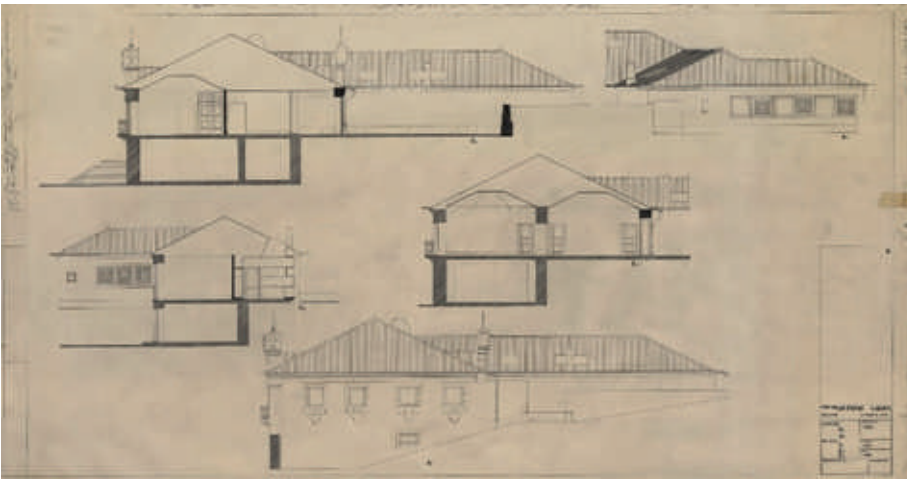
43 Ilídio Alves de Araújo, “Jardins de Basto”, in *Guia de Portugal*, vol. IV. *Entre Douro e Minho* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1964).

44 In October 1944 Fernando Távora stayed for several days at the *Casa da Boavista* in Celorico de Basto (owned by Manuel Osório de Aragão), where he spent time reading and visiting the area (taking notes and sketches of the ancestral homes in the region).

45 Fernando Távora, “Mondim de Basto: reconstrução da Casa da Igreja (1959-1961)”, *Arquitectura*, no. 71 (July 1961): 31.

Fig. 19

Casa da Igreja. Main façade and topiary front garden (photo by David Ordóñez-Castañón).



sense, what was built *ex novo* should express its contemporaneity, while seeking the best possible relationship with the pre-existing parts: "A dialogue was rehearsed in our current language to obtain from this synthesis a fresh and joyful work in which, evidently, the 'romanticism' of the presence of the ancient legacy is not lacking, which was preserved and enhanced".⁴⁶ In this way, modern design carpentries (doors and windows with clean lines, painted in white, robust frames and unique glasses) coexist with others from the Baroque era (recovered and reused) and even with elements of historicist design (such as the kitchen and the dining room cabinets) [Fig. 20].

The renovation of the rear façade is another clear reflection of this approach. Távora was aware that the additions of the nineteenth century had deformed the physiognomy of the house.⁴⁷ His intention was to recover the original profile, emphasizing the body of the chapel as the heart of the building and endowing this elevation with unity and a strong identity. Thus, the new gallery radically manifests the desire for avant-garde by displaying modern compositional principles (horizontality, formal abstraction, geometric simplicity, spatial fluidity, tectonic honesty, light and shadow contrasts...) [Fig. 21].



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Despite its strong modern expression, the influence of the *Inquérito* also marked the solution of the new porch, which evokes the typological scheme of traditional Minho porticoed spaces. Indeed, in a subtle way, the reference to vernacular models was already present in coeval works such as the *Casa em Ofir*, the *Vila da Feira* Market or the *Quinta da Conceição* tennis pavilion. In those projects the architect creatively reinterpreted the functional and tectonic concept of tradition at the light of a modern grammar and materiality, originating fully up-to-date

⁴⁶ Távora, "Mondim de Basto: reconstrução da Casa da Igreja (1959-1961)".

⁴⁷ Fernando Távora, "Memória descritiva e justificativa", 1958, Ante-projecto da Casa da Igreja de Mondim de Basto, Arquivo Fernando Távora, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, FIMS/FT/0103-pe.

Fig. 20

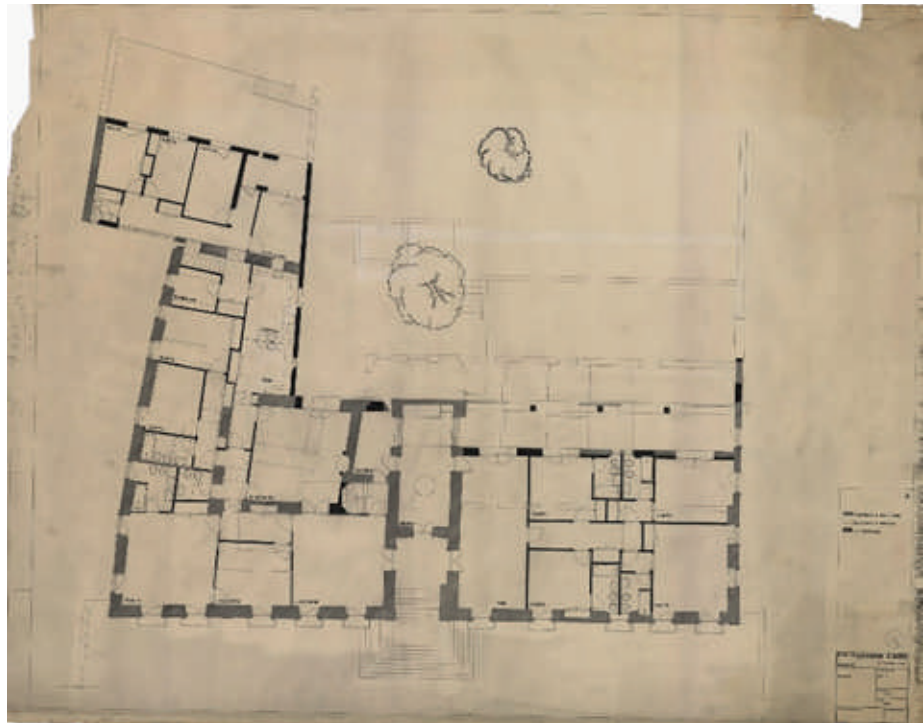
Casa da Igreja. Execution project (june 1959): elevations and sections (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0103-pd0028).

Fig. 21

Casa da Igreja. Back façade with a new veranda closed by sliding wooden lattices (photo by David Ordóñez-Castañón).

buildings although firmly rooted in ancestral culture.

It is worth examining the system of movable panels that characterizes the new façade. The design of these lattices could be understood as a modern reinterpretation of the light wooden structures present in popular architecture (granaries and cutters). However, this solution could also refer to the lattices that, coming from Islamic culture (*muxarabi* or *mashrabiya*), remained in Portuguese architecture after the Christian recon-



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quest, and of which some examples have survived, such as the *Casa dos Crivos*, in Braga, or the *Casa das Rótulas*, in Guimarães. Portuguese builders took these elements with them to Brazil, in colonial times, where they were successfully applied thanks to their functionality as sunscreens and as privacy filters. Later, in the twentieth century, modern Brazilian architects reinterpreted and adapted them to their avant-garde grammar in buildings such as the *Grande Hotel de Ouro Preto* (1940), by Oscar Niemeyer, or the *Casa Barão de Saavedra* (1942), by Lúcio Costa, among others. These references were widely disseminated in Portugal following the publication of the book/catalog *Brazil Builds*,⁴⁸ to which architects such as Keil do Amaral, Januário Godinho or Nuno Teotónio Pereira were sensitive. This frame of references has an impact on Fernando Távora's intervention in the *Casa da Igreja* through the new lattice, which is the symbol of the cultural return-journey and syncretism between Portuguese vernacular architecture and modern Brazilian-inspired design.⁴⁹

In addition to the reformulation of the rear façade, other deep structural transformations took place which affected the structure of the floors (rebuilt in reinforced concrete) and the roof (with a new wooden structure and tile covering). Also significantly remodelled was the distribution of the interior in order to achieve a more regular layout with new technical infrastructures (more bathrooms, electricity, telephone, heating, sanitary hot water), in accordance with the call for a contemporary domestic space stated in the essay *O problema da casa portuguesa* [Fig. 22].

48 Philip L. Goodwin, *Brazil builds: architecture new and old, 1652-1942* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1943).

49 To delve deeper into this issue, see the study by the authors: David Ordóñez-Castañón, Teresa Cunha Ferreira, Jesús de los Ojos Moral, "De la tradición a la modernidad: la reinterpretación de la celosía de madera. Influencias recíprocas entre Brasil y Portugal", in *Anais do 3º Congresso Internacional de História da Construção Luso-Brasileira* (Salvador da Bahia: Núcleo de Tecnologia da Preservação e da Restauração da UFBA, 2019), 899-913.

Fig. 22

Casa da Igreja. Execution project (june 1959): plan of the main floor (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0103-pd0026).

On the other hand, another primary premise was the “conservation and appreciation of its entire character”.⁵⁰ Although profound changes were made, Távora sought to preserve the fundamental architectural values of the pre-existence. In this sense, the baroque facades were fully preserved and highlighted, as well as the singular disposition of the house around the chapel. Likewise, the noble decorative environment of the representative rooms, especially the main hall and the master bedroom, were preserved; these were the only rooms that still kept the old ornate wooden ceilings.

3. CREATION ON EXISTING BUILDINGS: NEXUS BETWEEN PRACTICE AND THEORETICAL REFLECTION

The selected cases reflect a progressive practical implementation of the theoretical intentions first stated in *O problema da casa portuguesa* (1945, 1947). Although this manifesto does not provide a specific reflection on the renovation of the built environment, it reflects the theoretical impact of some relevant writers and philosophers. Hence, ideas on the compatibility of the inheritance from the past with the need for progress are glimpsed in the abovementioned text and may have influenced his approach to heritage intervention.

In short, Távora learned from Oswald Spengler that everything in the present must be interpreted based on the establishment of innumerable relationships between actions and thoughts of the most varied nature throughout history.⁵¹ From Benedetto Croce, he understood the importance of interpreting past events – however distant they may seem – in terms of the needs and situation of the present.⁵² Ortega y Gasset’s philosophy was also a fundamental pillar for the young Távora,⁵³ especially the rejection of either the excess or the absence of the ‘past’ (against over-technicality and historicism), as well as his ideas on memory and oblivion, primitivism and modern art, unity and multiplicity, among others. In addition, the Portuguese architect embraced Gasset’s notion of circumstance and supported the demand for “the right to continuity”, advocating for a “good relationship with the past”, which involved leveraging centuries of acquired knowledge to solve current problems and better face the future.⁵⁴

In this context, it is worth noting how, as early as 1940s, Távora considered historical research to be a fundamental tool for intervening in existing buildings. This approach, however, was not aimed at copying old forms but at better

50 Távora, “Memória descritiva e justificativa”, 1958, Ante-projecto da Casa da Igreja de Mondim de Basto.

51 Fernando Távora, “Arquitectura, cultura e história”, *Revista Pós, Numero especial: O estudo da história na formação do arquitecto* (1994): 18-21.

52 Benedetto Croce, *La storia come pensiero e come azione* (Bari: Laterza, 1966 [1938]), 183.

53 For a deeper analysis on José Ortega y Gasset’s ideas underlying *O problema da casa portuguesa*, see Patrícia Miguel, “Mapa-mundo é o repertório das nossas possibilidades vitais. Investigações a partir do estudo da biblioteca de Fernando Távora enquanto jovem”, in Manuel Mendes, ed., *Sobre o ‘projeto-de-arquitetura’ de Fernando Távora* (Porto: FIMS/FAUP, 2015), 346-377. See also: Nelson Mota, “Fernando Távora e a rebelião das massas. À procura de uma arquitectura entre memória e esquecimento”, Manuel Mendes, ed., *Sobre o ‘projeto-de-arquitetura’ de Fernando Távora* (Porto: FIMS/FAUP, 2015), 378-399.

54 These ideas are expressed in the most influential work of José Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1992 [1930]), but also in *¿Qué es filosofía? Unas lecciones de metafísica* (México D.F.: Porrúa, 2004), 143.

understanding inherited architecture as a trigger for solving present-day problems with contemporary resources. A few years later, the architect himself defended a sense of “permanent modernity”, that is, the discovery of design principles in the lessons and constants of history.⁵⁵ In line with the concepts of the monarchist essayist António Sardinha (for whom being a traditionalist did not mean “returning to a dead past, inert in its crystallised form”, but the capacity to take from history “a dynamic impulse”), the architect defended a concept of tradition as “permanence in development” or of “permanence in continuity”.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, this conceptual approach is not yet reflected in the projects of the 1940s, which present exclusive approaches in the relation between tradition and modernity. On the one hand, the proposal for the Bernardo Távora’s House, which was inspired by Le Corbusier’s purism. On the other hand, the project for Carapeços and the *Casa das Fidalgas*, which emulated old forms, contradicted his 1945 manifesto. At the time, Távora reflected on the separation of the old architecture from the modern creation, stating that “everything in its place and the past cannot coexist with the present”.⁵⁷ This thought, must be seen in the context of his trip to Europe in the post-war period (1947),⁵⁸ in which modern architecture and urban planning were seen as fundamental tools for improving the living conditions, while the monuments of the past, although beautiful, did not respond urgent needs. He embarked on a journey across Europe in search of answers to overcome the frustration caused by his own contradictions and his inability to translate intellectual ambitions into practice. In his descriptions he recorded his deep delight in historical monuments, but also in exciting modern architecture. However, his admiration for Modernism should not be misinterpreted, as he also expresses his irritation when, in Genoa, he observed how some fascist large buildings had replaced the medieval plots in the centre of the city.⁵⁹ The problematic balance between ancient and modern architecture (both in Italy and Portugal) fostered his distrust of the Athens Charter, which did not promote a harmonious and dialectical relationship between the historic and the contemporary city.

These reflections contribute to shaping Távora’s conceptual framework in the 1950s concerning the relationship between the new and the old. He was committed to expressing the integration of modern creation into pre-existences, as can be seen, in his own house in Foz do Douro, where some delicate gestures

55 Fernando Távora, “Arquitectura e Urbanismo – a lição das constantes”, *Lusiada, Revista Ilustrada de Cultura*, no. 2 (1952).

56 António Sardinha, “Do valor da tradição”, *Na Feira dos Mitos* (Lisboa: Gama, 1942), 11-16.

57 “Museums, cathedrals, palaces, are very beautiful things, but they are admired precisely because they are finished, definitive works, without the great interest, without the life of those others which are born by us and for us, which we ourselves will have to execute and to which we are so attached that our separation will also be our death. That is why I am now much more concerned with the appearance of cities and the way in which their inhabitants live (...). I am more attached to all this than to any old painting or any grand staircase which can only offer me problems of form or sensibility, but which rarely bring me face to face with the harsh realities of the moment, which by their nature should interest us most. Everything in its place and the past cannot coexist with the present” (30-IX-1947). Fernando Távora, “Esteio 2: Viagem pela Europa, 1947”, in Fernando Távora, “*Minha Casa*” / *Uma porta pode ser um romance*, edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS, 2013), H 23-24.

58 He travelled through Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium before returning to Porto, writing down his impressions almost daily.

59 Diaristic text in Genoa, 30/9/1947. Távora, “Viagem pela Europa, 1947”, H₂₃.

affirm its contemporaneity without undermining the identity of the bourgeois house. In fact, in the essay *A lição das constantes* (1952) the architect defends a modernity that is not alien to history. According to him, modernity is not defined by a formal language, but by the appropriate solution of problems in coherence with the circumstances.⁶⁰ In this essay Távora argues that contemporary architecture should affirm its modernity but also be integrated into the internal logics that govern the pre-existing buildings. Thus, this respectful integration would contribute to a collective and intertemporal process of creation, in which the spirit of intergenerational collaboration prevails over the individual contribution of a specific architect.⁶¹ Therefore, any action on a historic building must respect and prolong the constants that come from the past, in order to preserve its spirit and thus contribute to this long and collective process through a contemporary response.⁶²

In 1955, Távora drafted a book, never completed, to be called *A habitação portuguesa* (The Portuguese Home), which was to form part of the educational collection of the Campanha Nacional de Educação de Adultos.⁶³ The aim was to offer the guidelines for people to follow when building their houses, according to certain functional and aesthetic principles linked to tradition. Although intended as a pedagogical manual – with an indoctrinating pretension – the handwritten notes schematically express the fundamental ideas of his concept of the third way. He defends the need to combine the valorisation of popular Portuguese architecture (“the truth of its simplicity, utility and clarity”) with the need to assimilate modern developments (which, “in a general way, lead to the elevation of the people”⁶⁴), warning that “to follow tradition is neither to copy nor to use it”.⁶⁵ But in these notes he also stands “in defence of antiquities”, calling for the conservation of monuments, old houses, country house furniture, altar-pieces, etc. – “there are many examples of these houses that once recovered are transformed into wonderful houses” – and he urges not to destroy “the trees, the permanent symphony of the waters, nor the old furniture...”.⁶⁶

The 1950s were also marked by his attendance at the CIAM meetings, where he witnessed the decline of orthodox modernism, which was criticised by a group of young architects – members of Team X – who were more concerned with social issues and tradition.⁶⁷ However, this this new sensitivity was not uniform. Távora felt a strong affinity with Italian architects, such as Ernesto Rogers. His ideas on

60 “Modernity means the perfect integration of all the elements that can influence the execution of any work, using all the means that best lead to the realisation of a certain end [...]. Great works of architecture and urbanism have always been modern in the sense that they have accurately reflected, in other words, according to a perfect relationship, the conditions of their environment”. Távora, “Arquitectura e Urbanismo – a lição das constantes”.

61 Távora, “Arquitectura e Urbanismo – a lição das constantes”.

62 Távora, “Arquitectura e Urbanismo – a lição das constantes”.

63 Fernando Távora, “Esteio 3: ‘A habitação portuguesa, 1955’”, in Fernando Távora, *“Minha Casa” | Uma porta pode ser um romance*, edited by Manuel Mendes (Porto: FIMS, 2013), L 1-56.

64 Távora, “Esteio 3: ‘A habitação portuguesa, 1955’”, L 18.

65 Távora, “Esteio 3: ‘A habitação portuguesa, 1955’”, L 46.

66 Távora, “Esteio 3: ‘A habitação portuguesa, 1955’”, L 41.

67 For further information on the impact of the ideas developed by Team 10 on the Portuguese architectural context, see: Pedro Baía, *A recepção do Team 10 em Portugal* (Porto: Circo de ideias, 2020).

the architecture of continuity – a word that became the subtitle of the magazine *Casabella* – undoubtedly coincided with the beliefs of the young Távora: “continuity means historical awareness (...); a truly modern work is not one that lacks authentic grounding in tradition, as ancient works hold significance to the extent that they are able to resonate through our voice”.⁶⁸ Rogers affirmed that building in a built environment entails an obligation to respect the pre-existence, while injecting new energy to perpetuate its vitality through a creative act:

Conserving and building are two moments of the same act of consciousness, because one and the other are subordinated to the same method: conserving has no meaning if it is not understood in the sense of updating the past, and building has no meaning if it is not understood as a continuation of the historical process.⁶⁹

This complementarity between conservation and creation, which Távora adopted in the mid-1950s, is undoubtedly reflected in the *Casa de Além*. On the one hand, the desire to prolong and emphasise the atmosphere of an aristocratic rural home by preserving the most representative spaces and elements of the highest quality (the main hall with the wooden ceiling, the antique carved furniture, the wooden doors and shutters...); on the other hand, the desire to create something new to update the image and use of the house through a modern language (the striking woodwork, the spiral staircase, the planned fireplace...). In this case, as in the proposal for Monchique and the *Casa da Igreja*, there is a resounding affirmation of modernism, that will be gradually diluted towards a more subtle and less assertive expression. For example, in all these cases, the windows of the old façades are covered with new single-glazed frames, linked to the desire for transparency and luminosity of Modernism and also expressing the contemporaneity of the intervention, whereas in later projects (such as the Pousada da Costa or the houses of Breia, Briteiros and Pardelhas), Távora introduces new frames that follow the design of the traditional windows.

The *Casa da Igreja*, completed in 1961, is a further step in the integration of contemporary creation and conservation. Fernando Távora acknowledges to be exploring different intervention criteria in the search for a common thread between “new” and “old”, ranging from preservation of some old elements and the radical transformation of other parts of the building with a modern language. This work embodies a concept of heritage conservation that the architect wrote down in the essay *Da Organização do Espaço* (1962), in which he calls for a genuine integration of the past and the present, rather than a simple addition of forms. Moreover, according to his concept of space, continuity is a fundamental characteristic of organised space and, since time is one of its dimensions – the “fourth dimension”⁷⁰ – it follows that space is irreversible: “a space can

⁶⁸ Ernesto N. Rogers, “Continuità”, *Casabella Continuità*, no. 199 (1954): 2-3.

⁶⁹ Ernesto N. Rogers, “Verifica culturale dell’azione urbanistica”, VI Convegno nazionale di Urbanistica (9-11 November 1957), in Ernesto N. Rogers, ed., *Esperienza dell’architettura* (Geneva-Milano: Skira, 1997), 291-293.

⁷⁰ Fernando Távora, *Sobre la Organización del espacio*, eds. Aitor Varea Oro and Eva Raga i Domingo (Valencia: Universitat Politècnica de València, 2014), 53.

never return to what it was and hence the statement that space is in permanent change".⁷¹ His rejection of "scientific restoration" is based on this reflection, considering that a monument can never return to a previous state. Therefore, the defence of the architectures of the past must be achieved through updating, seeking continuity in a contemporary attitude and avoiding pastiche. This conception is in line with his appeal to a "healthy restoration criterion", based on a dialogue between the existing forms and the current language.

It is therefore possible to identify in these ideas and projects a series of reflections that are vividly manifested in later works. For example, in the 1969 proposal for the renovation of the Ribeira-Barredo urban area, Távora rejected the tabula rasa of Robert Auzelle's Mater Plan for Porto, and established a new criterion based on the preservation of the entire medieval street layout, with as much of the built fabric as possible. However, he did not intend to mummify buildings in order to fossilise an urban image of the past, nor to demolish the old constructions to rebuild them mimetically – a pastiche – with standardised solutions.⁷² He proposed an evolution to solve housing problems, carrying out selective demolitions and controlled transformations – decided case by case – as a form of regeneration: "In these few words renovate (or continue to innovate) with a global and open spirit, is contained the whole essence of the option we choose to orientate the proposal".⁷³ This attitude also guided the project for the renovation of the *Santa Marinha da Costa Convent* (1972-1989), usually considered to be one of Fernando Távora's works that best reflects his *modus operandi* in the field of built heritage. In similar words, the architect explained that "the general criterion adopted (...) was 'to continue innovating' or, in other words, to continue contributing to the long life of the building, by conserving and strengthening its most significant spaces or creating qualified spaces determined by the conditions of their new function. The intention was to create a dialogue, highlighting the affinities and the continuity, rather than the differences and the break from the past".⁷⁴

4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper demonstrates that the third way approach – the search for a formula that combines the continuity of tradition with the need for modernisation – is also reflected in the development of a strategy for intervention in existing buildings. Indeed, the cases presented in this paper (carried out in the period between 1945 and 1962, some of them barely known), can be considered as relevant experimental practices. The architect tested design principles and methodological guidelines for intervention in heritage context, which would fully mature in subsequent works with greater impact and dissemination.

71 Távora, *Sobre la Organización del espacio*, 58.

72 Fernando Távora, "Barredo: Operazione di Rinnovo Urbano", *Lotus International*, no.18 (1978): 95-97.

73 Fernando Távora, *Estudo de Renovação Urbana do Barredo* (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1969).

74 Fernando Távora, "Pousada de Santa Marinha: Guimarães", *Boletim da DGEMN*, no. 130 (1985): no page numbers.

The first designs, contextualised in a period of creative and identity crisis for Távora, reflect his difficulties in putting theoretical intentions into practice, failing to incorporate contemporary creation into old buildings. Certainly, the resounding modern *ex novo* projects of this period contrast with the conservative experiences of Carapeços and Santar, which involved the use of forms from the past mimicked in the pre-existence. However, as the 1950s progressed, while assimilating the theories and practices of other architects, Távora moved towards an integration of modern design with the permanence of tradition, as can be seen in the renovation projects of the *Casa de Além* and the *Casa da Igreja*. Both designs display an assertive modernism embedded in the logics and character of the historic building.

Although this vigorous modernism would later become more discreet and subtle, these works from the 1950s already reflect several features that would characterise Távora's his subsequent projects: the search for harmony within the context (environmental pre-existence), the preservation of the historic image of the buildings in relation to the landscape (involving the preservation of the main *façades*), respect for the scale and proportions of pre-existing structures, the recovery of typological coherence and spatial logic, the conservation and emphasis on traditional atmospheres, rigorous conservation and restoration of valuable old elements (ceilings, furniture, altarpieces, doors, fittings, etc.), the careful alteration of less valuable parts of the buildings to incorporate new functions and facilities, the use of geometry as a tool to relate old and new, and the introduction of modern language through the creative reinterpretation of traditional solutions, among other aspects.

All decisions were founded on a case-by-case approach and supported by a deep knowledge of the history and the circumstances of the pre-existing buildings. Thus, the ambition was always – using his own words – “to create a dialogue in the current language to obtain from this synthesis fresh and joyful works in which the ‘romanticism’ of the ancient legacy is not lacking but is preserved and enhanced”.⁷⁵

75 Távora, “Mondim de Basto: reconstrução da Casa da Igreja (1959-1961)”, 31.

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Alfredo Viana de Lima, Fernando Távora

Between Sigtuna (1952) and Royaumont (1962)

*In 1951, Alfredo Viana de Lima (1913-91) and Fernando Távora (1923-2005) were in Hoddesdon for the first Portuguese participation in CIAM. Viana de Lima had been invited by Sigfried Giedion and Josep Lluís Sert as a delegate from Portugal. The invitation to participate in the activities of the Congresses caused the ODAM (A Organização dos Arquitectos Modernos), founded in 1947, to be rethought and aligned with the objectives of the CIAMs by also assuming – not without internal debate – the identity of CIAM Porto, a specification that was not necessary because no other CIAM groups existed in the country. In 1952 (25-30 June), the Portuguese delegation attended the CIAM Council Meeting in Sigtuna, Sweden, a preparatory activity for CIAM 9 to be held in Aix-en-Provence. The objective of the meeting is to write a Charte de l'Habitat, which will not have an immediate outcome. Two texts relating to the meeting are preserved at AFIMS, one by Viana de Lima – in French, undated –, and the second by Fernando Távora – in French, autographed and typed – dated 7 July 1952. This second text, although brief, already contains key elements of the critique of internationalism that is among the reasons for Távora's unease with CIAM events. Just over a decade later he published (Fernando Távora, "The Royaumont meeting", *Arquitectura*, no. 73, 1963) the text on the Royaumont meeting in which he justifies his distance from the revisions to CIAM themes proposed by TEAM X.*



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Dear Colleagues,

The Portuguese CIAM Group, “in the process of organisation”, is very honoured to bring the work we have started on the theme of the “Habitat Charter” to the Stockholm meeting and to finalise it at the CIAM Congress. It goes without saying that we claim no more here than to mention the issues that form the basis of our preparation for CIAM 9.

Although our work does not offer anything new, it is at least the result of considerable effort, given the short time available and the circumstance of being the first outcome of a GROUP still ‘in the process of being organised’.

Our work, carried out under my responsibility and personally directed by me, has seen not only the effective collaboration of the members present here, but also of our colleagues Fernando Távora, Andresen, Alves de Sousa and others who, with great regret, cannot be with us.

I would like to mention the great contribution made to our work by two of the main members of the youth component, Luís Praça, creator of the diagrams, diagrams, and their colours, and Tello Korrodi.

Our work has two aspects: the first is the work of analysis on the functions of the Habitat, an analysis based on Hegel’s method – negation of negation – which led us to the definition of an Objective that we called “Contribution to the HABITAT Chart”; the other aspect is the exemplification conducted through the analysis of one of the conditions: the condition of space. We define this aspect as a suggestion for a grid.

We cannot fail to recognise the countless difficulties encountered and the impossibility, for reasons of time, of dealing with the specific cases of Children and Extensions. We recognise our imperfections and possibilities for error, but our presence at this meeting expresses our desire to benefit from your experience and advice. Following this intention, we have kept blanks in the boxes of the “conditions of space” grid to consider your suggestions and criticisms.

I would not wish to end my brief remarks without presenting you with the warmest and friendliest greetings from the Portuguese CIAM Group.

Alfredo Viana de Lima

The Portuguese CIAM group (under organization) is presenting at the Stockholm meeting an essay analysing habitat problems, accompanied by a graphic rendering of one of its conditions.

The Habitat Charter to be defined by CIAM 9 must be drawn up considering the habitat problems of the different countries of the world and have a spirit so that its application does not go against the specific experience of each of the countries wishing to adopt it as a basis for their own achievements.

Since the Charter is a universal instrument, it must not block specific manifestations. But since the Charter must result from the analysis of habitat problems under the most varied conditions, it is indispensable, first, to establish a method of analysis. We believe that this last point must be the essential outcome of the present meeting, and we therefore present a hypothesis regarding the method in question.

The method of analysis to be defined at the Stockholm meeting must have the characteristics already indicated in relation to the Habitat Charter, so that all national groups, using it, can present CIAM 9 with its complete application in each specific case. After the evaluation of all these cases – specific application of a universal method of analysis – it will then be necessary to arrive, in conclusion, at common objectives defining the Habitat Charter.

To this end, the Portuguese CIAM group (under organization) proposes that the Stockholm meeting, with the objective of developing the Habitat Charter for CIAM 9:

(a) establish a method for analysing the current state of the Habitat, a method that, aspiring to the universal, may allow for specific applications;

b) invite all national groups to apply the same method to their specific cases, while defining the procedure or procedures to be followed for such application.

Fernando Távora, 7 July 1952

The fact that we didn't reach a conclusion at Royaumont, and that we didn't even try to do so, is deeply significant to me. There are times when it is possible for a group of men to come to clear, lucid, schematised conclusions; others, on the other hand, when it is only possible to conclude that... it is impossible to find a conclusion.

The first case occurred, for example, when the men of the Charter of Athens came together; they certainly made a great effort to reach a conclusion, but in any case, they produced a document in which paths are indicated, where there is no uncertainty and where a grammar and a few key words made it possible to establish a common language. These were men with certainties, with the ability to prioritise and analyse the problems they were aware of, hence the creation of a letter arriving at supposedly universal conclusions.

This was not, I suppose, the case at the Royaumont meeting. I can't exactly consider myself a participant in the meeting since, having not presented any work, a certain natural shyness prevented me from speaking in public. I was therefore more of an assistant, and perhaps this allowed me to observe a little from the outside the significance of the discussions and the work that was presented.

Little time still separates us from the Charter of Athens, but circumstances have evolved in such a way that, in my opinion and now, a formal conclusion similar to that remarkable document is absolutely impossible, almost childish.

Times and dimensions have changed... Reality is more diverse, richer, and more varied. It is not possible, for the time being, to give recipes, to classify with sovereignty, to hierarchise with precision. The world appears to our eyes and our minds as complex, disturbing. Unusual. We know man better; we begin to unravel the phenomena of society and, at the same time, everything becomes more complicated. Contacts are increasing, new cultures are coming into play, concepts are relativising, the field of science and technology is broadening, in short, man and the world are flourishing in unexpected ways. One senses that this is a time of research and doubt, of re-encounter, drama, and mystery. So how can we conclude clearly?

But what we've just said, comparing the men of Athens with ourselves, is not intended to diminish their endeavour and its significance in any way, as well as all their thinking and the achievements that resulted from it. All the Royaumont participants signed a letter sent to Le Corbusier, which simply said "nous continuons", which succinctly and clearly expresses the meaning of our relationship with the heroic generation that preceded us. But to continue, to endeavour to achieve the same heroism in the face of any given reality, does not mean copying solutions or falling asleep in their shadow.

The statement that the time is not ripe for a conclusion cannot be considered pessimistic or sceptical. As far as I'm concerned, you shouldn't try to categorise such a statement, but just check whether it's true. I don't think it's

shameful that a group of well-intentioned men, animated by frankness and sincerity, could come to such a conclusion. Wouldn't it be less honest to do the opposite?

During the dense days and nights in Royaumont, many facts – big and small – led me to this conclusion. The spirit of the meeting was perhaps summed up in Coderch's little comment when Candilis presented his plan for 25,000 homes for Toulouse, a plan that was realised in five months, while Coderch himself said he needed six months to study the design of a small house. This striking contrast clearly shows us the scale of the problems that are beginning to worry us and that we absolutely need to resolve, problems that were the stuff of visionaries only a few years ago but are now a strong and vivid reality. I believe that the truth was on both sides, simply that awareness of the phenomenon, no longer as a utopia but as a palpable reality, is now emerging in its fullness.

It is the need for a new synthesis between the number 1 and the number 25.000 that is beginning to present itself to our minds as indispensable. Whatever sense, meaning or extension you want to give to this contrast, you will realise that it exists a little and everywhere in our world; It doesn't exist in the game between individual freedom and the "rebellion of the masses" that we've been witnessing, in the distance that separates the raw object from the product of the machine, in the gap that must be filled between intelligence and the love of order and the need for the spontaneous, the chaotic, the subjective, in the world that exists between old cultures that cannot be rejected and the most advanced forms of civilisation, in the extreme differences in living standards that separate men, in the speeds that can reach the pedestrian and the astronaut, between the human love of peace and the imminent danger of a war that will devastate everything and everyone, between the scale of a small rural village and a city with millions and millions of inhabitants, a region, a continent or the entire globe?

How can we achieve the essential synthesis between such real and apparently opposing elements of the same, continuous reality?

And, as a result, one theme came up frequently at the Royaumont meeting: that of the architect's responsibility. This is understandable; when there are no concrete, clear, exact truths, the problem arises more strongly because responsibility is always linked to the possibility of choosing and choosing between 1 and 25.000, in its real meaning or in its symbolic meaning, is no easy task...

Don't take these words and this interpretation as some form of scepticism or pessimism. This is simply an awareness of reality. To ignore it and come to comfortable conclusions would be nothing more than a betrayal. To be aware of a problem is to have already partly solved it. We should therefore feel very satisfied if we have come to know a little about the drama that surrounds us, because this is the first and indispensable step towards a victorious synthesis.

So, let's turn this awareness into a cry of hope for a future synthesis.

And let this impossibility of concluding for now, this desire to continue and to survive, be the most significant conclusion of our meeting and encourage us to hold future meetings.

Life is continually reborn of itself.

Fernando Távora, December 1962

Notes on the “Terceira Via” in Portugal and Sweden. A Comparison between Fernando Távora and Sven Backström & Leif Reinius

Fernando Távora, Backström & Reinius, Arquitectura Popular, Terceira Via, Housing

/Abstract

The essay seeks to highlight similarities and analogies between the architectural work of Fernando Távora and that of Sven Backström and Leif Reinius, with the aim of expanding the already rich but still not exhaustive panorama of international comparisons that links some of the most important names in architecture of the second half of the 20th century. These are, as in this case, unconscious “encounters” that did not really happen but which today, with the right historical distance, can be virtually analysed on the basis of what was theorised and realised. The typological theme of housing, so urgent at the end of the Second World War not only among the belligerent countries, is also at the centre of attention in two countries that were neutral and not directly touched by the conflict, such as Portugal and Sweden. It is no coincidence that this typological theme is the focus of attention in the early part of Fernando Távora’s design career, and no less so in that of the two Swedish architects Sven Backström and Leif Reinius.

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He is the author of numerous articles in journals, books and proceedings of national and international conferences, a member of the editorial board of the reviews *Studi e ricerche di storia dell’architettura* and HPA - Histories of Postwar Architecture. He is adjunct professor in History of Architecture at the Faculty of Engineering of Ancona and Bologna.

Whether one was in Athens or Amsterdam, on the Atlantic coast of Portugal or near the North Cape, the architect still needed an architectural language, and in the 1950s he had a good chance of finding it through a careful and critical re-examination of previous modern architecture (which everyone perceived in his or her own way), and through a distillation of those contemporary currents, domestic or foreign, that seemed best suited to respond to practical and symbolic tasks.¹

The fusion of regional declinations with the invariants of the International Style experimented by some architects born in the first decades of the 20th century brought about considerable changes in European architecture in the second half of the century. As William Curtis wrote, the paths taken and the goals achieved by some protagonists of the history of contemporary architecture in radically different geographical and cultural contexts start from an in-depth analysis of the past that is indispensable for a more conscious reading of the present. Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1958) in Greece, Hans Scharoun (1893-1972) in Germany, Jean Prouvé (1901-1984) in France, Mario Ridolfi (1904-1984) in Italy, Josep Antoni Coderch (1913-1984) in Spain and many others, with their architecture and theoretical writings quickly gained a position of cultural leadership in their respective countries. The search for a new language in which to integrate international references and local building techniques, the compositional themes of the avant-garde with the materials of tradition, was not shirked by the protagonists of two other geographically distant realities such as Fernando Távora (1923-2005) in Portugal² and the two Swedish architects Sven Backström (1903-1992) and Leif Reinius (1907-1995). United since their university years at the Faculty of Architecture of the Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan (KTH, Royal Institute of Technology) in Stockholm, Backström and Reinius's association was consummated over a period of time that began as students in the second half of the 1920s and ended in 1980 with the retirement of both and the closure of their associated studio in the centre of Stockholm.³

Even though the three have never met, or at least there are no documentable direct contacts to date⁴, the idea of a 'long-distance' comparison stems from a kind of methodological affinity as well as some biographical points of tangency. First of all, the difficult relationship with architecture and the language adopted

¹ William J.R. Curtis, *Monderne architecture since 1900* (New York: Phaidon, 1982), 471.

² About Fernando Távora see in particular the monographic studies: Luiz Trigueiros, edited by, *Fernando Távora* (Lisboa: Blau, 1993); Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2005); José António Bandeira, edited by, *Fernando Távora. Modernidade Permanente* (Guimarães: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012).

³ On the work of Backström & Reinius see in particular: *Arkitektur* no. 6, 1982, monographic issue edited by Claes Caldenby and Eva Rudberg; Giovanni Bellucci, *The housing models of Backström & Reinius between Thirties and Fifties. An alternative to Scandinavian functionalism* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2022).

⁴ In Sigtuna, Sweden, in June 1952, a meeting was held coordinated by Sven Markelius, a preliminary to the CIAM in Aix-en-Provence the following year, which could potentially have allowed Backström, Reinius and Távora to meet. Even though the two Swedes are not mentioned in the published sources among those present (Eric Mumford, "In Search of 'Habitat': Sigtuna, Sweden, 1952", in Id., *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, Cambridge MA – London: The MIT Press, 2002: 215-225), at least that of Leif Reinius, who had already attended the meetings in London in 1947 and Bergamo in 1949, cannot be excluded. The calendar of meetings also included several guided tours and the presentation of the project for the new satellite town of Vällingby, whose masterplan developed by Markelius saw Backström and Reinius as the authors of the designs for many of the public buildings in the central square. The presence of only Alfredo Viana de Lima (1913-1991) representing Portugal, and from what emerges from the short text signed by Távora for the occasion (published in this issue of HPA) testifies to how in the Lusitanian country openness to the modern movement was in its infancy.

in their respective countries by most of the designers working in the period in which Távora, Backström and Reinius completed their academic training and in the years immediately following, a factor from which the need to refine a new design approach in some respects similar arises. Secondly, the theme of travel and in-depth study of references both close and distant to their specific context but equally useful for the theoretical-cultural growth indispensable to the complete definition of the compositional theme. Lastly, the constant application of plural thought and a design sensibility that Távora expresses through references to the literary work of Fernando Pessoa and the theme of heteronomy, an articulated interpretation of the author's personality that Backstrom and Reinius, for their part, pursue by merging complementary skills and thoughts in the same realised work, the result of a continuous confrontation and balancing of two distinct approaches to design and two equally different characters⁵. The works realised by Távora in Portugal and by Backström and Reinius in Sweden in particular on the theme of housing also effectively synthesise the sudden stylistic and functional mutation that residential buildings underwent during the 20th century.

Although characterised by very different cultural assumptions, the response of Távora in the Lusitanian land and of Backström and Reinius in the Scandinavian one advocates alternative methodological and design choices to the established ones. On the one hand, the Portuguese architect theorises the possibility of a hybrid "Terceira via" between Le Corbusier and Raul Lino,⁶ the prodromes of which can be partly read in an initial short text published in 1945 and revised two years later.⁷ In the short essay, the author warns against the danger of the false and senseless re-proposition of past models that have substantially prevented the development of modern architecture in Portugal. The cultural flattening generated by the obtuse repetition by Portuguese architects of certain linguistic models follows what was theorised by transversal personalities in politics and culture at the end of the 19th century such as Henrique José das Neves (1841-1915), Antonio Rocha Peixoto (1866-1909) and the art historian João Barreira (1866-1961) in favour of stylistic features considered indispensable and therefore fundamental for reaffirming Portuguese autonomy and emancipation. Decisive in the first decades of the 20th century for the application of this romantic-national approach also from a technical-design point of view was the architect Raul Lino da Silva (1879-1974), who concretely constructed numerous buildings and was one of the main supporters of the "Casa Antiga Portuguesa" movement⁸. Regarding specifically the typological theme of the

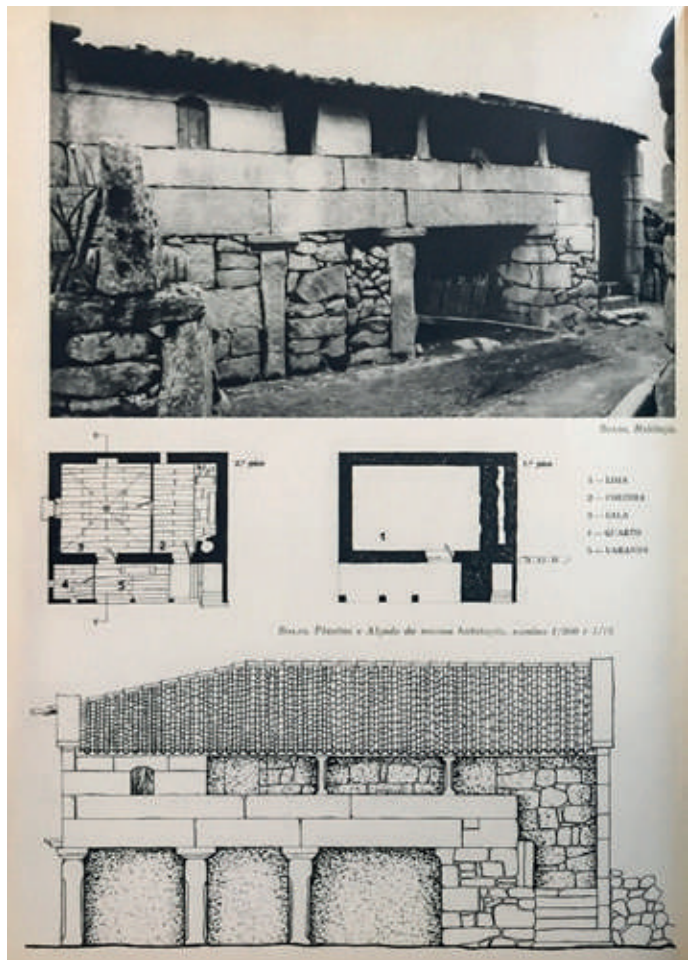
⁵ It is useful to recall the anecdote according to which the two, who worked in the studio at two opposing tables, exchanged their work positions after the lunch break to get a different view of the problems.

⁶ Cfr: Jorge Figueira, "Fernando Távora: coisa mental", *Unidade*, no. 3 (1992): 101-106.

⁷ See: Fernando Távora, "O problema da casa portuguesa", *Aléo*, no. 9 (November 1945); Fernando Távora, "O problema da casa portuguesa", *Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1 (1947) (translated into English in HPA no. 11, 96-101).

⁸ On the confrontation between the rearguard and modernity in Portugal in those years, see in particular: João Leal, *Etnografia Portuguesa 1870-1970* (Lisboa. Etnográfica Press, 2000), 107-143. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.etnograficapress.2562>; Joaquim Manuel Rodrigues dos Santos, "Tupi or not Tupi' versus 'Casa Portuguesa': Friction between Lúcio Costa and Raul Lino", *Artis on*, no. 12 (2022): 78-96.

residence Raul Lino between the 1910s and 1930s is the author of numerous publications⁹ in clear contrast to the contemporary design and theoretical proposals expressed by young European architects animators of the Modern Movement. Research into the country's past and architectural-cultural history in an attempt to overturn Raul Lino's misleading "Portuguese House", saw Távora strongly committed. Five years later, after completing his studies at the ESBAP – Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto, in 1955 he began his activity within the research group involved in the *Inquerito sobre a arquitectura popular portuguesa*. The multi-year research plan promoted by the National Union of Architects of Portugal and supported by President António Salazar led to the investigation of the peculiarities of the country's historical buildings published in a rich compendium that documented the architectural and urban aspects of the various areas of Portugal. The mighty research that opens by delving into issues related to the physical geography of each of the territorial contexts identified is characterised by detailed surveys of built architecture, both individual buildings and urban aggregates. This material, flanked by dozens of shots resulting from a meticulous photographic campaign and a historical-descriptive text, was published in 1961 in a double volume entitled *Arquitectura popular em Portugal*. Távora, together with Rui Pimentel (1924-2005) and António Menéres (1930), is engaged in the study of the Minho area, a strip of land facing the Atlantic coast in the north of the country where the cities of Averno, Braga and Porto are located.¹⁰ As the three authors write, a geographical reality is documented that, although territorially limited, includes an extreme variety of architectures ranging from the residential buildings of the large coastal cities, to the dwellings and aggregates of the small villages in the hilly hinterland, to the singular agricultural buildings of the mountainous areas and the more peripheral provinces. A heterogeneity of forms, compositional solutions, details and materials that demonstrate the variety of architecture sedimented over the centuries, materials that will be fundamental to Távora's design evolution [Fig. 1].



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⁹ See: Raul Lino, *A Nossa Casa – apontamentos sobre o bom gosto na construção de casas simples* (Lisboa: Edição da Atlântida, 1918); Raul Lino, *A Casa Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Escola Tipográfica da Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1929); Raul Lino, *Casas Portuguesas* (Lisboa: Edição de Valentim de Carvalho, 1933); Raul Lino, *L'évolution de l'Architecture Domestique au Portugal* (Lisboa: Institut Français au Portugal, 1937).

¹⁰ See: Fernando Távora, Rui Pimentel, António Menéres, "Zona 1. Minho", in *Arquitectura popular em Portugal*, vol. 1 (Lisboa: Sindicato Nacional Dos Arquitectos, 1961), 2-111. The other areas of Portugal explored in the volume are: Trás-os-Montes (by architects Octávio L. Filgueiras, Arnaldo Araújo and Carlos Carvalho Dias), Beiras (studied by architects Francisco Keil of Amaral, José Huertas Lobo and João José Malato). The regions of Extremadura, Alentejo and Algarve were included in a second volume published in the same year.

Fig. 1

Arquitectura popular em Portugal (Lisboa: Gravura, composição e impressão Gráfica São Gonçalo, 1961), 72.

A few years earlier in Sweden, Backström and Reinius conversely confronted an architecture that had largely moved beyond reference to Nordic classicism and the historicist revival particularly after 1930 following the Stockholmsutställningen (Stockholm Exhibition) when the rationalist movement became a theme of confrontation on which most young Swedish architects worked. There was a sort of marginalisation of the architects of the older generation in the country and in particular the exponents of the so-called "Swedish Grace" including in particular Ragnar Östberg (1866-1945) and Ivar Tengbom (1878-1968) who only a few years earlier had completed famous architectures in Stockholm such as the Town Hall and the Concert Hall. The new class of architects from this time onwards, in addition to Erik Gunnar Asplund (1885-1940), saw above all in Sven Markelius (1889-1972) the new theoretical leader, an architect who quickly assumed the role of the main reference point for the modern movement in the varied Nordic context, also internationally.¹¹ As Távora would do some twenty years later, Backström and Reinius identified the housing theme of social housing as the most stimulating one from which to develop their design ideas at the beginning of their careers as designers, helping to trigger a profound change from the cornerstones of the modern movement. The two young designers are extremely dubious about the use tout court of the rationalist language in a territorial context which, just like Portugal, presents considerable geographical varieties on which evident stylistic differences have settled over the centuries.¹²

From the large coastal cities such as Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö to the predominantly agricultural areas of southern Sweden, to the large wooded and almost uninhabited parts in the centre-north of the country, even in this case the study of the architecture that has historically been built demonstrates the need to continue even in the modern phase, with solutions that are not homologated exclusively to functional or compositional standards, but which on the contrary also take the context into consideration. This awareness was progressively substantiated by the two architects in the time between their graduation in 1929 and the foundation of the associated studio in 1938, a period in which Backström and Reinius followed different paths articulated between internships with both Swedish and foreign architects and a great many trips to discover most European countries. Similarly to the trip financed in 1960 by the Gulbenkian Foundation that took Távora not only to Europe but also to Japan and the United States and of which a precious testimony remains in the *Diário*

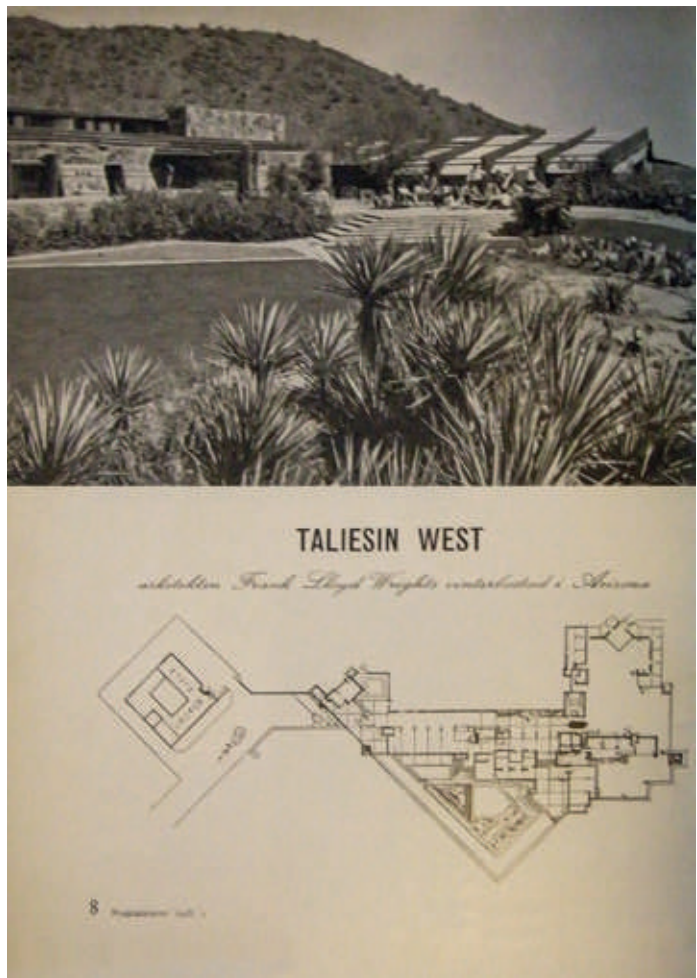
11 Sven Markelius' international outreach began in 1927 as a result of a scholarship that took him first to Dessau and then to Stuttgart to see the houses built for the Werkbund exhibition. Since the 1930s he has been an active participant in CIAM meetings, hosting (in his villa in Nockeby on the outskirts of Stockholm) Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius for a series of lectures that the 2 architects held in Sweden. Markelius' international fame took a further leap forward following the design of the Swedish pavilion built in 1939 in New York for the World's Fair, an episode that would bring him into the large international groups that would lead the design of the United Nations Building in New York and the Unesco headquarters in Paris after the Second World War. See: Stefano Ray, *Il contributo svedese all'architettura contemporanea e l'opera di Sven Markelius* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1969); Eva Rudberg, *Sven Markelius, arkitekt* (Stockholm: Arkitektur Förlag, 1989); Stefano Ray, *Sven Markelius 1889-1972* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1989).

12 In those years there was no comprehensive study like the Portuguese one on the subject of popular architecture in Sweden. In the 1950s, a first concise reading of architectural typological varieties appeared in the volume: George Everard Kidder Smith, *Sweden builds* (New York and Stockholm: Albert Bonnier, 1950), 34-63.

de "bordo",¹³ North America was also decisive for Leif Reinius, who went there in 1938, confronting in particular the works of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), contributing to reinforcing his doubts on the real effectiveness of rationalist architecture.¹⁴ From then on, the Swedish duo would begin to propose compositional solutions integrating two distinct approaches to design with increasing conviction: on the one hand, they continued to pay attention to the themes of the functionalist movement to which Backström and Reinius had fully applied themselves working between 1936 and 1938 in the studio of architect Hakon Ahlberg (1891-1984).

On the other hand, the use of details through which to bring buildings closer to a more serene relationship with man, exemplified in different ways: the use of warm colours to replace white as the hegemonic colour of modern architecture, the search for a link between architecture and its context, the implementation of detailed solutions and exposed materials that go beyond the use of concrete alone. These and other elements that, as in Portugal, were historically part of the country's cultural-constructive heritage were gradually to erode the rigid rationalist shell that had marked Backström and Reinius' academic training, adding a third way, the neo-empiricist way, as a compromise between rational and organic language in the Scandinavian context [Fig. 2].

Távora's early projects express this attempt to synthesise apparently non-overlapping compositional aspects, to reconcile references ascribable to the great masters of the 20th century while at the same time enhancing the context and emphasising the building tradition. Exemplary in this sense is the theoretical study done for the project for the *Casa sobre o mar* on which Távora worked from 1950 onwards in order to obtain his degree in architecture and then again until 1952. Here, the reference to Le Corbusier (1887-1965) with the pure volume raised on pilotis and the curved wall on the roof emerges clearly, but the iconic Farnsworth House by Ludwig Mies van Der Rohe (1886-1969)



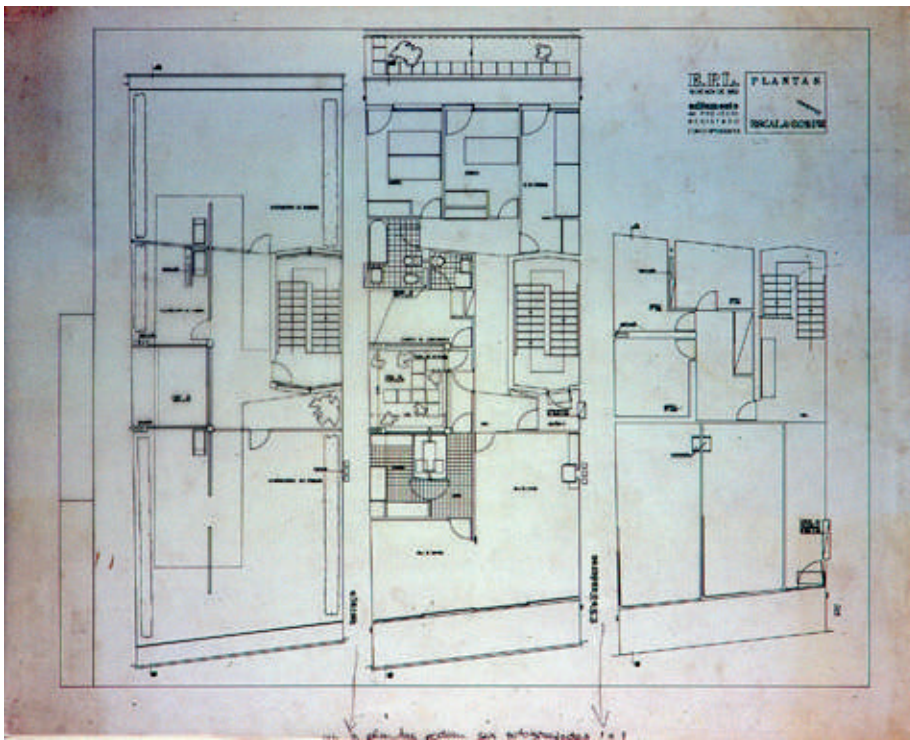
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¹³ In addition to the original text kept at the Marques da Silva Foundation, we refer to recent editions published in Portugal and Italy: Fernando Távora, *Diário de "bordo"*, edited by Rita Marnoto (Matosinhos: Associação Casa da Arquitectura 2012); Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, Raffaella Maddaluno, *Fernando Távora. Diario di bordo* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2022).

¹⁴ On this question, see in particular the pages that Leif Reinius dedicated in the review *Byggmästaren*, of which he was editor in chief between 1944 and 1950, to the United States and to Wright in particular: Leif Reinius, "Glimtar från U.S.A.", *Byggmästaren*, no. 17 (1944): 303-322; Frank Lloyd Wright, "Taliesin West, vinterbostad i Arizona", *Byggmästaren*, no. 1 (1948): 8-12. We also recall the commemorative article written by Reinius himself on the occasion of the American master's death: Leif Reinius, "Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959)", *Arkitektur*, no. 8 (1959): 190-192.

Fig. 20

Front page of the article by Frank Lloyd Wright published in *Byggmästaren*, no. 1 (1949): 8.



3 |

completed in the same years also comes to mind, which is characterised by the similar choice of raising the building above the ground. At the same time, the choice of inserting a modest staircase oblique to the orthogonal geometry of the rest of the composition and a blue and white texture clearly visible in the drawings and the maquette are clear expressions of an attempt to connect with the past and with that “Portuguese milieu” of which Távora had written a few years earlier.¹⁵ The *Foz do Douro* flat block in Porto completed between 1952 and 1954 confirms, although less clearly from the outside, this thoughtful compromise between modernity and tradition. If on the outside, in addition to the arrangement of the roof-solarium with thin vertical and horizontal concrete slabs without any curved walls, the essential volume on the main south-west-facing façade dug deep to try to protect the large glazed portions of the living area from direct sunlight emerges, on the inside Távora enriches the project with fine details. The project drawings show the precise definition of each joinery part of the wooden frames as well as the design of the iron balustrade with a soft wooden handrail that characterises the bare volume of the stairwell. This does not have a banal rectangular plan but has diverging shorter sides, giving the space a pointed configuration – Ponti or Ridolfi style?¹⁶ – bordered by vertical planes that are totally closed except

15 Távora, *O problema da casa portuguesa*.

16 “Porto: Bloco de Habitações na av. do Brasil (1952)”, *Arquitectura*, no. 71 (July 1961): 14. In introducing Távora’s projects, Nuno Portas refers to several Italian projects carried out in the same year: Nuno Portas, “Arquitecto Fernando Távora: 12 anos de actividade profissional”, *Arquitectura*, no. 71 (July 1961): 11-13.



4

Fig. 3

Fernando Távora, *Foz do Douro* flat block, Porto 1952-1954, floor plans (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 3

Fernando Távora, *Foz do Douro* flat block, Porto 1952-1954, view of the stairwell (photo by Alessandra Chemollo).



5 |

for the top level on the roof-terrace, which is entirely glazed and allows light to enter from above, enhancing every detail of the staircase with a marked luminous contrast [Fig. 3, 4].

On the Swedish territory, Backström and Reinius' professional debut led from the very first works to an interesting process of combining materials that partly or wholly departed from those of modernity in order to overcome the uninspiring white plastered walls. The first residential building the two Scandinavian architects completed was the *Kvarteret Tegelslagaren* flat block built in Stockholm in 1937, a parallelepiped volume completely similar in size and proportions to the contemporary expression of rational architecture. The details, however, are totally different from the usual rationalist housing block of the 1930s, as there are no ribbon windows and white plaster replaced by red brick and teak wood façades, while the ground floor features grey-green marble cladding from Kolmården [Fig. 5]. If the layout and the cut of the interior spaces are calibrated and satisfy functional requirements in an impeccable manner, on the outside the architects attempt this process of softening and contamination with tradition that will continue over the following decades with ever-changing results due to the context, the living function and other constraints that in their opinion must be conditioned by the project.

For instance, between 1939 and 1940, Backström and Reinius designed *Elfviggården*, one of the many subsidised housing complexes for frail people that the two architects worked on during their careers. In this case, the complex is not located in the city centre but in a narrow area between a coniferous forest and the sea. The project therefore takes on a much more articulated solution from a planimetric point of view, the result of the juxtaposition of several parallelepiped volumes in turn ordered by the union of modular elements

Fig. 5

Sven Backström e Leif Reinius, Kvarteret Tegelslagaren, Stockholm 1937, detail of the facade (photo by the author).

represented by the studios. The use and juxtaposition of materials also change, with fair-faced concrete being used here to create the connection between the rocky substrate and the elevation of the façades made of fair-faced bricks [Fig. 6]. This dissimilarity of planimetric solutions and details is one of the main peculiarities of the design model implemented by Backström and Reinius since the late 1930s, a strategy that is substantially similar to the one implemented by Távora on the same typological theme.

Equally thoughtful in terms of the use of materials and plan development is the design for the *Holiday House* in Ofir, which Távora worked on between 1957 and 1958. Here in particular, the use of a wide variety of natural materials for the interior spaces strikes the eye: different types of terracotta, wood and stone which in turn is worked with different degrees of finish. The building, almost completely enclosed to the north, rises with only one floor above ground and the elevations are a sequence of white walls (the only exception being the chimney flue which emerges from the façade level and is painted yellow) alternating with large glazed portions with wooden frames. The floor plan clearly shows the functionalist layout characterised by a central core (with the same floor continuing to the exterior) from which three asymmetrical arms branch off to form the main areas of the house. The living area is a large continuous room that stretches from the central core towards the east, the five-bedroom area located in the south-facing arm, and finally the third part – the smaller one – with the kitchen and some service rooms and the garage. The geometric matrix that governs the composition has not, however, constrained the axuality of the walls and the insertion of the plan within a rigid orthogonal grid, from which the design of the house eschews, responding instead more effectively, as Távora¹⁷ has written, to a long list of demands and conditioning environmental factors that also determined the position and size of the openings [Fig. 7].



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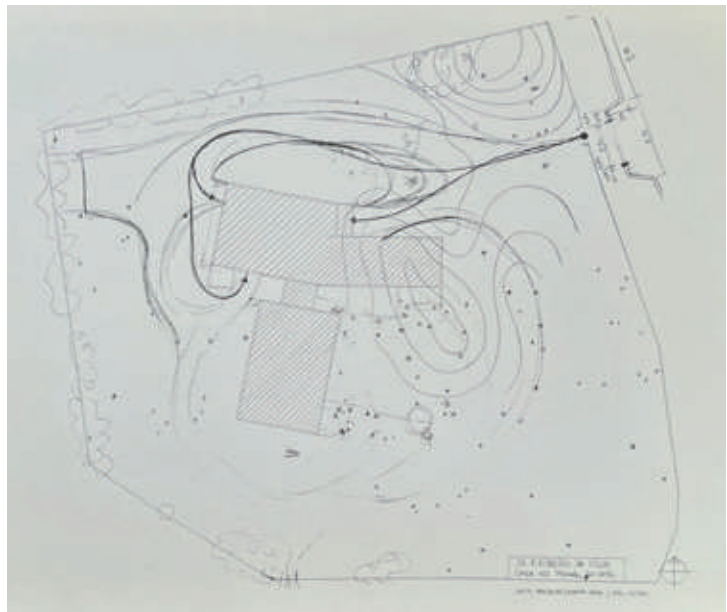


Fig. 6

Sven Backström e Leif Reinius, *Elfvinggården*, Stockholm 1939-1940, detail of the facade (photo by the author).

Fig. 7

Fernando Távora, *Holiday home, Ofir* 1952-1954, floor plans (*Casa de férias em Ofir*, Lisboa: Blau 1992, 8).

¹⁷ Cfr. Fernando Távora, *Casa de Férias em Ofir / Summer House at Ofir* (Lisboa: Editorial Blau, 1992), 2, 5.



A skilful balance between modern rigour and the revival of tradition that in some ways can be compared with one of Backström and Reinius' most famous projects, namely the various residential blocks and neighbourhoods of star-shaped houses – *stjärnhus* they built starting from the Gröndal building between 1943 and 1945. In this case too, the ambition of the two architects was to make the rigid geometric scheme of the plan based on the juxtaposition of multi-storey modular elements in the shape of a “Y” less exaggerated. The repetition of these elements that would lead to the determination of courtyards of different sizes, from the perfectly hexagonal ones in Gröndal to the large spaces of the Rosta district in the city of Örebro [Fig. 8], is accompanied by the study of the colour theme that only minimally involves white. Warm tones, sometimes with contrasting juxtapositions aimed at enhancing the cleanliness of the volumes, characterise the façades marked by the high number of balconies, and at the same time the contrast with the exposed concrete used for the part of the basement that raises the living volume above ground level is marked. It is in particular the earth colours of the different shades of red that are used by Backström and Reinius that reinforce the relationship with the traditional “Falun red” paint, the well-known red paint produced from some of the residues from the copper mine in the Swedish town of Falun and used for centuries to protect wooden dwellings from the aggression of moisture and animal pests. Then come the pitched roofs that definitively overcome with this project the horizontal tectonics of rationalist volumes and bring a theme also typical of Swedish domestic architecture back into the centre of the design.

The quote and reference to the past as a thread that ideally links Távora with Backström and Reinius emerges with even greater intensity in the project for the building constructed between 1958 and 1960 on Avenida Pereira Reis in Porto. The building, which in this case has a rectangular floor plan with the

Fig. 8

Sven Backström e Leif Reinius, *Stjärnhusen* “Rosta”, Örebro 1948-1952 (photo by the author).



9

largest dimension parallel to the street as opposed to the *Foz do Douro* complex, is characterised by a perfectly symmetrical façade score that has only one misalignment on the vertical plane to mark the position of the entrance and the staircase in the centre. To this condition of stereotyped rationality, the Portuguese architect contrasts details that once again recall tradition. Firstly, the four conspicuous gargoyles that mark the design of the façade with their expressive overhangs and project, like sundials in sequence, their shadows on the façade's second diriment element, namely the blue and white ceramic cladding typical of Porto, not with the well-known figurative references but with a repetitive geometric design that refers to the Arab origin of the decorative theme. This is combined with the need to externally reveal the structural matrix of the building by visually isolating the load-bearing concrete frame plastered in white and easily distinguishable from the other white and blue rather than granite cladding on the ground floor [Fig. 9].

Details that, in Portugal as in Sweden, thus render a different way of doing architecture that has as its common premise man and the earth¹⁸ at the centre of a reciprocal relationship of influences that have substantiated the choice of a "Terceira Via".

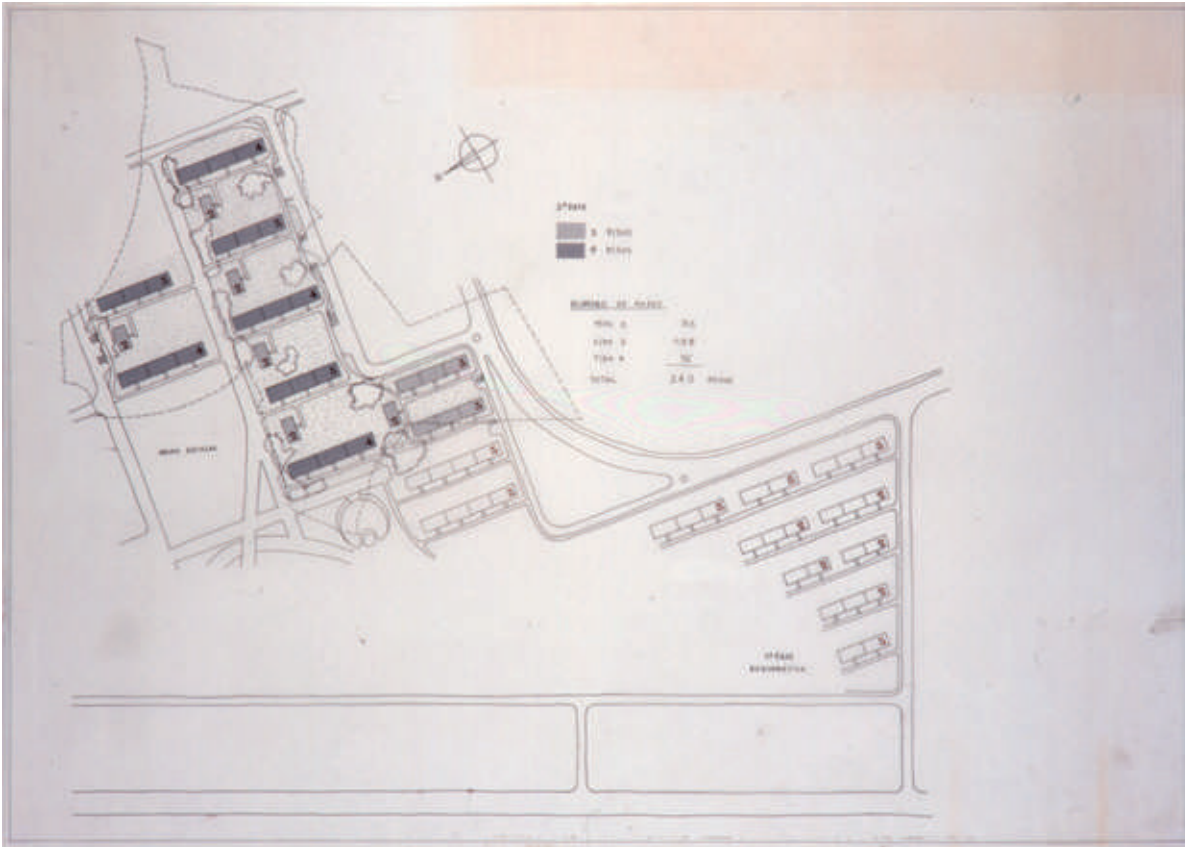
18 See: Leif Reinius, "Architectural Experiments", in *Nordic Architects Write. A Documentary Anthology*, Michael Asgaard Andersen, ed., (New York. Routledge, 2008; Távora), 348-353.
 See also: Távora, "O problema da casa portuguesa".

Fig. 9

Fernando Távora, Rua Pereira Reis flat block, Porto 1958-1960, (FIMS/AFT).

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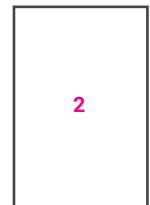
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Ramalde Housing Estates

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and partial realization)	1952-1960
PLACE/ADDRESS	Ramalde, Porto
COLLABORATORS	–
CUSTOMER	Habitacões Económicas – Federação de Caixas de Previdência
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



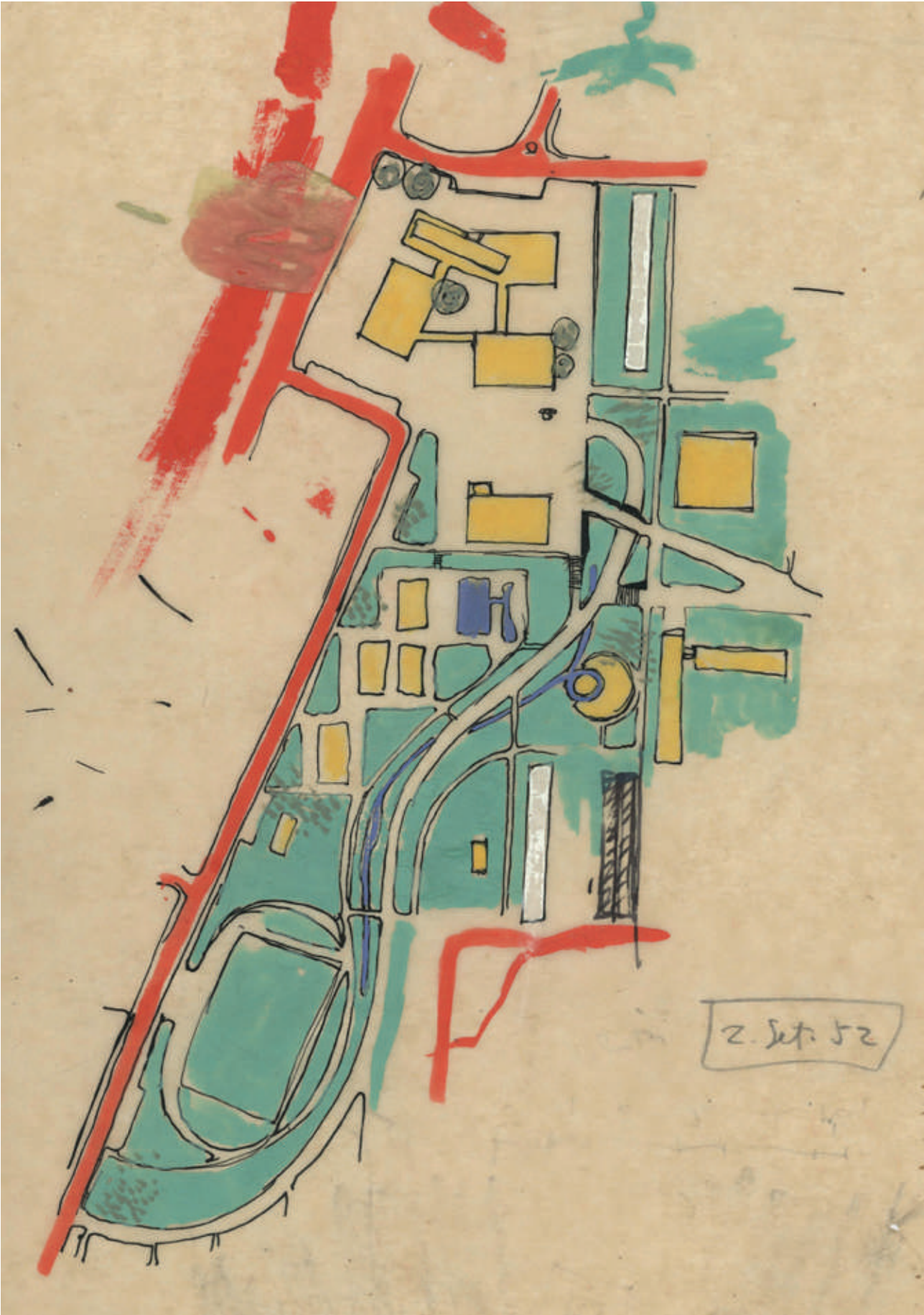
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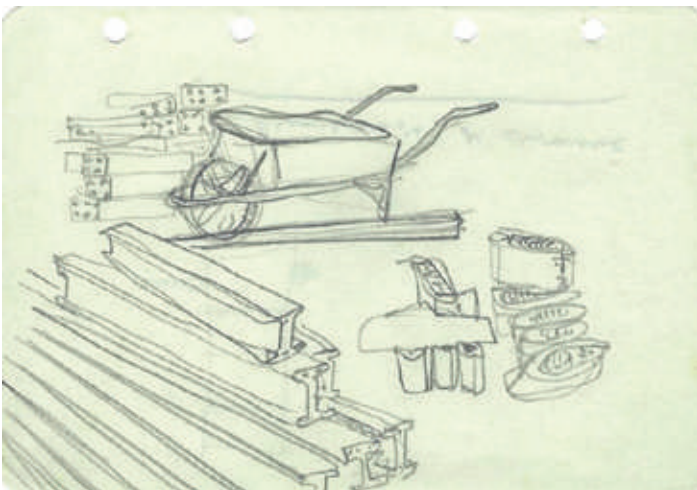
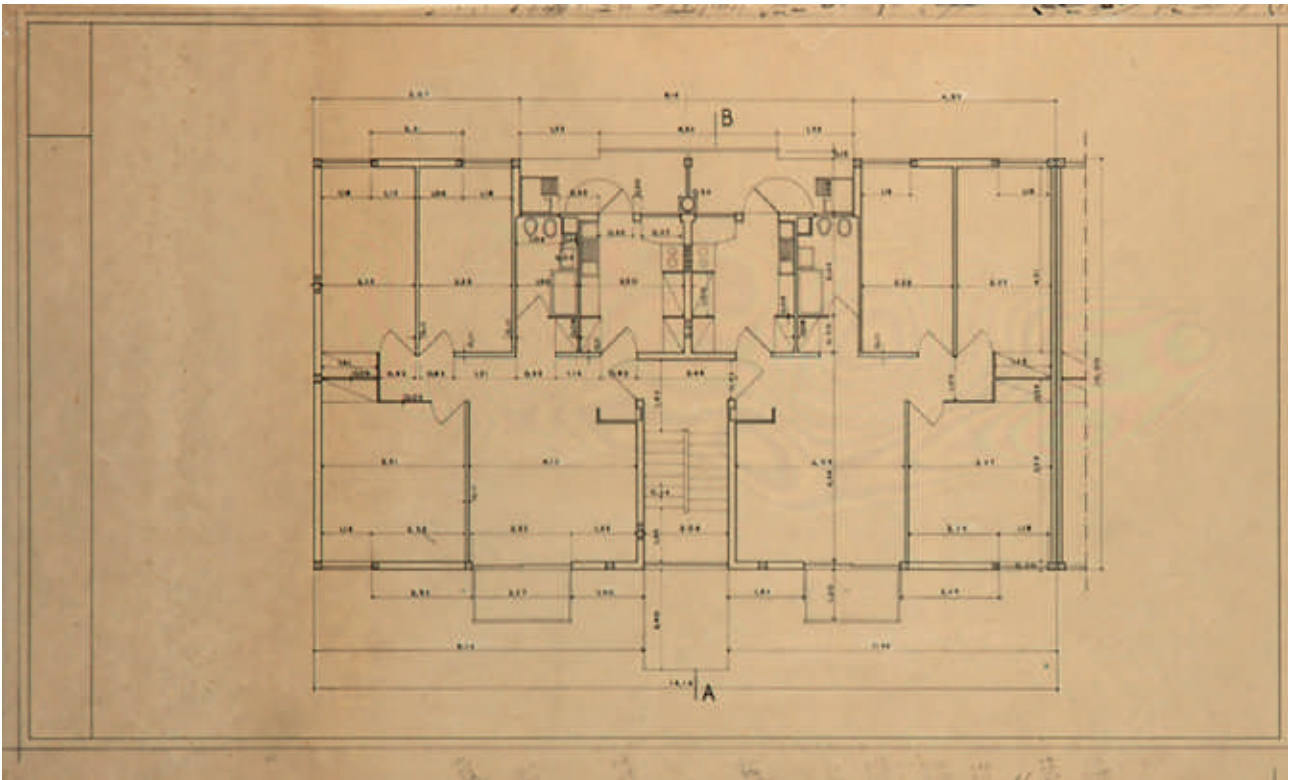
IMG.1: Remalde housing estates, Porto 1952-1960, general plan, ink on tracing paper; IMG.2: general plan sketch, coloured markers and ink on cardboard (FIMS/AFT).

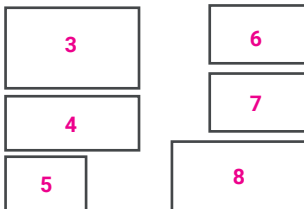


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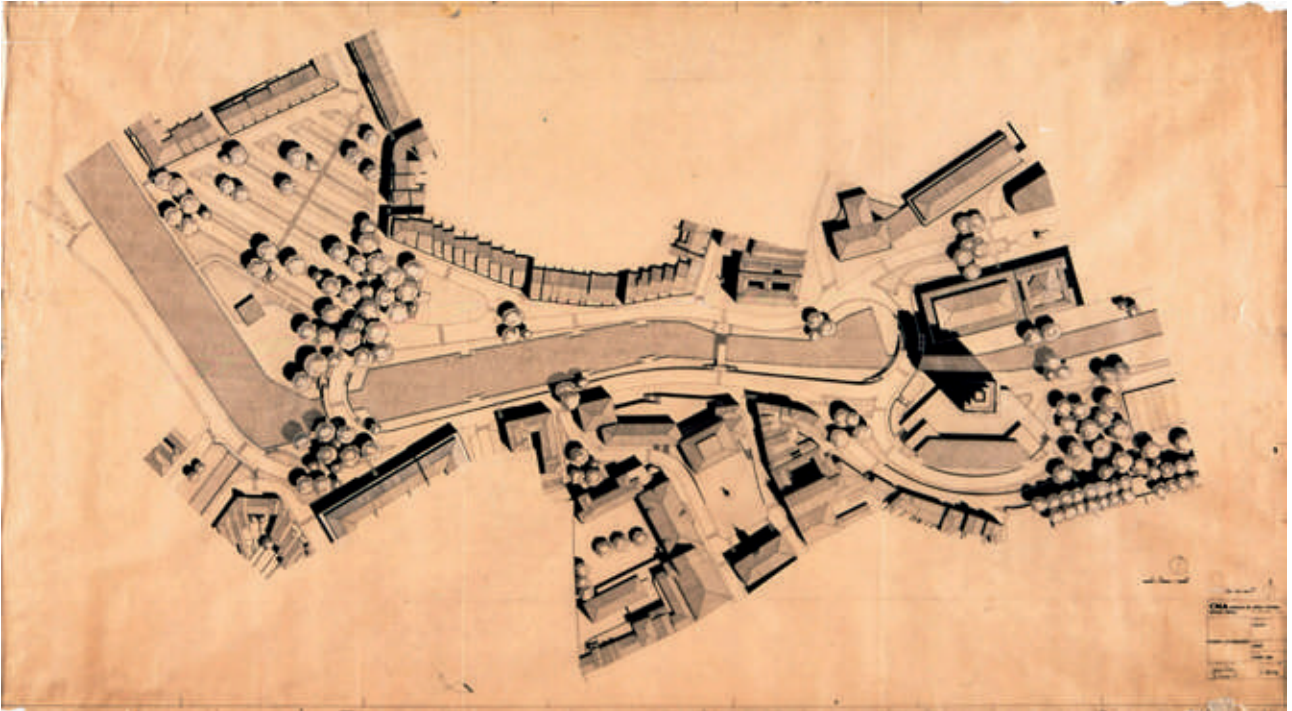


IMG.3: Remalde housing estates, Porto 1952-1960, Plan (building type 3), heliographic copy; IMG.4: main facade elevation (building type 3), tracing paper; IMG.5: building construction sketch, pencil on paper (FIMS/AFT).



IMG.6: Remalde housing estates, Porto 1952-1960, elevation of the three-storey building, ink and coloured pencils on heliographic copy; IMG.7-8: terraced house elevation sketches, ink and coloured pencils on heliographic copies (FIMS/AFT).

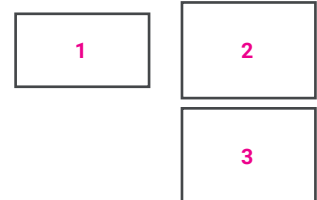




Renovation of Aveiro City Centre

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and partial realization)	1962-1972
PLACE/ADDRESS	Aveiro
COLLABORATORS	Alberto Neves, Joaquim Sampaio
CUSTOMER	Municipal Council of Aveiro
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



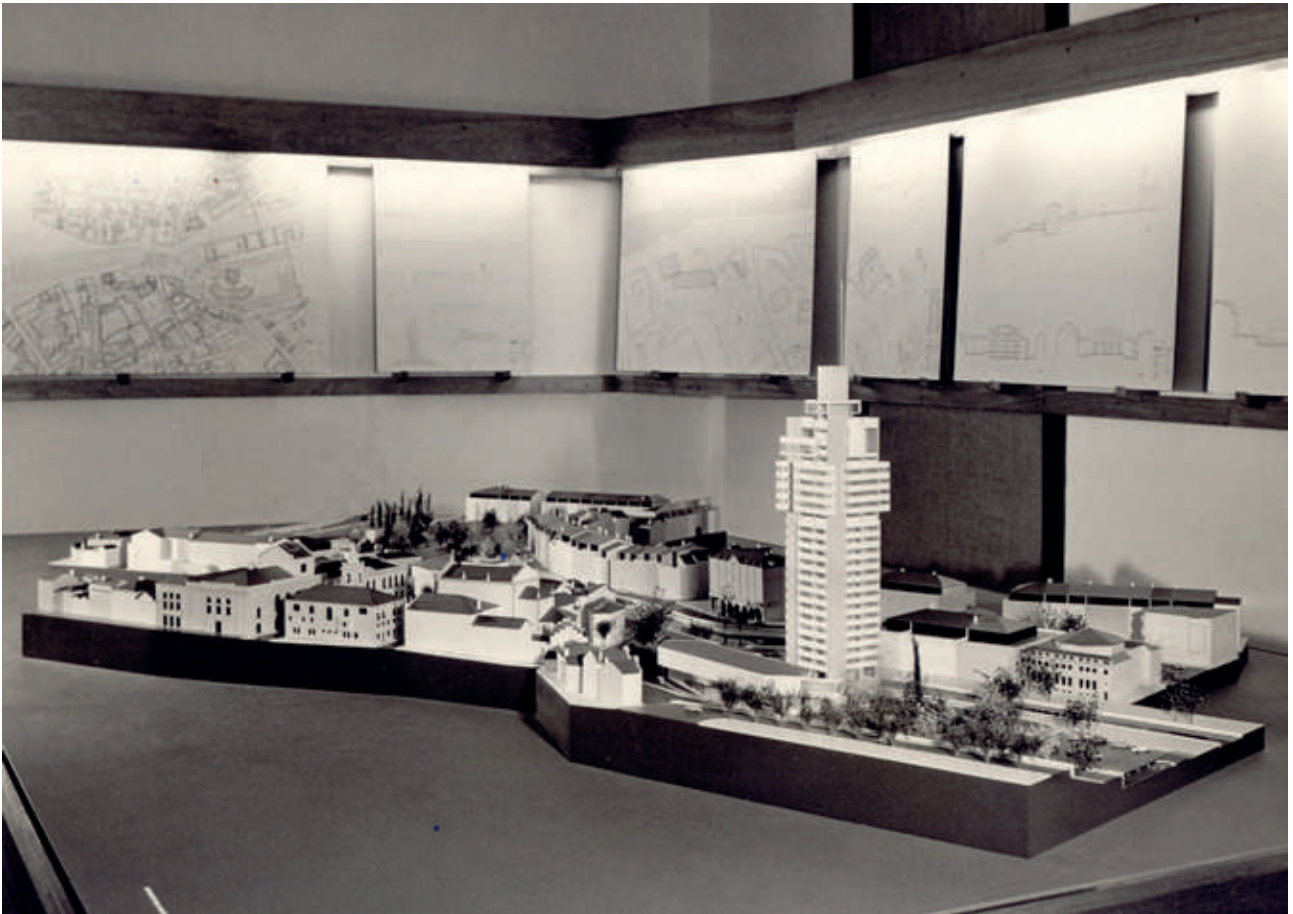
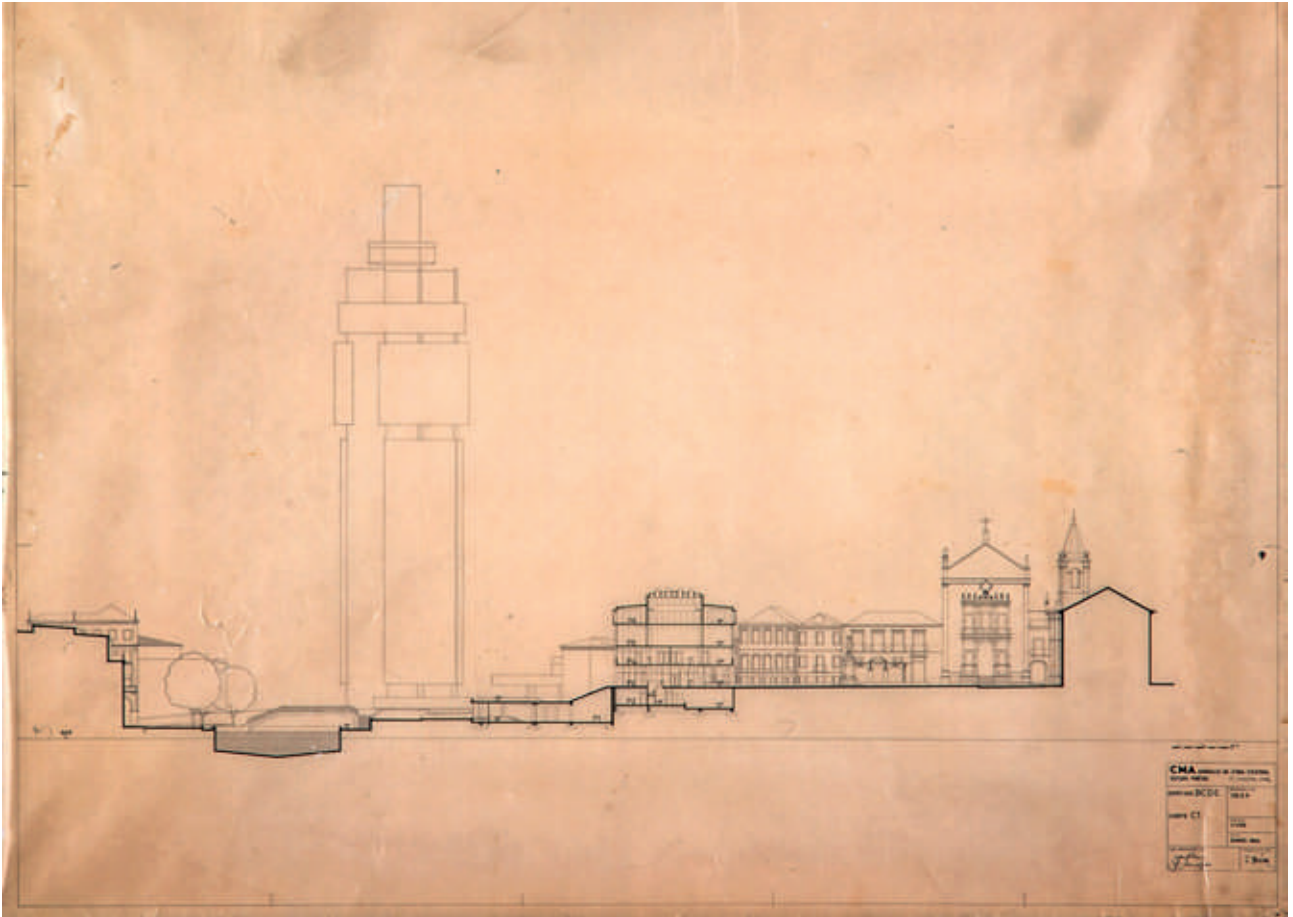
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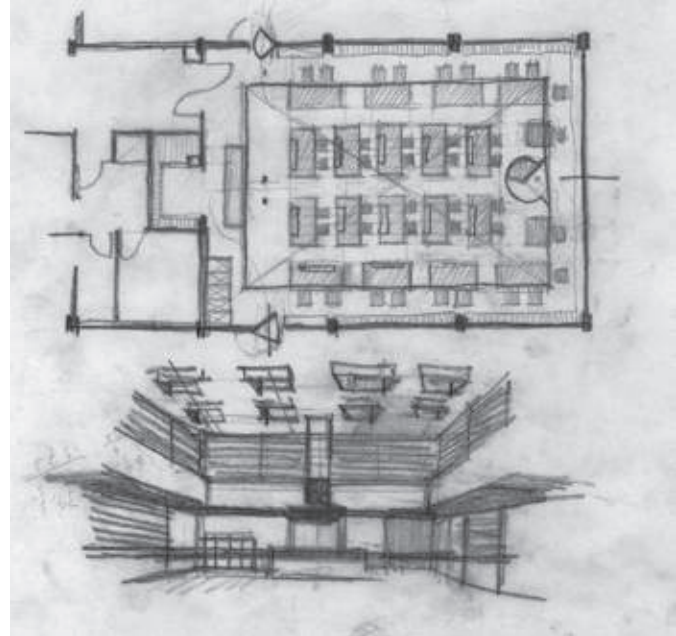
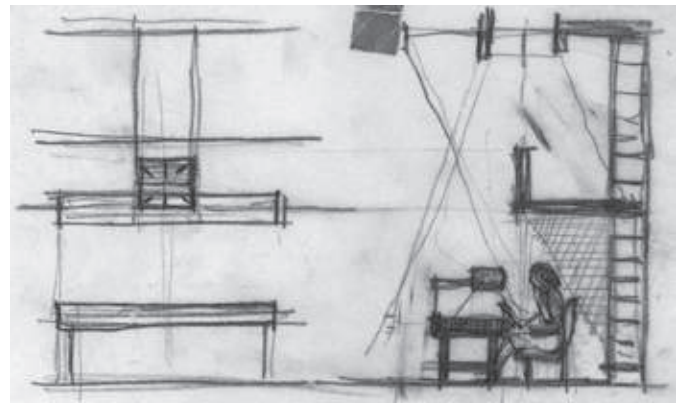
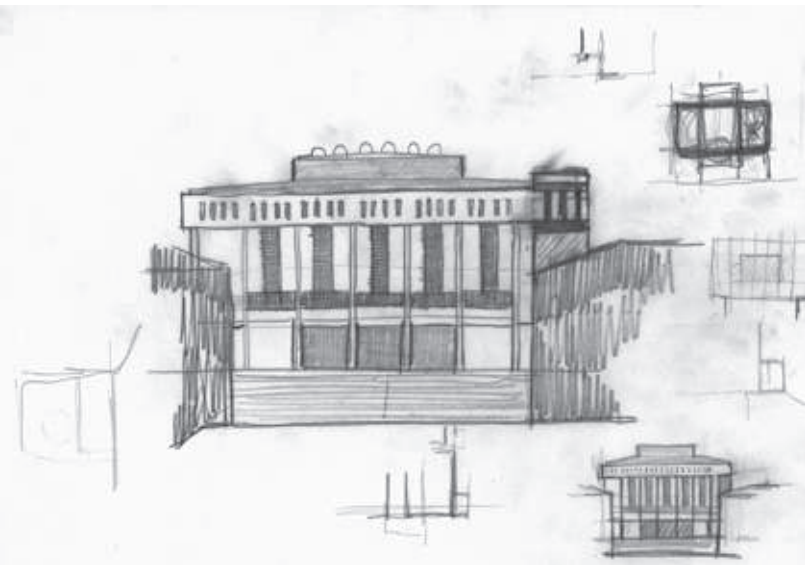
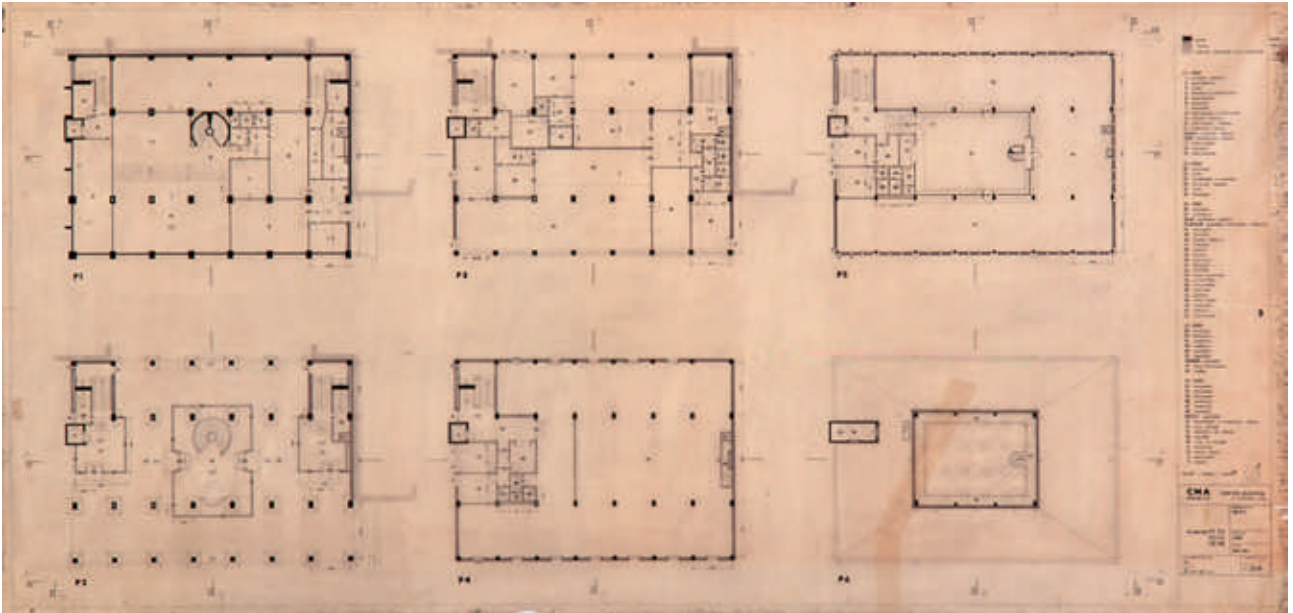
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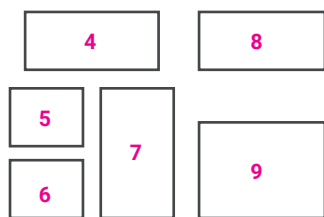
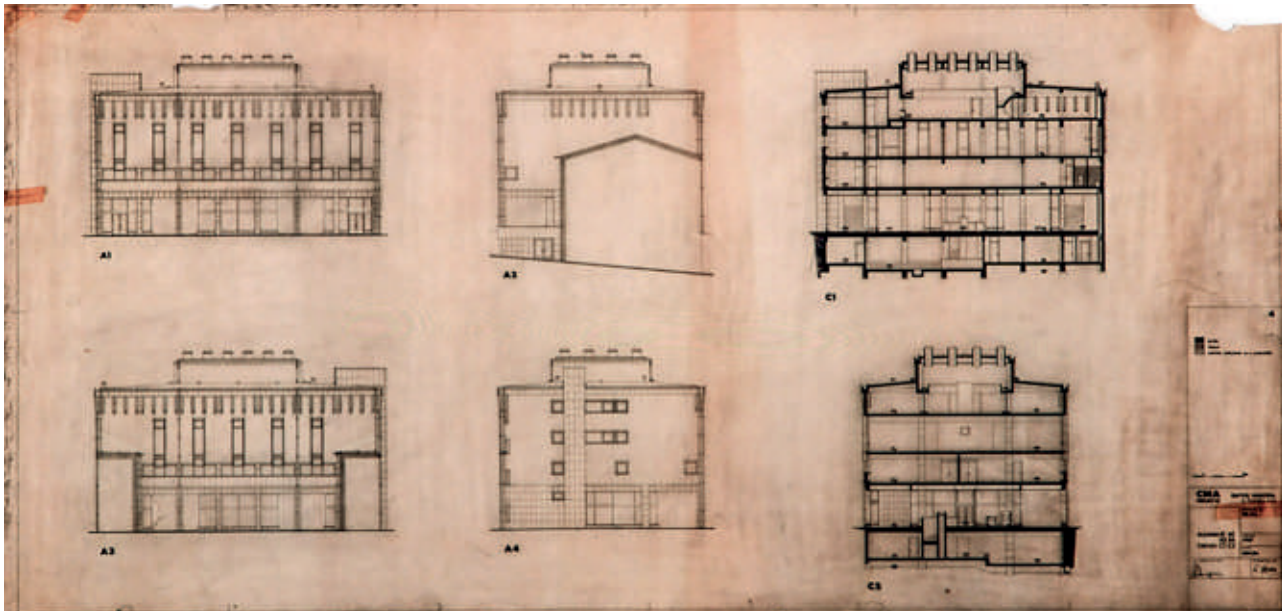
IMG.1: Renovation of the City Centre, Town Hall and Tower, Aveiro 1963-1967, general plan, tracing paper; IMG.2: section at the town hall building, tracing paper; IMG.3: maquette (FIMS/AFT).



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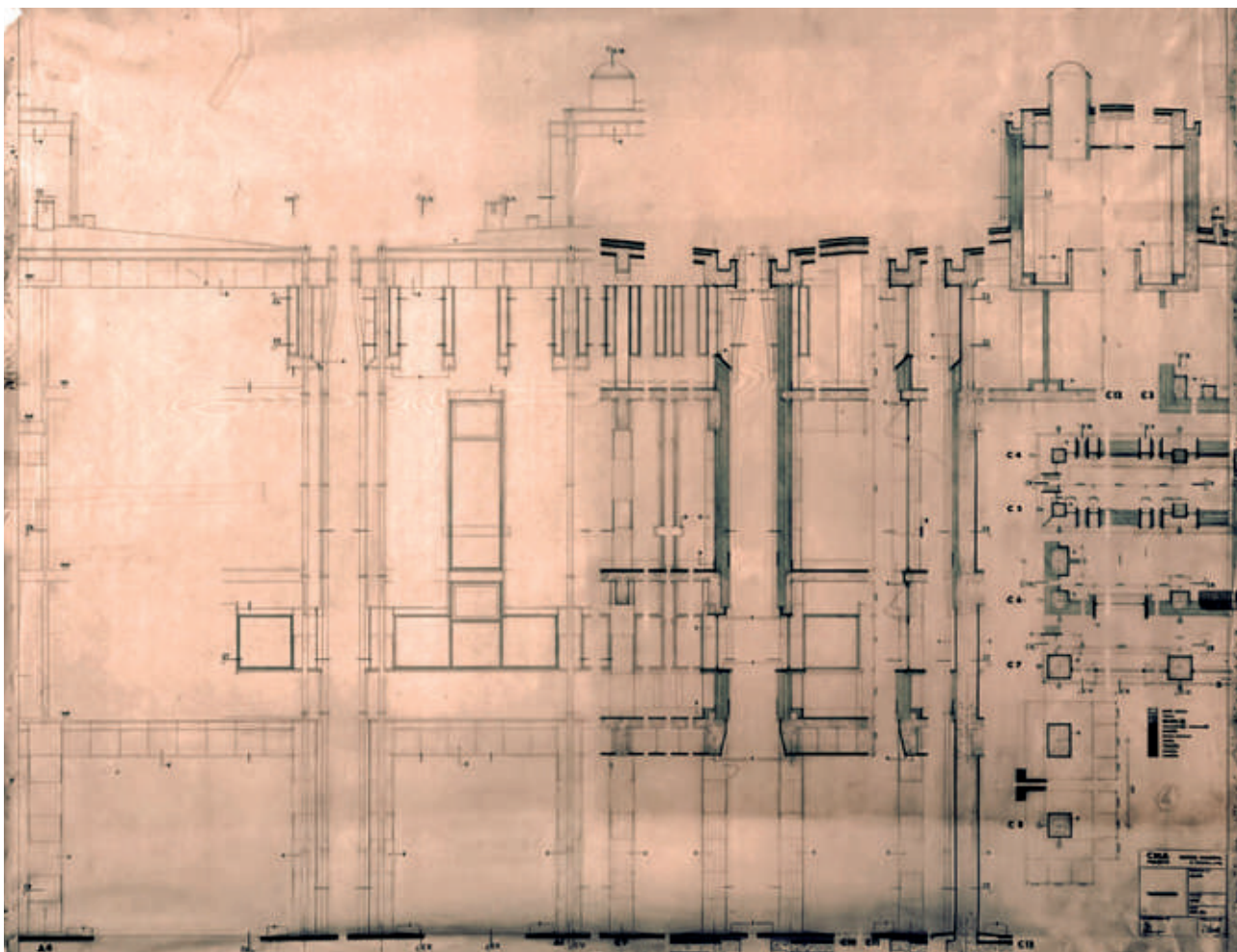


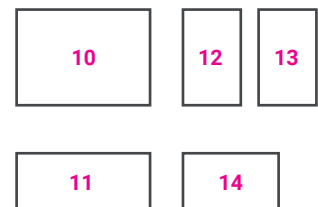
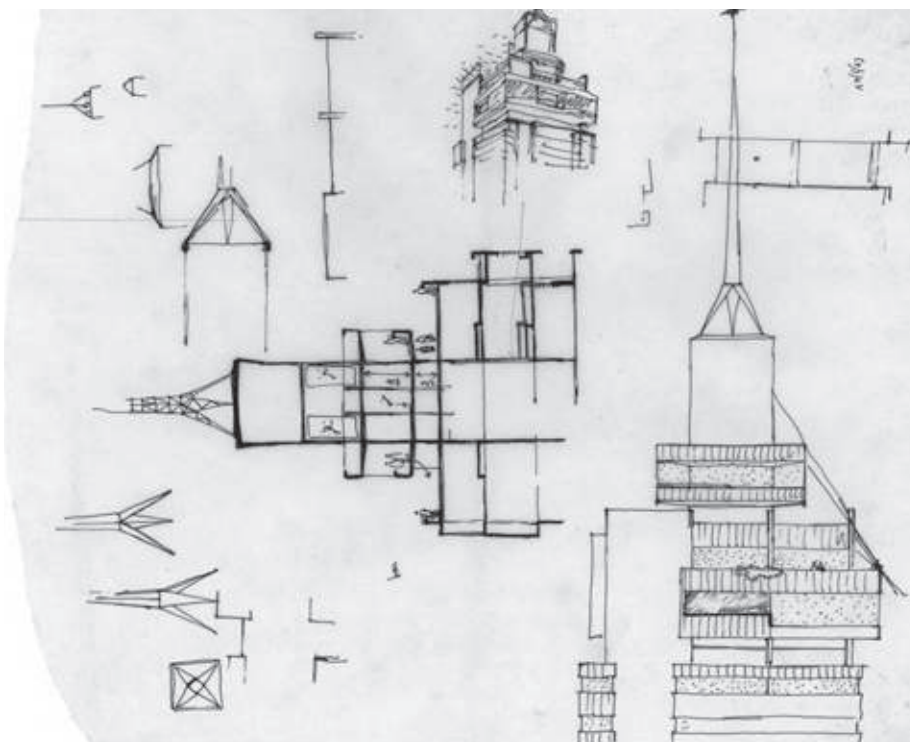
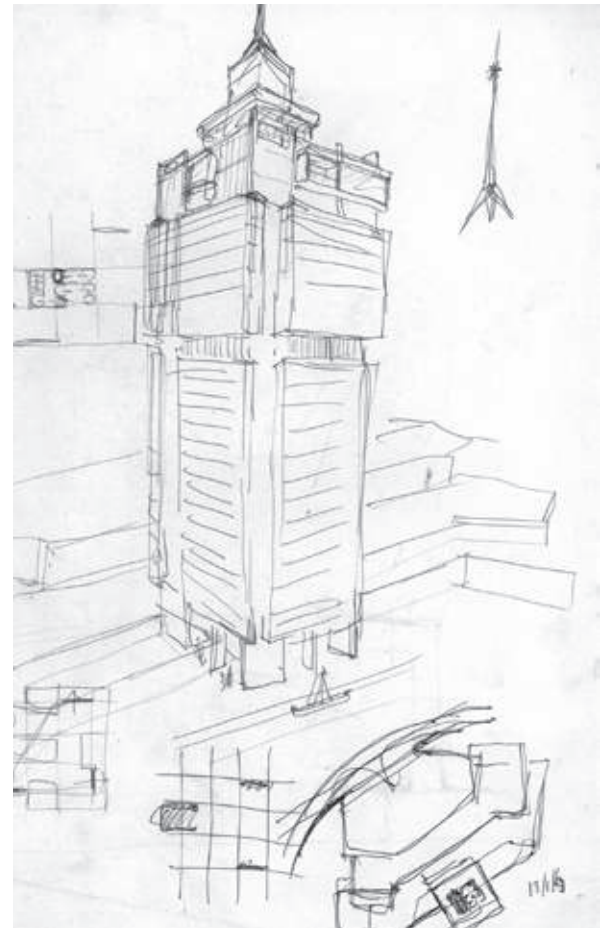
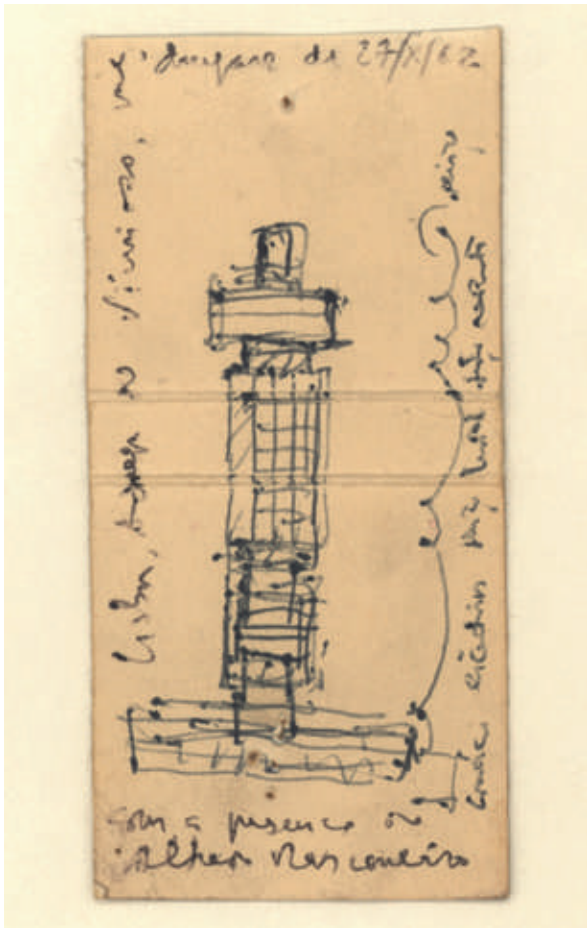




IMG.4: Town hall, Aveiro 1963-1967 (with Alberto Neves and Joaquim Sampaio), floor plans, elevations and sections, tracing paper; IMG.5: paper sketch of the main façade and details; IMG.6: paper sketch of the corner solution; IMG.7:

paper sketches of interior solutions and details; IMG.8: elevations and sections, tracing paper; IMG.9: section-elevation of the main façade and details, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).





IMG.10: Caixa Geral de Depósitos (with A. Neves, J. Sampaio and Bernardo Ferrão), Aveiro 1965-1972, floor plans, tracing paper; IMG.11: elevations and sections, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).

IMG.12: Project for the "Rumo" Tower (with A. Neves – Commissioned by João Nunes da Rocha), Aveiro 1962, sketch of elevation, charcoal on paper; IMG.13: sketches (perspective and plans), charcoal on paper; IMG.14: sections and details, charcoal on paper (FIMS/AFT).

Portuguese Moderns: the Ramalde Neighborhood by Fernando Távora 1950

Social Housing, Modernist Planning, Political Identity, Postwar, Porto

/Abstract

In the postwar, Portugal, entering its second decade under dictatorship and although not being directly involved in the war, witnessed the promotion of mass “social” housing. Portuguese architects were allowed a creative platform for the reinvention of housing typologies, urban forms and ideas in dialogue with central Europe. Fernando Távora was one of the architects engaged in this process early in his career as council architect at Porto, and designing one of very few examples of modernist housing in Ramalde. This article examines this early work by Távora as a grounding moment in Portuguese modern architecture after the war, situating Ramalde in the geography of Porto’s postwar urban changes. Using the method of *derive* as a form of critical geographical analysis, the article combines archival research with formal and environmental analysis of the built environment of Ramalde. Although Távora’s eminent career is more commonly referred to later works, this article argues that Ramalde’s housing plan, entangled in the dictatorship’s working of welfare with control, opens the discussion to alternative readings of postwar modern architecture in Portugal, while contributing to debates about the parallel development of modernism and European political identity in the postwar.

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Porto

February 2015.

I descend at Ramalde metro station. To the east there is a group of four storied buildings with a 'social housing' look, walls complemented with graffiti tags, abused sidewalks and greenery, old cars enduring solemnly, and other attributes of post-war suburbs built around Europe, although this one was built much later. To the west there is an old narrow road, bound to the north by what seems to be an old farmhouse or maybe an old industrial unit from the beginning of the past century. To the south, the road is bound by a couple of small houses, modest looking, for the exception of a two-storied façade, no house behind it, looking like the home of a once wealthy family.

This road is still made of stone, my feet feel the 18th century, my eyes are conflicted but a young citizen informs me that the shopping mall – *Norte Shopping* – is just one metro stop away. I did not ask where the shopping mall was, but which way was north. I have to go west, past the industrial zone and into another postwar suburb.

Going around this industrial area is not as uncomfortable as I imagined; the sidewalks are wider and better cared for than those in many central areas of Porto. Also, there are plenty of people walking around, another surprise. One look at the satellite view of this area and gets the image of running scared amidst big trucks. It is not the case at all, although I will have to find a path around the freeway leading north to the port and the airport and dividing the industrial area in two.

I have driven this freeway many times, always assuming that I was beyond the city, not even in a suburb but just passing through an industrial area. All you can see from the freeway are old modern looking warehouses. I never suspected these warehouses also served as a buffer, even if unwittingly, to housing neighbourhoods around them. The old and tall plan-trees siding the freeway are a clue that this was probably not a freeway to start with, at least not in the contemporary sense, but instead a 19th century styled avenue, a walk able boulevard, wanting to serve more than the mere flux of merchandise.

Planning the “great estate”

In March 1948, Porto's council approved the design of a road extension connecting the “5 de outubro” road, which leads directly to one of the city's central areas – the boavista roundabout – to the port of Leixões or what we might call “the Douro-Leixões economic complex”.¹ At the time Leixões was one of the country's main interfaces. By the early 1950s, Porto became one of country's main industrial centres, surpassing Lisbon in terms of active population

¹ Expression used by the architecture then student José Borrego, related to the fact that the port of *leixões* was originally built for boats that could not sail the river Douro, where the city's commercial activity was historically concentrated, see José Borrego, *Anteplano Duma Zona Portuária – Urbanologia* (MA diss., FAUP, Porto 1954), 3.

involved in the industrial sector.² The 1948 new avenue design emerged from the political will to modernize the economy in the wake of a wartime urban plan foregrounding the city's industrial development, part of the postwar economic restructuring enabled by the Marshall Plan. The new avenue in effect involved creating a more efficient corridor between the nodes of distribution (Leixões) and the various productive and storage units spread throughout the city and its outskirts. In other words, it involved making fast tracks for the drainage of the city's productivity [Fig. 1].



This new avenue also implied a rationalization of the city's economic activities, namely where and how to concentrate headquarters, technical offices, storage and distribution centres, while removing these programs from the city centre, freeing it for an emerging service sector. Indeed, businesses appropriated key sections of the city centre and, to accomplish this effectively, urban policy gravitated around business priorities. From the outset, the road extension approved in 1948 drew its logic not from the territory that it would occupy, but from the desired reorganization of central Porto and its welcoming of a modern business oriented urban effectiveness. It is, thus, curious to observe how the council's urbanization office proposed an urbanization plan for the lands adjacent to the new avenue with several housing quarters. Indeed, it appears Porto's council took the opportunity offered by the new planning priorities to provide some amelioration to the city's housing situation. For this reason, the council's urbanization office moved ahead with the idea that this new avenue needed to be more than a corridor of merchandise, but also an extension of the city, outgrowing into one of its semi-rural outskirts.

The problem of the freeway we experience today was then the problem of rearranging the city's population and, thus, tending to those that would be without

Fig. 1

The new road system proposed in the 1952 master urban plan (Antão de Almeida Garrett, *Plano Regulador da Cidade do Porto*).

² Fernando Rosas (ed.), *História de Portugal: O Estado Novo (1926-1974)*, vol. 7 (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1993), 65.

a place after the transformation of central Porto into a third-sector hub. In this respect, the reformist economic avenues engaged with more than one aspect of the city's industrial and commercial productivity – its historically consolidated concentration of human labour [Fig. 2].

I go beneath the freeway, through the east side tunnel, the sidewalks are still generous and ample. As I reach the other side of the freeway, coming out of the tunnel, the landscape is entirely different from the one I just came from. On my right side, to the north-west, there is a large estate with old and tall trees, encircled by a stone wall that looks aristocratic in appeal. I say aristocratic because it encloses *Casa de Ramalde* (House of Ramalde), the past residence of an old local noble family. Behind this estate, further westwards, there is a group of collective housing blocks, state-promoted in its apparent cheap materials and pre-made appeal. Facing these is the other side of the industrial zone I have departed from.

To my left there is a group of small two-storied houses with a meek complexion. Behind them a multi-storied condominium rises, probably not built twenty years ago, and deeply contrasting with the pauper, smallish, houses. I go past the first couple of small houses, symbolically taking me back to a village setting, as if suddenly walking through rural Portugal. Now I am somewhere in the past, an unrecognisable, yet familiar, past that lingers. As I go by these houses I reach an open space, at the corner where this road intersects another coming from the south. An old communal laundry occupies the corner, done in cement and stone, with large back-to-back cement tanks, where the water to rinse clothes still lays. This old public space, where mostly women used to gather, is just beneath the intersecting roads almost a full story. The latter were probably laid after the communal laundry and menacingly insinuated themselves over it. The open space created by the public laundry enables one to look within the innards of the old houses' plots. A combination of metal and wood sheds and shacks outgrowing slightly more permanent brick walls shows itself. In between these sheds and shacks some trees and chimneys pop up. There is probably some garden space in between the shacks, walls and old houses. But besides these packed gardens, the inner space of the quarter, constituted by the old houses on the intersecting roads, seems almost completely packed with the attributes of a self-functioning village. In other words, it is a collective housing complex, not by design but by gradual use and appropriation. The inner parts of the plots accommodate unforeseen tenements, residents and more. It is that unrecognisable familiar past that persists to exist and which came to be called *ilha* in Porto in some situations.³

3 The *ilha*, literally translatable as island, deriving its meaning from the latin *insulae* is the name associated with an architectural typology for workers' quarters specific to Porto's modern urban history, equivalent to the Birmingham back-to-back. It is also an old Portuguese slang word to signify that which belongs to the outcast city, the imaginary ghetto of Porto. For a history of the *ilha* see: Maria Ferreira, *As "Ilhas" do Porto: Estudo Socioeconómico*, (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto – Pelouro de Habitação e Acção Social, 2001); Gaspar Martins Pereira, "As Ilhas No Percurso Das Famílias Trabalhadoras Do Porto Em Finais Do Século XIX," in *Família, Espaço E Património*, edited by Carlota Santos Porto: CITCEM – Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar Cultura, Espaço e Memória, 2011), 477-493; Paulo Castro Seixas, "Ilhas E Novos Condomínios No Porto Do Século XX, Reflexos Do Passado, Interrogações Do Presente," in *Família, Espaço E Património*, edited by Carlota Santos (Porto: CITCEM – Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar Cultura, Espaço e Memória, 2011), 495–502.

I continue up the road leading from the communal laundry and its rural *ilha* to the townhall and the main street of Ramalde. On one side stands a new church, on the other the cemetery with its old chapel. I pass through an accumulation of what seems to be housing blocks erected sometime in the 1990s, with ground floor shops and adjacent parking. The road then becomes wider as four white story blocks, disposed in a strict geometrical pattern, emerge. Walking down a straight and generously spaced avenue, these blocks accommodate large open spaces in-between. The blocks are at times parallel and perpendicular to the avenue, so the in-between spaces oscillate between courtyard and green open space. The latter have grass that needs some caring, lumps of dirt appearing here and there. There are also cars parked everywhere, usually right next to small steel structures for drying clothes, recently built by the township to improve the neighbourhood's living conditions, namely by physically suggesting inhabitants not to dry their clothes in their balconies and windows – this apparently created the wrong impression for visitors.

Central stone paths in-between the blocks connect their different entrances. To enter each block, other smaller stone paths lead perpendicularly away from the main path onto common entrances. The base of the blocks is coated in granite, rising to waist level and then giving way to white towed façades. This creates the impression the blocks emerge from rock itself, that its foundations are stable and deep. The stone is but a filling, most blocks don't have basements and the ones that do, don't run very deep. It is more the symbolic gesture of gravity, both physical and social, as granite is a stone widely used in the north of Portugal, usually identified with nobility.

The white towed façades are blind on the block's shorter extremities and opened by groups of waist height windows and small balconies with regular rhythms, no deviation from an orthogonal metric. These rhythms are interrupted by the staircase that distributes to apartments on both sides of it. Residents that moved in in the late 1960s said the central staircase used to be open: each landing was an open balcony where people used to gather and talk during the day, in-between home shores – mainly women – and, when in summer, also during the night, making the stair landings small public living rooms from where they could talk with people walking in the stone paths, grass and on other staircases.⁴ Nowadays, however, these stairways are semi-enclosed by frosted glass blades that reach well above medium Portuguese heights; the ground floor entrance was also closed.

The average number of apartments per block is between twelve and eighteen, each block built from six apartments per floor, three on each side of the central staircase. This neighbourhood was named *Campinas* and promoted by public housing policies from the early sixties that aimed to solve, in a more systematic way, the housing problem of the lower working-class of Porto. The *Campinas* neighbourhood came to house all kinds of lower-class families, including some

4 Collected from a group interview with old residents, on 11 of March of 2015.

from then recently demolished *ilhas*. Campinas, however, was just a portion of a greater urban plan publicly announced through the newspaper *O Primeiro de Janeiro*, in 1950, in the following terms: “A truly new city for six thousand inhabitants is going to be built in Ramalde – according to the most modern urban conceptions”.⁵

The urban plan for Ramalde developed in the late 1940s and involved a large area between the *Boavista* avenue and the new avenue, filled with old farmlands and steads, aristocratic estates (House of Ramalde), several *ilhas* and some factories.⁶ It was part of a more general master plan for the city and its metropolitan region, in development since the late 1930s.⁷ The masterplan’s main strategy was to establish Porto as the urban node tying northern Portugal.



2

The new road network proposed a strict zoning policy, operating the functional distinction between housing, commerce, service, industry and leisure. The plan involved a campaign of urban renewal and new housing construction, following the vision of Porto as an organic “great estate,” structured along a hierarchy of socio-environmental typologies, whose grounding example was the village.⁸

5 “Uma Verdadeira Cidade Nova Para 6 Mil Habitantes, Vai Ser Construída Em Ramalde, Segundo as Mais Modernas Concepções Urbanísticas,” *O Primeiro de Janeiro*, February 26, 1950 (translation by author).

6 Maria Tavares, “Casas a Norte: As HE (Habitações Económicas – Federação de Caixas de Previdência) Num Processo de Continuidade,” *Revista Arquitectura Lusíada*, no. 2 (2011): 80.

7 The master plan started in 1939, stemming from a government program for the creation and of urban master plans throughout Portugal and developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Works. Its first planning coordinator was the Italian architect-planner Marcello Piacentini and two of his collaborators, the architect Giorgio Calza Bini and engineer Vincenzo Civico. They were replaced in the early 1940s by the architect-planner Giovanni Muzio and, in 1943, the latter was replaced by the engineer Antão de Almeida Garrett, a former collaborator of Muzio. Távora worked under Garrett during the late 1940s and early 1950s, as he joined the city’s urbanization office in 1948. In the early 1960s, Garrett was replaced, as lead planner, by the French architect-planner Robert Auzelle. See: Margarida Lôbo, “Planos de Urbanização: A Época de Duarte Pacheco” (PhD dissertation, Porto: FAUP, 1995); Maria Adriana Pacheco Rodrigues Gravato, “Trajecto Do Risco Urbano: A Arquitectura Na Cidade Do Porto, Nas Décadas de 30 a 50 Do Século XX, Através Do Estudo Do Conjunto Da Avenida Dos Aliados À Rua de Ceuta”, (Master’s Dissertation, Faculty of Literature of the University of Porto, 2004).

8 Garrett, in the public presentation of Porto’s master plan in 1952, explained it thus: “In a village, the lords are like the natural protectors of the most in need that know to have in them a support – and the first feel themselves morally obliged to do so. Everybody knows each other and everybody counts on one another. If a poor dies, the neighbours support does not falter, whatever their economic situation. (...) It becomes indispensable to return to the natural local organization and complete it with the greatest sum of gains that today’s life affords in Antão de Almeida Garrett, *Plano Regulador Da Cidade Do Porto* (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1952): 16, translation by author.

Fig. 2

Urban design for a neighborhood of economical housing in *Ramalde*, 1948 (Porto’s municipal archive D-CMP-03-526-013).



3

A neighbourhood for a Modern Capital

The urbanization of Ramalde emerged from this urban ideal of a new organic urban unit, specifically as a modern service and housing area delimiting the city's growth westwards. In practice the urban plan was supposed to house present and future displaced residents, created from the clearing of "dangerous" housing situations from central Porto [Fig. 3]. So, simultaneously keeping with Porto's master plan and adapting Marshall Plan priorities, the urbanization of Ramalde aimed to solve the city's "housing crisis." As the newspaper clarified:

his initiative – owed to the *Federação das Caixas de Previdência* (FCP)⁹ – is of the greatest import to Porto, where the housing problem is far from finding a solution. (...) The construction of the new residential neighbourhoods, if it doesn't completely solve the problem – we must not forget that in Porto more than 50.000 people live in *ilha* houses – is a positive contribution, worthy of the biggest praises.¹⁰ [Fig. 4]

This tone of reformist enthusiasm was betrayed by reality, in effect solutions were late and partial. The plan was acted with a mixed financial and organizational structure. The council advanced the urban plan and the technical expertise that would further develop the housing design and its construction. The central state, through the body of the FCP, funded the enterprise, stipulated the housing models and supervised the design and construction process. This was made possible by the dictatorship's adaptation to the postwar reconstruction environment, namely felt in the influence of Marshall Plan housing policies and the integration of experts with a reforming mindset in the ranks of civil and state corporations. Departing from a new legal framing for housing,¹¹ the FCP, a branch of the "almighty" INTP that, in the words of Fernando Rosas, was

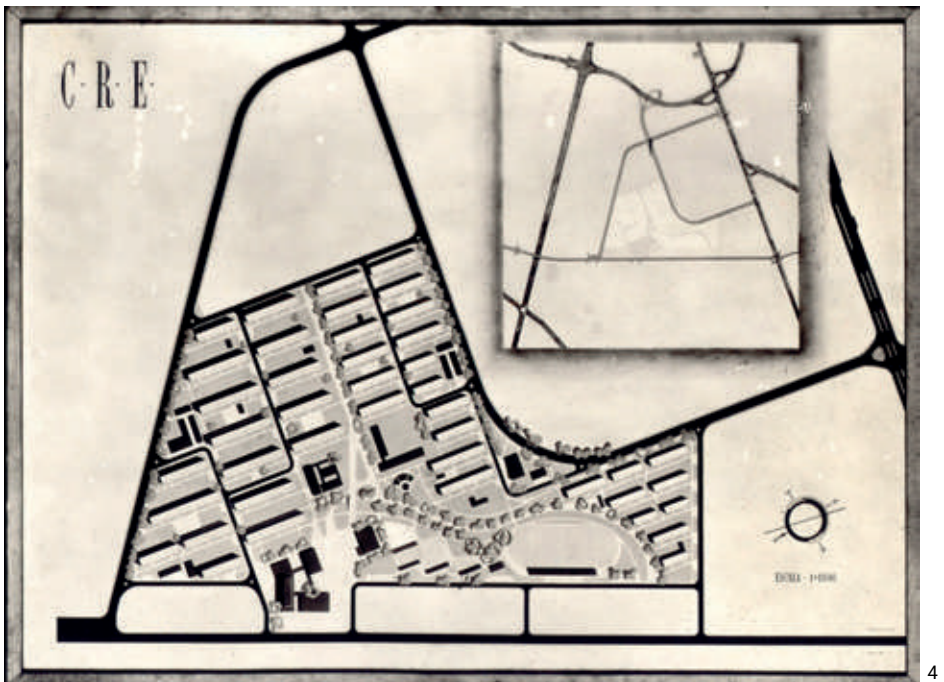
9 The Welfare Funds Federation was a welfare organization legislated in the immediate postwar, influenced by *Marshall Plan* directives, namely its housing program, and implementing the dictatorship's worker welfare and control apparatus, the *Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e Previdência* – INTP, translatable as National Institute of Work and Welfare. For INTP's work until 1943 see Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e Previdência, edited by, *Dez Anos de Política Social 1933-1943* (Lisboa, 1943); For an overview of FDP's housing program see Maria Tavares, "Leituras de Um Percurso Na Habitação Em Portugal. As Habitações Económicas – Federação de Caixas de Previdência," in *Habitação Para O Maior Número. Portugal, Os Anos de 1950-1980*, edited by Nuno Portas (Lisbon: IRHU – Lisbon Municipality, 2013), 21-45; On the relation of these government institutions with the dictatorship's administrative and executive structure see: José Luís Cardoso, "Corporativismo, Instituições Políticas E Desempenho Económico," in *Corporativismo, Fascismos, Estado Novo*, edited by Fernando Rosas e Álvaro Garrido, (Coimbra: Almedina, 2012), 101-120.

10 "Uma Verdadeira Cidade Nova Para 6 Mil Habitantes, Vai Ser Construída Em Ramalde, Segundo as Mais Modernas Concepções Urbanísticas". Translation by author.

11 May 7 of 1945 the dictatorship approved the decree-law no. 2007 that reformulated the norms by which public housing was to be promoted, built and made available. See Tavares, "Casas a Norte: As HE (Habitações Económicas – Federação de Caixas de Previdência) Num Processo de Continuidade": 78.

Fig. 3

Sporting event at Ramalde's sports complex, unknown date (Porto's municipal archive F-NP-CMP-01-07-721,722,723).



4 |

the “supreme guarantor of social discipline” through which an “embryonic and paternalistic social assistance” was developed,¹² created the housing program HE – *Habitacões Económicas* (Economical Housing), which would take on the tutelage of several urban and housing plans, namely the one through which we are walking.

The Campinas blocks seem to result from the “modern conceptions” praised at the time and today: “The new residential zone will not be a group of houses with their gardens, but a great garden with their houses”.¹³ Even though the grass needs tending, its suggestion is easily conveyed: the blocks do seem to stand on a garden, bringing forth a garden city scenography, if only just that.¹⁴ Yet Campinas is a later phase of the whole plan. In fact, it is one of its derivations.

Soon enough I find it, but not easily as expected, as there aren’t many elements to distinguish the spatiality of the later phases from the first, original, modern neighbourhood of Ramalde. A paint stamp, printed on the blank white walls gives it away, it reads ‘HE’. These marked blocks were not the first to be built; they were built in-between the Campinas’ and the first phase. Their roofs give it away: they are sloped and not very “modern” looking, meaning flat, just like the ones in Campinas. I walk past the HE blocks made vivacious by richly cultivated front gardens, with many different flowers and vegetables. They seem personal appropriations of the wide grassed open spaces between the blocks.

12 Fernando Rosas, *Salazar E O Poder: A Arte de Saber Durar* (Lisbon: Tinta-da-china, 2012): 294-295. Translation by author.

13 “Uma Verdadeira Cidade Nova Para 6 Mil Habitantes, Vai Ser Construída Em Ramalde, Segundo as Mais Modernas Concepções Urbanísticas.” Translation by author.

14 For a comparison of Ramalde’s urban plan in the 1950s with garden-city models see Eduardo Fernandes, *A Escolha Do Porto: Contributos Para a Actualização de Uma Ideia de Escola* (PhD Diss., Guimarães: Escola de Arquitectura da Universidade do Minho, 2010), 125-132.

Fig. 4

The new urbanization plan for Ramalde of 1952 (Porto’s municipal archive D-CMP-05-66-3-037).

In fact, many of these richly treated gardens are communal, organized by the tenants. Moving past the gardens and reaching a wide road a recent housing project seems to have been caught in the real-estate crash of 2008. Apparent concrete, unfinished windows, plastics of all sorts springing from a dark empty space inside, the whole complex boarded up with aluminium sheets. The road curves along this incomplete project and, on its other side, leads us to the first phase of Ramalde's urbanization.

The blocks seem smaller because of the flat roof. The walls and rhythms of openings are similar, if not the same, to all the other blocks before. The entrance and the staircase are, however, quite different. Its gardens are also richly cultivated and personalized. In-between the blocks the original trees, planted in the late 1950s, have grown higher than the blocks. Tenants closed the open balconies with conservatories – the habitual Portuguese marquise. An old tenant, moving in in 1964, tells me the place is famous. Many architects come here to see the neighbourhood he says, "sometimes even in buses full of them".¹⁵ Let us try to understand why this is so.

Portuguese Modern Architects Being Portuguese

In 1948 Távora was hired as an architect for Porto's urbanization office. His first known work, the urban plan of *Campo Alegre*, emerged from ongoing work on the new urban corridor and its various possible implications for the surrounding area. The plan was inserted within Garret's master plan described above. Contrary to original designs proposed by Milanese Giovanni Muzio, Távora's Campo Alegre tried a direct translation of CIAM's urban norms into Porto's urban landscape, advancing the modernist package of spatial solutions: segregation between pedestrian and vehicle traffic, as well as between different programs; housing blocks standing "freely" amidst open green spaces; the concentration of public activities in a common "precinct" that allowed "intense social life within the area." The whole thing would be, at least partially, self-sufficient and conceived to have its own traffic, public equipment and so forth.¹⁶

Like the late urban plan of Ramalde, it aimed to house "about 6000 inhabitants"¹⁷ Campo Alegre was in many respects the unrealized prequel for the latter. Although the latter precedes the modernist exercise of Campo Alegre – the first known official document regarding Ramalde's urban plan dates to March 1948¹⁸ – it was transformed by the inspiration of Campo Alegre when Távora assumed the lead for its design. Thus, the mystery of the bus loads of architects is partly solved: it is because of its famous author. The fact that Távora has become one

15 Interview in 3 of March of 2015.

16 For a contemporary reading of Campo Alegre's relation with CIAM norms see Nuno Portas, "Arquitecto Fernando Távora, 12 Anos de Actividade Profissional, Um Estudo Crítico," *Arquitectura*, no. 71 (July 1961): 11-12; for a more recent one, see Fernandes, "A Escolha Do Porto: Contributos Para a Actualização de Uma Ideia de Escola".

17 Távora cited in José António Bandeirinha, edited by, *Fernando Távora: Modernidade Permanente* (Porto: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012), 198.

18 *Plano Parcial de Urbanização de uma Zona Destinada a Casas de Renda Económica em Ramalde*, Historical Archive of Porto Municipality, document D-CMP-03-526, see image 2.

of the most famous Portuguese architects is detrimental, but equally important Ramalde would become one of the first examples of CIAM's "heroic" period in Portugal, which has its particular charm, i.e., cultural capital in modernism nostalgic architecture circles.

The "heroic" modernism of Távora's design for Ramalde did not happen in a vacuum. Quite the contrary, it was part of a concerted effort within the fascist government headed by Oliveira Salazar, namely through the FCT, to experiment with dwelling languages and priorities following from the modernist impetus of the Marshall Plan. After the construction of the first FCT neighbourhood of Alvalade, in Lisbon, by the architect Miguel Jacobetty, the FCT started exploring housing typologies beyond this initial model. Jacobetty's first generation of FCT housing rearticulated a late 19th century liberal middle-class housing block, such as those we find in end of century Vienna developed by Otto Wagner.¹⁹ Indeed, he designed Alvalade's blocks as the reproduction of a single rational model covered in a 19th century combination of *art-déco* decorated windows and panels, steel details, and monumental aspiring entrances with neoclassical symmetries. We might argue Jacobetty's Alvalade constitutes a nostalgic living archaeology of that late liberal spirit observable in central European countries: the desire to be one with the industry of the times while, simultaneously, not disguising its century old wish to civic nobility.²⁰

Departure from this spatial language in the FCT occurred through the efforts of young architects that, cultured in the revisionist environment of the post-war, promoted a proximity to modernist codes and logics. A later phase of Alvalade, the "cell 8," planned by the architects Formozinho Sanches and Ruy d' Athouguia during the latter part of the 1940s and constructed in the early 1950s, showcased a Corbusian inspired spatial



rationality: functionally dimensioned apartments, rejection of the road, elevation of the building from the ground and an urban articulation of Le Corbusier's specific take of the on garden-city ideal. This was the first building of its kind in Portugal, creating an immediate standard [Fig. 5].

From FCT's internal reconfiguration of architectural sensibilities, the field was open to encourage Ramalde's plan rethinking according to Távora's Campo Alegre proposal. The role of Nuno Teotónio Pereira, one of the younger

19 Carl Emil Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 24-115.

20 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*.

Fig. 5

Ruy de d'Athouguia and Sebastião Formosinho Sanchez, Alvalade's "cell 8" housing blocks, built between 1952-1954.

architects in FCT, was instrumental to this change. He started his career as a consultant to Jacobetty's plan for Alvalade in 1947, assisting the detailing and construction process. Soon afterwards he was invited to integrate the technical staff of the housing branch of FCP and made responsible for the first competition for new architectural typologies for economical housing. This competition served as a recruiting platform for the younger, more modernist inclined, architects. The architects selected were in effect selected from Teotónio Pereira's social circle, having himself "fled" from Lisbon's Fine-Arts school in 1946, to study in Porto's, at the time considered more artistically free.²¹ By 1948 Távora and Teotónio Pereira were more than acquaintances, having shared a common agenda since 1945 in the debate of what architecture for the modern Portuguese house. Yet Távora was not selected right away to design Ramalde.

Compelled by the FCP in 1949, the Porto's council opened a competition for the development of the urban plan's housing types, specially directed at two architects from the school of fine arts, one of them being João Andresen, who had developed a design for Ramalde in 1948-1949. The other competition entry was authored by the architect Manuel Magalhães and followed closely the example of Jacobetty's Alvalade.²² Andresen's proposal, developed in collaboration with architect Rogério Martins, while maintaining the spatial dispositions of the "petit-bourgeois" typology, namely the maid's quarter, the study and the total number of rooms, proposed a modernist language, specifically: the elimination of the corridor; the functional segregation between sleeping and working – rooms, living room, study and maid's quarters, adjoining the kitchen and laundry, are all segregated through a highly ordered spatial planning.

In February 1951, these two typological proposals were the target of the concerned opinion of the *Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia* (Municipal Commission of Art and Archaeology), a branch of the council's urban regulating apparatus.²³ This expert body openly rejected the modernist looking proposal by Andresen, claiming it completely missed the "spirit" of Ramalde's urban plan. These experts were referring to the guiding vision of Porto as a grand noble estate, with its well delimited and represented social layers and spatial partitions. There was on the council's side a clear identification of modernist forms as anti-cultural, which indirectly rejected, according to them, the ideological aesthetic of a well distributed society. FCT forced the decision and Andresen's solution moved forward, yet not with the same architects at the helm. Curiously,

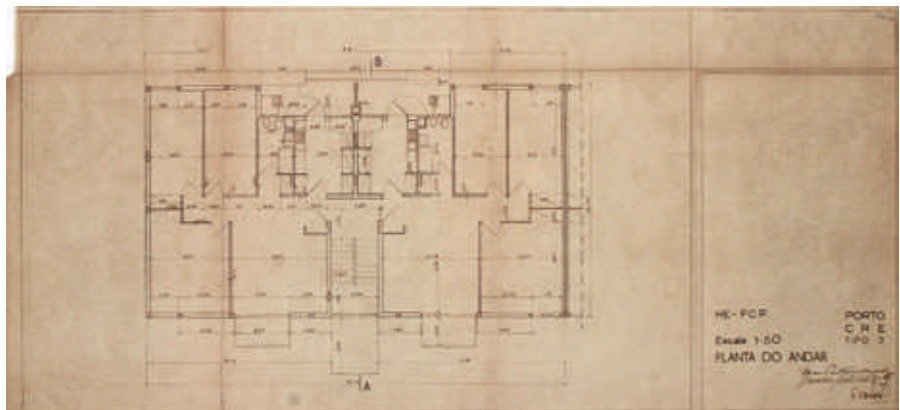
21 See Tavares, "Leituras de Um Percurso Na Habitação Em Portugal. As Habitações Económicas – Federação de Caixas de Previdência": 8.

22 Tavares, "Casas a Norte: As HE (Habitações Económicas – Federação de Caixas de Previdência) Num Processo de Continuidade", 84.

23 These commissions were formalized by national decree in 1936 and were responsible for passing judgment on local urbanization and building plans, specifically regarding their relationship towards the city's heritage. Their main area of purview was the city's historical centre but its remit also involving passing judgment more widely on the "defense of art, culture and popular education." For a brief historical description see Fátima Abraços, "História Da Conservação E Restauro Do Mosaico Romano, Subsídios Para O Conhecimento Do Estado de Conservação Dos Mosaicos No Sul de Portugal" (Master's Diss., Faculty of Literature of the University of Lisbon, 2000), 40-43.

as Távora picks up the design where Andresen and Magalhães left it, this issue returns with a twist.

Somewhere between early 1951 and 1952, Távora, who had been working as a technician for the city for four years, was charged with ‘solving’ Ramalde. Távora used Andresen’s typological proposal – the exclusion of corridors and other obsolete functional schemes and took it a step further. While Andresen’s proposal was in some ways just a modernist formal translation of Jacobetty’s Alvalade, Távora’s excluded some of its aspects of ‘middle-class luxury.’ The study, as well as the maid’s room, were removed from the design. The living room, which in Andresen’s proposal was generous, was reduced in size almost to the limit of usable space but not quite reaching Le Corbusier’s minimal standards, likewise with the bedrooms. Within this logic, cabinets were placed above room entrances and the reduced halls that resulted from the intersection of various rooms, such as the bathroom/main-room access space in the two-bedroom flat, or the small corridor distributing to rooms in the three-bedroom typology. The kitchen was also made smaller both in width and length. Width wise, the reduction served to place the bathroom in-between the kitchen and the first bedroom, creating a small hall in front of the bathroom to segregate the latter from the living room. Lengthwise, it created a semi-exterior balcony serving various functions, namely as a laundry hidden by concrete blades, behind which there is the bathroom window. The dirty, wet, cooking section of the flat was thus accommodated in a neatly tied square area, adjoining the flat’s entrance and enclosing the stairwell. [Fig. 6].



This permitted the concentration of all piping in the central wall dividing each flat, where different kitchens touched. To this rationalization of Ramalde’s typology, Távora made correspond a frugal aesthetic. Between the late liberal civility of the first Alvalade neighbourhoods and the collective authoritarian civility of Sanches’ and Athouguia’s Alvalade, Távora proposed yet another aesthetic rendition of being modern: that of the Weimar social-democrats. It did not face the same resistance in Porto’s council that Andresen’s plan did a couple of years before.

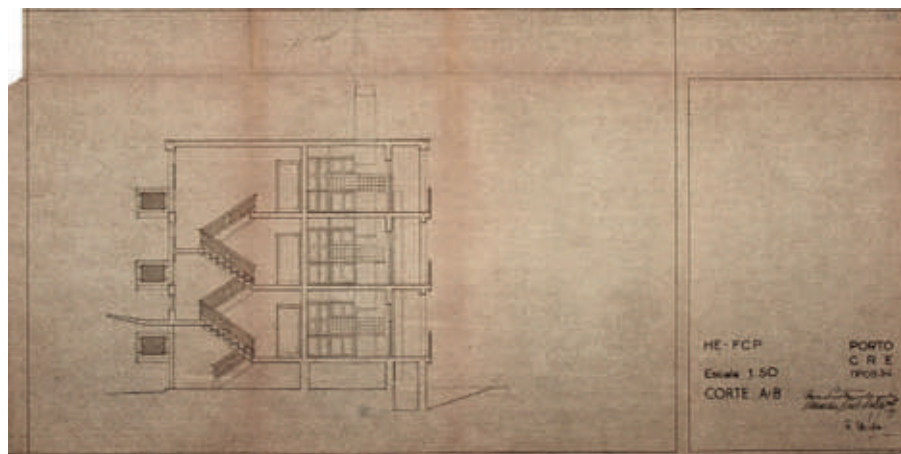
Ramalde was, thus, a choice for Ernst May’s Römerstadt garden-city or Hans Scharoun’s *Siemensstadt* or still Bruno Taut’s and Hugo Häring’s *Onkel-Toms-Hütte*. Like in all these city extensions, which “just as much in any English garden city” produced an environment of “peacefulness”²⁴, the “new city” of Ramalde did

24 Abraços, “História Da Conservação E Restauo Do Mosaico Romano, Subsídios Para O Conhecimento Do Estado de Conservação Dos Mosaicos No Sul de Portugal”.

Fig. 6

Plan of Távora’s rendition of Ramalde (Porto’s municipal archive D-CMP-05-66-4-089).

just that. Between the grown trees and the plan's segregating disposition between block and street, one has the feeling of urban tranquillity, felt even more dramatically when arriving from busy adjacent avenues, built during the city's later expansion. This feeling of tranquillity is corroborated by some of its dwellers, young and old alike, who rejoice the



7

marvel of living in such a peaceful place in the midst of a bustling urbanity, "so close to everything and so peaceful," many saidy [Fig. 7].²⁵

When the Távora's first phase of Ramalde was finished in the late 1950s, only nine blocks out of the forty-three originally advertised were built, 138 apartments in total built. There was no bus or tram to promote the commuting that had justified the German housing experiences cited above. The blocks were surrounded by agricultural land, vacant fields, some dirt roads, industry here and there, the old noble estate of Ramalde and a public housing development from two decades earlier, made of semi-detached single-family houses done in 'national style', with their private gardens and central square.

People commuted by foot and car, either their own car, which were not many at the time, or sharing rides into town. Groceries were either bought by the men, when returning home from work, or bought by women from local farmers and other small providers. There were also some services that came to the doorstep through the diligence of fishwives, bakers and milkmen. Of course, the postman came to the neighbourhood, as well as inspectors from the electrical and garbage companies. All of which were overseen by the urbanization's inspector, centrally appointed to manage all sorts of aspects of the neighbourhood's livelihood, ranging from repairs and maintenance to social supervision of guests and tenants.

Apparently, the garbage men had the hardest task, because Távora designed a centralized waste disposal system for each group of six apartments that would make rubbish converge on a basement depot. Garbage men would have to go down into the basement of each group of six apartments, pick up the depot, then come up the stairs and dump it into the wagon, so they had to do it twenty-three times in total per couple of days. It was not long until they realized they were underpaid for the smelly basement trips and until tenants started cementing their shoots because of bad odours.

Maintenance also had setbacks as council authorities progressively rolled

25 From interviews with old residentes of Ramalde, 2015. See also interviews conducted in João Paixão, in "Um Bairro Intemporal No Porto – Unidade Residencial de Ramalde" (Masters Diss., Porto: FAUP, 2011).

Fig. 7

Section of Távora's Ramalde (Porto's municipal archive D-CMP-05-66-4-090a).

back on the upkeep of the area's public spaces, namely its gardens, but also regarding buildings facades. Only very recently, when tenants organized in private condominium associations, did some restoration works get underway and, even then, there is a big disparity between those with greater organizational skills, free time and money, from those with less of each of these aspects or all of them combined. The result is apparent: in the same block of three units, one group may be glittering the original splendour, while the other two are in-between some state of decay.²⁶ In terms of services, the neighbourhood also faced some issues. Bus service only came much later and the tram only in the 2000s. For the longest of times, the residents of Ramalde, namely women who were mostly confined to the home, dwelled in a sort of island of modernity. They shared more in terms of everyday with the agricultural-industrial landscape of the city's outskirts, than they did with the cosmopolitan habits of central Porto.

In their time, however, Ramalde's modernist blocks represented a celebrated modernization of the city through the upgrading of its urban territory. It also spoke to how the county was joining, at least in part, the rest of Europe in reconstructing the continent anew, sharing its Marshall Plan welfare prerogatives. Likewise, it also spoke to how a group of willing politicians and technicians were making Porto modern, stringing its territories with new avenues of economy and living. For some Portuguese architects, the Ramalde blocks came to stand for one of the few works in the country opening routes for a radical spatial language, together with Alvalade's "cell8". Its flat roof, rigid fenestration grid, austere language, made to bear the phantasmagoria of socialism, welfare and democracy were also appealing for a coming young and progressive generation of postwar Portuguese architects. Celebrated as such, it stood for a sign that Portuguese architects, despite the dictatorship, were not falling back with the ideological and technical advancements of the rest of Europe.²⁷

In the mid-1980s, Távora recalled:

Alvalade [Jacobetty's solution] had a configuration that at that moment to us architects seemed terrible. It was a plan with streets disposed in blocks, with main and secondary streets (...) Well, the guidance we received was to do a similar plan and I, yet again, thought that it should be a modern plan and modern implied the continuity of spaces and open blocks (...).²⁸

He argued that the first urban plan for Ramalde of 1948 and the later variations of Andresen and Magalhães, based as they were in Jacobetty's Alvalade,

26 However, it must be said that recent pressures to resell apartments and the desirability of the place have been increasing, which has promoted restoration efforts.

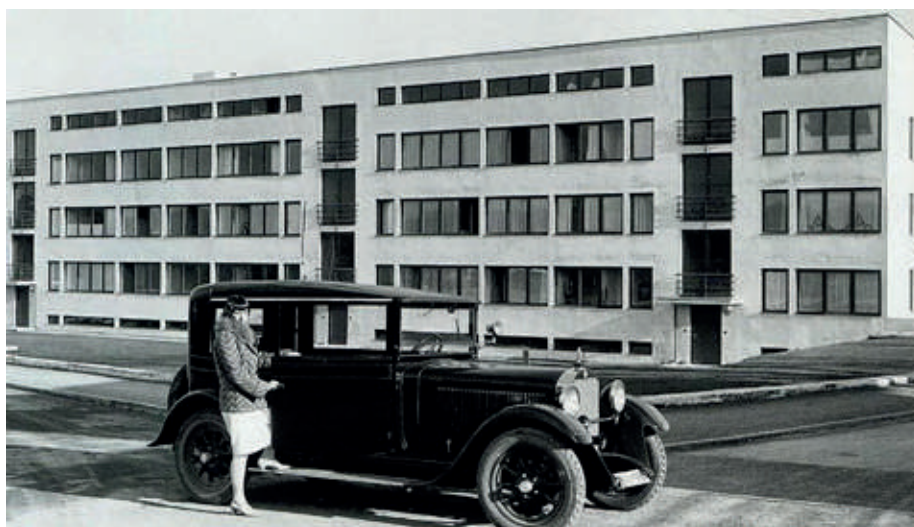
27 For two of the most influent readings, at the time, of Ramalde's innovation and power, see Portas, "Arquitecto Fernando Távora, 12 Anos de Actividade Profissional, Um Estudo Crítico"; Nuno Teotonio Pereira, *Escritos: 1947-1996* (Porto: FAUP, 1996).

28 Javier Frechilla, "Fernando Távora, Conversaciones en Oporto," *Arquitectura*, no. 261 (July-August 1986): 23. Translation by author.

“were not adapted to the *desenho* and characteristics of Porto”.²⁹ It is essential to bear in mind that for Távora’s and later generations of Portuguese architects, modernist architecture was idealized, in his words, as “(...) an architecture of war, was a declaration of war”³⁰ from the postwar onwards. This historicizing of the ‘heroic’ period of Portuguese modernist architecture was essentially written after the fact and within the political environment of a democratic Portugal repudiating all things dictatorial as much as possible. It is only understandable if it is tinged with the stakes of the day. In contrast, what we find at the time of Ramalde’s conception, as illustrated by Távora’s critique of Jacobetty’s Alvalade



8



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is that modernist architecture was made to relate to an imagined social identity of the city. The modernist design of Ramalde was answering the “characteristics of Porto”, these being a proud entrepreneurial provincial capital that was being re-conceived as a great modern estate with very clear values and urban hierarchies. Modernism meet an unsuspecting identity politics, not of the nationalist kind espoused by the dictatorship, but homegrown and regional in nature. Távora’s Ramalde articulated a reinvention of tradition, reproducing an existing observed culture with a new language. Above all, modernism was a language for and of Porto, that was the point. Thus started a story that until this day makes the city, its famous architecture school and its eminent architects the bearers of a ‘heroic’ style [Fig. 8, 9].

Fig. 8

Távora’s Ramalde neighborhood in the 1980s (FIMS/AFT, ref. 0017-Foto0003).

Fig. 9

Mies van der Rohe’s housing block in the Weissenhof Siedlung, 1927, unknown author.

29 Távora, interview, in Nuno Lacerda, “Projecto E Modos de Habitar” (PhD Diss., FAUP, 2008).

30 Fernando Távora and Jorge Figueira, “Fernando Távora, Coisa Mental: Entrevista,” *Unidade*, no. 3 (June 1992): 102. Translation by author.

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Fernando Távora and the Concept for a New Civic Centre for Aveiro: Urban Project, Modernity and the Enhancement of the Urban Landscape

Fernando Távora, Aveiro, Civic Centre, Urban Project, Revision of the Modern Movement

/Abstract

This article seeks to explore the importance of the urban project for the Central Zone of Aveiro both from the perspective of the work of Fernando Távora and also as a Portuguese example of the concepts of the Revision of the Modern Movement as they were applied in the early 1960s. We present the project and the historical context of its conception. Fernando Távora's proposal, started in 1962 along with the master plan for the city, sought to solve urban problems through architectural intervention, thus promoting a new identity through the creation of a new civic centre for the city, which included new road and pedestrian circulation routes, new monumental landmarks in the consolidated urban space, and the intensification of commercial and service use, in addition to housing improvements and land valuation. The project involved a re-reading of the city's historical attributes and, thus, the buildings designed, despite having a modern character, were intended to promote the appreciation of the historic city and the urban landscape around the city's Central Canal. In the context of the Revision of the Modern Movement, we view this work as an example of the discussions that took place in the last CIAMs – International Congresses of Modern Architecture.

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Introduction

Fernando Távora, one of the great figures of modern architecture in Portugal and creator of several architectural and urban projects developed between the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 2000s, is recognized as a man who knew so very wisely how to adopt a conciliatory position between tradition and modernity.

This article aims to explore one of his projects analytically, addressing the insertion of new modern architecture into a consolidated urban space. It refers to his intervention in the central area of Aveiro in the 1960s, where we can see the coherent “dialogue” of modern architecture with the pre-existing historical environment and the creation of a new and broader civic centre for a city that was modernizing and expanding physically. This project, which was characterized by a combination of urban and architectural solutions, was carried out based on the conditions established in the Master Plan of 1962-64, prepared by the Urbanization Office of Aveiro City Council and coordinated by the French architect and urban planner Robert Auzelle.

The investigation seeks to observe how the architect Fernando Távora worked with the concept of the urban project in this decade. In a preliminary analysis, his work is compared to what was being done in Portugal and in the international context at the same time and it is complemented by possible international influences on the process of creating this project. The current debate is the Revision of the Modern Movement.

The urban and architectural design for this area of the city was developed in different phases. Between 1962-1963 the Preliminary Study of the entire central area of the city was carried out. Between 1963-1967, the working drawings for the Municipal Building and the retail centre were developed, and in 1965-1968, the working drawings of the new branch of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*. In 1978-1979, the project for the first expansion of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* was drawn up and in 1984, it was time for the project to undergo its second expansion. Not everything that was designed by Távora for Aveiro was built, whether for financial or political reasons. What is important for us to evaluate, however, is the intentions of the scheme as produced over the years and the application of the concepts in the elaborated drawings. For this, it is important to explore two aspects: its urban design and its architectural design. They give us answers on how the study intended to improve the city centre.

The project as a whole, prepared as a Preliminary Study for the central zone, demonstrates the appreciation of a new concept of urban architecture, which differs from the mono-functional urbanism proposed by the first International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM). In this scheme developed for Aveiro, we see an attempt to learn from the existing city, valuing the historic urban landscape and giving precedence to interventions to improve what already existed, thus exalting the “heart of the city”, theme of the CIAM VIII, which took place in 1951 in Hoddesdon, United Kingdom. Here, the historical circumstances were

those of the second post-war period and the great destruction of cities caused by it, a context that stimulated not only the debate on how to rebuild them, but also how the physical and social structure of the contemporary city could be re-established.

As an urban project, the importance of the study is based on the method used to transform an urban area, different from that outlined by the Modern Movement. For Solà-Morales an Urban Project was defined as a project of intermediate size within the city, achievable in a short period of time, where the urban and architectural scales are intertwined and the architect has considerable authority over the shape of the city. Multifunctional in character, it articulates public and private investments and makes a strong commitment to civic architecture. According to Solà-Morales, “urban design means taking the geography of a given city, with its demands and suggestions, as a starting point, and introducing elements of language with architecture to shape the place”.¹ The principle, which according to him was set aside in CIAM speeches, notably when Giedion and Le Corbusier were in charge of the General Secretariat of the congresses, was able to be successfully developed in the work of some independent planners in European and American cities from the 1930s onwards and, as we will see, it was also applied by Távora.

In regard to the project of the new civic centre for Aveiro, we have three important works of reference. The first is the master’s thesis by Carlos Manuel Galante Mendes defended in 2016 at the University of Coimbra². In this work, the author initially makes a historical presentation of the city, emphasizing the date of the important architectural landmarks of Aveiro and later analysing the plans developed by Auzelle and by Moreira da Silva. He also analytically describes the parts of Távora’s preliminary project and ends by listing three influences on the conception of this project: the ideas of Kevin Lynch, the compositional concepts found in the urban landscape of the city of Venice, and the travel records the architect made on his trip to the USA and Japan in 1960.

The second work of reference is the book *Atlas Aveiro – Edifício Fernando Távora, Biblioteca Municipal, Projeto e obra 1964-2020*³, published by Aveiro City Council in 2021 to celebrate the reopening of the Municipal Building, which saw rehabilitation work coordinated by the architect José Bernardo Távora, the son of Fernando Távora, between the years 2019 and 2020. In this publication it is possible to see images referring to the original project of Távora and to the rehabilitation project, in addition to photos of the works on-site and the finished building. The book also features a chapter written by Carlos Manuel Galante Mendes, whose text summarizes his master’s dissertation.

1 Manuel de Solà-Morales, “The Urban Project”, in *Progettare città / Designing Cities*, ed. Mirko Zardini (Milan: Electa, 1999), 71.

2 Carlos Manuel Galante Mendes, “Arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, de Fernando Távora (1962-67): das influências teóricas às referências práticas” (Master Diss., Universidade de Coimbra, 2016).

3 José Bernardo Távora, ed., *Atlas Aveiro – Edifício Fernando Távora, Biblioteca Municipal, Projeto e obra 1964-2020* (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 2021).

A third and final work of reference is the very recent book entitled *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*⁴, by Domingos Tavares, an architect who collaborated with Távora in this project. The author presents a brief history of the city of Aveiro and reports the importance of Távora's contribution to the renewal of the city's monumental image, describing the architect's intentions in his concept of the urban project in the Preliminary Study, with particular attention to the architectural drawings that made up the plan, arguing that its design, in addition to remaining faithful to his knowledge of the history of the place, also explored the symbolic value of the various parts that made up people's collective living experience of the city. He also compares the guidelines of the Master Plan of Auzelle, who was attentive to the historical and cultural conditioning of the place, with the more interventionist measures of the preliminary plan that Moreira da Silva had previously prepared for the city. Finally, he emphasizes, in great detail, the aesthetic intentions of the project for the Municipal Building.

In our text, we seek to complement the studies already carried out, adding to the analysis of the idealization of the work, the historical modern context of the 1950s and the international character of Távora, which was consistent with the universal debate of the Revision of the Modern Movement, promoting in practice the theme of the "heart of the city", or the "civic centre". We will also try to understand the true relationship of Távora with the historic city and with its pre-existing architectures, in an interventionist attitude that was just starting (as we will see) to be concerned with social and heritage issues, a stance that he would demonstrate more consistently in later projects, for example for Ribeira-Barredo in Oporto, or in his acclaimed intervention in the historic centre of Guimarães.

1. The Portuguese Context in the 1950s and Early 1960s

The 1950s in Portugal are notable for the arrival of modern architecture, a relatively late event compared to the rest of Europe, but quite representative. Some of the manifestations of modernism in the country were moderate, others consistent with the International Method.⁵ There were great efforts made in the development of modern architecture in the country by the newly formed groups ICAT – *Iniciativas Culturais Arte e Técnica*, from Lisbon and ODAM – *Organização dos Arquitetos Modernos*, from Oporto. The first National Congress of Architecture was held in 1948 and it is possible to perceive from then on the occurrence of several initiatives of expressiveness.

As modern examples developed at this time in Lisbon, there are the Blocks on the *Avenida Infante Santo*, 1952-1955, by Alberto José Pessoa, the *Bloco das Águas Livres*, 1953-1956, by Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Bartolomeu Costa Cabral, the development called *Bairro das Estacas*, in the Alvalade neighbourhood in 1953, by

⁴ Domingos Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro* (Porto: Dafne Editora, 2022).

⁵ We will adopt the term "International Method" instead of "International Style", as advocated by Montaner (1993) to designate the architecture of the Modern Movement.

Ruy D'Athouguia and Formosinho Sanches, and also, in Oporto, the development for Ramalde, in 1952-1960, by Fernando Távora. These works represent the point when the Modern Movement's code was applied, where the concept of a block is replaced by a wide open space, providing free pedestrian circulation.

Some years before, in 1948 and 1949, there had been two exhibitions of modern Brazilian architecture at the *Instituto Superior Técnico*, in Lisbon, an event widely publicised by the magazine *Arquitectura*, the main vehicle for transmitting this modern ideal in Portugal. The influence of modern Brazilian architecture in the country continued to be felt in the 1950s and 1960s: In 1952, Lúcio Costa was honoured at an exhibition in Lisbon and in 1961, the Brazilian modernist himself came to the Oporto School of Fine Arts for a conference.

In the public investments of the *Estado Novo*, there was a search for a definition of a national identity. Works were carried out with a classic monumentality, as with the Law Courts of Oporto building by Raúl Rodrigues Lima in 1958-1961, and also with a modernist monumentality, as is the case of the Rectory Building of the University City of Lisbon by Pardal Monteiro in 1952-1961, or the buildings around the wide "Marquês de Pombal" roundabout in Lisbon by Carlos Ramos in 1957.

The promotion of the country's artistic and historical heritage by Salazar also dates back to that era, with a large public investment in works of restoration by analogy⁶ of national monuments, with the aim of enhancing the nation's identity. Examples are the restoration of the *Paço dos Duques de Bragança* in Guimarães, in 1960, and of the *Sé Velha* in Coimbra, in 1962, actions that show a perspective of solely restoring the object, rather than enhancing the image of the city or territory, a reality that would only change after the 1960s.

The *Inquérito à Arquitetura Popular Portuguesa* of 1955 was also relevant. This was a pioneering work of survey in the study of Portuguese traditional architectures, promoted by the National Union of Architects – *Sindicato nacional dos arquitetos* –, which had the participation of Fernando Távora and which would contribute to a change in the way national architecture was conceived.

Among Távora's texts, the importance of *Arquitetura e Urbanismo – a Lição das Constantes*⁷, from 1952 and *Da organização do Espaço*⁸, from 1962, deserve mention. In the first one, the architect reflected on the importance of paying due attention to the circumstances of the present day and to the work's location when devising a new architectural and urban project. By doing so he was stressing the importance of the role of history, which determines the possible constants of that present time, discussing the theme of "permanent modernity"; in other words, the aspect that manifests itself in the quality and accuracy of the relationship

⁶ Modern restoration, the theory of architectural restoration according to the dogmas of Viollet-le-Duc.

⁷ Fernando Távora, *Teoria geral da Organização do Espaço. Arquitetura e Urbanismo: A lição das constantes* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1993).

⁸ Fernando Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1996).

between work and life. For him, modern works were those that reflected the surrounding conditions, and the architect is merely the organizer and the agent that collaborates with the synthesis of the elements of its composition.

In 1952, the Regulatory Plan for the City of Oporto, produced by the Oporto engineer Antão de Almeida Garrett, was completed. Távora was at that time an architect at the Oporto City Council, where he developed, in addition to the project for the Social Quarter of Ramalde, a Study for the *Avenida da Ponte* (nowadays the *Avenida Afonso Henriques*) in 1955, a project that has a less radical interventionist attitude, if compared to the urbanism that had been carried out until then, demonstrating the change in the conceptual stance that he had towards the city.

It is also important to mention, following the public works policies, the preparation of the Improvement Plan for the City of Oporto, from 1956, which was not implemented in its entirety, but whose main objective was the extinction of the *ilhas*⁹ and the creation of neighbourhoods with healthier living conditions in areas of urban expansion, where the lower income sector of the population could be moved. The French architect and urban planner Robert Auzelle was hired to execute this plan. Afterwards, he was also appointed to prepare the Master Plan for the city, and so he worked as a consultant for the city authorities between 1956 and 1962 to systematize and organize the work started by Almeida Garrett. The objectives of this Master Plan were to modernize and define essential functions for the urban landscape, seeking to develop a more dynamic and cosmopolitan city model and to join the consolidated centre up with its new peripheral areas through functional roadways. It was not fully implemented due to financial constraints. If it had been carried out, there would have been, for example, the demolition of some of the buildings in the Barredo area, the freeing up of the area for the construction of a parking lot, which would have significantly changed the image we have of the city today.

Among Fernando Távora's built works, this decade marks the projects that demonstrate his lucid and coherent interpretation of the international movement that was concerned with the renewal of modern architecture: the Santa Maria da Feira Market, from 1953-1959, the Tennis Pavilion and Park at the *Quinta da Conceição*, in Matosinhos, in 1956-1960, and the House of Ofir, from 1957-1958. The project by Álvaro Siza Vieira for the *Casa de Chá da Boa Nova*, in 1958-1963, is also from this date and context. Another work by Távora that is worth mentioning and evaluating is the Preliminar Plan for Montemor-o-Velho, from 1951-1961, whose descriptive text shows the architect's attention to the historical components of the site.

We must state, first of all, that our work is intended, on the basis of a careful study of the past and present of the town, to propose solutions of a general nature, solutions considered fundamental; and not to solve

⁹ Typical term used for slums in central areas of Oporto.

problems of detail. (...) if Montemor must be rejuvenated, the initiatives that contribute to or result from such rejuvenation should not structurally alter its aesthetic aspect. (There was a time when progress meant destroying the past; today, however, progress must mean being worthy of the past, being knowledgeable and capable of adding something new to the past).¹⁰

According to Sergio Fernandez¹¹, in 1960 the Ministry of Public Works in Portugal began the preparation of urban plans for the regions of Aveiro, the Algarve and Lisbon. Távora was invited to participate in the Aveiro plan, collaborating on the elaboration of one of the three urban arrangements foreseen in the Master Plan that Robert Auzelle had been assigned to manage. The practice of urban planning was thus finally introduced into Portugal, a discipline that had already existed and been practised in the United States of America for over 30 years at that time. Fernando Távora, with his experience and updated knowledge, greatly enriched by his trip and sojourn in America in 1960, would be an important collaborator.

2. The International Context

The beginning of the 1950s is notable for the realization of CIAM VIII “The Heart of the City”, in Hoddesdon (England), and the discussion around the Revision of the Modern Movement. Fernando Távora, along with Viana de Lima, participated in this congress, and in all other subsequent CIAM meetings, a pioneeringly representing Portugal in these very important international meetings of modern architecture. This was due, as discussed above, to the evolution and assimilation of modern architecture in the country.

Discussions around the theme of the eighth CIAM had many connections and much resonance with the debate on the identity of cities and the conception of public space. The theme “The Heart of the City” was, as far as we can tell, the concept explored by Távora in the project developed for Aveiro. At this Congress, it was stated that the matter of the “Heart of the City” was the issue of the symbolic and physical reform of the structure of the city through the creation of centres of social life, which are understood as “civic centres”.

The great change that took place in CIAM debates between the 1933 meetings in Athens and the 1951 meetings in Hoddesdon was remarkable. The core of the discussion, following the destruction caused by the Second World War, moved away from functionalist urbanism and the theme of reinserting

¹⁰ “Devemos afirmar, antes de tudo, que o nosso trabalho pretende, na base do cuidadoso conhecimento do passado e do presente da Vila, sugerir soluções de carácter geral, soluções julgadas fundamentais e não resolver problemas de pormenor. (...) se Montemor deve rejuvenescer não devem as iniciativas que contribuem para ou resultem de tal rejuvenescimento alterar estruturalmente o seu fâcias (tempo houve em que progredir significava destruir o passado, hoje, porém, progredir deve significar ser digno do passado, saber e poder acrescentar algo de novo ao passado)”. From: José António Bandeirinha ed., *Fernando Távora: Modernidade Permanente* (Guimarães: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012): 218.

All translations of references in the text are mine. Revision of English: Richard Birkby.

¹¹ Sérgio Fernandez, *Percurso da arquitectura portuguesa 1930-1974*, (Porto: FAUP – Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, 1988).

new projects in the historic core of the city was then highlighted. In this decade, however, despite CIAM VIII registering a new trend in the conception of modernism, the legacy of the Charter of Athens continued to make itself felt in many of the urban achievements in the international context. Lucio Costa's plan for Brasilia, construction of which took place between 1956 and 1960, is an example of this.

However, the publication of *Verso un'architettura organica*, by Bruno Zevi in Italy in 1945, six years before CIAM VIII, demonstrated that the direction that modern architecture should take was beginning to be questioned. Soon afterwards, in 1949, Zevi criticized CIAM in a publication of the Italian magazine *Metron*. For him, it was important that CIAM discuss its own history, "including the importance of the divergent and excluded 'organic' architectures of [Frank Lloyd] Wright and [Hugo] Häring".¹² Zevi argued that there was another field of modern, non-rationalist architecture, a movement called organic, or human architecture, or new empiricism, from architects who had joined CIAM as proponents of the rationalist school ten years earlier and who had since gone through an evolutionary change.

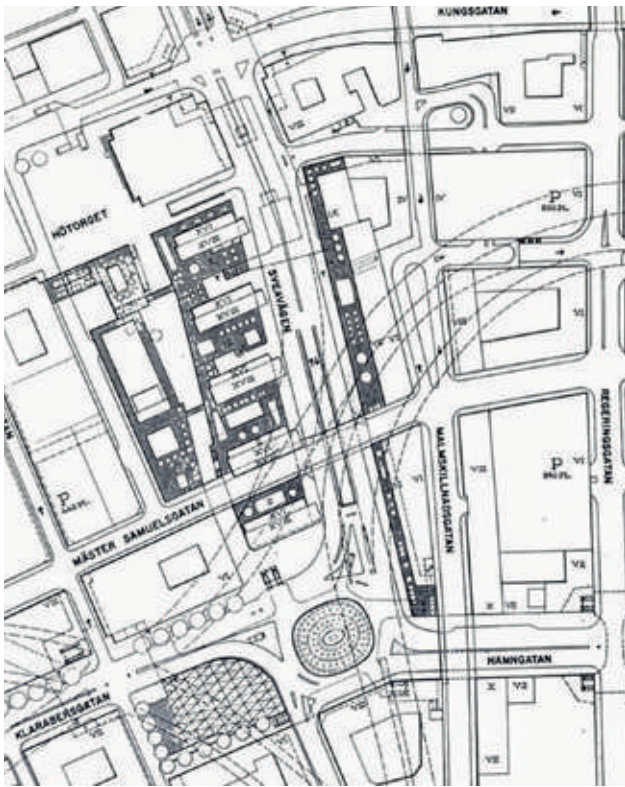
In 1953 at CIAM IX in Aix-en-Provence, France, the largest of all the CIAMs, young British architects Peter and Alison Gill Smithson openly challenged CIAM's discourse on the Functional City and proposed a new "hierarchy of human associations" to replace it. Their Golden Lane project for London, drawn up in 1952, had the clear intention of being a critique of Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse for Paris.

It is also important for our analysis to examine an urban proposal by the Smithsons in 1958 for Berlin. An urban concept of organization entitled "from stem to cluster" is applied in this project, a concept also explored by George Candilis in Toulouse Le Mirail in 1961-62. In the project for Berlin, rather than dividing the city into zones and functions, a complex network of routes was created at different levels, thus allowing the creation of varied environments in the city and the preservation of pre-existing buildings.

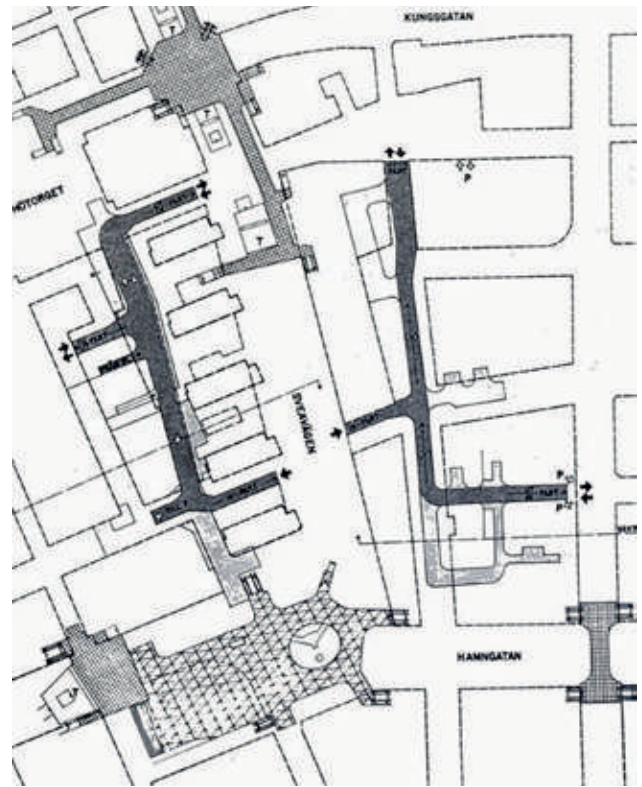
The Swedish modernist architect Sven Markelius (one of the founding members of CIAM in 1928) acted similarly in the early 1960s. He demonstrated a refinement of values when he began to work on city planning at the end of his career. For him, "the model of the 'rational city', tested to the limit in its virtual state in the planning of Stockholm, already appears to be insufficient".¹³ In proposing a solution for the city centre, in the area around Hötorget, a square used for street markets, he explored a radical proposal, with the distribution of pedestrians and cars on different levels, so that the area was re-planned around a new Metro station and new road junctions. He also explored a mixed use proposal for the centre (offices, residences, shops,

¹² Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928-1960*. (Cambridge: MIT, 2000), 200.

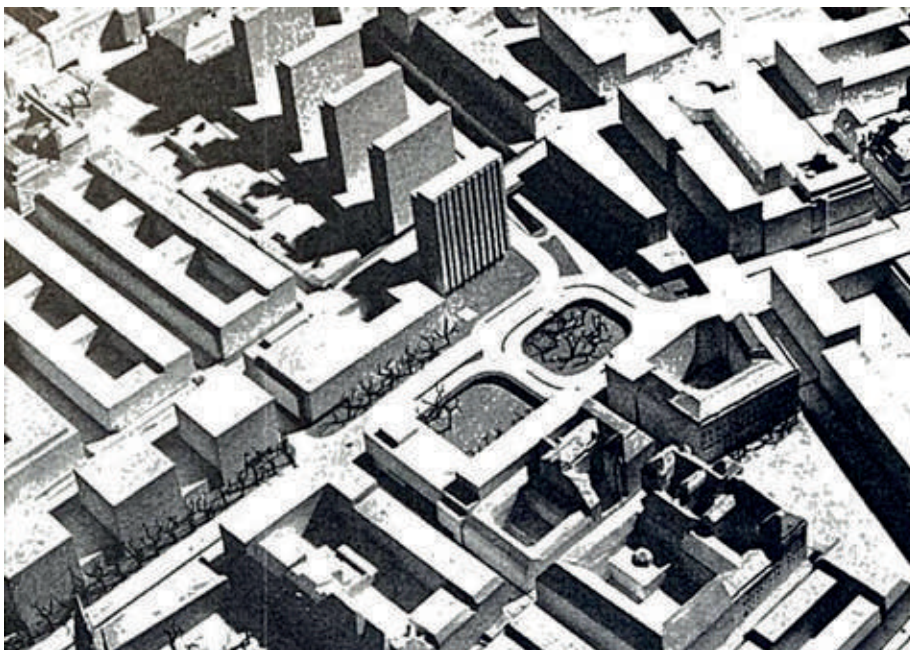
¹³ "Il modello di 'città razionale', verificato al limite delle sue virtualità nella pianificazione di Stoccolma, appare ormai insufficiente". See: Stefano Ray, *Sven Markelius 1889-1972* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1989): 121.



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Fig. 1

Sven Markelius for Stockholm City Centre – Upper-level floor plan.

Fig. 2

Sven Markelius for Stockholm City Centre – Lower-level plan. Source: Stefano Ray, *Sven Markelius 1889-1972*, (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1989), 125.

Fig. 3

Mock-up of Sven Markelius's Plan for central Stockholm showing the separation of pedestrian routes from motor traffic lanes. Source: Stefano Ray, *Sven Markelius 1889-1972*, (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1989), 125.

restaurants) in order to keep it “alive” both day and night [Fig. 1, 2, 3]. For Stefano Ray, it was in this urban arrangement that the question of the heart of the city emerged.¹⁴

At the last CIAM (XI), in Otterlo, in 1959, or the first meeting of the “Team 10”, the diversity of visions among the members was remarkable, but, despite this, there was a common bond between the architects: the efforts to restore urban life in cities; the exaltation of local traditions, treating them with respect

¹⁴ Ibid.



and interpreting them anew; the formal review of architecture, distancing itself from the dogmas of the Modern Movement; the pragmatic and empirical work method; and the vision of the social role that an architect must take on.

Távora had common ground at this CIAM with the ideals of the Italian representatives, expressed, among others, by the architects Giancarlo De Carlo, Ernesto Rogers and Ignazio Gardella. In Italy at that time there was a new interest in old city centres, from for which traditional cultural values could be assimilated. Among these, there was a determined will to continue the ideas of the Modern Movement, updating them to the then current state of Italian architecture. It was in this context that the *Torre Velasca* [Fig. 4] was built in Milan, a Project by the B.B.P.R group. Completed in 1958, it is a stand-alone building of great height and modern structure which, due to its location in the old city centre, adopted references to forms and elements of historical architectural language.

This building is the ultimate expression of Rogers' reflection on environmental pre-existence, with the intention of synthesizing and expressing, without any mimicry, the ineffable character of the city. It is also the perfect synthesis of tradition and modernity. Although its volume has clear historical resonances, it is clearly of a modern typology.¹⁵

In addition to the Italian Neo-Liberty movement, notable also are the Brutalist current of the British Peter and Alison Smithson, the new Nordic empiricism, exemplified mainly in the works of Alvar Aalto, and the works of an ethical character in relation to their environment, faithful to their Mediterranean traditions, such as with the examples of the Spaniard Josep Antoni Coderch. Also expressive of this era were the sculptural works of Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil and the

15 "Este edificio es la máxima expresión de la reflexión de Rogers sobre las preexistencias ambientales, en el intento de sintetizar y expresar, sin mimetismos, el carácter inefable de la ciudad. Es también una perfecta síntesis de tradición y modernidad. Aunque el volumen tenga evidentes resonancias históricas, se trata claramente de una tipología moderna". See: Josep Maria Montaner, *Después del Movimiento Moderno: Arquitectura de la segunda mitad del siglo XX* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1993), 101.

Fig. 4

Torre Velasca in the centre of Milan (source: www.itinari.com, last view June 2022).

last few works of Frank Lloyd Wright in the United States, such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, from 1956-1959.

Távora's trip around the world in 1960, a few years before developing the urban project for Aveiro and publishing his famous text *Da organização do espaço* is of relevance. The experiences he reported in his diary on the United States and Japan deserve special mention. For what concerns American culture, he expressed his admiration for the works of Frank Lloyd Wright. We know that the vast body of work of this American architect has its own character, very different from the dogmas of the Modern Movement and the teachings of Mies Van der Rohe at the Chicago School of Architecture. Távora's course was also opposed to the formal purism of Mies and consistent with works with their own language arising from a process, and not from the application of preconceived formulas.

In *Da organização do espaço*, published in 1962, we see, in a way, his experiences of this trip. Ana Mesquita analyses the testimony he wrote in his diary:

The organization of space is one of the themes that stands out in Távora's text, particularly the analysis of volumetric relations – in the observation of the city of Washington and on the riverfront of Boston, in a work by Wright, in the pyramids of Giza, in the Japanese temples and on the Acropolis. The relationship between the volumes and the interstitial spaces they created is much described and reflects his way of seeing architecture. This care, with the organization of the space, would also be a reflection of his own way of doing architecture.¹⁶

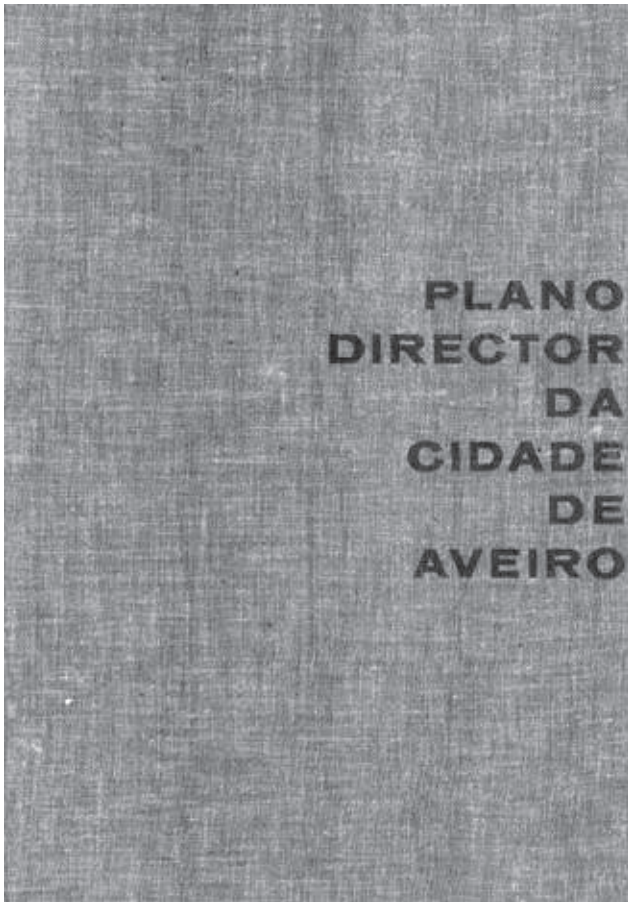
In his architectural design for Aveiro, one is able to see influences from the concepts of the Italians and the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, as will be further demonstrated in this paper. As Jorge Figueira reminds us, "Távora was a privileged observer and interpreter of the process of crisis and renewal of the Modern Movement in the 1950s, in free consonance with the matrix of Zevi's revision".¹⁷ Montaner recalls that in the book *Verso un'architettura Organica*, "the architecture of Wright and Aalto is proposed as a model and is supported by the argument of empirical psychologism".¹⁸

Finally, the book *The image of the city*, by Kevin Lynch, published in 1960, is worthy of mention. It discusses the shape of cities and how people understand their surroundings. Távora met Lynch on the occasion of his visit to the Urban Planning Department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1960, making reference to this text several times in his classes. We believe that

16 "A organização do espaço é um dos temas que sobressai no texto de Távora, particularmente a análise das relações volumétricas – na observação da cidade de Washington e na frente ribeirinha de Boston, de uma obra de Wright, nas pirâmides de Gizé, nos templos Japoneses e na Acrópole. A relação dos volumes e dos espaços intersticiais por eles criados, é muitas vezes descrita e reflecte o seu modo de ver a arquitectura. Este cuidado, com a organização do espaço, será também o reflexo do seu próprio modo de fazer arquitectura". See: Ana Raquel da Costa Mesquita, "O melhor de dois mundos: A Viagem do arquitecto Távora aos EUA e Japão – Diário 1960", (Master Diss., Universidade de Coimbra, 2007), 200.

17 "Távora foi um observador e um intérprete privilegiado do processo de crise e renovação do Movimento Moderno nos anos 50, em consonância livre com a matriz da revisão zeviana". See: Jorge Figueira, *A Periferia Perfeita. Pós-modernidade na Arquitectura Portuguesa. Anos 1960-1980* (Lisboa: Caleidoscópio, 2014), 24.

18 "La arquitectura de Wright y Aalto es propuesta como modelo y es sustentada con el argumento del psicologismo empírico". See: Montaner, *Después del Movimiento Moderno: Arquitectura de la segunda mitad del siglo XX*, 95.



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the re-reading of the existing historical attributes in the project developed for Aveiro was, in a certain way, based on this study by Lynch.

3. Robert Auzelle and the Master Plan for the City of Aveiro

The 1962-1964 Master Plan for the City of Aveiro by Robert Auzelle stood out for having been developed “based on the analysis of the growth of the urban fabric over time”¹⁹, where its designer sought to come up with a solution that would correlate the functions of human nature with the reorganization of the entire urban space, defining central axes with a modernist perspective.

The Plan [Fig. 5, 6], which is now housed in the historical archive of the City Council of Aveiro, is a single volume of large dimensions that contains written texts inside which shows the main ideas and fundamental objectives of the Plan, and drawings that refer to the surveys carried out and the proposals for architectural intervention in the city.

Before starting to work in Aveiro, Robert Auzelle had already conceived the Master Plan for the City of Oporto, as mentioned above, and had also visited the ESBAP – *Escola Superior de Belas-Artes do Porto* in 1955 to give a conference,

¹⁹ “A partir da análise do crescimento da malha urbana ao longo do tempo”. See: Lídia Maria Moreira Matias, “Transformações e integração derivadas da mudança de uso do espaço urbano na cidade de Aveiro, Portugal”. V Seminário Internacional de Investigación en Urbanismo. Barcelona: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2013. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5821/siiu.5860> (last access May 2024).

Fig. 5

Cover of the Master Plan of the City of Aveiro, 1964 (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

Fig. 6

Back cover of the Master Plan of the City of Aveiro (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

an occasion on which the architect Fernando Távora was a teaching assistant at the school. In the academic debate, the Oporto School followed the evolution of modern architecture and urbanism, but the discipline of urban planning in the country was still stuck with pre-functionalist guidelines at that time.

Since 1945, Robert Auzelle had been professor at the Institut d'Urbanisme in Paris and, perhaps this is how in 1955 he came to give a lecture at the Oporto School of Fine Arts. In Oporto, he found a School attentive to the international debate on architecture (and urbanism); not only because Carlos Ramos, the director of ESBAP at the time, was a profoundly modern man, but also because there he found Oporto architects who had participated in the previous CIAMs.²⁰

The contribution of this French architect and urban planner reflects the ongoing debate around urban culture of the 1950s, inside and outside Portugal. The Plan he drew up for Oporto between 1957-1962, better known as the "Auzelle Plan",

is testimony to the move from a "formalist" urbanism, of a "bucolic" nature [more properly of a landscape character] or "monumentalist", to another, of a "modernist" or "functionalist" type, marked by the articulation of the disciplinary doctrine issued by CIAM in the 2nd post-war period, with its "organic" adaptation to the morphology of the city [and is thus, therefore,] an example of an "Organic-Functionalism".²¹

The plan shows that the notion of the city as a "piece of art", as it had been practised by the French academics of the National Superior School of Fine Arts and the French Society of Town Planners in the first half of the 20th century, was being challenged.

For Nuno Grande (2011), this historical moment reinforced the importance of the concept of urban art as one that valued social and environmental issues in addition to the architectural qualities of buildings in the allocation and ordering of free spaces. This concept assigns "the urban 'void' a central role in the 'art' of renovating cities"²² and emphasizes open space, to the detriment of the layout and alignment of facades and heights in large architectural complexes.

In Aveiro, prior to the arrival of Auzelle, the Urbanization Plan by David Moreira da Silva and Maria José Marques da Silva was the plan in force. It was conceived

20 "Desde 1945 que Robert Auzelle tinha sido nomeado professor no Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris e, talvez por essa via, vem em 1955 fazer uma conferência na Escola de Belas-Artes do Porto. No Porto encontra uma Escola atenta ao debate internacional sobre arquitectura (e urbanismo). Não só porque Carlos Ramos, o director da ESBAP da época, é um homem profundamente moderno, mas também porque ali encontra arquitectos portugueses que participaram nos últimos CIAM". See: Manuela Juncal, "Robert Auzelle e o urbanismo francês dos meados do século XX no 'Plano Director da Cidade do Porto' de 1962", *Cadernos – Curso de Doutoramento em Geografia. FLUP – Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto*, (2012), 71.

21 "Testemunha a passagem de um urbanismo 'formalista', de cariz 'bucólico' [mais propriamente paisagista] ou 'monumentalista', para um outro, de tipo 'modernista' ou 'funcionalista', marcado pela articulação da doutrina disciplinar saída dos CIAM do 2º pós guerra, com a sua adaptação 'orgânica' à morfologia da cidade [e é assim, portanto] um exemplo de um "Funcionalismo Orgânico". See Nuno Grande, "Funcionalismo Orgânico. Robert Auzelle e o Plano Director da cidade do Porto", in *Jacques Gréber. Urbanista e Arquitecto de Jardins*, Teresa Andersen, Manuel Fernandes de Sá and João Almeida eds. (Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2011), 186-211.

22 "Ao 'vazio' urbano um papel central na 'arte' de renovar as cidades". From: Nuno Grande, "Funcionalismo Orgânico. Robert Auzelle e o Plano Director da cidade do Porto". In *Jacques Gréber. Urbanista e Arquitecto de Jardins*, Teresa Andersen, Manuel Fernandes de Sá, João Almeida eds., (Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2011), 186-211.



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in 1948 [Fig. 7] and supplemented in 1960 [Fig. 8]. This was characterized by being an addition of urban interventions for the city that were distinguished by the rationality of the layouts in which the order and revision of the road system prevailed over the old fabric.

Moreira da Silva envisaged in his preliminary urbanization plan a transformation for the central area that involved several demolitions, mainly with his proposal to widen the street called “Rua de Coimbra” [Fig. 9, 10, 11]. There were also plans to extend this route over the Central Canal by building a new bridge and creating a square on the opposite bank, demolishing other buildings as well for this purpose. This design was a gesture aiming to provide an urban landmark that marked the start of the *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*, a thoroughfare of increasing importance in the city. The sum of measures would even have led to the demolition of the Harbour Master’s Building (the *Capitania*), a construction of historical importance for the city. Such provisions were opposed by the city’s population and therefore did not materialize. However, some actions were repeated as proposed in the subsequent Master Plan, as will be seen below.

Unlike Moreira da Silva’s Urbanization Plan, Auzelle’s work in Aveiro in 1962-1964 was to design a whole system for the city.

Robert Auzelle, disciple of Jacques Gréber (1882-1962) at the Institute of Urbanism in Paris, where he was a professor, brought another orientation to urban culture in Portugal. Auzelle practised the idea of a flexible and adaptable plan, in order to integrate future events and information, supported by the analytical method and interdisciplinarity for an in-depth knowledge of the urban unit to be worked on.²³

23 Robert Auzelle, discípulo de Jacques Gréber (1882-1962) no Instituto de Urbanismo de Paris, onde foi professor, trazia outra orientação para a cultura urbanística em Portugal. Auzelle praticava a ideia de plano flexível e adaptável, de modo a integrar acontecimentos e informações de futuro, apoiado no método analítico e na interdisciplinaridade para o conhecimento profundo da unidade urbana a trabalhar. From: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 24.

Fig. 7

Cover of the Master Plan of the City of Aveiro, 1964 (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

Fig. 8

Cover of the 1960 Urbanization Plan for the city of Aveiro, with 2 volumes: Written pieces and drawn pieces (Historical Archive of the Library of Aveiro).



Fig. 9

Aerial photo of the city of Aveiro 1950s (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 10

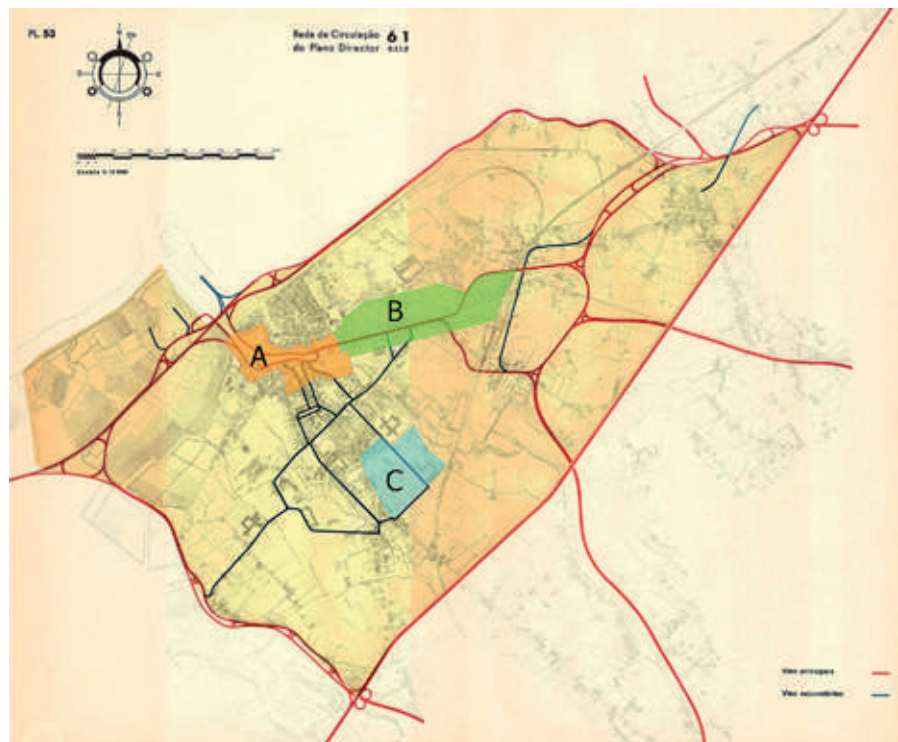
Interventions planned for the Central Zone in the Preliminary Plan for the Urbanization of the City of Aveiro (1960). Caption: in red – new road system; in yellow – road network to be remodelled; in black – road network to be conserved. A – Central Canal | B – Canal do Cojo | C – Plaza-Bridge | D – Republic Square | E – Rua de Coimbra | F – New road square | G – Av. Dr. Lourenço Peixinho (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro). Author's notes on the drawing.

Fig. 11

Intervention proposal in the Central Zone and beginning of Avenida Dr. Lourenço Peixinho in the Urbanization Plan for the City of Aveiro, 1960 (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

The Master Plan of Aveiro had as its guidelines the economic and social development of the region. Prior to its implementation, survey work and analyses were carried out, which served as a basis for establishing general guidelines and proposals for urban arrangements. The document mentions that, at the time, there was a prediction of a 40% demographic increase in the area by the year 1985²⁴ and that, therefore, special attention should be paid to the problem of the increase in motor traffic in the urban agglomeration. Thus, the Plan proposed to devise a new road system that allowed connections to the industrial and port areas independently, i.e. without crossing the city centre, so that the routes to and from the port to the north and south of the country would be simple to follow and would not cause any disturbance to urban traffic.

The enhancement of the natural landscape of the *Ria* (the surrounding lagoon) was also mentioned as being of great importance. According to Auzelle's justification, exposing this landscape was the main factor taken into account in the Plan's proposals. As such, the road layout of the urban arrangement, in addition to responding to the needs of the port and industry, also had the character of tourist routes. A semi-circular road [Fig. 12], passing through certain elevated sections of the area, would offer visitors panoramic views of the *Ria* to the north, and of the salt pans to the south, providing drivers with the best view of the beauty of this area, in addition to responding to the need to prevent them from encroachment by the urban agglomeration.



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In similar fashion we have the rationale for the construction of a tower in the centre of the city:

In order to make the most of this exceptional region, which, until now, has only be able to be appreciated from the air, a building of convenient height was located in the centre of the city, to allow everyone, in the best conditions, a view of the *Ria*, of its salt pans, its flotilla and its ports.²⁵

For the interior of the urban agglomeration, the author of the Plan proposed a hierarchical system of roads, seeking to avoid intersections and create a

Fig. 12

Master Plan circulation network. Legend: in red, main roads; in blue, secondary roads; yellow spot: limits of the master plan; Letter "A" – Location of the Detailed Plan for the Arrangement of the Central Zone; Letter "B" – Location of the Detailed Plan for the Urban Arrangement of *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*; Letter "C" – Location of the Detailed Plan for the Urban Arrangement of the sector at the east of *Bairro Dr. Sampaio* (Master Plan of the City of Aveiro, 1964, Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro). Author's notes on the drawing.

24 Robert Auzelle, *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro* (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1964), 11.

25 Auzelle, *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro*, 12.

“roundabout system on a large scale”²⁶ in the city. It also proposed that the “plaza-bridge”, built in 1952, be demolished, giving way to a new road scheme, with two new bridges over the Central Canal, with one-way traffic around it. The justification for its dismantling was that this bridge, configured as a roundabout over the canal, with its centre in the shape of a well, was considered by him a physical and visual “barrier”, which divided the canal and did not solve the road traffic problem in ideal fashion.



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This proposal to build new bridges would also result, as in the Moreira da Silva Urbanization Plan in the demolition of the Harbour Master's Building (the “*Capitania*”) [Fig. 13, 14], an action that created indignation as to why it had been downgraded as a historic building. We can only assume that, although this was erected on a structural base of arches on piles from the ruin of an old 15th century watermill, because the building was rebuilt in 1830 with only one floor and in 1903 expanded to two floors in an eclectic style, it was considered by the municipality to be “a more recent construction”,²⁷ in comparison to other historical buildings.



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The Plan also highlighted the need to create new surface parking lots in the centre, at the edges of the rebuilt area, east and west of the Central Canal [Fig. 15]. One of these parks would occupy the large area of the “Largo do Rossio”, west of the Central Canal. With this change in use, the square's traditional local activity of fairs and city festivals would be relocated to a new, wider and greener area, close to the “Canal do Cojo”.

The Master Plan even provided for industrial activity, housing, public services or services of common interest, and the corresponding regulations for each of the activities. The housing guidelines mentioned the construction of new neighbourhoods to the east and south, and the rehabilitation of existing housing, especially in the central area of the city. A new regulation also set out construction

Fig. 13

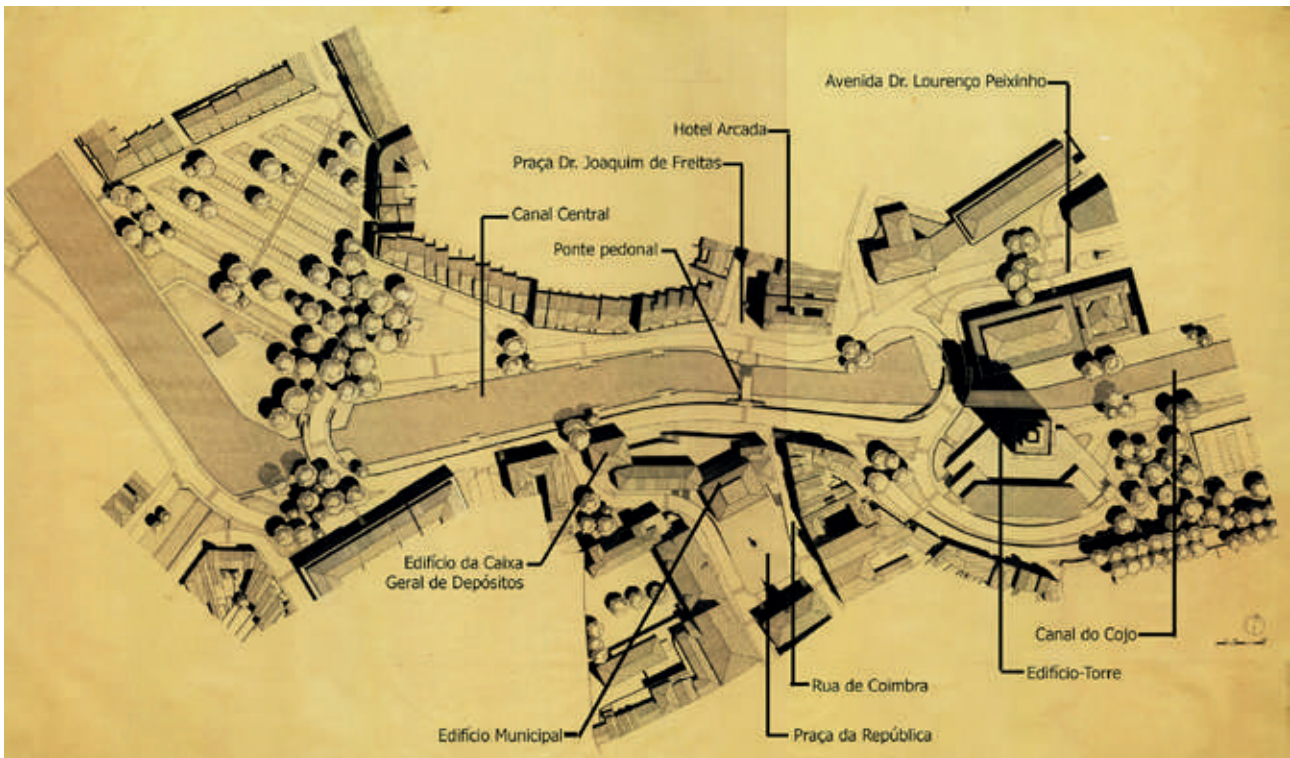
Photo of the Harbour Master's Building (the “*Capitania*”) after the first renovation (Urbanization Plan for the City of Aveiro, 1960, Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

Fig. 14

Photo of the Harbour Master's Building (the “*Capitania*”) rehabilitated in 2004, (Francisco da S. Dias, Tiago S. Dias and Maria João Soares, “P01 Arquitectura – Edifício da Antiga Capitania de Aveiro. Arquitectos Francisco da Silva Dias e Tiago Silva Dias”, *Arquitectura e Vida*, no. 51 (July-August 2004): 48.

26 “Sistema de plataforma giratória em grande escala”. Auzelle, *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro*, 14.

27 David Moreira Silva, Maria José Moreira da Silva Martins, *Anteplano de Urbanização da Cidade de Aveiro*. (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1948).



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criteria to avoid “a false style of contemporary architecture”,²⁸ demonstrating the importance of conserving the city’s traditional architectural complex.

Of note is the proposal to regulate and limit the maximum height of the buildings on the *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho* to seven floors, evidence of the plan’s aim to create order and control over urban densification in a growing region in the service sector. The city’s tallest buildings were located on this avenue and the Auzelle plan contributed both to its densification and to the consolidation of its character as a commercial and service hub in the city. This avenue, with the new residential areas, was then defined as an area of greater elevation in Aveiro. Furthermore, establishing a maximum height in these zones demonstrated the care and concern taken to set off the new Tower-Building against the urban landscape as the only building that should have visual prominence in terms of height in the city.

Detailed plans for some areas complemented the general guidelines. These defined the construction constraints, which were distinct from one area to another and clearly aimed at creating a new image of the city. There were 3 proposals. The first one was the Arrangement of the Central Zone, whose architect in charge Project was Fernando Távora. The second was the Urban Arrangement of the *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*, and the third the Urban Arrangement of the sector to the east of the *Bairro Doutor Sampaio*, given to architects J. Carlos Loureiro and L. Pádua Ramos for development.

Given the above as guidelines, Domingos Tavares writes:

[...] the Master Plan for the City of Aveiro had a greater ambition than a simple technical guideline based on zoning and density criteria. Auzelle

28 Auzelle, *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro*, 8.

Fig. 15

Presentation drawing of the Preliminary Study of the Arrangement of the Central Zone of Aveiro, June 1963 (FIMS/AFT). Author’s notes on the drawing.

proposed the principle of density in the configuration of the central historical nucleus, with the clear notion that the form of the city is more dependent on the culture of the place than on the programmatic geometry of the management plan. He understood the place beyond topography or physical geography, taking stimuli from social complexity such as the significance of its history and the natural human ambition for progress.²⁹

4. The New Civic Centre

The Arrangement of the Central Area of Aveiro by Fernando Távora (1962-1967) was characterized by being an urban renewal plan in its entirety, where there was an intention to create a new civic centre for the city. The project combined the creation of new spaces with the preservation of the historic environment, distinct aims in balanced proportion. From what was newly proposed, two areas are notable: the Tower-Building block and the regeneration of the "Praça da República". As concerns what was recommended to be preserved, the intention to maintain the configuration of the urban morphology stands out. For Mendes:

Távora has a clear intention with regard to the treatment of the historical environment of the city. For most of the existing buildings in the central area, Távora simply adjusts its heights, preserving its historic character. That is, it maintains the urban forms sedimented throughout history.³⁰

It can be said that the modification of the central area of the city was entirely defined in Auzelle's Scheme and that Távora was the creator of the architectural approach adopted for the materialization of the pre-defined concepts by the Urbanization Office of the Municipality of Aveiro. In this way, Auzelle's guidelines and Távora's proposals can be characterized by being complementary products.

According to Fernando Távora,

The Scheme [prepared by the Director Plan Office] (...) contained, in its simplicity, a whole happy and powerful conception of arrangement of the central area of Aveiro, full of possibilities that its development through the Preliminary Study prepared by us confirmed. This will be a point that should not be forgotten, thus paying homage to those who conceived this Scheme and putting our work in its proper place, which had the joy of starting from such a clear and significant idea, thus proving itself, and

29 [...] o Plano Director da Cidade de Aveiro tinha uma ambição maior do que a simples orientação técnica assente no zoneamento e em critérios de densidade. Auzelle defendia o princípio de densidade na configuração do núcleo histórico central, com a clara noção de que a forma da urbe é mais dependente da cultura do lugar do que da geometria programática do plano de gestão. Entendia o lugar para além do topográfico ou da geografia física, tomando da complexidade social estímulos como a significação da sua história e a natural ambição humana de progresso. See: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 33.

30 "Távora tem uma intenção clara no que diz respeito ao tratamento do ambiente histórico de cidade. Para a maior parte dos edifícios existentes na área central, Távora ajusta simplesmente as suas cêrceas, preservando o seu carácter histórico. Ou seja, mantém as formas urbanas sedimentadas ao longo da história". From: Mendes, "Arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, de Fernando Távora (1962-1967): das influências teóricas às referências práticas", 67.



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once again, the need and the advantage of basic studies in terms of urbanism for defining and framing architectural solutions.³¹

Távora played the role of organizer of the necessary synthesis to carry out a broad programme, which covered “aspects as diverse as the enhancement of the historic core with the value of a civic centre and its fitting into a complex web of car traffic”.³² Its conception encompassed both the urban design, which defined the road infrastructure, the regeneration of public spaces, the buildings to be demolished and to be built, and the architectural design of the proposed new buildings [Fig. 16, 17].

Among the architectural measures adopted were the spatial reorganization of an entire block, the demolishing of some existing buildings, proposing new ones and introducing a new pedestrian connection on different levels between

Fig. 16

Plan of the Central Zone of Aveiro prior to the project, emphasizing the striking buildings, June 1963. Caption: A: *Hotel Arcada* | B: *Banco de Portugal* | C: *Misericórdia Church* | D: *City Hall* | E: *Aveiro Theatre* | F: *Lyceum* | G: *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* | H: *Fishing Company* | I: *Banco Regional de Aveiro (FIMS/AFT)*. Author's notes on the drawing.

Fig. 17

Plan of Fernando Távora's Proposal for the Central Zone of Aveiro, June 1963. Caption: A: *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* | B: *Offices and Commerce* | C: *Trade* | D: *Municipal Building* | E: *Banco Regional de Aveiro*; F: *Offices and Hotel* | G: *Trade* | H: *East Car park* | I: *West car park (FIMS/AFT)*. Author's notes on the drawing.

31 “O Esquema [elaborado pelo Gabinete do Plano Director] (...) continha, na sua simplicidade, toda uma feliz e poderosa concepção de arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, cheia de possibilidades que o seu desenvolvimento através do Estudo Prévio por nós elaborado veio confirmar. Este será um ponto que não convirá esquecer, prestando assim homenagem a quem concebeu tal Esquema e colocando no seu devido lugar o nosso trabalho que teve a dita de partir de uma ideia tão clara e tão significativa, provando-se assim, e mais uma vez, a necessidade e a vantagem de estudos básicos em termos de urbanismo para a definição e enquadramento das soluções arquitetónicas”. See: Fernando Távora, *Arranjo arquitetónico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa* (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1963), 3.

32 “Aspectos tão distintos como a valorização do núcleo histórico com valor de centro cívico e o seu encaixe numa trama complexa de trânsito automóvel”. (See: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 41).

the *Praça da República*, with the City Hall, and the Central Canal. In the arrangement suggested for all this new block, Távora kept only the pre-existing building of the *Banco Regional de Aveiro*³³ and redesigned all the rest of the block. At first, he suggested remodelling the existing *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*³⁴ building (building A in fig. 17), which was subsequently demolished and a new one built. He designed three new buildings, an annex to the Bank for extension (building E in fig. 17), another annex to the *Caixa* for the installation of offices (building B in fig. 17), and a third intended for commerce (building C of fig. 17). All of them were thought together, in order to form a new mixed-use urban nucleus that eased the transition between the higher elevation of the *Praça da República* and the lower elevation of the Central Canal.

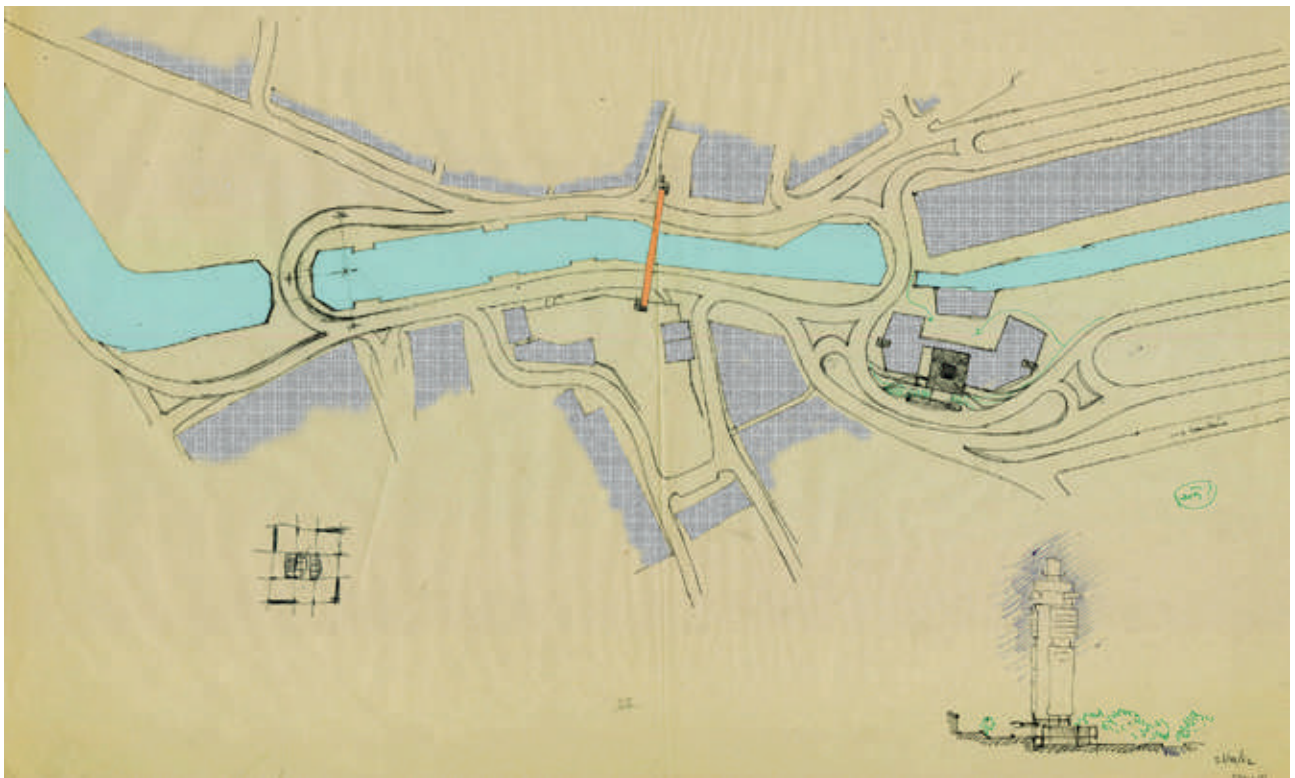
The second area with new buildings was the Tower-Building complex (building F in fig. 17), a building with 25 floors (about 90 meters high), expected to be conceived as a modern landmark for the city in the Auzelle Plan, in contrast to the prominence of the surrounding historic core. This building, with a commercial complex (building G in fig. 17) and a car park (building H in fig. 17), was intended to be located to the east, next to the *Cais do Cojo*, in a place dominated by buildings in poor condition that would be demolished. The complex would expand the provision of spaces for trade and services in the city, leaving the representativeness of administration and culture to the core of the old town.

Necessary adjustments were made to Auzelle's pre-established guidelines for materializing the ideas of these two building complexes. The first one was a small change to the configuration of the new set of buildings on the *Praça da República*, which was planned to be completely opened up on its north side in the Auzelle scheme, visually linking the square to the Central Canal, also featuring a pedestrian bridge over the canal, which would start at the higher level of this square and finish on the opposite bank, in *Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas* [Fig. 18]. In addition, the importance of this opening up was to encourage the shift in focus from the *Praça da República* to the new, revitalized public space of the canal. "Underlying the intention of the Auzelle team would be the creation of an open square, following the prototype of the symbolic places of the main Portuguese cities, masterfully represented in the transformation of the *Terreiro do Paço*, in Lisbon [...] open to the Tejo [river]".³⁵ Távora, however, contradicted this idea and resolved this permeability in another way [Fig. 19], proposing the construction of a building there, sitting in classical fashion opposite the City Hall on the other side of the square, but with a free space underneath it, thus allowing for a continual visual horizon from square to canal (building D in fig. 19). This opening also allowed the square to be extended to the position of the roof of the commercial building (building C in fig. 19), which was designed at a

33 The name of a bank from Aveiro.

34 The name of a national bank.

35 "Subjacente à intenção da equipe de Auzelle estaria a criação de uma praça aberta, seguindo o protótipo dos lugares-símbolos das principais cidades portuguesas, magistralmente representados na transformação do *Terreiro do Paço*, em Lisboa [...] aberta ao Tejo". (See: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 50).



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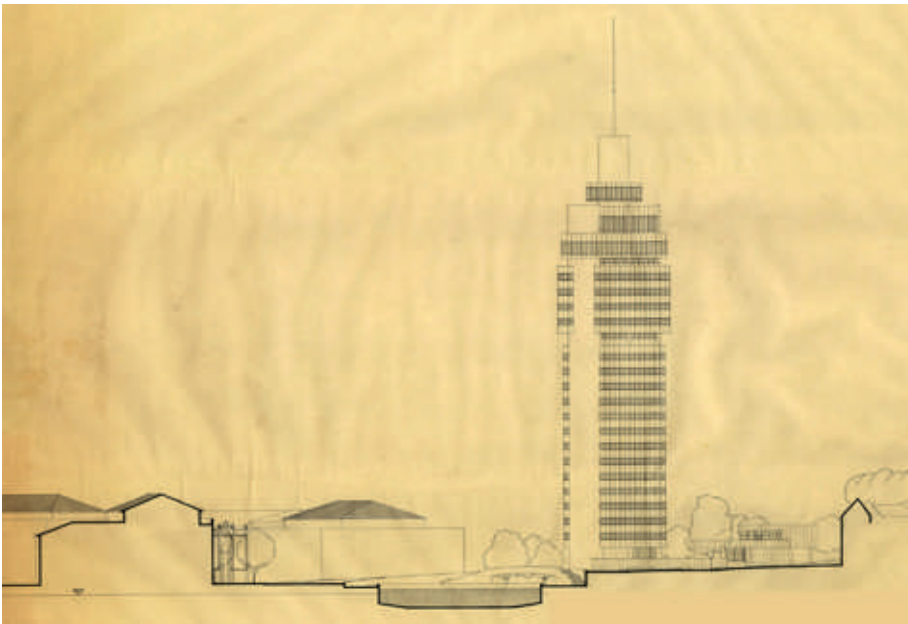
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Fig. 18

Initial sketch of the architectural design, showing the north side of the *Praça da República* open to the Central Canal and a pedestrian bridge (highlighted in red) from the high level of this square to the other side of the canal, over the canal and the arteries of traffic (FIMS/AFT). Author's notes on the drawing.

Fig. 19

Implementation of the set of buildings on the south bank of the canal, adjacent to the *Praça da República*, showing the piers of the Municipal Building, June 1963. Caption: A: *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* | B: Offices and Commerce | C: Terrace of the Commercial Building | D: Municipal Building (Entrance Floor) | E: Extension of the *Banco Regional de Aveiro* (FIMS/AFT).



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lower level, with direct access to the street bordering the canal. The connection to the canal was created with steps, linking the level of the square to the level of the street on the edge of the canal.

It is interesting to note that Távora accentuated the relationship between the square and the canal with his design. By designing the commercial front of this complex facing the canal, it confirms where he wanted “the eyes” of the city to be directed after this intervention. In addition, the roof of this commercial building (letter “C” in fig. 19) is also a lounge area, with a belvedere to the canal, promoting a recreational pedestrian route and the quality improvement of public space in the centre of Aveiro.

Távora’s second adjustment to the Auzelle Plan was in relation to the exact position of the Tower-Building. “After considering several hypotheses for its location, it was confirmed that the best position would be the one indicated in the diagram provided (forming a triangle with the ‘Church of the Misericórdia’ and the Hotel [Arcada])”.³⁶ The proximity of the tower to the Central Canal accentuated its relationship with the same, giving even greater prominence to this important waterway in the city [Fig. 20]. The building, which also had a shopping centre surrounding it on the ground floor, had its projection area significantly reduced because of this block, for reasons of profile and proportion in relation to the new solution for the road for cars.

With regard to the road scheme, in addition to satisfying the new road arrangement provided for in the Auzelle scheme, Távora proposed the design of the two new car bridges, and the pedestrian bridge. He planned to widen the roads running along the canal banks and to link this road scheme to the city’s main streets and avenues, as well as to the two new car parking lots. The appreciation of

Fig. 20

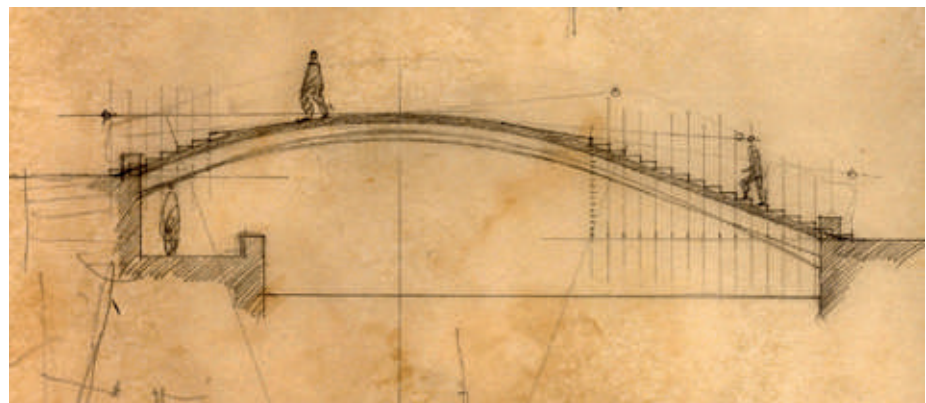
Cross section through the central channel showing the elevation of the Tower-Building in the background, June 1963 (FIMS/AFT).

36 “Depois de encaradas várias hipóteses para a sua localização, confirmou-se que a melhor posição seria a indicada no Esquema fornecido (formando um triângulo com a Igreja da Misericórdia e o Hotel [Arcada])”. See: Távora, “Arranjo arquitetónico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa”, 4.



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the Central Canal would thus be down to the intensified use of its banks, especially by pedestrians. The model [Fig. 21] shows the wide expansion proposed for the narrow pavements that bordered it, which sometimes reached dimensions that transformed them into living



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zones at a single level (1.5m). Roads, on the other hand, have variations in levels in the layouts. "It can be said that the pedestrian route works as a level platform, around the water, enhancing the canal".³⁷ In addition, the extension of these pavements under the new bridges promoted the removal of same-level intersections with vehicles, allowing the underpass of pedestrians without interruptions to the pedestrian route [Fig. 22]. The crossing of the channel by pedestrians in this scheme was achieved through dedicated pathways, with access via stairs and ramps, in both directions, east and west of the canal, adjacent to the road bridges created by the new scheme.

The pedestrian access system proposed for the central zone is a demonstration of Távora's intention to prioritise pedestrian life and also to confer pleasure, beauty and variety on the routes. There was also, in addition to the proposal for the renovation of the *Praça da República*, with all its extension of the space there, as already mentioned, the renovation of the *Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas* north of the Canal, where the existing car park was to undergo a change of use exclusively in favour of pedestrians, for living and socializing. In Távora's

³⁷ "Pode-se dizer que o percurso pedonal funciona como uma plataforma de nível, em redor da água, valorizando o canal". From: Mendes, "Arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, de Fernando Távora (1962-67): das influências teóricas às referências práticas", 79.

Fig. 21

Model of the Preliminary Study of the Arrangement of the Central Area of Aveiro, presented with the Master Plan of the city, in 1963 (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 22

Cross section through the central channel showing the elevation of the Tower-Building in the background, June 1963 (FIMS/AFT).

layout there is a correspondence between the two squares, which at first was a direct connection from the higher level of the *Praça da República* to the lower level of the *Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas*, which meant not only crossing over the channel, but also over its side roads, but which in the final proposal was simplified, limiting itself to crossing only over the channel.

The passage of pedestrians over the central canal, between the two squares, was simplified, either to obtain a more economical solution or due to the almost impossibility of naturally raising pedestrians on the side of *Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas*, at the necessary elevation, with the further inconvenience that, to service zones at low elevation, one would have to go up on one side (*Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas*) to descend on the other to an elevation similar to that of the starting point.³⁸

With regard to the elimination of crossings at the same level between pedestrian and vehicle lanes, one notes the architect's coherence with the examples of his time, with the lessons learned from modern thought, such as the Smithsons' project for Hauptstadt, Berlin, and the Stockholm civic centre proposed by Markelius.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the new vocation of the banks of the Central Canal: it would become a new civic centre, or the new "heart of the city", and with this, we can see the concern and care taken to create greater social dynamization for the area.

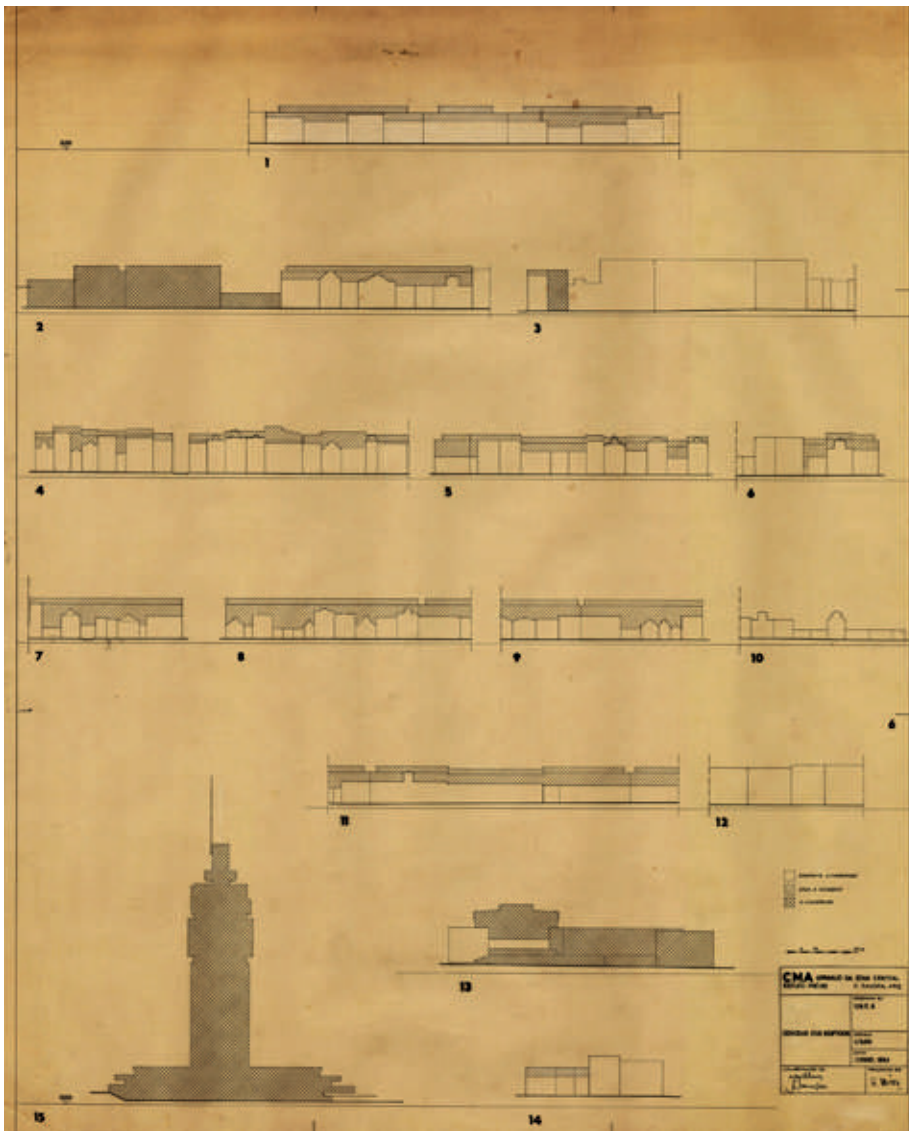
5. Urban Guidelines and Regulatory Standards

As a form of urban standardization, the Scheme of Auzelle's Master Plan proposed the regulation of the heights of the city's buildings. For some high-density areas, such as the long *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*, these were limited to a maximum height of 7 floors.

For other zones, the threshold was lower. These restrictions implied some kind of relationship between the buildings in the city as a whole, in order to allow a better balance of volumes and to emphasize the prominence of the Tower-Building in the urban landscape. For the buildings located on the banks of the Central Canal, the Preliminary Study suggested that in the long term changes could be made, implying an increase in the number of floors up to a standardised maximum height [Fig. 23]. This regulatory measure aimed to guarantee the maintenance of the horizontality of the urban landscape in this area of the city.

However, the regulatory measures were not limited to establishing new constructive indices for the area. Távora also proposed, in his Preliminary Study, a

³⁸ "A passagem de peões sobre o canal central, entre as duas Praças, foi simplificada, quer para obter uma solução mais económica quer pela quase impossibilidade de elevar, naturalmente, os peões, do lado da Praça Dr. Joaquim de Freitas, à cota necessária, com o inconveniente, ainda, de que, para serviço de zonas a cota baixa haveria que subir de um lado (Praça Dr. Joaquim de Freitas) para descer do outro para cota semelhante à do ponto de partida". From: Távora, "Arranjo arquitetónico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa", 4.



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constructive recommendation for these buildings on the banks of the Central Canal, which not only provided the guarantee of horizontal harmony in the landscape, but also created a typological alteration of the whole set [Fig. 24]. According to the descriptive memory of the project, for these buildings:

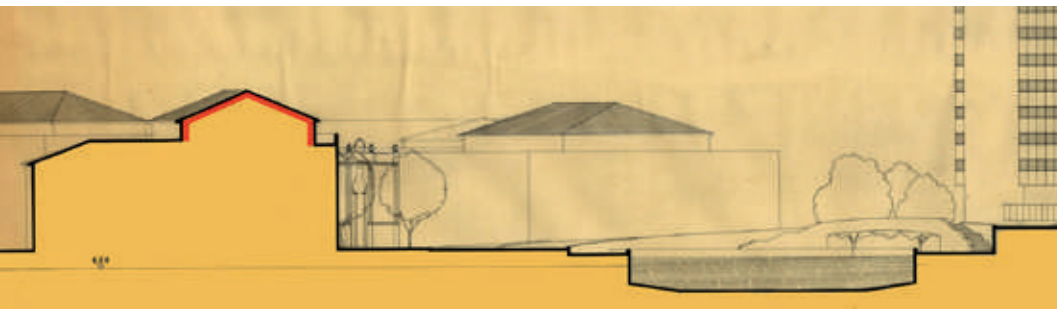
It is suggested that the top floor, generally set back, be covered in two pitches and not in four pitches as is currently the case, a fact that will certainly alter a little the general appearance of the buildings, for the simple reason that this type of roof makes it possible to solve in better conditions the problem of water infiltration that the existing buildings are victims of.³⁹

In analysing the buildings on the north bank of the Central Canal today, we note that two buildings adopted this alteration in the typology of their roofs [Fig. 25]. We observe that for this modification to take place, a new floor had to be

³⁹ "Sugere-se que o último piso, de um modo geral recuado, seja coberto em duas águas e não em quatro como atualmente acontece, fato que certamente alterará um pouco a fâcies local, pela razão simples de que tal tipo de cobertura permite resolver em melhores condições o problema das infiltrações de água de que são vítimas as construções aí existentes". Távora, "Arranjo arquitetônico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa", 19.

Fig. 23

Proposal for the regularization of the heights of the buildings on the banks of the Central Canal, June 1963 (FIMS/AFT).



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Fig. 24

Schematic section of the buildings in front of the Central Canal, showing in red the volume added to the existing structures to align the heights, as justified by the Descriptive Memory of the Preliminary Study by Fernando Távora (FIMS/AFT). Author's graphic on the drawing.

added to the buildings, as well as the recommendations of the Preliminary Study, in making a slight frontal retreat of these new volumes in relation to the respective facades. Nowadays, it can be seen that these are the only buildings that have gabled roofs, one facing the street and the other towards the back of the lot, visibly changed recently, while the others remain with the hipped roof typology.

This measure implies a long-term intention to change the general appearance of the existing buildings, as it can be seen in the photo of the model [Fig. 26]. Távora probably sought with this recommendation a conciliatory move between modernization and preservation of the existing structures, but in fact, what can now be perceived is a mis-characterisation of the historic properties that such a policy involves, and as such a measure of little use for conservation purposes.



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Fig. 25

Building complex on the north side of the Central Canal showing two buildings with alterations to the roofs as per the architect's intention to alter and standardize the rest of the block. Photo by the author, 2022.

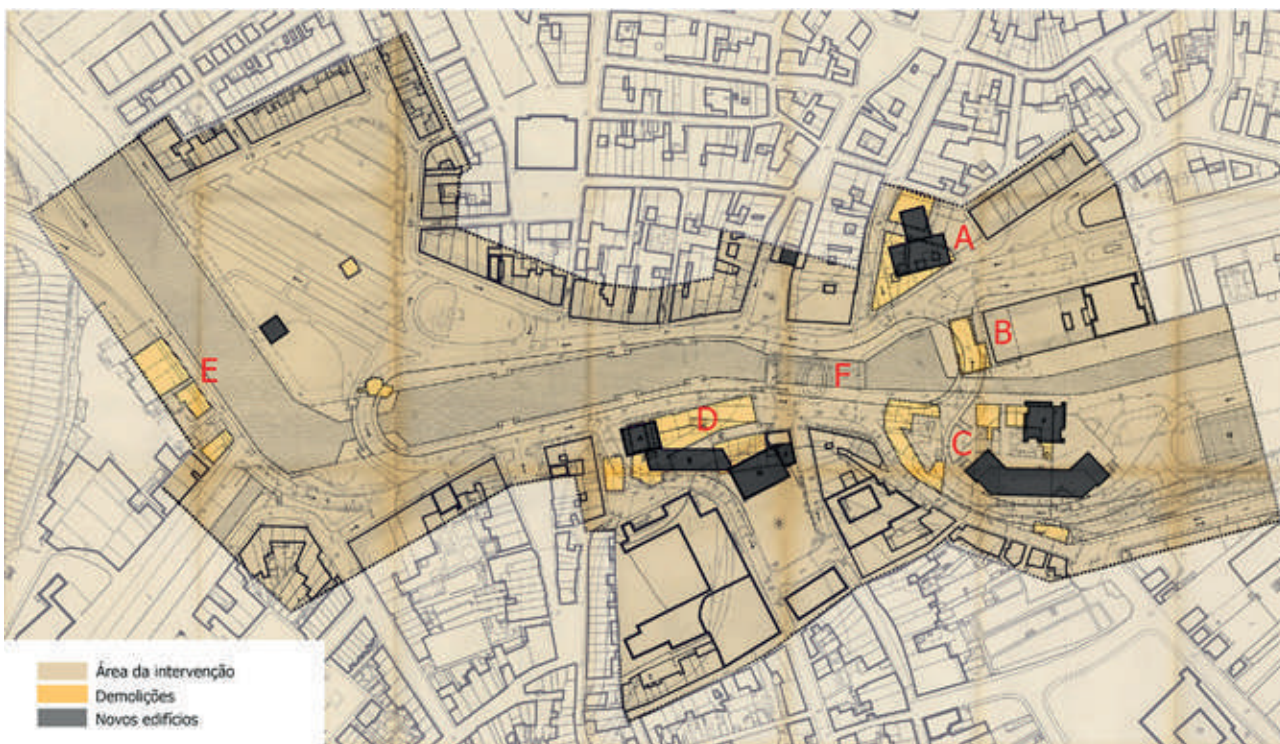
Fig. 26

Photo of the model of the Preliminary Study of the Arrangement of the Central Zone of Aveiro, presented with the Master Plan of the city, in 1963, showing the built complex in front of the Central Canal with roofs changed to 2 pitches, as justified by the Descriptive Memory of the Preliminary Study by Fernando Távora (FIMS/AFT).

6. Preserve Renovating

The sheer number of buildings that the Távora Preliminary Study proposed to demolish demands our attention. In order to implement the guidelines established in the Master Plan, namely, the widening of the roads by the canal and some of the secondary transverse roads, some single-building demolitions were proposed, and even some complete built-up sets of buildings were dismantled [Fig. 27].

The removal of two blocks to the north of the Central Canal was proposed. One of them was bound by the streets *Rua Viana do Castelo*, *Rua José Estevão*, and *Travessa da Caixa Econômica*, and the other one was located to the north of the first one; the recommendation for this area, according to a suggestion by



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the City Council's Urbanization Office, was their replacement by a single building (Letter A in fig. 27), in order to satisfy the new street alignments, and to free up the east façade of the Hotel Arcada (today called "Aveiro Palace") to mark the start of the *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*.

To the east, the designer of the Preliminary Study proposed the demolition of the building that was occupied by the Harbour Master at that time, and the removal of its functions to the port area (Letter B in fig. 27), a questionable attitude, as it was a building with Neoclassical aspects. The idea of demolishing this building, however, was not a new one, but originated from the Urbanization Plan drawn up in 1945 by the architect Moreira da Silva, as discussed earlier. It can be seen that Fernando Távora was not opposed to this idea, since its demolition would allow the construction of one of the bridges in his intended road system.

Next to the complex that would have included the new Tower-Building and the shopping centre, he proposed the doubling in width of the *Rua do Batalhão de Caçadores* in order to provide it with two-way traffic. The roadways were designed on different levels, with the east-west direction at a lower level, giving access to the new building complex through a secondary and service road. For this entire complex, the demolition of buildings that were in poor condition at the time was proposed. (Letter C in fig. 27).

In addition, in order to widen the roads running alongside the Central Canal to 8 metres, the south side of this canal had removed from its setting an entire block of the *Rua do Clube dos Galitos*, which included a recently restored building, where the Aveiro Fishing Company and the club *Clube dos Galitos* were installed, and the old building of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* [Fig. 28], giving way to the new block formed by the buildings of the *Praça da República* (Letter D

Fig. 27

Proposed demolitions in Távora's Preliminary Study (FIMS/AFT). Author's notes on the drawing.

in fig. 27). Also, in order to widen the coastal road, the demolition of the buildings located before the bridge over the *Canal do Paraíso* was proposed (Letter E in fig. 27).

Adjacent to the *Praça da República*, the demolitions led to the opening up of a new street called *Rua Belém do Pará*, which was made necessary by the design of the new architectural arrangement there and, as a result, there was a change in the existing urban fabric. The new construction of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* [Fig. 29], in a similar way, fulfilled the role of configuring, with its new volume, the limits of the new street layout.

It is also important to mention the proposed replacement of the plaza-bridge (letter F in fig. 27) with three new bridges. This large-scale construction was the result of a recent investment in the city, a modern work, but which constituted a visual obstruction to the reading of the Canal and a poor solution for the urban road layout, as it would have worsened a vehicular traffic problems instead of relieving them. According to Tavares (2022), by building new bridges “the authors of the plan were convinced that they would recover one of the most solid memories of the city, the old ‘Arcos’ bridge”.⁴⁰ While the pedestrian bridge would have a light aspect in Távora’s scheme, or a “transparency effect”⁴¹, the other two would have homogeneous masonry treatment, configuring an extension of the pavements by the edge of the canal.

The proposed demolitions demonstrate the intention to renovate the centre of Aveiro, adding monumentality and a new identity to the area, by inserting architectural landmarks at strategic points: revealing the existing building of “Hotel Arcada” at the start of a prominent thoroughfare; constructing a new Tower-Building on the banks of the Central and Cojo Canals; and erecting a new municipal building to accentuate the character of an administrative centre in the *Praça da República*. The other above-mentioned demolitions had the purpose of guaranteeing the opening up of the necessary space for the enlargement of the motor traffic lanes, a necessary action to supply the demand that the new traffic generating sites would provide.

⁴⁰ “Os autores do plano estavam convencidos de que recuperariam uma das memórias mais sólidas da cidade, a velha Ponte dos Arcos”. See Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 58.

⁴¹ Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 49.



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Fig. 28

Building where the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos de Aveiro* branch was initially installed in the 1930s (Joana Brites, *Filiais e Agências da Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência (1929-1970)*. Lisboa: Prosafeita Lda, 2014: 67).

Fig. 29

Building of the new branch of *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*, after the demolition of the old building and the construction of a new one in the same location in the 1960s (Joana Brites, *Filiais e Agências da Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência (1929-1970)*. Lisboa: Prosafeita Lda, 2014: 77).

The post-war concept of “urban renewal” refers to the idea of pure and simple replacement of existing physical structures as a condition for cities to adapt to the needs of modern life. The planning for the new arrangement of the central area of Aveiro, however, not only aimed at innovations and new perspectives. The city, which was experiencing territorial expansion and the modernization of its structures, also wanted an environment where the inhabitants felt good, by conserving and rehabilitating many of the existing structures.

This was an urban renewal programme for the old central area, maintaining the existing mixed use and increasing its vocation for the commercial and services sector with new buildings and a new social dynamic. By proposing new structures at certain points in the area, and reclassifying the urban space as a whole, the value of the existing urban complex in this area would be consequently enhanced.

As observed by Nuno Portas:

It should be noted that conservation does not mean “freezing”, but the defence of structures, areas or even “monument cities” [...] that deserve it. In a global sense, the rehabilitation of cities consists of the continuous renovation of existing structures, the construction “step by step” and the development of its own potential, finding the most adequate solution for each case and not a preconceived generic solution.⁴²

For part of the existing urban fabric, Távora proposed to keep it intact. Nuno Portas still reminds us that:

The value of an old area is not only that of the buildings: it is a value of location or “centrality” for those who work there, live there or may come to live there; it is the value of the already installed infrastructure even if, in some cases, it needs reform; it is the accumulated value of investments by thousands of citizens who own or do not own their homes, stores, warehouses or workshops.⁴³

The term “preserve renovating” is, in our understanding, a concept close to the intentions of this proposal made by Távora and also by the municipal interests of modernization, both of the physical environment, as well as the social and cultural area.

By proposing the motto “preserve renovating” or “renovate preserving”, we propose a policy of physical recovery and social reuse of the existing number of buildings, which opposes both the idea that old areas are dead

42 “Convém assinalar que conservação não significa “congelamento”, mas sim a defesa de estruturas, áreas ou até “cidades monumento” [...] que o mereçam. Num sentido global, a reabilitação de cidades consiste na renovação contínua das estruturas existentes, na construção “passo a passo” e no desenvolvimento das suas próprias potencialidades encontrando para cada caso a solução mais adequada e não uma solução genérica preconcebida”. See: Nuno Portas, “Velhos centros vida nova”, in *Os Tempos das Formas, volume I: A Cidade Feita e Refeita* (Guimarães: Universidade do Minho, 2005), 158.

43 “O valor de uma área antiga não é apenas o dos edifícios: é um valor de localização ou de “centralidade” para os que lá trabalham, moram ou podem vir a morar; é o valor da infraestrutura já instalada mesmo se, nalguns casos, carente de reforma; é o valor acumulado de investimentos de milhares de cidadãos proprietários ou não nas suas casas, nas suas lojas, nos seus armazéns ou oficinas”. Portas, “Velhos centros vida nova”, 157).

museums, for tourists to walk around and photograph, or the idea that they are pasture for surplus value without any benefit to the community.⁴⁴

7. The Enhancement of the Historic City

The Central Zone of Aveiro is an area whose urban landscape has peculiar characteristics, with the extraordinary presence of the Central Canal, which is navigable and integral to the daily life of the local population. We consider this core of the city an urban complex of historical, cultural and environmental value due to its unique quality. Its environmental value is emphasized in the descriptive memory of this project: “[the preliminary study] is based on the premise of conservation and improvement of existing values – among which the Central Canal stands out – and is intended to solve the most acute problems of various kinds that the central zone presents”.⁴⁵

The historical and cultural values of the centre of Aveiro can be seen from the architect’s attitude towards the city. More than an urban plan that tried to solve the area’s road problems and insert a new visual landmark to the city, Fernando Távora was also dealing with the regeneration of a historic centre with his new proposal. It is notable that there was attention paid to the urban fabric as a historical fact and guarantee of the permanence of man’s experiential places. “In the design of the joint arrangement of the zone, he instituted the principle of continuity, accepting the formal diversity of the pre-existing buildings”.⁴⁶

Fernando Távora also put some of his theoretical concepts into practice in Aveiro. For Tavares,

In Aveiro, in the very heart of the old town, Távora managed to put his reflection on *A Lição das Constantes* into practice in a consolidated historic centre. He worked with the historical memory overlapping with the generational memory that accompanied it, to generate the timeless modern in his own reading of the thread of time.⁴⁷

Fernando Távora’s study trip to the United States of America in 1960 is another point to consider for this approach. The architect’s reports show us his concern with preserving the historic urban landscape of cities. His contact with North American cities allowed him to perceive the positive urban consequences of the application of planning systems. From his visits to these cities, he elaborated

44 “Ao propor o lema “conservar renovando” ou “renovar conservando” defendemos uma política de recuperação física e de reutilização social do parque de edifícios existente, que se opõe quer à ideia de que as áreas antigas são museus mortos, para turista passear e fotografar, quer à ideia de que são pasto para as maiores valias sem qualquer proveito para a coletividade”. Portas, “Velhos centros vida nova”, 156.

45 “[O estudo prévio] assenta na premissa da conservação e beneficiação dos valores existentes – entre os quais se destacam o Canal Central – e pretende resolver os problemas mais agudos e de vária ordem que a zona central apresenta”. From: Távora, “Arranjo arquitetónico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa”, 2.

46 “No desenho do arranjo conjunto da zona, instituiu o princípio da continuidade, aceitando a diversidade formal do edificado preexistente”. Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 43.

47 “Em Aveiro, no exacto lugar do coração do velho burgo, Távora conseguiu levar à prática a sua reflexão sobre “A lição das constantes” em centro histórico consolidado. Trabalhou com a memória histórica sobreposta à memória geracional que o acompanhava, para gerar o moderno intemporal na sua própria leitura do fio do tempo”. Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 21.

concepts and observed the importance of the areas surrounding the monuments and landmark buildings, a modern concept. But he also noted some negative characteristics that harmed urban landscapes, especially in Boston and Chicago, where meshes of skyscrapers were built next to vast flat areas, especially on the sea and river fronts, promoting a great contrast of masses in these American cities, something that he was trying to avoid happening in Aveiro.

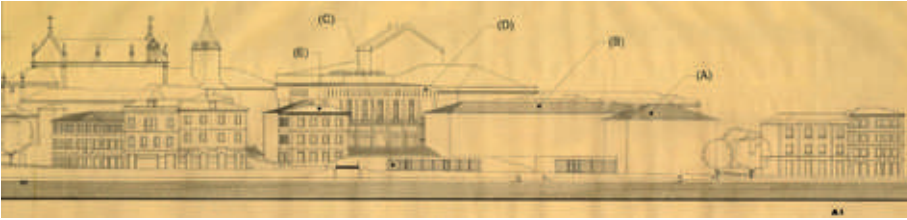
Domingos Tavares also cites some interesting aspects to be considered to justify the erection of a Tower-Building in Aveiro, showing the importance of symbolic values. The first one was to increase the influx of people in this area, thus creating an attraction for the new civic centre that was to be formed in the zone around the Central Canal. The second point was “to find, through the art of invention, an image capable of overcoming the lack of a cathedral tower like those that were made, in medieval times, by the towns of northern Europe”.⁴⁸ In this respect, there was a discreet landmark in the centre of the city, the bell and clock tower of the old City Hall in the *Praça da República*, a building from the late 18th century but whose height did not have enough visual strength over the surrounding environment to qualify as a landmark.

Also relevant for Tavares is the reference that Távora makes to the *Piazza San Marco*, in Venice, in his tract *A Lição das Constantes*, treating the urban environment of the Square as an example of formal diversity and permanent quality, where the buildings were built with a few centuries of difference, which meant stylistic diversity, typological variety and constructive evolution, and where the constant of modernity regulated the whole set. This square is characterised by the verticality of the Bell Tower of St. Mark, a tower almost 100 metres high, the only vertical element of this scale and magnitude in the city of Venice, a singular element in the urban landscape. This verticality, which contrasts with the horizontality of the complex, also seems to be the design of the architect Távora for Aveiro, aiming to highlight the value that the surroundings have as a pre-existing building mass.

There was also another way of valuing history in the Távora Scheme: to promote the rescue of a remarkable historical element of the city through its reconstruction in a new location. This is about the old *Fonte dos Arcos* (also known as *Fonte da Praça*), dismantled in 1932. This fountain, which was once in the *Praça Joaquim Melo e Freitas*, located north of the Central Canal, had value for the memory and identity of the city, and acquired in Távora’s project a special site, next to the new commercial building of the Municipal Library complex, in front of the Central Canal.

Thus, one of the contributions of the project to the city was to show that the presence of new architectural elements in the centre of Aveiro, in a well-studied way, would not overshadow its existing values. Távora did not appeal to *pastiche* in the proposed new composition. The challenge faced by him was to insert the new structures without obstructing the already consolidated local identity, or

48 “Encontrar, através da arte da invenção, uma imagem capaz de superar a falta de uma torre de catedral como as que se fizeram, em tempos medievais, pelos burgos do norte da Europa”. Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 44.



to find the best solution in adding “pieces” to this set, intending to enhance the context even more.

8. The Architectural Language

The design for the new *Praça da República* building complex was, in our judgment, influenced by the principles of post-war Italian modern architecture [Fig. 30].

When analysing Fig. 30, what attracts our attention in this new block is the composition of the 5 buildings – the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* (A), Offices and Commerce (B), Commercial Building (C), Municipal Building (D), and Extension of the *Banco Regional de Aveiro* (E). The intention is clear: it is to formally highlight the new modern language of the Municipal Building, but also, in a way, to “dilute” it to the rest of the block. It is important to note that in this drawing the architect showed volumetric blocks without facade definitions for two new buildings. For these, there was only the definition of their heights and the material of their roofs, in ceramic tiles, a traditional typology of city buildings. The relevance of the design lies in the harmonious relationship between the volumes. Even though the elevations of these two blocks were not defined, the stylistic contrast, highlighting the arrangement’s central building, is a decisive guideline for its conception. The new Municipal Building is designed in detail. It has a fenestration that follows the repetition of supports and voids of the pre-existing neighbouring buildings, with the clear intention of diluting it among the edifying mass. However, some of the five points of Le Corbusier’s modern architecture were also applied to this building, namely, the building on piers, the free plan on some floors and the roof as a garden terrace. And that is where its detachment lies. According to Bernardo Ferrão,

Its design seeks an environmental integration that, far from morphological mimesis, nevertheless accepts and extends the pre-existing architectural discourse. The composition of the facades, the careful treatment of the exterior areas, the autonomy of the detailed design and the chromatic finish of both this building and the neighbouring *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*, built in 1965, suggest here [...] the influence of ‘historicist’ architecture ‘ by F. Albini and I. Gardella.⁴⁹

49 “O seu desenho procura uma integração ambiental que, longe de um mimetismo morfológico, todavia aceita e prolonga o discurso arquitetónico pré-existente. A composição das fachadas, o tratamento cuidadoso das áreas exteriores, a autonomização do desenho de pormenor e o acabamento cromático quer deste edifício quer da vizinha Caixa Geral de Depósitos, de 65, fazem pressentir aqui [...] a influência da arquitetura ‘historicista’ de F. Albini e I. Gardella”. See: Bernardo José Ferrão, “Tradição e Modernidade na obra de Fernando Távora, 1947-1987”, in *Fernando Távora*, Luiz Trigueiros, ed., (Lisboa: BLAU, 1993), 34.

Fig. 30

Elevation “A1” of the preliminary study, 1963, showing the new block with the Municipal Building and the supporting buildings (FIMS/AFT). Author’s notes on the drawing.

For Nuno Portas, the interest of the study, which called for architecture as an urban project, lay “in Távora’s clear attitude towards the historical environment: interpreting an atmosphere by commenting on it through a work in figurative contrast”.⁵⁰ This interpretation shows the architect’s ability to abstract (or reduce) his design in order to harmonize its language with that of the surrounding traditional environment.

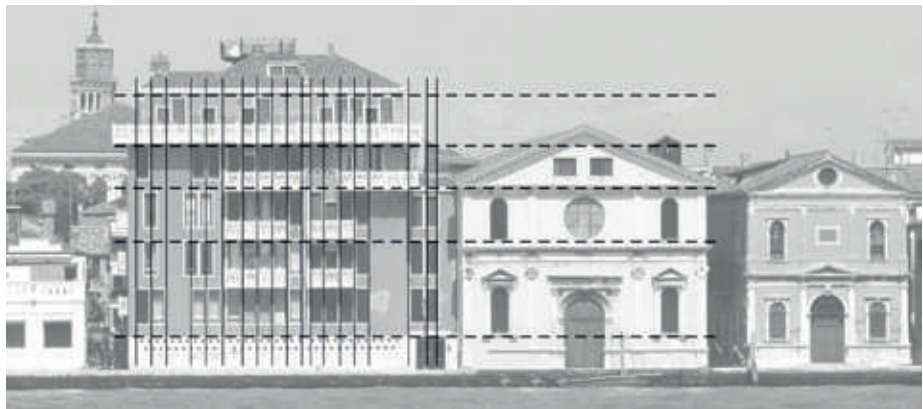
The influence of Ignácio Gardella, to which Bernardo Ferrão refers in “Tradition and Modernity in the work of Fernando Távora – 1947-1987”, is probably seen in the Casa alle Zattere building [Fig. 31, 32], constructed between 1958-1962 in Venice. This is an example of Italian Neo-Liberty style, a movement that, from the second half of the 1950s, promoted a renewed dialectical relationship between architecture and history. One can see Gardella’s care in harmonizing the new building with the pre-existing environment, the result of a design process that seeks a balanced solution between the old and the new. The result was to obtain an architectural language where the temporal distance between them was progressively reduced, becoming an exchange between two interpenetrating realities.

The harmony on the Venetian building’s facade is achieved through the alignment of the floors with the compositional elements of the neighbouring building’s facade (seen in the scheme shown in fig. 32) and also by the skilful use of supports and voids, seeking a harmony of masses. The windows have different heights and are grouped in series, vertically aligned and horizontally misaligned. The balconies, in turn, break the solidity of the building block and generate an asymmetry that can also be found in some other buildings in the city. The work still guarantees a certain visual spacing from the neighbouring buildings and the final set, modern in every sense, does not stand out in the landscape, but integrates into it despite all its distinctive character.

On the other hand, despite focusing on spatial continuity in the arrangement of the block adjacent to the *Praça da República*, Fernando Távora does not



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Fig. 31

View of the Casa alle Zattere from the Canale della Giudecca, Venice (www.photographer-michelle.com, last view June 2022).

Fig. 32

“Casa alle Zattere”, project by Ignazio Gardella and Church of the Holy Spirit (Allegra Maria Albani and Francesca Filosa, Dottorato di ricerca in Teoria e Progetto – XXXV cycle, Università di Roma La Sapienza).

50 “Na clara atitude de Távora perante o ambiente histórico: interpretar uma atmosfera comentando-a por uma obra em contraste figurative”. Ferrão, “Tradição e Modernidade na obra de Fernando Távora, 1947-1987”, 34.



33 |

nullify its modern essence, and asserts its contemporaneity by also promoting a rupture and the creation of a new landmark for the urban landscape with the Tower-Building. Thus, with his proposed demolitions and with the new figure of this tower, there was also a change in the relationship with the existing space.

In his proposed design for the Tower-Building and attached shopping centre, Távora sought a balanced solution between the internal arrangement and the value and meaning of its form. By proposing a design for this skyscraper, he was also, in a way, trying to repeat the examples that he admired on his study trip through America, where the references that he makes in his diary to buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright stand out, with all the poetics of the design and the rich plasticity that it imprints on American buildings. We believe that the artistic inspiration that Távora sought for the tower of Aveiro is from this architect's design. We found it in the Johnson Wax Research Tower, the component building of Johnson Wax Headquarters [Fig. 33], built in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1944-1950, and in the Price Building [Fig. 34, 35, 36], a skyscraper built in Bartlesville Plains, Oklahoma, in 1956, some references that illustrate the plasticity of Wright's design.

In this way, we can say that the influence of the "neo-empirical" architecture of the Italians, which inspired Távora in the conception of the new Municipal Building in the Praça da República, was not manifested in the formulation of the Tower-Building. Due to the historical context and proximity to the year of construction (between 1954 and 1958) of the *Torre Velasca* in Milan, a project created by the Italian Studio BBP and, above all, due to the close relationship that Távora acquired with the participants of CIAM XI, in Otterlo, especially with Giancarlo de Carlo and Ernesto Rogers, we can easily imagine that the Aveiro



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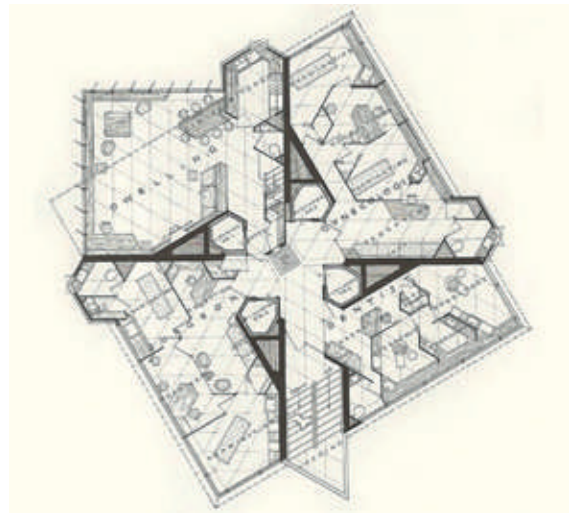
Fig. 33

Johnson Wax Headquarters, Racine, Wisconsin (<https://www.scjohnson.com/Interacting-with-SC-Johnson/Tours-and-Architecture/Our-Architecture>, last view June 2022).

Fig. 34

Price Building, general view (source: Cao, Lilly. "Lições do único arranha-céu de Frank Lloyd Wright, válidas até hoje". [The Tree that Escaped the Crowded Forest: Lessons from Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower] (Translated by E. Souza). ArchDaily Brasil, 2022. <https://www.archdaily.com.br/959013/licoes-do-unico-arranha-ceu-de-frank-lloyd-wright-validas-ate-hoje>, last view June 2022).

Tower would have followed the same compositional principles as the Italian tower, with the intention of synthesizing tradition with modernity. However, we believe it is more appropriate to approximate its architectural language to the examples of Frank Lloyd Wright we showed here, due to the contrast and strong character of its architectural language. In fact, the reference to the *Torre Velasca* is given as a theme, as it is the European example of the time, an attitude that proved to be successful in Italy and of which repetition was sought in Portugal: to introduce a large modern structure into the centre of a historical city.



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9. The Consequences of the Toning Down of the Initial Idea

The preliminary project for the central area of Aveiro aimed to give the city a new monumental image and create a new civic centre. The Central Canal was the focal point of the intervention in Fernando Távora's urban design. The treatment of its banks, with improvements in access for pedestrians and a new system for motor traffic, were intended to further promote appreciation in the urban landscape of Aveiro.

Unfortunately, this study only resulted in the regeneration of the *Praça da República*. The justifications for not building the Tower-Building, nor any of the proposals related to the road and pedestrian infrastructure of the canal, were political and financial. The plaza-bridge was not demolished, and with that the Harbour Master's building was also preserved. According to Tavares "The resistance of public opinion regarding the demolition of the Harbour Master's building (the *Capitania*) became insurmountable"⁵¹ and today this building is classified as a Protected Structure.



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Because it was not undertaken in its entirety, the impression left for posterity was that the 1962-1964 Master Plan was not properly concerned with promoting spaces for sociability. However, in our understanding, when analysing the plan and the project, we noticed that they showed real attention to valuing the "heart of the city" of Aveiro, in promoting a new and broader civic centre for an equally broader city. The never erected Tower-Building was fundamental to this idea.

At the time, the vast majority of the local population still lived in this old part of the city. The expansion of the zone with urban equipment for social use, such as revitalized squares, free of parked cars, and new buildings for collective use, would also be a way of encouraging residents not to migrate from there to other areas.

⁵¹ "A resistência da opinião pública quanto à demolição do edifício da Capitania do Porto de Aveiro tornou-se inultrapassável". See: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 54.

Fig. 35, 36

Price Building, plan and close-up view (source: Cao, Lilly. "Lições do único arranha-céu de Frank Lloyd Wright, válidas até hoje". [The Tree that Escaped the Crowded Forest: Lessons from Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower] (Translated by E. Souza). ArchDaily Brasil, 2022. <https://www.archdaily.com.br/959013/licoes-do-unico-arranha-ceu-de-frank-lloyd-wright-validas-ate-hoje>, last view June 2022).



37

For Portas (2005) “if it is important for citizens to see their basic needs met, it is no less important to enjoy living in this city for its aesthetic or emotional sense”.⁵²

Another important point of Távora’s programme to be considered and which was not implemented was the construction of all the blocks of the new complex for “Praça da República”. Among the 5 planned buildings, one of them, the one for offices and commerce, positioned between the Caixa Geral de Depósitos building and the Municipal Building, was not built. This block was important as a volume; it was planned to have the function of agglutinating the complex and making a transition in scale between the new bank building, at the canal level, and the new municipal building, at the square level. Its volumetry was simple and its implantation would favour the visual highlight that the central building, with a new architectural language, should have. In addition, the building was intended to be another attraction for increasing commercial and service use in the area and for attracting more people to circulate. In the place where it should have been there is nowadays only an empty space, consisting of a platform that serves only as a viewpoint over the Central Canal [Fig. 37].

The measures, envisaged as a whole, aimed, in our view, to value the central area as a hub of human activities, regardless of whether the city was or was not expanding, at that time, to new neighbourhoods. The Master Plan of 1964 was designed within the principles of urban renewal of modernism. However, in addition to adapting the city to the needs of modern life, it was also possible to notice the intention to adopt measures for the regeneration of the existing public space, ideas rooted in the Revision of the Modern Movement.

⁵² “Se é importante para o cidadão ver satisfeitas as suas necessidades básicas, não o é menos o fato de gostar de viver nessa cidade pelo seu sentido estético ou emocional”. From: Portas, “Velhos centros vida nova”, 163.

Fig. 37

Final configuration of the set of the new block adjacent to the Central Canal and *Praça da República* proposed by Fernando Távora, after the second refurbishment of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*. Approximate date: 1990s (Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni. *Fernando Távora. Opera Completa*. Milano: Electa, 2005: 187).

Conclusion

In Aveiro of 1964, it is noted with Auzelle's plan and with Távora's project, the existence of a pioneering urban planning attitude in Portugal and a careful attention in creating greater social dynamism for the central area of the city.

When analysing the current architectural debate of this decade, we assume that before any intervention proposal for Aveiro, Fernando Távora probably came across the following question: what are the attributes or values responsible for the cultural characterization of the historical site of Aveiro? After all, it is necessary to understand the specificities that make up the architectural complexes and urban spaces. Its attributes drive its recognition and appreciation as a cultural asset.

The Arrangement project for the central area of Aveiro shows the architect's first attempt to promote the conciliatory position of the modern man towards the old city, a characteristic method of the future projects by Fernando Távora. In this case study, the modernist does not intend to radically transform the image of the city, but rather intends to regenerate it. He has a clear reading of the city's symbols and historical architectural landmarks and, with a clear urban idea, inserts his new landmarks as a lesson of continuity, accepting the formal diversity of the pre-existing buildings.

The intention to modernize Aveiro, however, was unquestionable. There was a vision for growth in the region until the 1980s and the urban project had to respond to this demand. The intention was to create a new centre of social life for a new city, the Aveiro of the 20th century. Távora accomplished this by transposing, physically and on an urban scale, the city of the 19th century, concentrated in the surroundings of the *Praça da República*, where the City Hall was located with its clock tower, to the city of the future, a very much wider area, enhanced around the landscape of the Central Canal and its new modern 90-metre-high tower. He brought about this connection through another architectural landmark, which acquired the function of a mediating building, a structure raised on piers that makes the transition from one space to another and favours not only the pedestrian route, but also the visual route.

It is important to remember that this intervention changed the urban morphology of this part of the city. The *Praça da República* also partially changed its appearance. Its new configuration, however, allowed it to have a new significance. The ordering of the free spaces created was able to renew the image of the city, in addition to emphasizing its social and environmental qualities. There was the application of the principles of "space organization", a theme addressed by the author of the project years before in a publication in Portugal and for this reason we say that the work is consistent with his ideals: it arises from a process, and not from the application of pre-designed formulas.

The CIAMs are of great intellectual influence to this work. In these congresses, especially after the 8th meeting, the issue of the identity of the city and the conception of public space was intensely debated. The challenge of reconciling

the expansion of motorways and the creation of new civic centres was great. Creating networks of routes at different levels, generating varied environments in the city and maintaining pre-existing buildings was a premise adopted by the Smithsons in the unrealized project for Berlin, by Sven Markelius in Stockholm, and also by Távora (naturally on a more measured scale) in Aveiro.

New interpretations of local traditions were also discussed at CIAM, emphasizing the view of the architect's social role, an exercise that Távora adopted when choosing the symbols to preserve, such as the recovery of the old fountain, and also the symbols to value, such as the tower of the 18th century municipal building, and the tower of the new civic centre of the city. Ernesto Rogers' discourse on environmental pre-existence is also acknowledged by Távora when he synthesized and expressed, without mimicry, the formal character of the city in its new architecture for the new Municipal Building.

That said, we understand that the project for the Arrangement of the Central Zone of Aveiro was certainly a milestone in Portuguese urbanism for combining these experiences that the modern historical context of the 1950s provided. Furthermore, we see that this work by Távora applied the concept of urban design as defined by Solà-Morales (1999). For him, "designing the place" is the fundamental method for what he called the "Urban Project" and there is an empirical effort in this, where not only the geographical characteristics of the place are assimilated, but also the cultural ones.

Despite proposals for the demolition of some pre-existing blocks and the reconfiguration of the heights and roofing systems of the buildings located on the banks of the central canal (including some examples of local Art Nouveau architecture), proposals imbued with a clearly modern attitude, this work demonstrated the beginning of an attentive attitude towards the existing city in Távora's career, which attitude would be developed later in the urban intervention projects for the Ribeira-Barredo area, in Oporto, and for the historic centre of Guimarães. What had already been manifested in Aveiro was the principle of the architect's respectful relationship with the historic city and its identity.

Nowadays, the concept of the historic urban landscape stands out. Its principles are to preserve the quality of the human environment, improve the productive and sustainable use of urban spaces, recognize its dynamic character and promote social and functional diversities. The exhibition of this work by Távora allows us to ascertain that in the 1960s in Portugal there were already the beginnings of a demonstration of the expression of these concepts.

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Fernando Távora: The Struggle from Português Suave to the Shifting Aesthetics of Resistance from 1923 to 1953.

Ideology, Architectures, Periodicals, and the Role of Italy and CIAM from the First Salazar era to the Birth of the Third Way

Fernando Távora, Arquitetura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação, ICAT, Carlos Ramos, Português Suave

/Abstract

This paper explores the pivotal transformations in postwar Portuguese architecture, tracing the oscillation between traditional styles and modernist influences from 1923 to 1953. During a period marked by ideological conflict and cultural reassessment, Portuguese architecture experienced a profound metamorphosis, mirroring the nation's struggle between conservative nationalism and the burgeoning force of modernity. This study delves into the role of key figures such as Fernando Távora and the influence of international movements, notably from Italy and the CIAM, in shaping a new architectural ethos that navigated between heritage and innovation.

Through a meticulous examination of architectural projects, periodicals (*Arquitetura, Arquitetura portuguesa, Domus, Casabella*), and ideological discourses, the paper illuminates how architects negotiated with political and cultural currents to forge the architectural language. A form characterized by its duality, attempted to reconcile the traditionalist values imposed by the *Estado Novo* regime with a modernist vision inspired by global trends. The transition from the "Português Suave" aesthetic to a more resistant form of modernism, underscored by a critique of superficial stylistic nationalism, encapsulates a broader narrative of resistance and adaptation.

The findings underscore the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding architectural evolution, revealing how shifts in political ideology, cultural identity, and international influences converge in the realm of architecture. The paper contributes to a deeper understanding on how the Portuguese architecture context surrounding Fernando Távora's formative years not only reflected but also contested and reshaped the socio-political landscape of mid-20th century Portugal.

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His research focuses on the theory of forms and their interaction with societal and ideological transformations, with a particular emphasis on post-war developments. An advocate for ethical and socially responsible architectural practices, he addresses pressing issues such as class inequality and the rights of the broader 99%.



In 1139, Portugal saw the roots of its unity plunge into an identity and linguistic crystallisation. This moment foreshadowed the emergence of a bourgeoisie that witnessed maritime expansion and positioned itself among the first lights of globalisation, alongside the Italian republican cities. These components shaped the uniform temperament of Portuguese architecture: first civil, then colonial, unique, replicable, like the Jesuit, neo-Palladian or neoclassical architecture that would follow [Fig. 1]. With its white walls and simple construction, waterproofed with azulejos, with details, corners, or stone ornaments, it embodied the synthesis of a national tradition, at least until the end of the 19th century.

This historical period witnessed an ambivalent idea of the nation-state, characterized by a double dynamic: its fragility combined with a contradictory strengthening. Formations and reunions, as in Italy; civil wars, as in the United States; or refoundation's, as in countries with ancient territorial continuity, such as China, France, or Portugal. In the latter case, the beginning of the twentieth century was marked by violent upheavals¹ [Fig. 2].

Despite its great unity, the nation was, and to some extent still is, perceived by its elite as fragmented.

In the words of the architect Alexandre Alves Costa (1939), in an interview with RTP2, it appears “not very consistent as a unit” and “in permanent dissolution”, “difficult to bear”². As in Italy, this is characteristic of a section of historiography that promotes the idea of a disunited and fading fatherland. Intellectuals of the calibre of Almeida Garrett (1799-1854) and J. Mattoso (1933-2023) elaborated on this theme. In 2010, Alves Costa declared:

Although Portugal thrives on the existence of a strong political power that guarantees its unity, despite everything there are many regional differences [...] there are many Póvoas de Varzim [...] when I come to Lisbon I am abroad, I mean, I love Lisbon, I don't say it in a negative sense, I say it in a positive sense, but I am abroad: the light, the colour, I am here and I am in Algeria, [...] and when people from Lisbon come to Oporto they feel the same way, they too are abroad, they too are elsewhere, it is another country... here we are in *Gallaecia*...³



1

Fig. 1

Exemplary of this period but also of the constant relations with Italy is the Church of Aveiro's Mercy, whose initial design in 1585 is attributed to the architect and military engineer Filippo Terzi (1520-1597) and completion in 1653 by the Portuguese master Manuel Azenha (photo by the author, 2003).

1 Luís Reis Torgal, Heloísa Paulo, *Estados autoritários e totalitários e suas representações* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2008).

2 Interview by Paula Moura Pinheiro with Alexandre Alves Costa on Portuguese architecture (2010-02-14) in RTP 2 – Câmara clara <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/alexandre-alves-costa/> (last viewed March 2024).

3 Interview by Paula Moura Pinheiro (last viewed March 2024)



2

As in Italy, these ideas infiltrated the national intelligentsia, which failed to understand the nature of its national fabric and the modernising impulses of the working classes, mistaking them for “difficulties” in maintaining national order.

The twentieth century, both in the Portuguese case and in other countries, was marked by a relentless effort on the part of the ruling classes to limit the progress of their subaltern castes. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the reconciliation that the elites were forced to make found a synthesis in republicanism, which produced traces of dissent between the different spirits of the possessors.

The republic germinated among some of the higher classes, but it was the expression of contradictions that were made manifest by an untenable situation among the hard-working people, crushed by misery and dissatisfied with a throne immersed in unsustainable luxury and a backward clergy. In 1910, several days of riots forced Manuel II (1889-1932) to abdicate and flee. The Republic was born, characterised by barely developed programmes of liberal democracy and the hegemony of the interests of the upper classes.

Despite some secular and republican reforms, the new government struggled to implement reformist policies. Democratic leadership became synonymous

Fig. 2
This 1:9500 scale map of Oporto by W.B. Clarke and J. Henshall for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was published in 1833 (here in a 1849 prin) while Portugal navigated through the Liberal Revolution in conflict with the absolutists following João VI's death, moving towards constitutional monarchy and marked by a series of coups, insurrections that would lead to the establishment of a republic in 1910. This era also witnessed the last expansion of Portuguese colonization in Africa and the Septembrist movement push for educational and cultural reforms.

with inefficiency rather than modernisation. The *lumpenproletariat* remained underdeveloped, and Portugal continued to have one of the highest illiteracy rates in Europe. This inability to address the inequalities of rural and proletarian groups led to the failure of the reformist project⁴.

The ruling class relied on the military to contain the modernising impulses of the people, especially after the trauma of the First World War, in which almost 3% of the male population died. The 1922 elections were characterised by a low turnout. The Democratic Party won 47%, followed by parties linked to the landed gentry, such as the Liberal-Republicans (21%) and those close to the Church and the landed gentry (Catholic Centre, 14%), without any democratic representation for the working world. Instead, the workers found a voice in the Communist Party, which had been founded a year earlier in 1921, arousing the fears of churchmen, merchants, and landowners.

It's in this scenario that Fernando Luís Cardoso de Meneses de Tavares e Távora was born in Oporto on 25 August 1923, from the noble house of Covilhã, descendant of Rozendo Hermigues (c. 985-1041), a member of the Lusitanian fundamentalist movement, expression of the monarchical-Catholic line⁵.

In the field of architecture, this moment of uncertain innovation was reflected in timid expressions of modernity in projects such as the Economic Complex for Fishermen in Olhão (1923-1925). An urban and architectural project with Mediterranean, neo-dialectal tones, and cubist intonations by the young Carlos João Chambers Ramos (1897-1969). A simplicity and systematicity of form that is surprising when compared to the eclectic and cloying froufrou of his Portuguese Pavilion of Honour at the International Exposition in Rio de Janeiro (1922), and that illustrates the sense of an ideological transformation taking place [Fig. 3].

This transformation came to a halt from 1926 onwards in the face of the contradictions and inadequacies of the weak reform project. With the rise to power of the economist Antonio de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), the liberal leadership began a process of disintegration and submission to the army, which took over the role of maintaining social control over the subordinate classes, pushing the country towards a military dictatorship disguised as a technical government. During that decade and the following one, Portugal followed a path that was shared by many other countries, most notably Italy: Hungary, Spain, Germany, Austria, Greece, and many others. Nations in which the nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie, and landowners, frightened by the rise of the subordinate classes, contributed to the rise of anti-labour governments, and militarised their national capitalism.



3

Fig. 3

Also dating from 1923 is the design of the Rivoli Theatre in Porto, remodelled according to Art-Deco and a simplified eclectic tastes by Júlio J. de Brito (1896-1964), in which echoes of Auguste Perret's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (1911-1913) (photo by the author, 2005).

4 Ernesto Castro Leale, *Republicanism, socialismo, democracia* (Lisbon: Centro de história 2010).

5 Giovanni Leoni, "Fernando Távora. Un anonimo del XX secolo", *Casabella*, no. 678 (2000): 10-13.

In this context, architecture would tend towards a serene modernity, as in the radiology pavilion of the Portuguese Institute of Oncology in Lisbon, designed by Ramos himself in 1927, the same year as the founding of the second Portuguese architecture magazine, *Arquitectura* [Fig. 4], in January (the other main periodical, *A arquitetura portuguesa*, was founded in 1907).

Salazar, for his part, became prime minister in 1932, adopting an anti-communist Mussolini-inspired constitution the following year, while Ramos was completing the rationalist radiology pavilion, with echoes of the façade elements of Oud's minimalist houses in Weissenhof (1927).

Like the Duce's regime, Salazarism began with a mild technical and formal modernisation in various areas. This modernisation took place in a profoundly backward and largely rural Portugal, i.e. under different conditions from Italy, where robust industrialisation was underway. In the first five years of the Salazarist era, the government gave support to architectural modernism⁶. But the growth of "modernised" architecture was more stylistic than typological, although there were exceptions such as the Fialho de Almeida High School (1931-1935) by Luís R. C. Cristino da Silva (1896-1976) [Fig. 5].

Examples of this phase include projects by Manuel Marques (1890-1956), José Marques da Silva (1869-1947), Cassiano V. Branco (1897-1970), António Varela (1903-1962), Arménio T. Losa (1908-1988), Januário Gsodinho de Almeida (1910-1990). And by Rogério dos Santos de Azevedo (1898-1983), with the car park of the newspaper *O Comércio* in Oporto (1932) [Fig. 6], soon after projects of similar taste, such as the Marbeuf garage in Paris (1929), the Wilemans-Ceuppens breweries in Brussels (1930) and the Press Palace in Baku (1932). This architecture was part of the repertoire of the nascent Modernism, whose expressions ranged from simplified Deco to Novecento, through languages purified by decoration⁷.

But for de Oliveira Salazar, the harmless instances promulgated by the nascent Modern Movement would have been viewed unfavourably, as interpreted as manifestations of internationalism. The publication *A arquitetura portuguesa*, which in 1935 merged with a periodical edited by the Lusitânia ceramics factory, changed its title to *A Arquitectura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação*

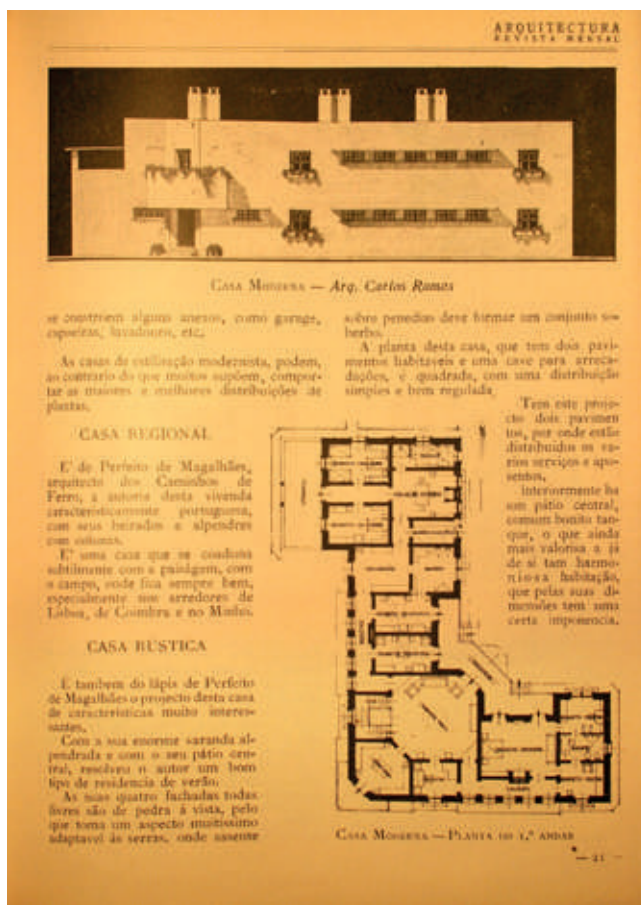


Fig. 4

Two years post-establishment, in November 1929, *Arquitectura, revista mensal* featured "Casa moderna" on pages 20-21, showcasing Casa António Moreira d'Almeida Pinto by Carlos Ramos. This design, conceived concurrently with Terragni's *Novocomun* inauguration, exemplifies Ramos's stylistic evolution of the era, in which a distant compositional reference to Le Corbusier's Villa La Roche-Jeanneret of 1923 are not entirely absent, as are echoes of the late architecture of Charles Rennie Mackintosh (Gregorio Carboni Maestri archives).

⁶ Alexandra Trevisan da Silveira Pacheco, "Influências internacionais na arquitetura moderna do Porto (1926-1956)" (PhD Diss. Universidad de Valladolid, 2013).

⁷ Opus Incertum. *Architectures à Porto* (Brussels: Mardaga, 1990): 36-46.



5



6 |

Fig. 5
Liceu Nacional de Jacinto de Matos (Beja). Architect Luís Cristino da Silva. Col. Estúdio Mário Novais / FCG – Biblioteca de Arte e Arquivos. CFT003.101911.

Fig. 6
Garagem o Comércio do Porto designed by Baltazar de Castro and Rogério de Azevedo (1928-1932) in Oporto (photo by Francesca Fagnano, 2004).

(*Reunidas*). This was the beginning of the 3rd series, which from here on we will abbreviate to *Arquitetura portuguesa*. Closer to the regime, it manifested this slowdown in the field of modern architecture through titles such as 'Ancient and Modern Lisbon' (1935):

[...] it would be indispensable that Lisbon, finding itself, no longer lose itself; that, – just as Mussolini seeks a Fascist style, distinctly Italian and necessarily rooted in Italy's past, – we seek a Portuguese narrative, unrelentingly Portuguese, within which the refinements and improvements of the modern were conquests, in fact conquered, and not formal annexations that are only important guests.⁸

The retro temperament of the regime, baptised New State, would have embraced a nacional anti-modernist style, already foreshadowed in some ornamental detail of the insidious slow death prison camp in Tarrafal, Cape Verde (1936) by J. Â. Cottinelli Telmo (1897-1948). Similarly, one can detect this nascent manner in the Portuguese pavilion for the 1937 Universal Exhibition in Paris, by viscount F. C. Keil C. do Amaral (1910-1975). This pavilion stood in opposition to the purist currents still present in Portugal, such as the Honório de Lima house, built from 1939 by A. E. Viana de Lima (1913-1991), which had aesthetic connections with buildings such as Le Corbusier's Citrohan house in Stuttgart (1927), Leendert van der Vlugt's Sonneveld in Rotterdam (1932-1933), Figini in Milan (1934-1935), Terragni's Villa Bianca in Seveso (1936-1937) or Casa Cattaneo in Cernobbio (1938-1939).

From the '40s onwards, with increasing determination, there was a strengthening of the architectural strategies implemented by the dictatorship. Initially oriented towards modest projects, these stylistic approaches gained clarity in works dedicated to exhibitions and fairs⁹. This trend would have had a less obvious beginning in the context of public buildings, where various sensitivities could express with different levels of competence [Fig. 7]. An example of this contradictory dynamic was embodied by the policies of engineer Duarte Pacheco (1899-1943), mayor of Lisbon and Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. This sphere of autonomy would progressively thin out to minimal proportions. State institutions would then gradually employ architecture, ranging from the most domestic to the most extensive, to convey propaganda and shape a process of re-education¹⁰ [Fig. 8].



7

Fig. 7

The lingering trace of this still-open breach can be observed in the 1940 publication by Jorge Segudado – who had contributed to the realization of the Portuguese Pavilion for the New York World's Fair since 1930 – titled "Sinfonia do degrau, Impressões de New-York e de outras terras do Estados Unidos da América do Norte". The publication was produced by Oficinas da Sociedade Nacional de Tipografia, spanning 185 pages with a collection of photographs and texts (Gregorio Carboni Maestri archives).

8 Tomaz Ribeiro Colaço, "Lisboa antiga e moderna", *Arquitetura Portuguesa*, no.3, (May 1935): 1.

9 Susanna Bortolotto, Nelly Cattaneo, Renzo Riboldazzi, eds., *Infrastrutture e colonizzazione: Il caso africano tra heritage e sviluppo* (Florence: Altralinea, 2020).

10 Dario Ramondetti, "Francisco Keil do Amaral (1910-1975). Architetto degli spazi verdi nella Lisbona salazarista" (PhD Diss. IUAV Venezia, 2018).



8

Colonial exhibitions were held in Africa, such as in Luanda, where the pavilions, including the Civilising Portugal building, embodied this new aesthetic. The most representative of those exhibitions was the 1940's Portuguese Empire exposition. In an era marked by the beginning of the Second World War, Portuguese isolationism, and limited resources available for a world-stage event, the regime took the decision to create a Great Exhibition of the Portuguese World. Only one country was invited, Brazil, overwhelmed by the pavilions of the regime in the purest Salazarism classicism¹¹. This new regime style had spread with triumph in this exhibition, formalising the *Estado Novo's* approach in architectural terms, thus initiating a turning point in the aesthetic-cultural policy of the elite. This was the event for which Cottinelli Telmo's well-known *Padrão dos Descobrimentos* was realised¹².

The stylistic evolution led towards an imposed official classical language, and this entailed rapid changes in the work of almost all the architects previously mentioned, including those that are now lauded in the historiographical mythology associated with Portuguese Modernism, such as Ramos. The Modern Movement was nipped in the bud.

The policies of the New State slowed down the country's technical-industrial, socio-economic, and political development, preventing any possible fertile

Fig. 8

Instituto Superior Técnico by Duarte Pacheco (engineer) and Porfírio Pardal Monteiro (architect) in Lisbon. Col. Estúdio Horácio Novais / FCG – Biblioteca de Arte e Arquivos. CFT164.1054

11 Marco Ferrari, *L'incredibile storia di António Salazar, il dittatore che morì due volte* (Bari: Laterza, 2020).

12 José Manuel Fernandes, *Português suave: arquitecturas do estado novo* (Lisbon: IPPAR, 2003).

environment for a modernity, if not ideological, at least technical-formal. It is easy to imagine how much bitterness longing for progress overwhelmed the generation – later called *dos Transigentes* – of compromise architects from that period, not to mention the subordinate classes.

In the years following the Portuguese World Exposition, Portugal's clerical-fascist regime engaged in debates about the essence of the Portuguese house. This period saw architecture increasingly fall under tight governmental control. The issue of Portuguese identity remained a persistent question in a nation where architects are first citizens of their homeland, deeply interested with matters of national identity. This engagement reflects a longstanding luso-mysticism, often in contradiction with the aforementioned inability to understand its reality. Two opposing aspects of a singular idealization: a national idealistic utopia versus the existing reality with its limits. A pattern that tends to emerge continuously in the dominant classes and that is imposed to the lower strata and often conflicting with the masses' desire for change in their objective existence¹³.

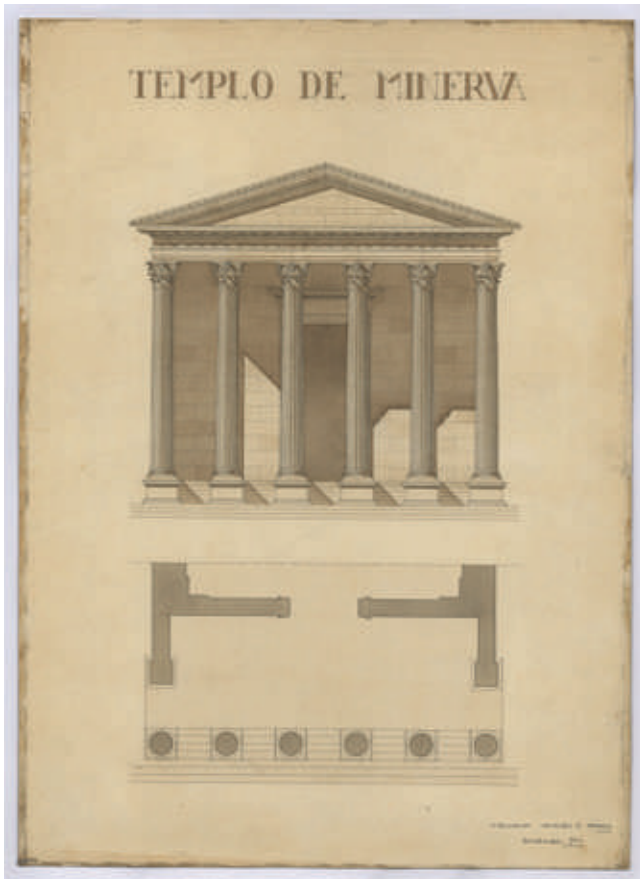
Out of this increasingly oppressive government-imposed straitjacket, a series of works emerged with diverse results historiography summarised under the ironic label of *Português Suave* (Mild or Suave Portuguese), a reference to the monopoly brand of cigarettes created in 1929. Rather than a style, the concept of Suave Portuguese emerged as a stylistic spectrum. A historical pastiche, with clumsy results, steeped in unintentional humour. Fluctuating between the grotesque, the tragicomic and the reactionary kitsch, it was a fusion of traditional elements and Portuguese clichés: tiles, arched windows, adorned balconies, and wrought-iron railings. These elements were combined with late Art deco aspects such as straight lines, essential geometries and symmetries. This laboured eclecticism merged with certain presumed Portuguese features, infiltrating the architecture of both prestigious and humble buildings.

It was at this time that a young Fernando Távora passed the entrance examination to the School of Fine Arts in Oporto (ESBAP) in 1941, having completed the second cycle of the Herculano Lyceum in 1940 with a mark of 16/20. He chose the specialisation in architecture, where Ramos had taught for a year. This conflicted with the decisions of the Távora's family. His father wanted his son to enrol in the engineering faculty, as his brother Dom Bernardo Ferrão, which was considered more in keeping with their position¹⁴. Fernando, who rejected the use of the hereditary title of Dom, said of his formative years:

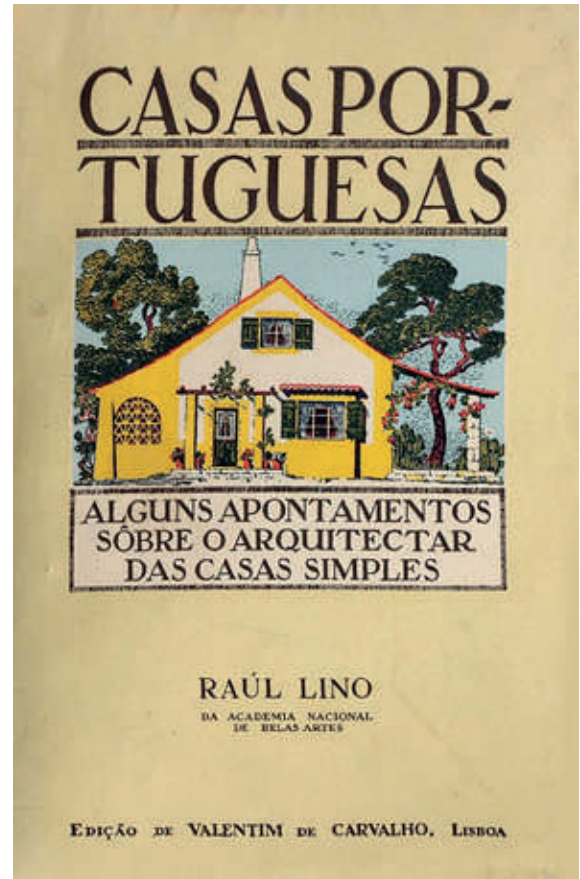
I received a classical and conservative education. I often say that I entered school enamoured with the Venus de Milo and emerged fascinated by Picasso. Thus, in my academic upbringing, there was a significant transformation from my family's education. At school, the instruction I received from the architect Carlos Ramos was very liberal, in the sense

¹³ Gregorio Carboni Maestri, "From Sé-Cathedral to the Self-Nation. About the architecture of the city and the Lusitan territory: historical and anthropological clues", in *Journey to Portugal: inside and outside the territories of architecture*, ed. Bruno Pelucca (Rome: Aracne 2010), 23-30

¹⁴ Luiz Trigueiros, ed., *Fernando Távora* (Lisbon: Blau, 1993).



9



10

that we could use any language. He, as a professional, was a man who at the time was engaged in the official classical language, but nevertheless allowed his students to use a different, more free form of language. My early works were classical [...] the first one: a copy of a Roman temple [Fig. 9]. One day, I decided to create a modern building, and Ramos accepted it without any issues. I believe that my academic education was quite deficient, more focused on reading books and theory than on practical professional experience. This, in a sense, has instilled in me a complex that translated into an inability to design.¹⁵

In the school Távora turned to art history, as Giovanni Leoni expounds:

[... Távora] got to know the work of architect Raul Lino, the main representative of the *Casa Portuguesa* movement. An education [...] enriched by a knowledge of international contemporary art that was unusual in Portugal at the time. [...] Távora began to learn about international contemporary architecture through Ramos, [...]. All this takes place at a time that Távora describes as one of intellectual confusion, dominated by traditionalist positions, but where there are perceptible ferments oriented towards opposing the pursuit of the chilled and pseudo-authentic Portuguese architectural 'tradition', supported by the Salazar regime [...].¹⁶ [Fig. 10]

Fig. 9

Ink drawing of the Temple of Minerva made during an architectural drawing exam (1942-12). Fernando Távora. Opaque paper; 56.7x41 cm. (FIMS/AFT, ref. F5-pd0001).

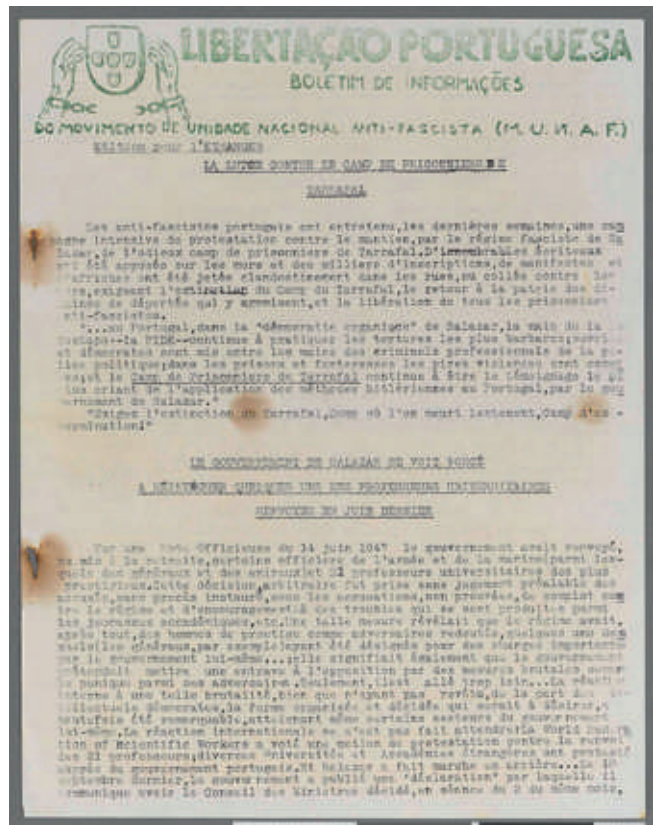
Fig. 10

Cover of an original edition of *Casas Portuguesas* by Raúl Lino, first published in 1933 (Gregorio Carboni Maestri archives).

¹⁵ Author's translation of: Javier Frechilla, "Fernando Távora: Conversaciones en Oporto", *Arquitectura*, no. 261 (July-August 1986): 22-28.

¹⁶ Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Un anonimo del XX secolo*, 11.

Távora began his training within a framework in which the Suave was pervasive in the urban landscape, with projects such as Cassiano V. Branco's João de Seabra building of the National Wine Council (1940-1943), but also in the two main architecture magazines. In the latter, the few innovations not related to these styles consisted of foreign and mainly Italian projects. Projects such as the 'House on the Karst by Rogers-Belgioioso-Peressutti'¹⁷, 'Two mountain houses by architect Gio' Ponti'¹⁸, 'Mountain house by engineer Elio Frisia'¹⁹ or 'A house on the Mediterranean by architect Luigi Carlo Danieri'²⁰. The quality, in terms of composition, of these architectures differed from those found in other capitalist nations projects published. What seemed to emerge was an attempt on the part of the Portuguese magazines, especially *Arquitetura*, to use the Italian example to outline possible paths for the regime, that is, a "pluralist" fascist architecture.



11

In December 1943, three months after the start of the Partisan Revolution in Italy, a secret pro-Allied resistance coordination, the MUNAF (*Movimento de unidade nacional antifascista*) took shape in Portugal, set up by communists, anarchists, republicans, socialists, freemasons, catholic-democrats, military and members of the magazine *Seara Nova* [Fig. 11].

Until the end of the agitated 1944, the two Lusitanian magazines would reflect this confused political situation, publishing Italian and foreign structures with fluctuating frequency. While some issues were entirely dedicated to architecture from Italy or abroad, such as the October 1944 issue of *Arquitetura Portuguesa*, half of which was dedicated to the 'Olivetti nursery school in Ivrea, by Figini, Pollini and Barnasconi'²¹, this presence gradually diminished, manifesting increasing isolation with the progressive defeat of the Axis powers during the Second World War. Foreign architectural productions seemed to increasingly adapt to languages that were compromising with Modernity. Projects that we could sarcastically call 'Swiss Soave' or 'Belgium Soave'²².

17 "Vivenda sôbre o Carso, pelos arquilectos Belgiojoso-Rogers e Peressutti", *Arquitetura Portuguesa*, no. 108 (March 1944): 10.
 18 "Duas casas de montanha, pelo arquitecto Gio Ponti", *Arquitetura Portuguesa*, no. 108 (March 1944): 6-9.
 19 "Casa de montanha do engenheiro Elio Frisia", *Arquitetura Portuguesa*, no. 108 (March 1944): 11-13.
 20 "Uma casa sôbre o Mediterrâneo pelo arquitecto Luigi Carlo Daneri", *Arquitetura Portuguesa*, no. 144 (September 1944): 6-20.
 21 "Asilo-ninho Olivetti, em Ivrea, pelos argulectos Figini, Pollini e Barnasconi", *Arquitetura Portuguesa*, no. 115 (October 1944): 2-9.
 22 Gregorio Carboni Maestri, *Tendenze Italiane, Vie Lusitane: Architettura Analoga: Inchiesta storico-critico-analitica sulle influenze e dialettiche fra architettura moderna e contemporanea portoghese ed italiana, dai primi del Novecento, ai giorni nostri* (Master Diss., Politecnico di Milano, 2007), 69.

Fig. 11
 "Libertação Portuguesa" MUNAF information bulletin, foreign edition in French. Archive Fundação Mário Soares / AMS – Arquivo Mário Soares.

It should be emphasised that styles linked to a conservative and regulated modernism, like the *Português Suave*, gradually spread into the current architecture of other contexts such as Belgium, which was also characterised by a conservative and colonial elite, albeit in a less generalised manner²³. The revival of old *Italia Soave* projects also emerged, with concepts related to the Novecento style or a domestic, anonymous, passively fascist Italy.

Several issues of *Arquitetura Portuguesa* consisted of translations of articles from old magazines on furniture and interior design. Design topics gradually gave way to articles on techno-ethical, legal, or domestic subjects: interior decoration, giftware, etc. *Arquitetura portuguesa* devoted entire issues to articles with titles such as 'Gardens', 'Legal Section' and 'The Tenancy Agreement', as well as 'National Electrification and the Development of Electricity in Switzerland, Prof. Dr. René Neesser'.²⁴

In the June '45 edition, the article concerning 'The War' was followed by articles concerning 'Weekend Homes' from the magazine *A casa*; '[...] the durability of bricks' from the magazine *Claycraft* and 'Work Rooms'. In the July edition, articles were presented dealing with 'Why cork-based insulation?', 'Children's rooms' and 'Four interiors'. In November '45, 'Application of a special type of simple gantry crane' was joined by 'Interior studies' by Pierre Duverlie et Van Luppe. The interior settings seemed to reflect the gloom of the time with dark colours and rich ornamentation in the antique style. Entire issues were devoted to these themes. Towards the end of '45, it was rare to find publications about architecture belonging to Modernism or architecture tout court²⁵.

The Portuguese magazines that were leafed through by Távora and the architects at that stage saw the disappearance of any break from the monopoly of Soave boredom. This happened until the end of '45 when the editorial dominance of *Suave* became totalising. The hardening of Salazarist stylistic diktats was part of the context of the era, with rare exceptions, more related to infrastructure, such as the *Hidroeléctrica do Cávado* (1944-1964), which was under construction at that time to a design by J. Godinho.

With the conclusion of the Second War and the defeat of the anti-communist regimes, the Iberian Peninsula found itself isolated. Europe would be marked by social-democratic regimes in the north and in the east, in Italy and Yugoslavia, the working class now dominated the political scene. In Italy, the old model and friendly country, the cradle of fascism, hundreds of thousands of armed partisans stood on the brink of an uprising, close to continuing the revolutionary process.

And while Europe discovered new democratic ways during the Reconstruction phase and witnessed the workers' victory over Nazi-Fascism, while Italy took new

²³ In this regard, the analysis of a Belgian magazine such as *Bâtir* is interesting, and especially issue 86 of January 1940, which presented rare architecture with full and ideological modernity, particularly residences of the upper middle class, as well as conservative architecture, especially related to state buildings.

²⁴ See *Arquitetura Portuguesa*, no. 150 (August 1944).

²⁵ Maria Luisa Neri, *L'altra modernità nella cultura architettonica del XX secolo: dibattito internazionale e realtà locali* (Roma: Gargemi, 2011).

political directions following the Liberazione of April 25th, 1945, Portugal continued its dictatorial path, having as its only interlocutor the equally closed Spain, in a relationship of incommunicability²⁶ [Fig. 12]. Consequently, the Portuguese endured an even more severe repressive and isolationist process, involving cultural, economic, political, and social aspects: the country closed in on itself, isolating from any contact with the outside world.



12

Alone, with threats to the east, God in the sky, Fatima in the heart. And a new imperfect paradise to the west: the US empire²⁷.

In the two Lisbon magazines this period saw the definitive disappearance of any reference to Italy, by then antifascist and soon to be a Republic “founded on labour”. Some extremely rare and sporadic articles in ‘News’ on foreign affairs were devoted to reconstruction, with a particular focus on France²⁸.

A previously absent country that had an influence in this phase was Francoist Spain²⁹ with architectures in the language of the *Arquitectura de la Autarquia* with conservatism and compositional flatness even more pronounced than those of the *Suave Portuguesa*.

Projects with 19th century overtones by architects such as Manuel de Solà-Morales (1932-2012), as well as lesser-known architects such as Santiago Casullero, Juan Montero, Luis M. Escolà, Joaquim de Alcañiz, Ramon Aragò, Roberto Terrada and Marcel Schemitz. The sporadic foreign links, especially associated with advertisements – the same as in previous decades – mainly concerned Belgium³⁰, the United Kingdom, France, the United States and Germany.

From an editorial point of view, it was evident that the period 1944-1947 represented a lost three-year period for Portuguese architecture, in which a theoretical and design asphyxia could be observed. The articles, although not always openly pro-regime, rarely dared to contradict the status quo and consensus. A

Fig. 12

Commemorative marble stele placed by the National Liberation Committee “In Genoa on 25 April 1945 at 19.30” under the monumental bridge in Via XX Settembre in honour of the victory of the partisans over the Nazi occupiers. This stele was an ecstatic celebration not only of the triumph, but also of the centrality of the working class in the antifascist process. The choice of symbols such as the Phrygian cap, the hammer and anvil on the CLN symbol, with the words “obstinate rigour”, deliberately symbolised the revolutionary character of the historic event (photo by the author, 2020).

26 Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza, *Storia del fascismo* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2021).

27 Antonio Trogu, *Conseguenze della Seconda guerra mondiale* (Bruxelles: EIRC, 2009).

28 With articles such as, for example: M. A. Weber, “A habitação popular em França”, *Arquitectura Portuguesa*, no. 136 (July 1946).

29 With articles such as, for example: “Concurso de anteprojetos para a reforma e ampliação do edifício da Câmara Oficial da Propriedade Urbana da Província de Barcelona”, *Arquitectura Portuguesa*, no. 131, (February 1946).

30 With articles such as, for example: Auguste Vanden Nieuwenborg, “Igreja de Saint-Adrien, em Bruxelas”, *Arquitectura Portuguesa*, no. 137, (August 1946).

veil of fear and self-censorship seemed to descend on every sentence, every word, every design, not only within the editorial boards, but also in the professional sphere³¹.

An equally unfavorable judgement concerns the lack of building production, characterized by a deficiency of content, and limited stylistic development. Consensus reverberated in the cities, countryside, and colonies. This apathy also affected schools and cultural circles³².



13

There were a few exceptions in the editorial field. An article on school complex projects by Diotallevi (1909-1954) and Marescotti (1908-1991) appeared in *Arquitectura Portuguesa* in the December 1945 edition. The same year Távora, after completing the special architecture course, enrolled in the advanced course and did his apprenticeship with F. Oldemiro Carneiro.

Towards 1946, gradually, in the two architectural periodicals, the more autarkic phase again gave way to articles on 'artistic' decoration, with naive historical references, or uncritically dealing with mannerist building materials. The single-family house, especially in the suburbs, reconfirmed itself as an unconditional fetish and the mask of the periodicals' absolute lack of cultural content. Examples of this period include articles in *Arquitectura*, such as 'Baroque Architecture' and 'Art Interiors' by A. João Simões (1946/02); columns such as 'Architecture and Beauty', 'Decorative Arts' and 'Masonry Arches' (March 1946); and pieces such as 'Weekend Housing Project on the Beach of Costa da Caparica (Almada)' in the column 'The Picturesque in Villages', etc.³³

In May '46, the magazine *Arquitectura portuguesa* published a usual issue, but with a singular insertion. An issue that presented similarities to many of the previous and subsequent ones: 'Two dwellings' by Edmundo Tavares (1892-1983) [Fig. 13], a 'Photographic documentary' on 'Four dwellings' in the seaside resort of Estoril; two articles on 'Decoration' and 'Problems of training and activity of engineers'. And, in between, an extraordinary project for that flat period: a 'Villa sul Lario' by P. Lingeri (1894-1968). The project had already been published in *Domus* years earlier³⁴ and was linked to the Fascist era, but to the White

Fig. 13

In 1946, Tavares completed the *Escola Secundária Liceu Jaime Moniz* in Funchal in Portuguese suave style, one of his many public and private buildings on the island of Madeira, mainly designed in the 1930s, such as the Lavradores market, the Bank of Portugal branch or the *Vivenda Fátima*. © Núcleo museológico "O Lyceu" / Arquivo Regional da Madeira.

31 Carboni Maestri, *Tendenze Italiane, Vie Lusitane: Architettura Analoga*, 70.

32 Carboni Maestri, *Tendenze Italiane, Vie Lusitane: Architettura Analoga*, 71.

33 José de Lima Franco, "Projecto de habitação 'fim-de-semana' na praia da Costa da Caparica (Almada)", *Arquitectura*, no. 4 (May 1946): 74-78.

34 Pietro Lingeri, "Una nuova villa sul Lario", *Domus*, no. 72 (1933): 627-631.

Rationalism phase, with its references to naval architecture, machine building and the eminent exponents of the Como School such as Terragni, of whom the Portuguese knew little.

This therefore constituted an unusual article in a magazine that no longer made any reference to Mussolini and even less to modernism, now devoting itself almost exclusively to Iberian architectural inquisition, conforming to the aesthetics promoted by the Salazar and Franco regimes, as well as residential bourgeois architecture, interiors, and decoration.

Above all, this villa appeared rather out of place in a historical moment marked by the initial phase of post-war reconstruction, seeming almost like a nostalgic revival. Lingeri himself, in those years, was involved in much higher spheres, such as the General Regulatory Plan of liberated Milan and the design of the Casa Alta for the experimental district of the Eighth Triennale in Milan. *Arquitetura Portuguesa* omitted any reference to these latter projects of his.

The latter, up to 1947, with the exception of an '*Moradia italiana*' project by Mozzon (1915-2014) in the September issue, continued with its usual plethora of articles on "rustic furniture", "cement" and technological novelties such as "benefits of atomic energy", "thermal insulation techniques" and a spate of interior designs, both foreign and Italian. Issues devoted to baroque interiors, full of agrestic decorations, were followed, schizophrenically, by issues such as January 1947 on 'Foreign Houses' or February 1947 with pieces on Josep Antoni Coderch (1913-1984) 'House in Sitges'; on 'Colour Television', 'The Healthiness of Buildings and Waterproofing Materials' and 'Illuminations'. Followed by 'Architecture and construction in Switzerland' (March); 'A private swimming pool' by Attilio Corrêa Lima (1901-1943) in June; the 'Profession of the engineer' and 'A competition – Monument for Brazil at war' (the only articles in the October issue); 'Ideas for modern constructions of small houses', 'Colored glass', 'The fired clay brick from a technical-caloric point of view' (November or 'Modern sculpture' (December)...

As for the presence of Portuguese architecture, it was once again reduced to a virtual minority. In the few projects that were published, there was a gradual adaptation to what was being produced abroad. Some of the names associated with this period were directly or indirectly linked to regimental architecture, albeit with renewed forms. Names such as José Manuel F. M. Galhardo Zilhão (1869-1950), Porfírio Pardal Monteiro (1897-1957), Vasco Regaleira (1897-1968), António M. V. dos Reis Camelo (1899-1985), Raul Francisco Tojal (1900-1969), Luís Benavente (1902-1993), Lima Franco (1904-1970), João Guilherme Faria da Costa (1906-1971), João Simões (1908-1993), Paulo de Carvalho Cunha (1909-?), Cassiano Barbosa de Abreu and Lima Lopes Rodrigues (1911-1998), Lucinio Cruz (1914-1999), Henrique Albino (1921-2003), Francisco da Conceição Silva (1922-1982), António Pedroso, Cassiano V. Branco, Edmundo Tavares, Fernando Ferriera, Frederico Gorge, João de Brito, José Bastos or Nuno Carveiro Lopes.

In 1947, during which Távora continued his apprenticeship under F. O. Carneiro, the political dam of the regime that took over after the Axis defeat began to show its first cracks. Cracks emerged in a barrier weakened by excessive censorship control and the pushes of hushed internal political pressure, forcing the government to create a few relief valves to prevent wider breakdowns [Fig. 14].



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One of these first outbursts manifested itself in the authorization, shortly before the beginning of 1946, of the foundation of the MUD, Movement of Democratic Unity, successor to the clandestine MUNAF and established with the aim of gathering dissent under one banner and promoting a collective debate on the electoral question. This movement gained wide public support, especially among the intelligentsia, the liberal professions, architects, and the more politicized proletariat. The threat posed by this success led the regime to ban the *Movimento de unidade democrática* shortly after its formation in 1946, denouncing its links with the Communist Party.

In 1946, the government also gave permission for the creation of the ICAT group, namely Cultural Initiatives Art and Technology. The latter was set up in Lisbon by a collective of architects involved in the political struggle against the New State, some of whom were linked to the MUD. The primary objective of this collective was the dissemination and support of professional opinions in the field of architecture and related socio-economic issues³⁵.

Some of the affiliated members had previously taken part in the development of the Portuguese architectural style imposed by the regime. Among them were João Simões, António M. V. dos Reis Camelo, Paulo de Carvalho Cunha, F. Keil C. do Amaral and Adelino Nunes (1903-1948). In contrast, other members had kept their distance from the ruling style, remaining faithful to the modernist current. Among them were Hernâni Gandra (1914-1988), Raúl Chorão Ramalho (1914-2002), Celestino de Castro (1920-2007) and S. Formosinho Sanchez (1922-2004).

Starting in 1947, ICAT began editing the magazine *Arquitectura*. Together with members of the Secret MUD, they participated in the organization of the General Exhibitions of Plastic Arts at the SNBA (National Society of Fine Arts)³⁶.

³⁵ Lourenço Jorge de Azavedo Ferreira, "O edifício Museu Gulbenkian e a sua importância na arquitetura moderna em Portugal" (Master thesis, Universidade Lusíada, 2014).

³⁶ António Luís Pereira da Silva Neves, "Arménio Losa e Cassiano Barbosa. Arquitectura no segundo pós-guerra. Qrquitectura moderna, nacionalismo e nacionalização" (PhD Diss. Universidade do Porto, 2018).

Fig. 14

1947 also saw the inauguration of the *Batalha Theatre* by Artur Andrade, in the square of the same name, on which Fernando Távora would work in later years (photo by Francesca Fagnano, 2004).

These multidisciplinary exhibitions contained works of representation, statuary, architectural composition, etc. From this moment on, the magazine *Arquitectura*, the exhibitions and the architectural sector in general became highly politicized. This constituted one of the few political outbursts authorized by the regime.

To give an idea of the political importance of this moment and the irritation it aroused in the mainstream media, it is useful to read the front-page headline of the newspaper *Diário da Manhã* (8 May 1947):

The 'Popular Front' of Art. Or Unity in Pessimism and Disorder manifests itself in an exhibition of the National Society of Fine Arts in which real bourgeois and pseudo-proletarians appear, and in which Mr. Falcão Trigoso's elastic bags and almond-box-shaped cover modernism are the backdrop for social uprisings.³⁷

Ramos, who in that 1947 inaugurated the Rovisco Pais leper colony in Tochan in the purest traditional Portuguese style, together with some designers adhering to the modernist culture and trained in Oporto between the start of the Spanish Civil War and the end of the Second War such as Viana de Lima and A. Losa, founded the Organisation of Modern Architects (ODAM)³⁸.

As well as for the ICAT its mission was to participate in the resolution of the immediate technological and collective difficulties that assailed the population of Portuguese cities, spreading the culture of urban plans traceable to the Athens Charter and Latin American experiences. A rare culture in a country where planning and territorial management were almost non-existent³⁹. This group would build the first genesis, with its share of compromises and contradictions, of the Oporto and Lisbon schools.

Two circumstances made explicit the deep discomfort of many architects with the autarkic stylistic approach, indicating to the regime possible alternatives to the clumsy *Português Suave* to answer the question of "what constitutes Portuguese architecture".

The first event manifested itself within the pages of *Arquitectura* in April 1947. In that issue, an article appeared on the children's colony O Século, in pure Suave Portuguese; an article on 'The Reconstruction of Saint-Nazaire' by the critic Léandre Vaillat (1876-1952) and 'A House in North America'. And, such lightning announcing a storm in an already grey sky, a proposal was made by F. Keil C. do Amaral – and consequently, by ICAT –, entitled 'A necessary initiative'⁴⁰. Amaral proposed to undertake a rigorous, methodical, and comprehensive research on

37 Translated by the author. Fernando Paulo Rosa Dias, "Memórias da arte pública em Portugal no século XX: 1945-1975: entre a retórica e a elipse". In *O Chiado, a Baixa e a Esfera Pública – Ensaios e Exposições de Arte Pública*, ed. José Quaresma, (Lisbon: Associação de Arqueólogos Portugueses, 2011): 129-138.

38 Maria Helena Maia, Alexandra Cardoso, "Portugueses in Ciam X" (paper presented at the 20th Century New Towns, Archetypes and Uncertainties, Oporto, 22-24 May 2014): 193-213.

39 Armando Minopoli, "Alcino Soutinho: cinque casi(e) di architettura", in *L'identità plurale: caratteri dell'architettura portoghese*, ed. Gabriele Szaniszló (Napoli: Alfredo Guida, 2002): 79.

40 Francisco Caetano Keil do Amaral, "Uma Iniciativa necessária", *Arquitectura*, no. 14 (April 1947), 12-13.

the various local expressions of architecture in Portugal. This proposal took as its point of reference the peculiarities of Lusitanian architectural jargon in their complete and complex internal diversity⁴¹.

The second episode occurred with the publication of the essay by the young 23-year-old Távora, entitled 'The Problem of the Portuguese House. False Architecture. For an architecture of today'. This essay was published in *Cadernos de Arquitectura* as a response to an article circulated by a historian expressing regret for the insufficient construction of typical Portuguese buildings. Távora advocated the principle later called the 'third way' or as 'realistic architecture'. He defended the principle of a building of modern composition, but with the capacity to connect and assimilate the characteristics of the Portuguese civilization in which it was developing⁴².

This strategic point encompassed an in-depth circumspection of certain directions in contemporary architecture of the time. Távora identified a certain inadequacy in solving many of the questions raised by the specific Portuguese situation, not only in terms of building. At the same time, he felt a revulsion towards what was happening in the sphere of official architecture, which at the time was going through a phase of increasing decline. Finally, he recalled the need to engage in ever more accurate learning about popular Lusitanian buildings⁴³.

Távora's contribution, as stated by G. Leoni, was in this sense precocious and not oriented towards a stylistic or eclectic reinterpretation, following the positions of Cassiano V. Branco. Rather, Távora's approach aimed to grasp the current lesson of functionality and coherence, in tune with the views of F. Keil C. do Amaral or Raul Lino da Silva (1879-1974)⁴⁴. In 'Falsa arquitectura' Távora wrote:

The study of Portuguese architecture, or building in Portugal, is not finished. A number of archaeologists have written and dealt with our houses, but, as far as we know, no one has made current sense of their study, making it a collaborative element of the new architecture. The past is a prison from which few know how to free themselves gracefully and productively; it is worth a lot, but it is necessary to look at it not in itself but as a function of ourselves. It is imperative that in the history of our old or working-class houses we determine the conditions that created and developed them, be they the conditions of the land or those of man, and study the ways in which materials were used and met the needs of the moment. The council house will teach us great lessons if it is studied properly, because it is the most functional and the least imaginative, in a word, the one that conforms most to new intentions. Today, it is studied for its 'picturesqueness' and stylised in exhibitions

41 Nuno Paulo Soares Ferreira, *Entrepasto frigorífico do peixe de Massarelos: um dos ícones da arquitectura modernista portuense*, (Master Thesis, Universidade do Porto, 2010).

42 Fernando Távora, "O problema da casa portuguesa. Falsa arquitectura. Para uma arquitectura de hoje", *Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1, (1947).

43 Frechilla, *Fernando Távora: Conversaciones en Oporto*, 23.

44 Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Un anonimo del XX secolo*, 12.

for nationals and foreigners: there is nothing to be gained from this attitude, which leads to the blind alley of the most complete negation that could be achieved.⁴⁵

The prospectus did not make a wide impression among colleagues at the time; however, it was in a way a precursor of later events. It seemed to be a distant reflection of what was happening in Italy, where very similar debates were taking place, thus constituting an interesting parallel with the *Bel Paese*, where Távora was to travel that very year⁴⁶.

In 1948, the New State, indulging the turmoil that was agitating the world of Lusitanian architecture, arranged a large propaganda-exhibition dedicated to public residential policies. In the same year, in May-June, the innovative thrusts of the 1st National Congress of Architecture began. A meeting promoted by the National Union of Architects and held in Lisbon, resulting in tense controversy, and attended by some of the country's youngest progressive architects, including C. Ramos and the Compromise generation⁴⁷. A vast cultural resistance movement, which had remained silent until then, represented above all by ICAT and ODAM, which raised many of the questions discussed at the congress.

A movement of great symbolic and historical importance, which advanced in a unified manner the rejection of the government style, inviting the latter to commit to the serious housing difficulties of the population and to the function that contemporary architecture and urbanism could fulfil in this regard. The Congress also put its hand to the regime's debates on the national style, taking the latter in a less retrograde direction.

In essence, a position of rebellion against the Soave was adopted, but not giving carte blanche to the Modern Movement, discussing the inconsistencies that arose from an unconditional attachment to it. At the same time, it reaffirmed the right to adopt the principles and values of its architecture. LeCorbusian concepts were mentioned to mark the need for a renewed urban and construction method, while reintroducing natural properties into the Portuguese's living existence: light, adequate surfaces, vegetation, etc. A detailed discussion was arranged on the properties of architecture as a discipline and its assumptions. The right to use the most contemporary materials and structures developed by engineering was claimed and it was considered essential to strive for an aesthetic reversal to solve the many urban and housing dilemmas. Housing issues and the interdisciplinary nature of the arts were posed as fundamental⁴⁸. Equally advanced was the idea that the progress of architecture was indebted to the basic emancipations of the existence of the individual and the municipality: the

45 Author's translation.

46 Giorgio Liverani, "Contesto e progetto, influenze italiane sull'architettura di Fernando Távora" (PhD Diss., Università di Bologna, 2017).

47 Nuno Teotónio Pereira, Manuel Costa Martins, "Habitação Económica de Rejustamento Social" (paper presented at the 1º Congresso Nacional de Arquitectura, Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, Lisbon, May-June 1948), 243-249.

48 José Manuel Pedreirinho, "O congresso dos arquitectos de 1948: uma oposição à Arquitectura de estado," *História*, no. 118 (1989): 44-53.

right to creative independence was affiliated with public order concerns arising from spatial planning. Rather than questions of form, comparisons of the architect's particular learning and general consideration for his creative independence and the limits of his work appeared⁴⁹.

Through these congresses and other ferments, albeit frustrated, veiled claims, discreet messages to power, shielded polemics and debates mediated by a certain amount of compromise, the abjuration of the regime's policies in architectural terms was nevertheless expressed. Claims that, for the circumstances of the time, constituted a real political mockery. Portuguese architects – a part of them – would no longer accept giving free rein to Salazarist stylistic diktats imposed from above. The years that historians would later call the Green Years of Lusitanian architecture were beginning. Changes that were not immediately noticeable in the built reality but emerged clearly in the periodicals, which, once again, became vitally important. The positions of the two major journals became radicalized, with an ideological reopening in both, albeit in increasingly distant ways and positions⁵⁰.

With regard to the periodical *Arquitectura*, the pulse and editorial expression of ICAT, the MUD and the movement triggered by the Congress, changes were seen from the January 1948 issue, with a new graphic and political version. In the editorial, F. P. da Costa explained, between the lines, the need for openness towards what was happening abroad – and in Portugal – “as far as we can go”. The *Português suave* disappeared, making way for projects of considerable compositive interest, with constructions by the *Transigentes* and the emerging School of Oporto. Projects by Adelino Nunes, Artur Andrade (1913-2005), Delfim Fernandes Amorim (1917-1972), Luís José Oliveira Martins (1918-1997), Alfredo Magalhães (1919-1988). And designers whose works had previously been characterized by a regime language such as A. Loza, C. Ramos, C. Barbosa de Abreu or Cottinelli Telmo.

In this new *Arquitectura*, articles and editorials encouraged the debate on concrete architectural problems, the in-depth study of various topics as the National Congress of Architecture and the CIAM. Form and content reflected the confused and exciting air of a succession of events and turmoil that was shaking the consciences of Portuguese architects. Amusing satirical cartoons appeared on the back cover, harshly and cheerfully criticizing the submission of architects to the whims of the private, bourgeois, and uncultured patrons of the time (and behind this patronage, it is not difficult to see who they were talking about). An underlying spirit of progressivism and resistance seemed to have contaminated the entire editorial set-up, not afraid to publish, in addition to satirical cartoons, articles, messages, telegrams and letters from architects complaining about pressure from mayors and the government to attempt to “deny their own era, their temperament and their taste, (...) imposing an aesthetic programme” or, more generally, about the “housing problem” in Portugal⁵¹.

49 Trigueiros, *Fernando Távora*, 27.

50 José Manuel Pedreirinho, “Arquitectura e fascismo”, *História*, no. 9 (1979), 56-64.

51 *Arquitectura*, no. 23-24 (June 1948).

In this context of rebirth, a common denominator would unite both magazines, again, as in the 1930s: Italy. And as during the pre-war period, Italy would be used as a litmus test for the defense of distinct programmatic visions by the two magazines⁵². Beginning in February 1948, in *Arquitectura*, if the most interesting articles were about what was happening in Italy, the novelty was not just what the magazine was showing, but how, with rather dangerous content in the political context of the time. A long and extensive series of reports on the Italian turmoil of those years. In contrast to its competitor, which focused its attention on the field of industrial design, interiors, informing the reader about small novelties and foreign curiosities uncritically and contradictorily inserted into a plastered editorial line, the magazine of "the Congress" proposed programmatic and critical-analytical novelties from Italy. It was a bolt out of the blue in the darkness of luso-fascism that seemed to want to bring the political and critical energy of Italian comrades back home, almost as if it wanted to unleash the winds of the CLN (National Liberation Committee) and its Brigades. *Arquitectura* proposed, not too subtly, in essence, to do 'as in Italy'. It is not known to what extent if only in the field of architecture. They studied, observed what architects in the Italian Boot were doing, almost as if they wanted to understand how to apply the same recipes in Portugal: innovative, realist – neorealist – experiences that fitted well with the themes set by the Congress.

Neo-realism was discussed in explicit and official terms in the literary domain, in the identical years in which figures such as the communist poet Joaquim Vitorino Namorado (1914-1986), the storyteller José Gomes Ferreira (1900-1985), and the poet, art critic and musician João José de Melo Cochofel Aires de Campos (1919-1982) emerged. As in architecture, they polarised numerous energies in magazines and publishing series more or less allowed by the regime, such as *Seara Nova*, *Vértice*, *Sol Nascente*, *Novo Cancioneiro*, *Altitude*, *Gazeta Musica and Todas as artes*, *Mundo Literário*.

But it is interesting to note the plodding, perhaps fearful steps, the ambiguous and contradictory political way *Arquitectura* would present its new cultural project to readers through the Italian lens. As at the competitor, projects built during the years of the Fascist regime by architect's unknown to the Portuguese were initially published, bringing the public up to date on the most daring contributions of that phase such as, for example, the design of the Santa Maria Novella station in Florence (Gruppo toscano, 1928). *Arquitectura* wrote that "although this building had already been constructed for many years", it had been "decided to publish it, for the first time, in Portugal, because of its very high architectural quality".

An equally surprising posthumous publication was that of the work of G. Terragni (1904-1943), an architect that the competing magazine also revealed to its readers in the same years. When the magazine published *Casa del Fascio* (1932-1936) in June 1948, *Arquitectura*, as often happened, got the location wrong, replacing Como with Lissone. The word fascio did not appear: the magazine took care to title the project with its new republican name: *Casa del*

52 Carboni Maestri, *Tendenze Italiane, Vie Lusitane: Architettura Analoga*, 72.

Popolo, People's house. This was followed, in the August-September 1948 issue, by publications of projects then in progress such as the Roma Termini station (Angiolo Mazzoni then the Montuori Vitellozzi group, 1939-1950) and projects by A. M. Delfino, Mario Terzaghi (1915-1998). In these early editorial choices, there seemed to be an underlying desire to make up for lost time in the previous years, wasted on castrated editorial choices. These editorial proposals perhaps had a pedagogical, formative, progressive attitude and squaring the political circle, creating a nexus between the fascist past and post-fascist reconstruction. A nexus of architectural continuity in political discontinuity.

The use of the Italian *casus belli* probably had a design character, a suitability for all political phases. At the same time, as before the Second World War, this model was used to propose to the regime a possible third way, a possible architectural policy. During Fascism, the Italian School was sibilantly cited as an example of possible linguistic and design pluralism within an authentic fascist doctrine (as opposed to the mummification desired by Salazar or the even more reactionary German policies).

In the democratic phase, on the other hand, the Italian way was proposed as a possible alternative and morally high to Modernism. In a posture that, as the Congress proposed, *faute de mieux*, was not perceived as irreconcilable with the regime. Showing projects from the Mussolini era perhaps made it possible to highlight how the projects of the post-1945 Italian school, linked by a continuity with the progressive and critical characteristics of the pre-25 *di Aprile* projects, were not in contradiction with the autarchic and reactionary political system of Portugal at the time.

It cannot be ruled out that the publication of pre-1945 Italian projects comforted the Salazarist wing, pointing a possible way forward for pluralistic architecture with design intensity and theoretical depth. Above all, of critical and dialectical openness towards Modernity. Almost as if to indicate, therefore, that the path traced by the Congress was not only not dangerous for the fascist regime but was, on the contrary, a path that had already been partly tested in Rome, the cradle of fascism. Thus, using the *continuità* of themes, authors, and projects between the pre- and post-war periods as a transition, without making explicit a political break or a connection with anti-fascism in the architecture of the post-CLN. The magazine could, through this editorial tactic, have then adhered to renewed artistic, formal, and spatial progressiveness in the wake of the Congress, publishing projects and themes from the First Italian Republic, fully opening the debates on international Modernity 'through' these projects. Doing politics without being labelled as communists. Finally, this extension, represented by the projects of Italian architects already active in the Thirties, matched that of the architects of the *Transigentes*, who were developing renewed critical-linguistic tensions despite having previously adhered to the Soave, as in the case of Carlos Ramos.

Through the Italian projects, both before and during the war, therefore, both Portuguese magazines seemed to indicate possible alternative paths to those

peremptorily desired by the New State, namely that of a variety of views, a linguistic multiplicity (in the case of *Arquitectura portuguesa*) and of debates, of a high critical, ethical, political, theoretical, social, collective and modernity profile (in the case of *Arquitectura*). But if in the Mussolini years the editorial line seemed to tend towards “we could be authentically fascist’ by doing ‘as in Italy’” (i.e. “– and not as in Portugal”), *Arquitectura* now seemed to point to the Italian comrades as a possible route to a critical and realist modernity: i.e. “as we want to do in Portugal, now!” And if in the 1930s the architecture of the *Bel Paese* aroused strong interest for aesthetic, formal and exquisitely architectural reasons and for the political proximity between Salazar and Mussolini, in the late 1940s Italy aroused interest for its critical intellectualism, for the socio-political and civic posture of its professionals. And, hissing, for the anti-fascism and morality that the forms of the new Italian project emanated.

But the Italian architects, projects, themes, exhibitions and debates that *Arquitectura* would publish had a structural difference from Portugal that could not be exported. They were exportable in disciplinary and formal terms, but not in political terms. They were, in fact, expressions of idealistic impulses stemming from an Italy destroyed by civil war and a process of anti-fascist innovation, which allowed for a supreme cultural rebirth. And which would go on to experience the longest low-intensity pre-revolutionary process in a country with a market economy, helping to produce a critical mass unique in Europe, at least until the G8 summit in Genoa⁵³. Architectural ferment that was far from being implemented in a Portugal whose working class was paralyzed by Salazar’s efficient repressive machine and a lack of industrialization. This lymph, contained in many aspects of the schools of Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Rome, etc., and which would appear in the pages of Portuguese magazines, would have expressed far more than a critical Modernity or a mannerist design Neorealism. This was probably understood by the politicized editorial team of *Arquitectura*.

Indeed, from the late 1940s and early 1950s, the most convulsive and interesting period of Portuguese architecture *ante-Revolução dos cravos*, *Arquitectura* published a little bit of everything. There was no issue that did not publish something related to Italy, with an interest that ranged from strictly architectural-compositional-design issues to more socio-political-programmatic problems, from the Canton Vesco quarter in Ivrea (1943-1963) to reviews of Italian books, such as Alberto Sartoris’s *Enciclopedia dell’Architettura Nuova* (1901-1998). The most progressive innovations related to the era of National Liberation would have been insistently proposed, with clearly politically identifiable words, on which the magazine took a clear field position.

While *Arquitectura portuguesa* used Italian projects for their exquisitely techno-popular interest (interior architecture, industrial design, objects of use, etc.), *Arquitectura* launched itself into a surprising militant analysis of what was

⁵³ Gianpasquale Santomassimo, “The public memory of antifascism”. In *L’Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta*, eds. Fiamma Lussana and Giacomo Marramao (Rome: Rubettino, 2003), 1-35.

happening in republican Italy. Like the eighth Milan Triennale (1948) and the experimental district, the QT8. The magazine that the 25-year-old Távora read in addition to Italian names and projects published the Athens Charter of the CIAM in parts, issue after issue. *Arquitectura* did not skimp on praise for the experience of the Triennale (here in its first issue of '48):

[...] The character of this exhibition, completely opposite to the usual concept of large exhibitions, is that it is not an ephemeral exhibition and that it exploits the credits placed at its disposal for social purposes.

Arquitectura, translated words that were certainly not welcome in a political regime like Carmona-Salazar's, then quoting passages from the Milan Triennale programme for the new Triennale 8 district:

[...] the new quarter will be a permanent, experimental, and living exhibition of Modern Architecture [...] all processes of perfect organisation of work will be in favour of unification and prefabrication. All new means and materials of construction and decoration will be experimented with! [...] The Triennale came out of the long period of the war with the same dilemmas faced by all the organisations and institutions of Italy and Europe: to review its own functions and means of organisation in the light of the harsh social reality, or to die. [...] For the industrial professions, give as much scope as possible to the production of large series parts (which can be produced by industry) so that they can be more economical and, consequently, contribute greatly to the needs of reconstruction. For artistic handicrafts, develop industrialisation through collaborative and cooperative forms of production, which – [...] – avoid the dispersion of energies and [...] of raw materials that are so scarce.

And to those who did not understand the message, he proposed, unabashedly:

[...] The eighth Milan Triennale will have to be an expression of the new social-political climate created by democracy. It will have to deal with the issues that relate to the less wealthy classes and bring solutions, in the same way that during the 7 [previous] exhibitions the Triennale dealt with the issues that affect the wealthy classes. Consequently, the single theme will be housing, a theme that is the truest, the most heartfelt, the most dramatic, a source of anguish, desire, and hope for millions of Europeans. The Triennale will refrain [...] from dealing with retrospective problems or set design, office furniture, shops, swimming pools, restaurants, etc., or exhibiting exotic flowers. All the works exhibited must be considered saleable and susceptible of being reproduced [...].⁵⁴

Towards the end of the 1940s, when the sweet Portuguese language was reaching its terminal phase even in the context of the magazine *Arquitectura Portuguesa*, the more progressive architectural current was confronting new themes that were considered forbidden by the very concept of Modernity. This

⁵⁴ Leoni, "Fernando Távora. Un anonimo del XX secolo", 12.

was done through typically Italian studies that explored the role of history, continuity with the past and theoretical aspects related to decoration, and so on. It was almost as if the themes introduced by the *Domus* directed by Rogers (1909-1969) and the influence of post-war Italian culture continued to roam through the pages of the magazine. However, rather than representing a mere contribution, it was a seed that found fertile ground. This soil consisted of the experiences of two generations who had experienced restrictions and dictates, and who were moving towards teaching and reflection. These cohorts identified Italy as a theoretical light shining at the end of the tunnel.

The very aesthetics of *Arquitectura* in the post-Congress period recalled much of the pictorial research post-Liberazione Italy. Neorealist graphics, derived from late critical modernism, which sought, perhaps unconsciously, a link with built architecture, with a discipline understood as a craft, beyond ephemeral fashions. Even the Portuguese research architectures proposed in the pages of *Arquitectura*, of great interest, seemed to respond to the themes raised by the Congress and the Italian debates. In the January 1949 issue, a translation of the article 'For architecture students' (which had appeared in '46 in issue 213 of *Domus*) was published. In this manifesto article, Rogers beautifully explicated what, decades later, would become evident in the eyes of many: Modern architecture could not survive based solely on hatred for tradition; instead, it had to draw nourishment from the past.

In the June-July issue of the same year, *Arquitectura* published reports on the 7th International Congress of Modern Architecture, held in Bergamo and organised by Rogers, Bottoni (1903-1973), Peressutti (1908-1976) and Spini (1923). In a short biography on Rogers, the magazine wrote about the "[...] Main works of this group [Rogers, Banfi, Belgioioso and Peressutti]. (...)" like "The monument to the Italian fallen of World War II, already without the collaboration of Banfi, who died on 12 April 1945 in the Mauthausen concentration camp, paying with his life for his courage in belonging to the Italian Resistance".

A further aspect of considerable importance referred to the attention *Arquitectura* paid to accompanying the internal issues of the Italian editorial debate, as frictions, tensions and, as was the case in many sectors of Italy at the time, contrasts, and stances in favor of one or the other contender evolved. *Arquitectura* showed particular affection towards the magazine *Domus*, under the direction of Rogers (from 1946 to 47). In the May-June 1948 issue, along with the continuation of the Congress proceedings, an interesting article appeared, in which we could read:

[...] Italy. Architect E. N. Rogers relinquished the editorship of the magazine 'DOMUS', which he had taken over since the Italian Liberation. Rogers, one of the architects most aware of the problems of our time, made the magazine an admirable and unique publication. In the letter in which he bids farewell to his readers, Rogers soberly and movingly explains that he is leaving the magazine against his will. We quote: "It was with good

grace that we accepted the designation of 'humanists' that they gave us, and of which we take pride as of a cavalry rod (...). Giò Ponti, who directed 'DOMUS' before the war, resumed his post [...].⁵⁵

From these sentences it was clear which side *Arquitectura* had chosen to be on. This would, moreover, be confirmed over time. The same was true for the competitor, which represented the Portuguese expression of Gio' Ponti's editorial field. *Arquitectura* continued to publish translations of the Trieste architect even after his resignation from *Domus*, and many of the articles on international architects were taken directly from the editorial line of Rogers' *Domus*. Articles such as 'Homeless Men'⁵⁶, 'The Peoples' House: the U.N. Competition'⁵⁷, 'Two Leonardi and Architecture'⁵⁸, 'Royal House and Ideal House'⁵⁹, some of which would go down in history, such as 'Open Letter to the President of the Italian Republic (The State of Art)⁶⁰, the aforementioned 'For Architecture'⁶¹, 'Reconstruction: from the Object of Use to the House'⁶² to name a few. It was thus through Rogers' eyes that a part of international architecture was seen by the readers of *Arquitectura* in a still closed country. Even the articles about Neutra (1892-1970) that appeared in June-July 1949 were the result of pieces that *Domus* dedicated to the architect in no less than six articles from November 1946 to November 1948⁶³.

The relationship between the themes developed by *Arquitectura* seemed to draw nourishment from the Rogerian perspective, situating itself in a panorama that was as distant from functionalist purism as it was from an uncritical reception of the Athens Charter, although the latter was not explicitly questioned. This distancing manifested itself in disagreement with the editorial orientation of magazines such as *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, which represented one of the opposite poles to the Italian anti-Frigidaire keepers⁶⁴. The relevance of the publication dedicated to *Modernisme optimiste* initially remained marginal during the Green Years, with a tendency more inclined to focus on Milan rather than Paris. And, as we shall see, until the partial clearance of such consensual modernism by the Portuguese regime. However, the weight of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in the firmament of Lusitanian architecture Green years was subsequently overestimated by the preeminent historiographical discourse, which artfully forced the Portuguese gem to be embedded in the rosary of the French Modern Movement.

55 *Arquitectura*, no. 23-24 (May-June 1948).

56 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Uomini senza casa", *Domus*, no. 206 (1946), 2-3.

57 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "La casa dei popoli: il concorso dell'O.N.U.", *Domus*, no. 207 (1946), 2-5.

58 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Due Leonardi e l'architettura", *Domus*, no. 208 (1946), 2-3.

59 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Casa reale e casa ideale", *Domus*, no. 209 (1946), 2.

60 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Lettera aperta al Presidente della Repubblica Italiana (lo Stato dell'Arte)", *Domus*, no. 210 (1946), 2-3.

61 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Per gli studenti di architettura", *Domus*, no. 213 (1946), 2.

62 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Ricostruzione: dall'oggetto d'uso alla casa", *Domus*, no. 215 (1946), 2-5.

63 Translation by Ettore Sottsass: "Coerenza di Neutra", *Domus*, no. 215 (1946), 6-11; Gio Ponti, "Spettacolo del mondo", *Domus*, no. 227 (1948), 1; Gio Ponti, "I materiali 'dello stile' di domani", *Domus*, no. 229 (1948-07), 46-49; Gio Ponti, "L'alluminio e l'architettura", *Domus*, no. 230 (1948), 31-33; Gio Ponti, "Scultura all'aperto", *Domus*, no. 231 (1948), 32.

64 Reference here is made to the article Ernest Nathan Rogers, "L'evoluzione dell'architettura. Risposta al custode dei frigidaires", *Casabella Continuità*, no. 228 (1959), 2-4.

Such a discourse, particularly outside Portugal and Italy, still holds the concept of the Third Way with little sympathy and even less the link of this Lusitanian current with the Italian tendencies⁶⁵.

Instead, the opposite seems to have happened. *The Anos verdes* blossomed with a great refalling in love with Italian schools, with the first sprouts of extraordinary projects such as *bairro das Estacas* (1949-1954) by Formosinho Sanchez and Ruy Jervis d'Atouguia (1917-2006) in which one glimpses links with Luigi Cosenza's (1905-1984) Neapolitan projects such as the Social housing for homeless citizens (1949-1950) or the *Rione D'Azeglio in Barra* (1946-1947); or with linguistic elements by Luigi Carlo Daneri (1900-1972) as well as some details of the Harvard University Graduate Centre (1949-1950) by Walter Adolph Gropius (1883-1969). But shortly afterwards there would be a kind of return to order also in the context of the *Transigents*, clearly visible in *Arquitectura*.

The more political, cultured, and subversive vocabulary of a text 'written half in Latin and half in Russian'⁶⁶ of the Italians would gradually give way to more accentuated functionalist naivety and a uniformed Euro-Anglo-Saxon mannered Modernism, more acceptable to the regime. It was in this context that the French magazine would make an increasingly insistent *entrée en scène* in Lusitanian publishing. To become substantially hegemonic in the following phase.

In *Arquitectura portuguesa*, the articles of the 1940's last years were inspired by more innovative themes from a technical and formal point of view, thus constituting small flashes of inspiration after the three years of 'dull boredom'. Topics concerning interior architecture emerged comprehensively in the magazine, addressing topics such as studies on the quality of rooms or issues related to living spaces, without neglecting objects. Articles on 'Tiles', 'Juan Mirò's Ceramics', 'Interior Wall Decoration', 'Coloured Glass and Glassmakers', 'The Acoustics of Indoor Swimming Pools' and industrialization in architecture 'at the service of the national economy'. In addition, some rare architecture was examined, such as hospitals in Melbourne and Basel, a brewery and some 'country' houses in the 'Ajuda housing estate'.

This phase coincided with the symbolic march of 24 August 1949 when, thanking the regime of the extreme right-wing dictator Salazar for its help in the anti-communist struggle, the "Free world" welcomed Portugal with open arms into the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), turning a blind eye to the abuses of the Lisbon despot⁶⁷. By joining the anti-workers-international, not only was domestic oppression not relaxed, it was enriched by a new Atlanticist and global

65 Bruno Gil, "Many Voices: Intertextualities as an Underlying Cultural Theory of 'Escola do Porto'", *Writingplace Journal for Architecture and Literature*, no. 1 (2018): 10-28. The work, in line with many of its kind, speaks of an 'improbable' Third Way, proposing instead a concept of a Third Voice.

66 Antonio Baldini (1889-1962), who collaborated with the members of the Constituent Assembly to find the clearest expressions for the Constitution, worked hard in this direction. At the beginning of his term of office, he is reported to have said: "[...] How can one translate into correct Italian a Constitution written half in Latin and half in Russian? [...]", thus highlighting the challenge of linguistic synthesis between the two main political currents. Ombretta Fumagalli Carulli, *A Cesare ciò che è di Cesare, a Dio ciò che è di Dio* (Rome: Vita e Pensiero, 2006), 68.

67 Giorgio Di Giusto, *1945-1952 – The United States at the Conquest of World Hegemony: The Novelty of the Truman Administration's Grand Design and the Perception of Foreign Policy in American Society*, (Master Diss., University of Trieste, 2005).

matrix, which strengthened and legitimised the government. Lisbon's inclusion in the *pax americana* brought about an international opening of the country that was more formal than, of course, internationalist. It corresponded with the beginning of a slight economic loosening and an opening up to a more corporatist capitalism, of some of the consumerist ways of life (music, clothes, objects of use, etc.)⁶⁸ without, however, any democratic relaxation. A process that contributed to openings in the architectural field mask-



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ing, in reality, a new stylistic numbness, a new straitjacket of apparent formal freedom: that of a certain *Modernus felix*, of International Style and of an inoffensive corporatist functionalism. The dazzle for the suave Portuguese faded away, leaving room for new glare, by means of more shrewdly designed mirrors, without questioning any aspect of the ideological context.

Political interference in the field of architecture continued for some years. However, this new economic phase and the resistance of the most active factions among the architects of the Green Years contributed to weakening the legitimacy of the regime in the field of architecture. Thus began a period that we could call Contemporary suave: aesthetic adaptation to the regime's alignment with the global diplomatic and economic network and the consequent clearance of the CIAM. And of a certain consensus modernity, consistent with Salazar's and neighboring Franco's enthusiasm for a promising new economic sector with little conflict in terms of class struggle: tourism. And, with it, star-studded lifestyles.

This new period brought with it a series of tourism-related urban planning projects, such as the one that involved the degraded and impoverished center of Porto, which had become a veritable ghetto of poverty. These plans stimulated destructive and invasive restoration works, with massive demolitions of dilapidated buildings [Fig. 15]. Equally devastating strategies were adopted, disguised as picturesque reconstructions of ancient complexes, complete with historical fakes and reconstructions in style. Of course, there was no shortage of imposing hotel complexes along the Iberian coasts with a Latin

Fig. 15

The *Torre da cidade* in Porto: a case study of historiographic revisionism for tourism and propaganda. This landmark underwent extensive restoration and reconstruction in the late 1940s under the direction of Rogério de Azevedo, exemplifying the transformation of historical sites to serve national narratives (photo by the author, 2003).

68 João Medina, "Salazar e Franco: dois ditadores, duas ditaduras", in *Espanha e Portugal. O fim das ditaduras*, ed. Osvaldo Coggiola, (São Paulo: Xamã, 1995), 11-34.

American flavour. South America (and speculative skyscrapers) made their way into Portuguese architecture through various articles by Brazilian architect Ulysses Burlamaqui (August '48 and July '49) and, later, with the new layout adopted in October '49, with articles in 'The Brazilian architecture' by architects Aldary H. Toledo (1915-1998) and by Daniele Calabi (1906-1964), who had fled Padua after the racial laws, alongside titles such as 'The shop window as a cultural element' and 'The conception of American office buildings' (January '50) followed by pieces on 'Hygienic architecture and human geography in Brazil' or 'Stockholm, the New York of the Nordics'⁶⁹.

It was in this context that, in 1950, a young Álvaro Joaquim de Melo Siza Vieira (1933) enrolled at ESBAP, while Távora, who would become his teacher, was completing his training. Of that period, the protagonist of the story recounts that:

[...] when I was finishing my degree I decided to go down the road of urban planning, assuming that the design commitments in urban planning were less than in architecture [...] with that certainty that urban planning is not for realisation [...] When I finished my degree I went to work at the Municipal Chamber of Oporto[...] where I did my first urban planning job. Since our main contacts were with Italians and my education, therefore, was more oriented in that direction, I went to Italy, to Milan. I think the Milanese influence is clearly perceptible in the works of this early period. It was later – somewhat through urban planning – that I started to design. But that was very late. I went two years without being able to realise any projects. So much so that some friends commissioned me to design a house and I, who felt totally incompetent to do it, passed it on to a colleague and pretended to do it myself. [...] these professional beginnings are the Campo Alegre and Ramalde projects [...] these works represent the strength and intellectual vigour I had at that time [...] because I was a great fighter against the official status quo... The Campo Alegre work has a curious history. Muzio and Piacentini worked there. They even planned a city centre in that area, in the idea of Italian business centres. The project was gradually betrayed and bastardised in its execution by the municipal administration. It was then that we were asked to adapt the Italian plan to the new circumstances. I felt that it could not be done, that we had to solve the problem in a different way. So I drew up this plan [...] in secret. One day I showed it to the boss and he decided to go ahead with it. It did not develop further because, shortly afterwards, during a visit, the Minister of Public Works thought it was a disaster, that the municipality could not work that way. He got angry with the mayor and... They almost threw me out. However, from the point of view of professional colleagues – because there was a group that encouraged this modern stance – the work was somewhat successful.⁷⁰

69 Issue of May 1951.

70 Author's translation by Frechilla, "Fernando Távora: Conversaciones en Oporto", 22-28.

On 31 March 1950, at the end of his specialist apprenticeship, F. O. Carneiro, notified that Távora was 'competent to do the job'. A year later, in 1951, F. Távora was chosen to be one of the few to represent the Portuguese wing of the eighth CIAM⁷¹, whose main Portuguese connection was Viana de Lima, thanks to his contacts with Le Corbusier's studio. Távora thus encountered architects from all over the world.

That year the CIAM was to be held in Hoddesdon, England. Despite the timid international openings, we mentioned earlier, Salazarist Portugal continued in a condition of autarchic closure, censorship, and lack of written information. In this sense, international exchanges were of enormous importance for a young man like Távora. And it was with this CIAM that Távora's "man of two worlds" really began. A Congress in which his reflections on a modern architecture with traditional formal and spatial values would be reinforced. About this Congress, he said:

It was a post-war CIAM in which Le Corbusier said things like: 'Well, we thought houses didn't need locks and today we are convinced they do'. It was the Le Corbusier of Chandigarh, of Indian architecture, of that great green space full of spontaneous manifestations. And it was the CIAM where when Tange presented his Tokyo buildings, Rogers said they were intensely Japanese. I felt that something was changing profoundly. CIAM, the Athens Charter... everything was in crisis and discussion. There was a strong contestation. It was not the case with the Portuguese, we came from a small country, we were appearing for the first time at the congress, but there was a feeling of change, of transformation... and it was very clear, even in the figure of Le Corbusier himself. Gropius was already in the United States and starting to make his little American betrayals, and Le Corbusier was evolving in the direction we all know. [...] Le Corbusier was an unsympathetic character. His report was always listened to; he was really the character of congress. In a way distant, – apparently – from the mediocrity of the other groups of architects [...] I only greeted Le Corbusier once in my life. I met him by chance, half-awake, in his room and said: 'Good morning'. That was the only verbal contact. The atmosphere was a bit like that: a group of wise men chaired by the oldest wise man. There were many other characters. At the first congress I attended, the new generation of Englishmen around the Smithsons emerged. Also the Italians, Rogers, Albini, Gardella, less likeable...⁷²

On Távora, the Italians and CIAM, Siza tells us:

Yes, Távora was a great admirer of Rogers. Of the BBPR, whom he knew directly through CIAM [...] [and] he witnessed those polemics within CIAM that in fact ended CIAM... [...] [Regarding] Italian culture, there was also

71 Nuno Portas, "Arquiteto Fernando Távora, 12 anos de atividade profissional", *Arquitectura*, no. 71 (July 1961): 22.

72 Author's translation. Frechilla, "Fernando Távora. Conversaciones en Oporto", 22-28.

a very active encounter, a turning point, a revision, on the part of Italian architectural culture [...] Italian works, in general, in the post-war period [...] were the great influence here.⁷³

Italian architecture was again the subject of another Portuguese editorial revolution that, this time, in the November-December 1950 issue, blossomed in the pages of the traditionally conservative *Arquitectura Portuguesa* with an atypical issue. For the first time in years, the editor, Martins, was breaking out of his thematic obsession with the single-family holiday home, interiors, decorative elements and building materials, with an issue dedicated to the IX Triennale di Milano, 'Italian Ceramics' and 'Modern Italian Architecture' with, on the cover, a 'high school in Biella' (the Biella boarding school in Pella palace) by Giuseppe Pagano (1896-1945). However, it is interesting to observe the different ways in which both magazines treated the Triennale theme. *Arquitectura Portuguesa* emphasised the decorative products presented at the event, the expositive and exhibition aspects, in contrast to the periodical enemy, which, as we have seen above, highlighted the political and social aspects of the event.

Typical examples of the vast set of thematic and formal innovations of an Italy that was preparing for the economic miracle, hyper-industry, the democratization of consumption and a creative capitalism driven by the state investments of the First Republic⁷⁴. What is still surprising today is the bursting formal contemporaneity of many of the published Italian projects, a popular modernity present in every colour, shape, and graphic, the expression not only of a new lifestyle, but also of a new democratic model. A scent of a techno-democratic future evoked in articles about prolific Italian professionals, such as the two very interesting buildings published in November 1950: one in Rome by Ugo Luccichenti (1899-1976), the other in Milan by Giulio Minoletti (1910-1981). A new editorial course, a belated reflection of what had been happening for years in the underground and among the new generation of Portuguese architecture, and which Martins spread sparingly. Designers whose *modus operandi* itself evoked this happy, refined and dense factory of thought that represented the Italian peninsula. With debates-research that touched on issues concerning the production of objects of use for serial manufacture and mass consumption⁷⁵ and that, although they passed as politically inoffensive and perfectly publishable in the Salazarist context, nevertheless seemed to emanate a real breeze of fresh air from their forms. These novelties, such as the Villa Conti in Piacenza, by Gian Giuseppe Mancini (1881-1954) – issued in August 1950 – or the Missori cinema in Milan by Emilio Lancia (1890-1973) – April 1951 – at the same time, allowed *Arquitectura Portuguesa* not to criticise the capitalist system in its essence, not to question the ideological *status quo*, if not, indeed, the superstructures of the everyday.

⁷³ Gregorio Carboni Maestri, private communication with Alvaro Siza Vieira (audiocassette recording 2004).

⁷⁴ Patrizia Dogliani, "An Alternative Image of Italy? Socialist Italy", *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome*, no. 109, (1997), 35-44.

⁷⁵ Paola Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione: Il piano Ina-Casa e l'Italia degli anni Cinquanta*, (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2001).

We can, however, try to imagine how much these images caused astonishment and wonder among the Portuguese readers of the magazine. Innovative images, almost from another planet, different in their themes, shapes, colours...⁷⁶ Imageries, however, that had nothing to do with the Portuguese reality of the time, which was little or not at all industrialised, where there was a feeble domestic market and weak mass consumption. But, above all, in which there was no debate on objects of use, and where social emergencies were far removed from issues such as ergonomics, the quality of chromaticity or the choice of materials for the kindergartens of the children of the workers of Italy at the time.

In addition to the Boota large number of countries progressively entered the magazine, which went from the gloomy and boring Iberianism of the regime, to an obsessive foreignness, which had, perhaps, the objective of not revealing the turmoil that agitated Portuguese architecture, as well as serving as a cover for a perceived inadequacy of the homeland, instead of its political and economic model. Most designers and authors of articles cited in this phase of the magazine's life were foreigners. First and foremost Spaniards, who were soon to start looking towards Italy⁷⁷, architects such as Hermando Acosta Sanchez, Hermando Benincore Cortes, Juan Menendez, Yalmar Elsin Londono and Colombians (such as Cuellar, Serrano, Gomez & Cia), the latter of which would be of great importance in the years of the magazine's fourth series.

In general, these were projects of medium to high aesthetic quality, but with a low theoretical profile, and very much anchored in professionalism and the emerging International Style. Architects such as the Swiss Hans Hofmann (1897-1957), Marcel Portevin, Georges Goldber, Vischer, Herman Badr'Brauning Leu Durig; or French, such as Georges Massé (1907-1994), Jean Ginsberg (1905-1983) and M. A. Weber; Belgians, such as Jacques Dupuis (1914-1984), Auguste Van den Nieuwenborg (1933-1968) or R. Cartine. But also, Brazilians such as Ângelo Bruhns de Carvalho (1896-1975) or Albary Toledo and Anglo-Saxon architects such as Neutra, Rodney Walker (1910-1986), Hugh Asher Stubbins Jr. (1912- 2006), M. Stephenson and Turner.

The magazine also placed a certain emphasis on exhibitions, as early as August '48, with articles such as 'XLVI Annual Exhibition of the National Fine Arts Society', 'An Exhibition of Modern Decoration' (January '51) or 'The Exhibition of Missionary Sacred Art' (July '51). In fact, it was precisely architecture exhibitions that were one of the tangible novelties of the Green Years, and it was ODAM that was one of the most active organisations in this field along with the ICAT collective, organising exhibitions for almost six years and publishing texts whose aim, in the case of ODAM, was also to oppose many of the policies of the Camara municipal do Porto. In addition to criticising the low quality of some popular

⁷⁶ Marta Boneschi, *Poveri ma belli: I nostri anni Cinquanta* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995); Nicola Tranfaglia, *Crisi sociale e mutamento dei valori: L'Italia negli anni Sessanta e Settanta* (Torino: Tirrenia-Stampatori, 1989).

⁷⁷ José Manuel Pozo, Ignasi López Trueba, *Modelos alemanes e italianos para España en los años de la post-guerra* (Pamplona: T6, 2004).



housing projects, ODAM opposed the municipality's plan to prescribe an Oporto style for architects [Fig. 16]. Perhaps this excess of critical spirit led to the closure of ODAM in 1952, with its last exhibition being held in 1951 at the Ateneu Comercial do Porto. In 1952, it was ICAT's *Exposições Gerais de Artes Plásticas* that were closed by PIDE, *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*, i.e. the Portuguese political police.

Within this framework of political realignment, F. Távora, on his way to Venice for the international conference of UNESCO, published 'Architecture and Urbanism, the lesson of the constants' in the second issue of the cultural magazine *Lusíada* (1952). *Arquitetura portuguesa*, after the monographic issue on the Triennale, progressively ceased – in a somewhat schizophrenic move – any reference to the experiences related to the Italian reconstruction. After a few projects with a light tone, as in the March 1952 issue on the painter Modigliani and the Milan offices of Ippolito Malaguzzi Valeri's *Farmitalia* (1857-1905) and Gianluigi Giordani (1909-1979), the Portuguese periodical most historically linked to Gio' Ponti ceased any glance towards Milan and Rome. A country where the working class, more and more organized, active, had voted 36% to the Communist, 11% a Socialist party – whose symbol was a hammer and sickle –, and another 7% a Democratic Socialist party with the socialist son as its emblem. Reference to Italy were by now probably too connoted, putting Julio Martins in an uncomfortable situation, associating himself with third ways and political upheavals that were unbecoming to him. Martins therefore turned definitively towards the Atlantic and the Washington consensus, the CIAM of the Frigidaire's keepers and the formalities now prevailing among the Portuguese elites and ruling classes.

Arquitetura Portuguesa thus fully resumed its role as a conservative magazine linked to the government's cultural aspirations. In issue 167, for its 44th year (April '52), it was given a new graphic design with an aesthetic leap framed in the scenario of formal normalisation, of a modernist-corporatist stamp, towards

Fig. 16
A view of the city center of Porto, showcasing its diverse architectural styles (photo by Francesca Fagnano, 2004).

which the regime would move, hesitantly, in the context of the Atlantic Pact. But the change of trend also seemed to be a necessity, with the aim of adapting to the publishing market. The avant-garde graphics and 16x23 format were accompanied by a drastic reduction in the number of issues. No more explicit references to the compromise with national-populism appeared, although the Salazarist Júlio Martins remained in charge of the magazine.

For the first time since its foundation, the articles reached levels of quality and readability almost comparable to those of *Arquitectura*. Without, however, ever reaching it. A symptom of a context that was beginning to enrich and demand more even from a moderate, traditionalist and governmental periodical, but whose investigative articles remained superficial and politically controllable, avoiding theoretical in-depth analysis, rare when compared to its more cultured, critical and tendentious competitor.

Pieces with harmless and in some ways naively populist theoretical articulations, such as '*Por que é o povo arquiteto?*' [Why are the people the architect?] and surveys such as the one conducted over three years, in which professionals, artists, directors and middle management (but never the working class) were asked what they thought of Portuguese architecture. In order to avoid any theoretical, humanistic and political insight into the city, history and architecture, so to speak, the magazine chose to drown its pages in a confused and cheerful interdisciplinary manner. It distracted the reader from disciplinary matters in an air of joyful Breuerian freshness: photography, cinema, mathematics, mind maps, diagrams, painting, etc. This tactic was coupled with semblances of attention to the social, without bothering, *ça va sans dire*, historical materialism or class visions, with an American style sociologism. Gesticulations of a faux progressivism that in nothing determined a shift in the editorial political axis.

Although there was an apparent intellectualisation of the product, there seemed to be no cultural project. *Arquitectura portuguesa* seemed to seek an attractiveness and an existential reason that had been lost. Inadequate, in a framework in which the political bar was moving ever further to the left. The architectures proposed in this fourth series ranged from uncritical and flattened late-modernist and late-functionalist currents through corporate brutalism, winking at commercial and speculative building and passing through the formalisms of the American matrix. With the exception of a few sporadic articles, there was a total disregard for heritage, for history, for historic centres, for the urban, for questions of continuity and for architecture as an autonomous discipline and, ultimately, for Humanism. Historic centres whose complete destruction was proposed in many projects in typical *bruxellisation* operations. A paradox, considering the insistence with which the magazine sought the eternal essence of its national architecture.

The Portuguese projects published seemed to tend towards an adaptation to the growing diligence of Lusitanian architecture, responding to the intellectual alacrity of *Arquitectura* without, however, bothering with debates and Third

ways. Projects by architects such as Rogério Martins, José Rui Gomes Joaquim Bento d'Almeida (1918-1997) or Victor Manuel Catum, today fallen into relative oblivion. Professionals who corresponded to international formal cannons, but with limited theoretical depth. Little or nothing of what was happening in Oporto was disseminated.

Távora, in his participation in the Competition for the Architect's Diploma (CODA) in 1952, presented a House by the Sea in the Douro Mouth, where he resided, as the conclusion of his design process, revealing remote references to the styles of Breuer (1902-1981), with vague allusions to the imagery of the House by the Waterfall (1936-1939), the Canvas Weekend House (1933-1934) or, in some proportional aspects, the Tugendhat (1928-1930). However, the main links are to be found in a dwelling built in the very same year, to which the author could hardly have been forewarned, namely Bo Bardi (1914-1992) Glass House. The Casa no mar, scored 19/20, alas remaining at the project stage. Simultaneously, Távora inaugurated the residential structure at the mouth of the Douro (avenida do Brasil 136, Oporto, 1952)⁷⁸ and started planning for Ramalde. Regarding the latter, he shared a small episode that sheds light on the peculiar atmosphere that pervaded Portugal at the time, often bordering on the ridiculous:

[...] Ramalde's project was designed [...] with shadows. One day the director general of urbanization came to order them to be removed "because the minister will not approve it with shadows". For him, the shadows had a terribly Corbusian and modern meaning. [...]⁷⁹

However, 1953 seemed to be a watershed year for the architect's national and international visibility, with an apparent benevolence even from the New State. In fact, an early article on Távora's work was published in *Arquitectura portuguesa*, which seemed to contrast the more artificial modernist syntax embraced by her northern colleagues and many of the projects published in the magazine. *Arquitectura*, for its part, published a series of articles about – and written by – Le Corbusier: 'Letter from Le Corbusier to the architects of southern Africa' (April), 'The proportions of the ideal dwelling – Comparison between Palladio and Le Corbusier' (August); 'Chandigarh – Le Corbusier and the new capital of Pangjab' (October) and 'Housing units in Marseilles – Le Corbusier' (November). The latter building had recently been visited, in addition to Fernando Távora, by architects such as C. de Castro, F. Sanchez, R. Athouguia, N. Teotónio Pereira, J. Carlos Loureiro⁸⁰.

At the same time, perhaps the first major international event in architecture was coming to Lisbon with the 3rd Congress of the International Union of Architects and an exhibition on Brazilian architecture, along with photographs of modern Portuguese works such as the Quartier das Estacas, which was nearing completion in those months.

⁷⁸ "Bloco de habitações na Av. do Brasil", *Arquitectura*, no 71, (July 1961). 14.

⁷⁹ Frechilla, "Fernando Távora: Conversaciones en Oporto", 23.

⁸⁰ José Fernando de Castro Gonçalves, "Edifícios modernos de habitação colectiva-1948/61. Desenho e standard na arquitectura portuguesa" (PhD diss. UPC, 2007), 85.

In that turning point year, in which Távora celebrated his marriage with Dona Maria Luísa Rebelo De Carvalho Menéres (1930), the construction of the *Mercado Municipal de Santa Maria da Feira* was also started, which was completed in 1959 in the same place where his father was born.

Although other research projects saw the light in those years, the predominant design environment of the first Fifties could be summarized with what was the most popular architect in the magazines around '53-'54, reconciling both *Arquitectura* and its rival (and perhaps the regime as well): Neutra. The Austrian American author seemed to synthesise the ultimate response to the theme of the upper-class villa in *Estilo internacional*. An atmosphere that seemed to infect contemporary architectural projects, such as the mansion on the Costa da Caparica by Artur Pires Martins (1914-2000)⁸¹.

An international style reiterated in the confirmed interest of the 4th series of *Arquitectura portuguesa* towards Latin America, especially Argentina, Brazil and Colombia, with designers such as Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994), Juan Kurchan (1913-1972), Jorge Ferrari-Hardoy (1914-1977), Charles Chen, E. Garcia, José Joaquín Angulo, L. Amurocho, L. I. Convers, A. O. Wills, C. Martinez. Experiences of *tropical-international* modernity, à la page, in authoritarian Latin American contexts and under US hegemony. Architectural landscape, therefore, which, despite appearances of techno-formal openness, remained asphyxiating.

Of that period – which was around '52-'53 –, of thirst for foreign and above all Italian periodicals, Siza himself, in an interview granted to me in 2004, rendered the idea in the following words:

That is. [...] Before, here, there was *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. And that's it! [...] when I was studying, when I started the course, and up to the middle of the course, it was *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and that's it! [...] Then *Domus*, *Controspazio* started to appear...⁸²

In this context of American openings that were more apparent than real, in a situation of exasperation of the New State with repeated returns to order, symptomatic was a journey that turned into an almost tragicomic myth, symbolizing the aspiration of so many Portuguese to leave the country's impermeable borders. The legendary escape to Italy of the artists Jorge Vieira (1922-98), Rolando Sá Nogueira (1921-2002) and the architect Duarte Castel-Branco (1927-2015) made, it is said, in a rickety Lambretta. Equally mythical was the return, in the same scooter, with, on board, materials, books, magazines and novelties – prohibited by censorship –, from the lively Italian workerist debate⁸³.

This was the setting, until the early years of the 1950s, in which Fernando Távora spent his formative years and launched his career. The *Anos Verdes*

81 "Casas de férias na Costa da Caparica, autoria arqs. Artur Pires Martins, Cândido Palma de Melo", *Arquitectura*, no. 64 (January-February 1959), 15-18.

82 Gregorio Carboni Maestri, private communication with Alvaro Siza Vieira (audiocassette recording 2004).

83 The materials from this famous journey were exhibited from 6 October 1999 to 2 January 2000 in the *Jorge Vieira, Homem-Sol* exhibition at the *Parque das nações*, Lisbon.



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were soon to blossom, and the *Inquérito* survey would serve as a catalyst for a transformative era in the Portuguese built environment. Távora's expeditions, while not involving a Lambretta, would also take on a mythical quality, characterized by both physical and intellectual journeys, including several to Italy. Like his fellow architecture students and colleagues, the countless unemployed workers who would soon emigrate, driven by the specter of hunger, or those who stayed, Távora remained resolutely committed to his homeland. Rather than succumb to apathy or bitter oikophobia, he embarked on a path of patient effort, weaving a tapestry of enduring cultural resistance, helping to found a school and, over the next two decades, standing shoulder to shoulder with millions of unsung compatriots as they embraced their own *25 Aprile*.

Dedicated to Jean-Louis Cohen.

Fig. 17
Auditorium of the Law Faculty of the University of Coimbra, designed by Fernando Távora: A view of the interior as it receives the final touches before its official opening (photo by Gregorio Carboni Maestri, 2001).

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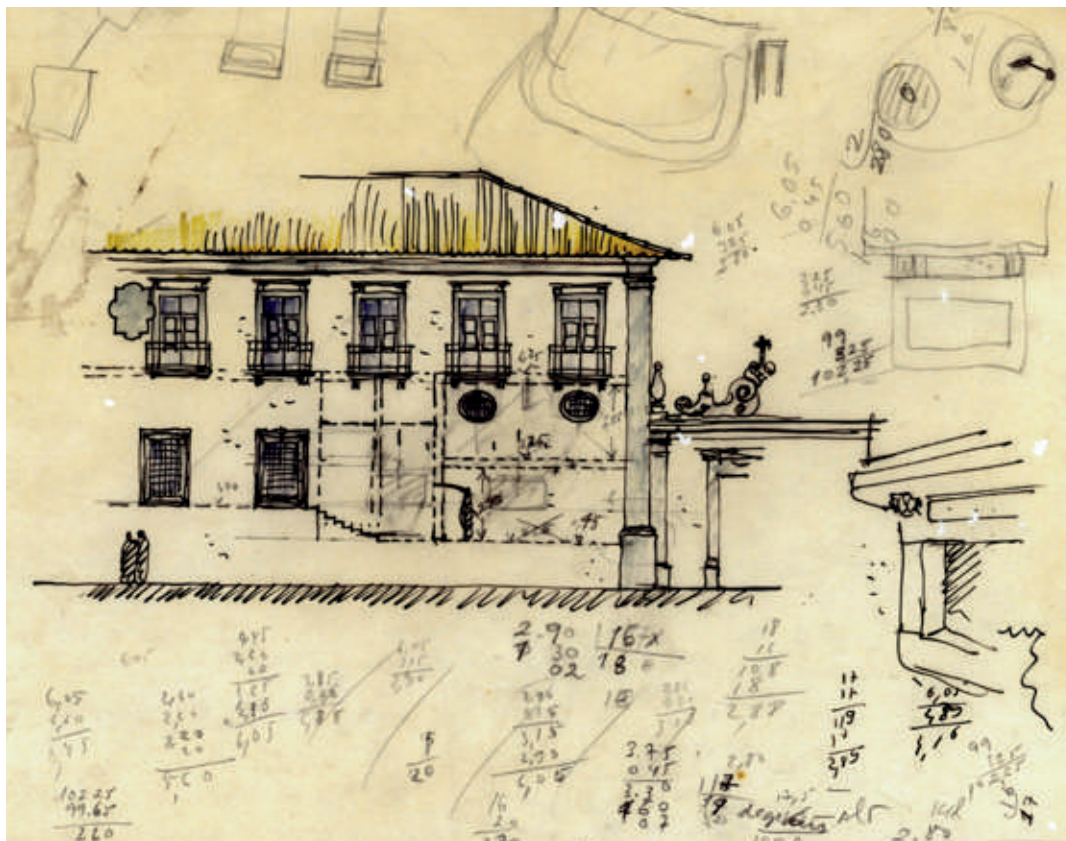
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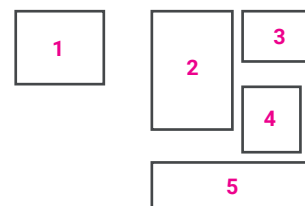
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Pousada Santa Marinha da Costa

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1972-1985
PLACE/ADDRESS	Guimarães
COLLABORATORS	(along with) Bernardo Ferrão, Alfredo Matos Ferreira; Jorge Barros, Francisco Barata, Joaquim Jordão, Manuel Magalhães, Agostinho Ramos, Gil Carneiro, José Bernardo Távora, Fernando Barroso
CUSTOMER	General Directorate for National Buildings and Monuments
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



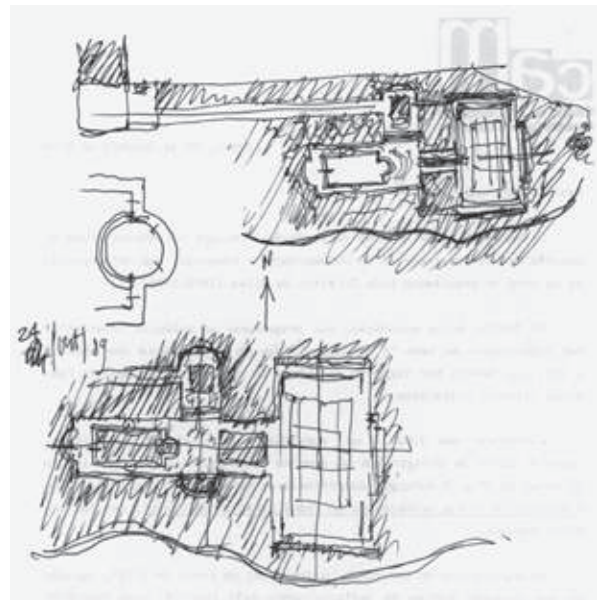
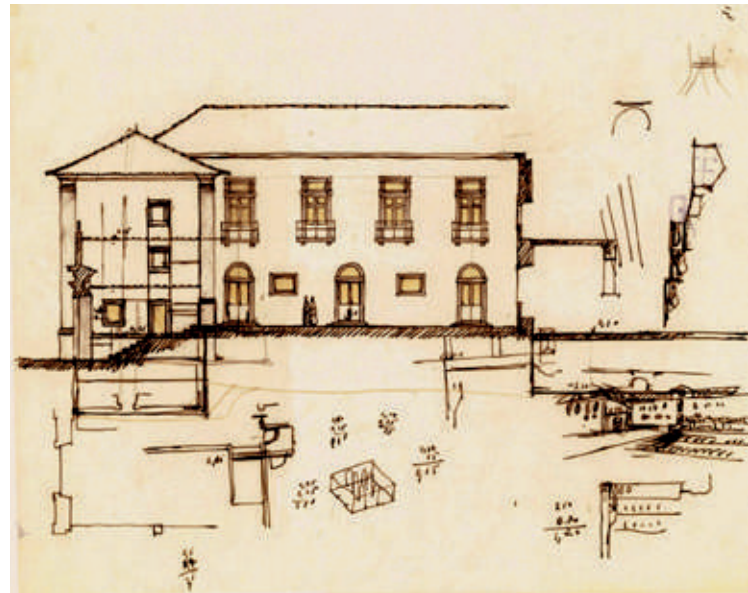
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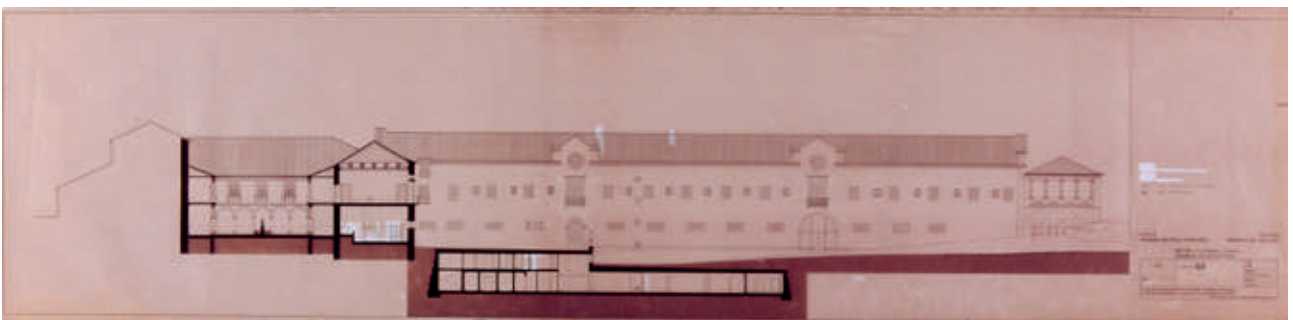
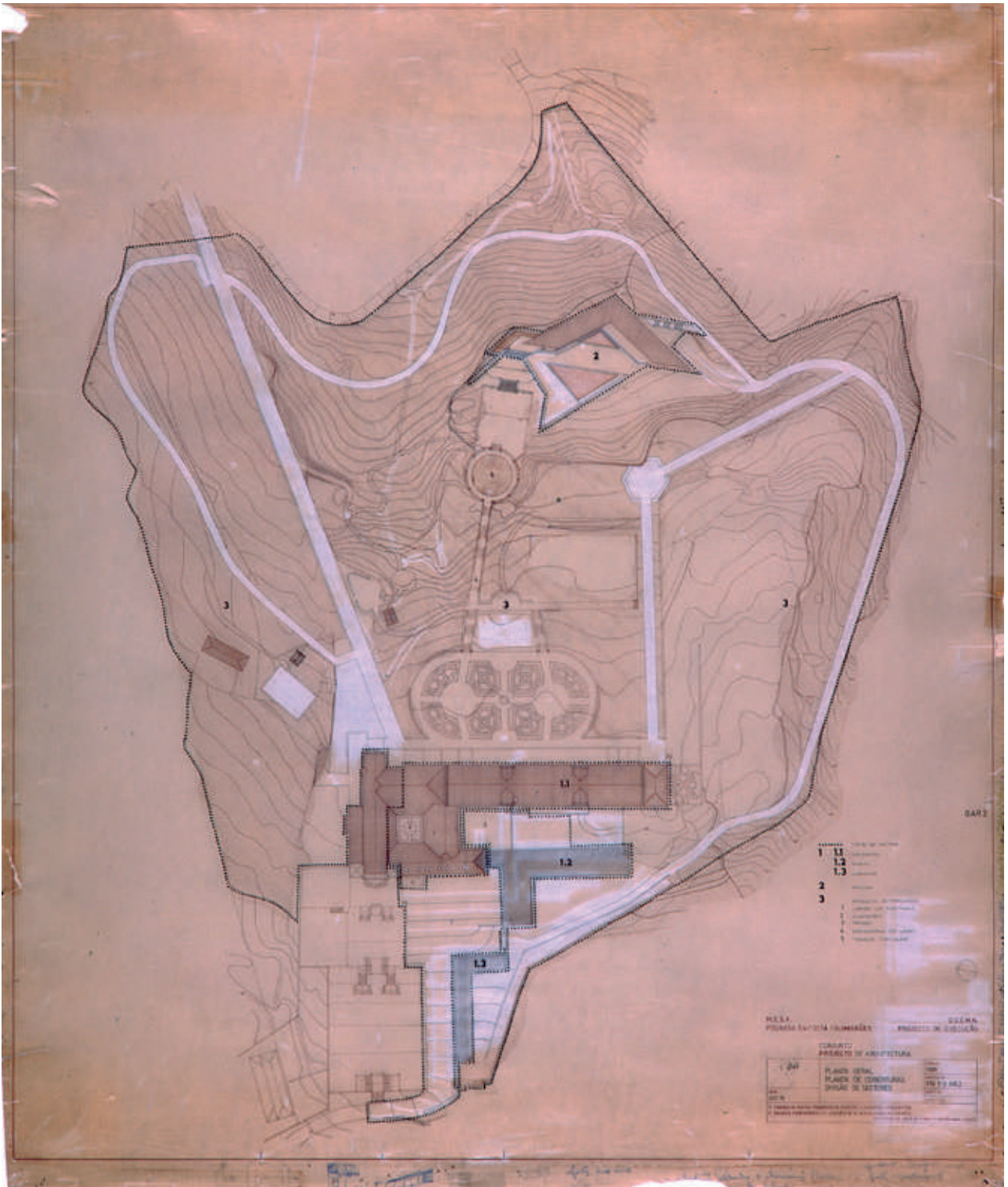
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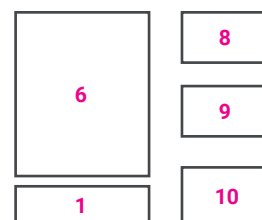
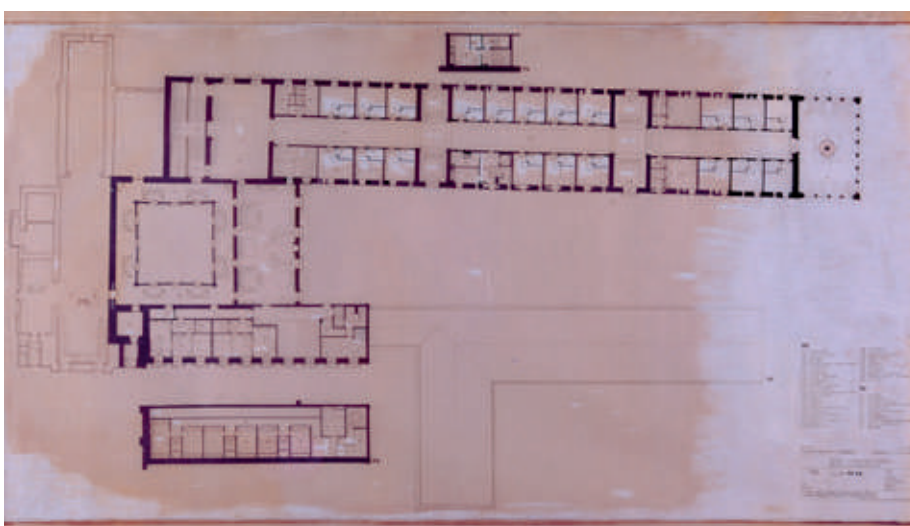
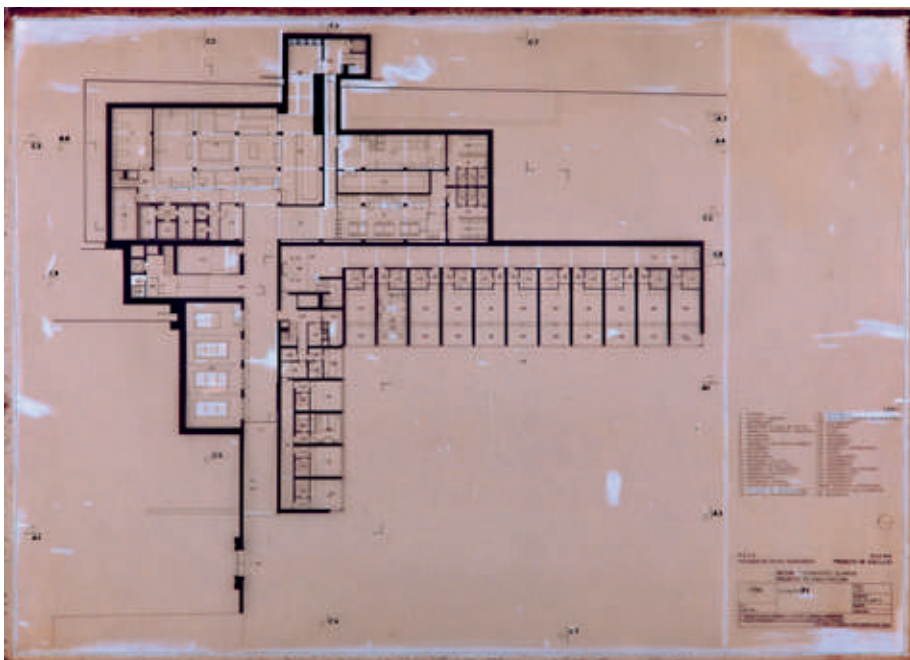
IMG.1-2-3: Pousada Santa Marinha da Costa, Guimarães 1972-1985, project sketches, ink and colours on heliographic copy; IMG.4-5: project sketches, ink on paper (FIMS/AFT).



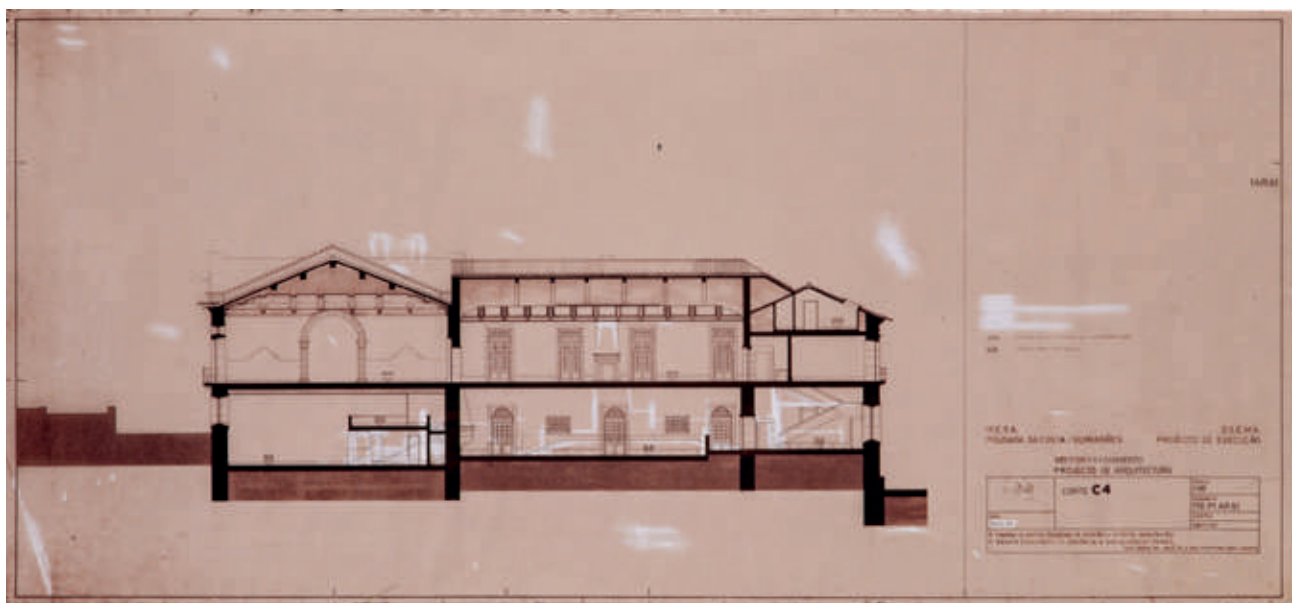
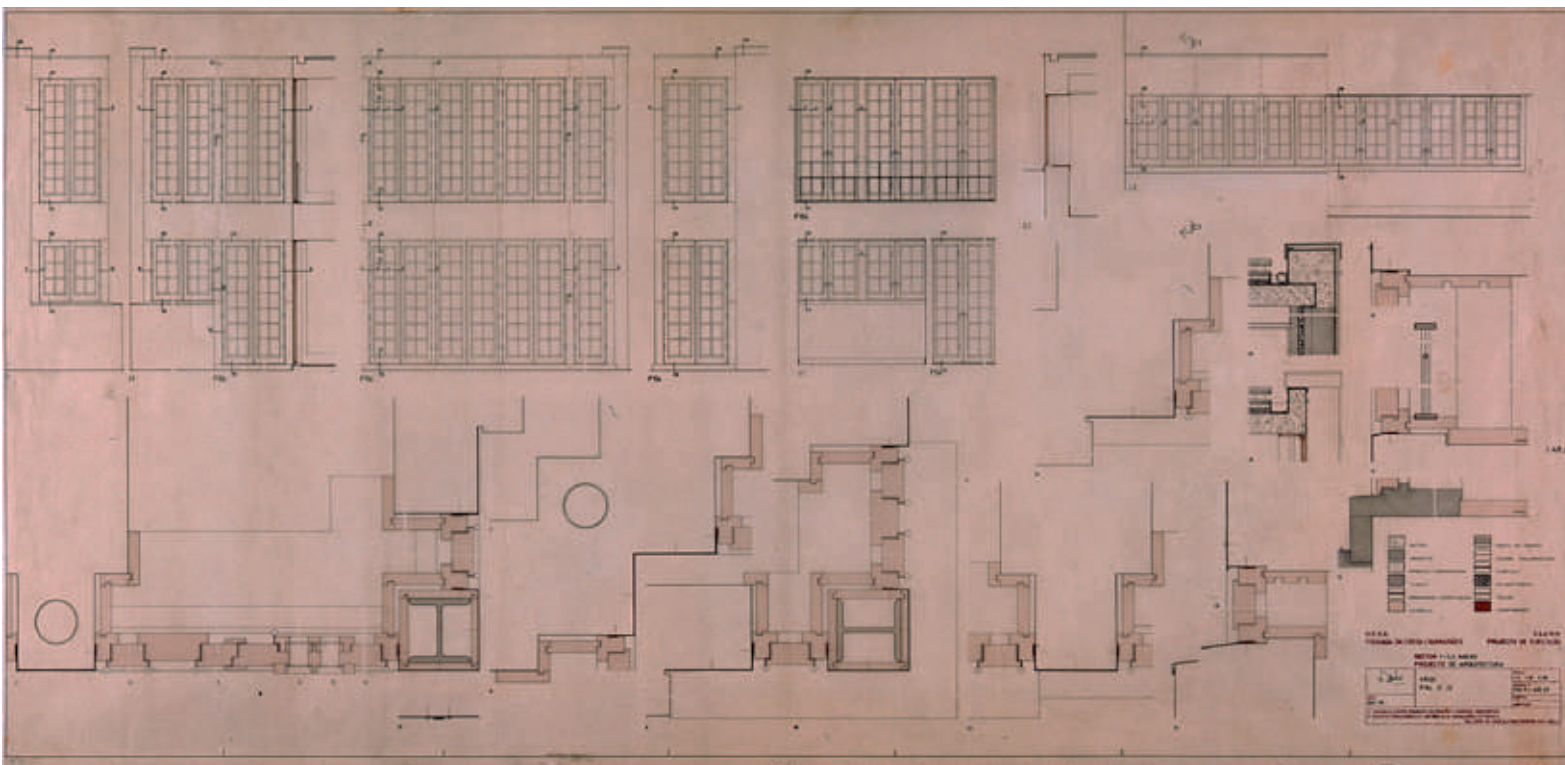
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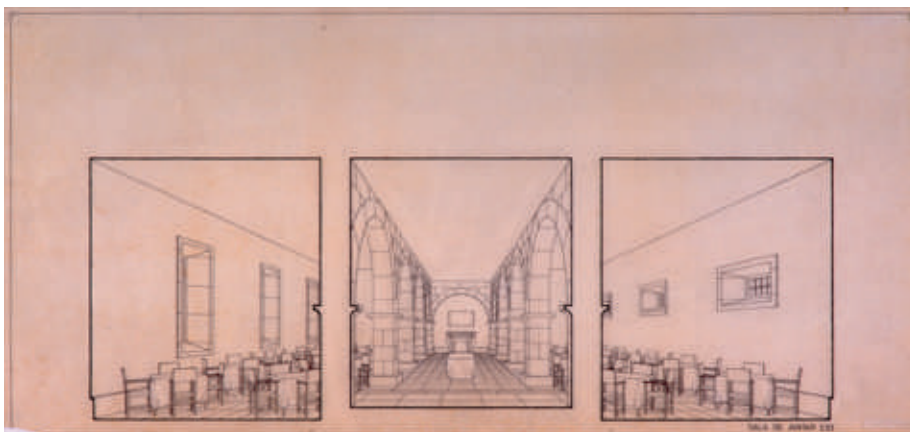
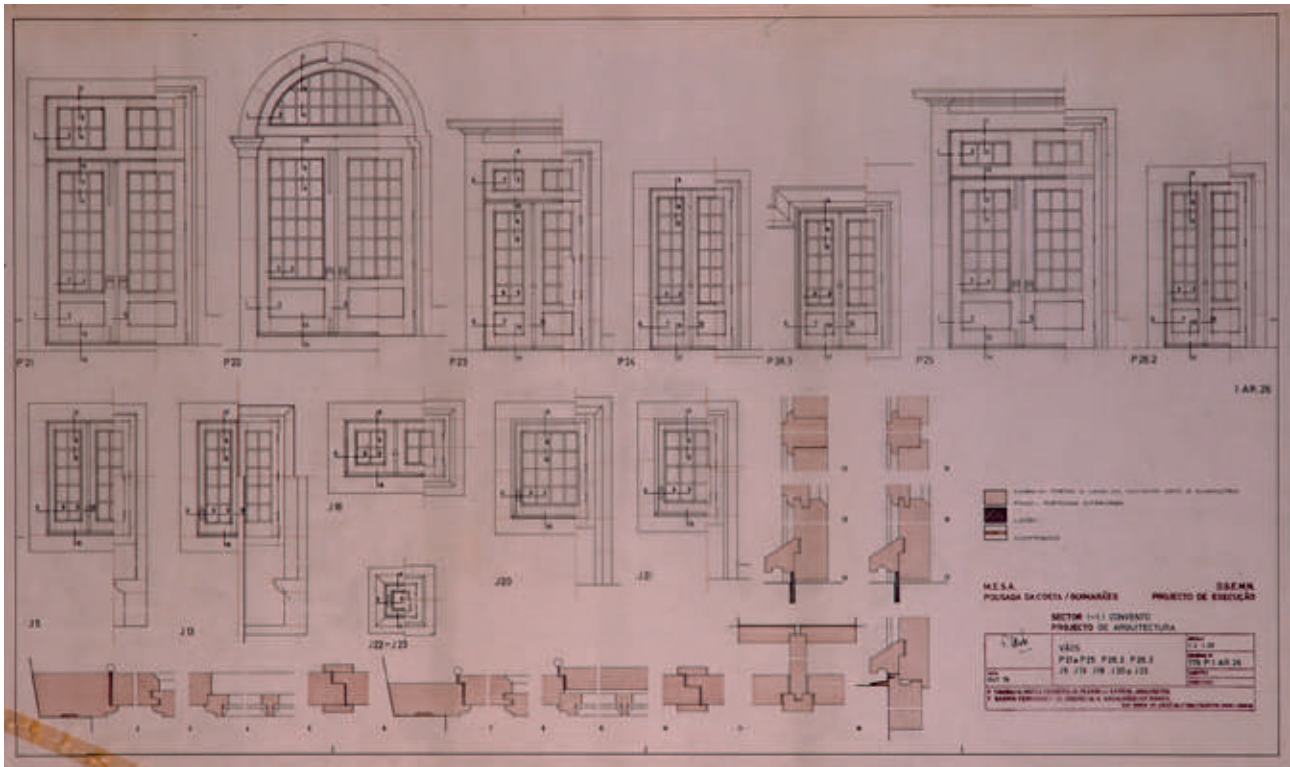






IMG.6: Pousada Santa Marinha da Costa, Guimarães 1972-1985, general plan, heliographic copy; IMG.7: section, heliographic copy; IMG.8-9-10: floor plans, heliographic copy (FIMS/AFT).





11	14
12	15
13	16

IMG.11: Pousada Santa Marinha da Costa, Guimarães 1972-1985, details of wooden window frames, heliographic copy; IMG.12-13: section, heliographic copy; IMG.14: details of wooden window frames, tracing paper; IMG.15-16 interior perspectives, ink on paper (FIMS/AFT).

In the Interior of Time. Constants and Contrasts*

Fernando Távora, Aldo van Eyck, Porto School, Temporal Depth, Project Methodology

/Abstract

The significance of the role of the CIAM doctrine in modern Portuguese architecture is undeniable, particularly within the post-war Congresses.

The involvement of architects from the Fine Art School of Porto in the CIAM meetings will be empathetic to the different group interpretations of the Corbusian grid, with Alfredo Viana de Lima and Fernando Távora at the helm.

This empathy will be amplified with future participation in Team X meetings. The relations between Fernando Távora and Team members, namely Aldo van Eyck, will be fundamental in cultivating a more sensitive approach set on an open dialogue between modernity and tradition.

Fernando Távora's formative path will articulate these concerns with a precise notion of tradition triggered through his cultural/family heritage, implying the premise of the architect as a cultured man, which he will sustain and amplify throughout his career.

This article draws a parallel reading to the notions and concerns amply shared by Aldo van Eyck and Fernando Távora, using the Santa Marinha da Costa Convent as a case study, even though each author traced a personal path set inside a specific socio-cultural framing and influences.

The exemplary conversion of Santa Marinha da Costa Convent, set in Fernando Távora's home city, Guimarães, into a hotel facility will trigger an in-situ reading that depicts the physical conditions, restraints and values inferring an extended reading of time, recognising the interpretation of the ensemble's inception as a design tool. The convent's heritage condition will be amplified through a collective memory reading, where Távora's reminiscence will be embedded. An approach that will place the foundational question linked to the Porto School *modus operandi*: it's not just about continuing but how to continue.

This reading will underline a methodology that draws on thematic empathy between the two authors, built patiently by acknowledging the layering of time within occasion, i.e. the interior of time.

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Develops professional activity, since 1992, received National Award IHRU 2008_Construction for Social Housing Project in Porto. Founder of "Fpoetics@_laboratorial hub", in 2013, and Fpoetics@ Studio, Lda, in 2020. Co-founder of curatorial collective "MATTER. the white conferences". Researcher at CEAU-FAUP in groups "T2P: Theory and Design Practices" and "AdC: Housing architectural design and forms of dwelling" with "multi-family dwelling: theory, design, didactics" and "Transference and Identity" projects, where he currently researches the modern condition and its reflexes in the contemporary architectural scene. Presently associated with the research project "SIZA baroque", funded by FCT: public agency that supports scientific research in Portugal and PI in European Project UpGranT – Updating the Grand Tour. Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment funded by European Union, under the programme Erasmus+, action KA220 – Cooperation partnership in higher education (2023-2026).

The first post-war Congress, CIAM 6 (September 1947), designated as the Reunion Congress, was organised in the bucolic countryside, at Bridgewater in Somerset, England, away from the big urban centres, with English as the common language and MARS group as hosts.

This setting personified the beginning of a significant shift – in reading and interpreting the changing centre of human reality – in the following decades in terms of architectural sense and sensibility.

This shift, although gradual with some setbacks and contradictions, is closely linked to the inclusion of junior groups in the CIAM meetings and affairs associated to the publication of the TEAM magazine and the inception and gradual consolidation of TEAM X meetings, which will, in turn, inspire a whole generation to the possibility of change by reading and apprehending reality, not only, through the notions of space and time but also place and occasion. Time will start to be understood and interpreted in-depth as a symphonic continuum, where the past, as an informant, would be as important as the present in the future to be.

In 1967, Aldo van Eyck published in *Forum* magazine a text written in 1962 and 1966, which synthesized these readings in a crystalline and mature way:

As the past is gathered into the present and the gathering body of experience finds a home in the mind, the present acquires temporal depth – loses its acrid instantaneity; its razorblade quality. One might call this: the interiorisation of time or time rendered transparent. It seems to me that past, present and future must be active in the minds interior as a continuum. If they are not, the artefacts we make will be without temporal depth and associative perspective.¹

This sensitive reading was shared by a handful of architects in the Fine Arts School of Porto, under the protecting hand of Carlos Ramos, a small local community that believed in universality (modern movement premise) but within the discipline of architecture, a belief which later was to be the inception of the Porto School. Fernando Távora was among this community, with a particular individual role in building and enhancing these notions, which can be interpreted in different dimensions.

Firstly, this meant that the architects from the Porto School were not only aware, but also in tune with the current debates occurring in central Europe. In the case of Fernando Távora, this meant attending the CIAM meetings, as a CIAM Porto member, with Alfredo Viana de Lima and later Sérgio Fernandez, presenting his work to CIAM colleagues, namely Team X members, attending UIA meetings, or structuring specific study trips, through his extensive travels to the United States, Mexico, Japan, Thailand, Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt and

* The inception of the present text results from a talk in "Távora 100 in continuità_pensiero e opera", Politecnico di Milano – ABC Department, Milan. May 2023. The title evokes Aldo van Eyck's text "The Interior of Time", written in 1962 and 1966 and published in 1967 in the magazine *Forum*.

¹ Aldo Van Eyck, "The Interior of Time", in Vincent Ligtelijn, Francis Strauven eds., *Aldo Van Eyck: writings, the child, the city and the artist, an essay on architecture, the in-between realm*, Vol I, (Amsterdam: SUN, 2008): 474-475.

Greece (Corbusian Grand Tour concept) as the intentions expressed in his “On board” *Diary can corroborate*.

This implies that although Portugal was a peripheral country with a harsh dictatorship that blocked out most of the news, especially linked to modern culture and architecture, Távora and his colleagues would be able to find intermediating ways to access vital and updated information.

Secondly, is how Fernando Távora’s formative path not only runs parallel to the research linked to Team X and its members during the 50s and 60s but is also informed by his family cultural heritage, i.e. arrives at these premises within his own personal journey, implying an autobiographical quest. This quest will be carefully orientated and informed by personal cultural preferences in such a way that he pursued a line of thought, the lesson of the constants, hinged in integrating into open dialogue, a way of understanding the meaning and framing of what came before him and what was around him.

The lesson was clear, “It is the function of history to know the existence of man’s manifestations and to determine the possible constants that this existence presented. It is a necessary and indispensable function that justifies all interest in past knowledge for the contribution it can bring to the present”.²

On the one hand, he is passionate about Modern Architecture, Art and literature, where the master’s rhetoric, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Fernando Pessoa, among others, are informed by an extensive library³ which he enriches avidly (with first editions), on the other, a cultural awareness framed by family values and traditions linked to an aristocratic background and education, which he identified with, and did not want to leave behind but blend with his modern education and values. In this sense, we can state that Fernando Távora’s collective insight and work are set on an autobiographical trigger.

Possibly, the most overwhelming testimony of this pursuit is an inscription Távora copied from Álvaro de Campos’ poem⁴, into one of his favourite books in his library – Le Corbusier volume 1 (1910-1929) – “ARRE, estou farto de semi-deuses! ONDE É QUE HÁ GENTE NO MUNDO?” (Ugh, I’m sick of demigods! WHERE IS THERE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD?)

Van Eyck will also reaffirm the need for a collective insight “Whoever attempts to meet man in the abstract will speak with his echo and call this a dialogue”.⁵

For Fernando Távora, this understanding could also be associated with the unfertile direct depiction (import) of international models or references associated

2 Fernando Távora, *Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço. Arquitectura e Urbanismo: a lição das constantes*, (Lisbon: FAUP Publicações, 1993): 7 (translated by the author).

3 In the 40s certain books already stand out: *Eupalinos – L’amé et la danse dialogue de l’arbre*, by Paul Valéry; *La Rebelión de las Masas*, by José Ortega y Gasset; *La Decadencia de Occidente*, by Oswald Spengler; *Tu Y el Arte, introducción a la contemplación artística y a la Historia del Arte*, by Wilhelm Waetzoldt; *O que é arte?*, by Abel Salazar, among others. In FIMS/FT.

4 Fernando Pessoa, “Poema em linha Reta”, in Fernando Pessoa, *Poemas de Álvaro de Campos*, (Lisboa: Ática, 1944): 312 (translated by the author).

5 Aldo Van Eyck, “Place and Occasion”, in *Aldo Van Eyck: writings, the child, the city and the artist, an essay on architecture, the in-between realm*, Vol I, eds. Vincent Ligtelijn, Francis Strauven (Amsterdam: SUN, 2008): 471.

with the *tabula rasa modus operandi*, which ignored realities, past and present, and gave an incomplete framing and, most of all, a one-sided understanding of the problems at hand – the lesson of the constants. Nevertheless, the modern intent, the desire to transform, associated with a progressive insight on society, should continue to guide the architectural reading and structure the formal discourse.

Aldo van Eyck expressed this continuum concept more precisely:

It is obvious that the scope of this enormous environmental experience cannot be contained in the present unless we telescope the past, i.e. the entire human effort, into it. This is not historic indulgence in a limited sense, not a question of travelling back, but merely of being aware of what “exists” in the present – what has travelled into it: the projection of the past into the future via the created present – “Anna was. Livia is. Plurabelle’s to be” (who knows Anna Livia Plurabelle may yet preside over architecture!).⁶

We cannot deny the thematic empathy between Fernando Távora and Aldo van Eyck.

Associated with this line of thought, Fernando Távora will defend a more sensitive approach set on an informed, open dialogue between modernity and tradition, which blends his modern education and teaching career at the Fine Art School of Porto with the notion of tradition triggered by his personal cultural heritage. For Távora, there are three aspects, three constants, in the evolution of architecture: “its permanent modernity, the collaborative effort that it has always expressed, its importance as a conditioning element of human life”.⁷ However, his body of work will best explore the notion of harmonious cultural openness.

In 1972, Távora was presented with a very particular commission and a unique opportunity that would be the perfect testing ground and a milestone in his layered approach - the conversion of the Santa Marinha da Costa Convent, set in the north of Portugal, in his home city, Guimarães.

Fernando Távora had a personal connection to the site, a place where, as a youngster, he had visited and played among the corridors of the convent.

This proximity and familiarity to the site, this personal memory, will be blended into a broad and sensitive environmental reading set on the notion of heritage and collective and individual memory. This reading will be fundamental because when Távora receives the commission, the convent had already been abandoned and had suffered a great fire leaving the complex completely destroyed and in ruins. Távora looks at this as an occasion, as a moment to synthesise the notions of continuity that he had been deepening and testing through the years.

In the 1950 and 1960s, Fernando Távora had a very productive design phase, an exemplary body of work exploring the sense of place and cultural embodiment with the Vila da Feira Market (1954-1959), the Quinta da Conceição

⁶ Van Eyck, “The Interior of Time”, 474.

⁷ Távora, “Arquitectura e urbanismo – A lição das constantes”, 9.

Municipal Park and Tennis Pavilion (1956-1960), the Ofir Holiday House (1956), the Cedro Primary School (1957-1961), among others, and in parallel a resilient role in the Fine Art School, besides Carlos Ramos. This role advocated an informed modern overview of teaching methods and recognising the structure of the architects' task through interdisciplinary actions and pursuits (his travels to the United States sustain this intention).

At the beginning of the 70s, the conversion of the Santa Marinha da Costa Convent enabled Távora to be culturally syntonically – look at the built ensemble not only as heritage but as a collective memory, where his personal memory would be embedded. He looks at this building through these notions following an environmental reading where time will not stand still or be fragmented but flow harmoniously in-between the rebuilt architectural elements and the reborn spatial continuity between past and present, as in Aldo van Eyck's writings.

The first stage of the design will be an open but embedded encounter with the built structure and the site. Set on rigorous observations and technical surveys but also sensitive and sensorial readings, as if Távora and the site had to get mutually acquainted, and get to know each other better.

About this design phase, Távora would often say, with time, "I got to know the building better, and the building got to know me better, so we learnt from each other".

This first reading, built patiently by acknowledging the layering of time, where every construction phase is equally valued without prejudice, is one of the most important moments within the design. The *in-situ* reading depicts the physical conditions, restraints and values but also goes into an extended reading of time, implying a rigorous parallel research phase (archives and libraries) in order to fully understand how it all came about, in reality, the inception of the complex [Fig. 1].



Nevertheless, the conversion of the convent into a small luxury hotel had a strong constraint.

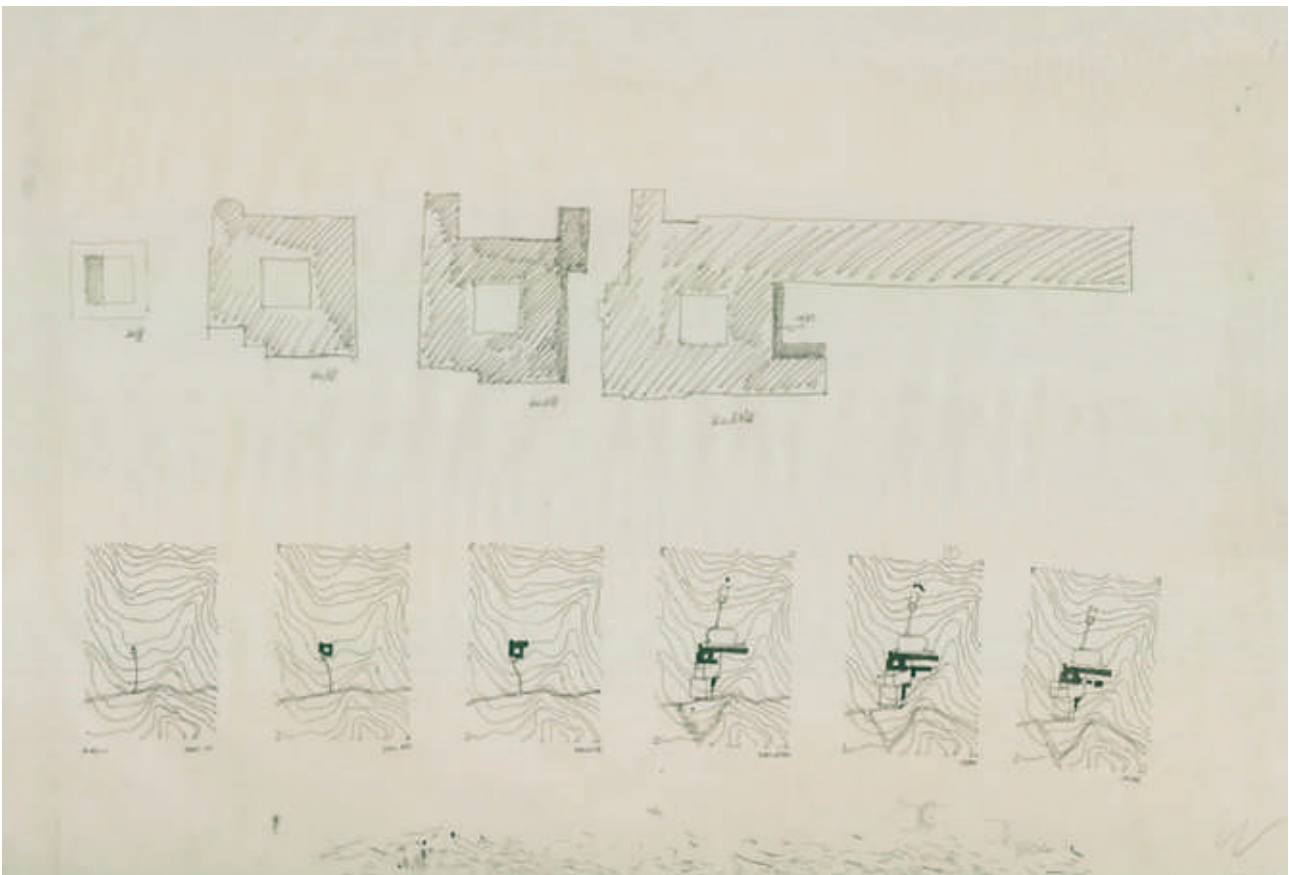
In order to respond to the set brief, it was not enough to bring back the atmosphere of the collective spaces and the character of the monks' cells; there were further programmatic issues. The need for new technical areas and the number

Fig. 1
Santa Marinha Convent,
General Plan – Existent, 1972
(FIMS/AFT).

of sleeping rooms required were not adequate for the dimension and configuration of the Convent's built structure.

One of the first lessons that Távora taught us was that when you reach a place, you must understand its nature and character and, within this reading, what it can hold, withstand, i.e. what the place can endure without losing its character.

Távora understood that the convent's formal structure – scale, proportion, rhythm and spatial sequences – would naturally limit the areas that could accommodate sleeping rooms and thus condition their numbers, imposing two extensions, a technical basement under the central patio and a new volume attached to the existing structure, dimensioned and proportioned to the new spatial units. For Távora, "the knowledge of the past is as valid as the measure of the present. It is certain that the indicated constants, by their very nature, have not lost their relevance".⁸



Through a personal redrawing process, Távora uncovers the primary structure of the complex, a small chapel, and underlines a possible evolution sequence of the whole built system and its relation with the landscape by identifying the different four extension phases from the 10th century up to the 18th century [Fig. 2].

So, through this survey, Távora intends to underline how the system would naturally evolve by rendering a volume that extends one of the existing wings, the smaller volume associated with the main *façade*. Here is the idea of interpreting

⁸ Távora, "Arquitectura e urbanismo – A lição das constantes", 17.

Fig. 2
Santa Marinha Convent, Survey
rendering on extension phases
– 10th to 18th century, n.d.
(FIMS/AFT).



3 |

the reading of time, not only as a descriptor but as a design operator, a tool in siting the new volume.

Looking at the drawings of the new volume, we understand that although he is trying to complement the pre-existing structure in a natural extension sequence, Távora does not just want to mimic the past. He wants to do a contemporary building with its own identifiable constructive system and architectural expression. A volume that has its own identity, although set in open dialogue within a pre-existing palimpsest [Fig. 3].

The project introduces something challenging to teach, to pass down: identifying the need to continue a pre-existing structure, but at the same time, it is not just about continuing but how to continue, and there are no set rules to guide us.

This is one of the most demanding lessons from Fernando Távora because it is not about giving us a recipe, a prescription, or even a menu. Távora poses an approach, an attitude or a methodology of how to break down a problem, identify its different components and select and hierarchise them within the pursued intent. The approach relies on the notion of the architect as a cultured man who should have enough information to identify the different issues and make educated choices.

Fig. 3
 Santa Marinha Convent,
 General Plan – Proposal, 1975
 (FIMS/AFT).

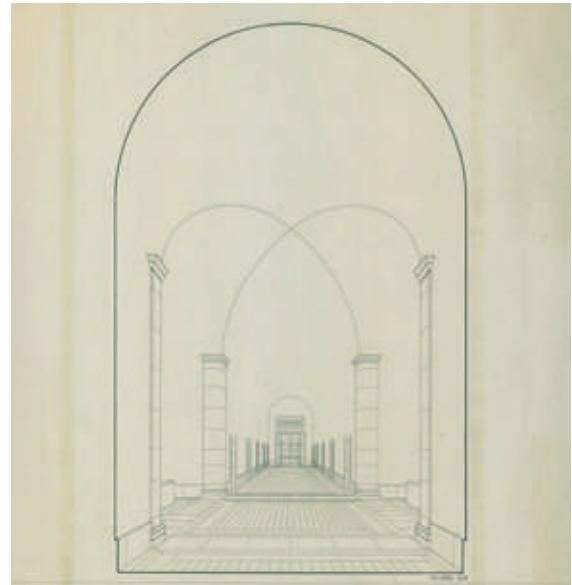
As such, Fernando Távora had two main concerns for the design, how to bring back the pre-existing structure and integrate the new extension.

It was clear that Távora wanted to evoke the memory of Santa Marinha da Costa Convent, but he did not simply want to repeat it by doing a pastiche. He understood the importance of bringing back the main character and atmospheres through identifying meaningful spaces, and this implied going room by room and understanding which elements each space needed to evoke the meaning of a convent set in his new intent.

This *modus operandi*, in the main cloister, will portray an extended timeline, dating from the inception of the complex, rendering a space filled with distinctive original architectural elements from different periods overlapping in open or suggested dialogue, activating an interwoven continuum flow of time.

In contrast, on the opposite side of the complex, the well-preserved granite balcony that overlooks the landscape and ends the main corridor, an emphatic enfilade of cells, is simply restored and completed by redoing the wooden ceiling and wall tiles in its original technique and expression, respecting the craftsman's metier.

In the other spaces, like the main corridor, that had almost disappeared in the fire, Távora brings the idea of the void as a powerful space, i.e. the idea of architecture being more than a simple mould [Fig. 4].



4

Távora brings back a cleansed vaulted space, entirely cast into existing transitional features giving value to the essential architectural elements in order to evoke the atmosphere of the convent as it was within the small hotel it is now.

This idea can also be linked to Luigi Moretti's 1950s experimentation, an apparent link between Portuguese and Italian architecture. Távora is passionate about Italy's poetic circumstance, be it through the classics, the notions of Luigi Moretti, Ernest N. Rogers and Carlo Scarpa, among others, or even the timeless approach rooted in BBPR's work when linked to collective memory.

This passage of time is also emphasised in the volumetric relationship and architectural expression set between the existing buildings, within their different timelines, and the new extension.

The architectural expression in the new volume is in open dialogue with the language of the existing building, but once again, not by repeating the elements but by reinterpreting them, through the notion of texture, the lowering of the two-level volume, to be perceived almost as the pedestal of the pre-existing building and a distinct constructive system expressing the notion of the free façade. However, the continuous façade, mesh-like glazing, is rendered as an assemblage of elements that evoke the proportion, the metric unit, of the individual wooden window frames set in the pre-existing building.

Fig. 4
Santa Marinha Convent,
perspective on main corridor
– proposal n.d. (FIMS/AFT).

In some perspective views, we almost do not detect the new volume, as it expresses a delicate recessed volumetric dialogue and takes into account the dominant colours and the materials – on one side, the white surface; on the other, the harmonious chromatic dialogue between window frames, individualised or continuous, and on the flat roof, interpreted as a platform, in terracotta ceramic tiles.

The footprint and expression of the recessed volume appear almost like a shadow, contrasting with the perforated expression of the clear white imposing pre-existing wings. The new volume in no way disturbs the space between the two main wings, creating a sequence of platforms that the tiled roof prolongs, keeping the original visual relationship with the surrounding landscape.

When we overview Távora's work, we have a clear idea that it is more than just about the significant principles, gestures and theoretical notions. Távora teaches us the importance of a precise design premise and a clear strategy; even because you have to ordinate all the different ideas and problems under that main principle, nevertheless, you must be open to the circumstantial. This openness implies a sensitive reading where "the stimulus of contrasts"⁹ come into play, maybe underlining van Eyck's premise, "I have heard it said that an architect "cannot be a prisoner of tradition in a time of change". It seems to me that he cannot be a prisoner of any kind. And at no time can he be prisoner of change".¹⁰

An example of this sensitivity is when the new volume and the pre-existing connect touch each other as if the two white-plastered volumes hold their breath in order to allow for a specific solution of transition [Fig. 5]. The pre-existing building, with its pilaster, defines the height of the new building, while a mesh of window glazing marks the transition separating the volumes but without dividing them.

Throughout the whole design, the idea of "the interior of time or time rendered transparent" is constantly underlined, confronting openly the different building types and timelines in the same perspective – the church, the courtyard volume, the main wings and the new volume are in total cohabitation. This is one of the more significant lessons regarding the approach to time. It is important to stress the word approach because, in reality, when we discuss the proposal, we are not interested in formal depictions of the design. After all, each case is a case, and each situation has its own triggers. Clearly, we cannot design without triggers, and for Fernando Távora, the triggers are to be recognised in the interior of time.

Aldo van Eyck expressed this concept with clarity, "If the lasting validity of man's past environmental experience (the contemporaneousness of the past) is acknowledged, the paralysing conflicts between past, present and future, between old notions of space, form and construction and new ones, between hand production and industrial production, will be mitigated. Why do so many believe they must choose categorically, as though it is impossible to be loyal both ways?".

9 Siza, Álvaro. "Fernando Távora – o estímulo dos contrastes", p. 7.

10 Van Eyck, Aldo. "The Interior of Time", p. 475.



5 |

As we have seen, the two authors share some significant common ground, concerns linked to understanding the circumstances of their time, although there is an aspect that we could consider somewhat divergent with clear results in the architectural work.

If we consider the direct quote, “Whatever space and time mean, place and occasion mean more”¹¹, we understand Fernando Távora’s architecture and especially Porto’s community of practice¹², does not fully resonate, i.e. they do not share the same segmented understanding.

The four notions – space, time (associated with Gideon’s *Space, Time and Architecture*), place and occasion (as a revision of modern architecture shifting from the abstract grid to a more human-centred reality) – are equally significant and calibrated in Távora’s teaching and work¹³. This implies an approach set on an in-depth reading of reality but interwoven with a clear compromise with the poetic circumstance hinged on the sense of composition, materiality and experimental plasticity informed by, what Alison and Peter Smithson would call, “the heroic period of modern architecture”.¹⁴ They would go further “This heroic

¹¹ Van Eyck, “Place and Occasion”, 471.

¹² This community of practice is directly linked to Fernando Távora and the Fine Art School of Porto, as students, professors, close friends, and some as former collaborators, namely Álvaro Siza, Alcino Soutinho, Alfredo Matos Ferreira, Jorge Gigante, Rolando Torgo, Alexandre Alves Costa, Sérgio Fernandez, Bernardo Ferrão, Francisco Barata and last but not least Eduardo Souto Moura.

¹³ The notions of space and time structured lesson 23 in Fernando Távora’s course “Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço”, at ESBAP and FAUP, until 1993, with the title “tipologias do espaço arquitectónicos: espaço e tempo” and lesson 24 with “Exemplos significativos de espaços arquitectónicos: Frank Lloyd Wright e Le Corbusier: semelhanças e contrastes”.

¹⁴ “In the period just before and just after the first world war a new idea of architecture came into being. In an amazingly short time it mastered its necessary techniques and produced buildings which were as completely realised as any in the previous history of architecture”. Alison & Peter Smithson, “Prelude to the heroic period of modern architecture”, *Architectural Design*, vol. XXXV, (December 1965), now in *The heroic period of modern architecture*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), 5.

Fig. 5
Santa Marinha Convent, view on new volume, courtyard volume, and church in cohabitation n.d. (FIMS/AFT).

period of modern architecture is the rock on which we stand. Through it, we feel the continuity of history and the necessity of achieving our own idea of order” and underline “an architecture of the enjoyment of luxury materials, of the well-made, of the high finish. It is special to Mies and occasional to Le Corbusier and Gropius”.¹⁵ These are interesting notions that can help frame Távora’s later architecture, where the tradition of the constants plays a guiding role.

For Távora, “the Great Tradition, the tradition of the constants is confused with small and passing traditions. Because the lesson of the constants cannot be forgotten, contemporary architecture and urbanism must manifest their modernity, translate a total collaboration and not forget the importance they play as conditioning elements in human life”.¹⁶

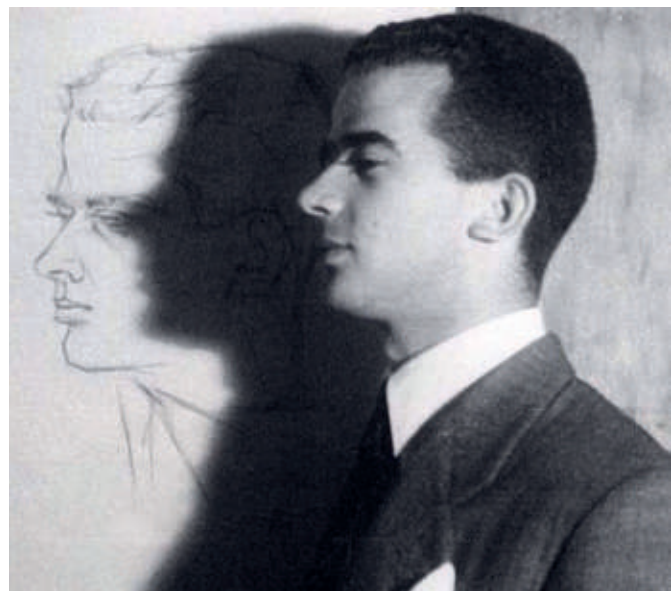
This standing will help, at the end of the 70s and particularly the 80s, the Porto School came together with the whisper of an embedded mindset approach, moving away from a loud post-modern discourse, with Fernando Távora always at the helm.

Although images have ambivalent meanings, we can find early echoes of Fernando Távora’s apparent thematic awareness linked to the notion of the past, present, and future *continuum*. We could say that one of his best-known portraits¹⁷ [Fig. 6], as a young architect, in the 1940s, seems to play with this notion of *continuum* with a layered disposition, the shadow evoking the past, his image the present and a setback drawing, done by Fernando Lanhas, representing the future. The elaboration of this layered portrait, rendered within a carefully coordinated setting, seems to evoke or even acknowledge the significance of understanding the interior of time – “time rendered transparent”.

Undoubtedly, we find reverberation between Aldo van Eyck’s personal research and Távora’s approach. Nevertheless, it is essential to understand that although the two authors shared a common ground and concerns linked to understanding the circumstances of their time, each author was also walking his own line, set inside a specific socio-cultural framing, influences and personal interests and sometimes we must be reminded of that.

Fernando Távora believed in a certain *tendenza*, rooted in a universal understanding of Portuguese culture, which he strongly influenced with other protagonists, the Porto School believed in it too, but he also knew it was equally important, inside the *tendenza*, to know how to walk alone.

However, as Fernando Távora constantly repeated, the opposite could also be true!



6

15 Ibid.

16 Távora, *Teoria geral da organização do espaço*, 19.

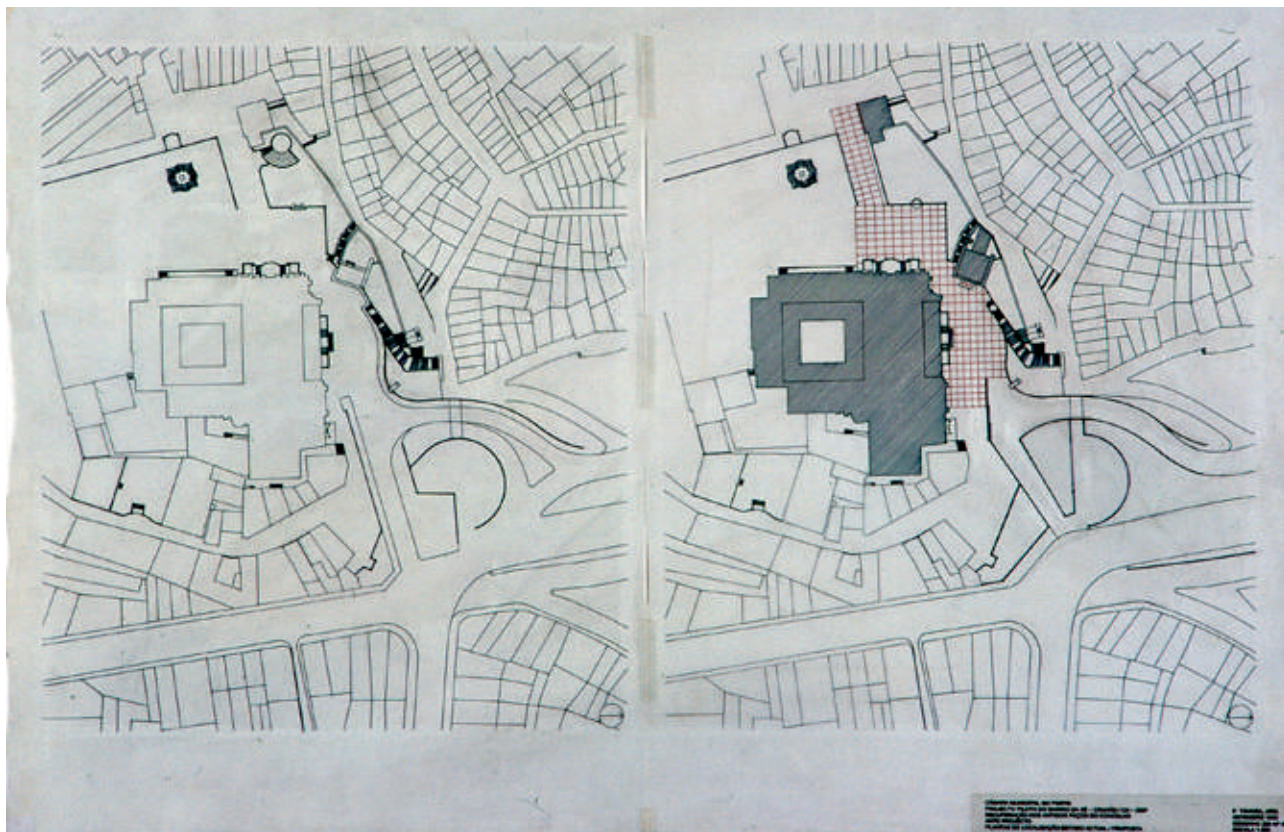
17 Fernando Távora Portrait, photograph by Alves Ribeiro with a drawing by Fernando Lanhas, in Foz, Porto, 1940.

Fig. 6

Fernando Távora Portrait; Photograph by Guilherme Álvares Ribeiro on drawing by Fernando Lanhas. Foz, 1940 (FIMS/AFT).

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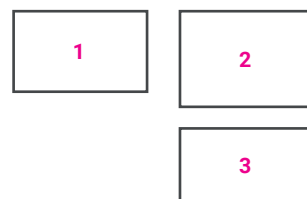
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Renovation of the Former Council Building – Casa dos Vinte e Quatro

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1995-2003
PLACE/ADDRESS	Porto
COLLABORATORS	Carlos Martins, Isabel Silva, Ricardo Câmara, Alexandra Borges, Catarina Gomes, Dina Henriques, Miguel Figueriedo, Susana Martins
CUSTOMER	Municipal Council of Porto
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



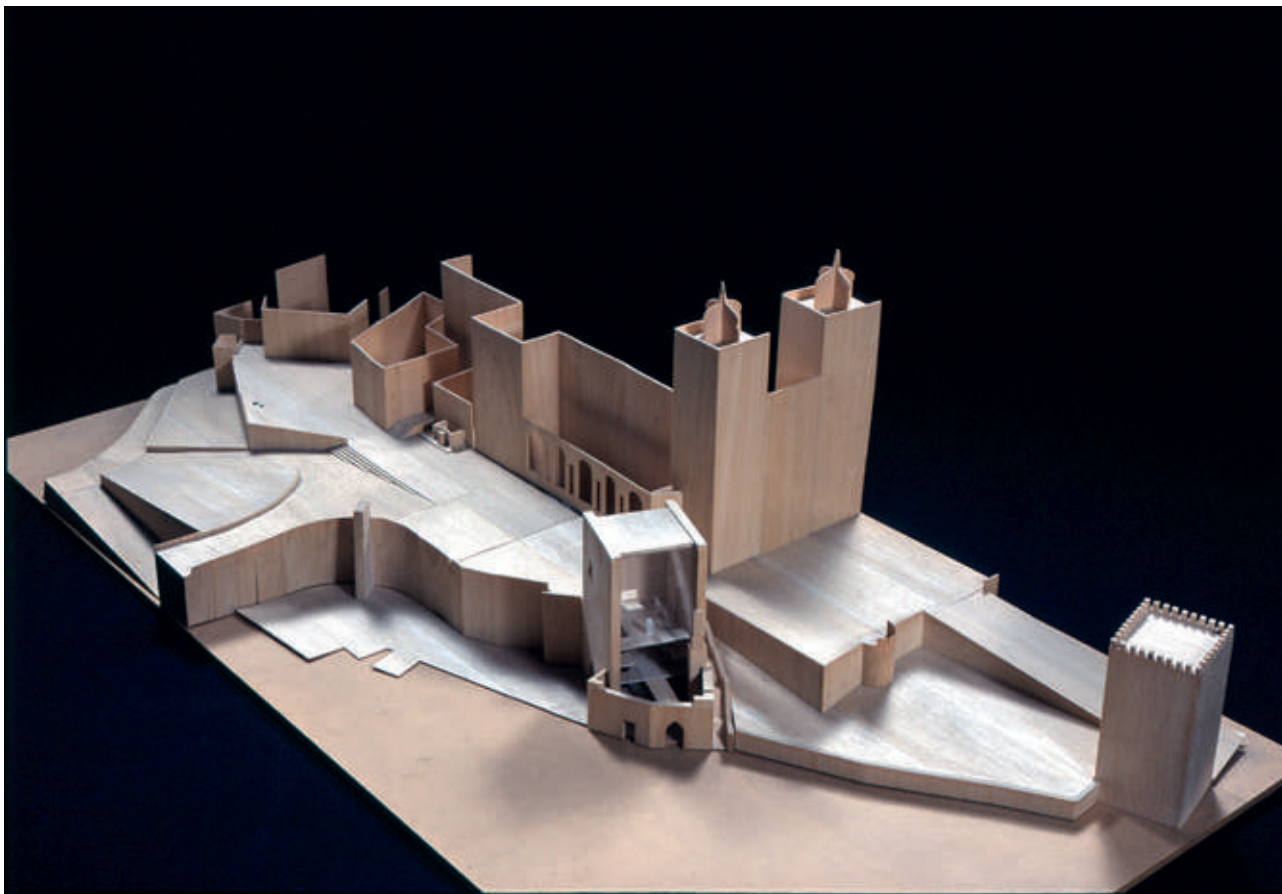
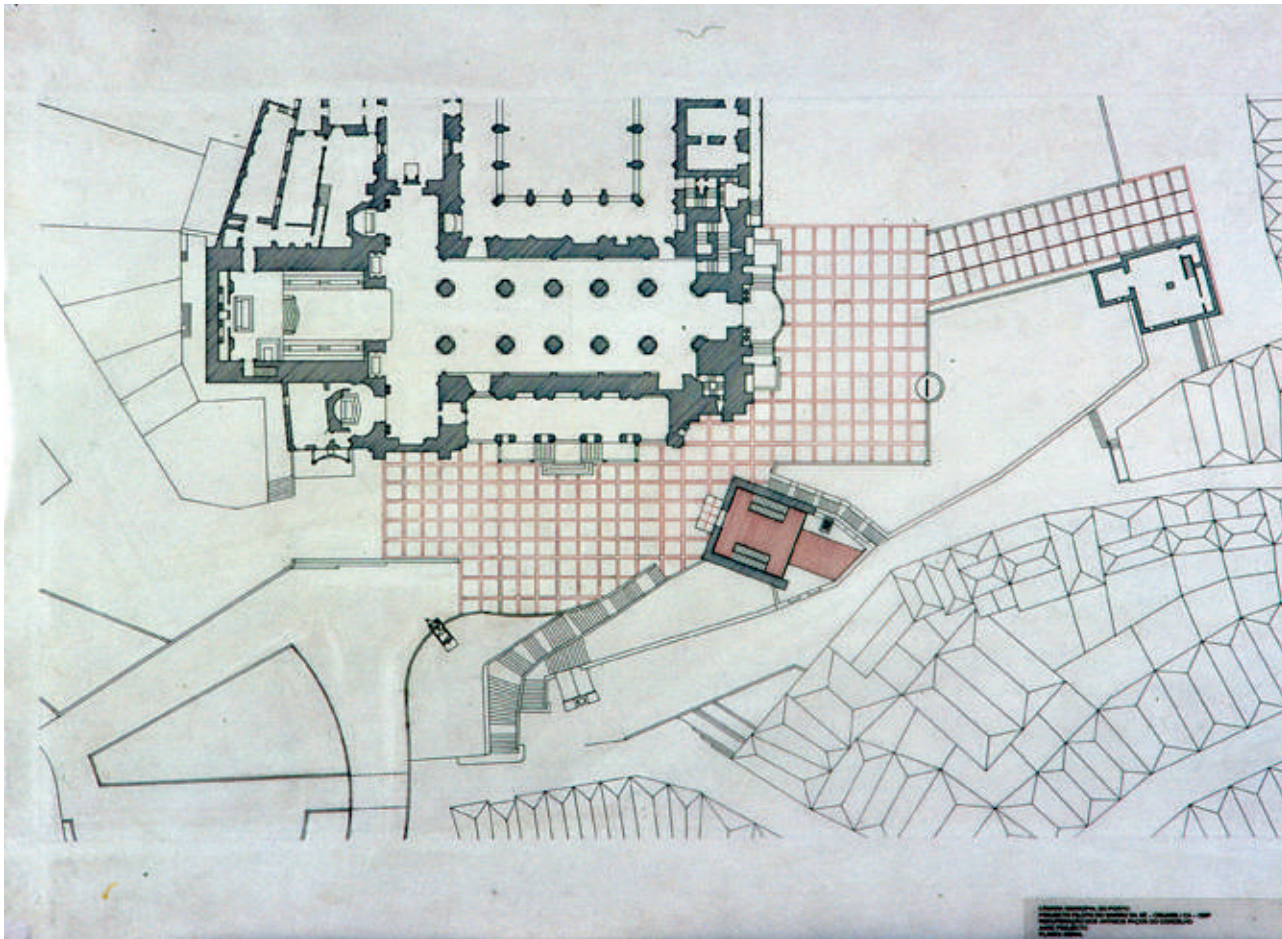
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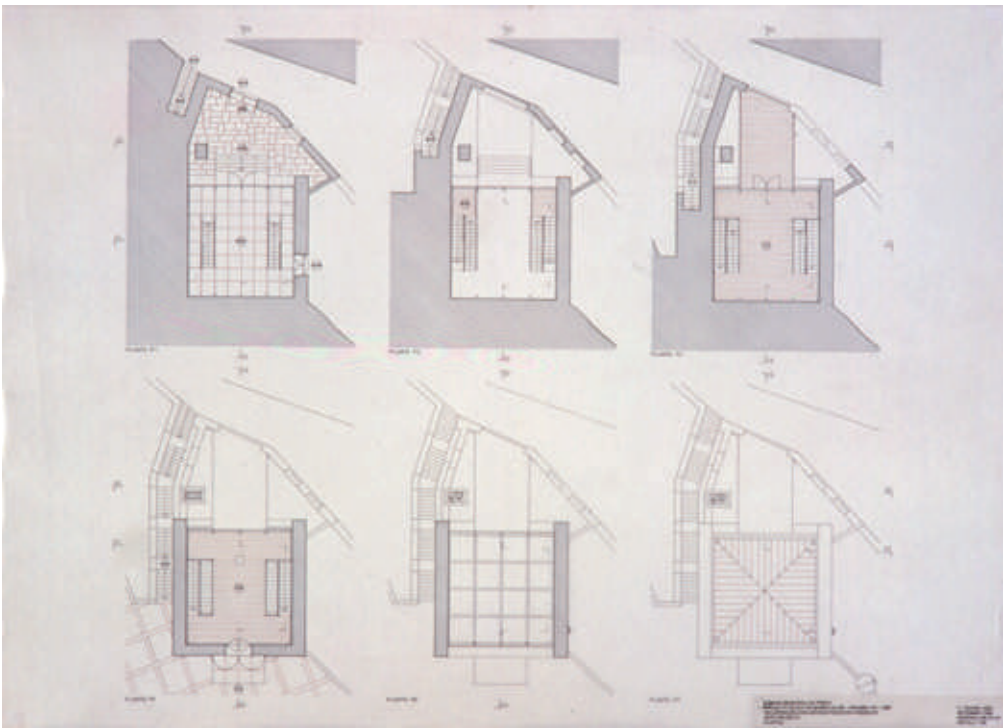
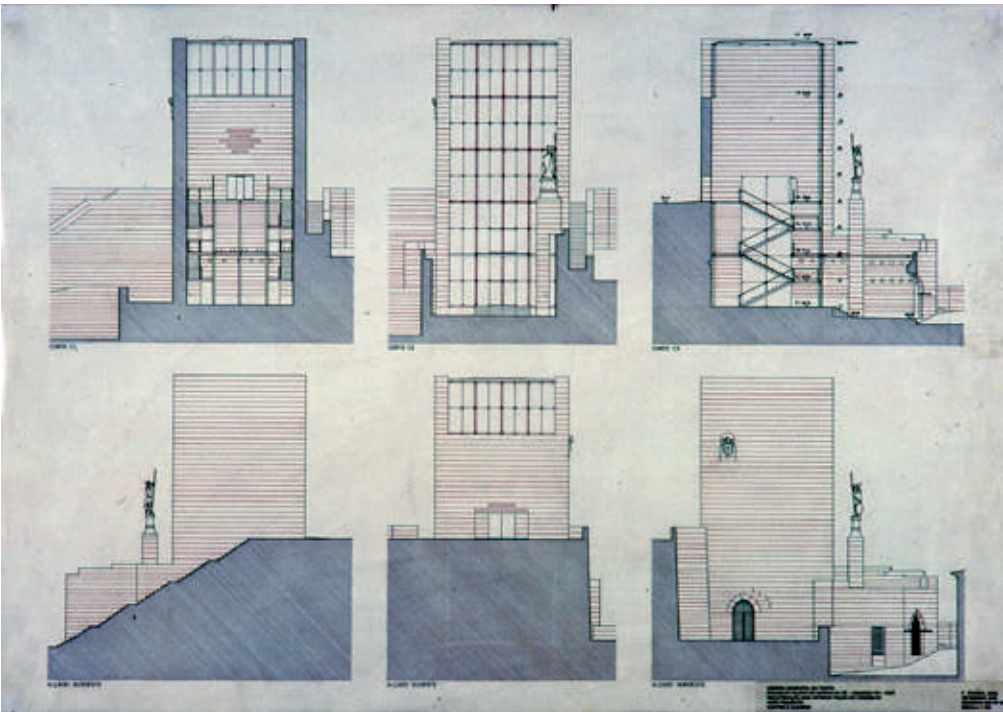
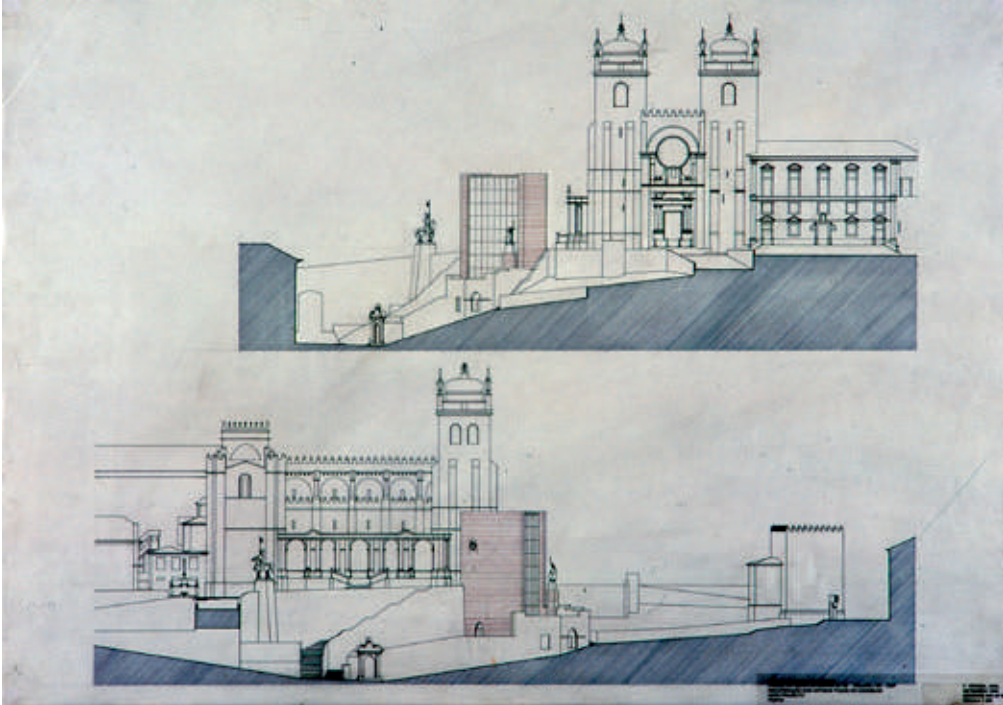
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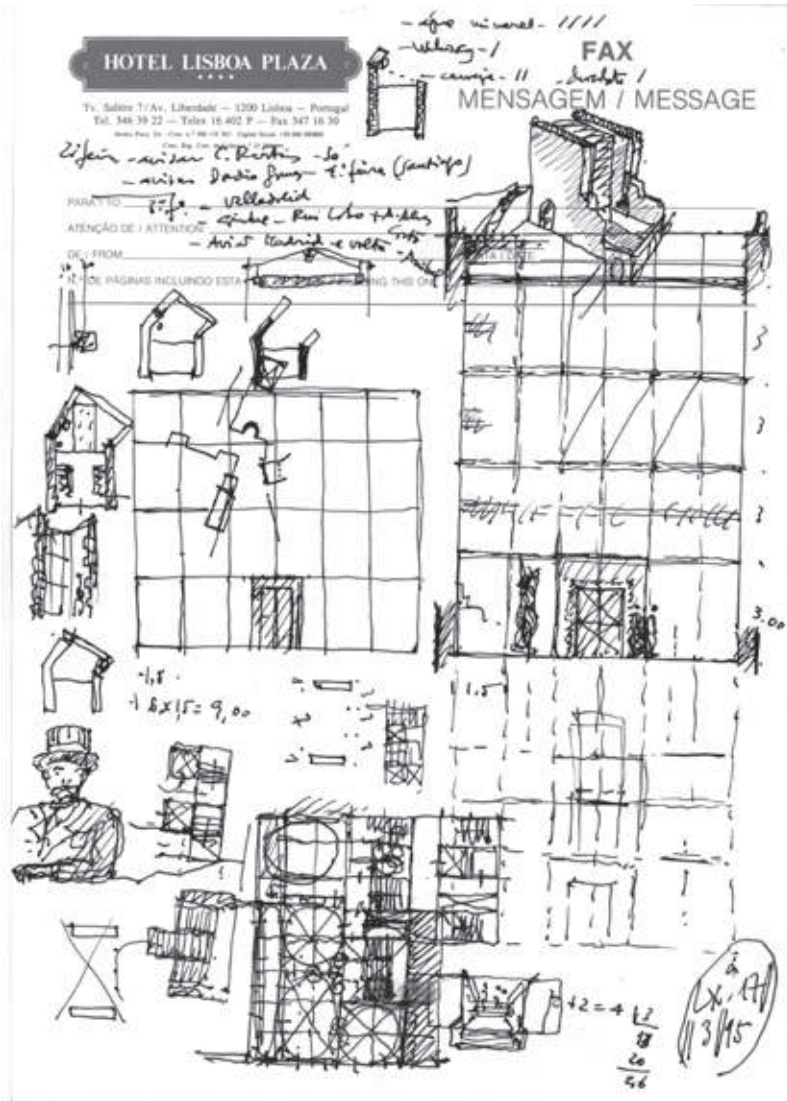
IMG.1: Renovation of the former Council Building – Casa dos Vinte e Quatro, Porto 1995-2003, floor plans comparing the pre-existing and project state, ink on paper; IMG.2: main floor, ink on paper; IMG.3: maquette (FIMS/AFT).



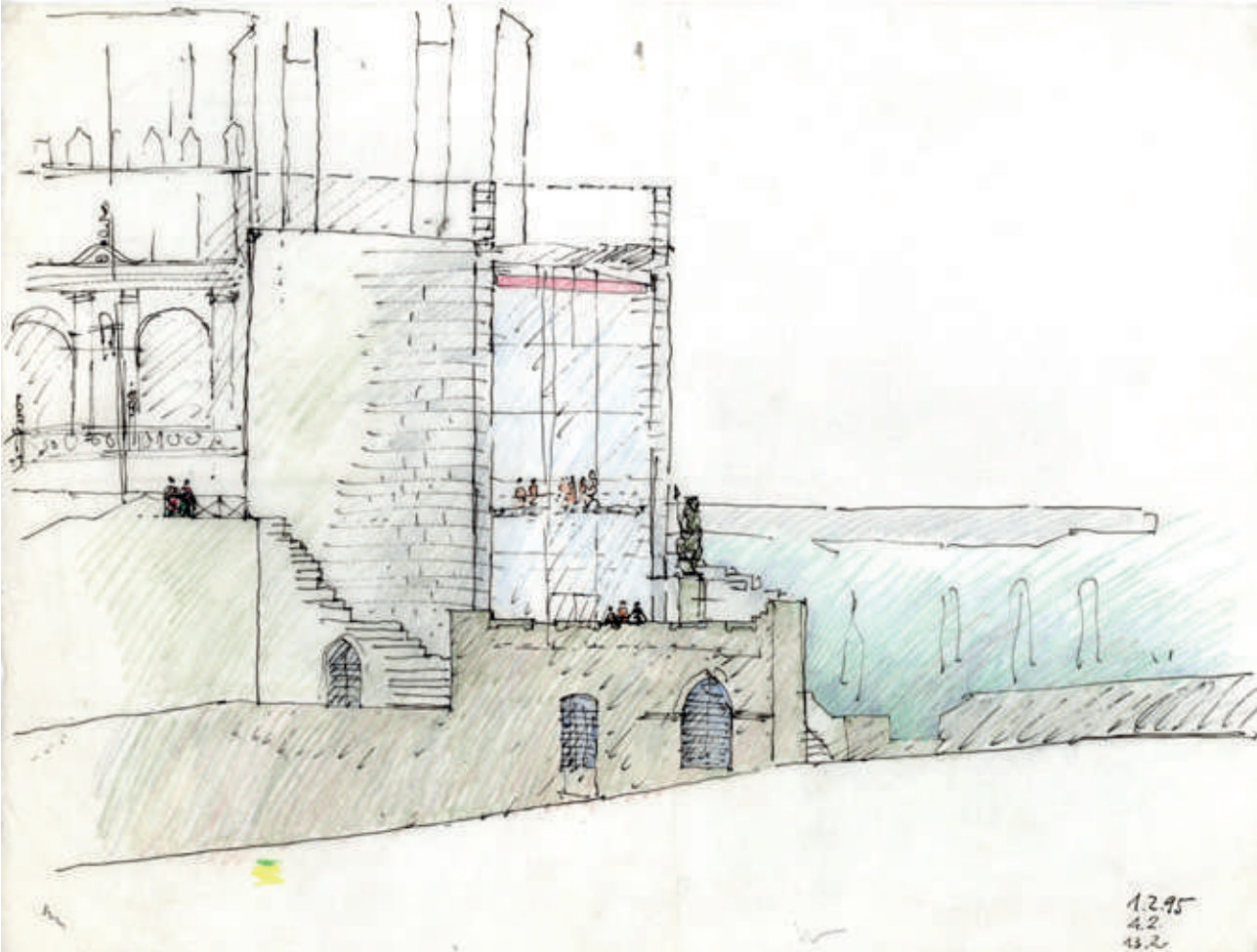
<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19845> | ISSN 2611-0075
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IMG.4: Renovation of the city centre, Town hall and tower, Aveiro 1963-1967, elevations, ink on paper; IMG.5: sections, ink on paper; IMG.6: floor plans, ink on paper; IMG.7: project sketches, ink on paper; IMG.8: Study drawing of the elevation oriented with rua de São Sebastião in which the relationship of the building with Nasoni's portico is emphasised; note the red of the roofing and a dashed hypothesis of greater elevation of the perimeter walls; the statue of Porto is already present on the pedestal positioned in front of the large window, ink and colours on paper (FIMS/AFT).



Avenida da Ponte: Knowledge of the City as a Tool for the Design of an Unresolved Place

Public Space, Urban Design, Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza, Avenida da Ponte

/Abstract

The article analyses the two unrealised projects – by Fernando Távora in 1955 and Álvaro Siza in 2000 – for Avenida da Ponte in Porto and the public space project underlying the construction of the Casa dos 24. This analysis has made it possible to define how the historical and morphological knowledge of the city becomes an operative and compositional instrument of the project and at the same time is not a presupposition of immobilism, revealing the potential for a process of transformation of urban places updated to today's needs.

This article is excerpted from the writer's doctoral thesis: A. Fanfoni, *La persistenza del fenomeno dell'architettura nella "Città delle Costanti. L'attualità della lezione di Fernando Távora per la definizione di temi e strumenti utili al progetto degli spazi pubblici e dei luoghi urbani verso le linee guida di Smart City in Emilia-Romagna*, Università di Parma: Parma 2023 (Tutor Dario Costi, co-tutor Giovanni Leoni).

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The main purpose of this article is to derive some methodological indications of intervention for the transformation of city places from the analysis of three projects that used knowledge as an operational tool. The characters of historical morphology become, in the three cases, design references and simultaneously reveal the potential for triggering a process of urban modification adapted to the needs of today. Without resorting to historicism, the reinterpretation of urban facts shapes an idea of the city's progress based on the conscious actualisation of the past, certifying the possibility that historical knowledge is not, in architecture, a presupposition of immobilism but a possibility of actualisation through design. Three proposals for the transformation of the area of *Avenida da Ponte* and *Terreiro da Sé* in Porto will be analysed in detail. They are part of a story that reflects the international architectural debate on the design of places within the consolidated city throughout the 20th century. To understand the importance (and effectiveness) of the three proposals, it is necessary to reconstruct briefly the events that involved this portion of the city, placing each event in its cultural, political, and social context. This exercise will provide an overall reading of the debate and will help to identify the reasons that led to the formulation of subsequent proposals and the non-realisation of most of them.

Short Critical Review of Design Events from 1880 to 1955

Towards the end of the 20th century in Oporto, following a process of industrialisation that was affecting the entire region, it became necessary to build a new bridge to connect the city with the neighbouring Vila Nova de Gaia both at the lower elevation of the *Ribeira* and at the upper elevation of the historical core known as *Morro da Sé*, contained within the now disappeared *Murallha Primitiva*. Commercial traffic was then to be facilitated by the construction of a new axis crossing the existing medieval fabric, directly connecting the civic core of the city, the Praça da Liberdade and the Praça da Trindade, with the new D. Luis I. The area, strongly influenced by the presence of the Sé (the Cathedral), was characterised by a dense mesh of small public spaces that had social, ritual, liturgical and civic values distributed between singular buildings, such as the seat of the Municipal Council, and between common residential buildings. Then, in 1736, on the side front of the Cathedral, the *Galilè da Sé* (Cathedral Nartece) was built by the architect Nicolau Nasoni, i.e. a porticoed space in Baroque style that served as an entrance hall to the side door facing the public space located between the Cathedral and the *Murallha Primitiva* wall [Fig. 1].

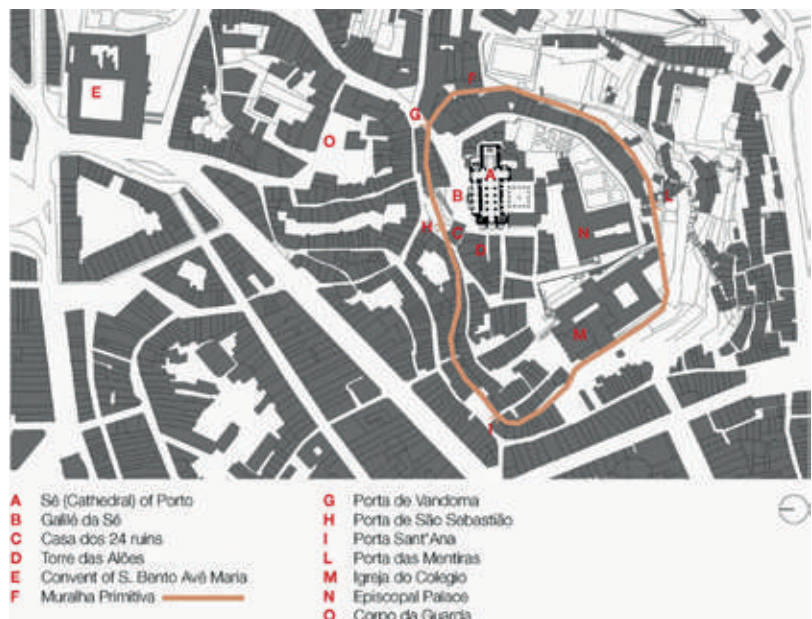
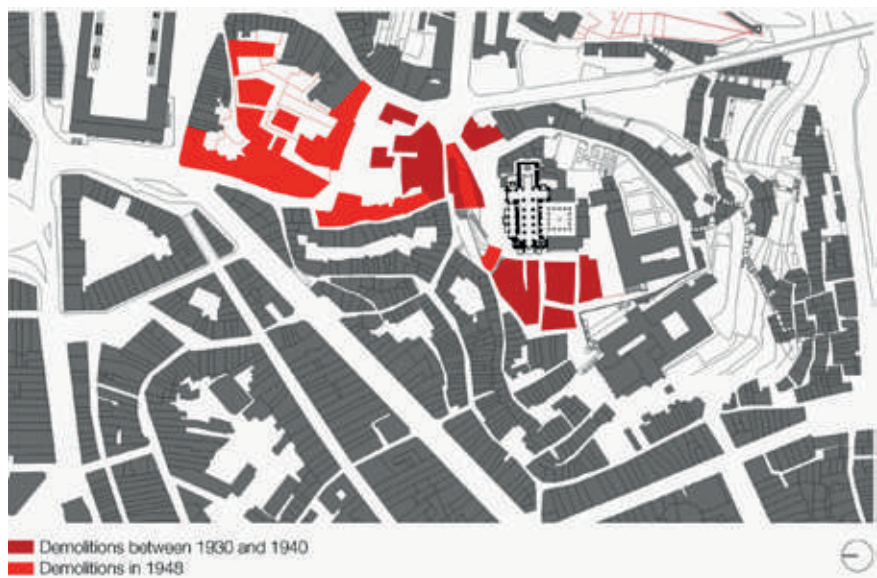


Fig. 1
Plan of the *Alto da Sé* area of the city of Porto before demolition in 1880.

The 20th century in Portugal was marked by a series of political and social transformations that also had repercussions on urban planning thinking. The opening of large avenues such as Avenida dos Aliados and Rua do Almada, in the wake of Cerdà and Haussmann's experience, responded to the need for salubrity, monumentality and efficient connections¹. The area earmarked for the construction of the new avenue was then affected by Gaudêncio Pacheco's 1913 and Barry Parker's 1915 projects, which showed an attitude insensitive to the city's real problems by proposing the design of a fabric formed by wide meshes in order to stitch together the centre of the historic city, which would suffer from a certain atrophy², with the expanding outer city. 1926 was the year that marked the end of democratic government for Portugal with the establishment of a military dictatorship that would end in 1933 to make way for a one-party regime, the *Estado Novo*, that would last until the mid-1970s. The regime, which looked to the Italian and German dictatorial experience, also promoted policies of glorification of the nation's origins in the field of town planning, defending the scenic prominence of the great national monuments and supporting development plans that were supposed to emphasise power through the theatricalization of urban scenarios, to the detriment of existing conditions. With Ezequiel Campos's proposal of 1932, the possibility of freeing the Sé, the Cathedral, of its neighbouring built fabric emerged for the first time in a clear way, in order to create a condition of monumentality with the Cathedral hill and the Baroque narthex as a perspective background. On the basis of these indications, in order to facilitate access to the D. Luis Bridge and with the aim of freeing the monument of the constructions placed on the main front, from 1930 until 1948 the *Direcção Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacional* (General Direction of National Buildings and Monuments) carried out a series of demolitions that did not follow a specific programme and that would strongly mark the appearance of these places³ [Fig. 2].



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In 1934, Duarte Pacheco, Minister of Public Works and Communications, promoted the General Urbanisation Plans that envisaged major modifications to the fabric of the main urban areas for the implementation of which, also due

¹ Teresa Pires de Carvalho, Carlos Guimarães, Mario Jorge Barroca, *Bairro da Sé – contributo para a sua caracterização Histórica* (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1996), 80.

² Manuel Luis Real, Maria Helena Gil Braga, *A Ponte e a Avenida – Contradições Urbanísticas no Centro Histórico do Porto* (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 2001), 73.

³ Pires de Carvalho, Guimarães, Barroca, *Bairro da Sé – contributo para a sua caracterização Histórica*, 80.

Fig. 2
Demolitions took place in the Alto da Sé area between 1930 and 1948.

to the lack of internal specialists, foreign designers who shared the ideological proximity to the regime's ideas were invited. It was for this reason that in 1938 Marcello Piacentini was invited to draw up a Plan for the new *Avenida da Ponte* and the Cathedral area. *Known and admired for his works in Brescia, he was called upon to transform the central area of the City of Porto into a monumental field. In Brescia he demolished part of the mediaeval historic centre to make room for the new Piazza della Vittoria (1932), and for the grandiose intervention of the Città Universitaria in Rome (1935)⁴ was called upon to transform the central area of the City of Porto into a monumental field. He drew up different proposals, some that partially respected the existing design by creating a perspective cone in the direction of the *Galilé da Sé* and others that distorted more the established layout⁵. The last proposal, or 'alternative proposal', envisaged the gutting of the building curtains located on the axis perpendicular to *Galilé* for the formation of a monumental avenue that would start from the Station of São Bento and end in an open space framing the Cathedral as its terminal part. Marcello Piacentini was succeeded by Giovanni Muzio, whom the Porto Municipal Council invited to collaborate in the elaboration of the Master Plan in February 1940. He also studied the problem of the *Avenida da Ponte* through the elaboration of various proposals that were united by the identification of a sequence of squares and monumental perspectives of the Cathedral inspired by a classical order of proportions and a rigorous purity of form and composition. Muzio's proposals echo some of Piacentini's intuitions and can be read as the result of an evolutionary process. The common traits are the use of the viaduct as a connecting element between the *Clerigos* elevation and the *Terreiro da Sé elevation*, the use of direct visual connections with the Cathedral and the establishment of a small area at the exit of the bridge's upper deck that regulated and oriented the various planned routes.⁶

The end of the Second World War marked the end of the season of celebratory monumentalism that had characterised the proposals of the 1930s and 1940s. In 1948 the second demolition of the Guardhouse lots took place, completing the actions carried out at the end of the 1930s. This time the action was even more complete, extending from the Cathedral to the Station, marking the definitive passage of the *Avenida da Ponte* at the rectilinear axis that connects São Bento to the D. Luis Bridge. This decision was endorsed by a series of internal proposals that followed one another between 1945 and 1955, which, however, did not substantially clarify the form and role of the public and private space that was created on either side of the avenue, in the portions freed from the Gothic lots. The fracture created by the opening of *Avenida da Ponte* without a specific project left unresolved many questions that had been addressed, albeit

⁴ Giorgio Ciucci, Simonetta Lux, Franco Purini, *Marcello Piacentini architetto 1881-1960* (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2012).

⁵ Orlando Manuel Fernandes Lopes de Sá, *Marcello Piacentini, Giovanni Muzio: a avenida da ponte e o contributo italiano num laboratório de experimentação urbanística*, Integrated Master Thesis in Architecture, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, Supervisor: Prof. Rui Tavares, 2007, 81.

⁶ Fernandes Lopes de Sá, *Marcello Piacentini, Giovanni Muzio*, 101.

with a different attitude, before the war and that would be taken up again with different reasons, conditions, and stimuli from the 1950s until today. Architect Rogério de Azevedo, a Porto city councillor in 1955, expressed his dissatisfaction with the situation created, considering the avenue thus opened “a real work against the nature of cities”.⁷

Fernando Távora’s 1955 Project

After the end of World War II, the functional city of distances and empty spaces imagined in the Athens Charter and pre-war CIAMs became a model criticised for the scant attention paid to the civic places of public life. The new trend towards changing guiding principles is spearheaded by a leading figure on the international scene such as Josep Lluís Sert who, with a highly critical opening speech, inaugurated CIAM VIII in Hoddesdon in 1951. This speech addressed a multiplicity of themes that would later become the basis for confrontation in the following years. Sert proposed to bring people closer together within cities by creating the conditions for encounters through a network of city ‘hearts’, to think of architecture and town planning as two declinations of the same discipline, separating the routes of people and cars by freeing historic centres from the presence of the latter, and recovering the characteristics of the public spaces of the historic city⁸. Fernando Távora was one of the main supporters of this new disciplinary line debated within the International Congresses and is perfectly aligned with the idea that history should be used as an effective tool to contextualise and solve the problem of the project and no longer as an icon to be monumentalised. The Avenida da Ponte project tells us a new idea of modernity that is applied to contexts as a creative act rooted in its own space-time dialoguing with the surrounding conditions. If his predecessors saw an opportunity to build a modern and organised city on the rubble of the previous one, Távora rediscovers the urban value and denounces an aggression that requires a solution respecting the past: “Turning to the past is a necessary intellectual act for the construction of the future. In Porto, this attitude emerged as a necessity”.⁹ In general, those years represented for Fernando Távora the moment of formation on more precisely urbanistic issues, at the scale of the city or the territory, where the interest in the “basic phenomena of architecture”¹⁰ is linked to the context, be it urban or rural, and the attention to the specificity of the environments in which the building is inserted becomes a constant that will mark the architect’s work throughout his life.

Fernando Távora’s can be defined as the first study that, with a certain sensitivity, attempts to restore the urban form that has changed because of the

7 Luis Real, Gil Braga, *A Ponte e a Avenida - Contradições Urbanísticas no Centro Histórico do Porto*, 50.

8 Josep Lluís Sert, “Centros para la vida de la comunidad,” in *El Corazón de la Ciudad. Por una vida más humana de la comunidad, CIAM 8, Hoddesdon, 1951*, eds. Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Josep Lluís Sert, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt (Barcelona: Hoepli, 1955).

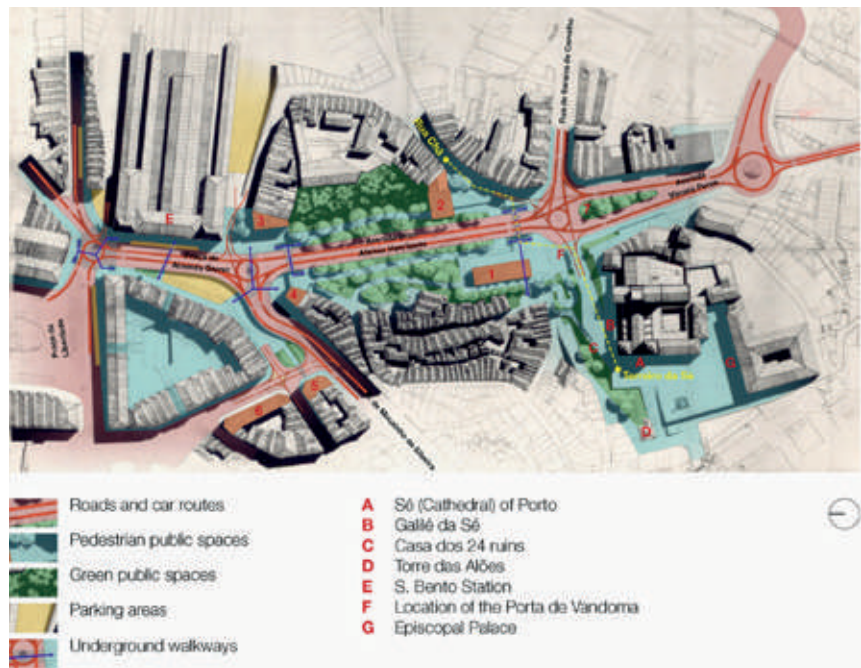
9 Fernando Távora, “La mia opera,” in Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milan: Electa, 2005), 11.

10 Associação dos Arquitetos portugueses, *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal. Volume 1*, 1980.

demolitions. In addition to this aspect, it is possible to detect in the proposal a decisive desire to question the tendency towards monumentalisation of the historic centre of Porto, approved and desired by the regime's government, through an understanding of the city and its historic form. If the previous projects were based on the construction of a new image of the city, the Távora project comes to terms for the first time with the restitution of the identity of places. Even though the project includes a strong infrastructural component, dictated by the incontrovertible need for a new and efficient road connection, the solution demonstrates an extraordinary attention to human routes, which are conceived with the same value as car routes. The author himself recounts the reasons that led to his commission:

[...] The mayor wanted to give the area a strong development, so despite the absence of a plan he had already demolished some buildings. My project had been preceded by many others, which were gradually rejected, some of which cut the Avenida in half and assumed the construction of incredible, hideous volumes. My plan assumed contained building quantities and, unlike Muzio and Piacentini, did not alter the road axis in the direction of Aliados.¹¹

These few words are of great relevance to introduce one of the main themes of the project, namely the understanding of the space freed by the demolitions. In the project the emphasis is placed on the perception of emptiness. The presence of a new structural axis that is totally unrelated to the medieval configuration suggests the use of a language poor in architectural elements, useful for emphasising the trace of the wound, but not lacking in density, which is recreated with a dense green design on both sides of the avenue [Fig. 3].



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From the analysis of the documents, it is possible to think how the settlement proposal starts from the organisation of traffic flows and the desire to separate the latter, in a rather clear-cut manner, from those destined for human circulation, minimising the effects of an infrastructural intervention made necessary by the design assignment. By taking advantage of a natural depression in the terrain at the intersection of Praça de Almeida Garret, Rua de Mouzinho de Silveira and Avenida Dom Afonso Henriques, the architect inserted a

¹¹ The interview conducted by Giovanni Leoni and Antonio Esposito can be found in Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza, "Lavorare 'insieme': conversazione tra Álvaro Siza and Fernando Távora sui progetti per Avenida da Ponte", *Casabella*, no. 700 (May 2002): 54-57.

Fig. 3
Analysis of the overall plan of Fernando Távora's project for the redevelopment of Avenida da Ponte, 1955. Graphic reworking by the author of the original plans preserved at Fundação Marques da Silva – FIMS/AFT.

three-armed roundabout suspended over a car viaduct. This allows pedestrians to pass through the trench, thus protectively linking the two sides of the avenue with the São Bento train station and the latter with Praça da Liberdade towards Avenida dos Aliados and with the intriguing network of streets to the west of the avenue. At the level of Avenida Dom Afonso Henriques the viaduct disappears, and the carriageway remains flush with the pedestrian paths on the outer sides and protected by wide green sleeves. At the height of the junction with Rua de Saravia de Carvalho the roadway widens¹² to accommodate a third roundabout that directs traffic eastwards or towards the Dom Luis Bridge deck. The innovation of the proposal, compared to the previous and many future ones, lies in confining the car routes perceptively outside the paths leading to the Cathedral hill, recovering the complexity and tension of the streets of the demolished medieval city through passages, stairways, bottlenecks, and paths articulated along the steep topography. A decisive role in this approximation is played by the trees that partly conceal the view of the Cathedral, partly protect human spaces from those of cars and recreate that condition of density typical of the 'urban forest' as a memory of the sequence of Gothic lots. This proposal is the only one that envisages the underground permeability of the pedestrian paths and still appears to be a desirable solution for this portion of the city. Another element of primary importance in the proposal is the desire to restore the layout of the historic city. The continuity of the city is a characterising element of Fernando Távora's architectural production, and this project bears witness to this. The succession of paths leading to the *Terreiro da Sé* culminates in two public spaces located on both sides of the Avenida. The first is on the eastern side as the end of the Rua Chã, the second on the western side, under the *Galilé da Sé*. In the Middle Ages, the Rua Chã was the route leading to the entrance of the walled city, passing under the arch of the ancient Porta da Vandoma, one of the gates of the primitive wall, demolished in the mid-19th century. This was undoubtedly a resting place on the approach to the Cathedral taken up by Távora thanks to the inclusion of a new building (2) that organises the space of an open space, occupied in the centre by a fountain, framing the side view of the Cathedral. Continuing the sequence, through a play of slopes, it is possible to pass in a trench below *Avenida da Ponte* and emerge in a new esplanade located on the slopes of the northern parvis of the Sé, under the Baroque narthex. Here is the only building proposed by Távora that does not serve to connect truncated portions of existing lots (1) and that in the project would have housed a special function: the Museum of the City. "For the first time in the history of Porto I defined the location of a building intended as a museum of the city's history, a requirement that now reappears in Siza's last plan".¹³

The sequence ends with the access plan to the *Galilé* which, unlike almost all past and future proposals, takes place diagonally, as in the conformation of the

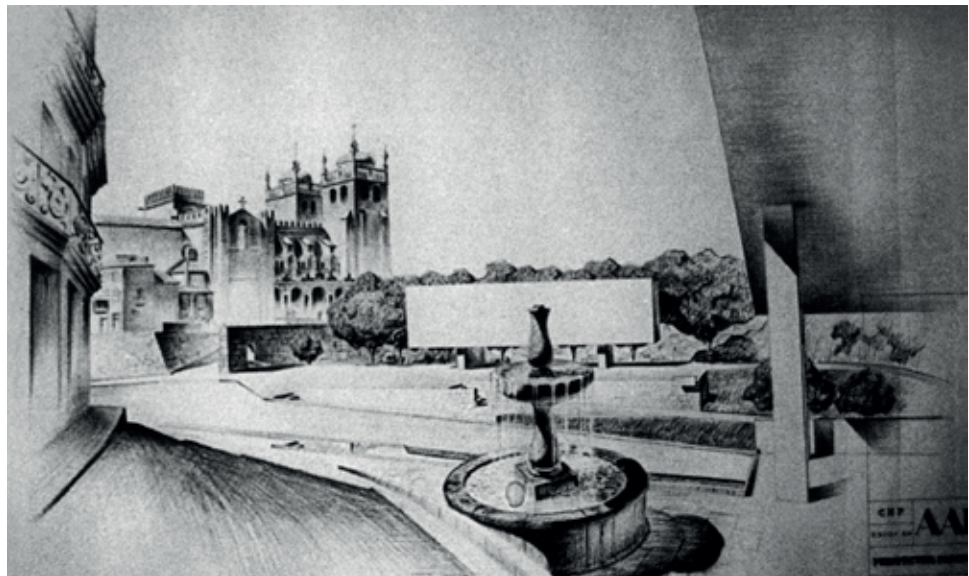
¹² The cross-section of the avenue is approximately 15 m and used to accommodate two lanes in each direction.

¹³ Távora, Siza, "Lavorare 'insieme': conversazione tra Álvaro Siza and Fernando Távora sui progetti per Avenida da Ponte".

original city. Indeed, reaching the Galilé from the front would have been a mystification of Nasoni's idea, who conceived it to occupy a cosy, lateral access to the sacred space, which was not meant to be seen from the front. This conviction, reflecting an extraordinary understanding of urban dynamics, will also be taken up in the project of Álvaro Siza and in that of the Casa dos 24 and will be one of the elements characterising the future debate. Unlike the projects presented in previous decades, Távora avoids overbuilding:

In my feasibility project, later altered by the Camara Municipal designer Robert Auzulle, the connection of the lower area to the archaeological zone was made through a sleeve of vegetation, thus eliminating the marginal buildings that previous solutions envisaged. I always felt that the green solution I had envisaged was a little weak to link the two poles, but I fought hard to avoid the construction of marginal strips of buildings that did not constitute a setting and did not integrate with the avenue.¹⁴

In fact, the project envisages only six new buildings, most of them redefining fronts truncated by demolitions facing the public space. Two of these (5 and 6) redesign the Rua Trindade Coelho frontage, which the project plans to extend to facilitate the connection with Rua dos Clerigos and the northern centre of the



city. Another building (4) reshapes the edge between Rua do Corpo da Guarda and Rua Mouzinho de Silvera due to the changed conditions of the public space located in front, articulating the two streets to the new situation. Two other grafts (2 and 3) conclude the sections of the Corpo da Guarda lot facing *Avenida da Ponte*, redefining the spatial relations with it, with the escarpment and with the pedestrian paths. In particular, the building that completes Rua Chã, suspended on pilotis, is conceived as entirely permeable on the ground and on the first floors, redefining the perception of the public space, circumscribing a protected point of lateral observation of the Cathedral and also allowing the passage of pedestrian paths [Fig. 4]. This building together with the one located below the narthex widening (1) were to house cultural functions as the Municipality intended, at the time, to create facilities for the Civic Museum and the City History Office. The communication between these two new bodies would have been ensured by a tunnel accessible from both sides of the Avenida that would have

¹⁴ Nuno Portas, "Arquitecto Fernando Távora: 12 anos de actividade profissional", *Arquitectura*, no. 71 (July 1961): 24.

Fig. 4
Side view of the relationship between the building proposed as the City Museum and the Cathedral, 1955 (FIMS/AFT).

continued to connect the new areas with Rua São Sebastião under the walls. It is interesting to analyse the relationship that would have been created between the *Galilè da Sé* and the new architecture located on its slopes and the dialectic between the different languages inserted in the context at distinct moments in history. It is useful to emphasise that the architecture proposed and visible in the perspectives are only the first prefiguration in a preliminary state, but they reveal a dialectical intent with the pre-existences and monuments that will characterise Fernando Távora's architectural production throughout his work. In this project, a series of themes emerge, albeit in an experimental and prototypical manner, that will distinguish the author's architectural production. Firstly, the search for continuity, seen as a succession of sequences characteristic of the consolidated city, as an objective that the urban and architectural project must achieve. Secondly, the valorisation of history through a profound understanding of the city's morphology, where the insertion of a new architecture is necessary within an overall design that accommodates, in a coherent form, realisations that are distinct in terms of era and purpose. Thirdly, the conformation of open space as the negative of built space, where the design of empty areas is based on the relationships of context, topography, distances, and proportions. Lastly, the search for functions that can amplify the collective vocation of the public space by facilitating its understanding and increasing opportunities for use. The proposal is not carried through to realisation because, as Álvaro Siza reminds us: "it leaves large portions empty and is not realised for economic reasons since the smallness of the new settlements makes the intervention insufficiently profitable".¹⁵ Many of the projects of the following years will disagree with the themes highlighted by Fernando Távora, which will only be recovered at the end of the 20th century thanks to two projects that can be seen as a completion of the reasoning begun by the author in the mid-1950s that still remains valid and highly topical today.

The following decades saw a succession of proposals for the redevelopment of *Avenida da Ponte* led by the Parisian urban planner Robert Auzelle, which were never put into practice, and which envisaged the use of the viaduct as a means of connecting the lower and upper parts of the city, without considering the Cathedral and the relations envisaged by Fernando Távora. In 1968 Robert Auzelle invited Álvaro Siza to draw up a detailed plan for the *Avenida* that included commercial areas, offices as well as a covered car park on the eastern side of the avenue, which by then had taken on the configuration that it still retains today. Siza then drew up a proposal that completed the urban fabric of the truncated lot harmonised with the new front on the avenue, preserving the idea of the urban void imagined by Távora thirteen years earlier on the opposite side but creating the conditions for the operation to be economically sustainable. The building perched on the escarpment symbolises the rupture caused by the demolitions by standing with a continuous glazed wall that could have mirrored the urban

¹⁵ Távora, Siza, "Lavorare 'insieme': conversazione tra Álvaro Siza and Fernando Távora sui progetti per Avenida da Ponte", 54.

void in front of it, where the project imagines a garden leading to the level of the hill, taking advantage of the topography of the site. The initial study envisaged terraces that would appeal to the memory of the city that was destroyed in the 1940s and would guide the ascent up to the Cathedral. Compared to the design culture of those years, that lacked attention to the context, Siza's design appears sensitive to the form of the city by introducing variations dictated by the relationship with the surroundings. The preliminary version was approved in 1968 and its development continued until 1974, when a dispute between the architect and the City Council decreed the end of the project.

Álvaro Siza's 2000-2001 Project

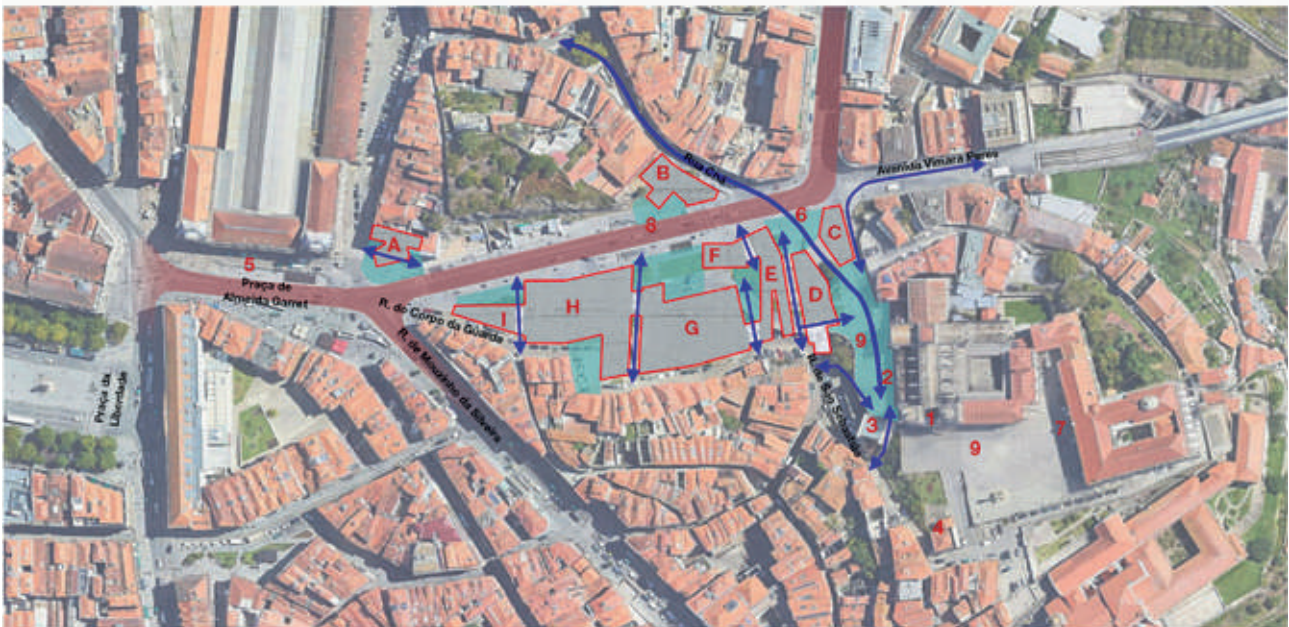
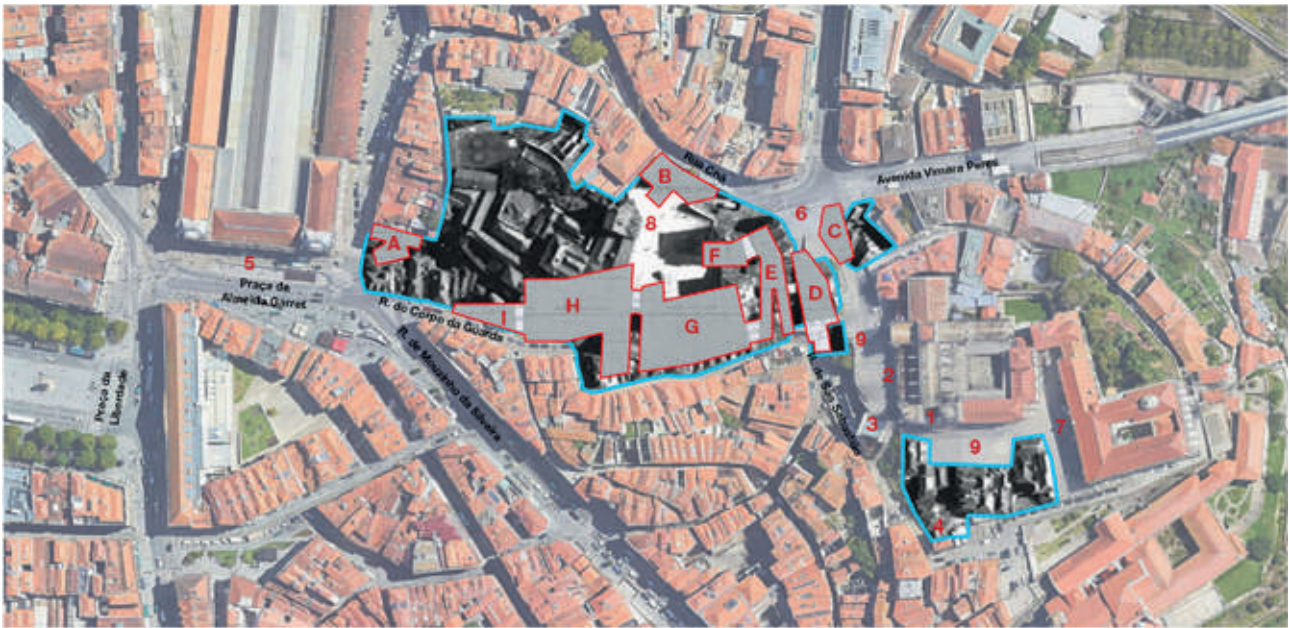
In 1974, the new republican government set up the CRUAR¹⁶, a commission responsible for the regeneration of Porto's historic centre, inspired by the values of the 1964 Venice Charter, with the task of preserving the heritage of cultural assets, providing the resident population with improved housing conditions, and stimulating the city's economic and tourist growth. Thanks to the Commission's work, Porto's historic centre became a UNESCO heritage site in 1991 and earned the nomination for European Capital of Culture in 2001. In the meantime, the area of Avenida da Ponte undergoes other alterations: firstly, following the closure of Ponte D. Luis Bridge, the avenue's dominant role as a vehicular link between the Historic Centre and Vila Nova de Gaia diminishes, and secondly, the construction of the Metro, which includes a stop in this very area, introduces changed requirements for this portion of the city. Architect Manuel Graça Dias recalls:

[...] the fundamental axis of connection to the south has lost the sense of emergency that the sanitisation of the city and the proto-rural concepts of the 1940s had given it. Today, the bridge is primarily a plan for public transport and therefore the 'hole', which was disastrously open at the time, can be closed and the road we have known for decades can be forgotten.¹⁷

Given these circumstances, in 2000 Álvaro Siza was commissioned to draw up a project that would promote the reconstruction of the urban fabric in the face of an avenue that was losing its role as a structural road axis in favour of new cultural, recreational, residential and tourist functions. The Porto City Council's brief initially envisaged the replacement and relocation of the existing São Sebastião market, the insertion of 100/150 flats, new local businesses, a 500-space underground car park, the City Museum, and new pedestrian

¹⁶ Comissariado para a Renovação Urbana da Área de Ribeira/Barredo, active until 2003 when it was replaced by *Porto Vivo – Sociedade de Reabilitação Urbana da Baixa do Porto*.

¹⁷ See the text by Manuel Graça Dias in Álvaro Siza (et alii), *Avenida da Ponte* (Porto: Porto 2001, 2001): no page numbers. Document consulted at Arquivo Arqtº Álvaro Siza. Col. Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Doação 2015.



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|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Sé do Porto | 6 Location of the Porta de Vandoma |
| 2 Galilé da Sé | 7 Episcopal Palace |
| 3 Casa dos 24 | 8 Largo do Corpo da Guarda |
| 4 Torre das Alões | 9 Terreiro da Sé |
| 5 S. Bento Station | |



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accessibility to the Cathedral and the underground metro station¹⁸. The most innovative component of the programme, again after architect Távora's proposal in 1955, is the inclusion of a building dedicated to the City Museum, suggested to the Porto City Council by Alvaro Siza himself, who recalls: "[...] it is not enough to occupy the space with housing, because the area needs a strong project that gives life to the city [...]"¹⁹ [Fig. 5].

¹⁸ Letter dated 31 March 2001 addressed to the architect Álvaro Siza from the Municipality of Porto stating subject 'Programme for the redevelopment of Avenida da Ponte' (Arquivo Arq^o Álvaro Siza. Col. Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Doação 2015).

¹⁹ Távora, Siza, "Lavorare 'insieme': conversazione tra Álvaro Siza and Fernando Távora sui progetti per Avenida da Ponte", 56.

Fig. 5

Photo insert of Alvaro Siza's project for Avenida da Ponte in 2001 in the demolished context between the 1930s and 1940s (black and white) and below in the current urban context where the new public spaces and paths are highlighted (Graphic by the author).

The design idea on the western side of the boulevard envisages the re-evocation of the demolished fabric through the reconstruction of a dense mesh of buildings that prefigures the intention of recovering the relationship of scale between the destroyed city and the monuments:

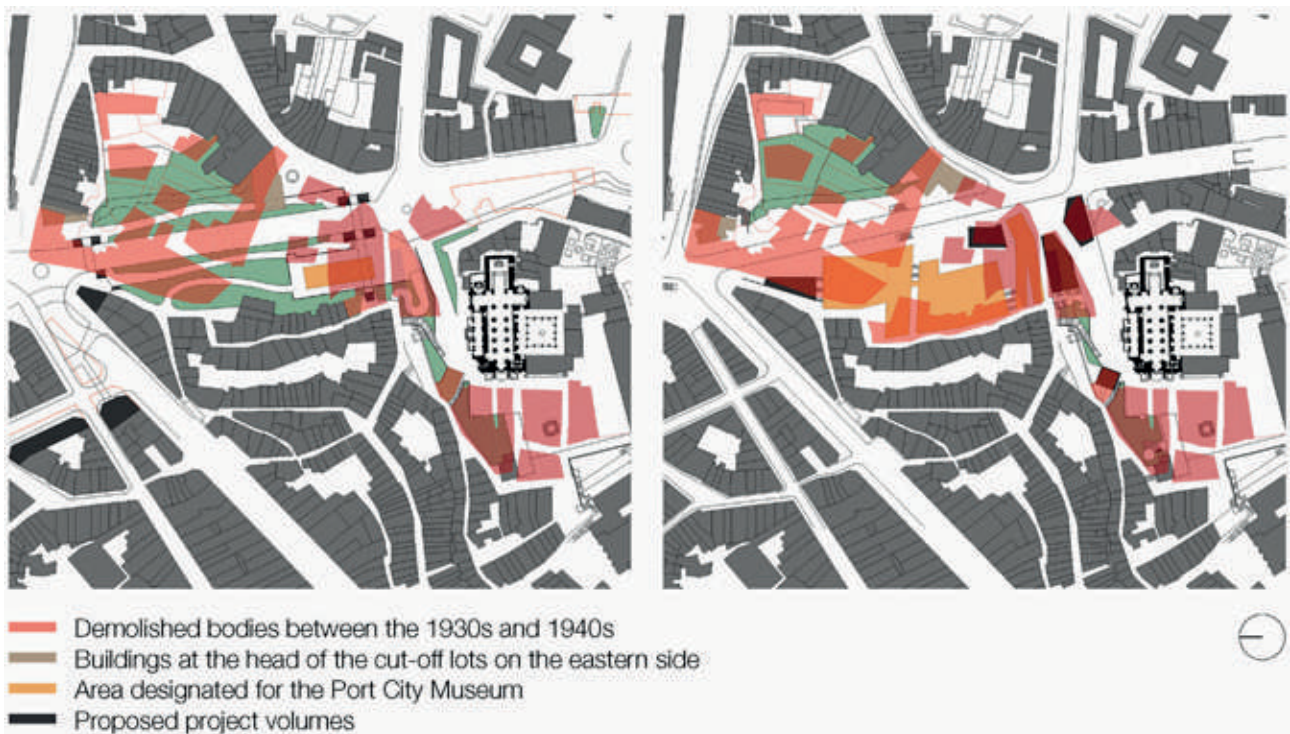
Today (compared to 1968 and compared to the Auzelle plan) the way of conceiving the relationship between monument and urban fabric is different. Demolitions that free monuments almost always betray their character by emptying the sense of urban space. The progressive knowledge of the interventions carried out in the historic centres of European cities has consolidated the awareness of the relationship of complementarity between monument and urban fabric and between testimonies of different epochs as an essential condition of conservation.²⁰

The preliminary proposal sets out, on this side, seven buildings of different shapes and heights that reconstruct, without imitating their morphology, the demolished Gothic lots. Starting from the lower part of the avenue, Siza's project proposes a first building at the head (I), oriented towards the station, which houses on the ground floor commercial activities related to the Museum and on the upper floors' residences with five floors above ground. This block not only re-establishes the dialogue with the other wedge-shaped front at the corner with Rua Mouzinho da Silveira, matching its height, but also redefines the access to Rua do Corpo da Guarda and the Traversera de São Sebastião where the disused market is still located. Along this narrow, ancient street lost to demolition, which in the past led to the slopes of the walled city, Álvaro Siza redistributes the market cells on the western sides of bodies H and G, which form the fulcrum of the City Museum, restoring to the market its direct relationship with the street and the passage of people. The layout of the new buildings preserves the ancient memory of the mediaeval city, re-proposing the proportions and distances between the buildings, reduced to a few metres, interspersed with passageways contained by frontages three to five storeys high above ground. This conformation, still observable today in the district below the Cathedral, claims dimensions typical of the context in which it is inserted, giving rise to lively, complex public spaces and the setting for relational activities on a human scale. At the end of these connections, which are adapted to the topography thanks to the stairs enclosed between the fronts following a matrix that can be observed throughout the historic centre, a sequence of squares and urban *espalanadas* (terraces) is articulated that organise the space of the city between the *Avenida da Ponte*, the lots of the historic centre and the *Terreiro da Sé*. It is possible to assume that Álvaro Siza thought of the project with a future scenario in mind where cars would be banned from the *Avenida da Ponte*, imagining public spaces as new centres of civic life in the city. One of these places can be identified in the space between buildings E, F, G, H and B at the former

²⁰ Álvaro Siza, *Technical Report of the Preliminary Redevelopment Project of Avenida D. Afonso Henriques*, Porto, 20 December 2000 (Arquivo Arqtº Álvaro Siza. Col. Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Doação 2015).

square Guardhouse forecourt, where Siza envisages a public space overlooked by businesses, the foyer of the Museum and accesses to vertical connections with the car park and the Oporto Underground. One can easily think of the potential of this public space in the future perspective of an avenue without cars, or reduced to a minimum. The place would be part of a sequence approaching the Cathedral hill as in the historic city before the demolitions, a concatenations of open spaces interspersed with narrowing and passages. Within this narrative Siza envisages recalling the ancient memory of the access to the Terreiro da Sé in the position of the Porta da Vandoma:

When I was given a programme, I partially reconstructed the fabric around the cathedral by inserting two blocks (C and D) that take up the diagonal entrance towards the cathedral and developed the Museum with a continuous underground part and with detached volumes in such a way as to reconstruct open spaces so as not to isolate the Traverera de São Sebastião, obtaining public spaces of greater dimensions towards the Avenida and smaller dimensions towards the interior.²¹



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The sequence ends in the northern broad of the Cathedral, where the public space between the *Galilè da Sé* and the new *Casa dos 24*, which was under construction at the time, is recovered. On the opposite front, at the top of the rock face left exposed, as in Távora's project, two buildings for commerce and residence (A and B) are planned to conclude the truncated heads of the curtain walls of the Guardhouse. These two volumes are a clear reference to the 1955 proposal, which envisaged precisely two buildings in the same current position to resolve the visual and spatial relationship with the São Bento Station to the

²¹ Extract from the speech in the video Álvaro Siza, *Obras e Projectos – Requalificação da Avenida D. Afonso Henriques*, <https://espacodearquitectura.com/>

Fig. 6
Comparison of Fernando Távora's 1955 and Alvaro Siza's 2001 proposals for the Avenida da Ponte (Graphic by the author).

north and the Rua Chã attack to the south [Fig. 6]. Siza imagined, as Távora did, a great permeability of the two buildings that would have organised the public space at ground level with retail activities. The plastic modelling proposed for these two blocks emphasises the contact with the rock, characterised by its irregularity and hardness, “covered over time by a light patina, highlighting the consolidated historical datum of a gash in the urban fabric”²² as “witness to the cut made for the opening of Avenida da Ponte”²³.

Analysing the proposal in its entirety, it is possible to extrapolate certain themes of primary relevance. Firstly, Siza uses the contrast between the singular fact and the fabric made of “banal” constructions²⁴ to trigger a relationship of complementarity that is necessary for the reading of the monument that also depends on this contrast²⁵. At the same time he seeks spatial continuity through the creation of a “fractured built ensemble”²⁶ that in its negative conforms public spaces of dimensions consistent with the scale of the original context and shows the urban scars so that the signs of the fractures, which have marked even damaging evolutionary processes, are used as a component of the project²⁷. Finally, it uses innovation as a preservation strategy where the preservation of the consolidated city takes place through the maintenance of certain notable points and thanks to the insertion of new architecture that amplifies the dialectic between empty and built space using history as a reference and demonstrating how the city cannot be crystallised to a given situation but must continue to develop in accordance with its memory and the condition of the moment: “Without the instantaneous archive of Memory there is no invention; and no key will open the exact doors”.²⁸

In March 2001, the Presidency of the Câmara Municipal de Porto responded to architect Siza’s preliminary study with a series of suggestions for modifications for a later phase²⁹ that would mark the abandonment of the proposal in a few months because, as the architect himself explained:

22 Távora, Siza, “Lavorare ‘insieme’: conversazione tra Álvaro Siza and Fernando Távora sui progetti per Avenida da Ponte”, 56.

23 Álvaro Siza, “Recovery of the Avenida da Ponte and project for the city museum”, *Casabella*, no. 700 (May 2002): 58-63.

24 The term is used by Álvaro Siza himself in the video *Obras e Projectos – Requalificação da Avenida D. Afonso Henriques*.

25 This idea emerges in a text by Álvaro Siza: “[...] (cities) do not grow out of immediate beauty. Beauty reveals itself by slow and long accumulation and selection. [...] Sometimes the temptation arises, so present today, to seek at all costs the singularity that is not part of a continuous fabric, constructing a banality laden with illusions and paradoxical repeated originality.” In Álvaro Siza, *Porquê um arquitecto e porquê eu?*, in Álvaro Siza, Carlos Morais (eds.), *01 Textos*, (Porto: Civilização Editora, 2009). 297.

26 See the text by Alexandre Alves Costa in Álvaro Siza (et alii), *Avenida da Ponte* (Porto: Porto 2001, 2001): no page numbers. Document consulted at Arquivo Arqtº Álvaro Siza. Col. Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Doação 2015.

27 “The rocks that are the result of the cut made remain exposed, because the patina of time has already made them beautiful and because they are a sign of the city’s history. It is a trauma that has had complicated repercussions but has marked the city and must be left as the idea that the gesture envisaged”. Álvaro Siza in the video *Obras e Projectos – Requalificação da Avenida D. Afonso Henriques*.

28 During the delivery speech of the Keys of the City of Porto collected in Álvaro Siza, *As Chaves da Cidade do Porto*, in Siza, Morais (eds.), *01 Textos*, 323.

29 Câmara Municipal do Porto, *Opinion on the proposed preliminary study for the redevelopment of Avenida D. Afonso Henriques*, 19 March 2001 (Arquivo Arqtº Álvaro Siza. Col. Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Doação 2015).

[...] the project is not formally disapproved, but there is the approval by the Municipal Council of an opinion that, in short, destroys the entire concept of the project, with criticism from top to bottom, from various angles. The only thing that has a favourable opinion is the City Museum, but, on the other hand, they say it is too big, because there is no money³⁰. Despite the project never being realised, it is possible to observe its relevance in the words of the architectural critic Paulo Varela Gomes: 'The volumetric unity of the whole and its programmatic and path links seem to put an end to the "tear" in favour of the existence of an avenue. [...] I believe that a granite and rough-skinned Avenida da Ponte would be essential to make us believe that it is possible to sew tears in cities without obligatorily placing the narcissistic smile of architecture in its place.'³¹

La Casa dos 24, an Architectural Object, a Place, a Story: it's all there³²

As already mentioned, it is conceivable that Alvaro Siza's project stemmed from his knowledge of the historical vicissitudes of the Alto da Sé, and was inspired by the guiding principles of the 1955 proposal and, by his own admission, of the *Casa dos 24*: "When architect Távora showed me the project, I already had a contract for the work on the Avenida da Ponte, and I immediately thought that this tower should become the cornerstone of the project".³³

Indeed, in 1994 Fernando Távora was commissioned to carry out a study for the arrangement and renovation of the Cathedral's western parvis, which had undergone major alterations since the 1940s as a result of demolitions [Fig. 7]. Up until the 1930s, the Cathedral of Porto was immersed in a medieval structure made up of clusters of houses surrounding the building and was in an off-centre position with respect to the route of the walls [Fig. 8]. For this reason, the public space to the north of the Cathedral was externally accessible through two passages: the Porta da Vandoma, located at the end of the Rua Chã and the Porta de São Sebastião, adjacent to the former seat of the Municipal Council. The stretch of wall between these two gates was the only one in which there were no constructions leaning against the line of the ancient *Muralha Primitiva* and therefore represented an open space, overlooking the city, with dimensions defined by perimeter structures, within which important



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Fig. 7

Álvaro Siza's hand points to the maquette of *Casa dos 24*. Frame from the video *Álvaro Siza, Obras e Projectos – Requalificação de Avenida D. Afonso Henriques*.

³⁰ Álvaro Siza, quoted in Eduardo Covelinhas, "Avenida da Ponte Congelada", *JN Journal de Noticias*, May 30, 2001.

³¹ Paulo Varela Gomes, *Avenida da Ponte* (Porto: Porto 2001, 2001). Document consulted at Arquivo Arqtº Álvaro Siza. Col. Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Doação 2015. 18.

³² The title of this paragraph refers to an extract from the text by Eduardo Souto de Moura, "The Tower of Távora", *Casabella*, no. 700 (May 2002): 64.

³³ Álvaro Siza in the video *Obras e Projectos – Requalificação da Avenida D. Afonso Henriques*, cit.

activities of urban public life took place. On this site, in addition to the Cathedral and its appurtenances, from the 15th century until the end of the 18th century, was the seat of the Municipal Council, also known as *Paço da Rolaçom* or *Casa dos 24*, a name of popular origin that recalled the twenty-four city guilds, related to the different trades, that met here. The tower-house from 1518, as mentioned in the descriptive report by Távora accompanying the recovery project³⁴, was in the form of a turret with a height of 100 palms (about 22 m) and a gilded roof. It stood on the stones of the ancient wall, only six metres away from the Cathedral, “as if to challenge the episcopal power”³⁵. In the 1940s, the Sé would be cleared of the residential building leaning against it to open up a noble perspective of the episcopal complex, forming the current *Terreiro da Sé*, a terraced courtyard overlooking the surrounding medieval alleys open in all directions³⁶. When Fernando Távora was invited to give an opinion on the development of the Cathedral area, only irregular stone walls remained on site, forming a wedge of ruins that acted as a buttress of the hill at high altitude. In the preliminary programme proposed in the descriptive memorandum of



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June 1994, the architect manifested his intention to design a building that would utilise the remains of the existing structure by leaning against them a new construction that would be used as a space for cultural tourism and as a place to organise an effective exhibition of Porto’s urban phenomenon³⁷. The conditions that were set by the proposal were to take into account the strength of the urban and architectural space of the environment, to confront the impact on the landscape, to take advantage of the views of the city acquired as a result of the demolitions, to respect the significant patrimonial value of the existing structures without further museifying the area, and to revalue the historical, architectural and urban heritage of the city. The project, as recalled by Álvaro Siza, tackles for the first time the theme of recomposing the spatial structures of the Cathedral Hill, dialoguing with the city, and composing the public space:

34 The short descriptive memoir accompanying the project was found at the Fundação Archives Marques da Silva and can be read in Italian in: Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* cit., 172. The description of the ancient tower is attributable to the Portuguese historian Artur de Magalhães Basto (1894-1960).

35 Francisco Portugal e Gomes, *Restauro e Reabilitação na Obra de Fernando Távora. O Exemplo da Casa dos 24*, April 2008.

36 Cleusa De Castro, “Collage, Fernando Távora e a Casa dos 24 do Porto”, *Arqtexto*, no. 15 (2009): 2-21.

37 Fernando Távora, *Memória Descritiva e Justificativa*, in *Empreitada de recuperação dos antigos Paços do Concelho*, pág. 127, Arquivo Histórico do Porto, 1998.

Fig. 8

Relationship between the Cathedral façade and the façade of th Capila dos Alfaiates before the 1940 demolitions (photo by Domingos Alvão).

There has never been a reconsideration of rebuilding the houses that were four metres from the façade. This is a consolidated problem because the Gothic nature of the Cathedral found its reason for being in the relationship with the curtain wall. With the reconstruction of Casa dos 24, the controversy became topical again. It was argued that this building would jeopardise the very existence of the Cathedral, but the reality is that the project resolves two needs: the first is to consolidate the battered edge of the hill, the other is to make an intervention based on historical facts that can become the access and foundation stone of the inevitable process of reconstruction of the Avenida da Ponte.³⁸

Acknowledging the importance of the integrity of the historic city Fernando Távora implements an intervention of urban regeneration by operating on the void produced by the transformations of the system, inserting the ruin and the contemporary architectural gesture within this process. The author's awareness of the city and his overall knowledge of it allow him to reorganise the urban environment following precise guidelines that re-establish proportions and tensions of space, creating new conditions of use updated to the present.

Observing the preliminary drawings of 1995, the building contributes to the organisation of the public space by restoring the predominant elements and strong points: such as the frontal relationship between the Baroque *Galilé* and the *Casa dos 24*, the diagonal access to the *Terreiro da Sé*, the narthex-nave-patio sequence of access to the interior spaces of the Cathedral and the prominence of the stairs giving access to the parvis from Rua São Sebastião, outside the ancient walls. Two public spaces are also created using paving and the arrangement of the green spaces in front of the north and west entrances of the Cathedral, separated by a considerable narrowing (up to 6.5m) caused by the footprint of the new building [Fig. 9]. In this regard, Alvaro Siza says that

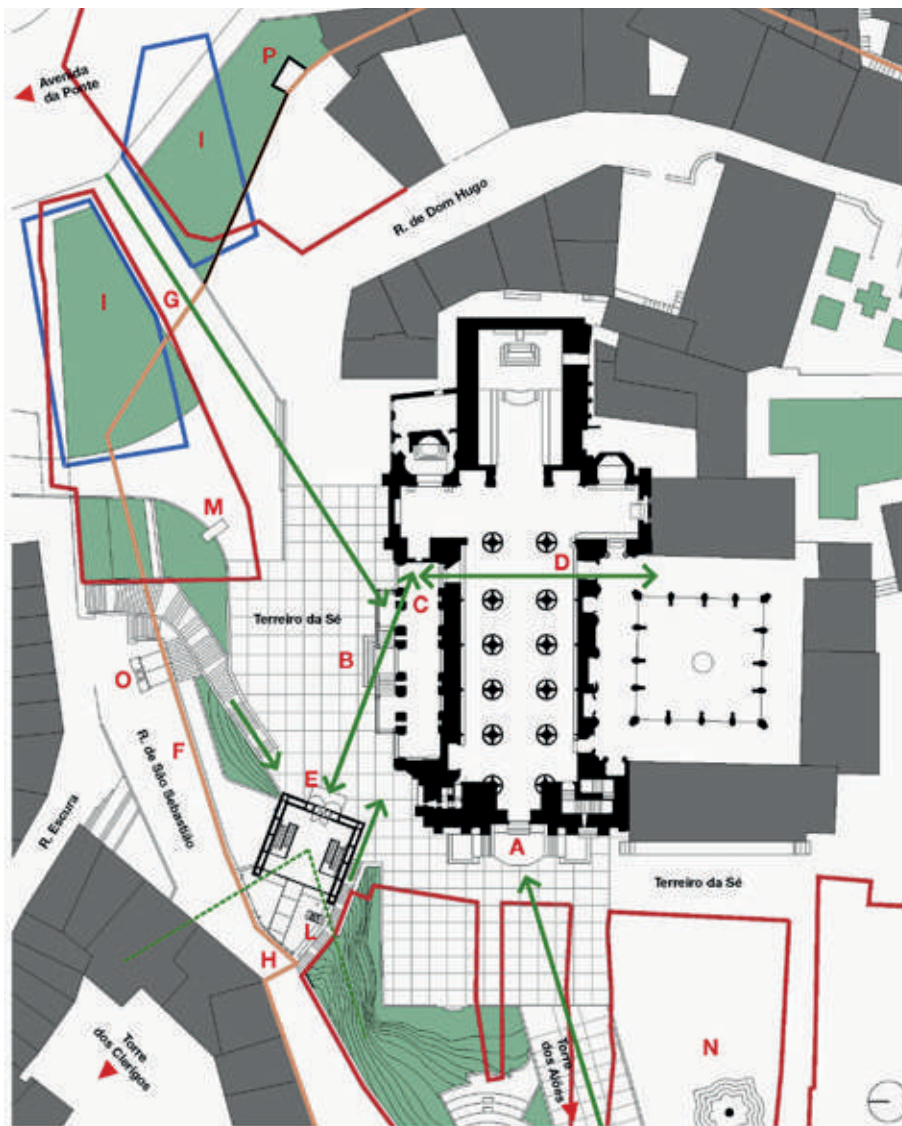
The tower gives new meaning to Nasoni's loggia, which, originally surrounded by buildings, followed a shape and had dimensions appropriate to the space. It also gives meaning to the position of the equestrian statue of Vimara Pares. It makes one realise how right the position of the old access road was, which I, therefore, re-propose by redesigning a similar small road that frames the old houses well.³⁹

Since there were no elements certifying the exact shape of the old building Távora seeks the meaning of the operation in the history of the place by elaborating a "simulacrum"⁴⁰ that refuses the imitation of the original creative process proposing an intervention syntactically located in the present and strongly rooted in the past. The building "without a programme" of the *Casa dos 24* allows Fernando Távora to construct a narrative with a strong symbolic

38 Álvaro Siza in the video *Obras e Projectos – Requalificação da Avenida D. Afonso Henriques*.

39 Távora, Siza, "Lavorare 'insieme': conversazione tra Álvaro Siza and Fernando Távora sui progetti per Avenida da Ponte", 56.

40 Andrea Fanfoni, "Abitare le tracce della città," in *Parma città d'oro, Progetto Urbano Strategico e Atlante Civile dell'Architettura*, eds. Dario Costi, Francesca Magri, Carlo Mambriani (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2021): 198-209.



- A** Main entrance to the Sé (Cathedral) of Porto
- B** Entry to the Galilé da Sé
- C** Side entrance to the Cathedral
- D** Entrance to the Cathedral Patio
- E** Entrance to Casa dos 24
- F** Muralha Primitiva disappearance trail ————
- G** Location of the ancient Porta de Vandorna
- H** Location of the ancient Porta de São Sebastião
- I** Location of buildings proposed by Alvaro Siza ————
- L** Position of the statue of the Knight
- M** Statue of Vímara Peres
- N** Ancient pillory of Porto
- O** Chapel of São Sebastião
- P** Remains still visible of the disappeared Muralha Primitiva
- Demolition in the 1940s ————
- Relationship axes restored by the project ————

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character where architecture becomes a gesture and visual reference that organises perspectives and urban routes as well as a civic temple of the city. In the 1960s⁴¹ Távora often drew the temples he visited in Mexico, Japan and Greece, and on this occasion, it is possible to think of the architecture of the Casa dos 24 as the transposition of a civic temple of Porto's history. The

41 Fernando Távora, *Diário de 'bordo' (1960)* (Porto: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012).

Fig. 9
Layout proposed by Fernando Távora for the Terreiro da Sé area of the city of Porto.

characteristic that leads one to think of the sacredness of this place is the sequence created in the entrance facing the public space of the *Terreiro da Sé* where, at the threshold, there is a compression due to the limited height of the architrave supporting the entrance door, followed by the subsequent expansion of the empty space inside the room. The height of the door, on which we find the engraving “Antiga, mui nobre, leal e sempre invicta cidade”⁴² is deliberately reduced to its essential dimensions (2.20 m) to provoke that unexpected sensation dictated by the sequence of different heights that can be observed in many sacred structures with a central plan, such as, for example, the Baptistery of Parma where the pilgrim was drawn inside by a round arch that tapers towards the entrance threshold to then open into a diaphragm of great height. If architecture becomes a temple, its path of approximation also takes on a different value, which in this case is dictated by the



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articulation of the plane where the work is placed in the city. The new tower removes horizontality from the Cathedral esplanade and the *Terreiro da Sé* ceases to be “just an immense and anonymous belvedere above the city”.⁴³ The passage projects the visitor into an interior closed on three sides and open towards the historic city by means of a large opening that introduces the visitor into an unexpected dimension “as if for a few moments he were gathering in the discovery of what a city is, of what this city is”.⁴⁴ Observing today the layout of the hill that houses the Cathedral of Porto and analysing the potential that the intervention proposed by Álvaro Siza could have had, it is inevitable to refer to the Acropolis, as Paulo Varela Gomes points out [Fig. 10]:

[...] the project takes as its own the tower of Távora at the side of the Cathedral, adding other volumes that can make the scenographic platform created around the Cathedral a true Acropolis of Porto near one of the noble entrances to the city. It is one of the strongest, most controversial, and most praiseworthy ideas of the project.⁴⁵

42 ‘Ancient, very noble, loyal and always invincible city’ is the motto of Porto.

43 Francisco Barata, “La regla y la Excepción. Dos Proyectos de Távora para Porto”, *DPA*, no. 14 (1998): 54-63.

44 Barata, “La regla y la Excepción. Dos Proyectos de Távora para Porto”, 54-63.

45 Paulo Varela Gomes, *Avenida da Ponte* (Porto: Porto 2001, 2001). Document consulted at Arquivo Arqtº Álvaro Siza. Col. Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Doação 2015. 18.

Fig. 10

Relationship between the Casa dos 24 and the Porto Cathedral. In the background the baroque *Gallilé da Sé* by Nicolau Nasoni. Photo taken by the author walking up the stairs of Rua de São Sebastião, October 2022.

On his 1960 trip, Fernando Távora carefully studied the relationships between the elements of the Acropolis and their connection to the city. Arriving in Athens for the first time in June 1960, Fernando Távora wrote: “[...] I saw a lot and understood little”.⁴⁶ In fact, it is conceivable to believe that this first travel experience, which was followed by others in subsequent years, was foundational in the understanding of the relationship between architecture, place and landscape, a characteristic trait of his entire authorial production. In that journey he relied on drawing and its didacticization to introject concepts that would emerge in crystal-clear form almost forty years later, in the design of *Casa dos 24*. By drawing a parallel between the drawn and written analysis of the Acropolis and the project of the tower at the side of the Porto Cathedral, it is possible to recognise similarities in the point of observation. In Athens, Távora, drawing the Acropolis from the outside, identifies three levels of reading, with a classical matrix, of the elevated layout: the natural terrain i.e. the basement, the supporting walls i.e. the body and the profiles of the buildings i.e. the crowning. In Porto, the situation of the Cathedral hill is very similar: at the low elevation the *Avenida da Ponte* with the void created by the demolitions represents the natural terrain; at the intermediate elevation the walls of the hill represent the supporting walls and the high elevation of the *Terreiro da Sè*, stripped by the demolitions, represents the crowning, the “prestige of the sacred place”.⁴⁷ The design of the tower fits in as a completion of the monumental layout, restoring unity to the landscape seen from outside. As with the Parthenon in Athens, in Porto the cathedral plays a central role in the overall vision of the monumental complex, which, however, finds its *raison d’être* and the measure of proportions lost in the relationship and dualism with the surrounding elements. The Erechtheion, the Statue of Athena and the Parthenon that contributed “to the balance of the composition”⁴⁸ become the Romanesque *Sé*, the Baroque *Galilé*, the equestrian Statue of Vimara Peres and the contemporary *Casa dos 24*, an essential element to balance the harmony deprived to the complex by the demolitions. The second element that gives rise to important design choices that can be traced back to the Athens experience is the observation from inside to outside the installation. Távora, in the Acropolis, studies the position of the Statue of Athena, in front of the Erechtheion, as an element of balance, then imagining it inside the temple, in its original location, as the protagonist of the sacred space. In Porto, the Statue of the Fighter, which the architect places in front of the great window, becomes a ‘venerable’ object, soaring from the slopes of the building and standing out in the imagined frame, representing the value, immortality and sacredness of the image of the city that is offered to the visitor from inside the building. Looking back over his design parabola in this building, the architect

46 Távora, *Diário de 'bordo'* (1960), 367.

47 Taken from the caption of the drawing placed in Notebook B, no. 13, 9 June of Fernando Távora, *Diário de "bordo"*, Italian edition edited by Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, Raffaella Maddaluno, *Fernando Távora, Diário di bordo*, (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2022): 399.

48 Távora, *Diário de "bordo"*, 400. From the caption of the drawing placed in Notebook B, no. 14, 9 June.

performs an extraordinary synthesis of the values that guided him throughout his life, as analysed by Eduardo Souto de Moura:

It is the synthesis of the concepts that Távora elaborated, little by little, in his works. The building could only be realised by knowing the site and the pre-existing building, understanding the Baroque, the importance of Niccolò Nasoni and the relationship with the loggia on the side of the church. The external arrangement, the placement of the different elements, such as the statue, the views and alignments it obtains demonstrate an erudite knowledge of the acropolis of Athens.⁴⁹

Despite the premise, the validity and the necessary character of the proposal, the project of the *Casa dos 24* underwent fierce criticism⁵⁰ and opened a debate that lasted for several years, ending with the convocation of a judging commission in which Álvaro Siza was also present, who defended the work by speaking of

a unifying element of the city that is powerful and intelligent enough to break the gap between the Cathedral hill and the rest. It was a provoked detachment, it was not a historical detachment, and it contained tensions that were revived in a ridiculous way, such as the comments that were made about the attack on the Church. After its appearance, the only comment that could be made was that it was necessary.⁵¹

Conclusions

As the analysis of this experience has shown, the three proposals analyzed “[...] based on the study of the evolution of the city and its small, large transformations, using historical documents and observing the testimonies engraved in the territory”⁵² have been inserted in the constant flow of modification of the city, proposing very distinct languages but strongly rooted in place and time. The knowledge, in the three projects, has become a compositional tool of the architectural work, which in turn lends itself to the organization of urban space as if it were a device at the service of the city itself. However, it is necessary, to emphasize how the bodies in charge of preserving knowledge were, in the cases given as examples, those who hindered, and in some cases even blocked, the execution of these works. Today Avenida da Ponte remains an unresolved project that suffers from the non-implementation of the proposals for the development of the avenue, which however have brought to the attention of the discipline of urban design a multiplicity of useful themes in the processes of transformation of places that should constitute the architect’s knowledge base for intervening in the ‘heart’ of the city.

49 Souto de Moura, “The Tower of Távora”, 64.

50 A letter available at the Fernando Távora Archive at the Fundação Instituto Arquitecto José Marques da Silva dated 9 December 1998 from the IPPAR institute (Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico) communicates the preliminary dissent to the execution of the project.

51 Valdemar Cruz, *Retratos de Siza* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2005): 31 (translation by the author).

52 Siza, “Recovery of the Avenida da Ponte and project for the city museum”, 58-63.

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Fernando Távora's Passion for the Antique

Fernando Távora, Antique, Reconstruction, Details, Sketches

/Abstract

The text discusses Fernando Távora's deep passion for history and how it influenced his architectural work and worldview. Távora's study of history, particularly Portuguese history, and his appreciation for the past's connection to the present had a significant impact on his design philosophy. His approach to architecture was rooted in a rational interpretation of the past, allowing him to create modern designs while respecting historical and geographical contexts. Távora's passion for history also influenced his teaching methods, shaping the pedagogy of the Porto School of Architecture for many years. Additionally, the text highlights his travels and his fascination with ancient objects and art, demonstrating how his love for history extended beyond academic pursuits.

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Antonio Esposito (Rome, 1961) teaches Architectural and Urban Composition in Cesena and Bologna and distributes his commitment between design, teaching and research, focusing his attention on the redevelopment of post-war urban areas. He has produced and published several studies on Portuguese contemporary architecture, a reality with which he has forged a relationship of cultural confrontation since more than thirty years.

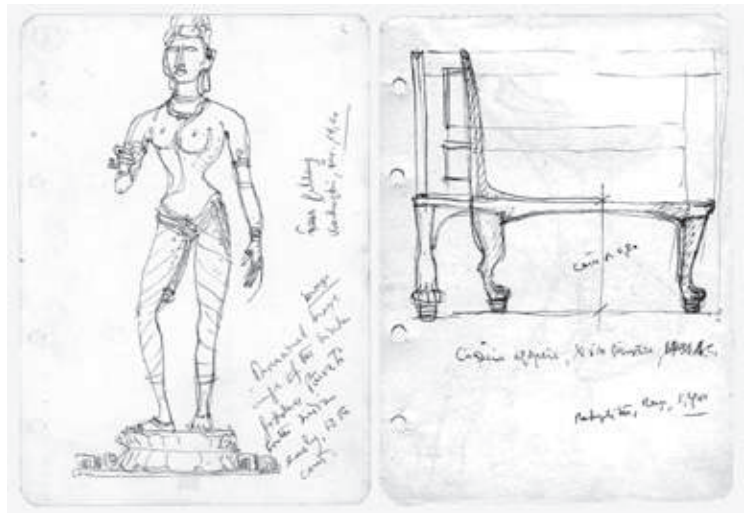
Fernando Távora has been a passionate connoisseur of history throughout his life. Of Portuguese history *in primis*, but not only.

Knowledge of history entails, perhaps inevitably, an intrinsic awareness of feeling part of a flux and a whole, with outcomes that lead thought and feeling towards an attitude disposed to revolutionary subversion, for one extreme, or to instinctive and affective preservation for the other. It cannot be said that Távora positioned himself intellectually close to one of the two limits of this ideal scale of values, but we can legitimately think that he preferred an attitude of rational or reasonable interpretation of the present in an evolving form, in constant movement, such that its meaning is updated from time to time, placing it in direct and visible relation with what has been and what will be.

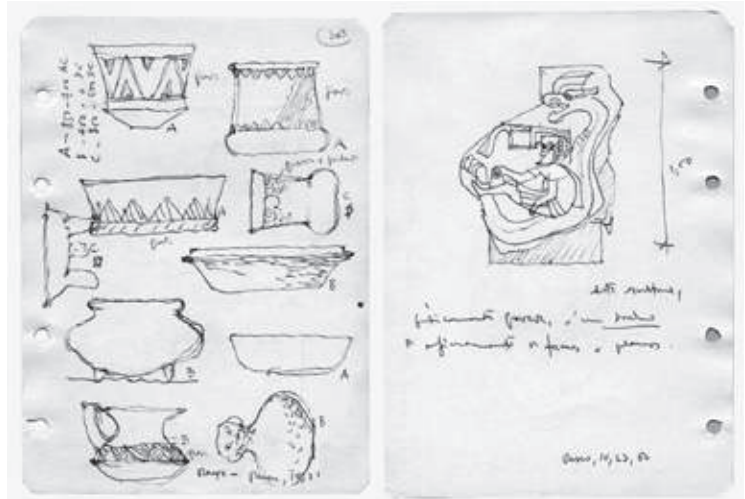
Távora therefore knew history, we start from this assumption which is generally shared by studies and direct testimonies on his figure. He studied it to find the reasons for the present. The history of his country had already begun to be absorbed, one could say, in his mother's milk, through the stories, facts, objects and houses that his families of origin, of ancient descent and high lineage, passed on from generation to generation¹.

His instincts and his culture pushed him, in his design conduct, towards philology – whether it was a place, a city, an author, a building – which he did not perceive as a deterministically blocked methodology, which cages the project by leading it to univocal results, but rather as a reservoir of multiple information to be subjected to free processes of selection and re-composition. It was in the philological process of ideal reconstruction of the past of a building or a place that he rooted the reasons for the project in order to project them into a development to come. In discerning between the multiple possibilities, his creativity found its place.

It was not only the project that was the pretext to approach the study of history. On the contrary, having a clear diachronic scheme of facts and thoughts in the course of time was for him a presupposition, an *a priori*. Recognising



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Fig. 1

Drawings from the Gulbenkian trip: the goddess Parvati from the Freer Gallery in Washington and an Egyptian chair from the Metropolitan Museum in New York (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 2

Drawings from the Gulbenkian trip: pottery and sculpture from the Maya civilisation in the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City (FIMS/AFT).

¹ Távora refers on several occasions to his ancestral relationship with places and history through his family. For instance, in an interview with João Leal in 1996 and now published as "Fernando Távora sobre o Inquérito à Arquitectura popular em Portugal" p. 14 – dossier contained in the collection edited by Manuel Mendes, Fernando Távora. "Minha casa", FIMS, Porto 2013.

in the events of men and human things, the intrinsic reasons they preserve and transmit, this was his constant exercise.

Of the knowledge of the past before taking a position and facing action, he had been somewhat of a promoter, since the 1940s advocating the need to study the Portuguese territory and the historical architectures that were preserved intact in its most remote and isolated lands, suspended in pre-modern and rural history of Portugal. Full awareness of their materials, construction systems, settlement logics, formal expressions, climatic and geological conditions, would have been indispensable before being able to understand, in the dispute between late second-hand modernism and obsequious traditionalist and ruralist rhetoric of the regime², on what roots the plant of an architecture truly rooted in the territory, its history, geology, geography, in the name of an authentic and constant modernity, could take root.

The ancient is for Távora, from very early, a mine of teachings on techniques, from which much can be learned, cultivating the ability

to discern in the ancient, to have depth of field to distinguish qualities according to a set of principles that do not exclude personal inclinations. Historical investigation allows him to appropriate the intimate reasons for things, to make them his own in order to understand their possibilities for new life. It thus becomes a fundamental part of the project methodology that he adopts for himself and transmits to his students. His passion for history thus gradually became a myth that characterised the Porto School of Architecture and shaped its pedagogy for many years.

2 It is the clash between the two positions that faced each other after World War II in Portugal, succinctly referred to as the problem of the Portuguese home. Hence Távora's youthful pamphlet of the same name, *O problema da casa portuguesa*, published in two editions in 1945 and 1947. After it was published in Portuguese and English in Luiz Trigueiros, *Fernando Távora* (Lisbon. Editorial Blau, 1993): 11-13



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Fig. 3

The Távora tower in relationship with the Cathedral bell tower (photo by the author).

The cognitive passion often took on the guise of a desire to possess antique objects, for their collection cultivated since his youth as a modern architect. The attraction for the content of art and knowledge is at the same time a sensual attraction for the material³. In his 1960 travel diary⁴, in several passages he himself speaks of it almost as a mania or weakness, incompatible with the finances at his disposal. And if reading those pages reveals all the fascination of being immersed in a new world, the American one, so projected into tomorrow and so distant from the historicity of the European tradition, the visits – accurately described and annotated in the drawings – to the antiquities collected and exhibited in American museums, so rich in variety of epochs and provenance, absorbed and captured him. While, in the long run, the efficientist pragmatism and the devilishness of modern American life disturb and even annoy him. Even sharper still is the spiritual relief that comes over him when he leaves the United States and goes to Japan, a country still firmly anchored to traditions and the permanence of the ancient in everyday life, despite the pressing Americanisation.

When he was already an old man and made another trip, this one also becoming somewhat mythical due to the co-presence of Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto Moura, the latter recounted that the Inca walls of Machu Pichu surprised him with the precision of the hydrology of a stone rain gutter⁵. In the wonderment, masked with *non-chalance*, lies all his ability to grasp the technical wisdom of ancient civilisations at a glance.



4



Fig. 4

The Cathedral as seen from the top of the Clérigos tower before demolition in the 1940s.

Fig. 5

Map of demolitions (in red) due to the thinning of the blocks north and west of the Cathedral, in conjunction with the gutting due to the construction of Avenida da Ponte. From: Teresa Pires de Carvalho, Carlos Guimarães, Mário Jorge Barroca, *Bairro da Sé do Porto, contributo para a sua caracterização histórica* (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1996): 96.

3 Eduardo Souto de Moura, *Fernando Távora: "Ritratto dell'artista da giovane"*, in Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Eduardo Souto de Moura. Tutte le opere* (Milano. Electa Milano 2012): 509-510 reports that he liked to keep an ivory object in his pocket to stroke with his thumb.

4 Fernando Távora, *Diário de "bordo"*, edited by Rita Marnoto (Matosinhos: Associação Casa da Arquitectura 2012). Italian critical edition: Fernando Távora, *Diário di bordo*, edited by Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, Raffaella Maddaluno (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2022).

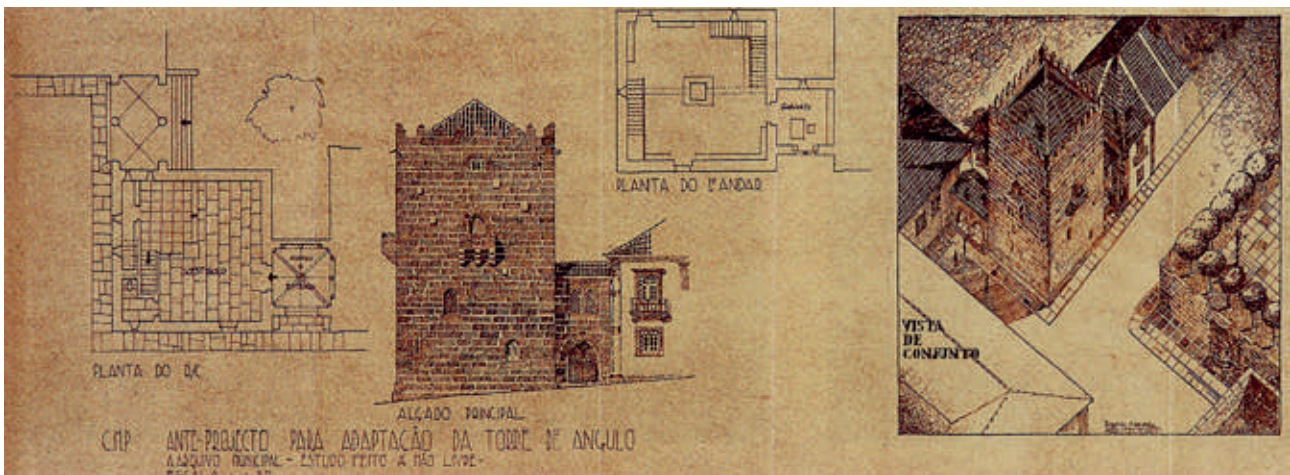
5 Eduardo Souto de Moura, *Fernando Távora e la natura delle cose naturali: tre episodi per il mio prossimo millennio*, in Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano. Electa, 2005). Text written for the ceremony conferring Távora the Laurea Honoris Causa at IUAV, 29.4.2003. Also published with some cuts in *Casabella* no. 713 (July-August 2003).

In the projects he has come across in the course of his long activity, we are surprised by his ability to insert himself into the flow of history that places and buildings hold. In their vicissitudes he seeks the constants that guarantee the continuity of the flow, each time finding a way to adapt the artefact to the present day. Thus in the Convento da Costa, in the agricultural school in Refoios do Lima and in the houses (Covilhã, Briteiros, Pardelhas, Rua Nova among many others).

But Távora's work in which his passion, aesthetic and gnoseological at the same time, for antiquity can be measured to the highest degree of purity, is undoubtedly the tower built next to Porto Cathedral, a reconstruction of the ancient Casa dos Vinte e Quatro⁶. Now that the granite has acquired the patina that amalgamates it with the city's other monuments, it is even more beautiful. Its bearing as a historical monument is even more natural, both as a work in itself and as a fulcrum that organises the urban space.



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The history of this project starts from afar and from a circumstance of brutal and extensive erasures that lay bare an extremely rich and complex historical stratigraphy. The primitive walls (12th century), which encircled an area slightly larger than the Cathedral, were soon incorporated into the internal growth of the medieval city now bounded by the much larger new Fernandina circle of walls (14th century). The four gates were demolished in the 19th century in a normal process of improving the movement of goods and people in the liberal,

Fig. 6

Medieval tower demolished in the 1940s thinning campaign, photo taken from the book *A cidade do Porto na obra do fotógrafo Alvão. 1872-1946*, ed. da Fotografia Alvão, Porto 1984. Contains the introductory text of Fernando Távora, *O Porto de Alvão*.

Fig. 7

Rogério de Azevedo, project for the reconstruction of a medieval tower near the Porto Cathedral (1941).

⁶ So called because of the number of guilds whose representatives governed and exercised the civic power of the city alongside or in stark contrast to the ecclesiastical power of the archbishop.

bourgeois city. One of these, the Porta da Vandoma, is in direct contact with the Casa dos Vinte e Quatro, a medieval tower close to the primitive city walls, where civic power was exercised until the mid-18th century.⁷

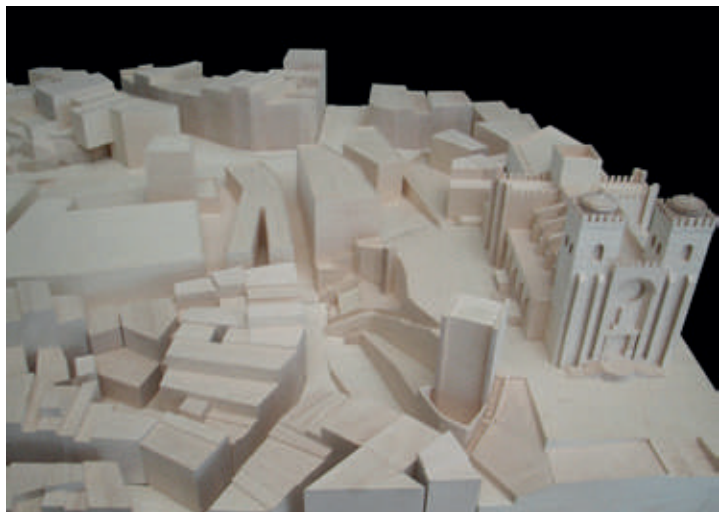
The campaign of 20th-century demolitions in the heart of the old city began, on the one hand, with a utilitarian purpose in mind: the construction at the end of the 19th century of the Luis I double-decker bridge required the cutting of Monte da Cividade to connect the mercantile and bourgeois city, which stood at a high altitude in the rugged orography of the banks of the Douro, with the opposite bank and the road to Lisbon. This opened a wound in the body of the city, which has still not been sewn up to this day. In parallel, an aesthetic and formal purpose, linked to the theory of thinning, dictated the demolition of buildings on the Pena Ventosa hill to the north and west of the Cathedral, starting in the mid-1930s. These included the demolition of a medieval tower-house (sometimes confused with a tower of the primitive walls) rebuilt a few metres away with extensive remodelling, to a design by Rogério de Azevedo.⁸

Until then, in the area around the cathedral, the Baroque narthex on the north side of the church, designed by the Tuscan Niccolò Nasoni – invited to the city as a painter-scenographer and established as an architect – is the only element of the cathedral that enjoys depth of field and scenographic centrality and constitutes the cathedral's true urban façade, framed on the left by the buildings flanking the Rua da Vandoma and on the right by those abutting the front of the Cathedral and, until its collapse, by the bulk of the old *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro*.

Throughout the 20th century, a succession of proposals for the arrangement of the gutted area followed one another, all centred on the high viability of the bridge and the scenic centrality of the cathedral's isolated mass. Some envisage further gutting, others focus on re-stitching; among these is the one by Távora himself in 1955, the debut act of the long relationship of study and intimate approach between author and project area. Until precisely the construction of



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7 After a long period of disuse and neglect, the tower was destroyed by a violent fire in 1875.

8 Alexandre Alves Costa, Jorge Figueira, "Terreiro da Sé: ideias e transformações", *Monumentos*, no. 14 (March 2001): 72-81. See also: Jorge Miguel Faria da Cunha Pimentel, "Obra pública de Rogério de Azevedo. Os anos do SPN/SNI e da DGEMN" (doctoral thesis in the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, University of Valladolid, Tutors: Maria Helena Teixeira Maia, Ramón Rodríguez Llera): 70-72. The drawing at page 294 was taken from there.

Fig. 8, 9

Álvaro Siza, model for the masterplan for the redevelopment of the Avenida D. Afonso Henriques (2001).



the new tower and Álvaro Siza's second proposal⁹ which conceptually overturn the objective, supported by the construction of the underground line which, by appropriating the upper level of the bridge, completely cancels the need for the carriageway continuity, fluid and fast, for which the bridge had been built.

When Távora received the commission¹⁰ to arrange the ruins of the ancient *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro*, he had already drawn up project sketches that had matured on the basis of a long activity of study and historiographical investigation of the area, which built on the intimate relationship with the ancient city that had begun forty years earlier. The design idea already shows in nuce that it does not want to follow Rogério de Azevedo's historicist and mimetic path, but rather exhibits from the outset the appearance of a contemporary building, in the usual expressive sobriety of its author when dealing with historical heritage.

The game of cross-references and triangulations that the new volume establishes (or restores) takes shape in the project, strengthened by the decision to reintroduce the route to the cathedral on the site of the ancient *rua e porta da Vandoma*, in alignment with the *rua Chã*, which still exists, in an ideal and significant, albeit faint, spatial mending between the two halves of Monte da Cividade. It supports the idea that a single pivotal element can reorganise urban space by separating the Baroque narthex from the Romanesque façade, so that even the *Terreiro da Sé* finds its own edge and a limit to the disorienting view generated by the thinning of the 1940s.

The completed building scandalises some people who perhaps expected something more like Rogério's tower of half a century earlier. Instead, it surprises

Fig. 10

Unpublished sketch (private collection) made by Fernando Távora during what was perhaps his last teaching experience in what was a workshop organised in April 2002 in Porto with a group of undergraduates from the Faculty of Architecture in Bari, led by Giovanni Leoni and myself. The thesis project was about the Avenida da Ponte area, based on Álvaro Siza's new masterplan and the Casa dos 24, currently being completed. Thanks to the incomparable support of Francisco Barata, it was possible to organise an intense project activity and lectures at Faup with Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza, Domingos Tavares, Manuel Fernandes de Sá, Bernardo Ferrão, António Madureira, Manuel Mendes and the same Francisco Barata.

9 This refers to the controversial master plan that Siza elaborates in 2000 and somewhat opposed to its first proposal in 1968, which envisaged the construction of a building on the rock face east of the Avenida. Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza, "Lavorare 'insieme': conversazione tra Álvaro Siza e Fernando Távora", *Casabella*, no. 700 (maggio 2002): 54-57. See also the video in which Siza explains his masterplan in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7k7P3gheVhM>

10 Távora, Siza, "Lavorare 'insieme': conversazione tra Álvaro Siza e Fernando Távora".

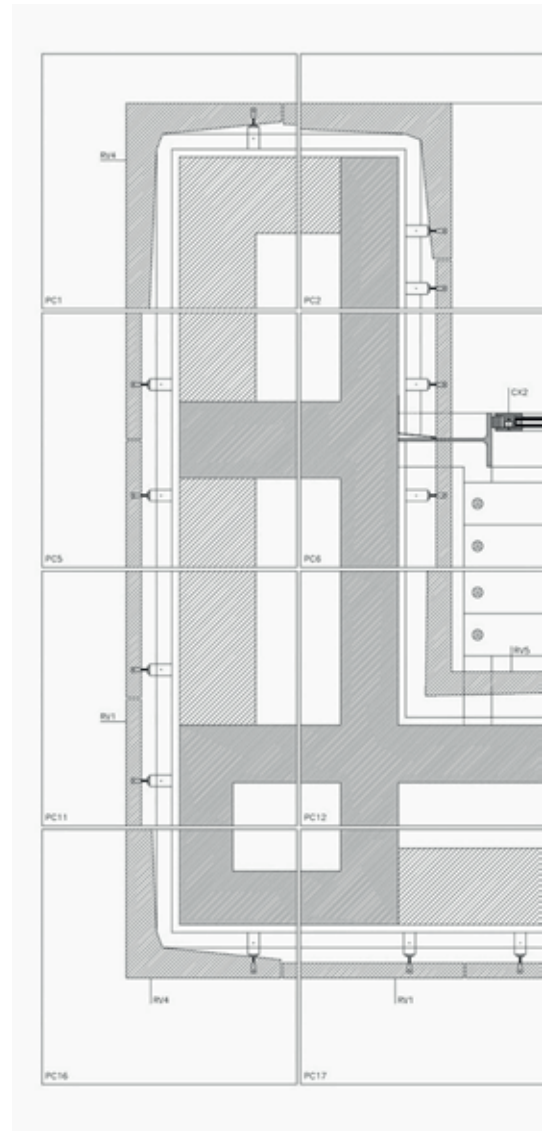
and fascinates the international community of architects and becomes the fulcrum around which Siza's proposal for the general layout of the area unravels, which, by the way, includes a couple of tributes to Távora's reflections on the area itself almost half a century earlier.

The tower is a contemporary monument in the ancient city understood as a living structure in continuous transformation. Constructed without pretence or camouflage according to current reinforced concrete technology, it stands out from the remains of the pre-existing tower's historical masonry in granite blocks. Explicit here are the reduced thickness of the granite slabs and the dry lining technique, in which Távora convincingly opts for the staggered joint installation that only emulates, without masking, that of solid, load-bearing blocks.

As Álvaro Siza argues from the outset, it is a testimony for the 21st century of how one can intervene not only in the dense fabric of the ancient city's dwellings, but also by introducing new monumental elements.

"I knew, even before I saw the first signs, that a place like that and an accumulation of history like the one present there, placed at its disposal, were ideal conditions for the appearance of something that today's ancient cities desperately need: a sign of vitality, a challenge to courage in the face of timidity and conformism.

Fernando Távora has carved it deep and in the centre of the city: a robust and compact opening – an intimate and at the same time wide-open door between the past and what is to come.



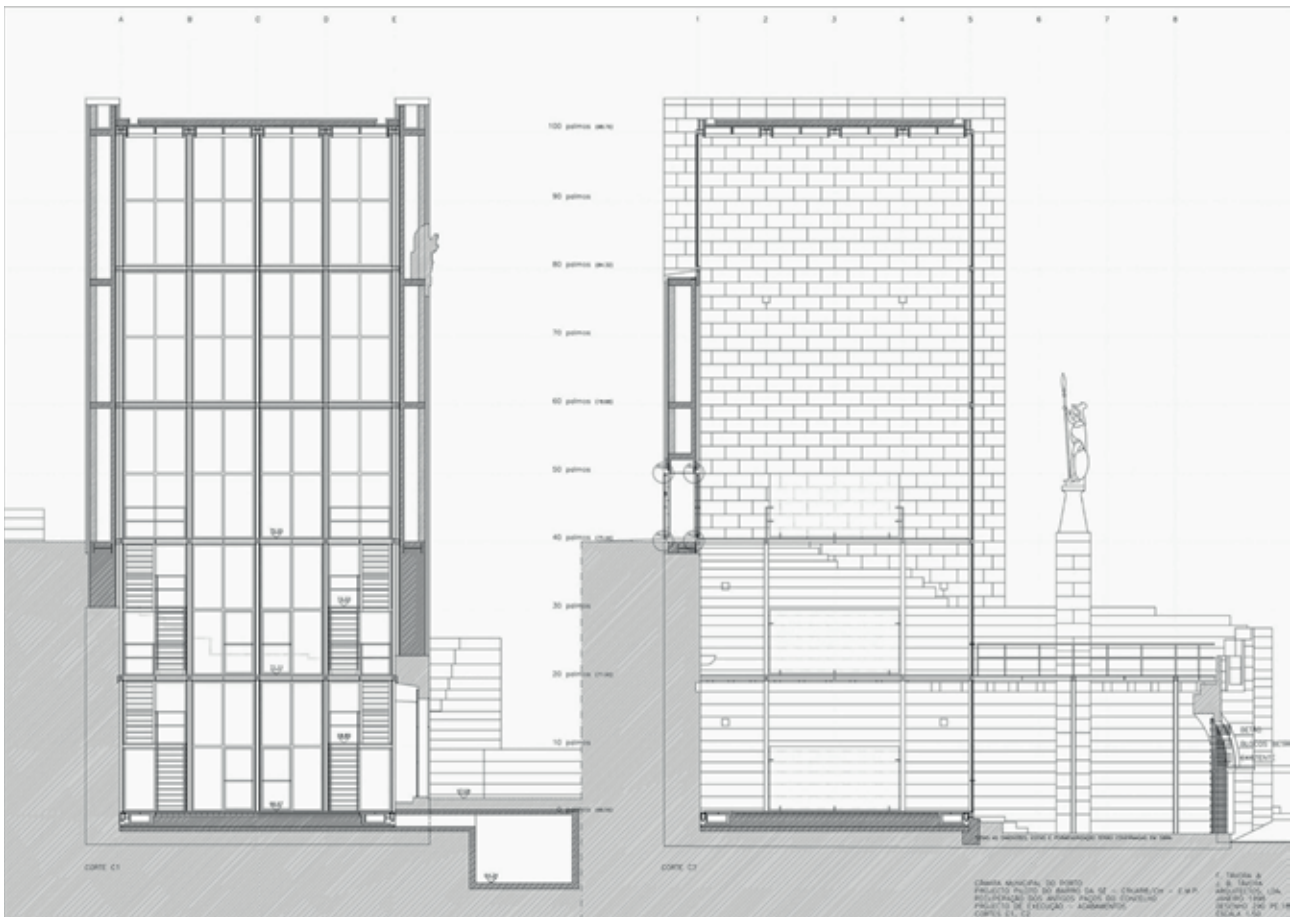
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Fig. 11, 12

Detail of the assembly of the granite slabs on the reinforced concrete masonry. Drawing archives Távora (FIMS/AFT); photograph by Carlos Martins.



13

As it is recent, this project is not yet a memory; it will be, as a relevant moment of his work and teaching, as this disciple sees them: continuous construction of Tomorrow's Memories. As tools: memory, open eyes and heart, serenity and desire.

This work and teaching are today recognised and celebrated".¹¹

The tower therefore represents an antidote to the fetishistic and passive attitude towards history – which by now rages everywhere, especially in Italy – according to which whatever comes from the past is in any case worthy of being preserved and handed down without alteration, without the possibility of critical interpretation of the past. An attitude that hurts history itself, the idea of history as a constant and unstoppable flow. A more secular and less mythologising conception of history is instead important for the construction of history itself, a constant process of making and unmaking, of memory and forgetting. So that even our contemporaneity is a piece of the flow of ideas, of ways of working, of techniques.

That the legacy of the past is a useful testimony to contemporary culture is a universally recognised fact. This awareness, however, in the common feeling of our times, not infrequently transcends into dogmatic worship of the historical object. Architectural culture should instead learn to "continue innovating"¹²,

11 Speech read by Álvaro Siza during the ceremony conferring Távora the Laurea Honoris Causa at the IUAV, Venice 29.4.2003. Now in this volume at pages 6-11.

12 This is one of the mottos that recur most frequently in Távora's writings and conversations.

14



Fig. 13, 14

The reinforced concrete masonry standing out from the remains of the historic granite block masonry. Two 1:50 scale sections, drawing Távora archive (FIMS/AFT); photograph Carlos Martins.



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16 |

Fig. 15

The side access to the low level where the relationship between the wall of the new tower and the remains of the old building is evident (photo by the author).

Fig. 16

The same material relationship in a detail of the interior (photo by the author).

i.e. to appreciate the materials of history with a capacity for discernment and a perspective reading of time. With the ability to intervene in history, even to use part of heritage itself and transfigure it. In sensitive cases such as this, it is only permitted to do so at the apex of a conscientious, attentive and reflective magisterium, miles away, as Távora's wisdom dictated, from the cravings for protagonism and individual exhibitionism of career architects. If, on the other hand, everything is sacralised and crystallised in the same way, damage is done to contemporary culture and to the collective baggage or inheritance that we will hand down to future generations; a piece of the expressive capacity of our era will be taken away from them. Cultivating memory, Fernando Távora often argued, means keeping it alive and becoming aware of the limited space it has, with the consequent need to select what we consider worthy of being remembered. This is why forgetting and remembering are two complementary processes of equal importance in the mechanism of memory. It is therefore necessary to know how to wisely preserve and, at the same time, erase and rewrite in the process of memory related to architecture¹³.

The historical documents describing the tower¹⁴ determine the height of the building as one hundred palms, approximately 22 metres, and suggest to the author the coffered ceiling covered in gold leaf to capture and amplify the last glow of light, as in the baroque talhas douradas introduced in the altars of medieval Portuguese churches. But it is also safe to assume that the suggestions induced by the gilding of Japanese temples and shrines¹⁵, visited on the Gulbenkian trip in 1960 and the fascination of the gilded surfaces of Luis Barragan's interior spaces, which he visited in the winter of 1990-1991¹⁶, had not subsided when this detail appeared in the project.

After the death of its author, the tower has been poorly utilised and for the past ten years at least, it has remained closed, due to the disinterest and hostility of the municipal administration following the one that had promoted and supported it, and due to incompatibility with its function as a tourist information office for which it had been unhappily intended. In fact, it is a building that does not stand up to utilitarian purposes. Távora was well aware of this – and somewhat proud of it – ever since he conceived it as the City Memorial. Somewhat like the tennis pavilion in the Quinta da Conceição forty years earlier, its presence in the urban space is symbolic and monumental, and as a monument it helps to organise a space that had become uncontrollably silted up. Its interior space is to be interpreted as a scenic machine, a real stage from which to observe the urban landscape and a crossroads where the footsteps of those moving through the ups and downs of the ancient city converge and come to rest.

13 *Fernando Távora, pensieri sull'architettura* collected by Giovanni Leoni with Antonio Esposito, in *Casabella*, no. 678, (April 2000): 14-17. Then published in volume as *Fernando Távora, La mia opera* in Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*.

14 No iconographic documents have been found showing its exterior and interior appearance.

15 Junichiro Tanizaki describes in his *In Praise of Shadows* the effect of golden surfaces at dusk in traditional Japanese houses (Junichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, Vintage publishing, 2019).

16 It was a trip he made with his family during the Christmas holidays. His son José Bernardo guides him on visits to the Barragan architecture that had passed him by completely unnoticed on the Gulbenkian trip in 1960.



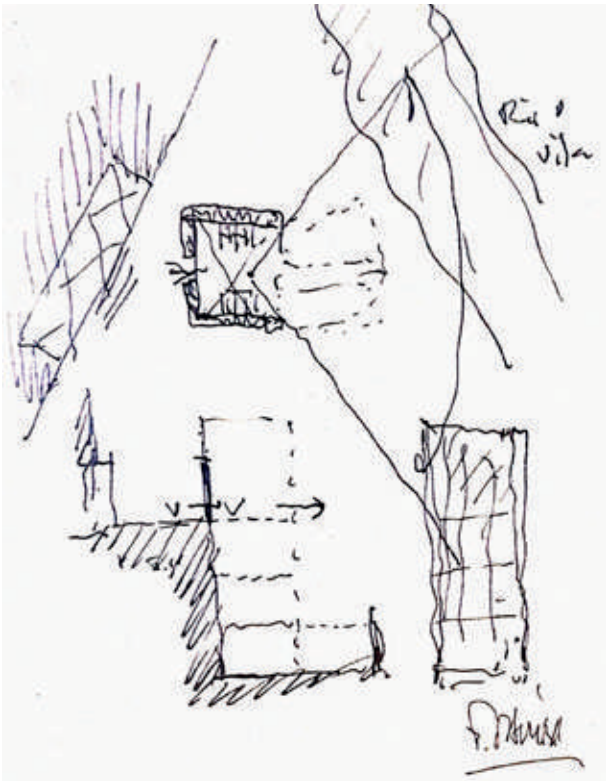
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The statue depicting the city of Porto in the form of a warrior, which on its high pedestal seemed casual and irreverent to some, revealed the reasons for its position with its back to the city, to those who accessed the main floor of the tower. Recovered in the gardens of the Crystal Palace, Távora decided, after a period of uncertainty between three possible locations, to offer it to the viewer in an unusual exchange of glances, placing it almost at the same level as him, as an amphitryon that invites one to dwell on the landscape of the historic city over which the Torre dos Clérigos stands.

Subtle analogies can also be drawn here with an earlier intervention, namely the wooden statues of angels in the Cathedral Treasury Museum, displayed on

Fig. 17

Fernando Távora, Arrangement of the Porto Cathedral treasury. (photo by the author, 1989).



18 | | 19



the granite wall by means of an invisible support and without any additional commentary. They seem to wander in the void and instead organise the space. We realise this as we leave the Chapter House.

The statue of Porto was removed and its tall pedestal demolished a decade ago; the building is in a state of neglect. But something is now being done to return the tower to the city and the international community of architects. On 24 August this year, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Fernando Távora's birth, its gates reopened to welcome visitors to the exhibition significantly entitled 'The urgency of the city – Porto and 100 years of Fernando Távora'¹⁷. Hopefully, this is only the beginning of a recovery and maintenance work that will lead to it finally being used as it was intended. We hope that will return to its place also the statue, now banally placed in a corner of Praça da Liberdade like a skittle, an object of stumbling, with the sole justification – which satiates the appetites of false philologists – of being near its original location¹⁸.

Fig. 18

Unpublished sketch (private collection) made by Fernando Távora in November 1999 to explain the meaning of the tower project that was being built: the relationship with the cathedral and the Nasoni portico, the opening of the view of the city landscape towards the Vitória hill and the Clerigos' tower, the relationship in section with the high elevation where the Cathedral rests and the low elevation of rua de São Sebastião. That meeting marked the beginning of a long period of study, by Giovanni Leoni and myself, of the figure and work of Távora and immediately produced the articles contained in Casabella no. 678, pp.6-25.

Fig. 19

The statue depicting the city of Porto before its removal (photo by Alessandra Chemollo).

¹⁷ Exhibition "The urgency of the city – Porto and 100 years of Fernando Távora", Antiga Casa da Câmara 24.8/29.10.2023; coordination by Jorge Sobrado; scientific curatorship by Manuel Leal.

¹⁸ The statue had been sculpted in 1819 by João Joaquim de Sousa Alão to place it at the top of the pediment (i.e. in a soaring position as in Távora's placement) of the Municipal Palace that had just been built in the Praça de D. Pedro (later Praça da Liberdade) and later demolished in 1916 when work began on the opening of the Avenida dos Aliados.

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

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

/Abstract

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

The Design Process

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

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



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

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

Urban Development of Porto

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

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

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

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



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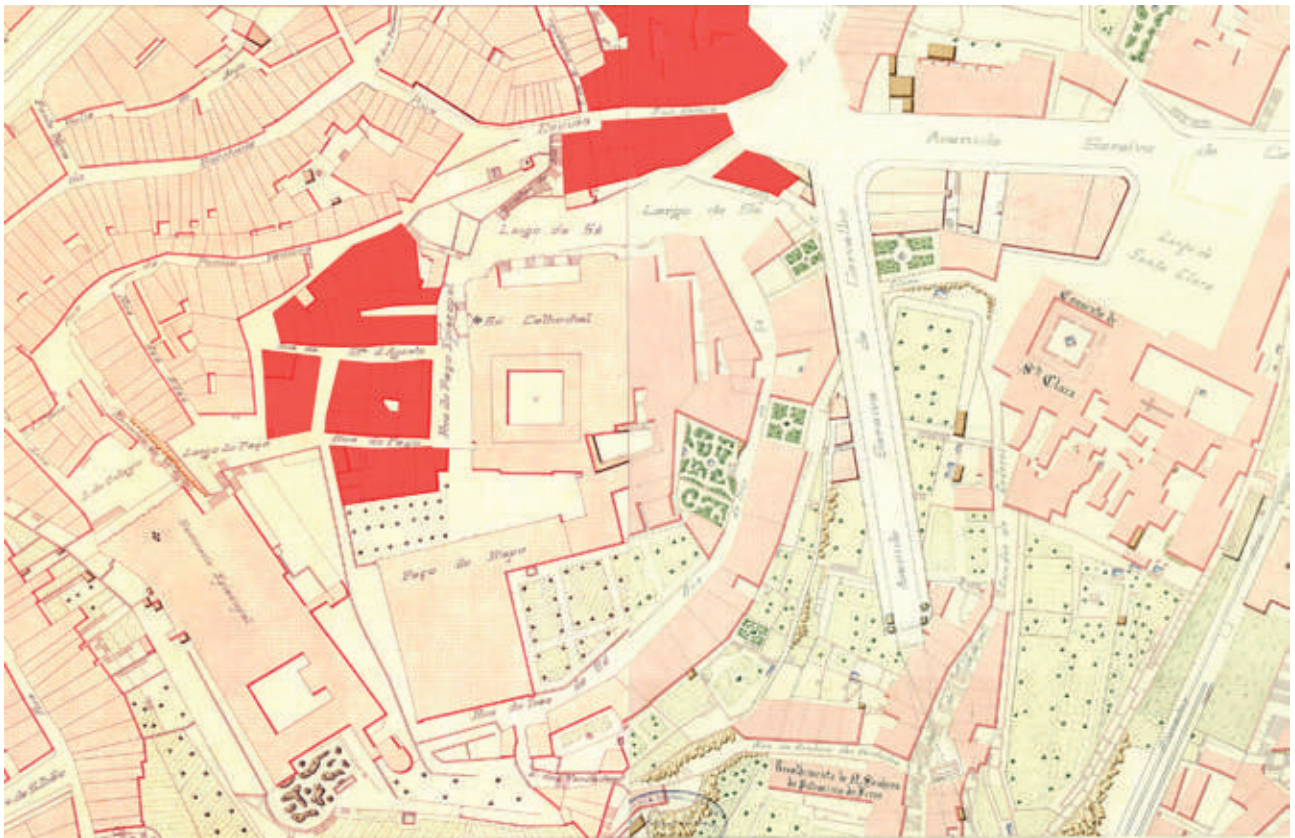
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Fig. 5
Porto early 1900s, Dom Luis bridge (photo by Beleza).

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

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



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Fig. 8

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

Fig. 9

Nasoni Baroque Loggia 1736 (photo by Domingos Alvaio).



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Fig. 10

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

Fig. 11

Cathedral of Porto (photo by Domingos Alvao).

Fig. 12

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

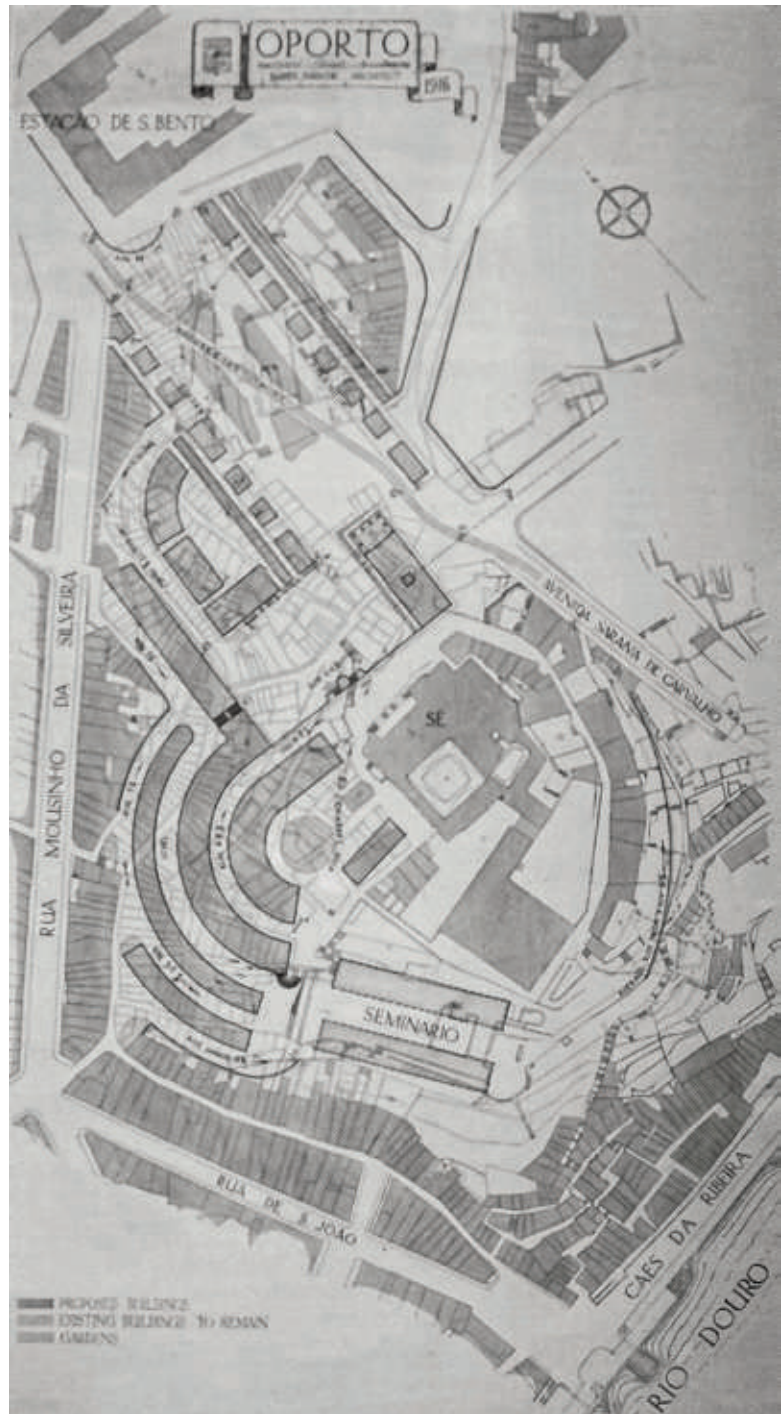
Plans for Avenida da Ponte

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

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

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

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



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Fig. 13

Barry Parker, plan of Avenida da Ponte, 1916.

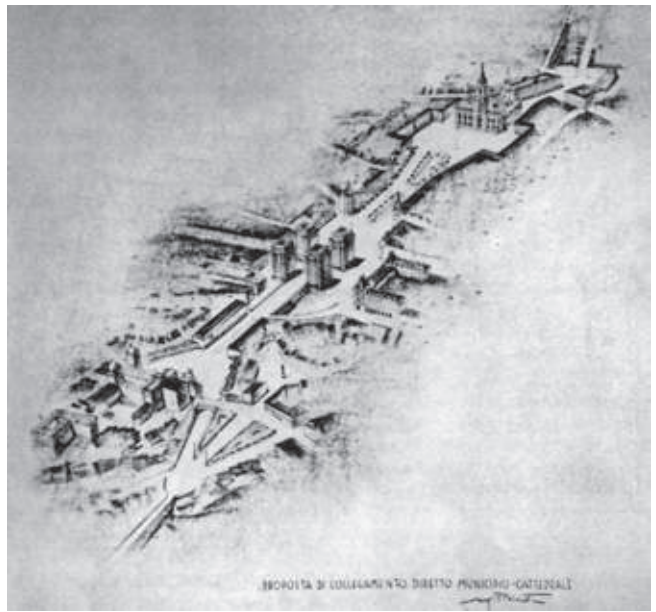
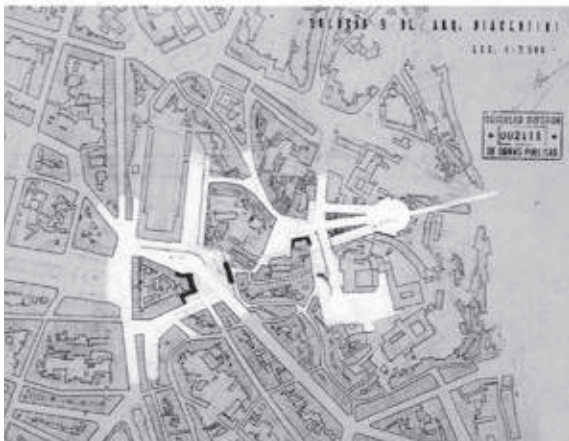
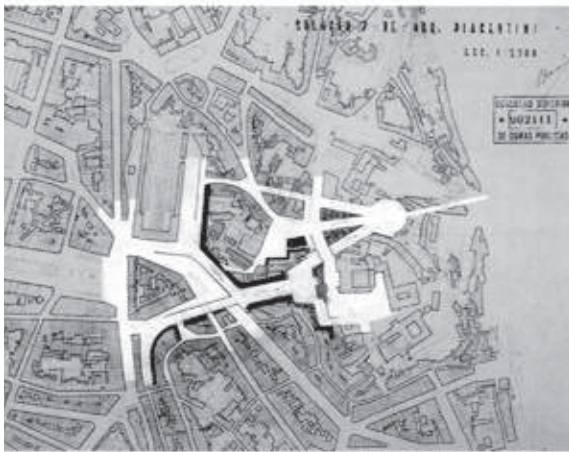
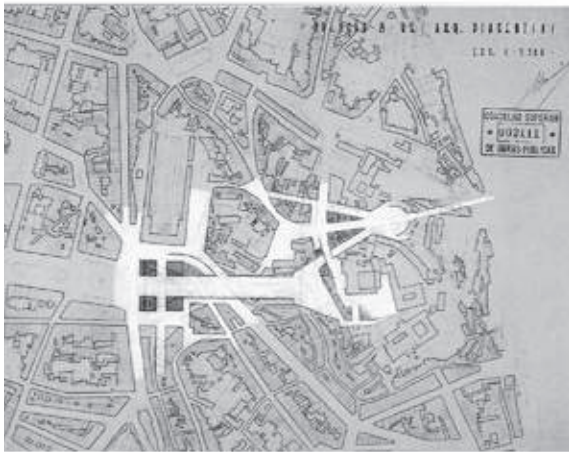
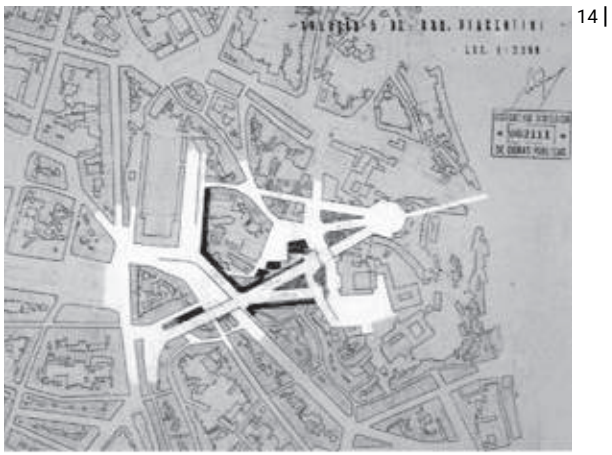


Fig. 14

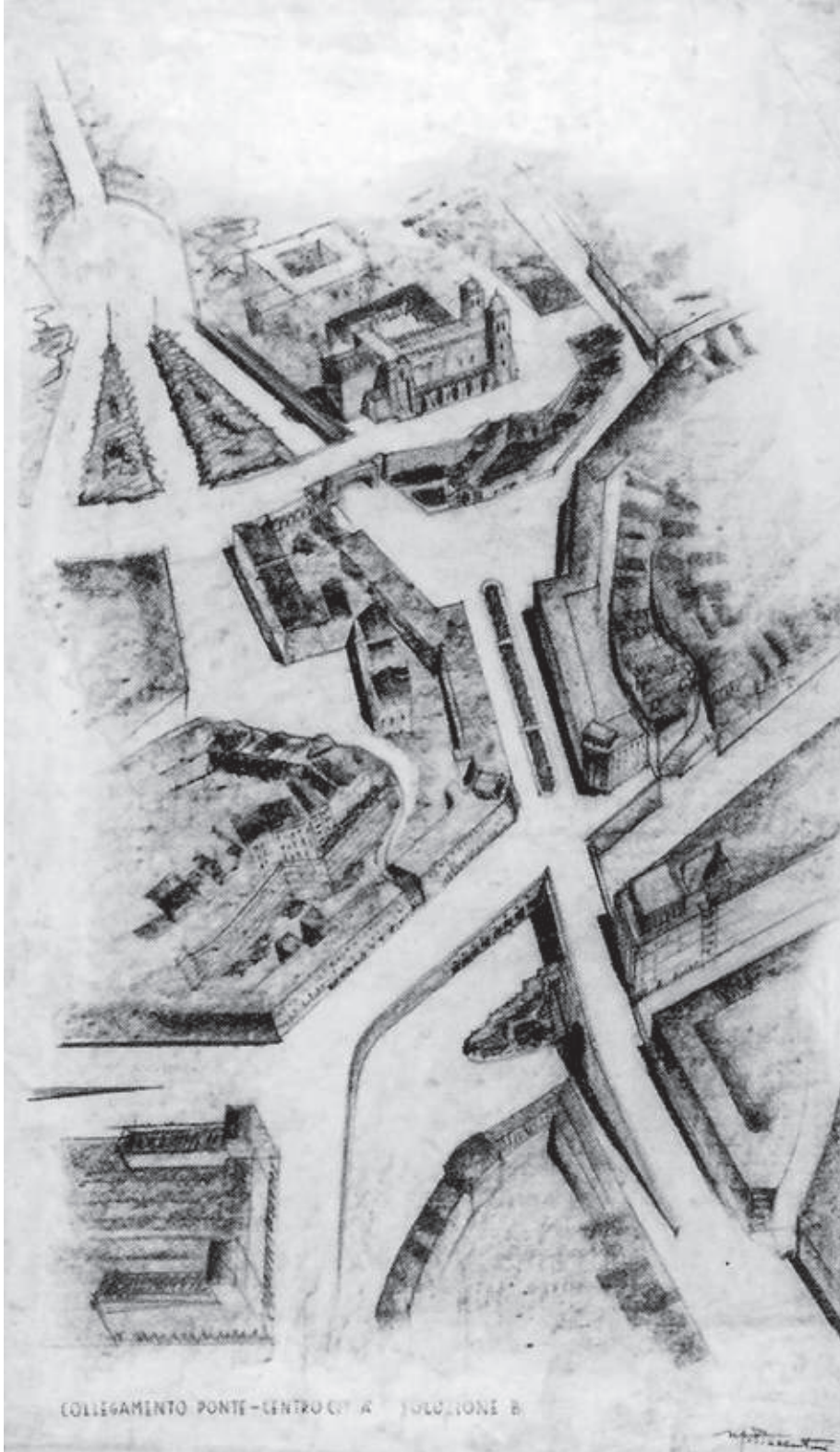
Marcello Piacentini, Avenida da Ponte, 1939, plan variants A, B, C and D.

Fig. 15

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

Fig. 16

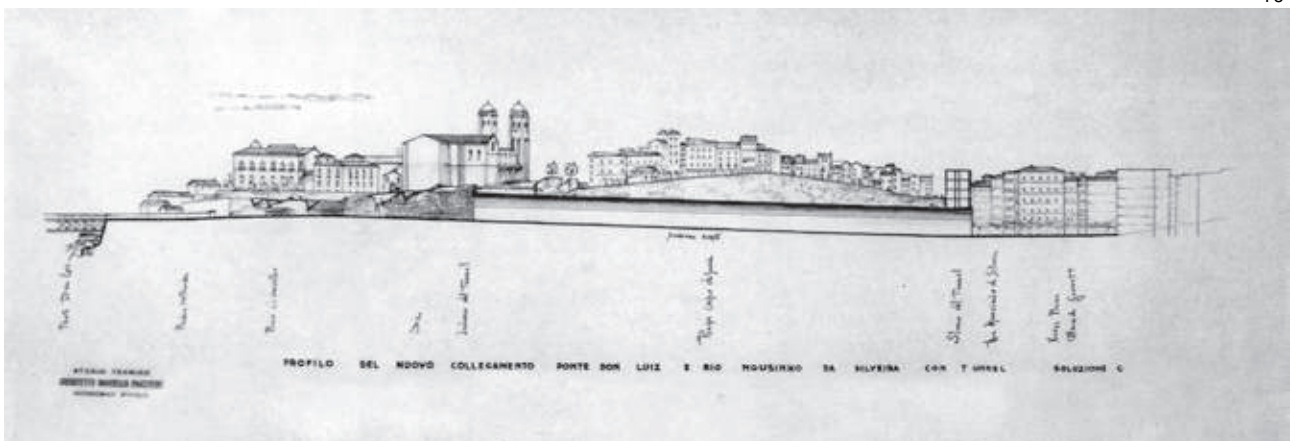
Marcello Piacentini, Avenida Ponte, 1939, plant variant B.



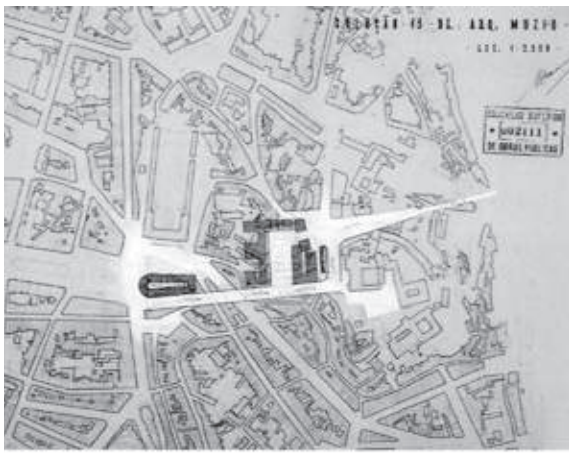
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Fig. 17
Marcello Piacentini, Avenida
Ponte, 1939, plant variant C.

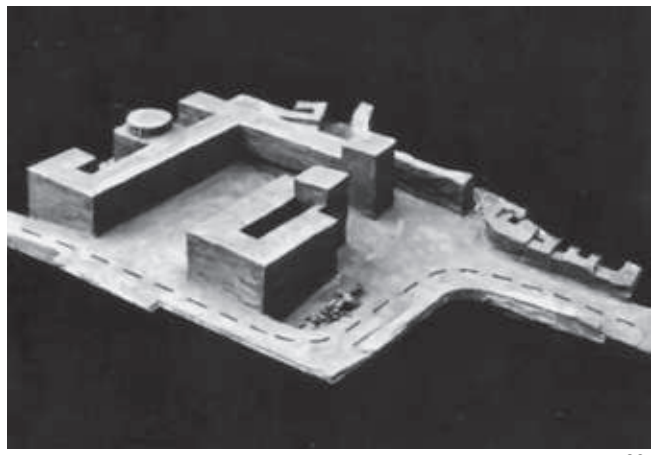
Fig. 18
Marcello Piacentini, Avenida
Ponte, 1939, plant variant D.



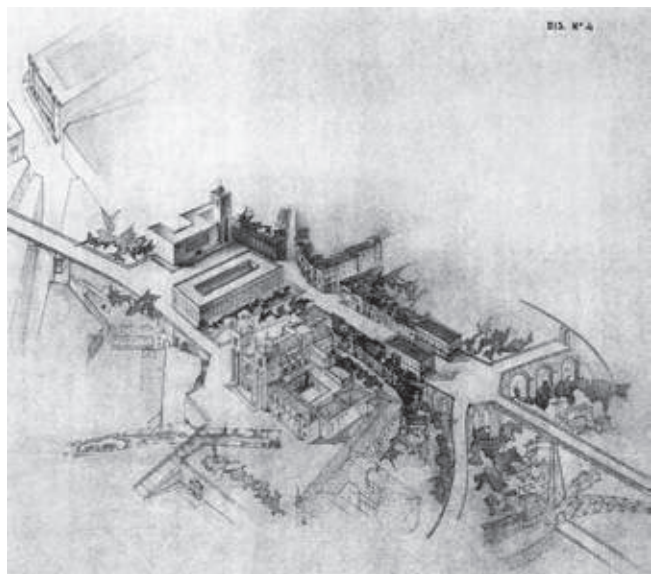
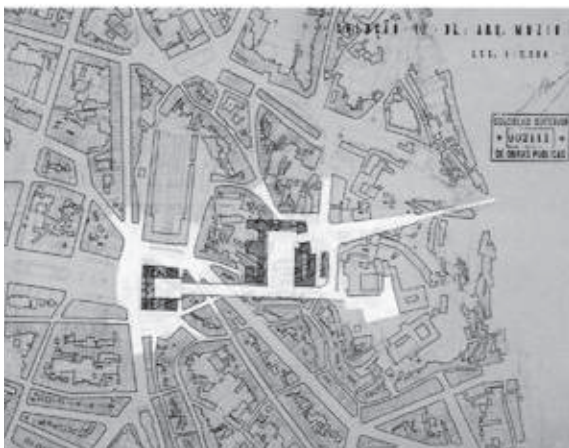
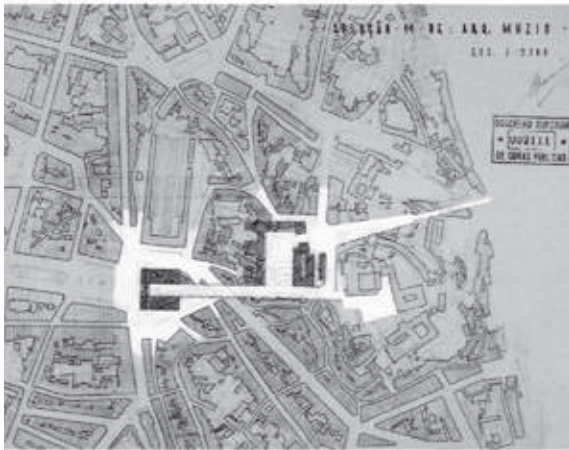
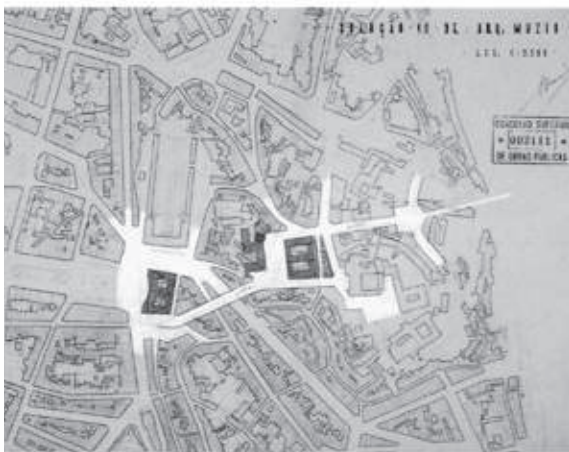
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Fig. 19

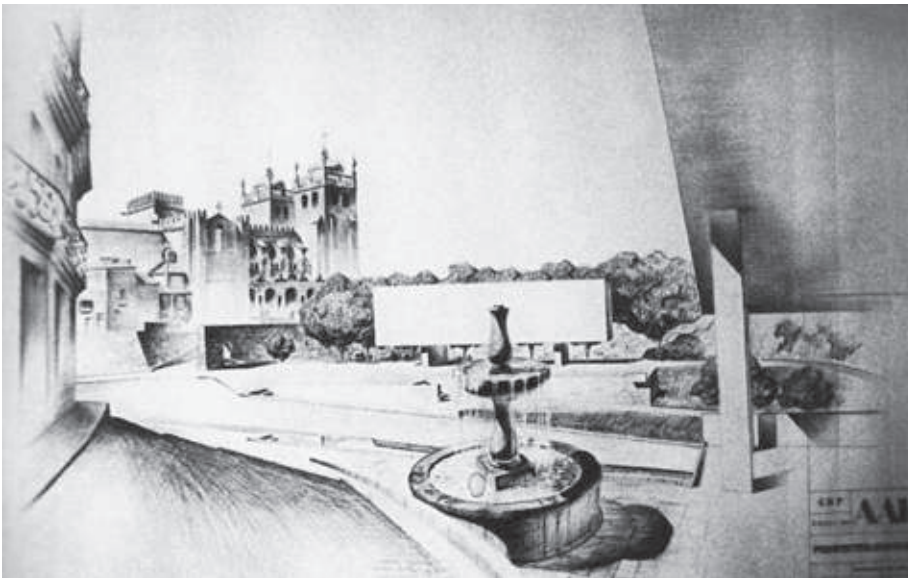
Giovanni Muzio, 1940, Avenida da Ponte, 1940, plan variants A, B, C and D.

Fig. 20

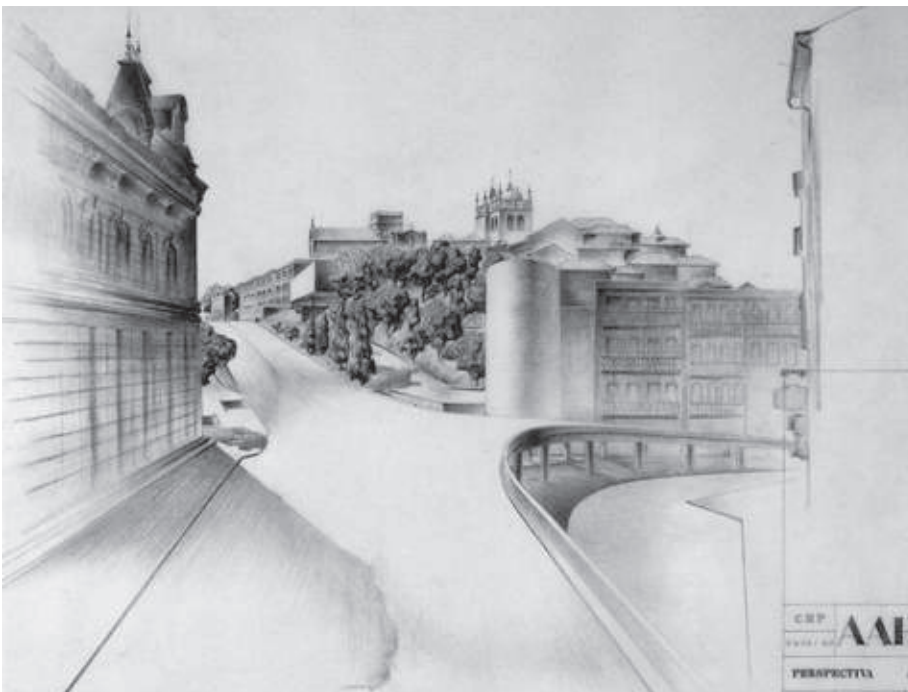
Giovanni Muzio, Avenida da Ponte, 1940, plant variant C.

Fig. 21

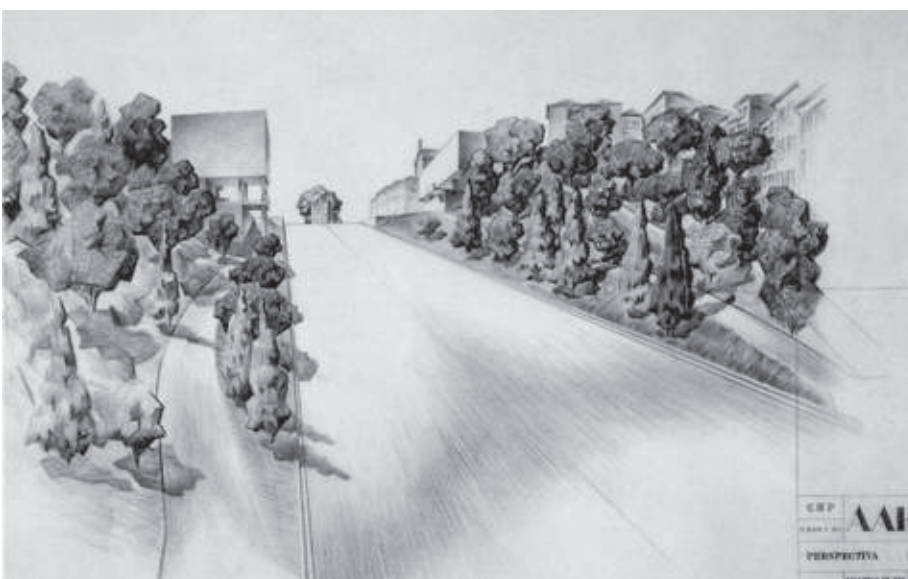
Giovanni Muzio, Avenida da Ponte, plant variant E.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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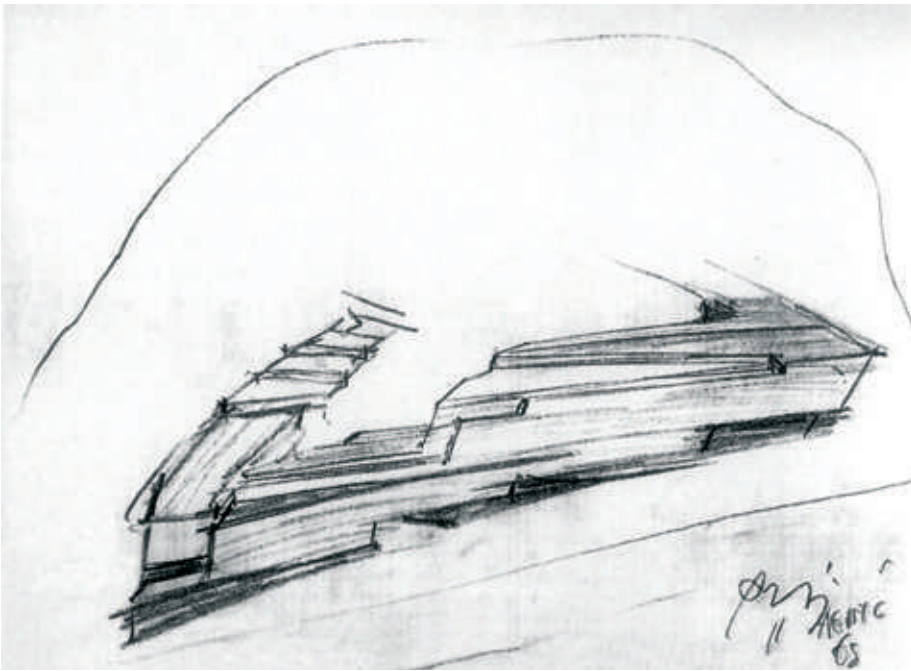
³ Luís Cunha (1933-2019), Porto architect, professor of Urbanism, at the time of the Auzelle Plan within the city's Urban Planning Department.

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

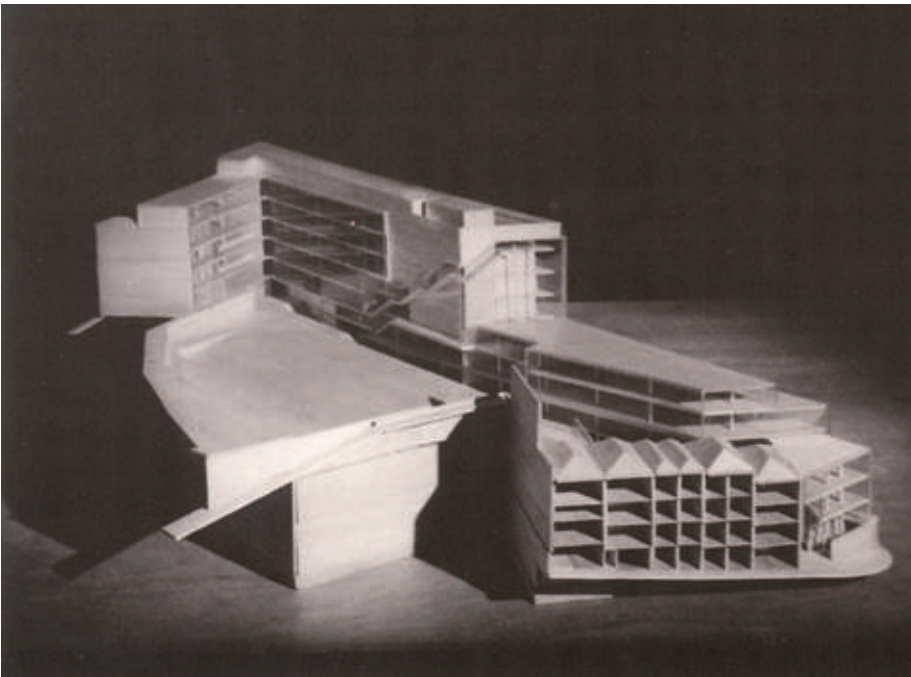
⁵ From an interview with Álvaro Siza in his studio in Porto conducted by the author (7 July 2007).

Fig. 25

Luís Cunha, Avenida da Ponte, 1962, planimetry.



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

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

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

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

Fig. 26-27

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

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

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

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

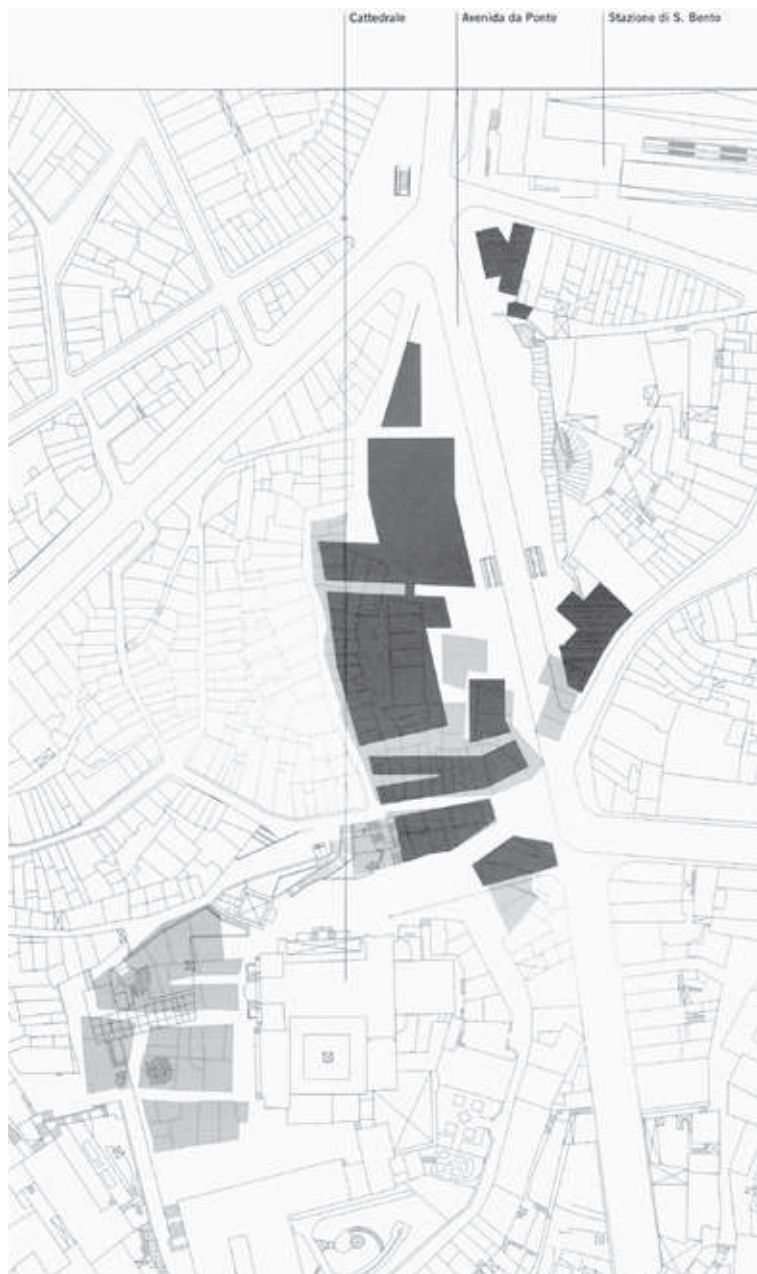
The two architects' approach to history is dialectical.

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

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

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

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

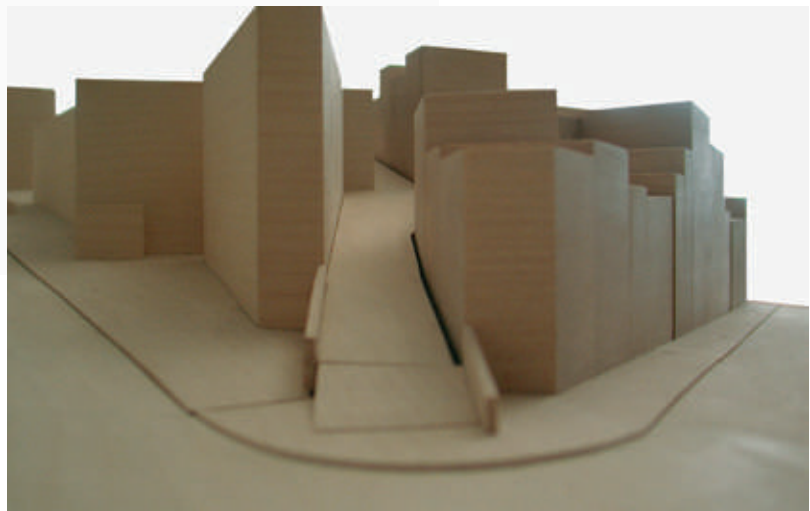
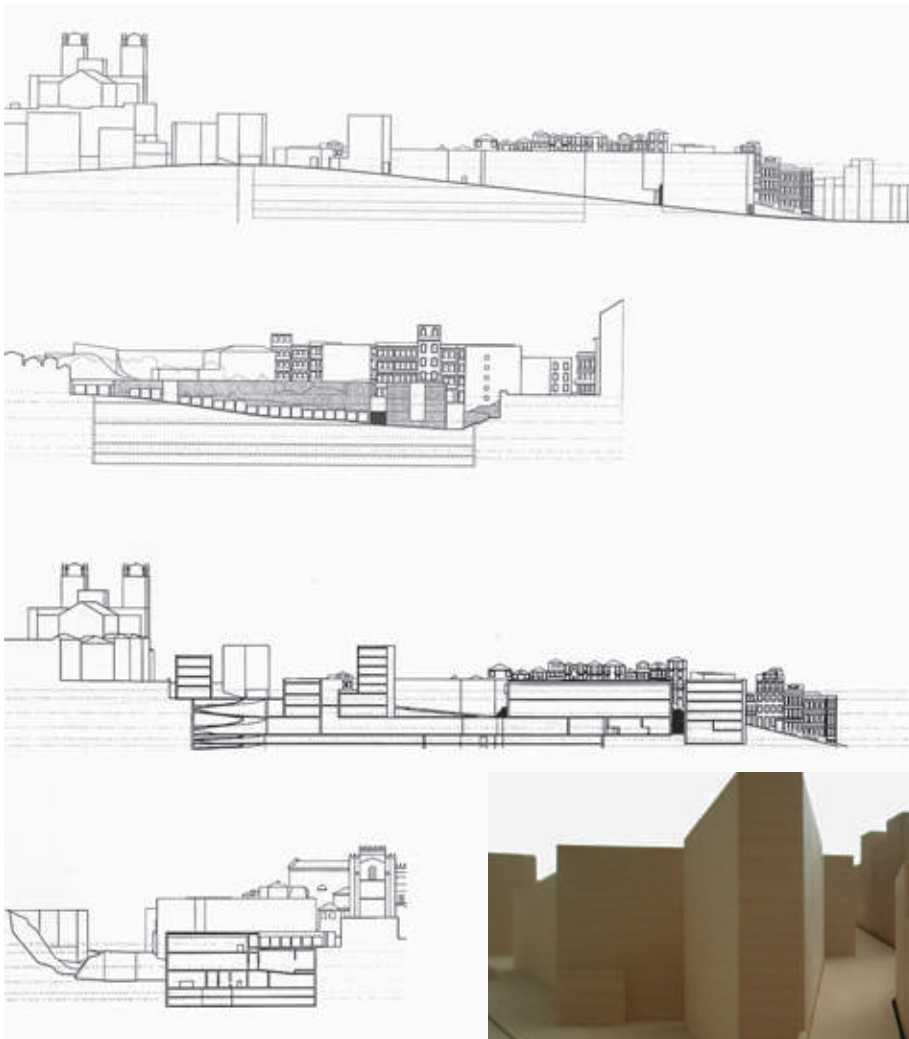


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Fig. 25

Alvaro Siza, Avenida da Ponte, 2001, planimetry.

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



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

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

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

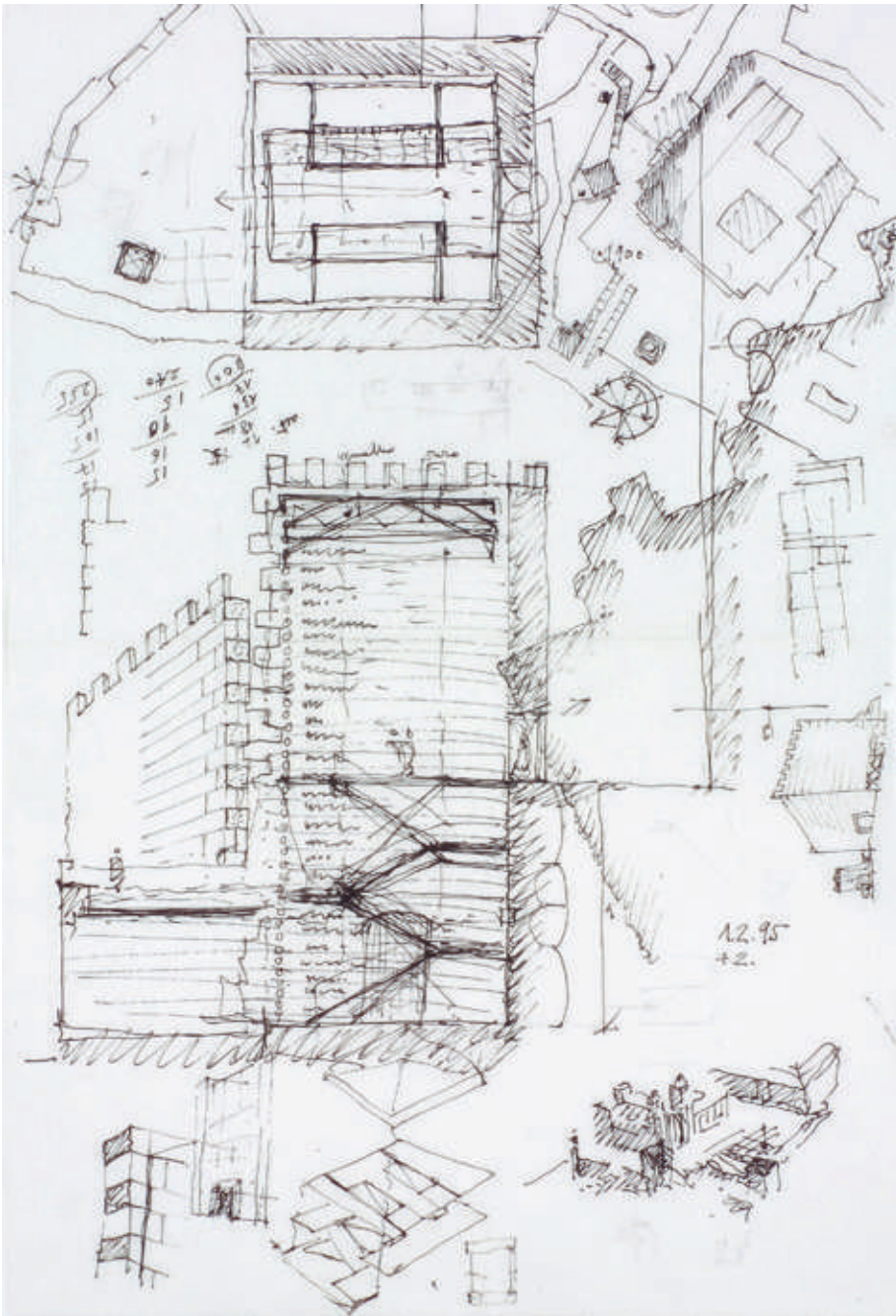
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Fig. 29

Alvaro Siza, Avenida da Ponte, 2001, section.

Fig. 30

Alvaro Siza, Avenida da Ponte, 2001, maquette.



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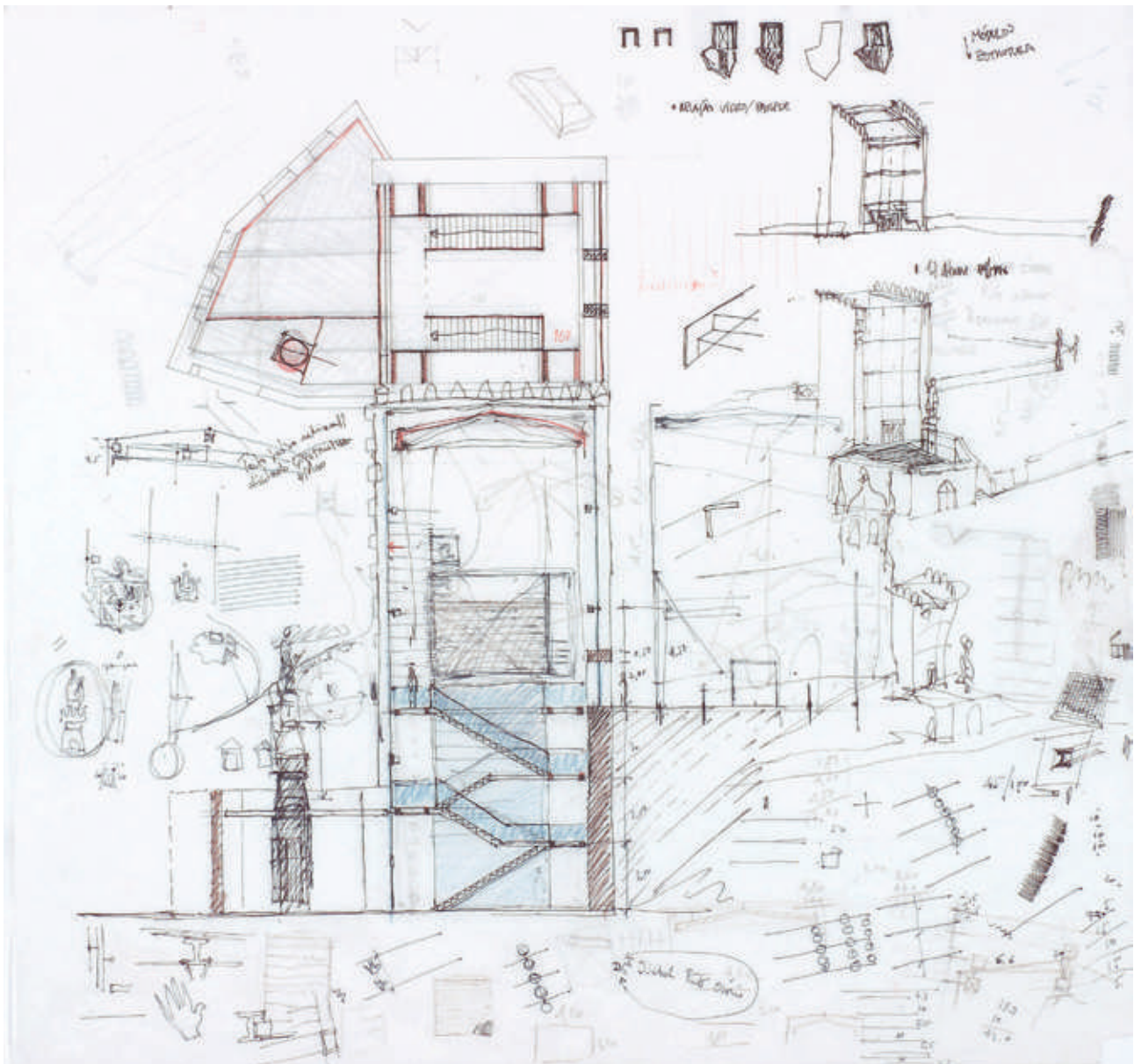
framings that are old and new, but all of a Portuguese nature; he rediscovers the scale of the city with its texture of solids and voids; he reunites monuments and the urban fabric; he juxtaposes architectures that are “witnesses of different eras”; finally he establishes a dynamic dialogue between the fragmented building masses and the rocky wall left free to the east, evoking the urban wound that thus takes on material consistency.

This approach to the project is nothing other than the continuation and completion of the complex system of relations set up by Távora’s project for the reconstruction of the Casa dos 24. The “approximation to reality” is, for Siza as well, the only way to develop a life on the site that is “an essential condition for preservation”.⁷

⁷ Álvaro Siza, “Report of the Preliminary Project for the Redevelopment of Avenida Afonso Henriques”, in *As Cidades de Álvaro Siza*, Carlos Castanheira ed. (Lisboa: Livraria Figueirinhas, 2001).

Fig. 31, 32

Fernando Távora, initial drawings of the tower at different scales (February–April 1995). Note the hypothesis of crenellation and masonry in granite blocks, later abandoned, and two small perspective annotations in which the tower is related to that of Rogério de Azevedo; the annotation of the gilding of the roof intrados is already present while the red colour, hypothesised for the exterior of the roof itself, was later abandoned (FIMS/AFT).



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

The Context, the Malleable "Matter" of Porto

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Tower's Past – The 'Archaeological' Study

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The State of the Ruin

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

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

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

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



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



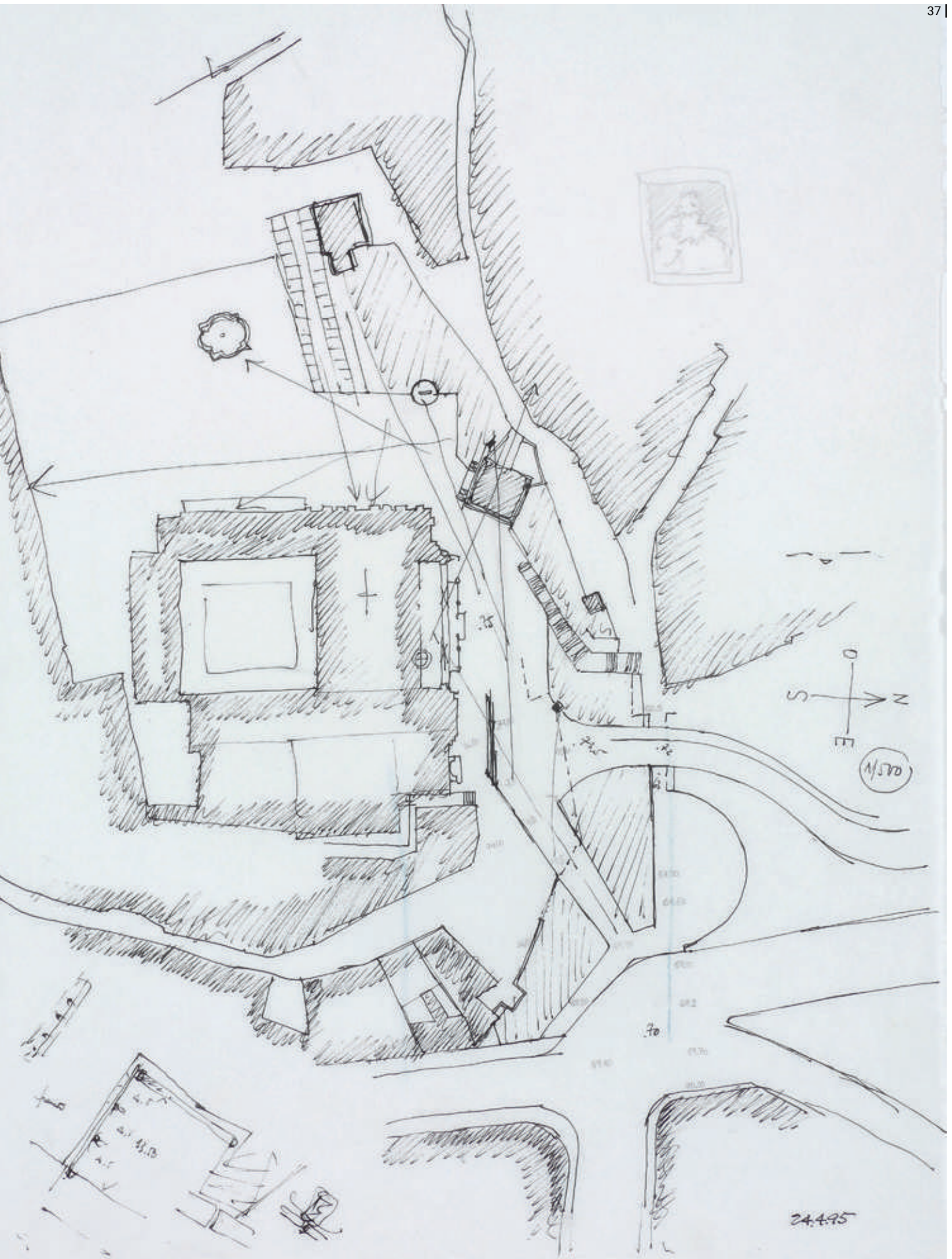
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Fig. 35, 36

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



Humility and the strength of the project – The Távora method

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

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

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

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

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

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



38

Memory and the Characters of Urban Composition

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

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

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

Fig. 37

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

Fig. 38

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

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



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

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



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



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Fig. 39

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

Fig. 40

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

Fig. 41

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

Fig. 42

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

Fig. 43

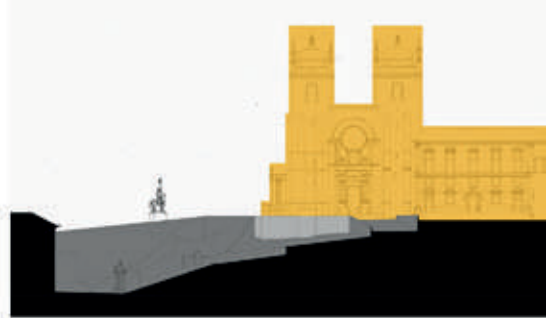
Fernando Távora, Casa dos 24, Porto 1995, churchyard door inscription (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



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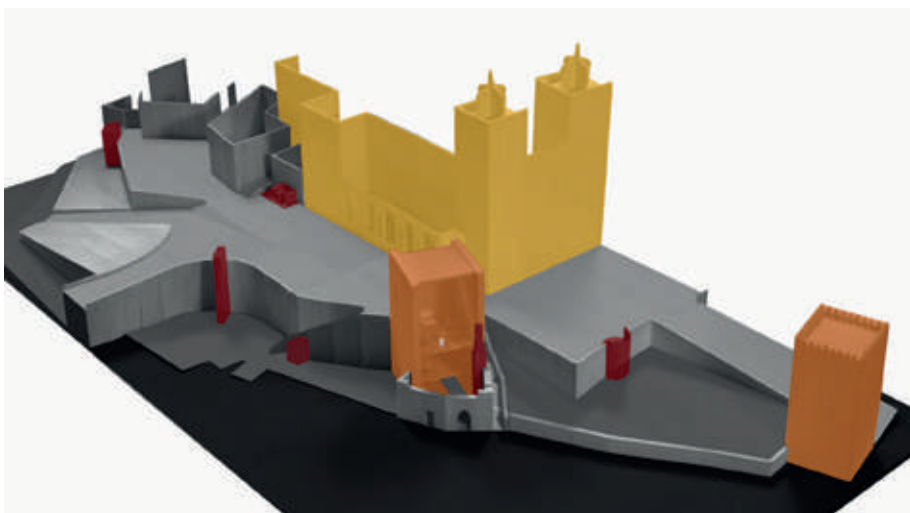


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The urban reconnection and compartmentalization of the route

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

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

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

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

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

The "Window" on the City's Time Frame

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

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

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

Fig. 44, 45

Composition analyses by Antonio Telesforo (North view).

Fig. 46, 47

Composition analyses by Antonio Telesforo (West view).

Fig. 48

Composition analyses by Antonio Telesforo (model tower).

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

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

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

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



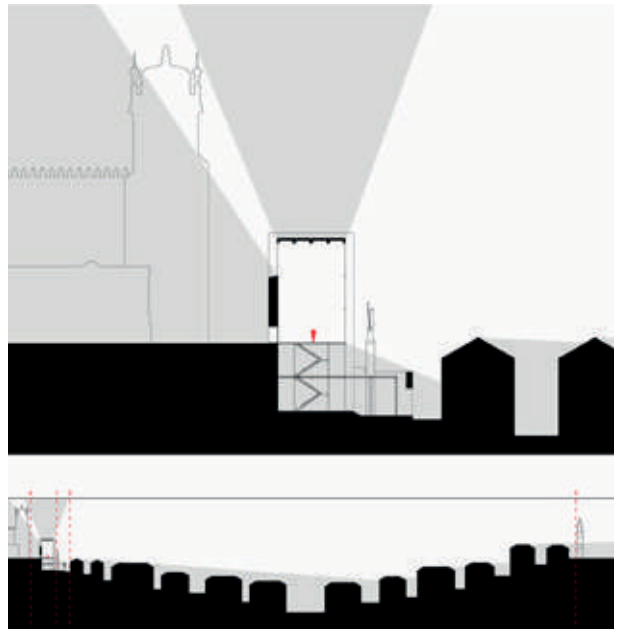
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Fig. 49

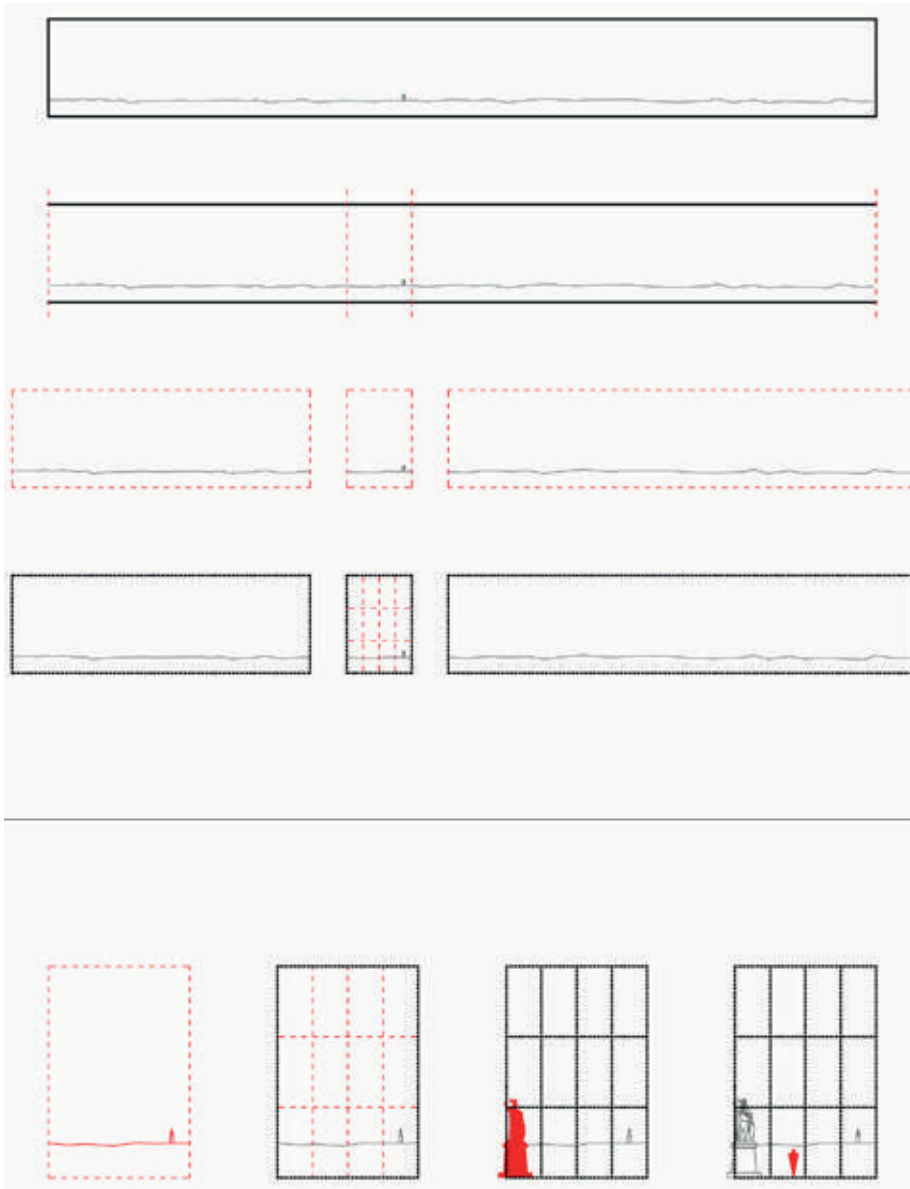
View of Porto Clerigos (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



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Fig. 50

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

Fig. 51

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

Fig. 52

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

The New Casa dos 24: a Window on History

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

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

The Rule of Construction: the Palm

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 Távora, "Memorial Portuense na Sé".

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



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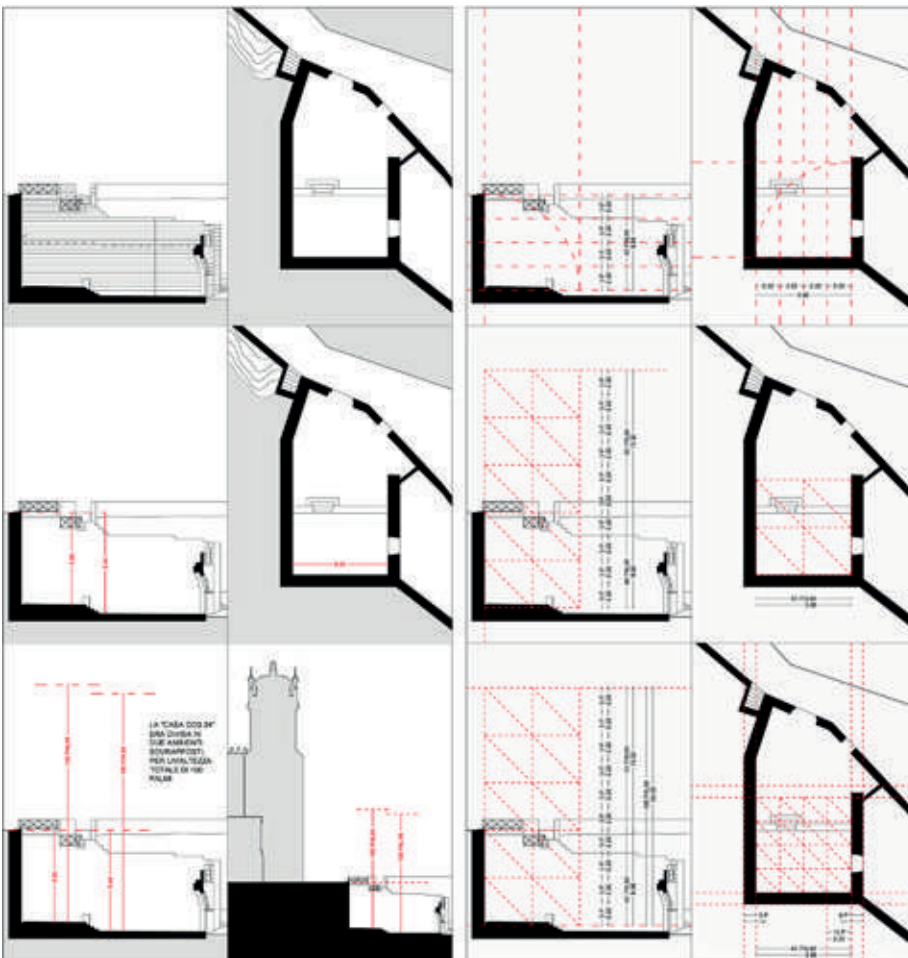


Fig. 53, 54

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

Fig. 55

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

Fig. 56

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

The Palm Mesh also Defines the Structure of the New Building

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Truth of Materials: the Sense of Gravity

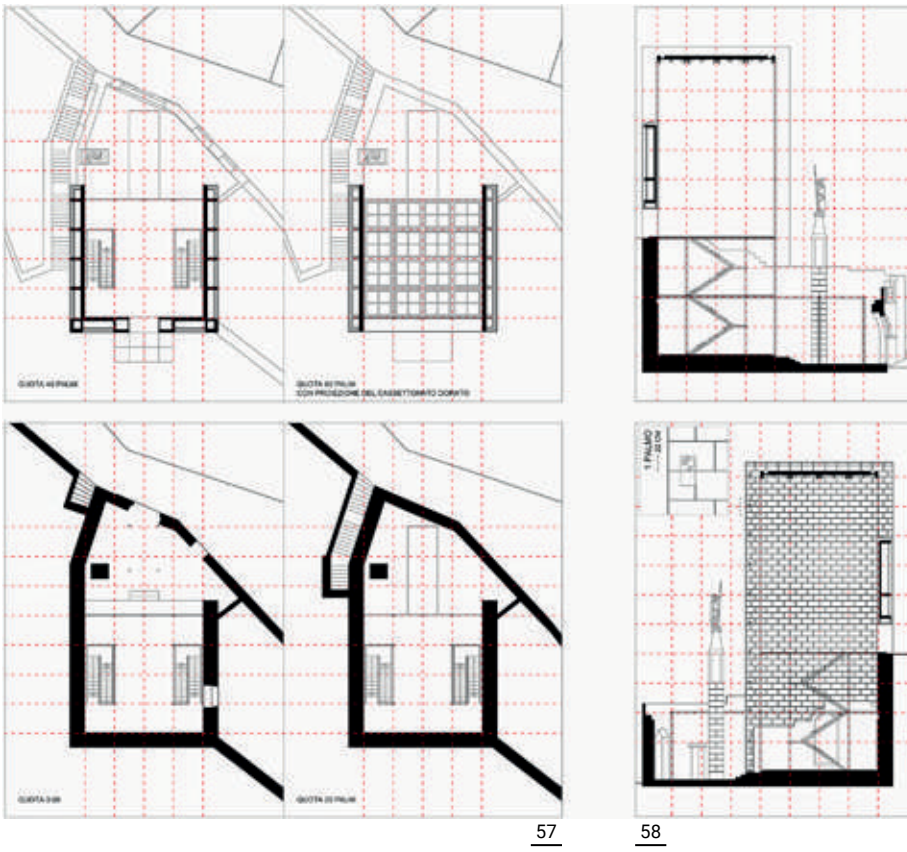
The first idea of the project consisted of a tower made of two opaque and two glass partitions. The roof was also transparent. The glazing was imagined to be made of tempered glass with a recessed supporting structure, not visible from the outside. But this hypothesis would have presented many technical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

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

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

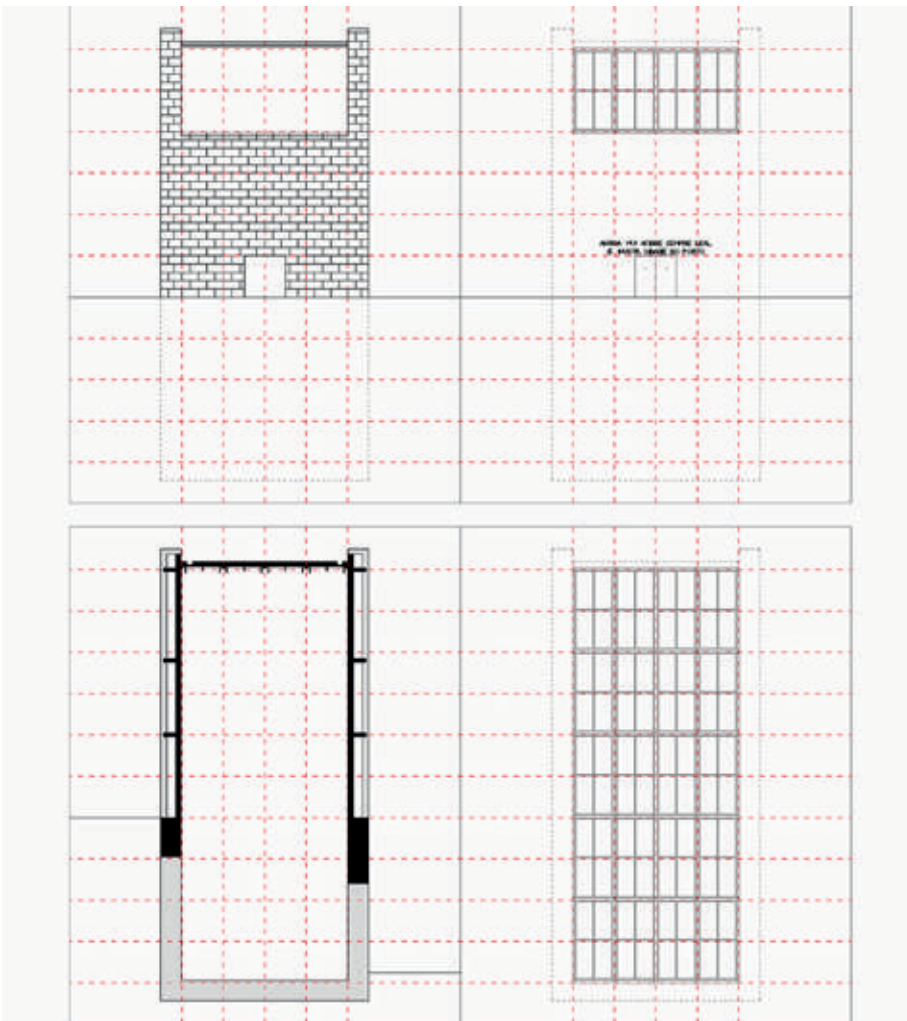
The construction once again takes on the demonstrative value of gravity and matter. As in Ofir's house (1957-58), to name but one of Távora's exemplary projects, the window frame is not denied, but rather its thickness gives weight to the transparent diaphragm, and guarantees a feeling of protection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

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



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Fig. 57

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

Fig. 58

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

Fig. 59

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 Fernando Távora in his report on the project.

21 Távora, “Memorial Portuense na Sé”.

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



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



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Fig. 61

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

Fig. 62

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



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

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

The Decor of Timeless Architecture

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carlos Martins reports that:

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

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

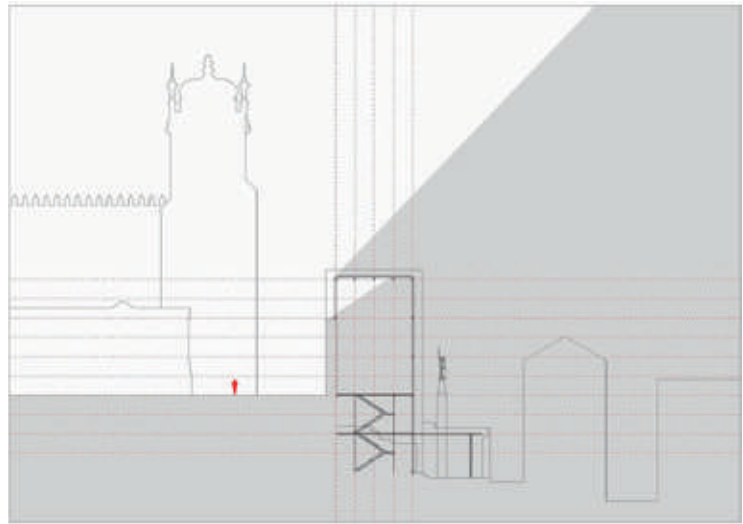
Távora does not want to affix decorative devices to the "modern" structure that would distort its reading, but the "memorial", by definition, is a symbolic place, so it is necessary to endow it with a certain "decorum". The solution of varnishing the intrados of the disposable coffered ceiling is therefore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

²³ Fernando Távora in his report on the project.

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

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

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



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Fig. 65

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

Fig. 66

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

Fig. 67

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

Fig. 68

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

Fig. 69

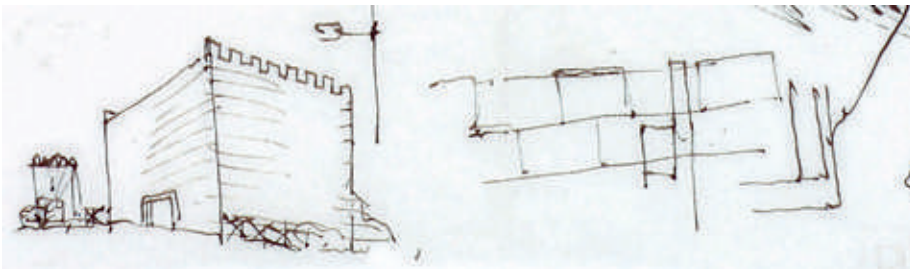
Decoration, the palm (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006).



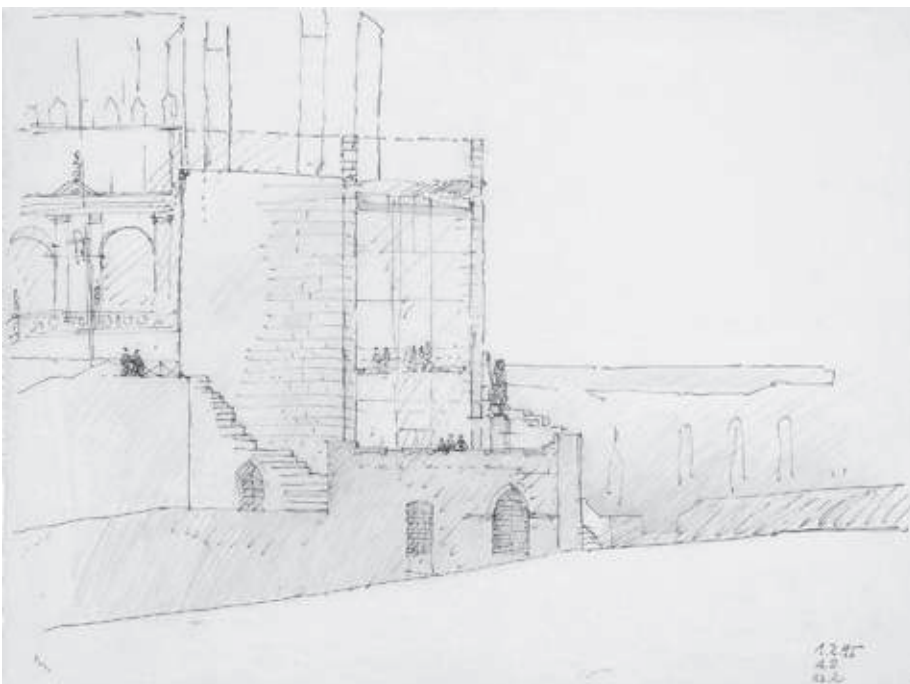
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Fig. 70

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

Fig. 71

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

Fig. 72, 73

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

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

The historic city has a void to fill.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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Fig. 74

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

Fig. 75

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

Fig. 76

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

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



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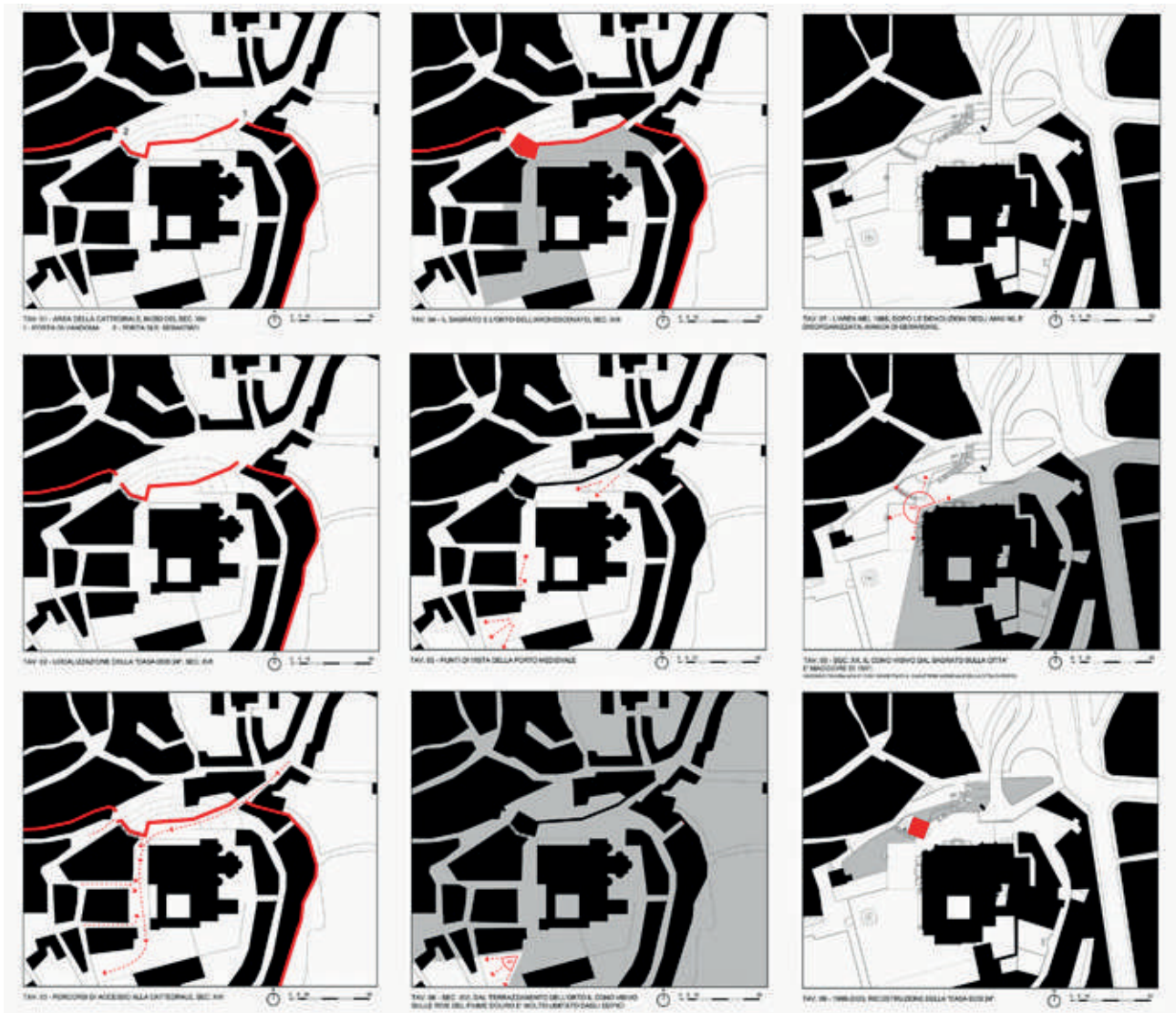
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Fig. 77

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

Fig. 78, 79

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



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Fig. 80

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

Fig. 81

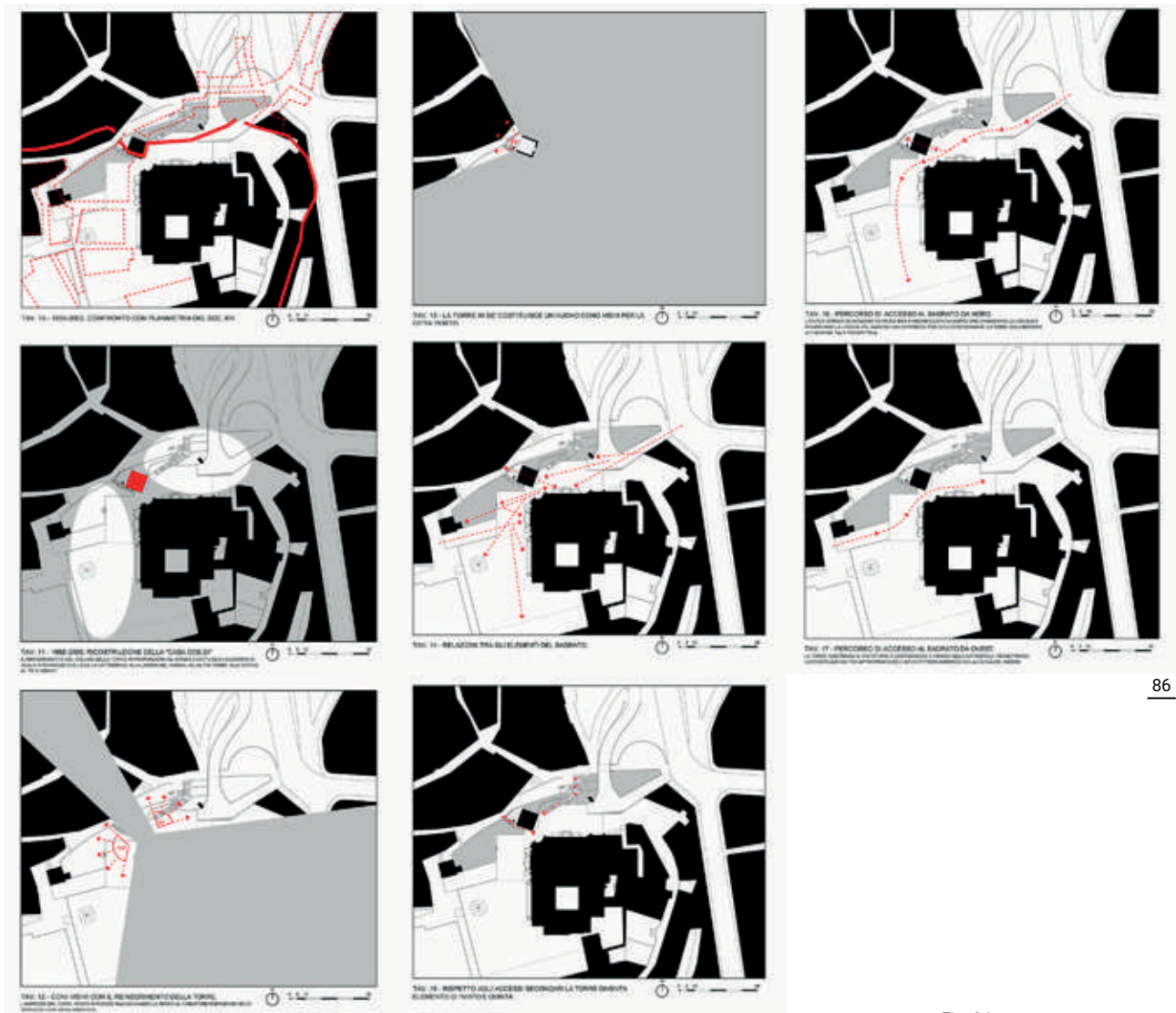
Analyses promenade century XVI; "Casa dos 24" and Sagrat; point of views of Porto; "limited" view of Porto: the terrace (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 82

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

Fig. 83

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



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Fig. 84

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

Fig. 85

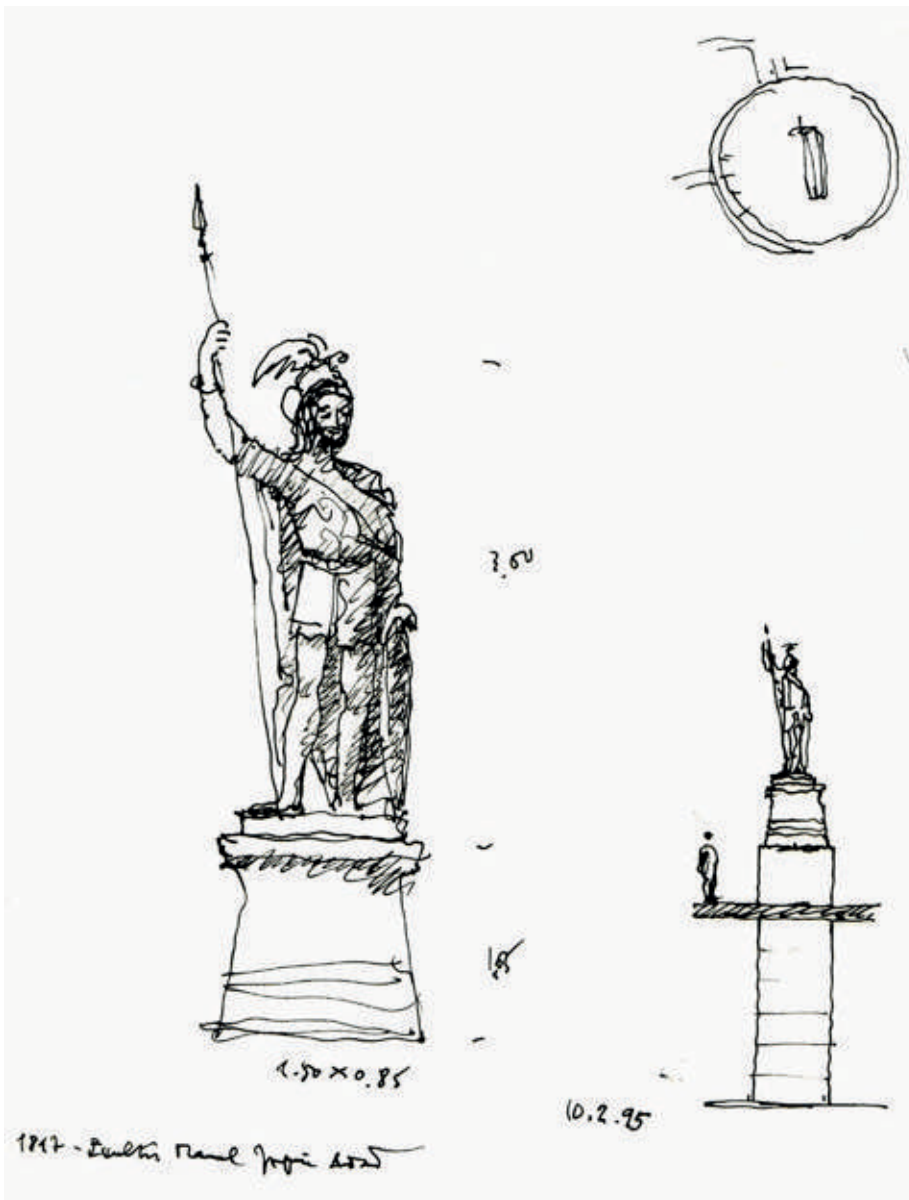
Analyses promenade century XX after reconstruction; new "Limited" View (90°) of Porto from the inside of Casa dos 24; relationship between the "characters" of the Sagrat; relationship between the secondary accesses and Casa dos 24 (graphics by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 86

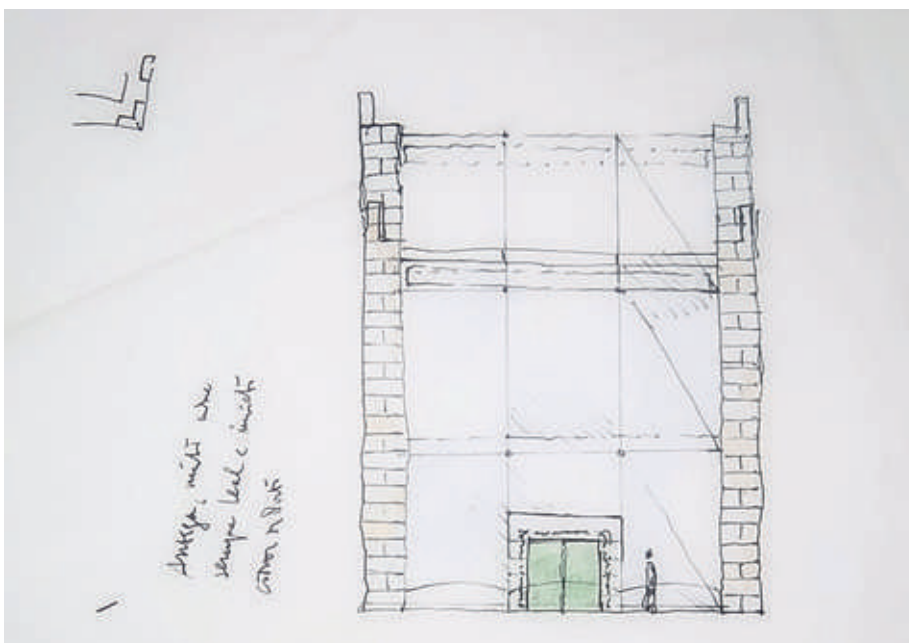
Analyses promenade century XX after reconstruction; access from Calçada de Vandoma and access from West (by Antonio Telesforo 2005-2008).

Fig. 87

Loggia view (photo by Antonio Telesforo, 2006)



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Fig. 88

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

Fig. 89

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

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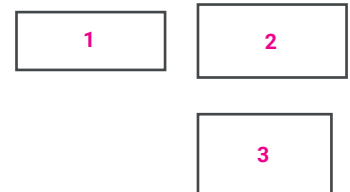
Távora, Fernando. "O Porto e a arquitetura moderna", *Panorama*, 4 (1952).



Arrangement of 8 de Maio Square

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1992-1997
PLACE/ADDRESS	Coimbra
COLLABORATORS	Pedro Pacheco, Fernando Barroso
CUSTOMER	Municipal Council of Coimbra
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



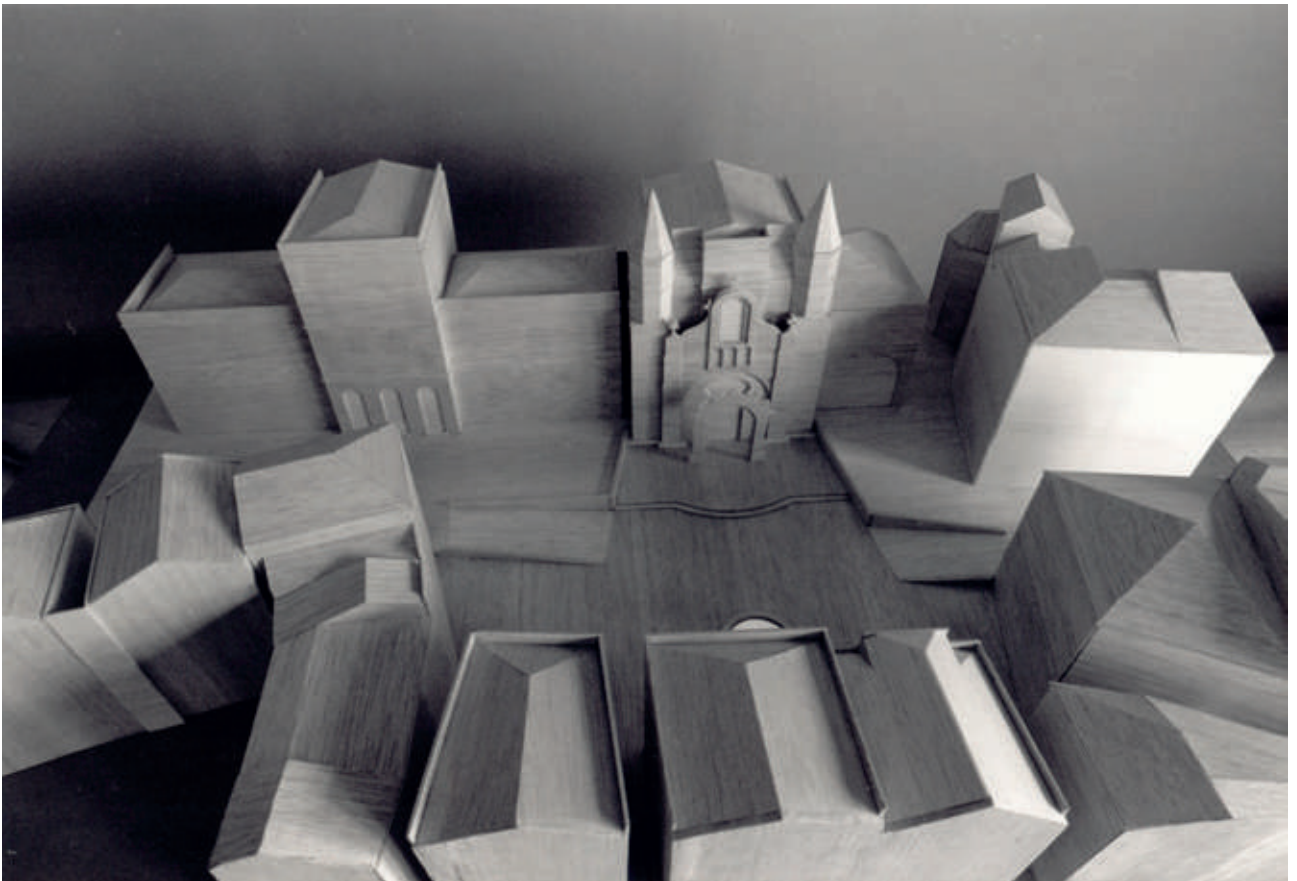
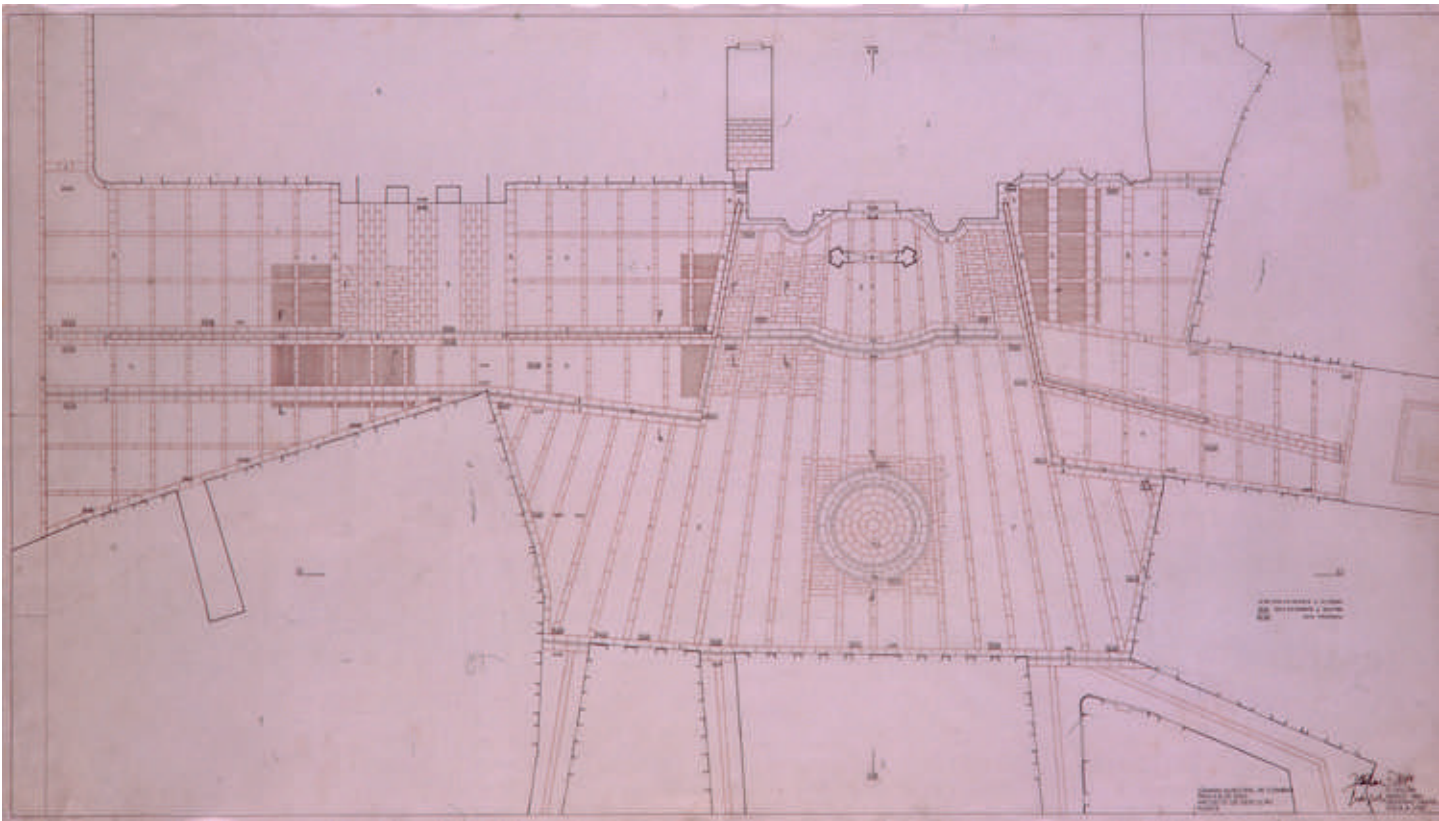
ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

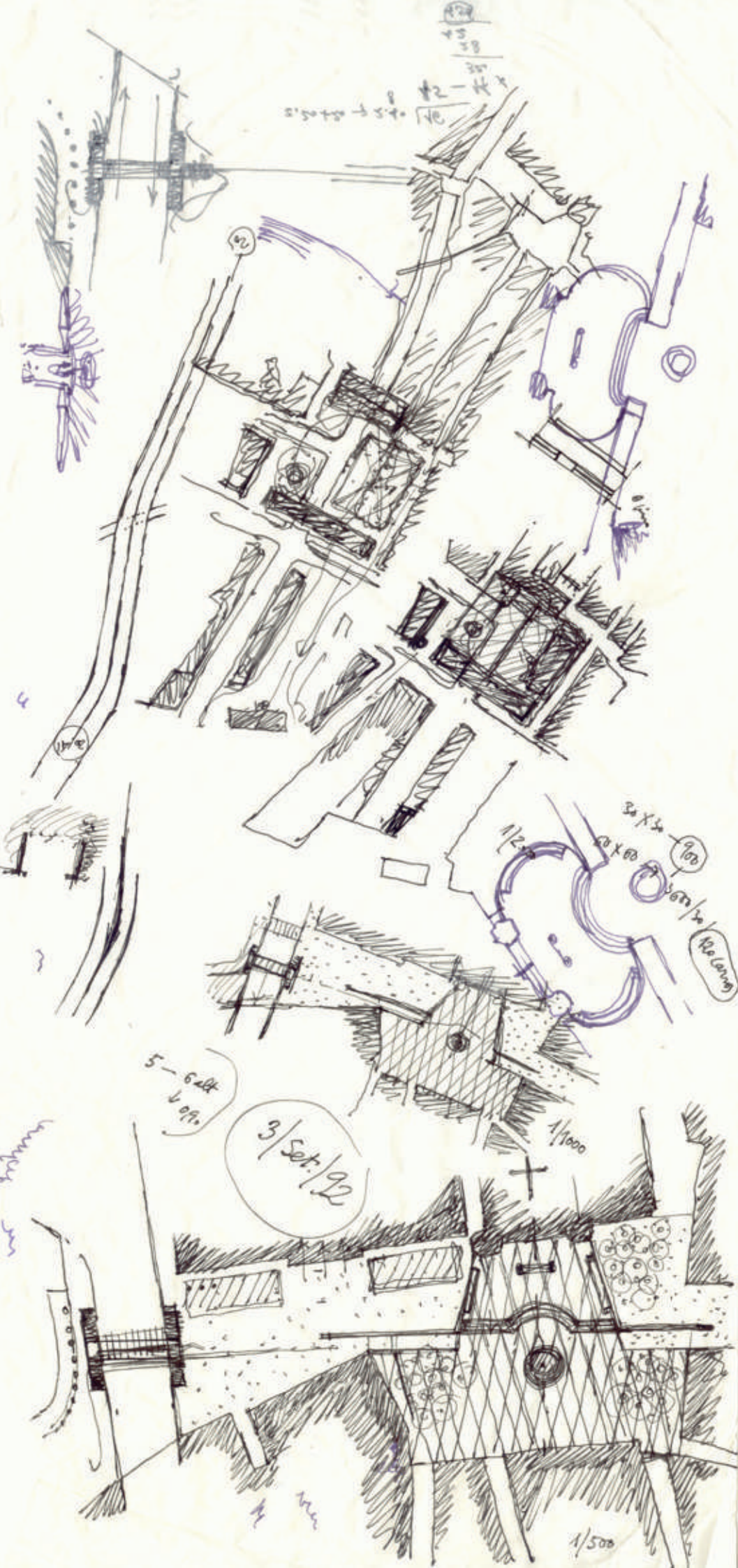
L. Trigueiros, *Fernando Távora* (Lisboa: Editorial Blau, 1993), 174-177; A. Esposito, G. Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2003), 262-265; J. A. Bandeirinha (ed.), *Fernando Távora. Modernidade permanente Permanet modernity* (Matosinhos: Casa da Arquitectura, 2012), 400-405.

IMG.1: Arrangement of 8 de Maio square, Coimbra 1992-1997, perspective, ink on paper; IMG.2: general plan, tracing paper; IMG.3: maquette (FIMS/AFT).

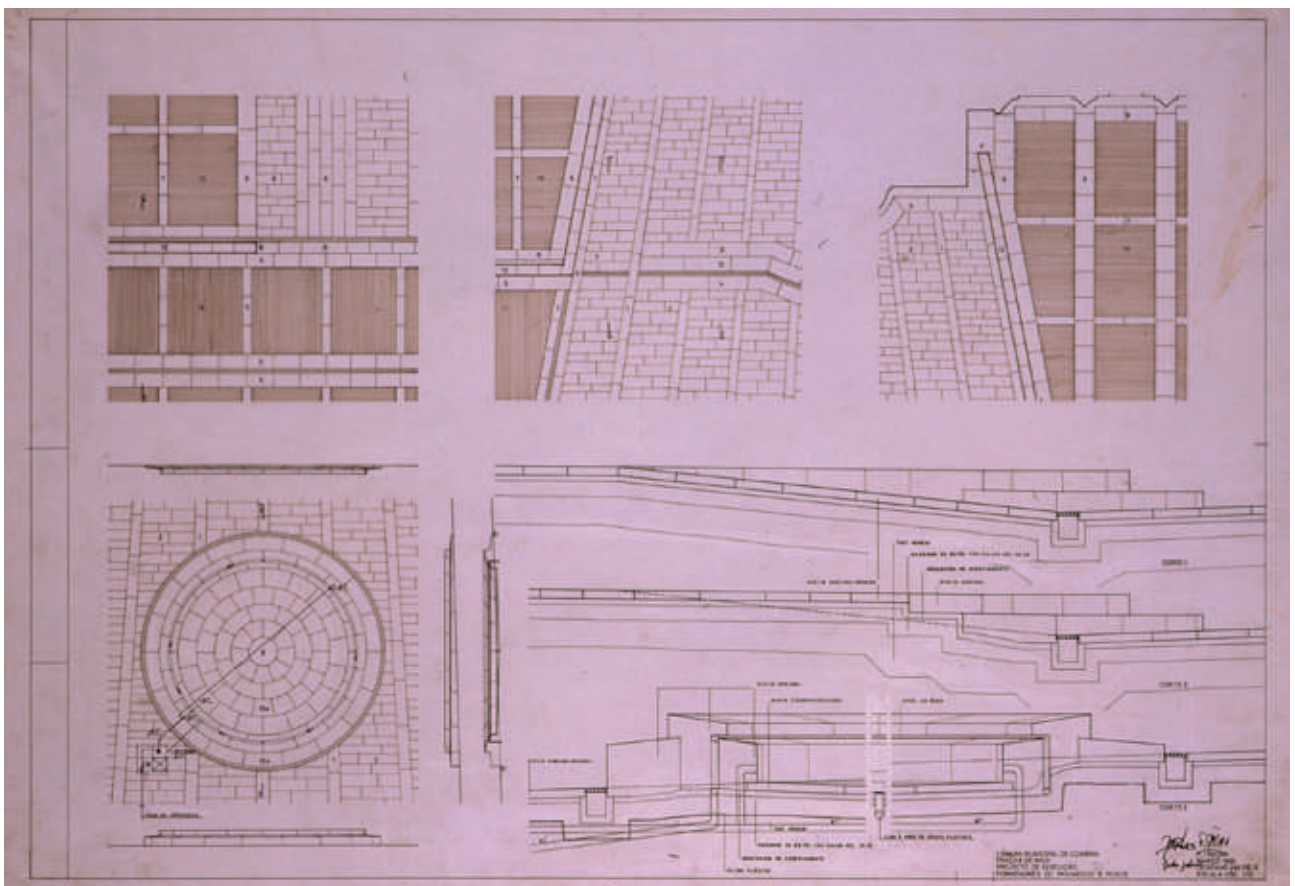
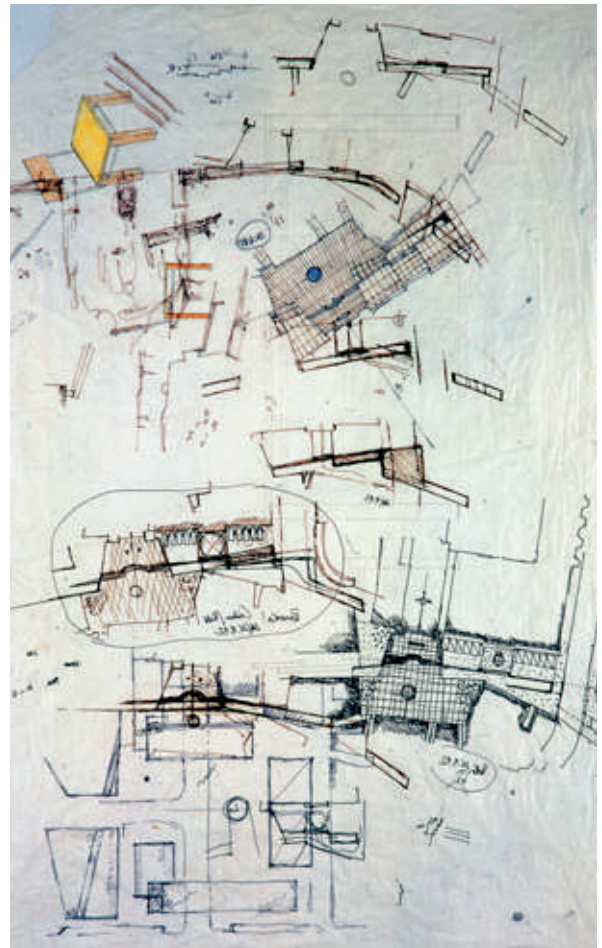
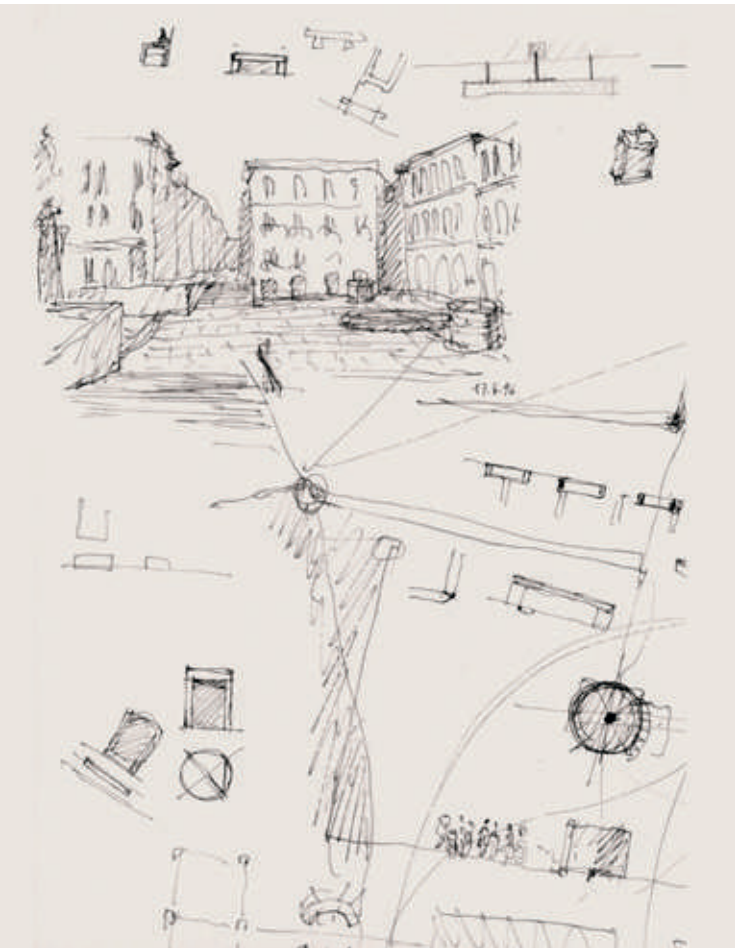


<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/19847> | ISSN 2611-0075
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IMG.4-5-6: Arrangement of 8 de Maio square, Coimbra 1992-1997, perspective, ink on paper, sketches of project, ink on paper; IMG.7: details of flooring and fountain, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).



A Project with Many Dates. Fernando Távora, Santa Cruz and Sansão Square in Coimbra

Távora, Sansão Square, Coimbra, Heritage, Urban Design

/Abstract

This text seeks to relate Fernando Távora's urban design of Sansão Square, in Coimbra, with the social, cultural and material conditions that surrounded it and, above all, with some particular characteristics of Távora's mindset regarding his own design practice.

On examining the process, it becomes abundantly clear that the relationship between the developer, the supervisors, the architect and the builder was far from balanced. Fernando Távora submitted the preliminary project for approval in April 1993. From then until construction was completed, by the end of 1997, a myriad of problems arose during the natural development of the project: from delays in formalising the contract, to successive disagreements over the choices of materials, or even the attempt to include different elements from the approved project. Without any kind of concessions to the traditionalist way, Távora sets out on the 8 de Maio Square project – one of his dearest, in his own words – with full awareness that historical reposition is not something to be searched for, under the dust of a thousand circumstances, it is not something flexible that could be adapted to the occasion, under risk of losing its tie to the truth.

Finally, we intend to reflect on the meaning of time and space limits in design practice and in the final result of architecture. The duration of a project, of a work, time itself, is not, never has been and never can be a condition for inclusion or exclusion in any category.

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José António Bandeirinha graduated in 1983 as an architect from the Escola Superior de Belas-Artes of Porto. Currently he is full professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Coimbra, where he completed his PhD in 2002 entitled "The SAAL process and the architecture in April 25th 1974". Having as main reference architecture and the organisation of space, he has been dedicating his work to several subjects – city and urban condition, housing, cultural studies. From 2007 until 2011 he held the position of Pro-rector for cultural affairs at the University of Coimbra, and from 2011 until 2013 he was the Director of the College of the Arts at the University of Coimbra. In 2012 he curated the exhibition "Fernando Távora Permanent Modernity", coordinated by Álvaro Siza. He was the scientific consultant of the exhibition "The SAAL Process Architecture and Participation 1974-1976", curated by Delfim Sardo and organized by the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Oporto, Portugal, in collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, Canada (2014-2015). He is a senior researcher at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra. He held the position of director of the Department of Architecture at the University of Coimbra from 2002 until 2004, from 2006 until 2007, and from 2017 to 2021. José António Bandeirinha had been continuously working on the urban and architectural consequences of political procedures, mainly focusing on the Portuguese 20th century's reality.

The oldest Portuguese university, based in Coimbra, which traditionally followed a conservative pedagogical approach, founded a Faculty of Sciences in 1911, created from the fusion of the faculties of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. Sixty years later, in 1972, the new Faculty of Sciences and Technology was created, offering a range of engineering courses, and teaching for the development of applied research. But architecture education, in the historical university of Coimbra, started in 1988, when the old schools of fine arts of Lisbon and Porto were already integrated in the respective universities and the teaching of the subject was instead taught in the recently created faculties of architecture. The University of Coimbra, however, decided to incorporate this new school of architecture in the Faculty of Sciences and Technology. What were the reasons for this decision? It is a difficult question to answer, although the affinity with the engineering courses could be one of several possible arguments.

In any case, following the creation of that department, by the end of 1989, Fernando Távora began to collaborate with the University of Coimbra. He was invited along with two other professors, Alexandre Alves Costa and Domingos Tavares, who had already assisted him in transitioning architecture from the School of Fine Arts to the Faculty of Architecture of Porto. The department in Coimbra had already been running for a year, in a very rudimentary way, from a disciplinary point of view. It had no lecturers in the area of architecture and no courses dedicated to design studios. The first mission of this Porto delegation was to modify radically the curricular structure, hire architects to teach and try to recover the time lost by the first year's students¹.

This is how the history of architecture education in Portugal's oldest university began. But, in fact, at its core, the more conservative environments of the university, and of the city, did not see this new pedagogical feature in a very positive way, a discipline which, only a couple of years before, did not have a real *university quality*. Furthermore, at the time, in Coimbra, the involvement of architecture in the so-called urban planning was always very marginal and mostly confined to mere building design. Urban planning, as a generic technique for acting on urban fabrics, was the exclusive responsibility of civil engineers, who had been trained in the same university since 1920, for the first two academic years, and since 1973, with the full curriculum.

Why should this be mentioned? Firstly, to explain the presence of Fernando Távora in Coimbra, and secondly, because this situation may help to explain, at least partially, much of what occurred around the project we are going to focus on, the urban arrangement of the Sansão Square, in front of the Santa Cruz Church.

The Monastery of Santa Cruz, of the Augustinian Priests, is located in a strategic position in the city, at the entrance to the Ribela valley. It may be considered

¹ Rosa Marnoto Bandeirinha, *O Limiar do Claustro. Origens e práticas do Departamento de Arquitectura de Coimbra* (Coimbra: Master's Thesis in Architecture submitted to the Department of Architecture, under the supervision of Professor Jorge Figueira, 2013), 151-161. And also: Alexandre Aleves Costa, "Primeira anotação do Curso de Arquitetura de Coimbra (2012)", in Id., *Centralidades do Real* (Coimbra: e|d|larq, 2018), 151-160.



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the structuring element of the urban fabric that expands westwards. Its central location and significance are clearly demonstrated by the layout of Direita Street, the main northern exit, but also by those of Corvo Street, Louça Street and Moeda Street². Together with Visconde da Luz and Sofia streets, they form an immense fan shape that opens towards the river, and converges in the monastery. It should be pointed, however, that Sofia Street was opened later, in the early 16th century.

From another perspective, if we consider the ancestral route that crosses the Mondego river near the Portagem Square, and runs tangential to the hill that was once walled, through the Ferreira Borges and Visconde da Luz Streets, it touches the city wall near Porta de Almedina and then goes north, we can notice that its design pauses at a slight vertex, precisely in front of the Santa Cruz Church, and then continues along Direita Street. Given the harsh topographical circumstances – it is a very steep hillside mainly in the western and northern slopes – its tangentiality to the city wall is understandable, but the subtle nod of this small vertex clearly testifies to the polarising force the monastery has always processed [Fig. 1].

What is more, this is also confirmed by the *forma urbis* of a centrality that does not only derive from its local and urban significance, but also from the role it played in the context of the political and cultural establishment of a

2 Walter Rossa, *Diver[s]idade. Urbanografia do Espaço Urbano de Coimbra até ao Estabelecimento Definitivo da Universidade* (Coimbra: Doctoral dissertation submitted to the Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia da Universidade de Coimbra, 2001), 465-478.

Fig. 1

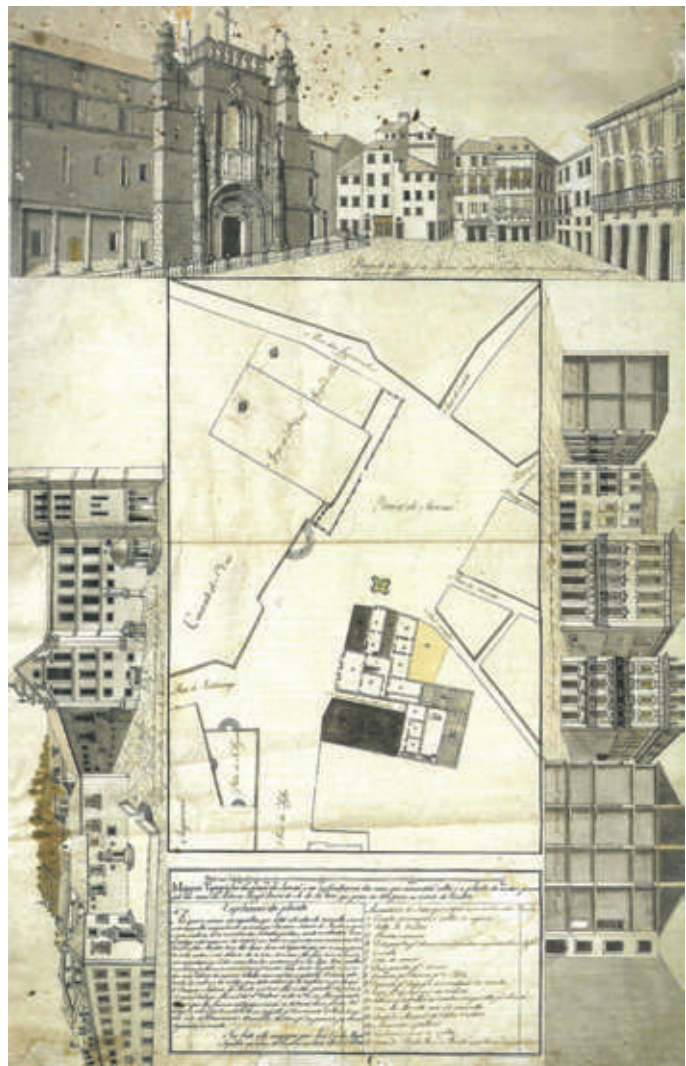
Aerial view of Santa Cruz Monastery and urban surroundings. Filipe Jorge, photography, & José António Bandeirinha, text. *Coimbra From the Sky*, Lisboa: Argumentum, 2004: 35.

primordial national identity: "(...) With the foundation of Coimbra's Santa Cruz Monastery, from 1131 onwards, it appears as the most original and powerful cultural centre of the beginning of Portuguese nationality"³.

With the establishment of independence and national identity, the Monastery of Santa Cruz generated an urban environment with a layout that is an extension of its own spatial order. In the first stage, it extends over the urban fabric developing to the west. Then in the 16th century, the eloquent layout of Sofia Street. Later on, in the 19th century, large urban developments were settled over the territorial structure of the monastic complex. There is a perennial and irrefutable dynamics that flows from the spatial matrix of Santa Cruz It balances its scale and is its urban front.

But there is no doubt that the main site of this contamination is the Sansão Square, also known as 8 de Maio. This square was the first public front of the building complex, where the frontispieces of the church and monastery were located. It is the entrance space, but also the space that allows the monastery to breath and balances its scale. It is its urban front.

However, as in all these areas of lower elevation in downtown Coimbra, the alluvial flooding of the river caused the floodwaters to rise, which in turn led to successive embankments of the streets and public spaces, in order to protect them from flooding. Whenever it was necessary to redesign the interior of buildings, the thresholds of houses were lifted. In this case of the Santa Cruz Monastery, only some areas – the church, the Cloister of Silence, the refectory – maintained their original floor levels. All throughout history but particularly in the 19th century, with the construction of the Town Hall building – between 1877 and 1886⁴ – and the subsequent transformation of the São João de Santa Cruz Church – currently Café Santa Cruz –, the surrounding spaces gained new interior and threshold levels. However, the entrance to the monastery church remained the same, and in the middle of the 16th century, there were still four steps up to enter. But progressively, the exterior pavement became higher and higher [Fig. 2]. At the end of the 18th century, around 1796, the high gap entering the church was already noticeable, people walking in had



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Fig. 2
Sansão Square. *Mappa topographico da praça de Sansão e as confrontações das ruas, que arrematão nella...* Executed by José Carlos Magne, 1796. Divisão de Documentação Fotográfica / Instituto Português de Museus. José Pessoa.1993.

3 José Mattoso, "A formação da nacionalidade no espaço ibérico", in *História de Portugal. Segundo Volume* (Mem-Martins: Círculo de Leitores, 1993), 262. (Translated from Portuguese by the author of this text).

4 Rui Lobo, *Santa Cruz e a Rua da Sofia. Arquitectura e urbanismo no século XVI* (Coimbra: E|d|larq, 2006), 46. And also A.C. Borges de Figueiredo, *Coimbra Antiga e Moderna* (Lisboa: Livraria Ferreira, 1886), 76.

to descend, and the exterior entrance platform, which coincided with the level of the threshold, was vast, ample and only minimally proportional to the scale of the building⁵. Nearly ninety years later, Borges de Figueiredo refers to the "(...) very small churchyard, where today we descend from the 8 de Maio square by three seven-stepped stairs (...) "⁶, obviously referring to the semioval ditch, protected by a balustrade with wrought-iron gates, which overcame the gap between the lower inside of the church and the higher exterior square pavement. This strange circumstance of the entrance to the monument, although seen as purely as a functional resource, in fact completely changed the ancestral system of relations that the church maintained with its closest urban surroundings. Mainly, because the axis articulating the system was transversally displaced, and the layout dynamics that had been reproduced towards the outside, starting from the axiality of the religious space, which had generated not only the square but also a dense and regular fabric towards the west⁷, was subjected to a perpendicular transversal axis, as preponderant as that of its longitudinal predecessor.

The church, sunk down in relation to the street, was then in a very fragile position, and could hardly respond to the needs of articulation of the central area of a city with progressively transforming dynamics that, just like urban spaces all over the world throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The main circulation flows, which induce street outlines, had undergone a ninety degree shift and became tangentially to the church.

Meanwhile, the square began to fill up with shops, cafés and services. Trams and other vehicles crossed it, indifferent to the hidden entrance to the symbolic and ancient monastery [Fig. 3]. Anyone who descended the "seven steps" in one of the "three staircases" entered another world, dedicated to worship and prayer, but also to the contemplation of the intense artistic and architectural significance of the pieces and the spaces that remained inside. The urban circumstance of the monument, seen by less observant eyes as a necessary effort to regulate incompatibilities considered inevitable, had in fact subverted all communication between the building and the city, negatively affecting its semantic representativeness and, above all, its symbolic meaning. The layout of 8 de Maio Square, at the time, was a dual diagram, of both cause and effect for the depleted and inferior condition of the Santa Cruz Church. This situation persisted for more than a century. And this is how Fernando Távora found it when he was commissioned to redesign it.

Hence, at the beginning of the 1990s, following the recommendation of the urban consultant and civil engineer Jorge Carvalho, the Coimbra City Council made the decision to invite prestigious architects with previous remarkable

5 According to the engraving of José Carlos Magne, 1796, Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro, no. INF 5849, described in: Virgílio Correia, *Obras*, vol. I (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1964-1978), 274-283.

6 Borges de Figueiredo, *Coimbra Antiga e Moderna*, 52. (Translated from Portuguese by the author of this text).

7 Rossa, *Diver[s]idade. Urbanografia do Espaço Urbano de Coimbra até ao Estabelecimento Definitivo da Universidade*, 465-467.



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urban interventions in the city⁸. Since some of these recognised architects were teaching at the time in the newly established Architecture School of the Faculty of Science and Technology, the association was happened naturally. As a result, Fernando Távora, Raul Hestnes Ferreira and other professors⁹ were invited to carry out projects in places considered strategic by the urban administration. Távora, who was highly reputed for his works in the historical district of Guimarães, was in charge of 8 de Maio Square, not as a limited space, but rather as part of the area of the so-called Bota Abaixo. In Portuguese, the expression Bota Abaixo is a popular and generic reference to demolitions. In Coimbra, particularly, it is a popular originated toponymic term that roughly designated the western limit of the streets Louça, Moeda and João Cabreira. It is a set of demolished blocks, hence the obviousness of the toponym, which establishes the old plan of connecting the Avenida Fernão de Magalhães to the City Hall. This intention, generically known as Avenida Central, had, in terms of design and layout, numerous developments: In the 1930s, with the Plano de Urbanização da Baixa da Cidade, by Luís Benavente (1936); in the 1940s, with the Plano Preliminar de Urbanização, Embelezamento e Extensão da Cidade de Coimbra, by Étienne De Gröer (1940), with specific designs for that intervention; in the 1950s, with the Plano de Remodelação da Baixa da Cidade, by Alberto Pessoa; and, in the following decades, the 1960s and 1970s, with various studies presented by the City Council's technical agencies¹⁰. The commissioner's intention was rather clear: to settle the issue of the square itself and,

8 Jorge Carvalho, ed., *Urbanismo Coimbra Anos 90* (Coimbra: Câmara Municipal de Coimbra, 1993).

9 Alexandre Alves Costa, for instance, would be invited to submit a proposal for an intervention in the Guarda Inglesa area, which subsequently did not come to be carried out. The Plan for Bairro da Rosa, near Ingote, a suburban area with a high concentration of public and semi-public housing, would be committed to Raul Hestnes Ferreira.

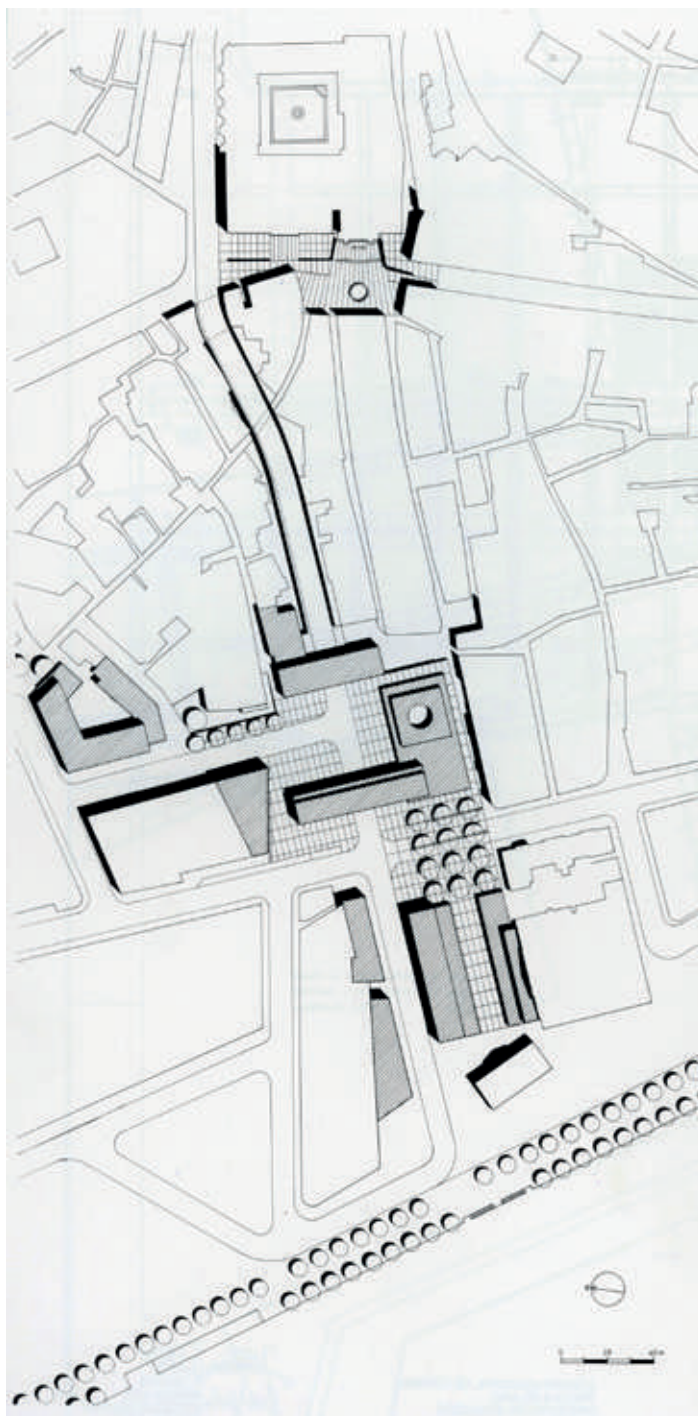
10 Sandra Maria Fonseca Almeida, *A Cidade Baixa. Evolução e Caracterização do Espaço Urbano* (Coimbra: Final exam of the Degree in Architecture of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology of the University of Coimbra, 1997).

Fig. 3

Sansão Square C. 1040s. Foto Estrela, unknown photographer.

at the same time, revive the insistent question of the connection to Avenida Fernão de Magalhães.

This was commissioned in May 1992 and just a few months later, in October, Fernando Távora presented an overall design, summarised in a layout plan, already contained a well-developed structural basis for the intervention at Sansão Square, but also including extended intentions towards the west, all the way to the river bank¹¹. This design plan was published and widely publicised by the City Council [Fig. 4]. It is a document that reveals the still embryonic desire to darn urban areas in a severe state of decline. Its starting point is the peripheral closure of the Bota Abaixo area, in an attempt to create a square, and the proposal of a street that artificially overlaps the existing fabric, almost a canal, that runs through the interior of the block and reappears in the axis of Rua Olímpio Nicolau Rui Fernandes. It's noticeable that the intervention at Sansão Square is wisely disconnected from the others and that, above all, it is much more studied, much more and matured. This exclusively planimetric design, which has a degree of finalisation compatible with a scale of 1/2000 or, at most, 1/1000, was never fully developed. Coimbra's City Council decided to move forward with the execution project for 8 de Maio Square and dropped the order for the remaining spaces. Nevertheless, the plan guided the entire building mass that various architects were proposing for the area. In a distorting and, above all, deeply unfair attitude, the various buildings that were built according to that first study were then attributed to Fernando Távora. It is essential, for his memory and above all out of respect for the truth, to clarify what has been done. It is, in fact, enough to simply observe to notice how different those buildings are from each other and, above all, how different they are from Távora's work¹². It seemed clear, anyway, that 8 de Maio Square was the work that really interested him. So, this was the work that he would have developed later, due to the explicit intention of the municipality. But this was also the



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Fig. 4
Fernando Távora. Detail plan for the axis Praça 8 de Maio – River. Carvalho, Jorge, coord. *Urbanismo Coimbra Anos 90* (Coimbra: Câmara Municipal de Coimbra, 1993): 29.

11 Carvalho, *Urbanismo Coimbra Anos 90*, 29.

12 On several occasions I have heard the architect Fernando Távora describe to me, among other vicissitudes of the project, the meetings he had with the designers of those buildings, also showing his growing distance in relation to what was being built.

work for which he already had a structuring purpose, which basically consisted of the following premise: if the floor of the Santa Cruz Church does not coincide with the exterior, the exterior floor should be lowered to coincide with that of the Santa Cruz Church¹³.

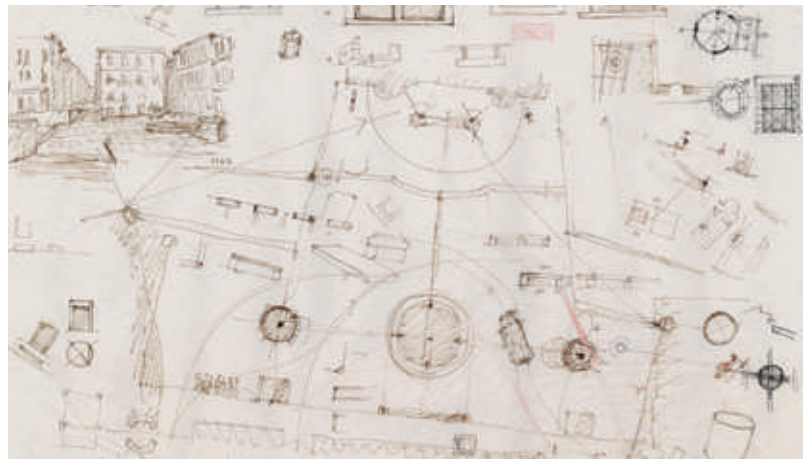
Therefore, Távora took the altimetric coordinates of the entrance to the monument, then the altimetric coordinates of the westmost side of the square, and connected them, thus restoring the initial axis [Fig. 5]. He established the whole composition system based on this principle, dictated by the very space of Santa Cruz Church: all the lines of the layout are directed to the centre of the main altar. The architectural strength of the church thus becomes a pole of irradiation, in a literal, almost rhetorical sense, for the whole compositive system of the surrounding public space [Fig. 6, 7].

But beyond this, throughout the new layout of the square, the pavement is an extension of that ancestral urban dynamic that generated the layout of the streets in a fan shape open to the west. The primordial historical sense was re-established, the original axially based on the intrinsic value of the building, precisely the one that had organized all the surrounding space, was not only reconstructed but improved as well.

Some voices claimed that the project was a rupture. I don't think so, it simply carefully re-establishes another truth that had been temporarily forgotten. It gently heals a small yet uncomfortable wound in the urban space, *naturally*. It is just one more of the many interventions that the square experienced throughout its *life*. This time, however, the square did not dictate the rules of its own intervention, nor did the mitigation of the worst environmental adversities. The physical vicissitudes of the *circumstance* did not determine this intervention, but the critical rationality of a careful and liberated hence comprehensive look



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Fig. 5

Fernando Távora. Sketch for Santa Cruz Church. Ball pen on paper. Undated sketch (FIMS/AFT).

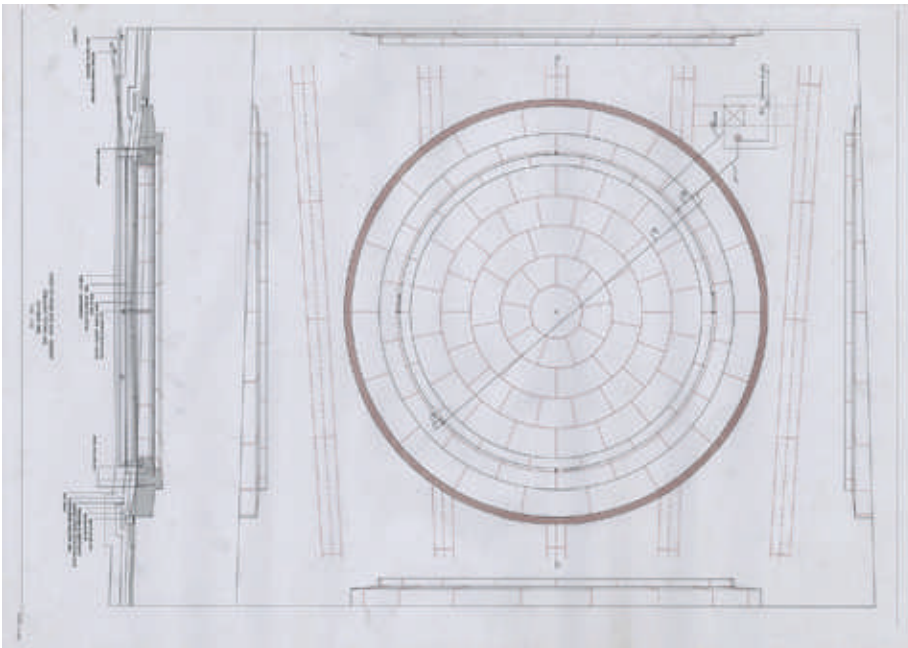
Fig. 6

Fernando Távora. Sketch for the layout of Sansão Square. Ball pen on paper. 1996 (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 7

Fernando Távora. Design project for the layout of Sansão Square. Plan. Ink on paper (FIMS/AFT).

13 A purpose that has become possible after the hydraulic works of the 1970s and 1980s, which partly regularised the riverbed.



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did, a look that focused on the essence of the site and understood that the only possible way to restore the spatial order was throughout integration, never disintegration. To do this, he cleverly sought out the centre – in this case the main altar of the church – and composed the whole system starting from it. But in the physical complexity of dense urban fabrics – resulting from the reproduction of the social dynamics – purity is almost a miracle. Távora, in this project, had to deal with two sets of adversities.

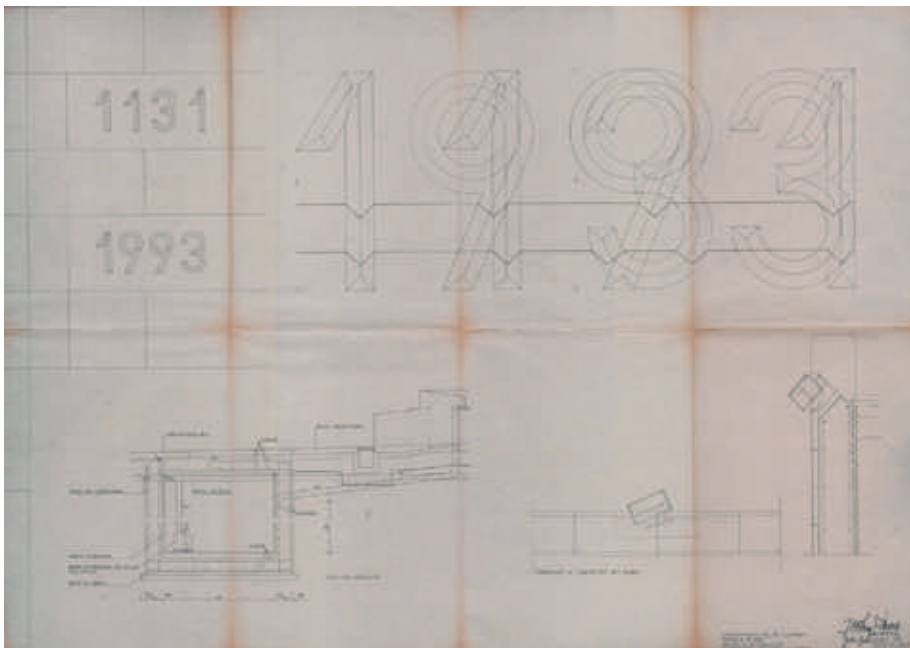
The first set concerns the subordination of the other axial dynamic, the one that was intentionally abandoned but not extinguished. The axis that violently crossed the front of the church was thus interrupted by design choice. It couldn't be otherwise, Távora knew that any concession to the refusal of such direct confrontation would jeopardise one of the foundations of the idea – its integrity. One can thus perceive the predominance of a sense of understanding of the square, which is that of the low elevation, that of the east-west axis: "(...) The tangential reading of the Church by the axis Visconde da Luz – Sofia is now replaced by the orthogonal reading of that set of streets of the medieval structure (...)”¹⁴. One can also perceive, inherently, a certain indifference towards the direction that the other axis, the north-south one, might take, particularly in what concerns the endings of Sofia and Visconde da Luz streets [Fig. 8].

The other set of adversities concerns the circumstances of the work. On examining the process, it becomes abundantly clear that the relationship between the developer, the supervisors – who were the same entity – the architect and the builder, was far from balanced. Fernando Távora submitted the preliminary project for approval in April 1993 based on the idea that had already been consolidated in the 1992 design. From then until construction was completed, by the

Fig. 8

Fernando Távora. Sketch for Sansão Square. Ball pen on paper, 1996 (FIMS/AFT).

¹⁴ Fernando Távora, *Câmara Municipal de Coimbra. Remodelação da Praça 8 de Maio. Memória Descritiva e Justificativa*, 1993. (Translated from Portuguese by the author of this text).



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end of 1997, a myriad of problems arose during the natural development of the project: from delays in formalising the contract, to successive disagreements over the choices of materials, or even the attempt to include different elements from the approved project [Fig. 9]. Regarding these, the most problematic was the idea, coming from the mayoral decision-making spheres, to include a flame in the pavement, to acknowledge the symbolic value of the place. At one point, addressing the mayor, Távora writes: “(...) I wish to state, in principle, my disagreement with your desire to introduce into the work an important element completely strange to the initial concept, which does not enhance it in any way, but rather introduces a certain conflicting situation in its sobriety and originality intended by the author (...)” and, further on, “(...) Life sometimes forces us to take apparently paradoxical attitudes of abandoning our most dearest work to defend its integrity (...)”. Távora considered giving up, with much regret, several times during this process¹⁵.

But the most striking result of this late set of constraints, and perhaps the only one significant in the context of the intervention, was the supposed impossibility of using Bordalo’s stone – traditional stone of the city’s historic buildings, the same as the façade of the Santa Cruz Church – in the exterior supporting walls, therefore denying the intentional distinction, in terms of material, brightness and texture, between the vertical walls and the pavement of the square. Very similar to the stone used on the ground, the walls relate too much to the horizontal plane, abstracting and dramatising the relationship with the church.

However and for posterity what remained was an entirely renovated space in agreement with its founding matrix. A very successful square, regarding its use

15 Letter by Fernando Távora addressed to the Mayor of Coimbra, dated 15th March 1996. It is unknown, however, if this letter reached its destination. There are other letters in the process that express indignation about the way the work was going, some of them have indication of not having been sent, at the request of Távora himself (Fernando Távora’s documentation, Fundação Instituto Arquitecto José Marques da Silva, FIMS, Porto). Translated from Portuguese by the author of the text.

Fig. 9

Fernando Távora. Design project for the layout of Sansão Square. Plan for the central bowl. Ink on paper (FIMS/AFT).

by the residents despite some criticism, generated by certain more conservative sectors of public opinion, unhappy with transformation. Some newspaper articles, not numerous but widely read, went as far as to insult the public and professional personality of the author of the project¹⁶. Those unhappy opinions served, paradoxically, as a political weapon for the local elections in 1997 and 2001. Shortly after the 2001 election, the new city council decided to carry out some transformations in 8 de Maio Square. To that end, the mayor even visited the architect Fernando Távora in his studio. The new changes were indeed implemented, but one-sidedly. Spouts, reflows and metal grids were installed in the central bowl designed by Távora. At the time, these changes even gave rise to a statement signed by various cultural and architectural figures¹⁷.

If we consider the current intensity of use, even knowing that it is a central space in the city, we can hardly compare it to what used to happen before Távora's project. From the busyness of the locals to the attention of tourists, the square is permanently full of people passing by, stopping, people who, although they may not always be aware of it, cannot help but feel deep inside the emotion of a new perspective of the space and, above all, of the monument. The square has been used as a stage for cultural performances, with music concerts at the forefront, or as a significant value of public space, political demonstrations, religious ceremonies, in posters, postcards and leaflets for the most diverse types of distribution.

Without any kind of concessions to the traditionalist way, Távora sets out on the 8 de Maio Square project – one of his dearest, in his own words – with full awareness that historical reposition is not something to be searched for, under the dust of a thousand circumstantialities, it is not something flexible that could be adapted to the occasion, under the risk of losing its tie to the truth. It is indeed a geometrically clean and rational course, in the modern manner, firmly grounded in the bedrock of the historical matrix of space. This is the order of the project, this has always been its clearest, most natural destiny, all the rest were fluctuations of tendency, misunderstandings of circumstance. This was the only possible future for the place. Távora knew that any compromise would have weakened the work, he knew that the success of the project depended entirely on his ability

16 *Diário de Coimbra*, January 18, 1998.

17 "The undersigned express their strongest disapproval of the installation of coloured fountains and lighting fixtures, which they refer to as cybernetic fountains, in 8 de Maio Square, inside the water 'bowl', which is an integral part of the project for the same place, designed by Fernando Távora. The decision to install this device there was taken without consulting anyone, neither the author of the project, the population, nor the entities that should give their opinion, from the heritage agencies point of view. The previous alteration of one of the ramps had already proved formally disastrous and functionally ineffective. All the peacefulness of the initial intentions is now disturbed by an interference that, furthermore, is assumed as a frontal lack of respect for the work of an author who has a long and dignified career, with a recognized place in the Portuguese and European architectural culture. Santa Cruz and Sansão Square deserve Fernando Távora's contemporary intervention, and Fernando Távora's contemporaneity deserves Santa Cruz and Sansão Square. Coimbra and, above all, its political leaders, must also know how to deserve it. A significant part of the contemporary interest of 8 de Maio Square lies precisely in the urban arrangement of the 1990s, which is now subverted. Public space should not be subjected to personal whims, nor to amateurish measures of dubious taste". (Translated from Portuguese by the author of the text). Among several architects and cultural personalities, this statement was also signed by Alexandre Alves Costa, Álvaro Siza, Domingos Tavares e Gonçalo Byrne. The content of the text, without signatures, was finally published in the same newspaper that launched the campaign against the square design, endorsed by the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, at the time the President of a citizens' association in Coimbra, named "Pro-Urbe": *Diário de Coimbra*, August 2, 1996.



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to unite, on the way he managed to free himself from the constraints of the present, while resolving them, and to devote himself wholeheartedly to restoring the axial meaning of the space, which is also the restoration of its symbolic value, and allows for a considerable increase in its semantic dimension. Hence the disagreements. Hence the passion with which he followed the construction. Hence the everything or nothing attitude regarding the authorship of the project.

A life-size inscription, which was intended to be engraved in the stone of the supporting walls, is recorded in a drawing of the construction process: "1131-1993". Between the foundation of the Monastery of Santa Cruz and the construction of Sansão Square, 862 years had passed with incorruptible naturalness [Fig. 10]. Heroically installed over that time, a public space was erected that re-established the dialogue between the square and the church, a dialogue that was more than evident but that, in fact, was muffled and deaf. It was a natural, collective process that had been built up gradually over eight centuries, perhaps even much longer. Yes, because according to Távora:

between the first and the last buildings that make up this extraordinary urban organism there are a few centuries of difference, centuries that signify evolution, diversity, variety. Any of these buildings could have been

Fig. 10

Contemporary view of Sansão Square. Photo by José António Bandeirinha.

modern and because they all were, the constant of modernity dominates over the whole; it does not matter the style in which each one was made – what matters is the similar attitude that presided over its conception.¹⁸

The duration of a project, of a work, time itself, is not, never has been and never can be a condition for inclusion or exclusion in any category. However, heritage norms are always anxious to create limits, whether special or temporal limits. Spatial boundaries that you may find on heritage listed areas, with its limits and buffer zones. Temporal limits since heritage, as the name suggests, is something created by a previous generation. Furthermore, there is always a boundary between what may and may not be considered heritage. There is no respect for collective memory if we do not believe in the unlimited existence of a human chain that built those spaces, whether cultural or material. To create limits to this chain is to deny the very idea of memory. And disrespect it.

Fernando Távora and Manfredo Tafuri, using the same urban and spatial metaphor, San Marco Square in Venice, have referred to this very same subject. While their purposes were not the same, the periods in which they wrote were also very different, even the line of reasoning used has no reciprocal correlation, it is still possible to observe a common and abnegate focus on the idea of temporal continuity in both of them. Távora mentions the Venetian square as “a typical example of formal diversity and permanent quality”¹⁹ because, regardless of the time in which each of the building elements that integrate it were built, and there are several centuries of difference between them, the ensemble’s quality was always recognisable. And this ensemble, I would add, should be understood as the whole urban organism of the lagoon city in its integrity. Távora highlights the significance of the quality of the whole to the detriment of the time and the period context, what matters is “the similar attitude that prevailed over its conception”. What matters is what we rarely name but know well, it is architecture and the quality of space.

Manfredo Tafuri, in a master class that he gave at his university in 1994, also refers to the modernity of San Marco Square and even classifies it as “the first modern square”²⁰, but he uses other examples to explain the instant – “attimo” – and its meaning in contemporary times, its lost dignity, in short, he makes us aware of this loss and of how current works of art endeavour to mercilessly revive it. Venice, in this case, is not so much an example as the framework from which we, the contemporary humanity, might understand, or rediscover, this lost relationship with the instant, this enchantment that we no longer have with such tiny unit of time. To this purpose he uses the example of the *Obus Plan* for Algiers, by Le Corbusier, who intended to domesticate modern time by emphasising the Casbah. Above all Tafuri uses a Titian canvas to give us a

18 Fernando Távora, *Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço. Arquitectura e Urbanismo. A lição das constantes* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1993), 12. First edited in 1962. (Translated from Portuguese by the author of this text).

19 Fernando Távora. “Arquitectura e Urbanismo a lição das constantes”, *Lusíada. Revista Ilustrada de Cultura*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (1952): 155. (Translated from Portuguese by the author of this text).

20 Manfredo Tafuri, *La Dignità dell’Attimo Trascrizione multimediale di Le forme del Tempo: Venezia e la Modernità* (Venezia: PL IUAV, 1994), 20.

better understanding of the metaphors of time, which make Venetian spaces perfectly coherent. It is *L'Allegoria della Prudenza*, an oil with a tricypitium representing the faces of an old man, a mature man and a young man, enigmatically overlapped with the snouts of a wolf, a lion and a dog respectively.

These three representations symbolise present times which, instructed by knowledge of the past times, acts with prudence for fear that the future might ruin its actions²¹. In other words, Tafuri aims to convey the practice of living each instant, of being in the abstraction we call the present, a practice which he classifies as eminently Venetian. It is a practice of being so intensely aware of the past that it allows us to face the future without any fear that the present is in danger of being somehow ruined. In this practice, the present has an absolute dignity, yet intrinsic and natural. Like breathing, Távora would have said in his unshakeable fidelity to the human condition. The only way for the present to respect what we often describe as heritage is to continuously build new architecture, in a constant search for quality, permanently investing in the dignity of the moment of creation, in the "dignità dell'attimo". But this production must contain the past within itself, it must include history in a hyperesthetic wholeness to better prepare for the future, always the future. If it gets caught up in the obsession of a precise time, of a single time, it falls into the labyrinth of limits.

Venice is modern because it contains this dream, this utopia of itself, Tafuri tells us, and this is precisely what Távora had already observed by reflecting on San Marco Square. Nonetheless the first one, a profound connoisseur of what was also his city, expresses a concern: too much emphasis on the crystallisation of spaces can submerge the best of the Venetian soul. Quoting one of his favourite masters, Sergio Bettini, Tafuri states that "ciò che si preserva, ciò che è nel nostro intimo, ciò che si nasconde, la struttura veneziana, è ciò che conta" and, on the reverse side, "ciò che è lì per lo sguardo è propaganda politica, è *decorum*, è qualcosa che ha a che fare"²². Venetian time and space begin to be assaulted by the new time, by that time that Le Corbusier wanted so much to domesticate so badly²³. In a space clearly delimited by its lagoon condition, temporal limits are around every corner. As long as the city is lived in, they will be surely defeated.

When space is distorted by the circumstances of the present, by successive presents, as it happened in Sansão Square, in front of Santa Cruz Church, we have to rely on drawing; only drawing can restore order. To achieve this, Távora favoured, without constraint or compromise, the resumption of the crystalline and geometric relationship between the main space protagonists. To this end he dived deep into a clarification of the founding matrix, making it even more intelligible than it was at the beginning.

21 Erwin Panofsky, "Titian's Allegory of Prudence; A Postscript", in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 147-168.

22 Tafuri, *La Dignità dell'Attimo*, 18.

23 Tafuri, *La Dignità dell'Attimo*, 29.

Referring once again to Távora's intervention in Sansão Square, we've heard and still hear voices that dislike the liveliness, or disapprove of the stone texture, or detest the edges of the walls, or even vociferations, which were so disturbing for Távora, from political leaders that were not, at that moment, in that specific *attimo*, "all'altezza dell'altezza dell'oggetto da amministrare"²⁴, voices that matter and voices that don't matter that much, but the truth is that the final result of the project – architecture – offered itself to time, as if it had a pre-determined, almost deterministic rationality. Nevertheless, I do believe that time's rationality is far more abiding than the limestone softness may make it seem.

24 Tafuri, *La Dignità dell'Attimo*, 32.

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The Pedagogical Value of the Organisation of Space. Founding Role and Continuity of Fernando Távora's Thinking

Architectural Pedagogy, Architecture and Circumstance, Intervention on Built Heritage, Portuguese Architecture, School of Porto

/Abstract

The importance of Fernando Távora's text, *Da Organização do Espaço*, is recognised in the context of Portuguese architectural culture, but not yet fully investigated internationally. The contribution aims to define the background within which the text was born and published and, more generally, to relate the peculiar condition of this book to the more articulated framework of experiences, relations and ties that characterise the multifaceted figure of the Portuguese master. The circumstances in which the young architect and lecturer found himself at the time of writing this theoretical reflection and the influences coming from his activity in the international sphere are analysed in depth. The intention is therefore to reread the theoretical reflection, rooting it on the one hand in the design experimentation carried out by Távora, and on the other hand in the definition of the pedagogical model that made the School of Porto celebrated. This to relate the specific experience of this book to the contemporary condition of teaching in schools of architecture, recognising in it an interpretation of strong topicality, alternative to the dominant tendencies of sectorialisation of architectural teaching and practice.

The humanistic basis of architecture, therefore, is understood as the possibility of anchoring the discipline to a concept of culture understood in a broad sense, which calls architects to their responsibility in giving substance to common aspirations. The nexus between the organisation of space and its rootedness to place, a repository of material heritage and immaterial memories, translates the tension between nature and artifice through the synthesis of the architectural project.

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Currently she gives lessons and takes part in international conventions and seminars. She writes articles and essays, contributing to series on architecture as well as international journals. She conducts research with particular attention to the “other modernity” poetics and to the tension between theme, figuration and place.

Relevant publications are the monograph *Classicismo di Frontiera. Sigurd Lewerentz e la Cappella della Resurrezione* (Padova: Il Poligrafo 2014) and the volume *Ricostruzione Inventario Progetto*, edited together with Gundula Rakowitz (Padova: Il Poligrafo 2018). In 2021 she translated into Italian and edited Fernando Távora's book, *Da Organização do Espaço* (Milan: nottetempo 2021); in May 2023 she organised and curated the conference at the Politecnico di Milano: *TÁVORA 100. In continuità. Pensiero e opera*, with Martina Landsberger, Angelo Lorenzi, Stefano Perego.



When Fernando Távora left his teaching position at the FAUP (Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto) in 1993, the school's Directive Board greeted – *até sempre* – what they considered one of the founding fathers with a small publication¹, which constitutes the first piece in that rich corpus of testimonies and studies on the master's work, which has been continuously updated even in recent times.

It contains: a note by Alexander Alves Costa, in his role as President of the Directive Board; the reproduction of a group of drawings drawn by Távora in the classroom to illustrate the theoretical issues dealt with in the course of *Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço* in the last two years of teaching (1991-1992 and 1992-1993)²; the summary programme of the topics dealt with in this course; the reprint of the text *Arquitetura e Urbanismo, a Lição das constantes* written in 1952³.

The latter is a short essay of seminal importance, as it defines some cornerstones of the theoretical reflection that ten years later Távora will have the opportunity to elaborate more fully in the book *Da Organização do Espaço*⁴. The task that Távora considers necessary to lay the foundations of the teaching of architecture is, first of all, to widen its field of action to the organisation of space, extended to all spheres, in a multi-scalar and meta-historical vision. The focus is on the importance of architecture as a conditioning element of human life, on its active role within the perpetual transformation in which the different rhythms that characterise the history of civilisations alternate. The tension towards the search for the theoretical dimension is never oriented towards knowledge as an aim in itself, but towards the pursuit of the "appropriateness of the relationship between the work and life". In this article, the very young Portuguese architect takes the opportunity to openly define his way of understanding modernity: it is not a style in the academic sense, but an attitude aimed at finding integration between all the elements that contribute to the formation of a work. This is why architecture implicitly carries within itself a condition of "permanent modernity". Alexander Alves Costa will later describe the specificity of this interpretation through the effective definition of "inclusive modernity"⁵. In it, as well as in the affirmation of

1 Fernando Távora, *Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço. Arquitetura e Urbanismo, a Lição das constantes* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1993).

2 During the lectures of the course *Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço* Fernando Távora used to devote time to the elaboration of drawings, which have become famous, capable of synthesising the different themes addressed in a single large sheet of 'papel de cenário'. The sequence of drawings from his last years of teaching are reproduced in full scale in the "Aulas" section (at the FAUP), curated by Manuel Correia Fernandes, within the exhibition FERNANDO TÁVORA. PENSAMENTO LIVRE (Porto, October 2023 – February 2024) that Fundação Marques da Silva has dedicated to the master, in the year of his centenary, under the coordination of Alexander Alves Costa.

3 "Arquitetura e Urbanismo, a Lição das constantes" è un articolo originariamente pubblicato in *Lusitana. Revista illustrada de Cultura*, no 2 (1952).

4 There are several texts that anticipate issues developed in *Da Organização do Espaço*, writings that between 1947 and 1955 fix a series of theoretical nodes and in which Távora's interest in an authentic understanding of Portuguese architecture frequently emerges. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that in 1947 the *Cadernos de Arquitectura* series was inaugurated with the publication of an expanded version of his essay *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa* (first published in the weekly "Aléo" in 1945), in which he proposed a new look at the theme of tradition, emancipating it from the picturesque version that the regime had formalised. See Fernando Távora, "O Problema da Casa Portuguesa," *Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no 1 (1947).

5 "His work has never abandoned its stated fidelity, but has matured in it like its author. And unlike other ... he transformed fidelity into something inclusive and not exclusive. Hence its permanent contemporaneity". Alexander Alves Costa, "Fernando Távora. Pensamento Livre", in *Fernando Távora. Pensamento Livre*, Catálogo da Exposição, (Porto: Fundação Marques da Silva, 2023):13. Eng. Transl. Carlotta Torricelli.

the importance of knowledge of the past as a matter of design for the future, lies the most lasting lesson that Távora leaves to the School of Porto.

In the introductory note to the 1993 publication, albeit in the context of an institutional accompanying text, in a few icastic sentences Alves Costa gives evidence of the role that Távora, as a professor and as a man, played, profoundly marking the structure and cultural, critical and operational attitude of the school:

The School sees itself in Távora, we see ourselves in him and through him we have built the broad consensus that has allowed us to face the imbalances or new balances of contemporaneity. His fundamental lesson simply stems from his unique ability to distinguish the essential from the superfluous or circumstantial, and while we were divided by circumstance, with him we were united in reinforcing and taking into account the most perennial structural values, cemented by the permanent presence of a morality that never admitted any breach in the defence of human dignity. Such an abstraction could have paved the way for all kinds of perversity if it hadn't been, as in his case, actively vigilant in building the happiness of all men, respecting their differences, and looking up to and loving them in the day-to-day of a life so passionately lived. And it was in this apparent paradox of reference to the essence and attachment to the quality of the moment that Távora built his teaching as a natural result of his way of being in the world. [...]

But what profoundly marked the School throughout its more than forty years of teaching was the compatibility of this modernist conviction with the attempt to elaborate a method and not the transmission or defence of a formal code, it was the consideration of History as an operational instrument for the construction of the present, it was, not only the definition of Architecture in its constructive and functional adequacy, but above all as a representation of each one because it represents everyone, making each building a living body, an organism with its own soul and language.⁶

Finally, the fact that this publication selects precisely the programme of the *Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço* course, together with the sketches, of great strength and extreme synthesis, that Távora elaborated during his now legendary lectures, significantly demonstrates the role that the text *Da Organização do Espaço* – which constitutes the theoretical basis of this teaching, as well as one of the compulsory readings – has covered and still covers today in the curriculum of the Architecture programme. The course, conceived by Távora and present since the 1980s, that is to say, from the origins of the institutional structuring of the School,⁷ is compulsory in the first year, and is highly recom-

⁶ Alexander Alves Costa, memorandum of 25 August 1993 accompanying the publication *Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço. Arquitectura e Urbanismo, a Lição das constantes* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1993).

⁷ It should be noted here that the Architecture course, born within ESBAF, would only become autonomous from those of Painting and Sculpture only in 1967, and in 1979 it was integrated as university teaching under the name of FAUP (Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto). The crucial moments in the life of this institution, from the battles of 1969 to the redefinition of the teaching structure in the 1980s and its subsequent remodelling, are all marked by Távora's commitment and continuity with his thinking.

mended for those who, in any year, manage to access a period of study at the school from abroad. For the school it represents an unavoidable passage for those who wish to understand the roots of the pedagogical model that is transmitted from generation to generation in Porto and in those Portuguese Faculties of Architecture, founded subsequently, that openly declare continuity with the Tavorian line of thought.⁸

For these reasons, the study of the theoretical synthesis that Távora outlines in the pages of *Da Organização do Espaço* appears to be of relevance today, also favored by the dissemination of the text in various languages.⁹

The book was published in 1962, in a country oppressed by the *Estado Novo* (the dictatorship that lasted from 1933 to 1974, which followed the military coup in 1926) and was written as a contest exam for teaching at the *Escola Superior de Belas-Artes do Porto* (ESBAP). The context in which it is written, therefore, is necessarily specific, yet the author uses the academic circumstance to bring to synthesis a series of reflections on which he also focused during his experiences abroad.

On those occasions, in fact, he acquired a breadth of horizons, which, as a young lecturer, he finds it necessary to bring back to the school where he trained and where he teaches, precisely at a time when, due to the political situation, international exchanges are infrequent and not very easy. He is aware that the possibility of being included in the international architectural debate of those years represents a privileged condition for a Portuguese of that period and, at the same time, entails a responsibility that induces the search for change, practised from the depths of one's condition.

It is interesting to recall how obtaining the Entitlement as a Professor at ESBAP foresaw at the time the realisation of a project (*Prova de Grande Composição*) – the test assigned on that occasion was the realisation of a shopping centre between Praça Carlos Alberto and Rua do Carmo, where Távora proposes a radical response to the problems of the historical city – together with the elaboration of a dissertation of a theoretical nature. Over time, many of these dissertations have formed a mosaic of disciplinary insights, thanks to which it is possible to reconstruct the geography of reciprocal influences, links and cross-references between the Portuguese architectural culture of the time and the international debate. Mention should be made here, by way of example, of that of Octávio Lixa Filgueiras, presented in the same Távora session under

⁸ Fernando Távora is a member of the scientific commissions for the creation of degree courses in Architecture at the universities of Coimbra (since 1989) and Minho in Guimarães (since 1997).

⁹ The original Portuguese text from 1962 was republished by ESBAP (and subsequent reprints by FAUP Publicações) in 1982, accompanied by an introduction by Nuno Portas. There are currently two complete translations of the text, in Castilian and Italian, respectively: Fernando Távora, *Sobre la Organización del espacio*, eds. Aitor Varea Oro and Eva Raga i Domingo, (Valencia: Universitat Politècnica de València, 2014) (in addition to Portas' 1982 introduction, this edition is accompanied by an introductory essay by Jorge Figueira, *Sobre la organización del espacio. Como sobrevivir a la melancolía*); Fernando Távora, *Dell'organizzazione dello spazio*, ed. Carlotta Torricelli, (Milan: nottetermpo, 2021), in addition to Portas' 1982 introduction, this edition is accompanied by an introductory essay by Carlotta Torricelli, *L'incontro tra la vita e le forme in architettura. Attualità del pensiero di Távora*. Also available is the English translation of the first part of the book: Fernando Távora, "On space organisation", *Estudo Prévio* no. 20 (2022): 29-39. <https://doi.org/10.26619/2182-4339/20.5>. Published from: José Manuel Rodrigues, ed., *Teoria e crítica de arquitetura. Século XX*, (Lisbon: OA – SRS, Caleidoscópio, 2010): 480-488.

the title *A Função Social do Arquitecto* and that of the previous year by João Andresen, brother of the great poet Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, *Para uma cidade mais humana*.

At the time of this book's writing, Távora has already realised a number of important architectural works that have found their way into both national and international contexts, albeit on the limited occasions allowed by a country oppressed by dictatorship.

As an invited member of the ODAM (*Organização dos Arquitectos Modernos*, founded in Porto in 1947), he was among the architects who took part in the CIAM (International Congresses of Modern Architecture), where he acted as a mediator between the internal debate and the various battles that were undermining the crystalline certainties of the Modern Movement and paving the way for new critical and operational orientations.

More specifically, Távora participated in the Hoddesdon Congress in 1951, the Aix-en-Provence Congress in 1953, the Dubrovnik Congress in 1956 and the Otterlo Congress in 1959 – in the latter of which he also had the opportunity to individually present his recent works, such as the House in Ofir (1957-1958) and the Market in Vila da Feira (1953-1959). To the latter, Aldo Van Eyck would refer to demonstrate how the notion of “space and time” had lost its effectiveness and could be replaced by the more vital notion of “place and occasion”.¹⁰

I arrived at the conclusion that whatever space and time mean, *place and occasion mean more, for space in the image of man is place and time in the image of man is occasion* [...] time and space remain frozen abstractions [...] Place and occasion constitute each other's realization in human terms [...] Since furthermore place and occasion imply participation in what exists, lack of place – and thus of occasion – will cause loss of identity, isolation and frustration.¹¹

For the young Portuguese architect, the recognition by the members of Team X of a different mode of relationship between architecture and place in his built work, tangible in particular in the conception of the central space of the Vila da Feira market¹², represents an important acknowledgement. Yet, as will be seen later, Távora's thought goes beyond the theme of participation to appeal to a deeper involvement of men in the processes of transformation, always understood as collective acts founded on a shared ethic, capable of calibrating the relationship between nature and culture. The action to which Távora calls us is not that of participation, but that of collaboration. Collaboration of all men for the realisation of a common dream.

¹⁰ Aldo Van Eyck expressly refers here to the notion of “space and time” as understood by Sigfried Giedion in *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge – MA, Harvard University Press: 1941).

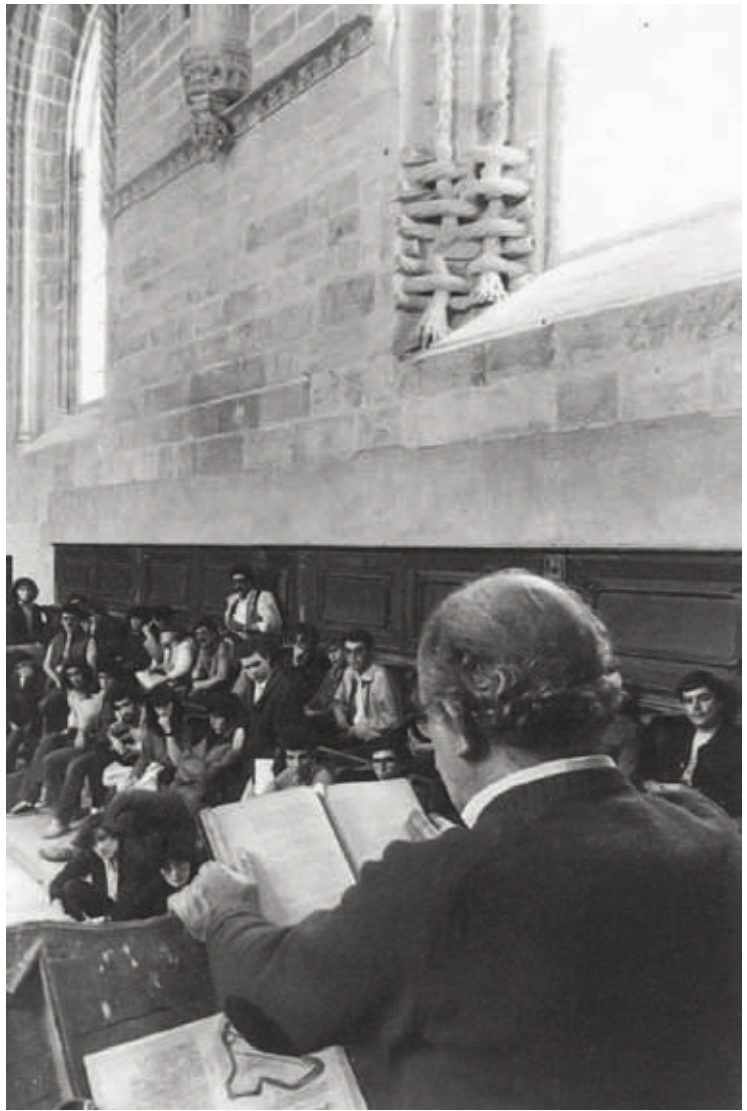
¹¹ Aldo van Eyck, “The medicine of reciprocity tentatively illustrated”, in Id. *Writings: Collected Articles and Other Writings 1947-1998*, ed. V. Ligtelijn and F. Strauven (Amsterdam: SUN Publishers, 2008), 312-323.

¹² Photographs of the completed work appear on two pages of the book collecting the outcomes of the congress: Oscar Newman, Jürgen Joedicke, eds. *CIAM '59 in Otterlo: Dokumente Der Modernen Architektur 1* (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1961), 133-137.

Among the other works realised in the span of time between obtaining the diploma of architect in 1950 (achieved by presenting the CODA¹³ *Casa sobre o mar*) and obtaining the teaching qualification in 1962, it is worth mentioning the project experience of the Quinta da Conceição Municipal Park in Leça de Palmeira (Matosinhos), with the construction of the Tennis Pavilion within it, and the construction of the Quinta do Cedro Primary School in Vila Nova de Gaia, which will also find international diffusion.

The peripheral condition from which he observes the architectural debate allows Távora to cross-fertilise the teachings of the various masters of the Modern Movement and, at the same time, the critical attitude of those figures who, in the post-war period, questioned functionalist dogmatism, reconnecting the threads of the memory of places; where memory means that form of dynamic knowledge, thanks to which the coherence of the constructive act is substantiated not in a self-referential way, but through the relationship with the circumstantial elements.

The social instances of which architecture is a vector in no way lead the author to deviate from the work within the discipline, on the contrary, they push him to explore its limits, in search of a quality that is perceived as a shared value. From the very first works, the tension between the particular and the universal is configured as the theme around which the reasons for the architectural project revolve. In the project description of the House in Ofir, the author uses the metaphor, later to become famous, of understanding architecture as a compound and not as a mixture. In chemistry, in fact, the compound derives from the relationship of different factors that, by virtue of their new condition of relationship, change their state. There is, therefore, not a simple juxtaposition of elements, nor is it left to one element to predominate over the others, but a reciprocal modification: "as to the principle adopted, we have no doubt whatsoever that this is the only one to follow should we want our work, due to their individuality, to be recognized universally".¹⁴



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Fig. 1

Fernando Távora on a study trip with ESBAAP (Porto) students, Tomar Convent, 1982, photo by Joaquim Vieira (FIMS/AFT).

¹³ C.O.D.A. is the acronym for Concurso para Obtenção do Diploma de Arquitecto (Competition to Obtain the Diploma of Architect).

¹⁴ Fernando Távora, "Casa de férias, Ofir, 1957-58", in *Fernando Távora*, ed. Luiz Trigueiros (Lisbon: Editorial Blau, 1993), 78.

Da Organização do Espaço is a text that deals with the theme of the formal organisation of space as a starting point for an investigation aimed at bringing the architectural project – understood as an act of transformation that applies to all scales: from the object to the city, to the landscape – back into the sphere of culture considered in a broad sense, according to a profoundly humanistic vision. Not only architects, but all people, as citizens, are called upon to collaborate in the definition of the space they inhabit and, at the same time, are responsible for its enrichment or impoverishment. Each individual must become aware of the repercussions that the organisation of space has in the various spheres of our existence. In this sense, affirming the unity of the architectural fact implies supporting the integration of architecture, culture and civic engagement. It must be acknowledged that, from the outset, the treatment is linked to the tradition of architectural treatises, of which Távora is a profound connoisseur and of which he will become a passionate collector. This places his work in the groove of the great classical tradition, to which the Portuguese master feels he belongs, recognising in it the matrix of a profoundly logical thought, but equally dynamic and capable of reconfirming its principles in relation to the problems that contemporary life poses from time to time.¹⁵

The tension towards the individuation of original forms and the recognition of “constants” are the basis for the development of that project research that does not tend towards crystallisation, but towards the ability to accept the vitality implicit in the act of organising space.

These are the premises for which Távora states in the introductory note:

The interest that the work may have lies, we believe, in the system of relationships that we seek to establish, in the certainty that the problems of the organisation of space are of a much wider scope than is generally attributed to them, and that we have to overcome the limited concepts or preconceived ideas with which such problems are usually focused.

We hope that this essay will make each reader more aware of the role they themselves play in the organisation of space, as well as the importance that creating more harmonious forms can play in their life, both as an individual and as part of a society.

The book is divided into four parts that proceed from a more general, outward-looking view to an examination of the Portuguese reality, in an attempt to place it within the international scenario. In each of them the different experiences that the young architect has conducted and carried out up to that point, on different fronts, from the profession to research, from study trips to teaching, come together.

In the first part *Dimensions, relations and characteristics of organised space*, the author deals in a general way with the theme of interpreting space as a

¹⁵ See: Salvatore Settis, *Futuro del "classico"* (Torino: Einaudi, 2004).

continuum, in which solids and voids, positive and negative should contribute equally to the creation of a balanced whole.

In this perspective, Távora binds himself to the instances of pure modernism, understood as the search for order through an uninterrupted process that from conception leads to execution, bringing together the contributions of different sectors; this approach is entirely oriented towards the operational feedback that determines the mission of the project in the transformations that condition human life. This operativity translates into reflection on the generation of form and thus on space, which, from the pragmatic and formalistic dimension in which it had been confined, recovers the qualities of a positive and significant element:

We can also generalize, stating that what we call space is also a shape, negative or mold of shapes that our eyes seize [...] Visually, therefore, we may consider that shapes animate space, but it should never be forgotten that, in a more real concept, the same space is also a shape because what we call space is made up of matter and not only shapes that exist in it and occupy it, as our eyes let us assume. This notion, so often forgotten, that space that divides – but also connects – shapes, is also a shape itself, is fundamental, because it allows us to gain full awareness that there are no isolated shapes and that a relationship always exists, both between those that occupy a certain space, and between them and one that, although we do not see it, we know that it is shaped as well – negative or mold – of apparent shapes.¹⁶

On an epistemological level, the fundamental shift that Távora makes is from the domination of space to the control of space, from its occupation to its organization; from this perspective, it is not possible to separate art and technique, it is not possible to distinguish between actions driven purely by functional needs and others sustained by an artistic intention, nor is it possible to separate major and minor arts.

The expression “organizing space” on a human scale, has, for us, a different meaning from that which could have, for example, the expression “filling up space”. We sense in the word “organizing” a desire, a manifestation of will, a logic, that the word “occupy” does not comprehend and hence we use the expression “organization of space”, for it reveals man as an intelligent being and artist by nature. From that, it results that space occupied by man always tends to – always walks in the sense of – its purpose, which is the creation of harmony in space, considering that harmony is what accurately translates balance, challenging consciousness, and sensitivity, as well as hierarchical and correct integration of factors. [...]

¹⁶ This quote and all the next ones from the first part of the book are taken from the English translation of this part of the book published in: Fernando Távora, “On space organization”, *Estudo Prévio*, no. 20 (2022): 29-39. Quotations from other parts of the book have been elaborated for the present publication

From what has been said, it seems that a fundamental characteristic of organized space can be deduced: its continuity. Space is continuous, cannot be organized with a partial view, does not accept limitations in its organization. And in the same way that continuity forms space, both are so closely linked that one is negative from the other, and vice versa, so they cannot separate; the visually seized shapes, thus, maintain close relationships – harmonic and inharmonic – but evident in any case.

This insistence on the continuity of space brings out the importance of considering not only the facts themselves, but above all the relationships between them:

[...] applying to the concept of space, that there is left is as important as the one that is filled [...] Everything is important in space organization – shapes themselves, the relationship between them, the space that limits them. And this truth that results from space being continuous has been largely forgotten.

The consequence of this vision based on a sense of reciprocity is the idea that every project must be born from the tension between the plan of what is to be conceived anew and that set of factors in which it is located and from which it cannot prescind, which the author gives the name of “circumstance”.

The affirmation of the continuity of space, finally, implies the conception of time as a continuous becoming, in which the dynamics of transformation is recorded as a positive datum, as a latent opportunity in things in themselves, a tension towards the continuous generation of new forms, in an ever-renewed dialectic between permanence and change, between the past “to be observed” and the future “to be built”.

Nonetheless, because space is continuous and time is one of its dimensions, it is also irreversible; that is, given the constant march of time and all that it entails and means, an organized space can never be what it once was, hence the fact that space is in permanent coming.

On the one hand, therefore, the idea of the inexorability of transformation processes, together with the interpretation of phenomena not as isolated facts but always in terms of relationships, confirm the affinity of Távora’s thought with that of the classical tradition. It is impossible not to quote here Leonardo da Vinci’s words that Ernesto Nathan Rogers used to cite as an introduction to his *History of Modern Architecture* course at the Milan Polytechnic:

Leonardo da Vinci, always a good example of one who stated his concepts both highly poetically and rationally, expressed with these words the real meaning of the passing of time: “the water that laps against one’s hand in a river is the last to have gone and the first to have come – such is the nature of the present”.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ernesto Nathan Rogers, *Il senso della storia* (Milano: Edizioni Unicopli, 2003), 62.

But at the same time, this approach places Távora's treatment on the frontier of the scientific advances that characterised the Post-War period and which, as Carlo Rovelli reminds us, still pose fundamental enigmas in the interpretation of reality:

a century has passed, and we are at the same point. The equations of quantum mechanics and their consequences are used daily by physicists, engineers, physicists and biologists, in the most diverse fields [...] yet they remain mysterious: they do not describe what happens to a physical system, but only how a physical system is perceived by another physical system. What does this mean? Does it mean that the existential reality of a system is undescrivable? [...] Or does it mean, as it seems to me, that we must accept the idea that reality is only interaction?.¹⁸

From these two characteristics of space – continuity and irreversibility – derives, on the one hand, the idea that the organisation of space is a collective work, the result of collaboration between all men – understood both in a “horizontal” sense, between contemporaries, and in a “vertical” sense, between men of different epochs animated by a common feeling – and, on the other hand, the great responsibility that architects have, since, by trade, they have a greater involvement in the management of the problem. Indeed, they must be aware that the space they are going to organise is conditioned by circumstance, but in turn will be conditioned by future transformations. This is why the act of organising space carries within itself an important pedagogical role.

The search for consonance between forms and circumstance must be practised through knowledge of the contemporary context, of different geographical realities and of the past, without any form of erudition, let alone intellectualism, but always with the aim of recognising the relationship between forms and life.¹⁹ It is Edoardo Souto de Moura who eloquently defines the tension between time and place, which underlies Távora's passion for study trips: ‘Távora has something telluric about him, like Pascoaes in *A arte de Ser Português* [...] Távora seemed to be interested in History, yet what Távora loved was not History, but the instant, the territory, the geography laden with history’.²⁰ The definition of telluric, applied to Távora, brings to mind the words with which Henri Focillon describes history, as a geology, of layers and fractures, which allow different times to coexist in the same place:

History is not like a river on whose waters the events, and fragments of events, are carried along at the same pace and in the same direction. In

18 Carlo Rovelli, *Sette brevi lezioni di fisica* (Milano: Adelphi Edizioni, 2014), 29 (Translation by the author).

19 The desire to investigate the connection that is established, through experience, between forms and life, refers back to the thought of Ernesto Nathan Rogers, who is not expressly cited in this book by the author, but with respect to whom there are numerous affinities. In this regard, it is worth recalling the influence of the Italian debate on the training of Portuguese architects in those years. Bruno Zevi's publications are widespread in Portugal, and are among the fundamental study texts, as are the writings of Ernesto Nathan Rogers, whom Távora had the opportunity to meet in person as early as 1952 in Venice, participating in the first CIAM summer school at Iuav. The numerous affinities between Rogers' thought and Távora's would deserve to be explored in depth with independent discussion. For some further reflections see: Carlotta Torricelli, “L'incontro tra la vita e le forme in architettura. Attualità del pensiero di Távora”, in Fernando Távora, *Dell'organizzazione dello spazio* (Milano: nottetempo, 2021).

20 Eduardo Souto de Moura, “Fernando Távora. Ritratto dell'artista da giovane”, *Casabella*, no 744 (2006), 77.

fact, what we call history consists precisely in the diversity and unevenness of its currents. It should remind us rather of geological strata, laid one on the top of the other, at various angles, broken here and there by sudden faults; here we can grasp in one place and at one time several of the earth's ages; and every moment of the time that has gone by is here at once past, present, and to come.²¹

In support of the importance of the collaboration of all men in the construction of space, Távora makes his own José Ortega y Gasset's accusation against the "barbarism of specialisation", considered as one of the phenomena, characterising his contemporaneity, that must be stemmed with determination. The influence of *La rebelión de las masas*²² in the Portuguese master's thinking is very strong and he will see its prophetic relevance in the face of various and successive educational reforms, changes in the profession and, more generally, social transformations.

The second part entitled *Contemporary Man and the Organisation of his Space* begins with considerations on the parabola of the development of Western thought, with respect to which Távora more than once emphasises the fundamental backbone role of the Greece-Rome-Europe line. In this section of the essay, the influence of the study of some thinkers, such as the aforementioned Ortega y Gasset, and Oswald Spengler, emerges clearly.²³ Their reflections underpin the pessimism that the Portuguese author declares towards a civilisation focused exclusively on "progress" as its sole objective. The risk he recognises in such an attitude is that of erasing every ripple, concentrating only on the acceleration of the speed of production and nullifying the possibility of recognising, in the products of the human intellect, the inner language, that is, that profound intention that ensures that the individuals of a civilisation pursue a common destiny.

This part also constitutes an important testimony of the experience of the great journey of 1960, which represents a crucial formative moment for the author and will constantly re-emerge in his lectures, essays and even in the definition of his many subsequent trips. Thanks to a scholarship from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Távora had the opportunity to visit the United States and Japan. It was a rare experience of study and research that took him around the world in four months: after the United States (from which he allowed himself a brief diversion to visit Mexico) and Japan (where he took part in the World Design Conference – WoDeCo in Tokyo), he went on to Thailand, Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt and concluded his itinerary, not surprisingly, in Greece.

21 Henri Focillon, *The Year 1000* (New York, F. Ungar Pub. Co 1970): 1.

22 José Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas* (Madrid: Espasa, 1943). English Translation: *The Revolt of the Masses* (London and New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

23 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Wien: 1918/München 1922). Eng. Trans. *The Decline of the West*, translated by Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1928). For the influence of Ortega y Gasset and Spengler in Távora's thinking see: Bernardo Pinto de Almeida, "A Arquitectura É O Dia-a-Dia: Entrevista a Fernando Távora," *Boletim Da Universidade Do Porto*, 1993; Manuel Mendes, "Para Quê Exigir À Sombra a Rectidão Que Não Possui a Vara Que a Produz?," in Leonardo Express, edited by Rita Marnoto (Coimbra: FBA, Ferrand, Bicker & Associados, 2004), 111-138; and Fernando Távora and Jorge Figueira, "Fernando Távora, Coisa Mental: Entrevista," *Unidade* (June 1992).

The official objective of the mission for which he receives funding is to investigate the working methods of public bodies and the educational programmes of universities in major North American cities, focusing in particular on the role of urban and regional planning. But in the context of a country oppressed by dictatorship, the young architect – here as a Portuguese lecturer sent for refresher courses – is aware of how this opportunity places him in a privileged position and, at the same time, entails a responsibility that induces the search for change, always practised within the profound awareness of his own condition.

As his *Diary*²⁴ reveals, but also as emerges from reading this essay, Távora, in this kaleidoscope of encounters with major institutions (in addition to academic ones, one of the most relevant events is his visit to Taliesin East, exactly one year after the death of Frank Lloyd Wright) and with important personalities in the international architectural context (he had the opportunity to meet Louis Kahn, Josep Lluís Sert, Paul Rudolph, Kevin Lynch and Vincent Scully; among others, he got to know the work of Mies Van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Eero Saarinen by visiting their architecture), he aims to observe new metropolises, cultural institutions, and models of living, but at the same time engages in a profound reinterpretation of his own cultural matrices. It is interesting to note that in this part of the book, the two architects that the young Portuguese cites as evidence of the possibility of tracing alternative paths to pure functionalism are Wright – with respect to whom, however, he immediately warns against the risks of mythologising his positions – and Alvar Aalto, whose work not only stands out for its quality, but also for the coherence between architectural expression and the social structure of the country it is brought to represent.²⁵

Always attentive to recording the tension between local cultures and the diffusion of a universal culture, derived from advances and technical progress, which “seems to better satisfy people’s need”, the author wonders how to relate to these “real situations of clash that will certainly be eliminated, diluted little by little thanks to a synthesis between the traditional and the new conditions of life”.

In the course of this part of the reflection, centred on the critique of the parable of Western man’s progress that has led to uncontrolled development from the Renaissance to the present day, the conviction gradually emerges that an important moment of self-criticism has arrived for modern man, which will lead to the elaboration of a renewed outlook, capable of perceiving the squandering of space as the main problem to be curbed for the development of contemporary society.

24 Fernando Távora, *Diário de “bordo”*, edited by Rita Marnoto (Matosinhos: Associação Casa da Arquitectura 2012), English version. The Italian reader can find the full Italian translation in: Fernando Távora, *Diario di bordo*, eds. Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, Raffaella Maddaluno, (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2022). In addition to the important essays in the Italian edition, the role that the voyage played in the construction of this Portuguese architect’s thought has been discussed by various scholars. Mention should be made, among others, of Jorge Figueira, ‘Fernando Távora. Alma Mater. Viagem na América. 1960’, in *Fernando Távora. Modernidade Permanente*, ed. José Antonio Bandeirinha (Guimarães: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012) 38-53

25 It is recalled here that Távora would later visit Finland in 1968, accompanied by other Portuguese architects, including Álvaro Siza.

As a result and fatal consequence of this need, a revision and restructuring of the entire system of relationships and values now takes place; man is now thinking about himself, about the meaning of his evolution, about the possibilities of his future.

Here, the core of reflection is the problem of urban development and its possibility of being defined and controlled, so that it takes shape through design and not through natural proliferation. Also on the role of urbanism and planning and the importance of activating a collaboration between the abstract idea of design and the concrete reality of circumstance, the author questions and proposes different models from what he has been able to record in the structure of land government in the United States. In general, he hopes that for countries and regions throughout the world, territorial development plans and financial development plans will be defined in such a way as to pursue economic progress while at the same time safeguarding space, understood as heritage, thus demonstrating the potential for criticism of the dominant system implicit in the writing.

In fact, the experience of the Gulbenkian trip has allowed the author to see and compare different metropolitan realities, contributing to forming in him the idea that the contemporary city represents a new type of organised space, to be considered, in terms of size and configuration, like a monster, which in the end makes man, its maker, a victim:

The most visible manifestation, due to its size, of the discontinuity and disorder of contemporary space, is the city, and although man as an urban being has a long history, the truth is that the typical city of today presents completely new aspects and problems. [...] The contemporary city thus attains a dominating form, a visual scale whose dominance man cannot control, and it dominates and absorbs in its growth all the space that surrounds it, both the horizontal space where it rests and the vertical space that the possibilities of technology allow it to occupy. And in its uncontrolled growth, it destroys everything, from the natural landscape to the very man who creates it.

Herein lies one of the most interesting passages of this reflection, which paves the way for the construction of an alternative paradigm to that of simple alignment with mass industrial civilisation – of which he sees all the limits of the individualism inherent in the petty-bourgeois model – and the race to reach North American standards. The author recognises in Europe – and in particular in Portugal, in its isolated and marginal condition of the time – a degree of diversity not to be understood exclusively as “backwardness”, but rather as a possibility for the definition of alternative scenarios, arising from the knowledge of what happened in the more developed countries and also from the awareness of the limits highlighted. In support of the need to seek coherence between industry and craftsmanship, Távora brings up Walter Gropius’s thesis regarding industrial design, writing:

In truth, “industrial design” is beginning to emerge [...] the contrast between the extreme anonymity of the industrial product (anonymity that has nothing to do with a low level of quality) and the extreme individuality of the handmade product, a contrast of extremes linked together by an infinite number of possible positions, is gaining interest day by day.

Once again, an opportunity for change opens up, one with a positive side, capable of challenging the canons of industrial civilisation. Referring to the thought of Jean Fourastié, in fact, Távora hopes that technical progress can emancipate man from menial work, leading him towards spiritual work.²⁶

Thus, in the act of updating the experiences conducted in the rest of the world and taking into account the most advanced tendencies, Távora seizes the opportunity to question the stereotypes of the reductionism and simplification of identity implemented by the Salazarist regime, reconnecting the plots of assimilation and mirroring, of migrations and echoes, that have characterised Portuguese cultural history. For his temperament, more interested in archaic testimonies than in expressions of brazen modernity, the encounter with the American world of the time is destabilising: on the one hand, Távora appreciates its character as a permanent laboratory, its effectiveness and persuasiveness, but on the other he sees the limits of that society founded on the mechanisation of processes and the homogenisation of expressions.

It is from these assumptions that the idea of research based on consonance between human progress and nature takes shape, which does not erase differences, but draws richness and grounding from them.²⁷

The third part of the book concerns *The Organisation of Contemporary Portuguese Space*. The chapter begins with an examination of national history, immediately declaring an operational approach and emphasising that the past is not a heritage to be frozen in its fixity, but should always be read in relation to the present, with attention paid to what is happening in other countries:

[...] we have always insisted on the danger of a unilateral view when it comes to spatial phenomena and we would not fall into such an error here. [...] We should also remember that when we criticise our present, we do so on the basis of spaces from our own happier past or spaces other than our own whose present is also happier, in any case from a perspective that may even be wrong, because our past is certainly not coming back and our present circumstances are very different from those of other countries.

²⁶ Jean Fourastié, *La civilisation de 1960* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947).

²⁷ For an in-depth discussion of Portuguese interpretation around the possibility of combining local culture, social ethics and coherence between form and function, see: Rui Aristides Bixirão Neto Marinho Lebre, *From the organization of space to the organization of society. A study of the political commitments in post-war Portuguese architecture, 1945-69*, Ph.D thesis in Architecture with the guidance of Prof. José António Oliveira Bandeirinha and Dr. Nuno Manuel de Azevedo Andrade Porto (Coimbra: Department of Architecture of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology University of Coimbra, October 2016).

The analysis of the aspects and problems of contemporary Portuguese space starts from the observation of the existence of the two great urban spaces that act as poles of attraction, namely Lisbon and Oporto, and from a critique of the planning model that has separated the problems of these two cities from the general vision capable of encompassing the rest of the country:

In truth, the problem of Lisbon and its region cannot be disconnected from the general problem of the country because, as complementary issues, they are inseparable [...] Otherwise, how can we create harmony in the national space? If space is continuous – how can we solve the problem of its organisation without looking at it in its entirety? Only on the basis of a national plan can the problem of our continental space really be solved [...] This is why the pressing need for some regional plans emphasises the urgent need for a national plan. [...] This is precisely one of the reasons why the physical planning of the territory has followed, not only among us, but in general in all countries, an evolution contrary to that which would be most logical, moving from the particular to the general, and not in the opposite direction.

Next, the author questions not only how a national spatial government plan should be structured, but how urban planning regulations can strike the right balance between prefiguration and adherence to circumstances:

Day by day, the urban planning discipline loses the static and formalistic character that normally manifests itself in the “plan”, and is orientated in a more dynamic direction in which the forms come to enjoy a life that they didn’t have before, not least because most of the time they were already born dead.

Here again, Távora insists on the inseparability of architecture and urbanism and the importance of considering the whole relationship between a work and its environment as more important than the construction of each building in itself:

[...] because the inseparability of the phenomena of space organisation at various scales does not allow us to accept the hypothesis of good architecture in bad urbanism, or, more clearly, a high architectural level presupposes a high urbanistic level.

And in reasoning on the risks of neglecting the system of relationships between architecture and the circumstance that encompasses it, he takes the opportunity to call for a courageous change in the vision of the problems that afflict the Portuguese reality, emancipating the architectural question from the influence of “tastes” – personal, institutional and social strata –, in defence of the coherence between architecture and place.

[...] the relationship between a building and its site is of key importance and although normally, and from the point of view of size, the site pre-

dominates over the building, the truth is that the latter, although small, can totally destroy the former, when one would like to see a harmonious balance between the two elements present.

Here, in particular, Távora gives space to the reflections linked to the concrete experience of the *Inquérito*²⁸, bringing them directly into the practice of the discipline. There are two fundamental themes: the coherence between construction techniques, materials and place, between construction logic and spatial conception of the building; the importance of understanding the physical and anthropological characteristics of the territory, aimed at strengthening the link between the scale of human habitation and the broad scale of the landscape.

But because developments in our country have been slow and far from covering huge parts of the country where traditional techniques are still fully justified, the problem of choosing the optimum technical solution for each case is a delicate one, and it is necessary to find solutions that correspond to the many realities that the country still has, without falling into the primarism of studio or fashion solutions which, even if they can be realised, can lead to enormous economic waste, in addition to other inconveniences [...].

Then, as for another aspect of the forms of our architecture, we believe that it is almost fundamentally based on a criterion of “taste” [...]. But taste, perhaps because it is more subjective and therefore less easily debatable and has consequences that affect the appearance of forms (which for many is everything), is a factor that takes hold and gains dominance whenever, due to an apparent lack of constraints, the work of architecture seems to float in a void, thus becoming an easy prey to subjective notions and reassuring concretisation. And when taste predominates, everything submits to it and there are no reasons, even objective ones, even logical ones, even intelligent ones, that can overcome its common lack of reason.

Following this, the author tackles the theme of the relationship between old and new in architecture, a theme that he will put to the test through a series of relevant project experimentation, giving operational translation to his theoretical reflection. Once again, the vitality of Távora’s design thought emerges, overturning the problem of time over the reality of space and unhinging the question of continuity with history, understood in philological terms, through the search for coherence with the place, as depository of memory. This attitude is fully in line with the line of investigation that will find full expression in George Kubler’s research:

²⁸ The *Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* is a field research work that takes place between 1956 and 1958; the country is divided into six areas, in which as many research teams – architects, anthropologists, geographers – work in order to detect the authentic characteristics of the national reality and the links that exist between the conformation of the territory, settlement systems, building techniques and ways of life. Fernando Távora works in the team in charge of the Minho region. The results of the investigations are collected and published in: *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* (Lisboa: Sindicato Nacional Dos Arquitectos, 1961).

Without change there is no history; without regularity there is no time. Time and history are related as rule and variation: time is the regular setting for the vagaries of history [...] No act ever is completely novel, and no act can ever be quite accomplished without variation".²⁹

His understanding of the project as a form of synthesis capable of capturing the incandescent core where the reason for things resides, in order to intervene in the existing heritage, projecting it into the future, is expressed in these words:

Another point, among many, also concerns us: the realisation of new works next to valuable works built by the past or in environments built by the past, as well as the alterations to old structures due to the effects of a fatal evolution of the times.

Two important aspects should be mentioned here: firstly, that the concept of "monument" in force among us will have to be extensively revised in order to go beyond this or that more or less erudite building, with a more or less well-known history, to encompass broader environments and humbler buildings; secondly, to point out that the work of the past constitutes a cultural value of space, and because this is irreversible, it cannot become what it once was or even continue to be what it was [...]. In truth, the values of the past must be stubbornly defended at all costs, but they must be defended with a constructive attitude, either by recognising the need for them and allowing them to be updated, or by accompanying them with contemporary works.

Távora then returns to the possibility of making economic and territorial development coherent, this time referring to the specific Portuguese context. In fact, the author points out how: the settlement of new industrial complexes was implemented without any kind of structural forecasting; reflection on the housing issue was not carried out in a radical manner, but only by chasing after housing emergencies from time to time – here we read in the watermark the formation of a thought that will be put to the test later in the SAAL experience³⁰; finally, not only school structures but the whole concept of the education system needs substantial revision.

But because the phenomenon of our economic backwardness has been pointed out many times, we don't insist on mentioning it, nor on

²⁹ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the history of things* (New Haven CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1962).

³⁰ Following the *Revolução dos cravos* of 25 April 1974, thanks to the willingness of a group of architects and students to engage in the struggle for the right to housing, in a logic of democratisation of public space, the SAAL (*Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local*) Brigades were founded. The backwardness of the population and the dramatic situation of the housing of the working class are the causes of the action, while the experimental process is the direct involvement of the inhabitants in the realisations. An ambitious process that of the SAAL operation - defined by Távora in 1975 as "the only dream an architect, when he is awake, can dream" – which in little more than two years produced one hundred and seventy housing projects in different cities, made possible by the figure of Nuno Portas, architect and Secretary of State in the post-revolutionary government. The SAAL programme, whose parabola would be halted in 1976, materialises collective reflections on the relationship between the housing problem and the construction of the city. In Porto, in particular, there are numerous models of synthesis between typological innovation and continuity with the urban structure, in which we find many of the professors of what would become, a few years later, the Faculty of Architecture involved.

its obvious impact on the national space; however, it seems to us that it would be appropriate to try to say something about the importance of the relationship between physical planning and economic planning, given its topicality in our country [...]. In Portugal today, it (housing ndr) is one of the most difficult and urgent undertakings to which we will have to devote ourselves, but its solution will have to be approached with a broad vision, both in terms of the ends to be achieved and the means to be used.

It goes without saying, by implication, that a country where the housing problem is serious cannot have a harmoniously structured space and that, on the other hand, given the abundance of poor-quality housing, the existing housing, as well as being a determining and negative aspect of our circumstances, represents a serious phenomenon of spatial and economic squandering [...].

The dilettantish amateurism with which we all design and build in Portugal today cannot be reconciled with the harsh reality that surrounds us and, without falling into myths or utopias, we will have to review our entire position in this matter and try to find our own solutions to our own various difficulties, which, moreover, cannot only be the result of the goodwill of certain sectors but of total collaboration between all of us.

Concluding this part, Távora focuses on the problem of training suitable professionals to solve issues related to the changing urban phenomenon, territorial development, and the housing crisis, through an organic revision of the education system, in which the different sectors of education can participate in a single vision, as branches of the same tree: "How can we expect the work of these professionals, who ignore each other throughout their courses, to be harmonious in their relationships and in their work?"

The reflection closes by focusing on the link between teaching and research, where for the author project research is always understood as an eminently operational activity rooted in reality, defining what are still today the criteria on which the school and its educational offerings are based:

But in addition to teaching, which is its complement and just as indispensable, we have research, the weapon that best allows us to detect the intensity and quality of those problems that, as worrying as they are, should deserve greater attention [...] and this (research ndr) can range from studying the space needs of the various sectors of the population for the various buildings that serve them, to determining the "invariants" [term used by Fernando Chueca Goitia, *Invariantes castizos de la arquitectura española*. (Madrid: Dossat bolsillo, 1947) as an alternative to 'constants', a more common but less exact term] of the way the Portuguese live and work [...] and this (research ndr) can range from studying the space requirements that the various sectors of the population have for the various buildings that serve them, to determining the "invariants"

of the way the Portuguese have organised their space over time, passing through everything related to construction techniques and materials, etc. etc. Only by relying on research can teaching be carried out on a real basis and only research can guarantee an indispensable sense of collaboration insofar as it makes teaching aware of the problems of those for whom it is intended; this, we believe, is why, especially at university level, research and teaching are now inseparable activities.

The chapter ends again with a turnaround: Portugal's condition of backwardness is to be understood as a valid possibility, as a laboratory for experimenting with a form of collaboration between professionals and citizens that together build a new condition, in which harmony in the organisation of space and the happiness of its inhabitants live from a renewed relationship of reciprocity. Knowledge of history, in the context of a country oppressed by dictatorship and backwardness, is a means of emancipation from ignorance, far from a quest for legitimacy. Twelve years separate the writing of this essay from the Carnation Revolution; Távora's thinking here is positively positioned towards the future and at the same time rooted in tradition.

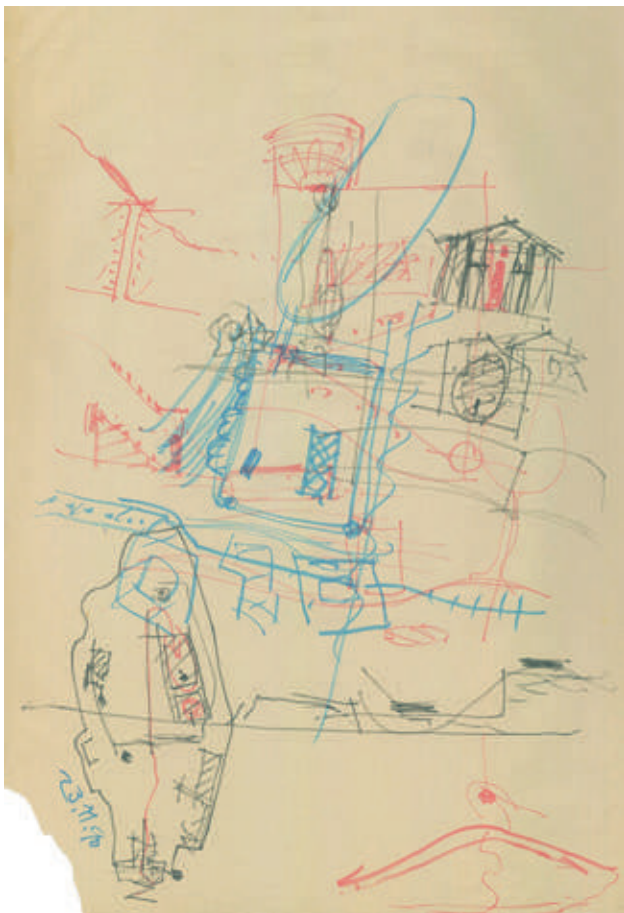
In the fourth and final part, *Around the Role of the Architect*, Távora returns to the theme of the tension between the work of the individual architect and the community to which he, as a professional "creator of forms, organiser of space par excellence", is called upon to give voice, clearly framing his civil role and excluding all forms of individualism and mythologising talents. He also returns to the theme of the diversity of the spheres to which architecture applies, while maintaining a single approach, a unitary vision; finally, he reiterates the role that the study of history and place have within the project, which must translate knowledge into living matter on which to base the construction of the new.

His fields of activity are multiple – because organised space has many facets. He designs and realises buildings, works on land planning at various scales and designs furniture.

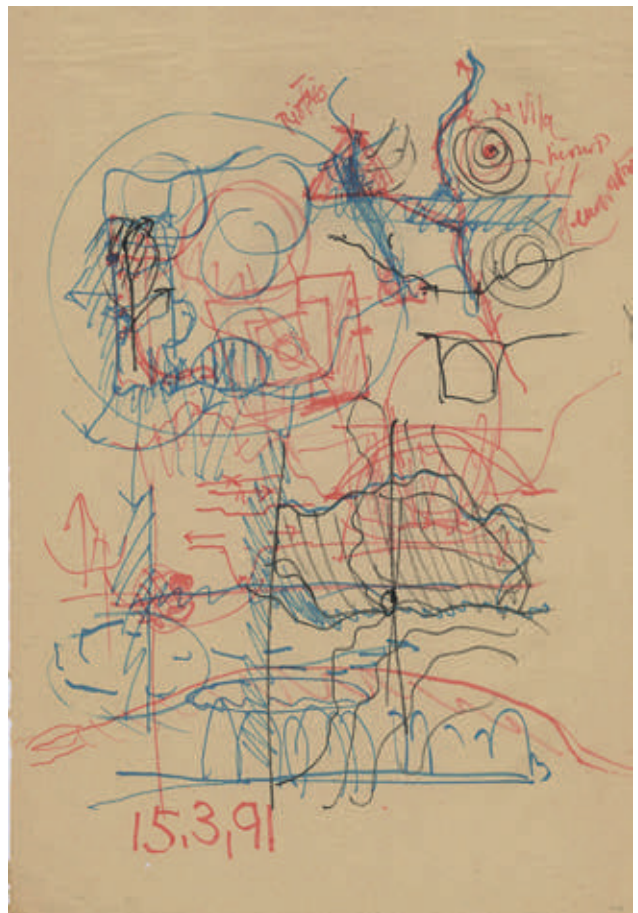
For him, however, designing, planning and drawing should only mean finding the right form, the correct form, the form that efficiently and beautifully realises the synthesis between what is necessary and what is possible, bearing in mind that this form will have a life, it will constitute a circumstance.

This being the case, designing, planning and drawing should not translate for the architect into the creation of meaningless forms, imposed by the caprices of fashion or any other kind of whim. Rather, the forms he creates must be the result of a wise balance between his personal vision and the circumstances that evolve around him, and for this he must know them intensely, so intensely that knowing and being are intertwined.

And he must counteract the negative aspects of the circumstance and value the positive aspects, which means, after all, educating and



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collaborating. And he will also collaborate and educate through his work. His position will therefore be that of permanent student and permanent educator.

The idea of the reciprocity approach that underlies his maieutic and his vision of architecture returns clearly. Responsibility and awareness motivate the drive for knowledge, which is never a form of erudition, but is the profound investigation carried out outside the ego that allows the ego to substantiate itself.

The primary objective of Távora's writing is also the aspect that makes it particularly topical; in short, that of the construction of a concept of democratic culture in the deepest sense of the term, in complete contrast to the expressions of fashions and the display of personal virtuosity.

This approach is fully in keeping with the climate of the ESBAP, led from 1952 onwards by Carlos Ramos, who had already called Távora as his assistant in 1951. A man of refined culture and a highly influential pedagogue, Ramos transformed the school into a centre of cultural debate, taking the opportunity to update the curricula and open up to international influences, in an exercise of careful handling of the pressures of the authoritarian regime.

On other occasions, Távora's thought develops through a more open form of doubt, in which critical and design reasoning moves with a trend that always displaces the problem forward and solves it more through compositional action than

Fig. 2

Fernando Távora, Three Sacred Places: Delphi, Acropolis of Athens, Olympia. Their topographical, aesthetic, religious and symbolic values. The importance of knowledge of the place and sensitivity to it for the architect's work. Sketch made during the course Teoria Geral da Organização da Espaço at the Faup, lecture November 23, 1990 (FIMS/AFT).

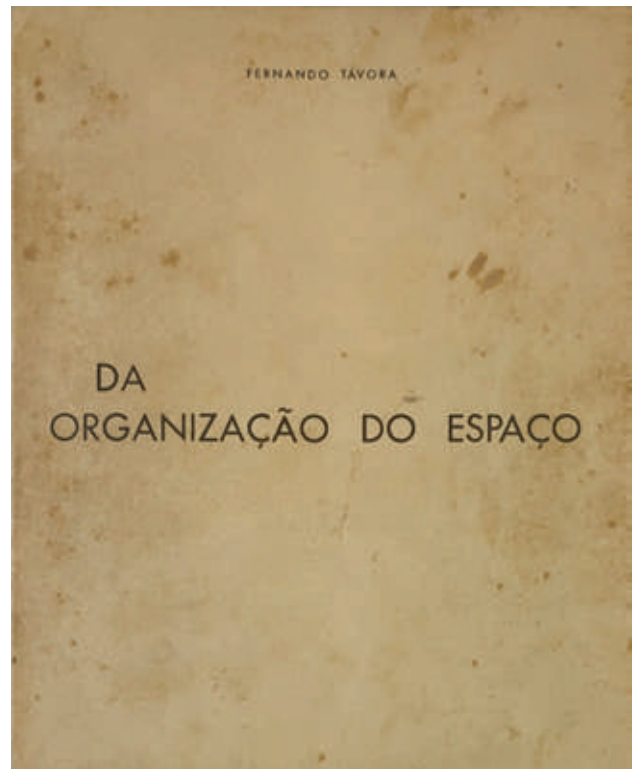
Fig. 3

Fernando Távora, Plan and schematic section of the city of Oporto, topographical relationship with the Douro river. Sketch made during the course Teoria Geral da Organização da Espaço at the Faup, lecture March 15, 1991 (FIMS/AFT).

through rhetorical exercise. His way of incorporating contradictions within the dynamic of mirroring between problems and solutions will make him famous, as will his ability to transpose the attitude of undermining the fixity of given certainties into architectural questions. These aspects, together with the “aptitude for heteronomy and attention to circumstantial conditions”³¹ represent the living inheritance of Fernando Pessoa’s thought, of whose works Távora is a devotee and collector.³² In this book, however, the academic contingency induces him to assume certain closures, certain fixed points that the author will reopen in later treatments.

A little over sixty years after this text was written, in the context of a culture that has translated individualisms into talents, legitimising the uncritical self-promotion of each “protagonist”, this invitation to the education of a well-founded culture of space appears as the definition of an antagonistic paradigm:

That, alongside an intense and necessary specialism, he puts a deep and indispensable humanism. May the architect be like this – man among men – organiser of space – a creator of happiness.



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³¹ Giovanni Leoni, “Oltre il ‘moderno’: l’architettura di Fernando Távora”, in Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera Completa* (Milano: Electa 2005) 40.

³² In this regard, it seems appropriate to mention that the reference to Fernando Pessoa’s thought represents an inescapable confrontation for Távora, which accompanies him from a very young age, continually leading him to confront the different interpretations of the concept of identity. In this vision, it is always to be understood as plural, in the multiplication of the ego. The acceptance of multiplicity is substantiated by the awareness of the set of factors in which our reality is articulated and on which each personal memory is also built.

Fig. 4

Da Organização do Espaço, Author’s edition, Porto 1962, cover (FIMS/AFT).

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Fernando Távora

Architecture and Urbanism

The Lesson of Constants

The text on architectural “constants” – one of the guiding concepts of Távora’s work – is part of a series of writings about the city published in the early years of the 1950s, and therefore at the time when Távora was asked by Carlos Ramos to collaborate as a volunteer assistant in ESBAP’s teaching programme. The texts are: “Arquitectura e Urbanismo. A lição das constantes”, Lusiada, Revista ilustrada de Cultura, no. 1, November 2, 1952; “Para um Urbanismo e uma Arquitectura Portuguesa”, Comércio do Porto, May 25, 1953; March 24, 1953; December 13, 1955; March 8, 1955; “Do Porto e do seu Espaço”, Comércio do Porto, January 26, 1954; “Para a Harmonia do nosso Espaço”, Comércio do Porto, August 10, 1954.



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The phenomenon of architecture and urbanism is universal. Wherever man is, at any time and in any place, there is Architecture and Urbanism. A necessary phenomenon, inherent to man's very nature, an indispensable extension of his life, a manifestation of his existence; from this universality – the variety, the infinity of aspects, the plurality of realisations. Each physical or spiritual climate has its own solution, hence the immense panorama that consideration of the past offers our eyes and that the present itself does not hide, infinite construction methods, countless plastic subtleties, varied programmes, the strangest materials, always and everywhere the unprecedented, the different, the unexpected. No one can deny the persistence of the phenomenon: in Architecture it's the elementary hut of the savage or the refined Parthenon, in Urbanism it's the incipient cluster of buildings or the complex metropolis. Different in volume, shape, and degree of delicacy, but common because they are manifestations of a common need to organise space, realised here by a primary spirit incapable of any possible speculation, there by a specialist who integrates his work into a theoretical current or establishes a doctrine. How many changes of spirit there are between the Arab who is an architect when he pitches his tent and the Renaissance man who writes treatises on architecture! Universality of the phenomenon, permanent and endless variety in realisations. How can we not? How can we conceive of the rudeness of a popular house in Palladio's work? How can we expect an Acropolis of Athens from the hands and spirit of a primitive society?

It is the function of history to know the existence of man's manifestations and to determine the possible constants that this existence presents. It is a necessary and indispensable function that justifies any interest in knowledge of the past because of the contribution it can make to the present.

But you ask, is there anything common in the evolution of the phenomena of Architecture and Urbanism? Undoubtedly. Three aspects, three constants, seem to us to be of paramount importance: its permanent modernity, the collaborative endeavour it has always reflected, its importance as a conditioning element in human life.

The modernity of an event is measured by the relationship it maintains with the conditions in which it takes place. In terms of Architecture and Urbanism, modernity means the perfect integration of all the elements that can influence the realisation of any work, using all the means that best lead to the achievement of a certain end. Modernity manifests itself in the quality and accuracy of the relationship between the work and life. If the conditions are different, the solutions will be different – but the nature of the relationship must be the same. The great works of architecture and urbanism have always been modern insofar as they translated their surroundings exactly, i.e. according to a perfect relationship. There is one great truth common to all these works – their modernity. Their formal aspects are a direct consequence of the variety of environments, of conditions of all kinds, but they themselves, in their diversity, allow for the deduction of that constant called modernity.

St Mark's Square in Venice is a typical example of formal diversity and permanent quality. Between the first and last buildings that make up this extraordinary urban organism there are a few centuries of difference, centuries that signify evolution, diversity, variety. Any one of these buildings was modern and because they all were, the constant of modernity presides over the whole; it doesn't matter in what style each one was realised – it matters, rather, the similar attitude that presided over their conception. Common to all the manifestations of Architecture and Urbanism is the truth that all of them were realised thanks to a collective effort and that all of them therefore represent a synthesis. The architect or the urban planner are not enough to achieve Architecture and Urbanism; they are only the organisers of the magnificent synthesis that the works reflect and in which an endless series of elements collaborate. Without underestimating the value of the individual contribution, there is no doubt that it is these elements, in their totality, in the unity of their efforts, that realise the definitive work. Collaboration here takes on the most varied aspects and reaches the most diverse social strata. Without astonishing physical effort, the stones that define Stonehenge would not have been erected; the Pyramids would not be a reality without the collaboration of geometers, astronomers, and mathematicians; cities like Athens or Venice would not exist without a climate of close collaboration between their most diverse inhabitants. And this collaboration ranges from the actual collaboration that takes place in the conception or construction of works of architecture and town planning to the very enjoyment of these works; in fact, it is not enough to build houses or cities or temples, it is necessary to have the guarantee of their interest for those for whom these works are intended; by living them, they collaborate not only in the creation but in the very existence of these manifestations. Being works of collaboration, the works of Architecture and Urbanism will be syntheses, plastic translations in the organised space of those by whom and for whom they are made, translations of their own, characteristic, diverse, varied, and changeable. Previous and common to all of them is the truth that without a spirit of collaboration, of collective effort, these works could not be realised.

The importance of Architecture and Urbanism as a phenomenon that conditions human life cannot be overstated. If man, in organising space, carries out conditioned work, insofar as he satisfies the realities that surround him, he also carries out work that conditions his own activity; a city or a house are built according to pre-existing conditions but once built, they create conditions of existence for the men who live in them. The good or bad quality of the organisation of space determines, in part, the wellbeing or unease of people; the disharmony of the organisation of space generates human unhappiness. Who is unaware of the influence of the space man inhabits or where he manifests his social relations on his own physical and spiritual health? It has always been true, and here we call it constant, that the environment exerts a capital influence on man. It is largely in the hands of

architecture and urban planning to organise the environment in which men live, the buildings in which they live or work, the cities, regions, or countries in which they are integrated.

Knowledge of the past is of value to the present. It is true that the mentioned constants, by their very nature, have not lost their relevance. Sometimes, however, they are forgotten, and Architecture and Urbanism take on aspects of crisis. The analysis of many contemporary manifestations in this field provide the perfect index of this crisis, of this forgetting of the constants, of something fundamental being replaced by the accessory and the decorative, even though these manifestations almost always invoke traditional aspects or a return to the past. The Great Tradition, the tradition of constants, is confused with small, fleeting traditions. Because the lesson of the constants cannot be forgotten, contemporary Architecture and Urbanism must show their modernity, reflect total collaboration, and not forget their importance as conditioning elements in human life.

Fernando Távora

Le Corbusier, Bruno Zevi, Lúcio Costa

On 29 April 2003, Fernando Távora received the Laurea Honoris Causa from the IUAV in Venice in a ceremony held in the Sala dei Dogi of the Ducal Palace. The Rector at the time was Marino Folin, the Dean was Carlo Magnani, who delivered a Laudatio accompanied with speeches by Eduardo Souto de Moura and Álvaro Siza.

The Honorary Degree was proposed and strongly supported by Francesco Dal Co. The Lectio Magistralis delivered by Távora is a subtle and sophisticated essay on his attitude of being 'always himself and always other than himself'. Without any direct reference to his own work, Távora entrusts the narrative of his identity to three heteronyms: Le Corbusier, Bruno Zevi, and Lúcio Costa, three key figures to him united in the memory of a Venetian sojourn that is one of the fundamental journeys made by Távora in the decade between 1950 and 1960.

Le Corbusier, with sublime demythologising transversality, is evoked through an article that appeared in the Gazzettino, a venetian local newspaper, in April 1952. It is a Le Corbusier who, with Ruskinian accents, celebrates Venice and its being a city designed for man, free from the domination of the machine, the "misery of contemporaneity". A Le Corbusier who, enlightened by Cingria-Vaneyre, becomes the cantor of Romance Switzerland and, having repudiated Mitteleuropa, remains faithful to a Mediterranean and Greco-Roman root. A potential Le Corbusier, who may never have existed, nevertheless well represents the tension between local and international, between authorship and anonymity that the figure of the Swiss master brings to Távora's education.

The considerations on Zevi multiply the heteronymic game, as the Italian historian – whose erudition and expository zeal are evoked with respect but not without a subtle vein of irony – is immediately identified with F.L. Wright, the second fundamental master for Távora, who is thus both evoked and, at the same time, avoided. Between the lines there is also a distinction between European and American architecture that is not irrelevant if one considers the strongly anti-American outlook expressed, for instance, in the Diary written by Távora on the occasion of the 1960 trip financed by the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Finally, Costa, in reference to whom the heteronymic exercise becomes one of explicit adherence: knowledge of Portugal, the lesson of anonymous architecture, a shared idea of the modern that does not coincide with modernism and does not mark a break in historical continuity.

Two versions of the text exist. The original Portuguese text, reproduced below, and an Italian version with some variants, edited by Antonio Esposito and revised by Távora, used here for the English version.



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1 – Magnífico Reitor do Instituto Universitário de Arquitectura de Veneza e caro Preside da Faculdade de Arquitectura. É, naturalmente, às vossas pessoas que a minha palavra de agradecimento deverá dirigir-se em primeiro lugar, dado o facto de ter a vossa Universidade decidido de atribuir-me a *Láurea Honoris Causa*.

Dessa consideração não me sinto realmente merecedor, mas reconheço-me aceite por ela, enquanto reconhecida pela boa vontade e pela competência da sua Universidade. E, igualmente, envio também a minha profunda gratidão pela presença nesta cerimónia dos arquitectos portugueses Álvaro Siza Vieira e Eduardo Souto de Moura, que, especialmente, foram indicados para estarem presentes e, também, de todos aqueles que quiseram, igualmente, estar aqui connosco.

2 – Cumprida tal obrigação, cabe-me agora indicar o tema das minhas palavras que se iniciaram pela sua razão de um encontro que aconteceu nesta bela cidade de Veneza, no ano de 1952, quando participei, acompanhado de alguns colegas da Faculdade de Arquitectura do Porto, ao Congresso Internacional dos Artistas, realizado no que fora o Convento de S. Giorgio Maggiore, hoje a Fundação Giorgio Cini. Trata-se tal instalação de um edifício construído em 1530 por Palladio, e acabado mais tarde por Simone Sorella para uma comunidade benedita, e que ocupa uma posição dominante e inesquecível sobre o percurso do Canale de S. Marco. Veneza constituiu-se nesta data como uma grande festa, como resulta sempre, quando tais manifestações ocorrem numa belíssima e poética cidade.

Mas o Congresso Internacional dos Artistas não vai, propriamente, ser o tema das minhas palavras, mas sim o do aparecimento de três personagens marcantes na minha já longa vida profissional, que estiveram aqui presentes entre as personalidades que nele participavam. São eles os Arquitectos Le Corbusier – do seu nome verdadeiro Charies-Édouard Jeanneret – Bruno Zevi e Lúcio Costa.

Pusemo-los aqui em contacto com a sua história da arquitectura, analisando nos seus depoimentos algumas das concepções gerais de cada um e a sua mútua comparação de modo a permitir ao leitor a minha presença perante eles.

Enquanto a minha compreensão perante cada um deles se exercerá e para que seja assim possível analisar a presença de um arquitecto português, perante três homens importantes do pensamento na arquitectura.

3 – Mas ouçamos, em primeiro lugar o arquitecto Le Corbusier através da tradução de um artigo do Jornal “Il Gazzettino”, de 24/9/1952, quando na casa Cá Giustinian apresentava uma conferência sobre a Cidade de Veneza.

Sob a presença de um enorme público, apresentado pelo Professor Samoná, Reitor do Instituto Superior de Arquitectura, Le Corbusier, definiu Veneza como a cidade maravilhosa que assume em si própria, depois de séculos de história, os

mais bizarros contrastes arquitectónicos mas que, apesar disso, aparece harmoniosamente completo!, refeita em todo o seu particular, cinzelada pela mão do tempo.

Confrontando Veneza com quaisquer outras cidades, de um lado ruas estreitas, campos, *fondamenta*, tudo reservado ao peão nas quais ouvimos apenas as vozes dos homens, sob um céu esplendido de Sol algumas vezes de qualquer nuvem branca que parece até posta para fazer ressaltar o azul dos céus. Por outro lado, de estradas, sim, mas grande parte reservada às máquinas e nas quais se cruzam rebatendo num ou noutro muro, os rumores mais heterogêneos; regime pelo qual Veneza é claramente constatada como a cidade do silêncio, no confronto com aqueles altos centros onde a humanidade é submergida por aquele que o orador define como a “miséria contemporânea”, o domínio da máquina sobre o indivíduo. Veneza, em suma, é construída em função do indivíduo, para servi-lo a si próprio. As suas estradas, o arco avançado das suas pontes, a arquitectura das suas gôndolas, toda a sua harmonia responde a critérios de repousante esteticidade e não a frias necessidades.

A casa, portanto, é o centro da cidade, é à casa que deve dedicar-se a maior parte de atenção, os maiores cuidados. E o conferencista descreveu, ajudando-se sempre com os seus desenhos, aquela que responde a todas as exigências da vida moderna, demonstrando como o problema do espaço não é sempre fundamental, basta que os ambientes sejam construídos com particular atenção, basta que possamos oferecer ao habitante todas aquelas comodidades necessárias ao seu exigente dia a dia.

Mas o suíço Le Corbusier nasce na pequena cidade de La Chaux-de-Fonds, no ano de 1887.

Visitei tal cidade em 1992, onde se nota a presença inicial do grande arquitecto, e as industrias da cidade do século XIX, as suas grandes ruas e as suas praças, os seus museus de Belas-Artes, ou de Relojoaria, a própria casa onde nasceu o arquitecto.

Dizíamos que em La Chaux-de-Fonds se encontrava a “presença inicial” de Le Corbusier porque, em verdade pouco se encontra dos elementos reconhecidos do arquitecto, mas apenas um conjunto de residências tais como a Villa Fallet (1906), Villa de Stotzer (1908), Villa Jaquemet (1908), a Villa Jeanneret (1912), Villa Schwob (1917) e Villa Fabure-Jacob (1912), construída para os pais após a sua chegada do Oriente, a qual está já influenciada pela arquitectura neoclássica e vernacular.

Isto é, de todas as habitações propriamente lecorbusianas, pouco existe em La Chaux-de-Fonds. Existem sim memórias da sua presença, a sua primeira formação escolar, a participação de Charles L'Eplattenier, o professor de arte da sua juventude que o encaminhou para a prática da Arquitectura e René Chappalaz, um seu colaborador em alguns trabalhos profissionais.

Com efeito a 1ª edição completa da obra de Le Corbusier, não apresenta nenhum destes trabalhos, embora se trate já de um homem muito conhecido, pela sua ação prática e pela sua participação teórica.

Toda a coleção de edifícios mais tarde atribuída a Le Corbusier não aparece então e apenas a pesquisa de dois autores, Paul V. Tumer (1967) e H. Allen Brooks (1997) com os livros *La Formation de Le Corbusier – Idéalisme & Mouvement Moderne* e *Le Corbusier's Formative Years* vem revelar a realização do seu aparecimento.

Entretanto, perante estes seus trabalhos, leituras e viagens agita-se no espírito do jovem Jeanneret, naturalmente, a dúvida sobre o sentido do seu pensamento e da sua ação profissional uma vez que a presença de L'Eplattenier e da tendência Arts & Crafts do seu mestre é forte ainda como um primeiro leite materno.

E em Outubro de 1910 Jeanneret toma conhecimento de uma obra escrita que vai alterar a sua vida intelectual e profissional: *Les Entretiens de La Villa du Rouet* de Cingria-Vaneyre que acaba de ser publicada. Apresentados como uma série de “diálogos”, os Entretiens versam, como tema principal, a necessidade de criar uma identidade artística específica para a Suíça romana; a obra comporta uma só ideia fundamental e permanente: o verdadeiro espírito dessa região é mediterrânico e não nórdico e a sua arte deve cessar de ser influenciada pela Alemanha para se voltar, de novo, para o classicismo greco-latino.

E Cingria escreve: “A nossa alma clássica, com efeito, não pode deixar de evoluir numa fórmula greco-latina”, acrescentando: “a vocação de conduzir a minha pátria às suas verdadeiras harmonias invadiu-me. Afastei tudo o que podia levar-me para longe do Sul, de Roma e do Mediterrâneo; era a salvação através da cultura clássica...”. “Genève deve ser greco-latina”. Afirmações estas acompanhadas de um ataque contra o “romantismo”, que perverteu o verdadeiro espírito clássico da Suíça romana, e contra a Alemanha, fonte de más influências, que exerce um domínio “cultural” sobre o país.

No fim do seu exemplar do livro Jeanneret escreve uma profissão de fé, datada de 23 de Novembro de 1910, na qual afirma... “plenamente de acordo com o espírito geral e genial... para mim este livro ajuda favoravelmente a minha orientação... Dentro de um ano, em Roma, vou relê-lo e, através de esboços, fundarei a minha disciplina jurássica, ‘Neuchateloise’”.

Em 1911, entre Maio e Outubro, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret e o seu amigo Augusto Klipstein partem para uma viagem cujo fim é Constantinopla. Ele descobre então a arquitectura: jogo correcto e magnífico dos volumes sob a luz, sistema coerente do espírito.

Ao longo desta viagem, de Dresde a Constantinopla, de Atenas a Pompéia, ele mantém o seu “carnet-de-route”. Nota impressões e realiza um volume de desenhos que lhe ensinam a olhar e a ver. Mais tarde prepara um livro que devia ser publicado em 1914 e apenas o será em 1966.

Esses livros são *Lê Voyage d' Orient* publicado em 1966 e *Journey to the East – Le Corbusier* publicado em 1987 com os desenhos então feitos.

A consideração do livro *Cingria, o amor de Jeanneret à "pátria" Suíça-Romana*, o conhecimento histórico da cultura mediterrânica e toda a conseqüente obra de criação de Le Corbusier, vieram marcar fortemente, os rumos da arquitectura e do urbanismo contemporâneos.

Mas a revelação do Le Corbusier, não indiferente à lição da história prossegue e em 1988 quando, no centenário do seu nascimento, é realizada uma grande exposição no Hotel Sully, em Paris, pela Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, intitulada *Le Corbusier – L'ê passe à reaction poétique*, trata-se da apresentação de uma enorme exposição de objetos resultantes da prática profissional ou motivos de inspiração formal em que a história intervém claramente. E no rosto do catálogo um escrito de Corbu: "Les siècles ne salissent d'ailleurs pas nos mains: au contraire ils les remplissent" – os séculos não sujaram as nossas mãos; pelo contrário, enchem-nas.

4 – Falemos agora de Bruno Zevi cuja aula dada aos estudantes congressistas se realizou no Instituto Universitário de Arquitectura, no Palazzo Giustiniani e num curso na Scuola Internazionale Estiva d'Architettura. Lembro-me, para a qual, todos partimos em conjunto para a figura de Zevi, que me pareceu um pouco dura e muito rigorosa, no sentido da sua criação, nas suas palavras e a medida de um enorme grupo de "slides" o que apresentou, como ilustração, das suas afirmações; lembro-me, ainda, de que a aula terá durado perto de duas horas e meia, com cerca de quinze-vinte minutos de intervalo, para descansar um pouco da intensidade do seu discurso.

Foi muito interessante a matéria – o problema da colocação da "janela" nos edifícios, também rodeado de 250 diapositivos! Exposição muito clara, muito intensa e muito condensada, que recordamos bem na formação das nossas aulas teóricas em grande parte dispersas e pouco enérgicas.

Mas continuemos com Zevi, homem e pensador, que para o caso destas palavras é certamente, mais interessante.

Bruno Zevi, um italiano nascido em 1918, graduou-se na Graduate School of Design da Universidade de Harvard, nos Estados Unidos da América e dirigido por Walter Gropius, dedicando-se, mais tarde, agora em Itália, a estudos históricos e praticando a Cátedra de História da Faculdade de Arquitectura de Roma.

A sua obra bibliográfica é notável, tendo os volumes *Verso una architettura orgânica*, 1945, *Saper Vedere L'Architettura*, 1949 e *Architettura In Nuce*, 1969, com uma vasta bibliografia de cerca de 1500 títulos de livros de arquitectura. E, paralelamente ler um outro livro de Frank Lloyd Wright, *Arquitettura Orgânica*, 1945, onde, na página 67 o autor diz: "a arquitectura verdadeira, meus senhores, senhoras e senhores é poesia. Um bom edifício, se é arquitectura orgânica, é o maior dos poemas".

A sua formação americana animava-lhe o culto de Frank Lloyd Wright, por alguns considerado o maior arquitecto do mundo moderno e, bem assim, a evolução entre a arquitectura racionalista e europeia e a arquitectura americana é

acrescentada pelos Arquitectos dos Países Nórdicos, Alvar Aalto, por exemplo. Na Revista *Metron* – 31-32, 1949 –, onde é publicado um artigo de Bruno Zevi perante *A Cultura Arquitectónica* em que é estudada a disposição dos arquitectos modernos e italianos.

Identificando como válido o trabalho dos arquitectos europeus no CIAM, declara que a massa dos arquitectos americanos não participou nunca nas atividades. E hoje é necessário que esses participem e continua: “O CIAM na opinião dos arquitectos modernos, é deixado à mentalidade arquitectónica de Le Corbusier, e em geral do período que existe sob o nome de racionalista. É deixado às perspetivas e às interpretações históricas de Siegfried Giedion”. E continua “a inteira geração de jovens arquitectos que muito contribuí para o avanço do sistema moderno e todo o sector da escola de Wright são quasi excluídos. Porquê?” E termina assim o seu longo artigo: “Noutras palavras acreditamos que estas ideias encobrem cidadania no CIAM”.

Já em 1996, na revista *Zodiac* 16 transmite-se o resultado de uma entrevista entre Bruno Zevi e Enrico Bordogna, sobre a evolução da arquitectura na América, em Itália, ou no CIAM, a qual é terminada por aquele do seguinte modo: “De tudo o que escrevi, são três as “quele” que considero verdadeiramente originais e importantes: 1) a ideia de que o espaço é o protagonista da arquitectura; 2) a ideia de que a arquitectura tem a necessidade de uma linguagem, o qual sem invariantes não pode processar-se, entender-se, comunicar. Mas que estas invariantes não possam ser articuladas, isto é não mais invariantes como regras, mas como anti-regras; 3) a ideia de uma visão da história da arquitectura que contenha todos os valores, que capte a existência dos factos do progresso. Tal fim que se resta no paradigma também está na reacção, só a heresia é criativa”.

“Para concluir quero sublinhar o significado fundamental que para mim recupera a crítica operativa. Entendo por crítica histórica operativa, uma história que serve para libertar os arquitectos dos dogmas, dos idosos, dos prejuízos das invariantes clássicas e de tudo o que lhes constrange uma posição estética. Pensamos nas coisas que aconteceram nos anos oitenta, com a trágica explosão do pós-moderno. Eu resisti e não publiquei mais uma obra pós-moderna. Hoje a situação aparece completamente modificada, também do ponto de vista político, e penso que também em Itália quem pratica a arquitectura deve sentir a importância das nossas perspetivas que esta situação abre”.

5 – Corbusiano, assim lhe chama o jornalista de *Il Gazzettino*, de 25.9.1952, a Lúcio Costa, quanto aos modos de habitar, não aceita uma habitação maciça, na vertical; aí a promiscuidade não é de facto permitida: assim, por cada família o isolamento é favorecido pela vizinhança dos benefícios concedidos a cada agrupamento. A arquitectura é contrária à localização dos pequenos casos de periferia, com vistas de uma sobre a outra; isto é decididamente partidária das habitações alveolares, onde “todos estão no mesmo meio gozando dos

mesmos princípios”. O seu ponto de vista é aquele das construções em altura (os conhecidos arranha-céus), espaços para grandes manchas de verde e equipadas com piscinas, escolas, jardins de infância, farmácias, bar, restaurantes, negócios para aquisições essenciais, etc.

Já o conhecíamos desde o momento em que, em 1943, o Museum Of Modern Art, de New York, publicou o livro *Brazil Builds. Architecture New and Old 1652-1942*, dirigido por Philip L. Goodwin.

Eu e outros colegas portugueses procuramos o Arquitecto Lúcio Costa com quem estivemos falando dos nossos países irmãos; a diferença, porém, é que não conhecíamos o Brasil e ele conhecia perfeitamente Portugal, contando histórias várias que lhe tinham acontecido.

Devo dizer que este encontro resultou para mim numa forte amizade a esse arquitecto brasileiro e que por mais de uma vez me levou ao Brasil. Lembro o nosso último encontro, no Rio, na sua casa em que muito conversamos sobre as nossas coisas e, sobretudo, os nossos problemas.

Acontece que, entretanto, o Lúcio Costa foi ganhando espaço no Brasil, quer pelos trabalhos que aí fez com o Arquitecto Le Corbusier, quer pelas suas relações com Oscar Niemayer, quer como autor do Plano de Urbanização de Brasília.

E o que nos atrai em Lúcio Costa é o seu “portuguesismo”, isto é a sua ideia de posse de uma arquitectura brasileira, ela não esquece a sua origem portuguesa, coisa que entretanto íamos perdendo na nossa arquitectura.

Ou como diz a sua filha Maria Elisa Costa “Mas, como o norte fica dentro, não há rigidez é lícito mudar de opinião, se mesmo de convicção, sempre que esse norte apontar para a mudança. E, ao mesmo tempo, existe o lado poeta-pragmático, ou seja, essa coisa de ter os pés muito bem fincados no chão, com a perfeita consciência dos limites viáveis, exactamente para, dentro desses limites, tentar sempre o voo mais alto. Só uma cabeça assim seria capaz de produzir a utopia de carne e osso que é, na verdade, Brasília. Tudo isso é temperado com senso de humor, simplicidade e elegância – em tudo –, além de uma capacidade sempre renovada de acreditar, de se encantar com as coisas, de ter prazer com uma comida gostosa ou uma coisa bonita, de receber o imprevisto. E mais a sóbria e plena consciência do seu próprio valor. Em suma, é o inverso do ‘personagem’: nada é ostentado, vale a verdade. O Verbo é, mesmo, ser”.

E respondendo, sobre a entrevista de 1995, publicada em anexo no seu livro, à pergunta: “Porque o Sr. não gosta que o chamem de arquitecto modernista?” Diz: “Moderno é o certo. Modernista tem um ar paranoico e um sentido suspeito. Parece que está-se opondo ao que se fazia antes, à tradição, para fazer uma coisa obcecadamente moderna. Eu não vi a diferença. A verdadeira arquitectura moderna não promove a rutura com o passado. Só a falar isto acontece por causa da má formação de pseudo-arquitectos”.

E à pergunta:

“Em 1937 o Sr. dirigia o grupo que projectou o prédio do Ministério da Educação e, ao mesmo tempo, estava no Património Histórico. Como era possível conciliar arquitectura moderna e preservação histórica?” Responde: “No estrangeiro quem gosta de arquitectura moderna detesta tradição e vice-versa. Aqui foi diferente, o moderno e a tradição andavam juntos. Eu chefiava a Divisão de Estradas e do Tombamento de SPHAN. Achava que a arquitectura moderna não devia contrariar nessa tradição”.

6 – É tempo de acabar. Recordo aqui de novo, os nomes de três arquitectos, todos já falecidos, que foram importantes na minha vida profissional.

Recordo Le Corbusier, o homem da Veneza silenciosa, Bruno Zevi, o mestre da arquitectura orgânica, e, ainda, Lúcio Costa, o apaixonado de Portugal e da sua arquitectura. Três homens modernos e muito influentes de um ou de outro lado na arquitectura.

É à sua memória que dedico as palavras ditas e bem também à sua memória presto a importância que essas horas tiveram na minha formação.

É um arquitecto português que vos fala na bela Veneza, e recordado no seu tempo que, em 1952, passou nesta cidade.

Muito e muito obrigado por tudo.

1 – Rector of the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia and dear Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, it is of course to you that my words of thanks must first be addressed, since your University has decided to confer on me an Honorary Degree.

I do not really feel deserving of such consideration, but I welcome it gratefully as it is certified by the benevolence and excellence of your University.

Likewise, I express my deep gratitude for the presence at this ceremony of the Portuguese architects Álvaro Siza Vieira and Eduardo Souto de Moura, whom you invited, and for the presence of all those who wished to be here with us.

2 – Having accomplished this duty, it now concerns me to indicate the theme of my words, which are inspired by a meeting, which took place in this beautiful city of Venice in the year 1952, in which I participated in the company of some colleagues from the Faculty of Architecture of Porto on the occasion of the International Congress of Artists, at the convent of S. Giorgio Maggiore – today the Giorgio Cini Foundation. It is a building constructed in 1530 by Palladio and completed later by Simone Sorella, for a Benedictine community, and occupies a dominant and unforgettable position on the San Marco basin.

Venice, on that occasion, was transformed as if for a grand celebration, as always happens when events like that take place in a city both beautiful and poetic.

But it will not be the International Congress of Artists the theme of my speech in the strict sense of the term, but rather the appearance of three figures, decisive in my already long professional life, present on that occasion among the various personalities who took part.

These are the Architects: Le Corbusier – whose real name was Charles-Eduard Jeanneret – Bruno Zevi and Lúcio Costa.

They have been brought together in these pages, along with their histories of architecture, analysing in their testimonies some of the general concepts of each and comparing them, so that the listener can sense the presence of a Portuguese architect in front of three men so important to the thinking of architecture.

3 – But let us first listen to architect Le Corbusier through the translation of an article from the newspaper “Il Gazzettino”, dated 24/9/1952, the day he presented a conference on the City of Venice at Cá Giustinian.

In front of a huge audience, presented by Professor Samoná, Rector of the Istituto Universitario di Architettura, Le Corbusier defined Venice as the marvellous city that takes on in itself, after centuries of history, the most bizarre architectural contrasts, but which, despite this, shows itself to be harmoniously complete, intact in all its particularity, greyed by the hand of time.

Comparing Venice with any other city, we have on the one hand narrow streets, *campi*, *fondamenta*, everything reserved for pedestrians, where only the voices of men can be heard, under a splendid sky in full sunlight, sometimes crossed by white clouds that seem to have been deliberately designed to make the blue stand out. On the other side we find the streets, largely reserved for cars and in which the most heterogeneous noises refract from one wall to another. A condition that makes us clearly identify Venice as the city of silence, in contrast to those large centres in which humanity is submerged by what the orator called the ‘contemporary misery’, the dominance of the machine over the individual. Venice, in short, is built in function of the individual, to serve him. Its streets, the low arch of its bridges, the architecture of its gondolas, all its harmony responds to criteria of restful aestheticism and not to cold necessity.

The home, therefore, is the centre of the city, it is to the home that most attention, most care must be devoted. And the speaker described, always with the help of his drawings, the house that responds to all the needs of modern life, demonstrating how the problem of space is not always fundamental, if the rooms are built with particular care, as long as one can offer the inhabitant all the comforts necessary for his or her demanding everyday life.

But the Swiss Le Corbusier was born in the small town of La Chaux-de-Fonds, in the year 1887. In 1992 I visited this town, where the initial presence of the great architect can be felt, along with the industries of the 19th-century town, the large streets, the squares, the Fine Arts and Horology museums, along with the very house where the architect was born.

We used to say that in La Chaux-de-Fonds we can find Le Corbusier's "initial presence", since, in truth, little is visible of his recognised elements in houses such as Villa Fallet (1906), Villa de Stotzer (1908), Villa Jaquemet (1908), Villa Jeanneret (1912), Villa Schwob (1917) and Villa Fabure-Jacob (1912), built for his parents on his return from the Orient, already influenced by neoclassical and vernacular architecture.

In fact, in La Chaux-de-Fonds, there is very little of the houses that can be described as properly LeCorbusian. On the other hand, there are memories of his presence, his first education, the presence of Charles L'Eplattenier, the art history professor which led him to practise architecture in his youth, and René Chappalaz, who collaborated with him on some of his professional work.

In fact, the first edition of Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre* does not present any of these works, although he was already a well-known man at that time, both for his practical action and his theoretical contribution.

The entire group of buildings later attributed to Le Corbusier does not appear, and only the research of two authors such as Paul V. Tumer (1967) and H. Allen Brooks (1997), with the books *La Formation de Le Corbusier – Idéalisme & Mouvement Moderne* and *Le Corbusier's Formative Years*, came to make these works manifest.

In those years of work, reading and travel, there is, naturally, in the young Jeanneret's spirit, doubt about the meaning of his own thought and professional work, given that the presence of L'Eplattenier and his master's Arts & Crafts tendency is still as strong as mother's first milk.

In October 1910, Jeanneret came across a written work that altered his intellectual and professional life: *Les Entretiens de La Villa du Rouet* by Cingria-Vaneyre [Alexandre Jullien: Genève, 1908 N.d.R.] that had just been published. Presented as a series of "dialogues", the essays deal, as their main theme, with the need to create a specific artistic identity for French-speaking Switzerland; the work entails only one fundamental and constant idea: the true spirit of this region is Mediterranean and not Nordic, and its art must cease to be influenced by Germany and return once again to Greco-Latin classicism.

And Cingria writes: "Our classical soul, indeed, cannot stop evolving according to a Greco-Latin formula", and adds: "the vocation to lead my homeland to its true harmonies has pervaded me. I pushed away everything that could take me away from the South, from Rome and the Mediterranean; a kind of salvation through classical culture..." "Geneva must be Greek-Latin". Statements

accompanied by an attack against “romanticism”, which had perverted the true classical spirit of Romande Swiss, and against Germany, a source of bad influences, which exerts “cultural” dominance over the country.

At the end of his copy of the book Jeanneret notes a profession of faith, dated 23 November 1910, in which he states... “fully in agreement with the general and ingenious spirit... for me this book favourably aids my orientation.... Within a year, in Rome, I will reread it and, using the drawings as well, I will find my Jurassic discipline, ‘Neuchateloise’”.

In 1911, between May and October, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret and his friend Augusto Klipstein set off on a journey whose destination was Constantinople. He then discovered architecture: a correct and magnificent play of volumes under the sunlight, a coherent system of the spirit. During this journey, from Dresden to Constantinople, from Athens to Pompeii, he compiles his ‘carnet-de-route’. He noted down impressions and produced a volume of drawings that taught him how to look and see. Later, he prepares a book, which was to be published in 1914 but was not published until 1966.

In 1966, *Lê Voyage d’ Orient* was published and in 1987, *Journey to the East – Le Corbusier* [MIT: Cambridge MA, 1987 N.d.R.] was published with the drawings made on that journey.

The consideration in which Cingria’s book was held, Jeanneret’s love for his Romande Swiss ‘homeland’, his historical knowledge of Mediterranean culture and all Le Corbusier’s consequent creative work, come to strongly mark the furrows of contemporary architecture and town planning.

But the revelation of a Le Corbusier not indifferent to the lesson of history continues, and in 1988, the centenary of his birth, a large exhibition was held in the Hotel Sully in Paris, promoted by the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, entitled *Le Corbusier – Le passé à réaction poétique*, with the presentation of a large number of objects from his professional practice and formal inspirations in which history clearly intervenes.

On the cover of the catalogue is a sentence by Corbu: “Lês siècles ne salissent d’ailleurs pás nos mains: au contraire ils lês remplissent” – the centuries do not dirty our hands, rather they fill them.

4 – Let us now talk about Bruno Zevi whose lecture given to the student congress participants was held at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura, Palazzo Giustiniani, as part of a course of the International Summer School of Architecture.

I remember that on that occasion we were all overwhelmed by the figure of Zevi, who seemed to me a bit harsh and very rigorous in the construction of his arguments, commensurately supported by an enormous quantity of slides that he showed us to illustrate his statements; I still remember that

the lecture lasted about two and a half hours, with a breck of about fifteen or twenty minutes, to give us a little rest from the intensity of his speech.

The subject matter was very interesting – the problem of the positioning of the ‘window’ in buildings – peppered with no less than 250 slides! Very clear, very intense, and very condensed exposition, which we well remember in the construction of our theoretical lectures, often dispersive and lacking in energy. But let us continue to talk about Zevi, a man and thinker who, as far as this discourse is concerned, is certainly more interesting.

Bruno Zevi, an Italian born in 1918, graduated from the Graduate School of Design at Harward University, in the United States, guided by Walter Gropius; later, back in Italy, he devoted himself to historical studies, occupying the Chair of the History of Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture in Rome.

His written work is remarkable; with books such as *Verso un’architettura organica* (Towards an organic architecture) dated 1945, *Saper vedere l’architettura* (How to look at architecture) dated 1949 and *Architettura in nuce* (Architecture in nuce) dated 1969, with a vast bibliography of approximately one thousand five hundred titles on architecture. I spontaneously associate with these works Frank Lloyd Wright’s book *An Organic Architecture*, the *Architecture of Democracy* from 1939, in which the author says: “true architecture, my gentlemen and ladies, is poetry. A good building, if it is organic architecture, is the greatest poetry”.

His American education animated in him the cult of Frank Lloyd Wright, considered by some to be the greatest architect of the modern world, and in those years, the evolution between European rationalist architecture and American architecture was also enriched by the contribution of architects from the Nordic countries, such as Alvar Aalto, for example.

In issue 31-32 of the magazine *Metron* in 1949, Zevi published an article on *Architectural Culture* in which he analysed the position of modern architects and Italian architects.

He considered the work carried out by European architects within CIAM to be valid and, noting that the mass of American architects had never participated in CIAM activities, argued the need for this to finally happen, since “CIAM, in the public opinion of modern architects, is linked to the architectural mentality of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and in general to the period that goes by the name of rationalism. It is linked to the perspectives and historical interpretations of Siegfried Giedion”. He continues: “An entire generation of young architects who contributed to the advancement of the modern movement, and the entire school of Wright, are almost excluded. Why?” And he concludes his long article like this: “In other words, we demand that these ideas find citizenship in CIAM”.

In 1996, the magazine *Zodiac*, in no. 16, published an interview with Bruno Zevi by Enrico Bordogna on the evolution of architecture in America, Italy and CIAM, in

which he concluded: "Of all the things I have written, there are three that I consider truly original and important: 1) the idea that space is the protagonist of architecture; 2) the idea that architecture needs a language, which without invariants cannot proceed, extend, communicate, and these invariants can only be anticlassical, that is, no longer invariants as rules but as anti-rules; 3) the idea of a vision of the history of architecture that overturns all values, that grasps heresy as a progressive fact. As long as you stay in the paradigm you stay in the reaction, only heresy is creative. To conclude, I want to emphasise the fundamental significance of operational criticism for me. By operative historical criticism I mean a history that serves to free architects from dogmas, idols, the prejudices of classicist invariants and everything that forces them into a static position. Think of what the 1980s were like, with the tragic explosion of Postmodernism. I resisted and never published a postmodern work. Today the situation appears completely changed, also from a political point of view, and I think that those who do architecture in Italy must also feel the importance of the perspectives that this situation opens".

5 – LeCorbusian; this is how the journalist from *Il Gazzettino*, of 25.9.1952, calls Lúcio Costa, who, with regard to living arrangements, does not accept the massive, vertically distributed dwelling; there, mixed living is not in fact permitted: hence, for each family, isolation is favoured by the proximity of the services granted to each grouping of buildings. For Lúcio Costa, architecture is opposed to the scattering of small houses in the suburbs, with a view of one on top of the other; instead, he takes a firm stand for alveolar dwellings, where "everyone is in the same system, enjoying the same principles". His point of view is that of high-rise buildings (so-called skyscrapers), open spaces for large patches of green equipped with swimming pools, schools, kindergartens, pharmacies, bars, restaurants, shops for essential purchases, and so on.

We had already known him since the Museum Of Modern Art in New York published the book *Brazil Builds: Architecture New and Old, 1652-1942*, edited by Philip L. Goodwin, in 1943.

So, I and other Portuguese architects met Lúcio Costa and we stayed with him to talk about our brother countries; the difference, however, was that we did not know Brazil, whereas he knew Portugal perfectly well, and told anecdotes about his trips to our country. I must say that this meeting resulted in a strong friendship for me towards him and an opportunity to travel to Brazil. I remember our last meeting, at his home in Rio de Janeiro, during which we talked a lot about our affairs and, above all, our problems.

During all that time, Lúcio Costa had conquered his own space in Brazil, as much for the work he had done together with Le Corbusier as for his relationship with Oscar Niemeyer, but also as the author of the Urban Plan of Brasilia.

What fascinated us in him was his "portuguesismo", his idea that Portuguese origins, which in the meantime were being lost in our architecture, had been preserved in Brazilian architecture.

As his daughter Maria Elisa Costa says of him: “If one has a compass within oneself, there is no need for rigidity and it is permissible to change our opinions and convictions, as long as the compass points in the direction of change. At the same time, there is the poetic and pragmatic side, i.e., the ability to keep one’s feet firmly planted on the ground, with a perfect awareness of attainable limits, precisely to always attempt, within those limits, the highest flight. Only such a mind could produce the utopia in flesh and blood that Brasilia really is. All this is flavoured with a sense of humour, simplicity and elegance – in everything – as well as an ability, which is renewed each time, to believe, to be enchanted by things, to take pleasure in a tasty dish or a beautiful thing, to welcome the unexpected. And, again, it requires a sober and full awareness of one’s own value. In short, it is the opposite of the ‘personage’: nothing is ostentatious, what counts is the truth. The Verb is absolutely ‘to be’”.

When, in a 1995 interview published as an appendix to his book, Lúcio Costa was asked: “Why do you dislike being called a modernist architect?” he replied: “Modern is something, for sure. Modernist has something paranoid and suspicious about it. It seems like we are opposing what was done before, tradition, to do something blindly modern. I see no difference. True modern architecture does not promote a break with the past. This only happens in words, because of the bad training of pseudo-architects”.

And one more question: “In 1937, you headed the group that designed the Ministry of Education building, and at the same time you were part of the heritage protection organisations. How did you manage to reconcile modern architecture and historical preservation?” To which he replied: “Abroad, those who love modern architecture detest tradition and vice versa. Here it was different, modern and tradition walked together. I used to head the Roads and Constraints Division of IPHAN (Secretariat of National Historic and Artistic Heritage) and I believed that modern architecture should not clash with tradition”.

6 – It is time to conclude. Once again, I recall the names of the three architects, now deceased, who were so important in my professional life.

I remember Le Corbusier, the man of silent Venice, Bruno Zevi, the master of organic architecture and, again, Lúcio Costa, who was in love with Portugal and its architecture.

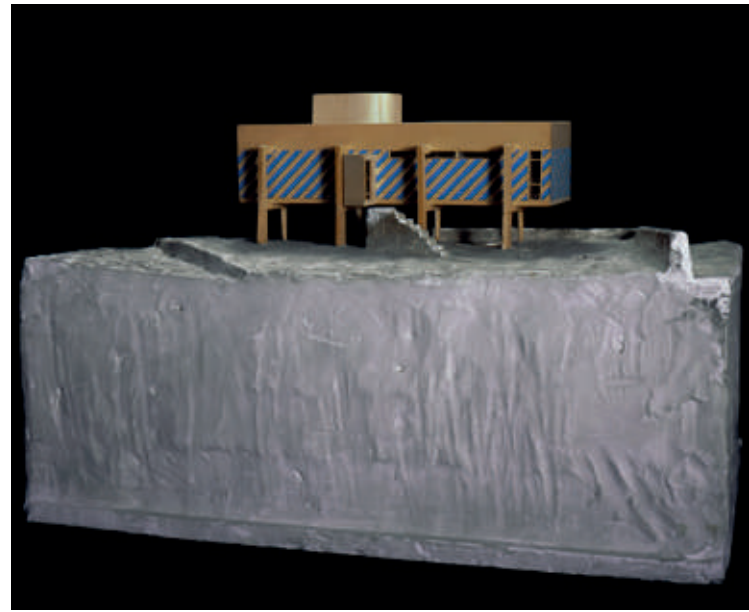
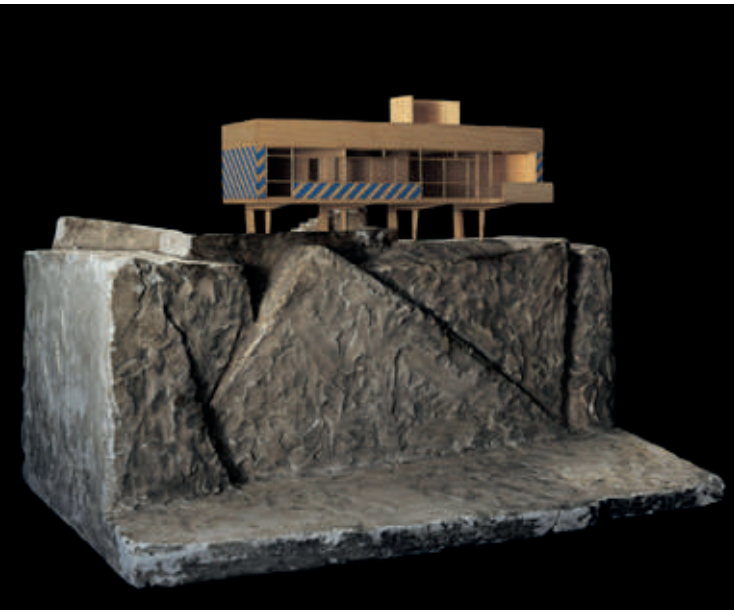
Three modern and very influential men in architecture, in one way or another.

It is to their memory that I dedicate the words I have spoken, and so it is to their memory that I link the importance those hours had in my education.

It is a Portuguese architect speaking to you in beautiful Venice, recalling the time he spent in 1952 in this city.

Many, many thanks for everything.

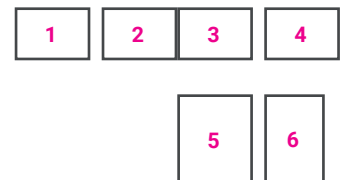
Venice, Ducal Palace, Sala dei Dogi, 29 April 2003



House on the Sea

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1950-1952
PLACE/ADDRESS	Porto
COLLABORATORS	Nadir Alfonso
CUSTOMER	School of Architecture, Porto
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



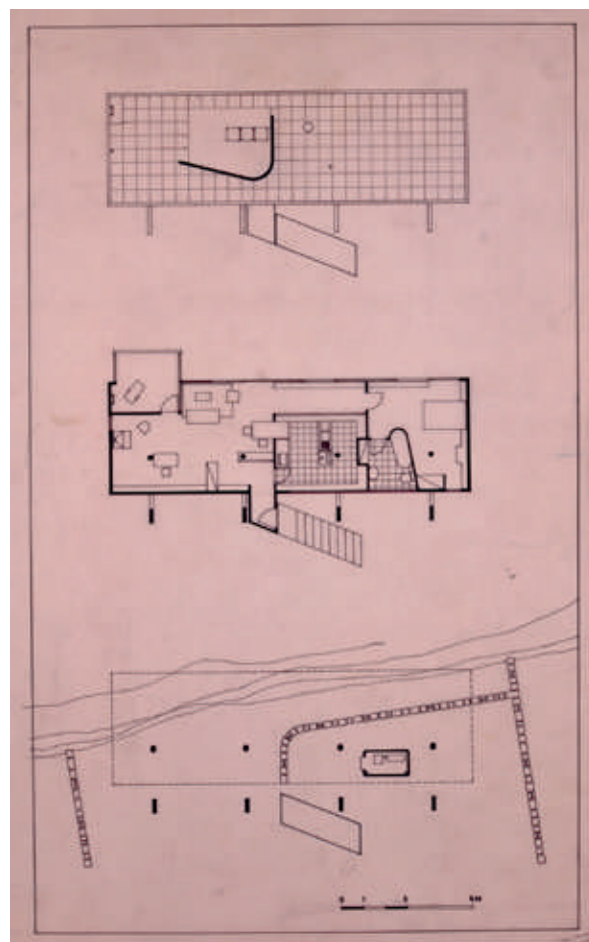
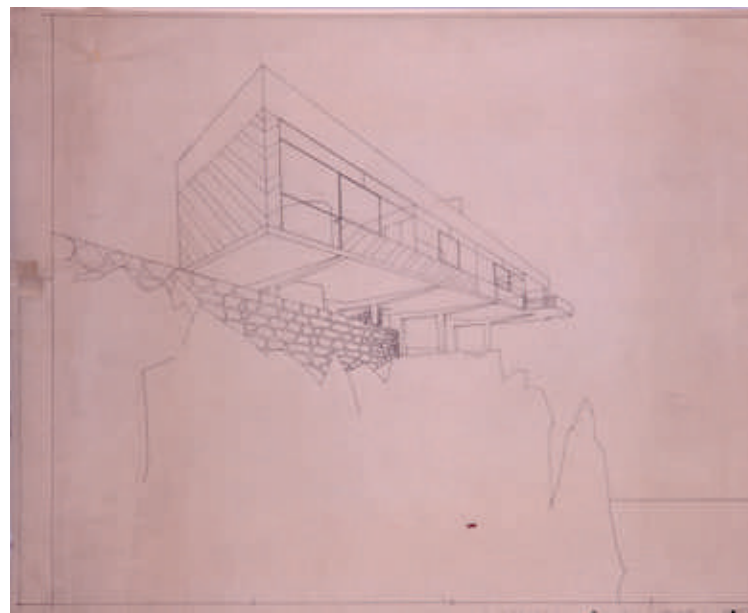
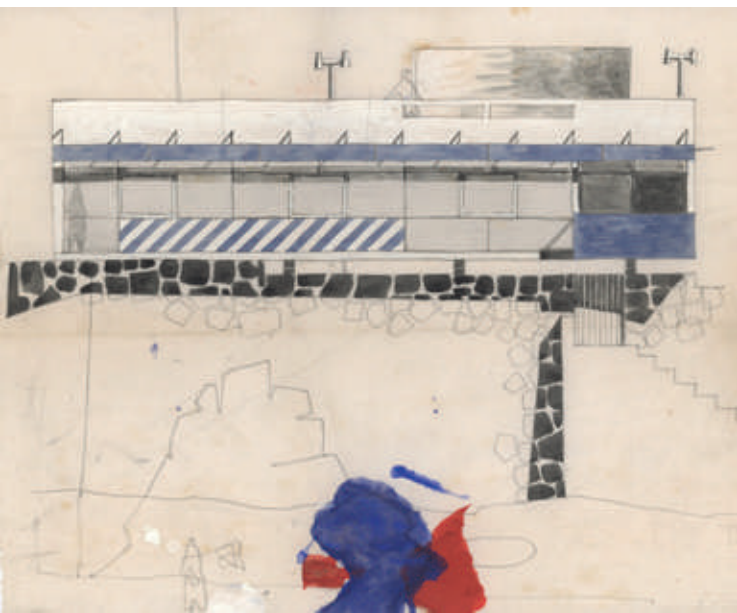
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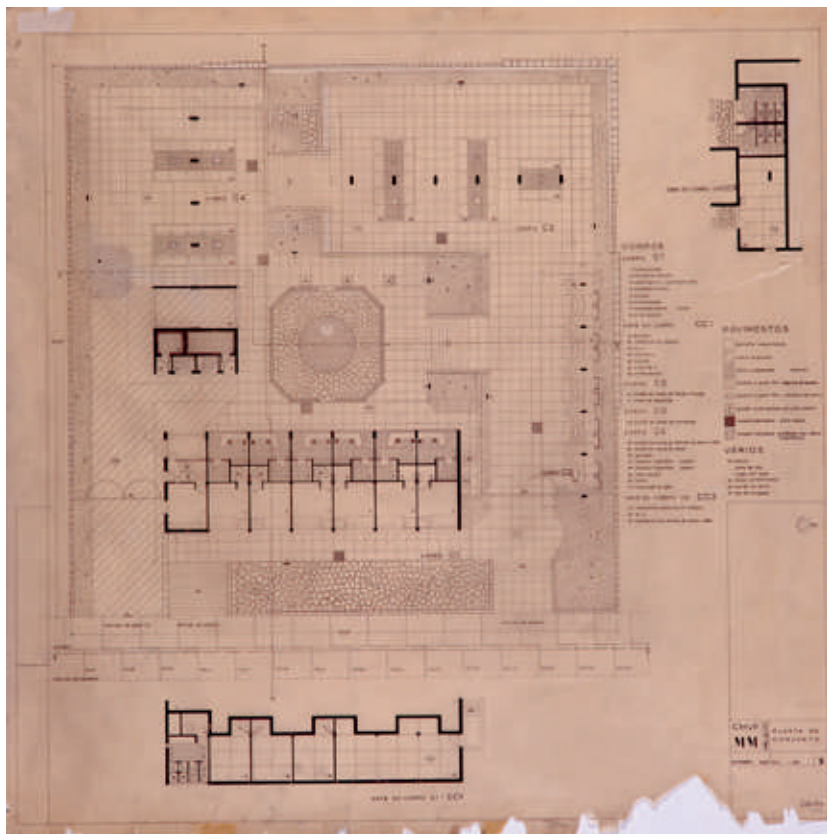
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IMG.1-2: "Sobre o mar" house, Porto 1950-1952, maquette; IMG.3: main elevation, ink and colours on paper; IMG.4-5: prospective, heliographic copy; IMG.6: floor plans, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).



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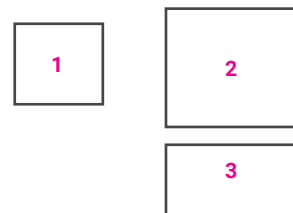




City Market

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1953-1959
PLACE/ADDRESS	Santa Maria da Feira
COLLABORATORS	Alberto Neves, Álvaro Siza Vieira, Fernando Lanhas
CUSTOMER	Municipal Council of Santa Maria da Feira
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



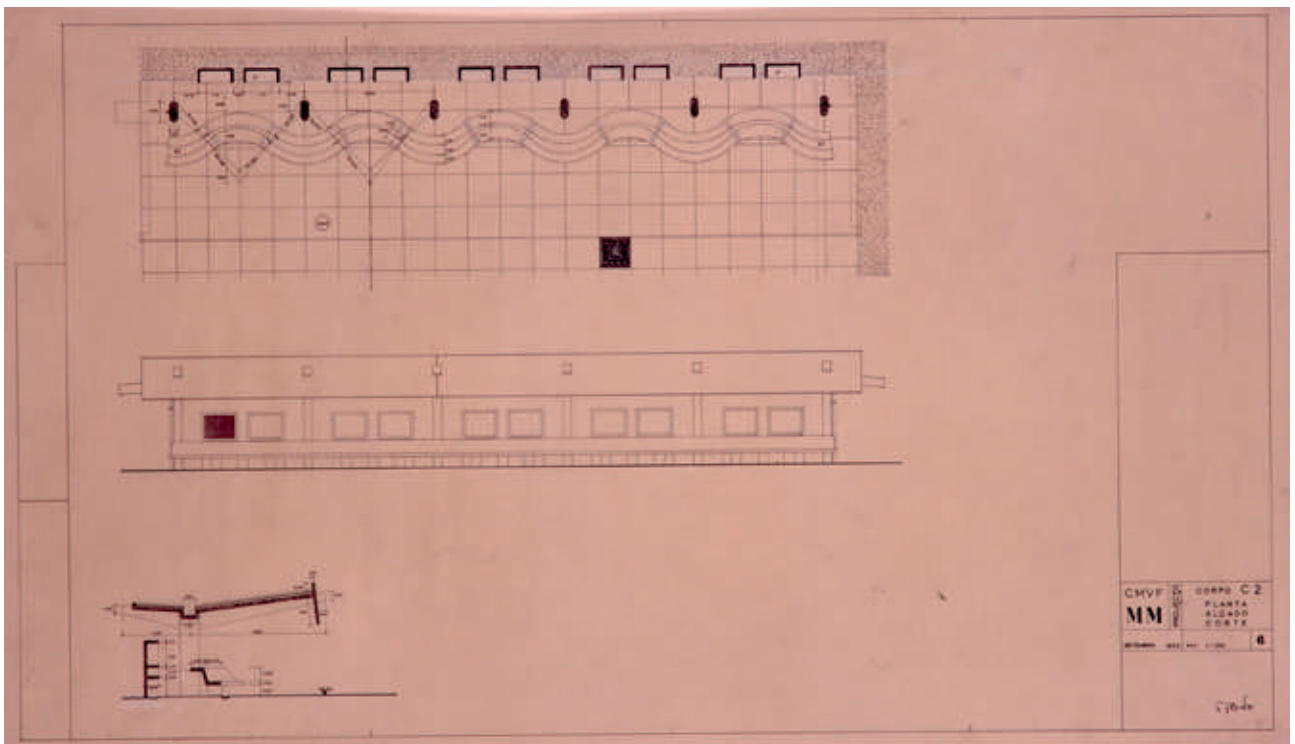
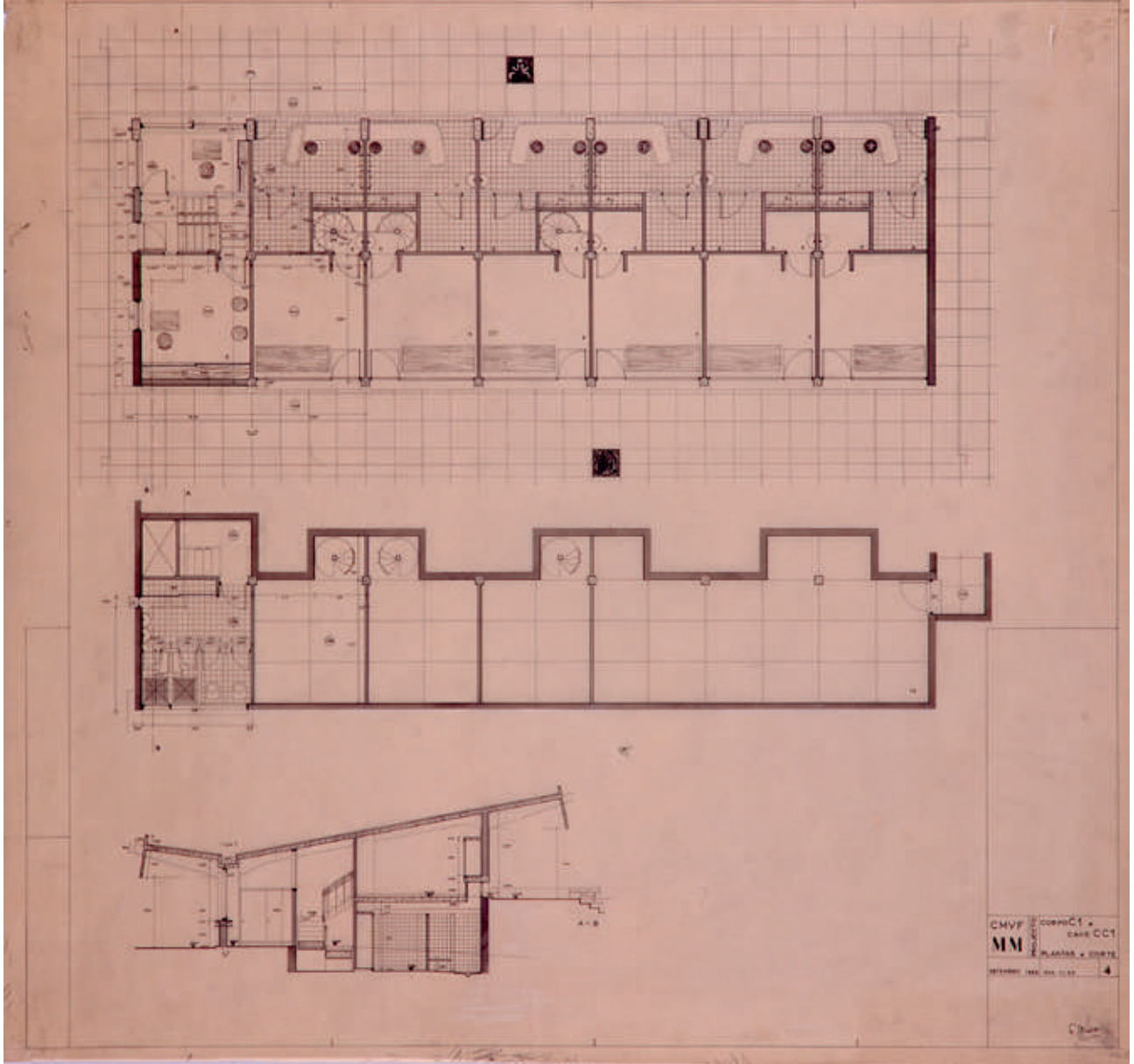
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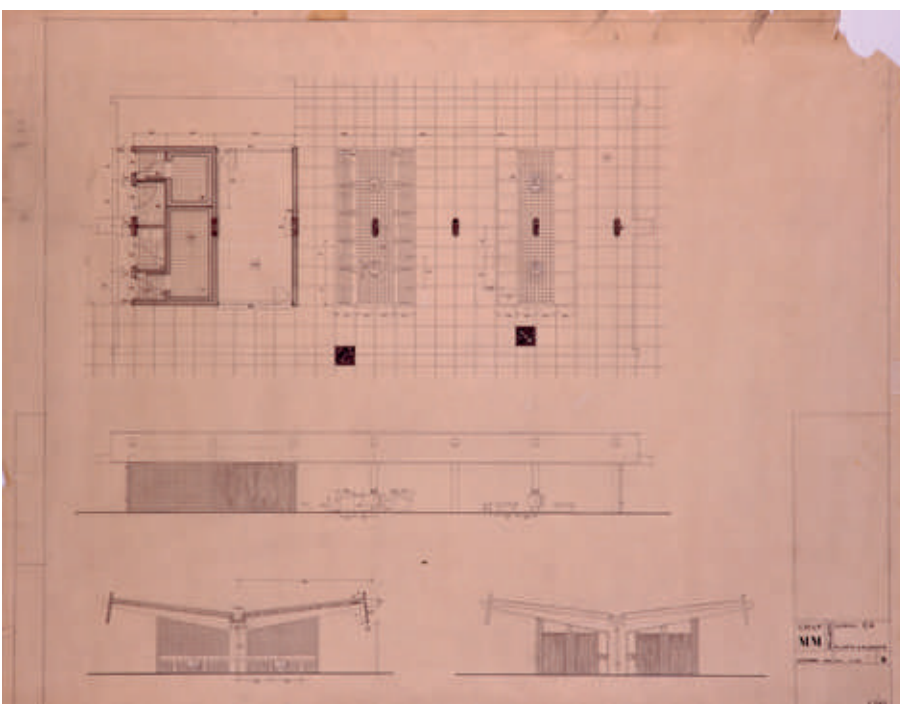
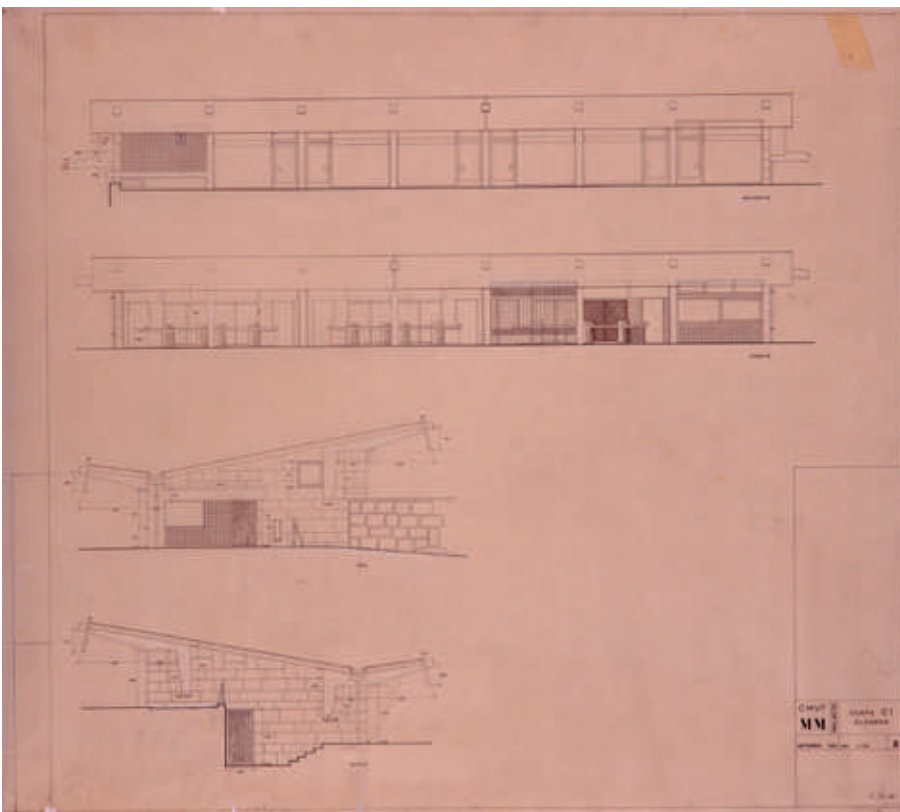
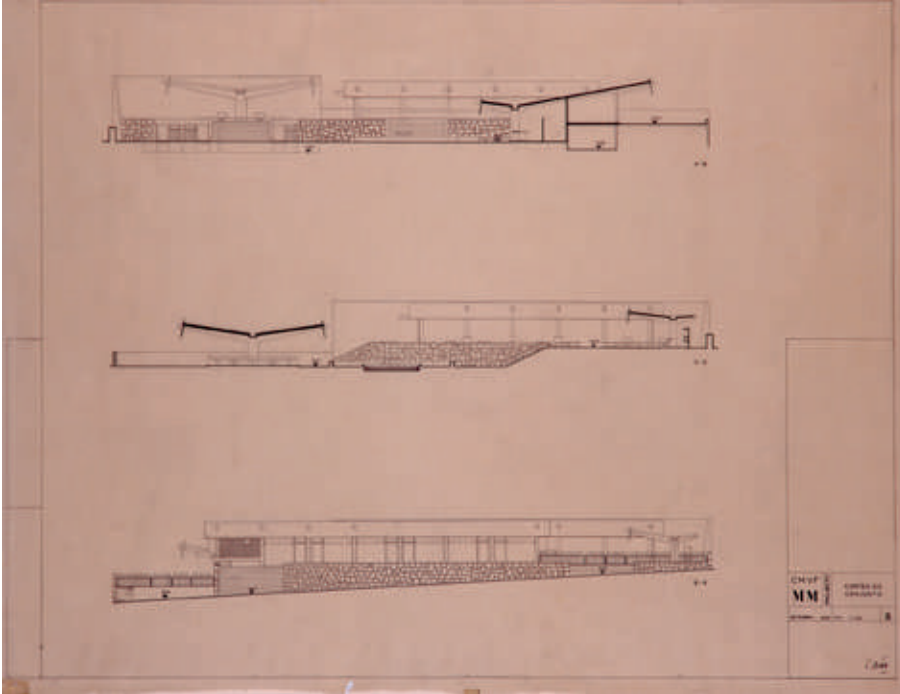
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IMG.1: City market, Santa Maria da Feira 1953-1959, general plan, tracing paper; IMG.2: plans and section, tracing paper; IMG.3: plan, section and elevation, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).



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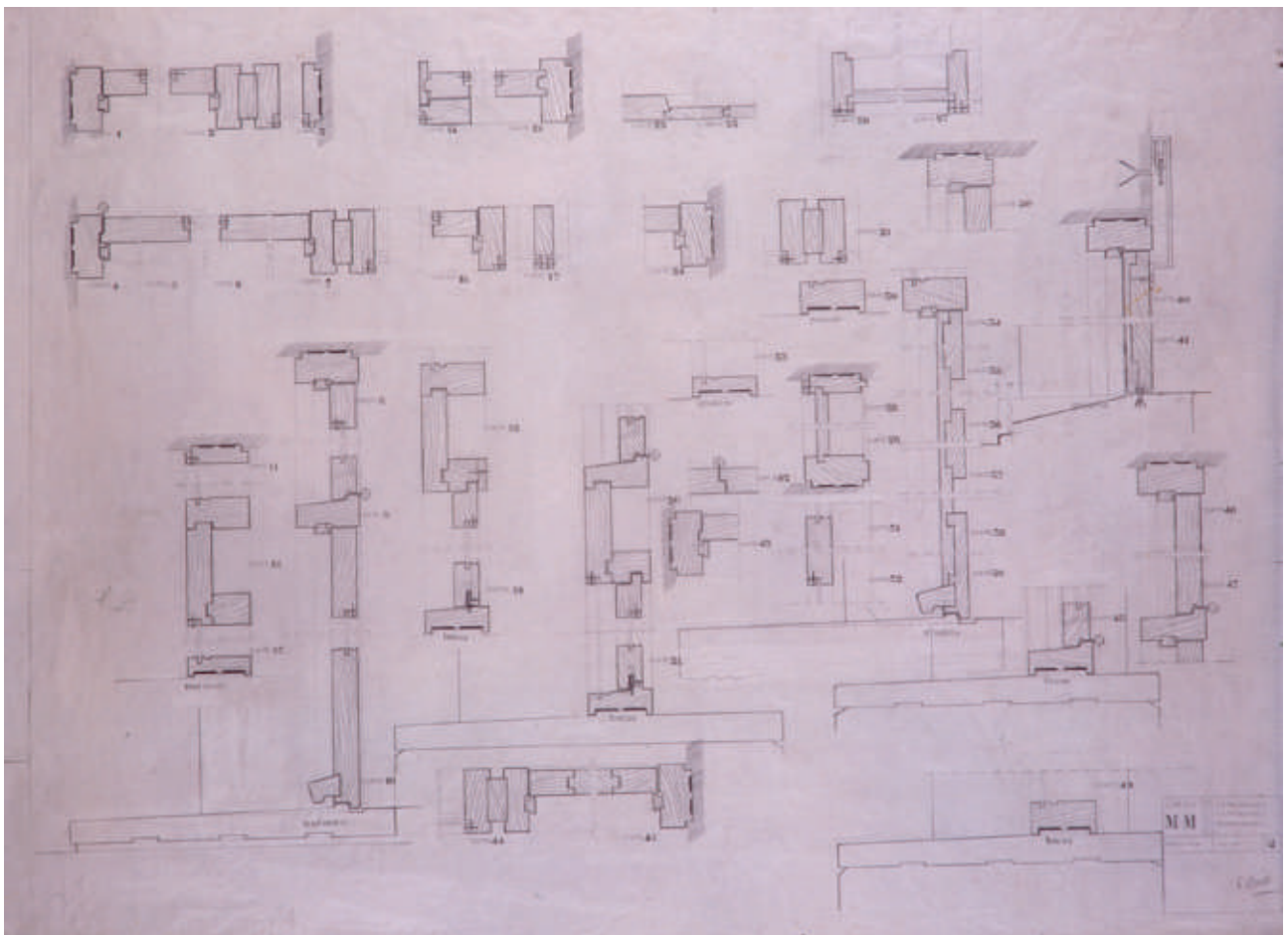
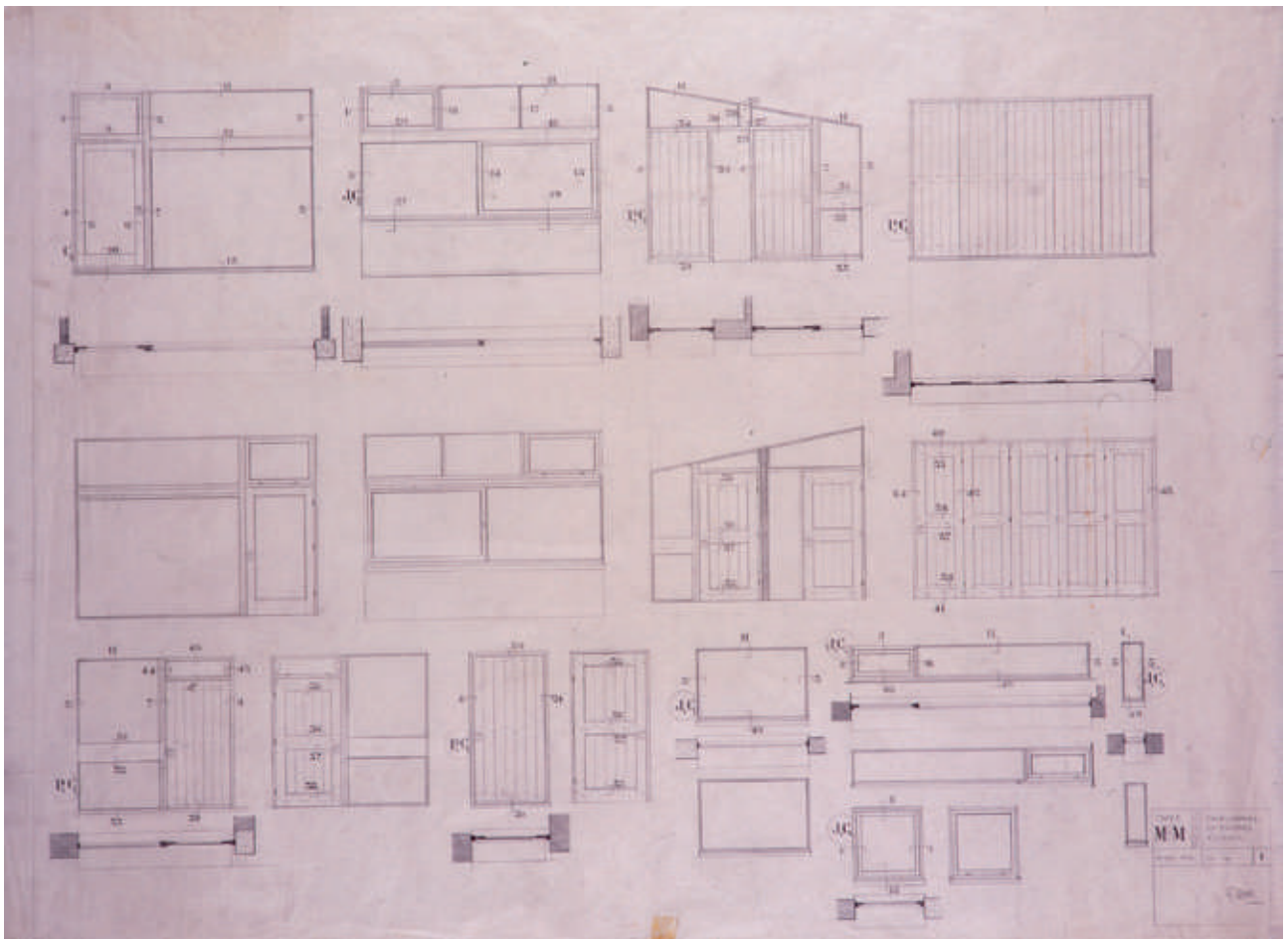
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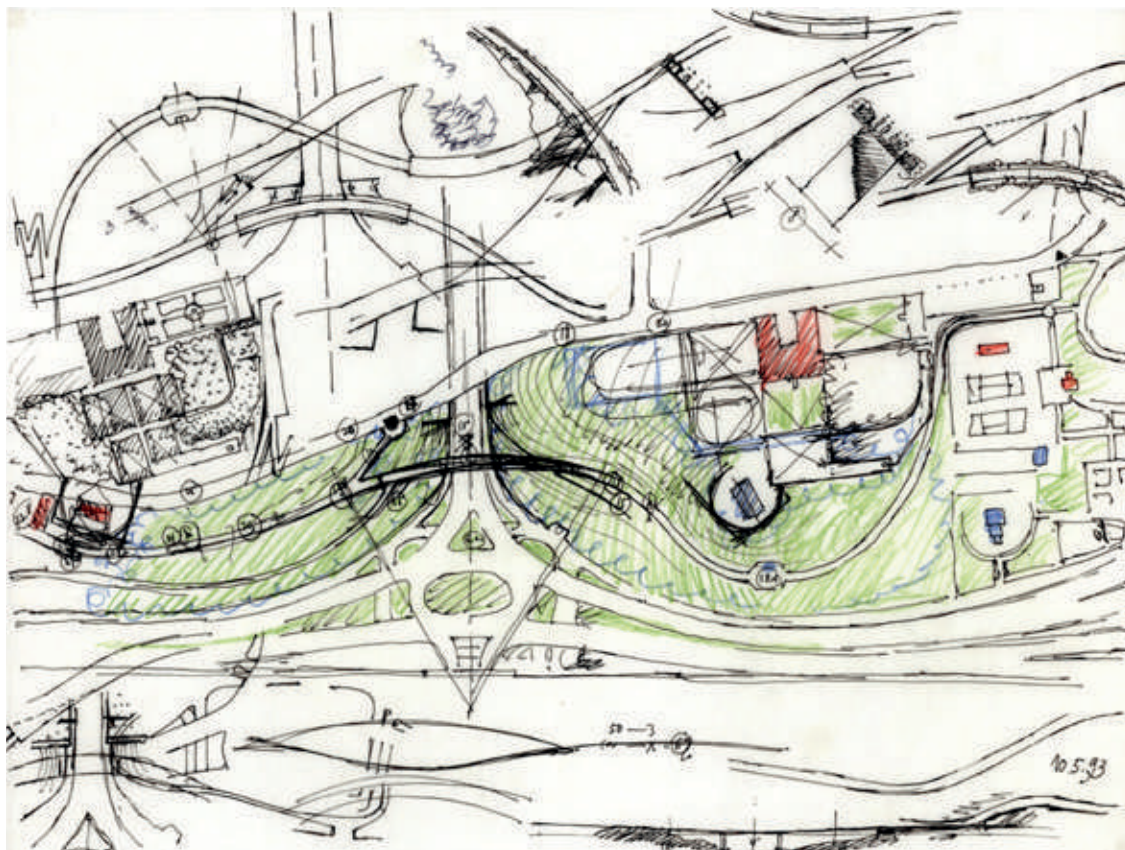
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IMG.4: City market, Santa Maria da Feira 1953-1959, sections and elevation, tracing paper; IMG.5: elevations, tracing paper; IMG.6: plan and elevations, tracing paper; IMG.7-8: details of wooden window frames, heliographic copy (FIMS/AFT).

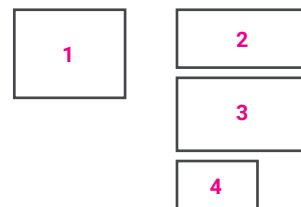




City Park of the Quinta da Conceição e de Santiago

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1956-1960, 1967 (restaurant), 1993
PLACE/ADDRESS	Matosinhos
COLLABORATORS	José Pacheco, Álvaro Siza Vieira, Francisco Figueirado,
CUSTOMER	Municipal Council of Matosinhos
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



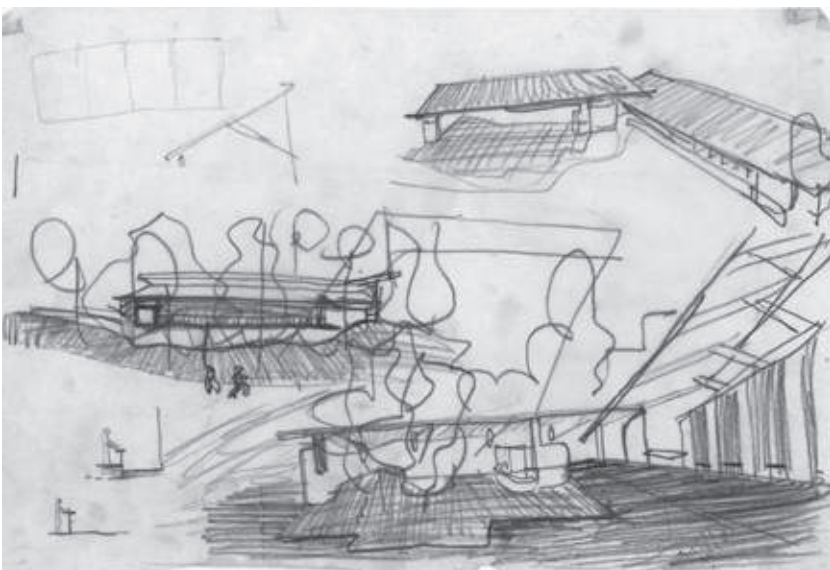
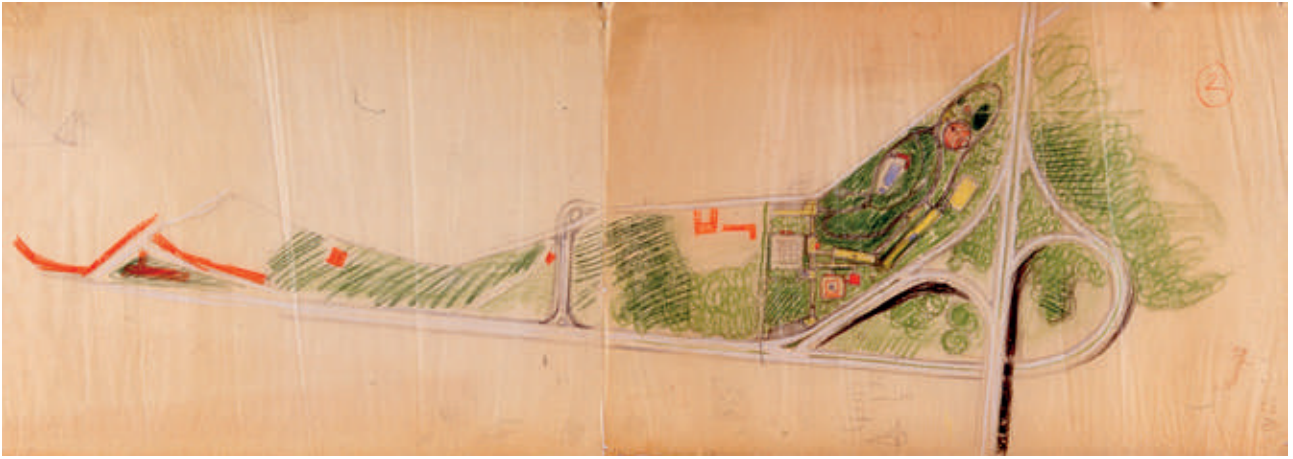
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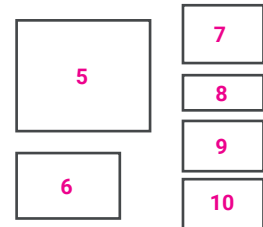
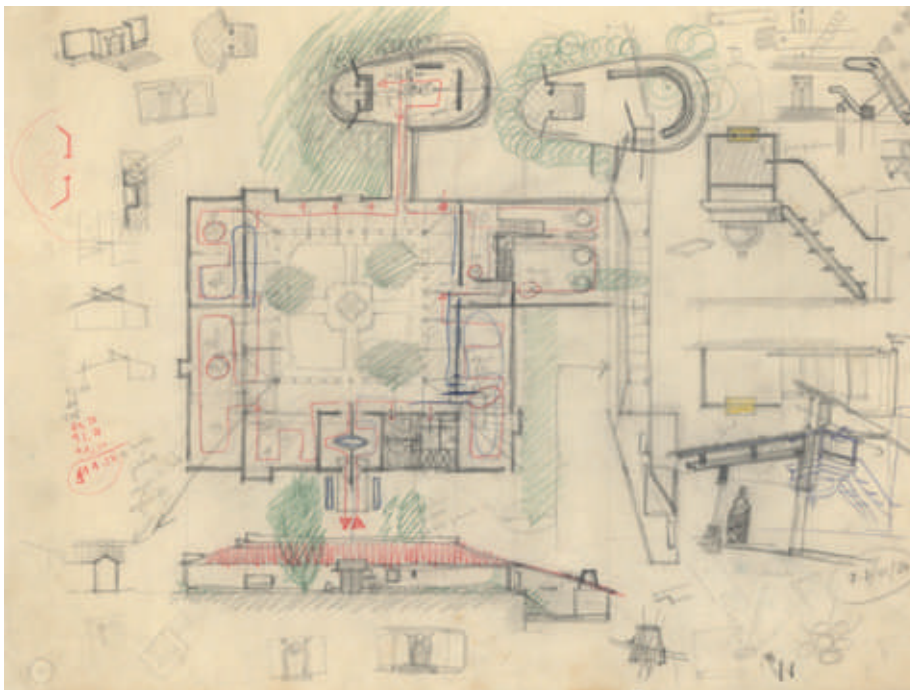
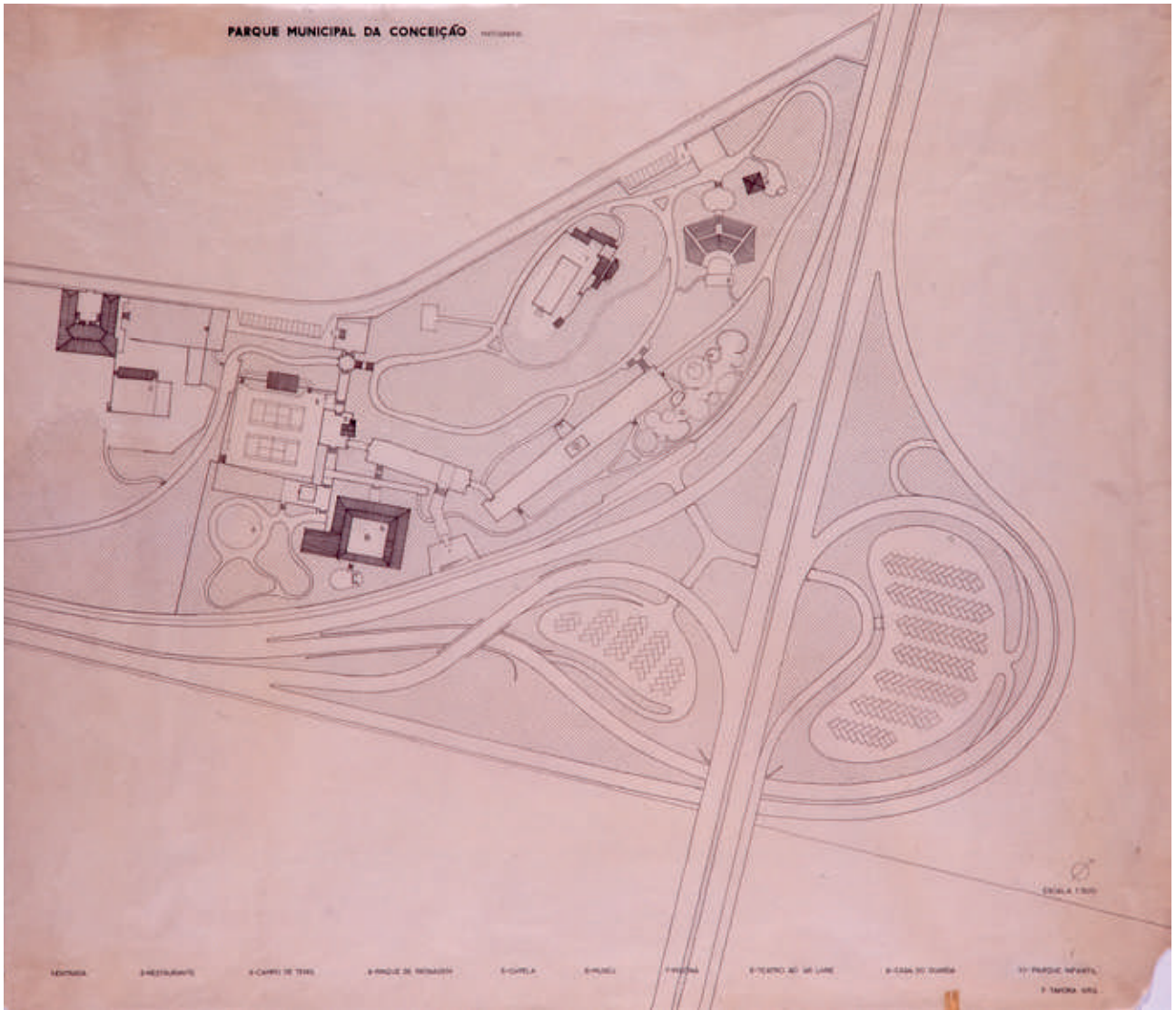
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IMG.1: City park Quinta da Conceição e de Santiago, Matosinhos 1993, sketches for the connection solution, 1993, ink and colours on paper. IMG.2-3: City park Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos 1956-1960, general plans, ink and colours on paper. IMG.4: A. Siza, sketch for a first version of the pool 1958, pencil and charcoal on paper (FIMS/AFT).

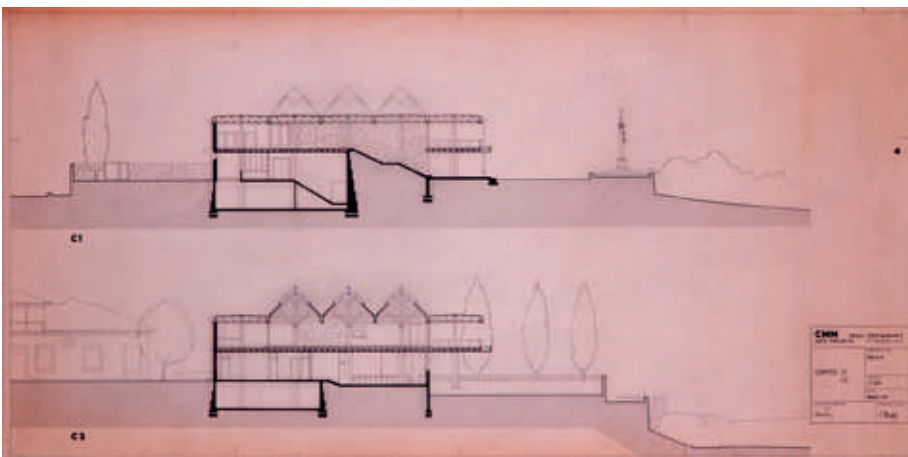
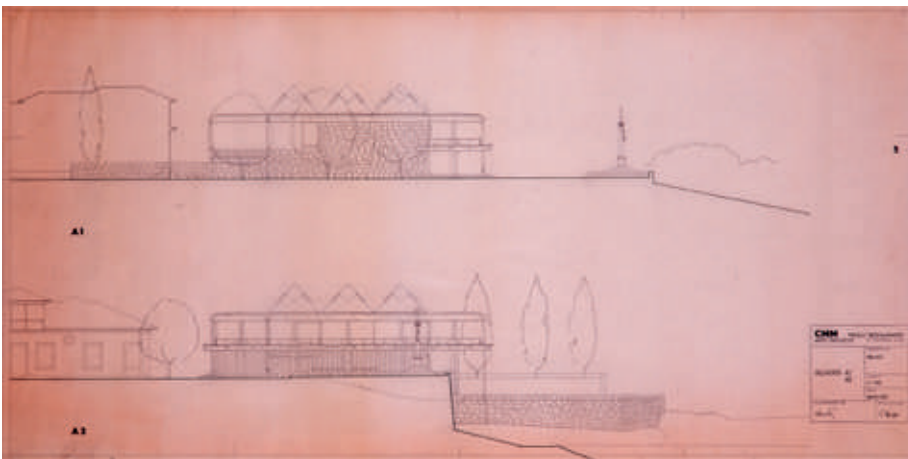
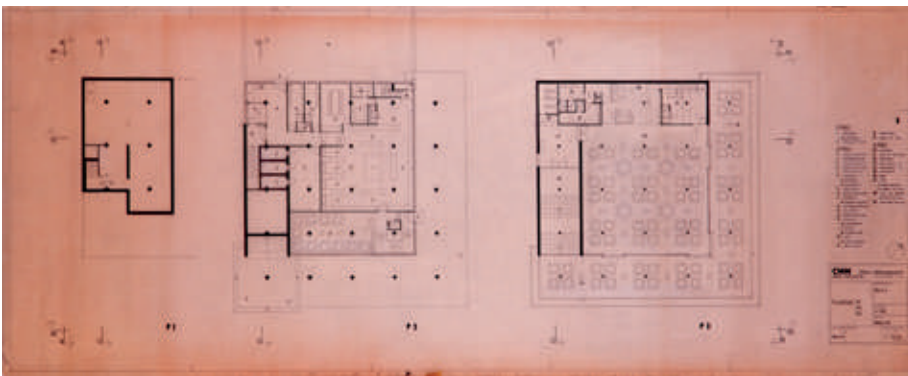
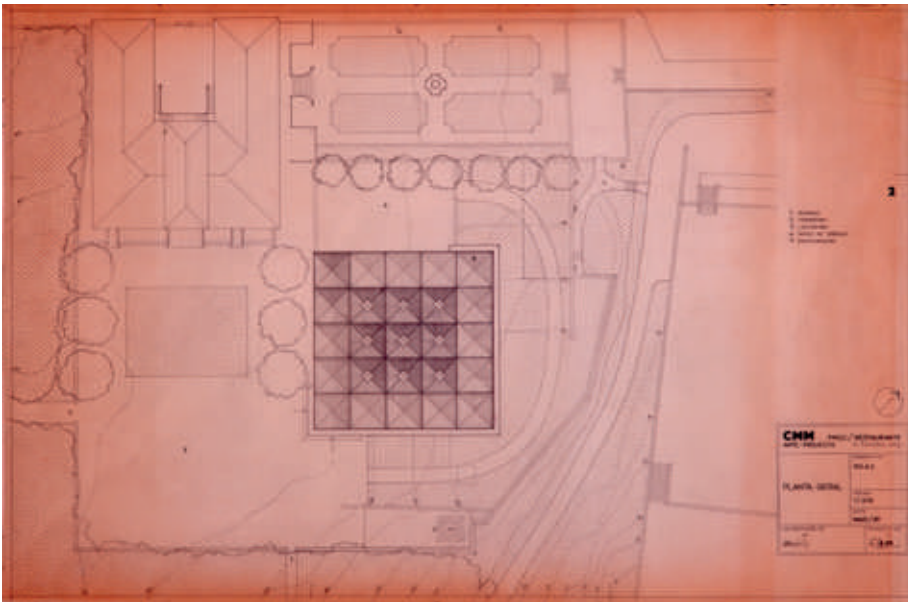


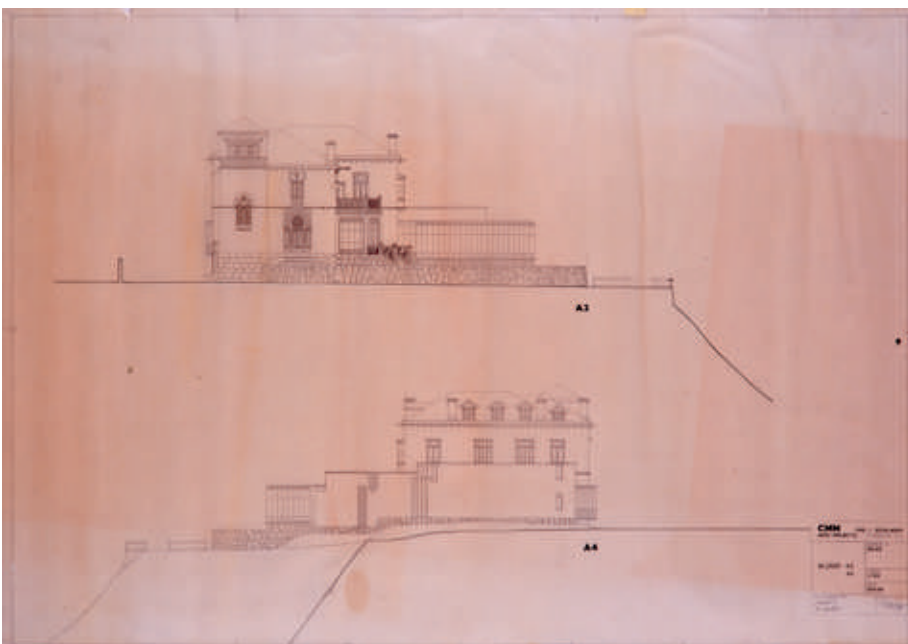
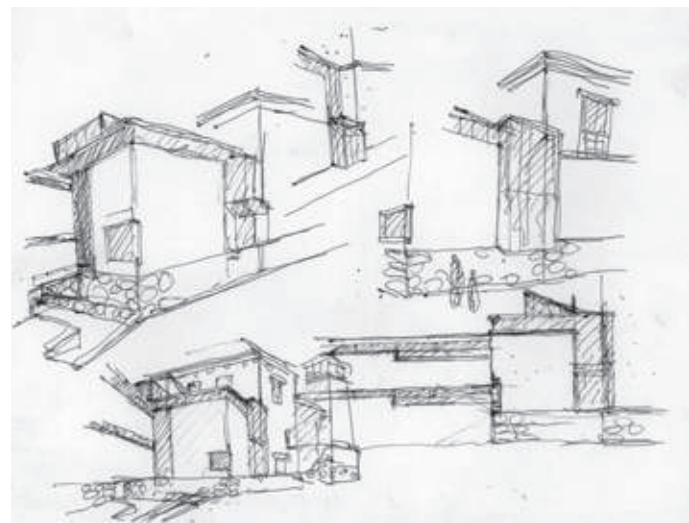
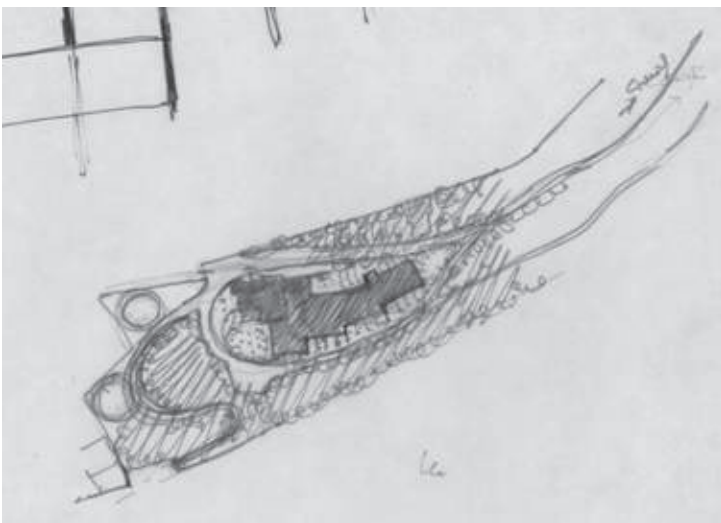
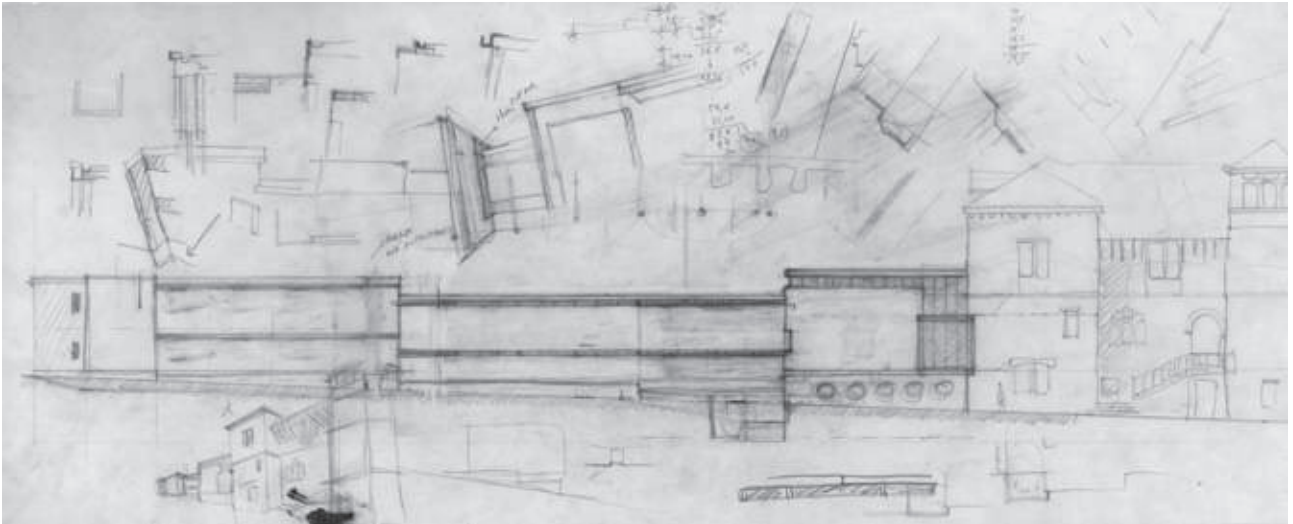
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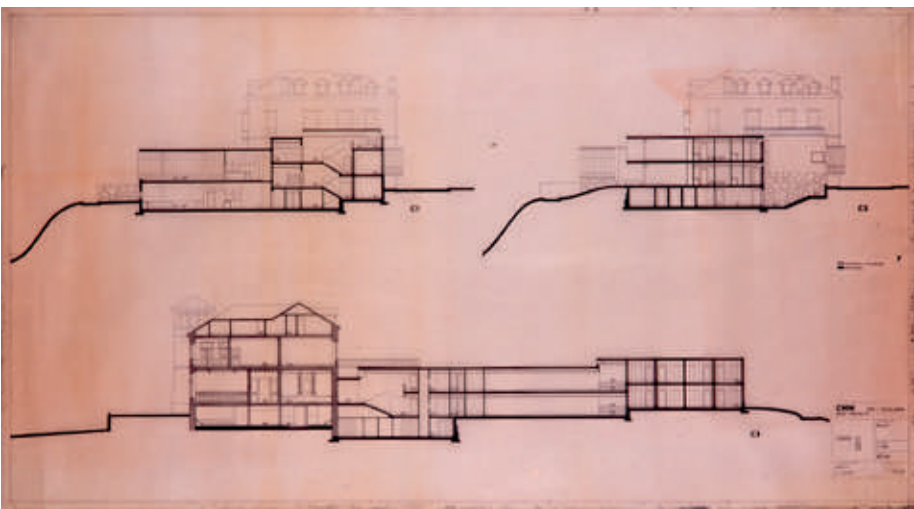
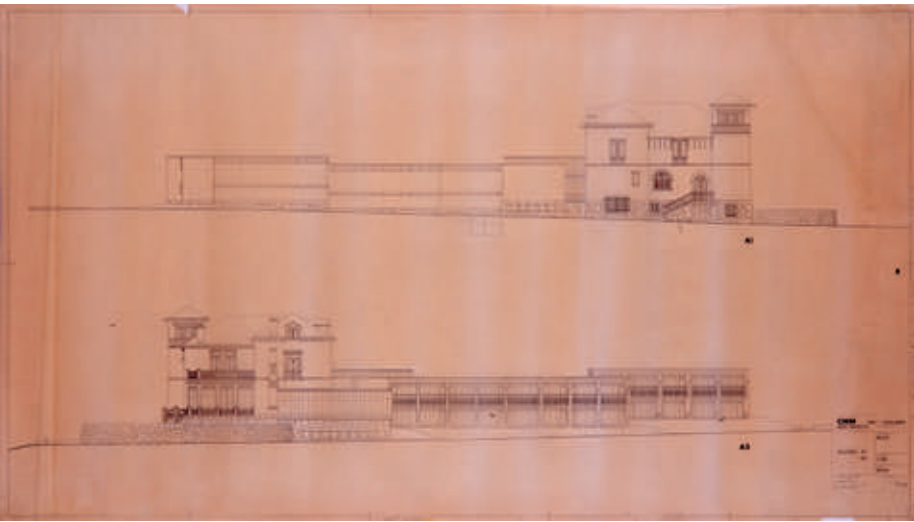
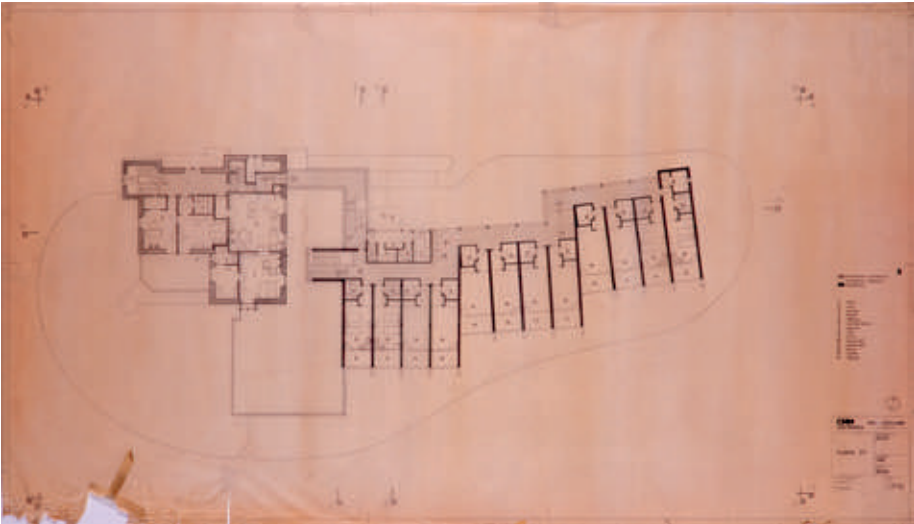
IMG.5: City Park Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos 1956-1960, general plan, tracing paper. IMG.6: Museum of City Park Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos 1957, general plan, elevations and design sketches, pencil and colours on paper. IMG.7: Restaurant of City Park Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos 1967, general plan, tracing paper; IMG.8: floors plan, tracing paper; IMG.9: elevations, tracing paper; IMG.10: sections, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).

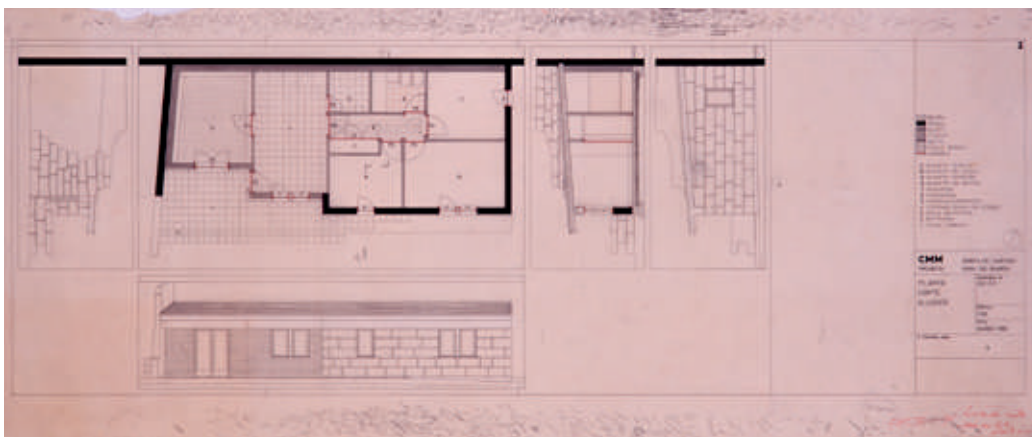
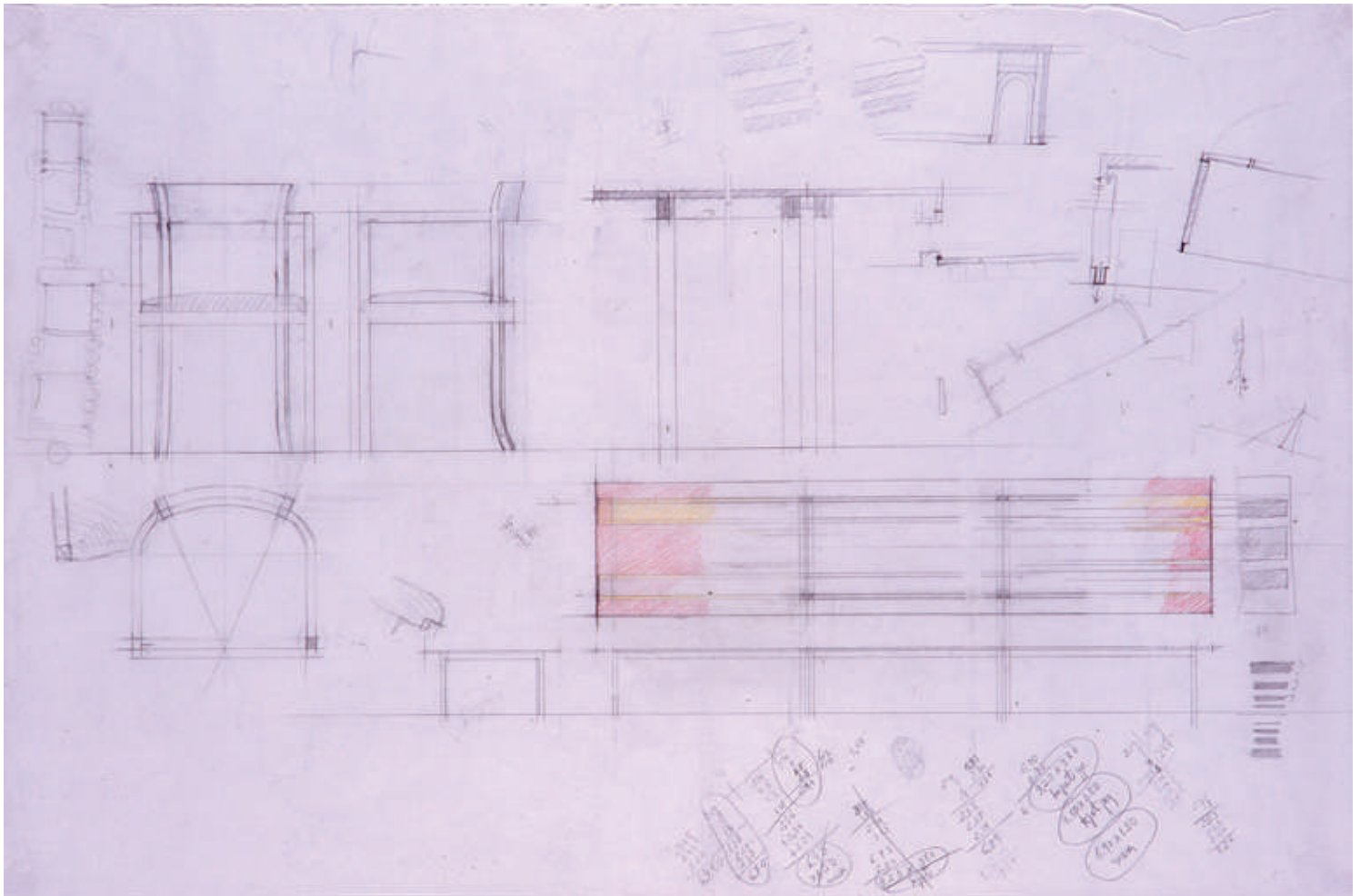




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IMG.11: City Park Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos 1956-1960, Hotel, elevation and design sketches, pencil and charcoal on paper; IMG.12, general plan sketch, pencil and charcoal on paper; IMG.13: Pousada of Quinta de Santiago, Matosinhos 1956, design sketches, pencil and charcoal on paper. IMG.14: elevations, tracing paper; IMG.15-16: floors plan, tracing paper; IMG.17: elevations, tracing paper; IMG.18: sections, floors plan, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).





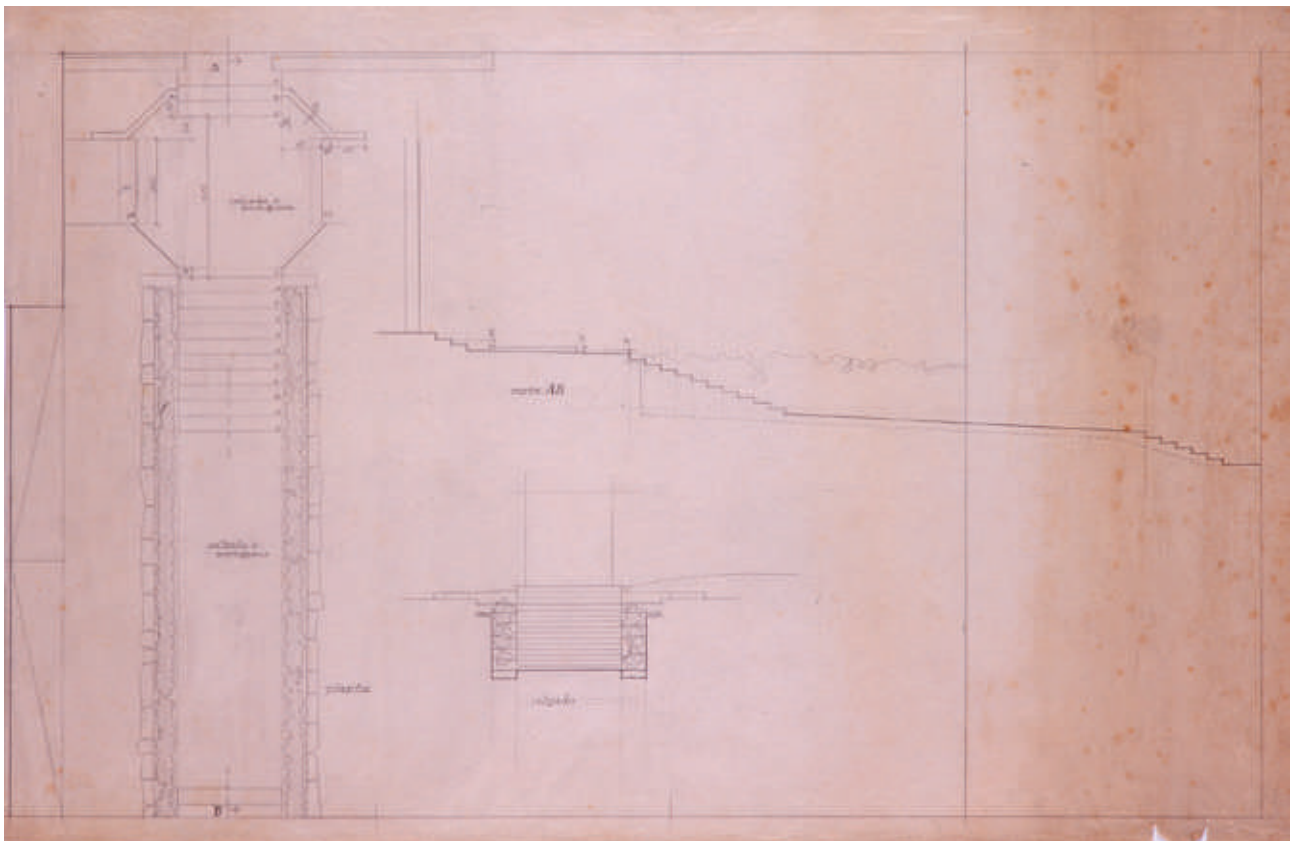
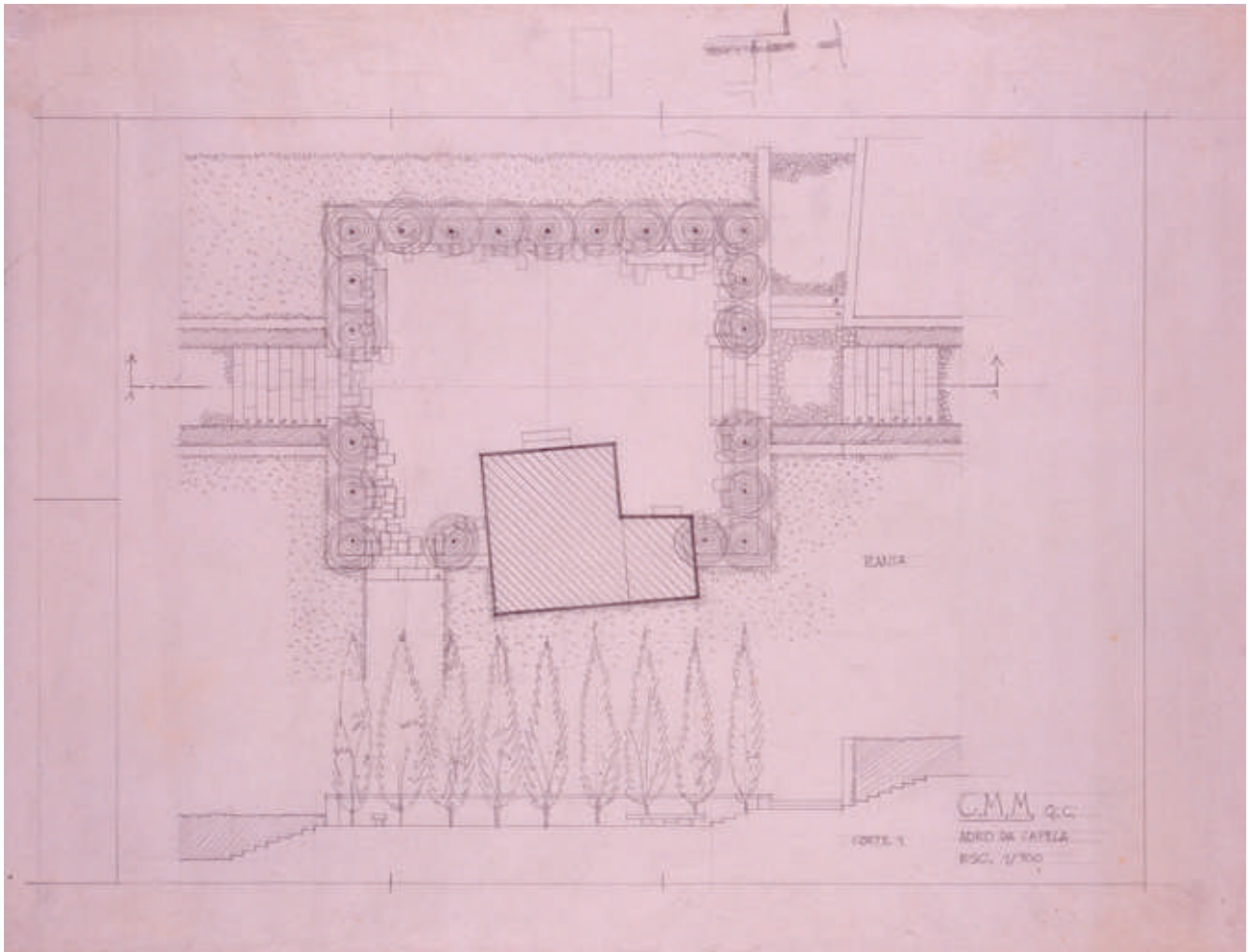
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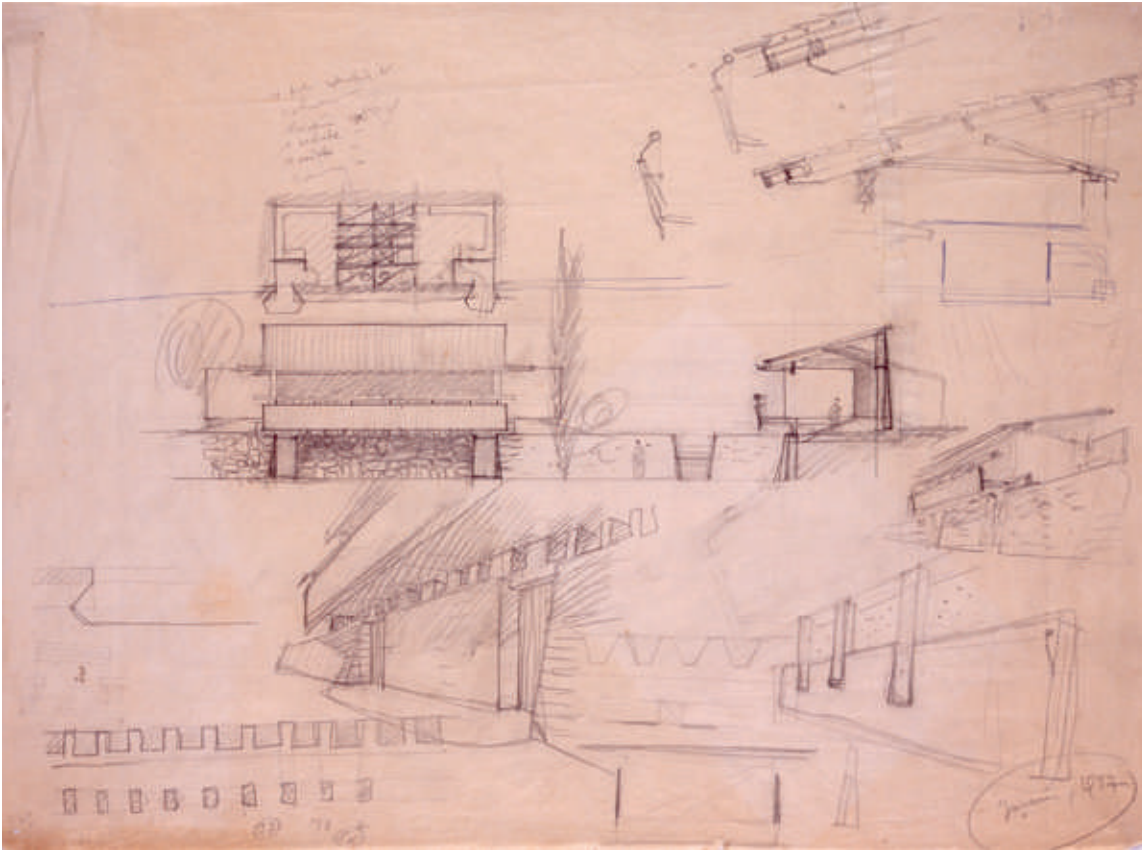
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IMG.19: Hotel in the Quinta de Santiago park, Matosinhos 1969, furniture design, pencil and colours on paper; IMG.20: refurbishment of the Guardian house, plan, section, elevations, heliographic copy; IMG.21: chapel forecourt, general plan and section, tracing paper; IMG.22: paths near the red patio, general plan, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).





Tennis Pavilion in the Quinta da Conceição City Park

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1956-1960
PLACE/ADDRESS	Matosinhos
COLLABORATORS	Alberto Neves, Vasco Cunha
CUSTOMER	Municipal Council of Matosinhos
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



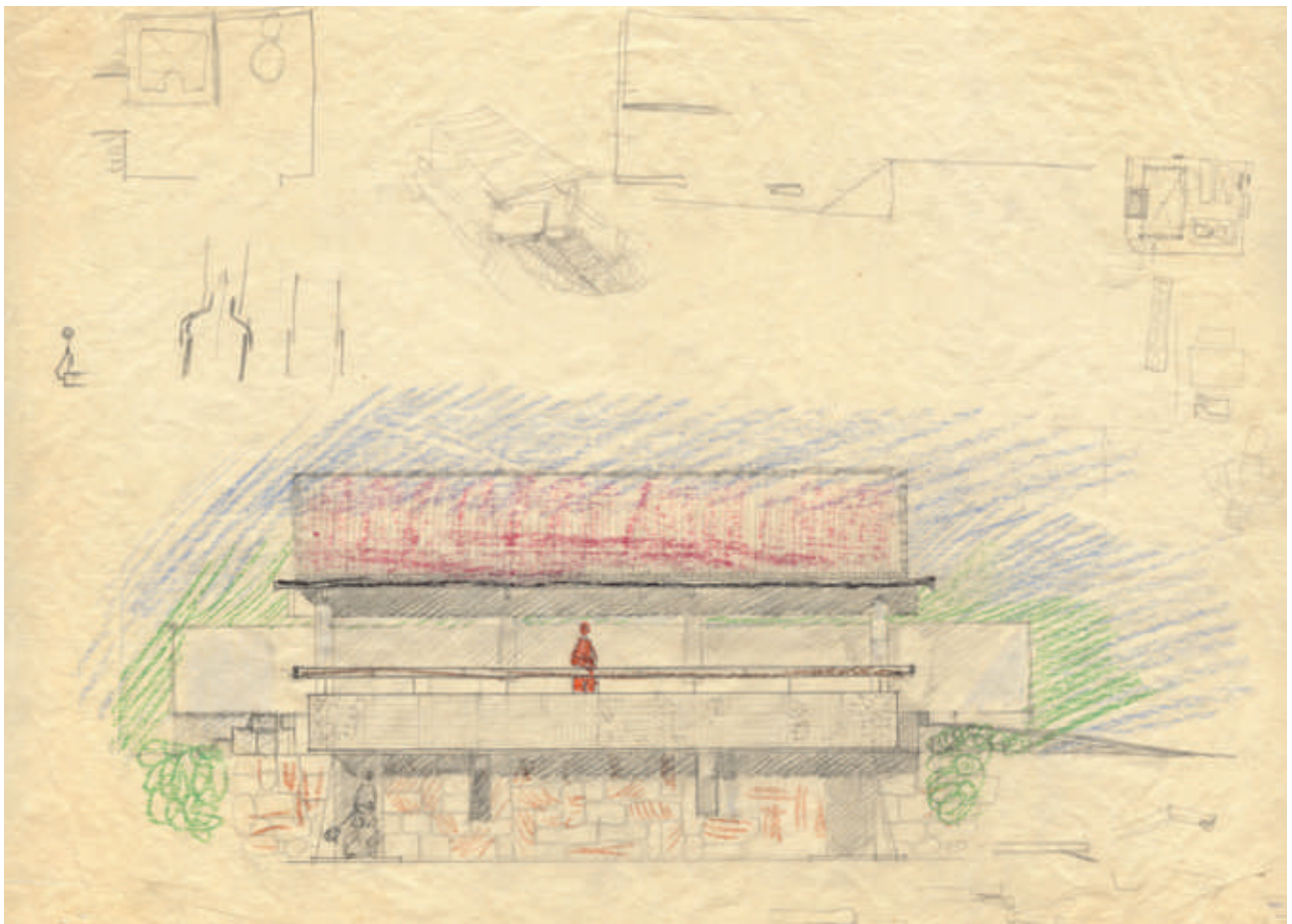
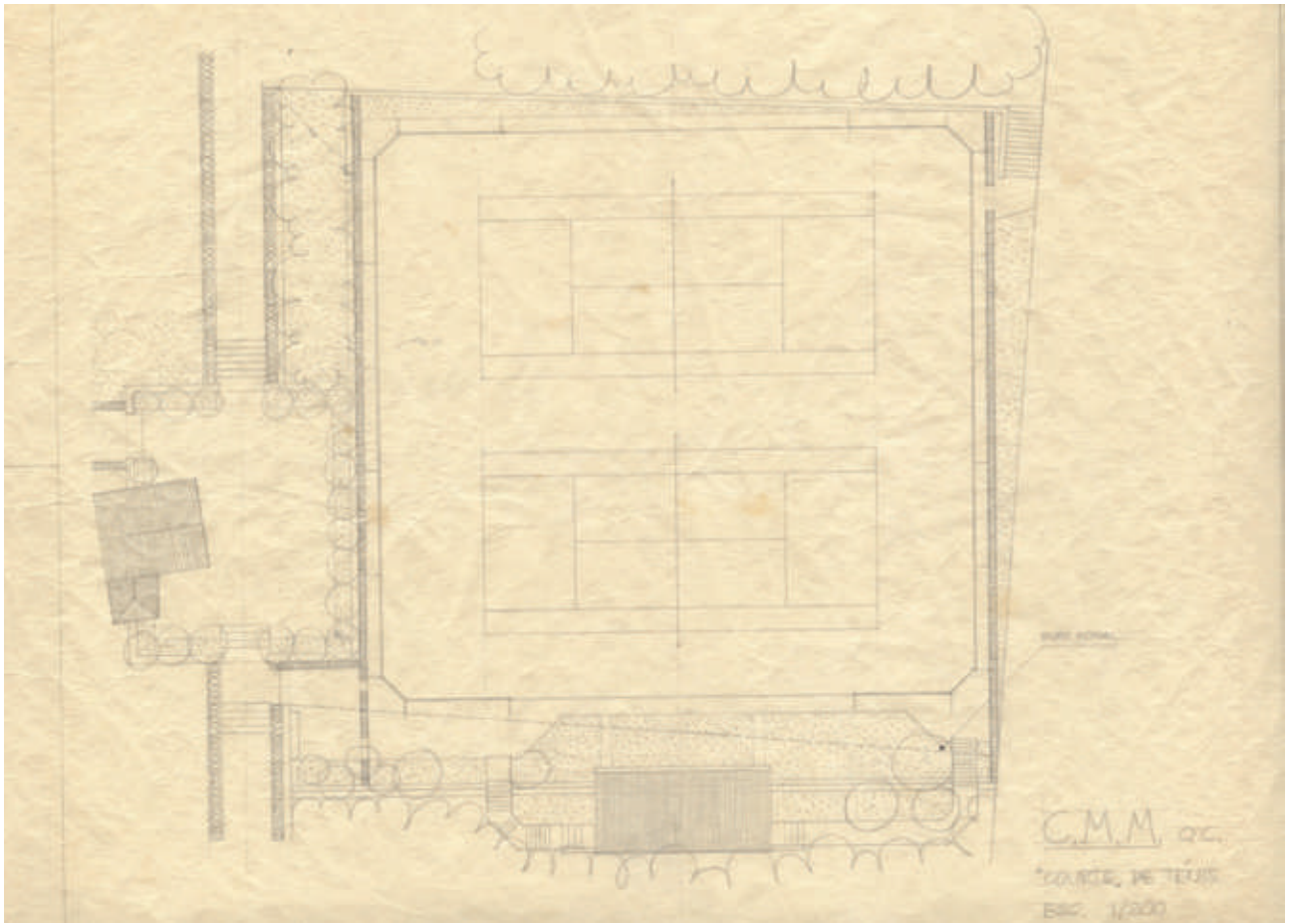
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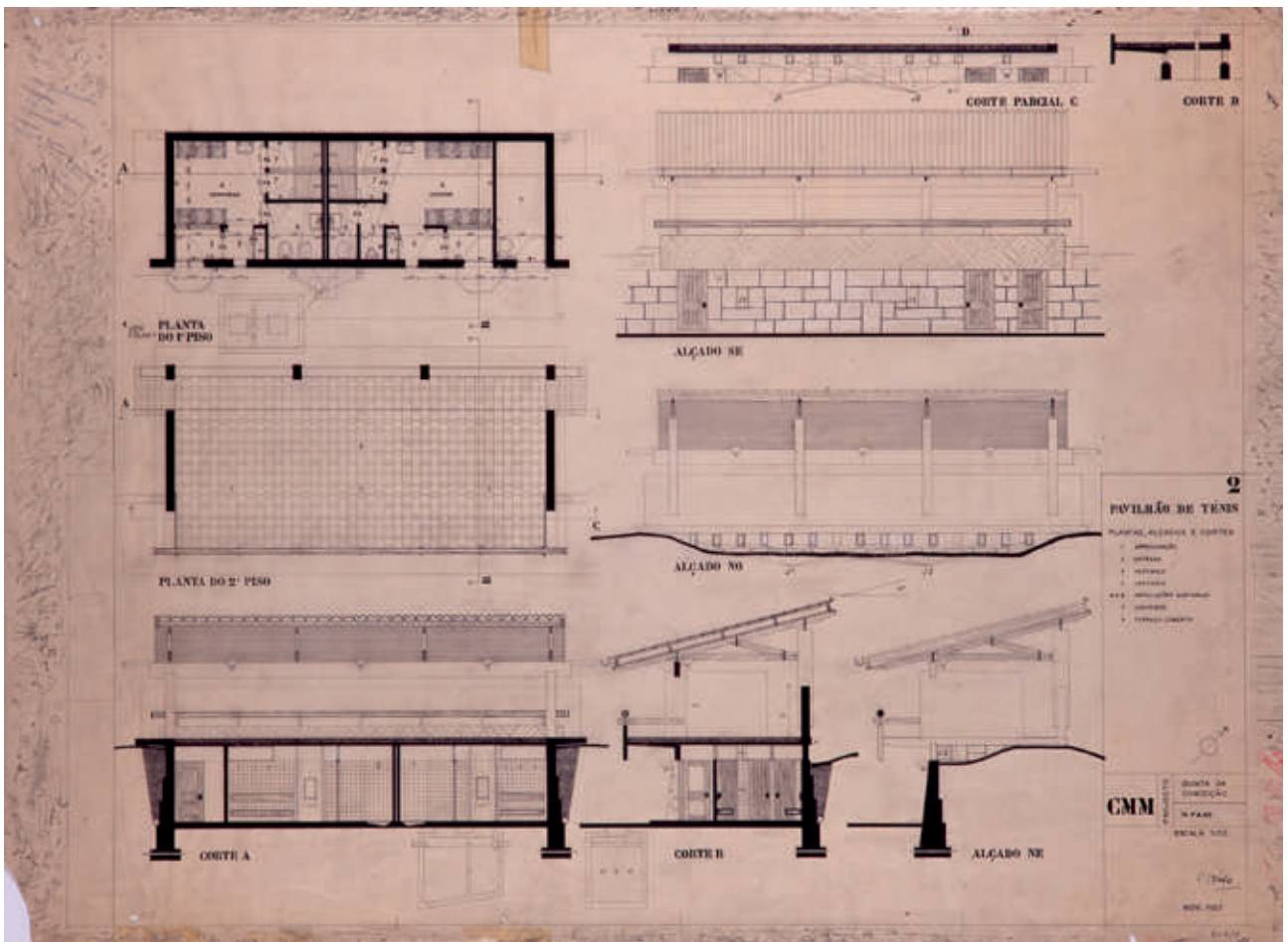
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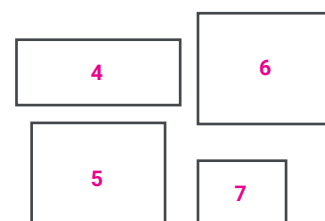
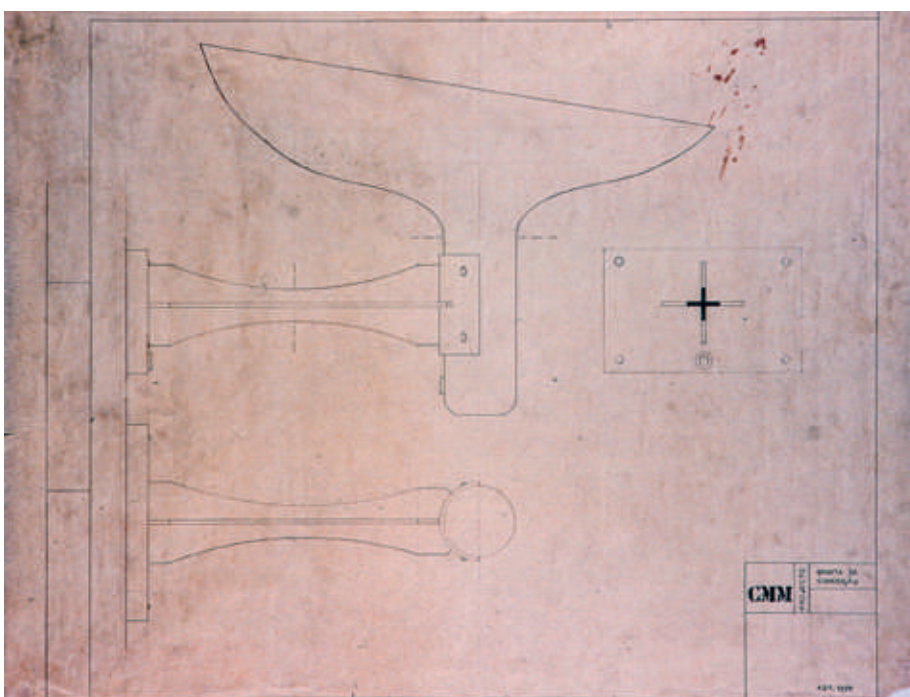
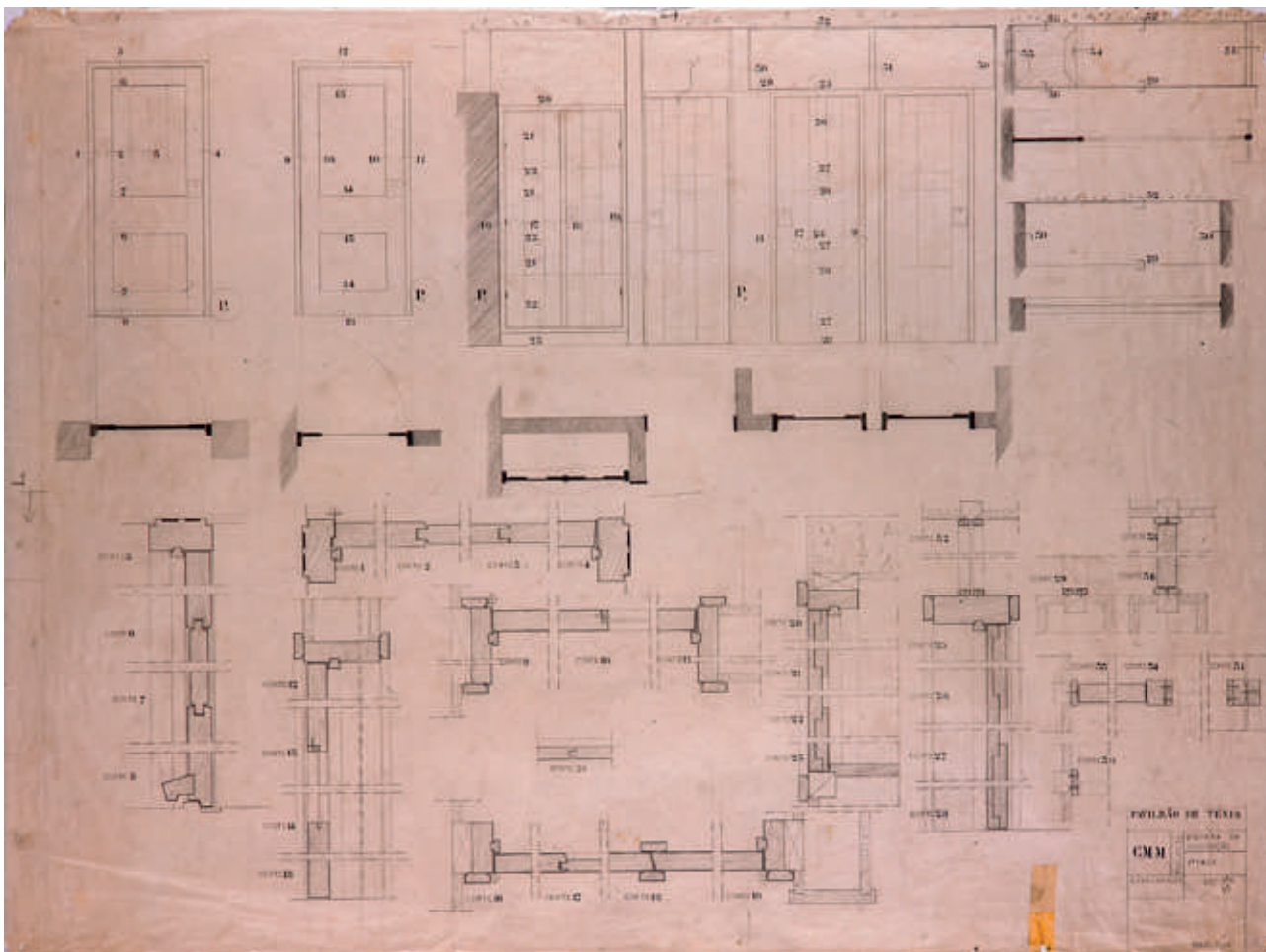
IMG.1: Tennis Pavilion in the Quinta da Conceição City Park, Matosinhos 1956-1960, design sketches, pencil on paper; IMG.2: general plan, pencil on paper; IMG.3: design sketches and elevation, pencil and colours on paper (FIMS/AFT).



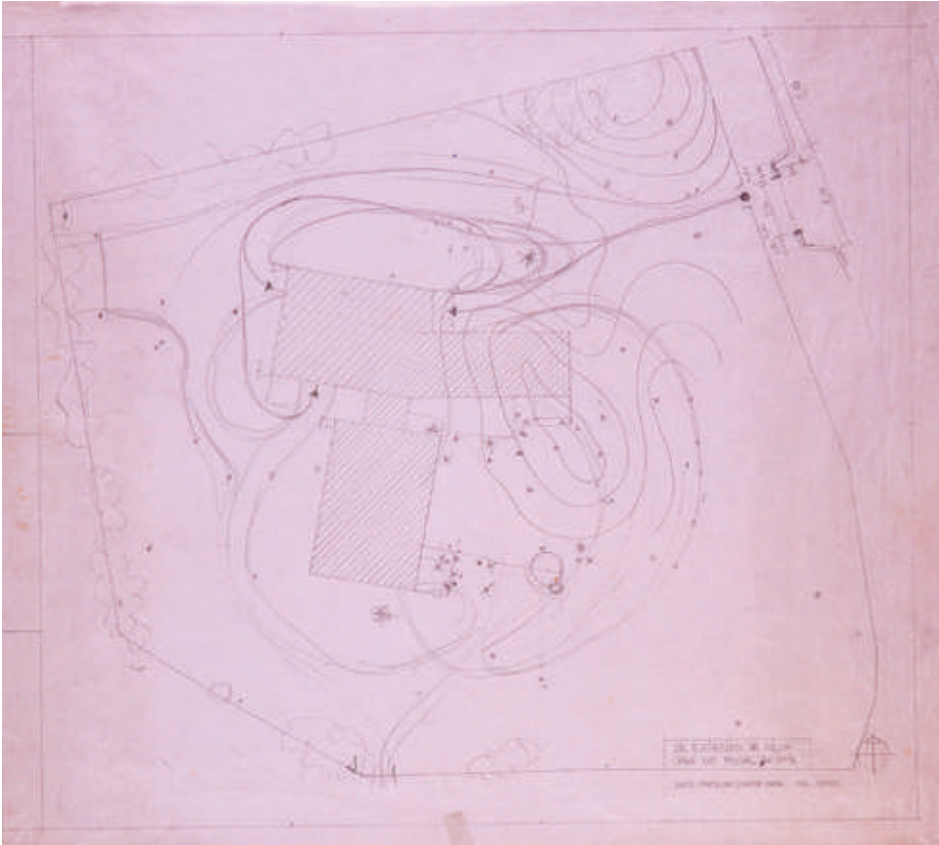
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IMG.4: Tennis Pavilion in the Quinta da Conceição City Park, Matosinhos 1956-1960, design sketches, pencil on paper; IMG.5: main floors, sections and elevations; tracing paper; IMG.6: construction details of wooden frames, tracing paper; IMG.7: construction details of a lamp, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).



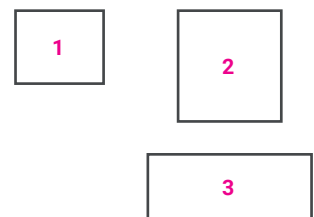
Holiday Home in Ofir

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1957-1958
PLACE/ADDRESS	Fão
COLLABORATORS	–
CUSTOMER	Fernando Ribeiro da Silva
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto

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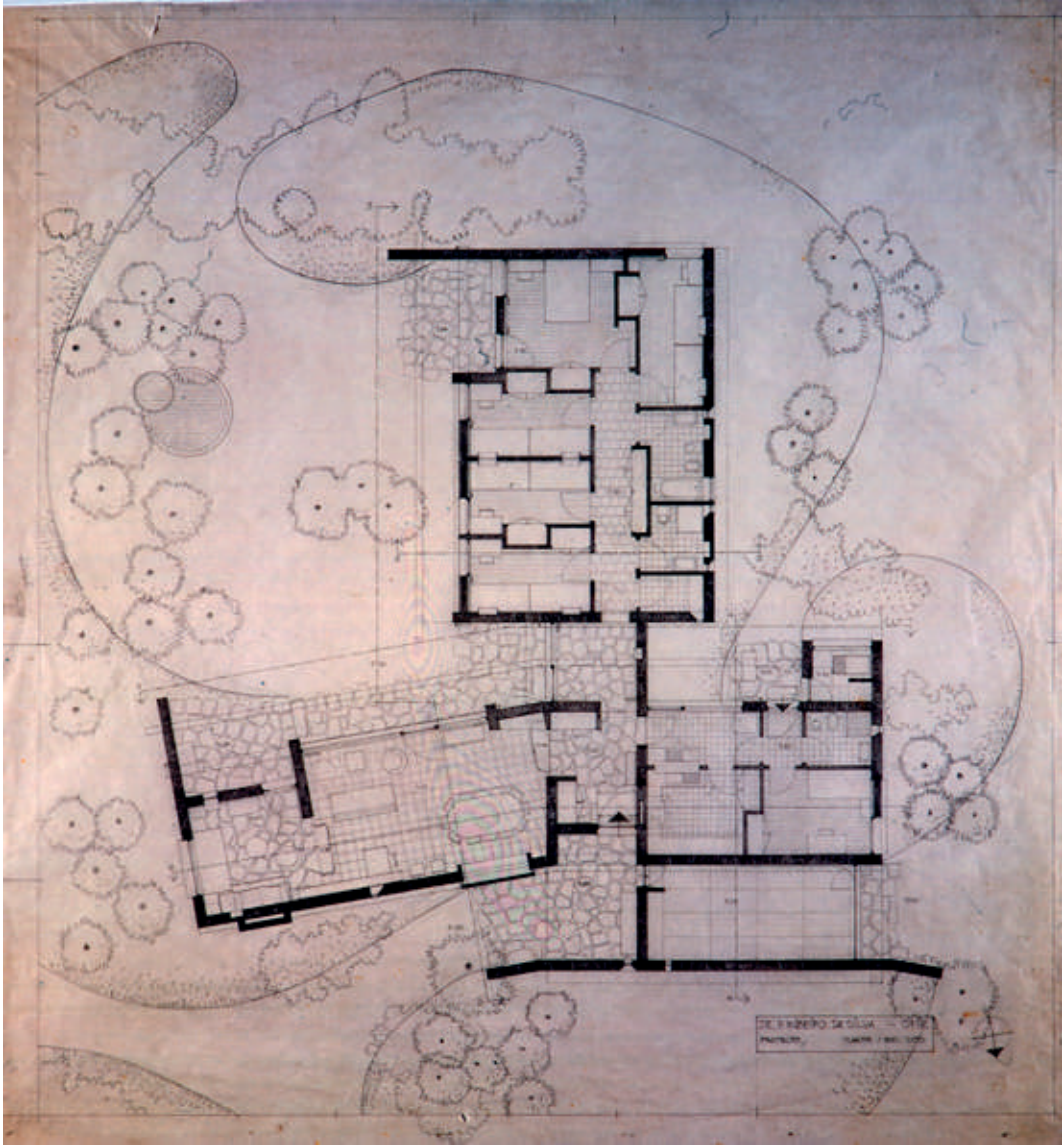
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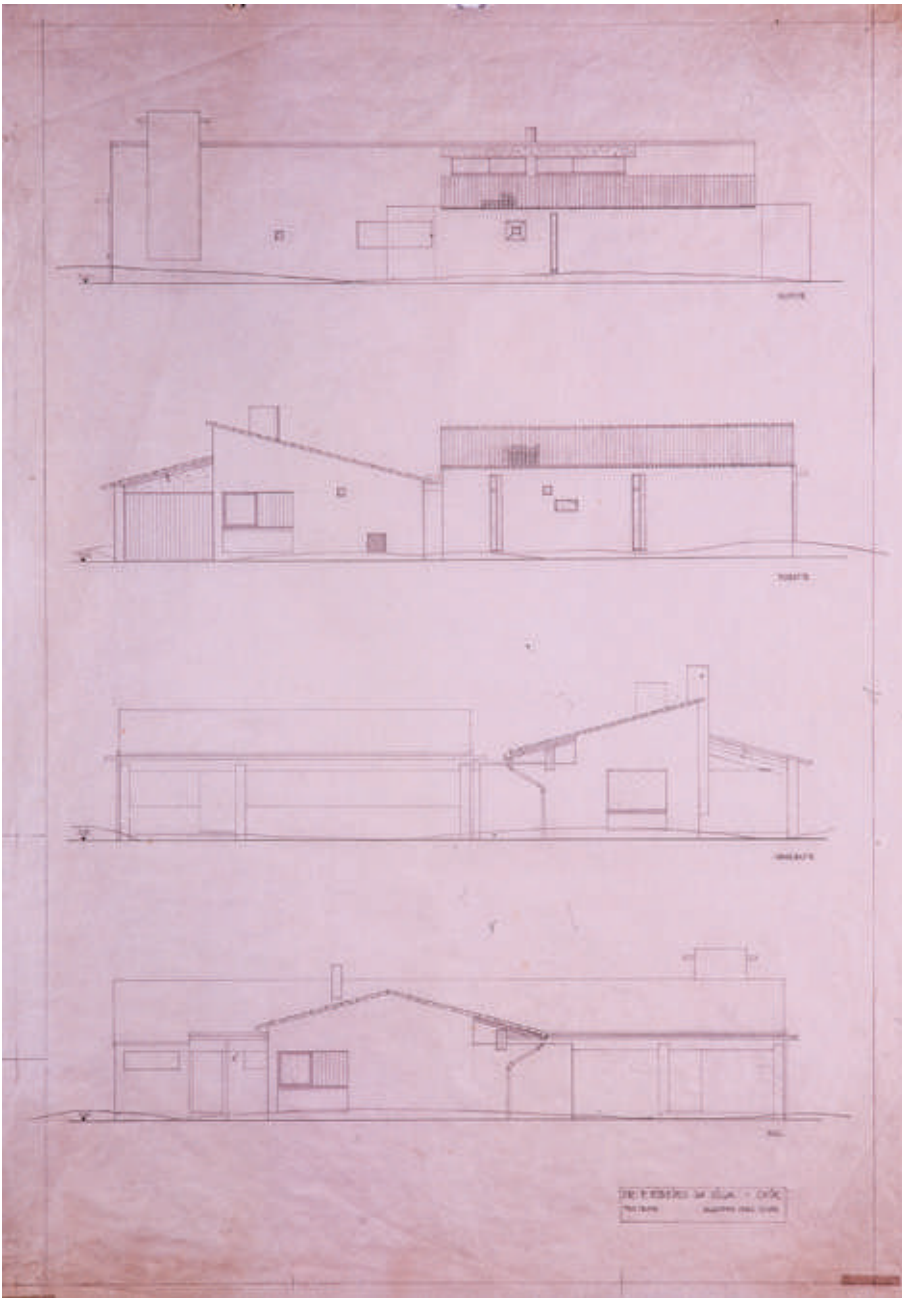


IMG.1: Holiday Home, Ofir 1957-1958, general plan, tracing paper; IMG.2: floor plan, tracing paper; IMG.3: elevation-section, tracing paper (FIMS/AFT).

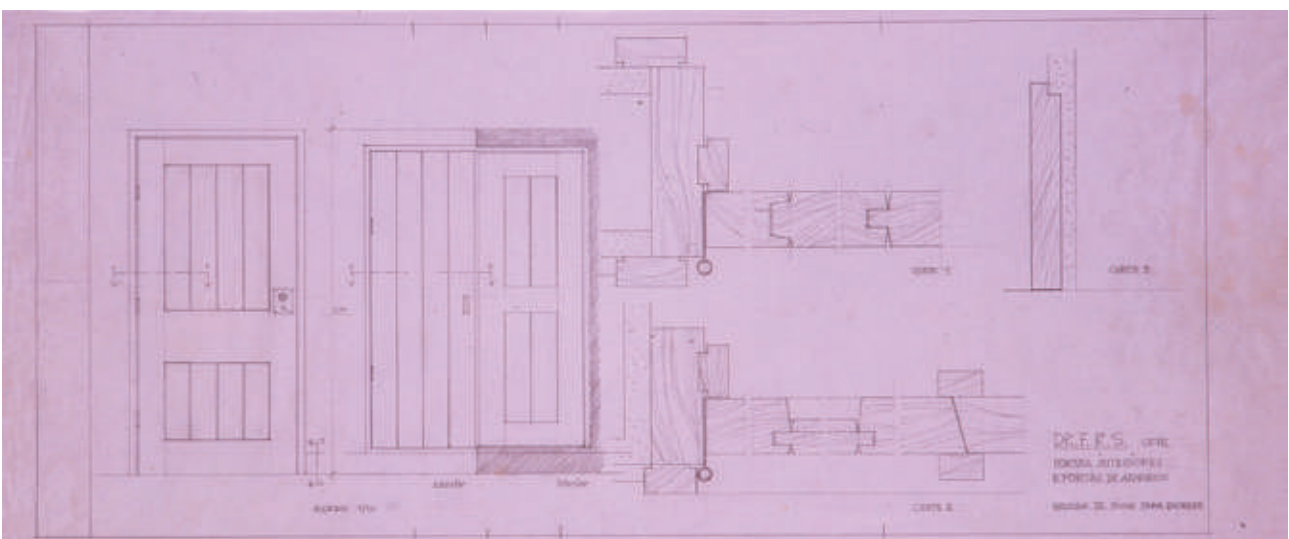


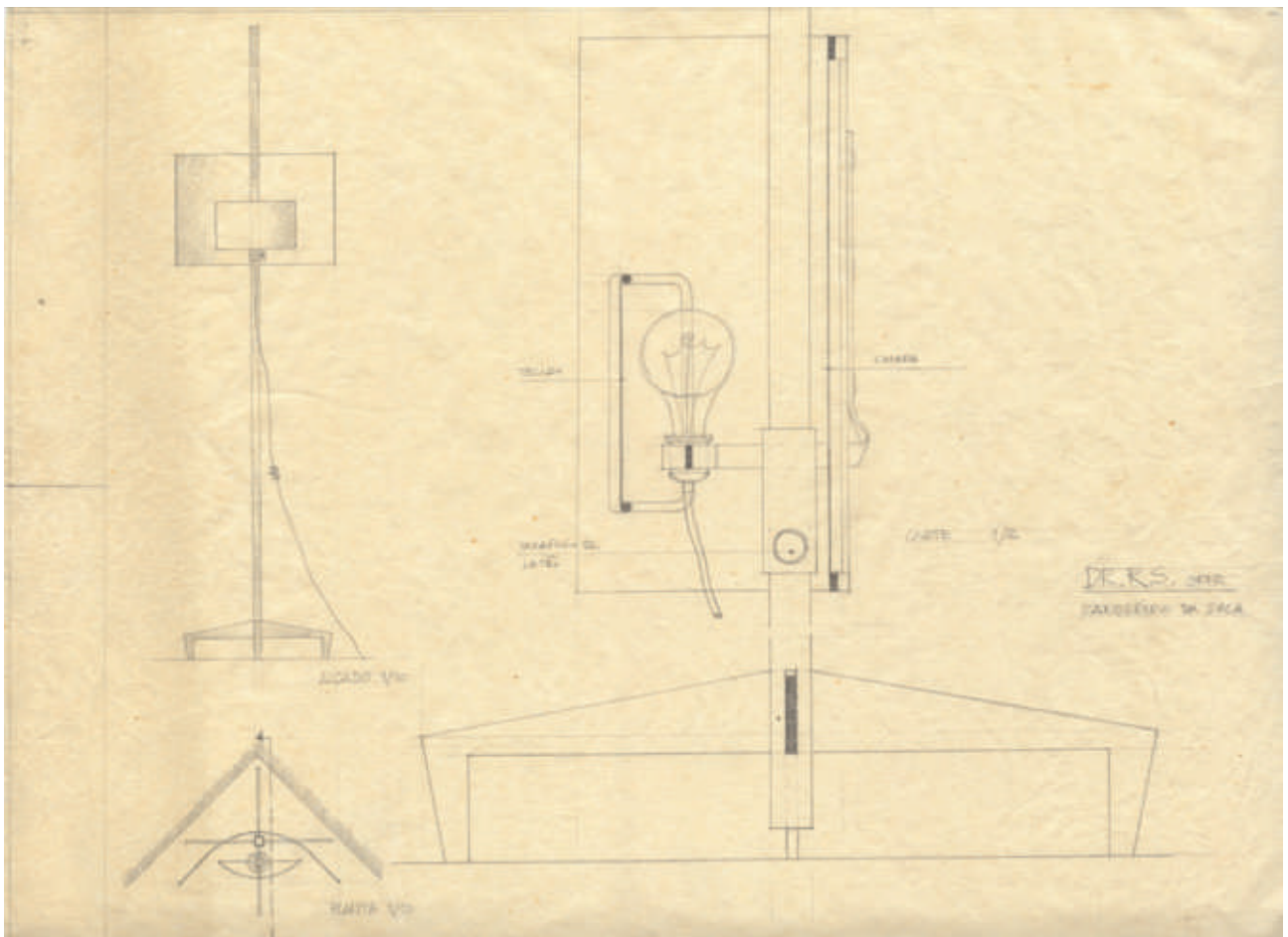
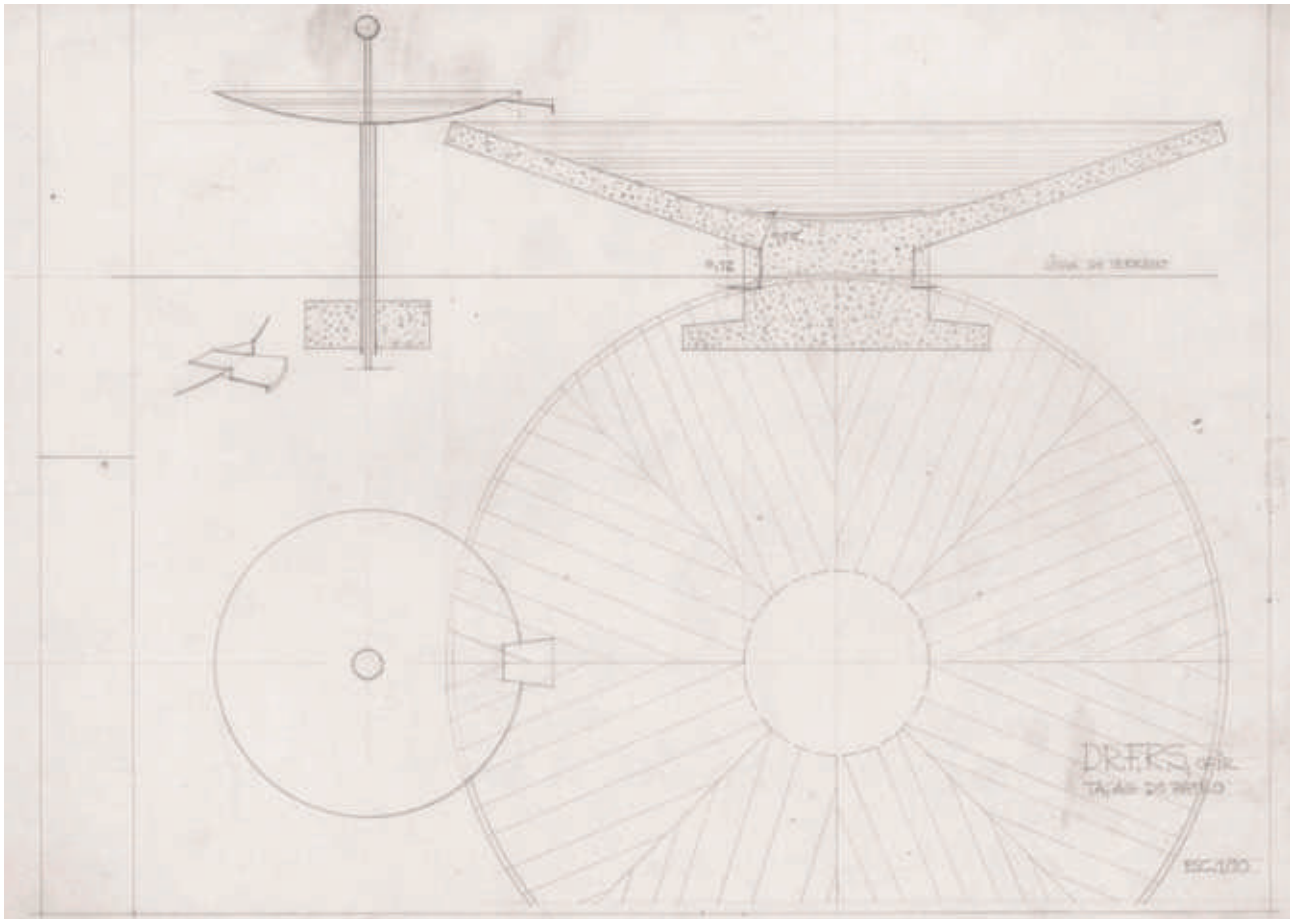
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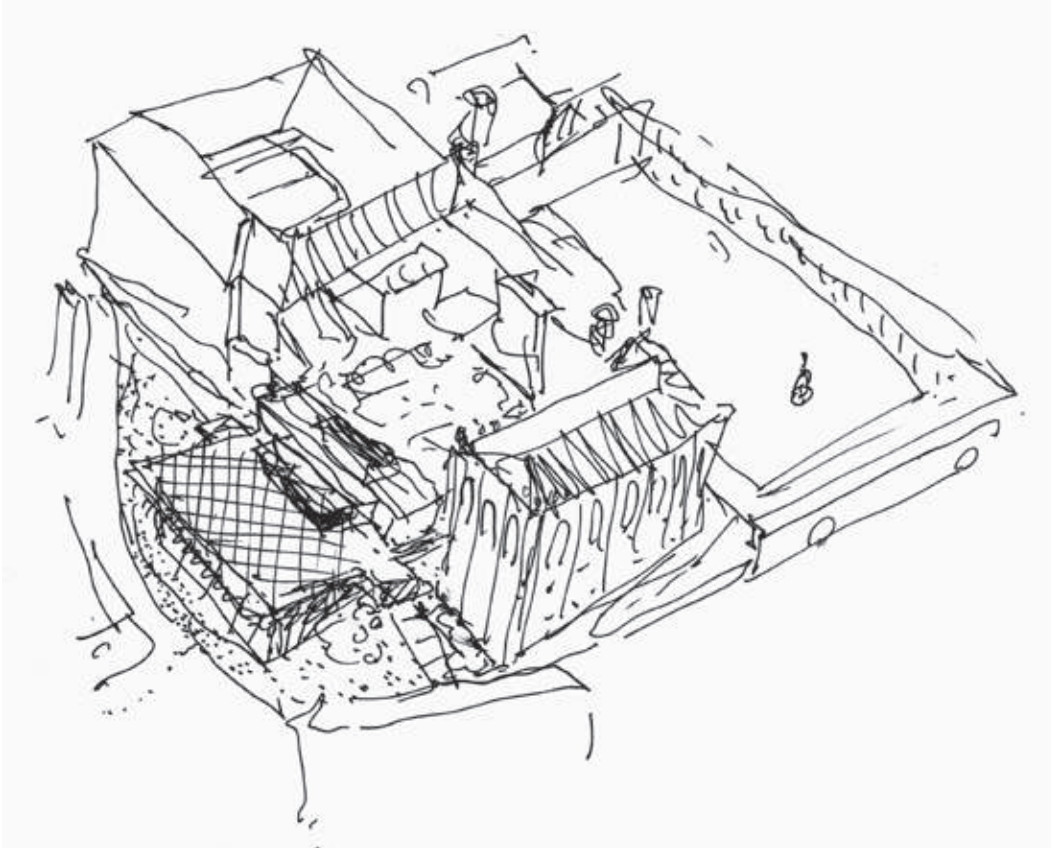




IMG.4: Holiday Home, Ofir 1957-1958, elevations, heliographic copy; IMG.5: details of wooden frames, heliographic copy; IMG.6: construction details of the fountain in the garden, heliographic copy; IMG.7: construction details of a lamp, heliographic copy (FIMS/AFT).



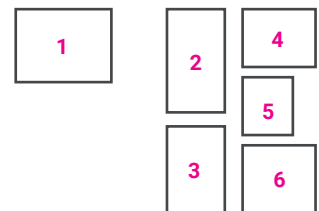




Aula Magna – Faculty of Law

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE (design and realization)	1993-2000
PLACE/ADDRESS	Coimbra
COLLABORATORS	Fernando Barroso
CUSTOMER	University of Coimbra
SOURCES	Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto



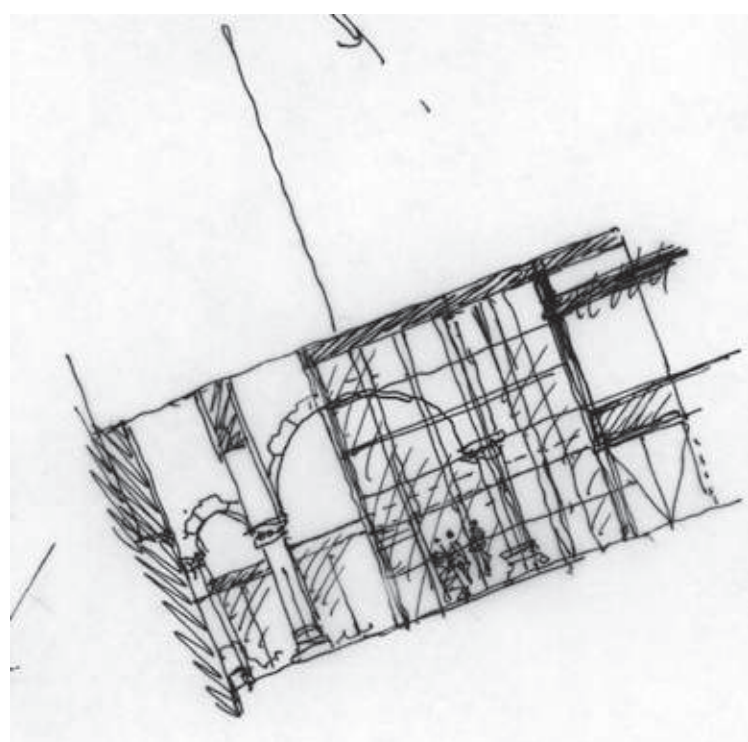
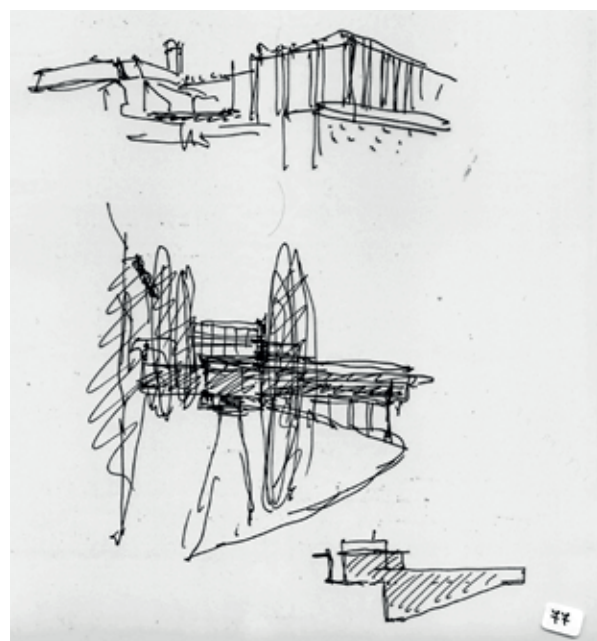
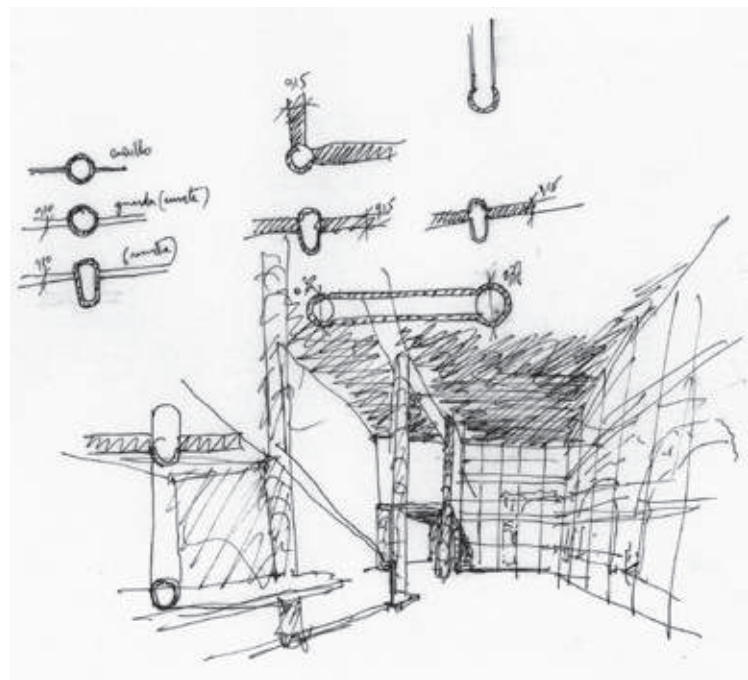
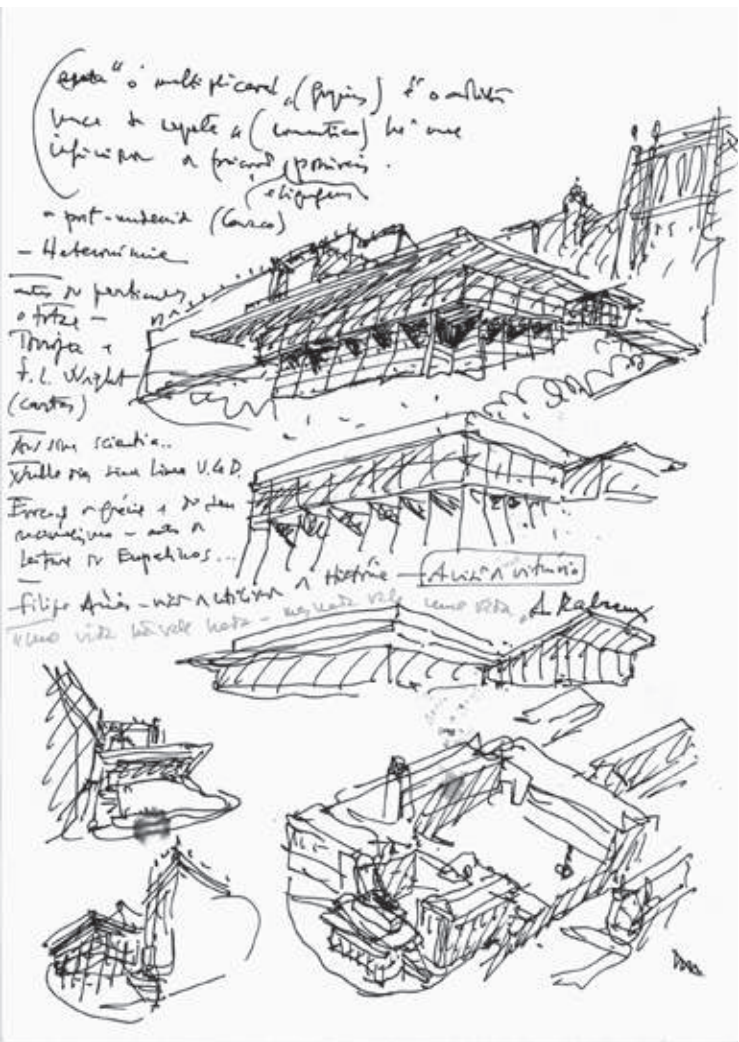
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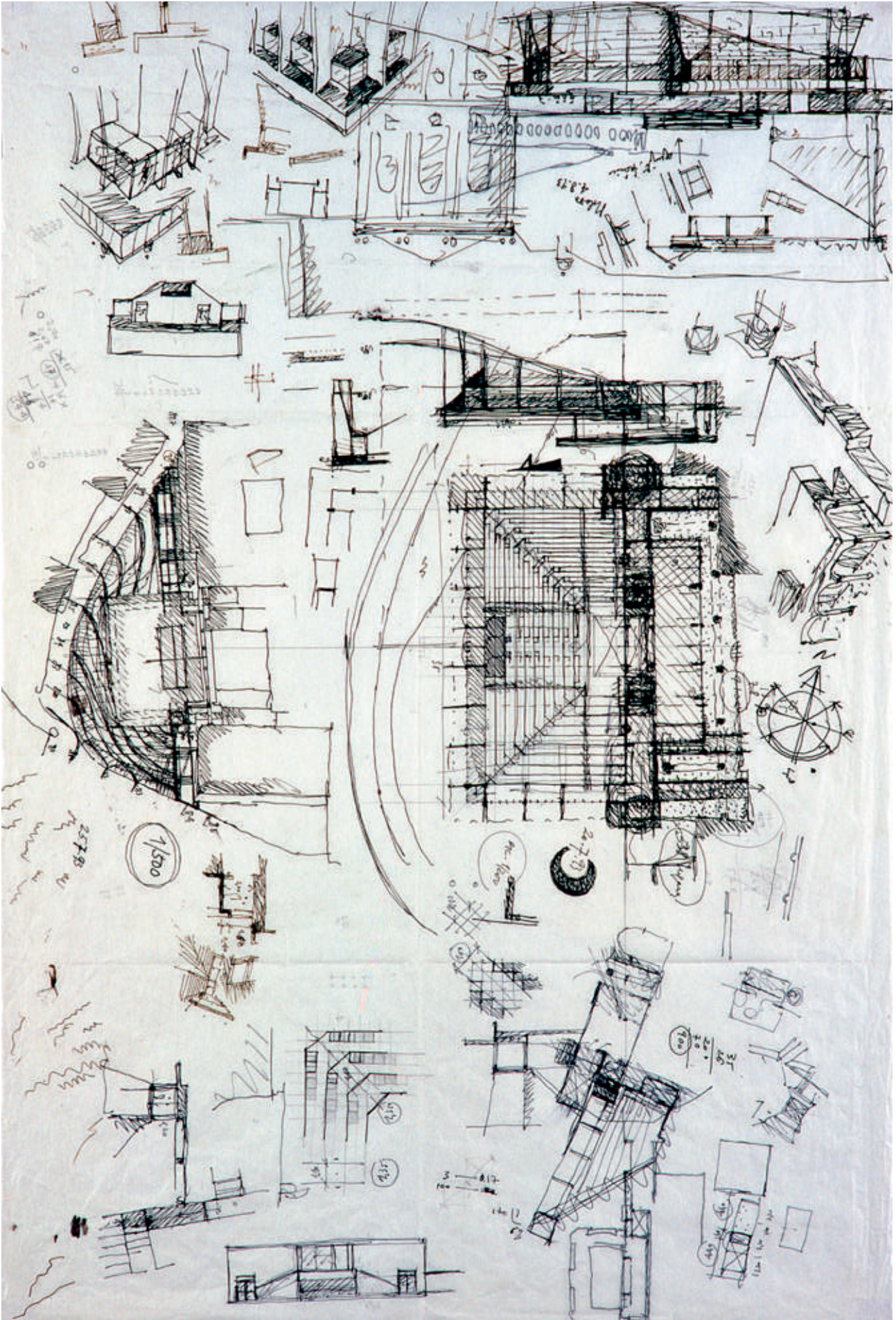
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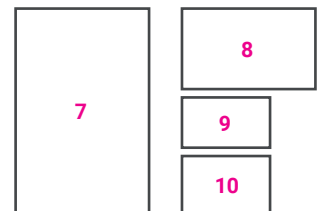
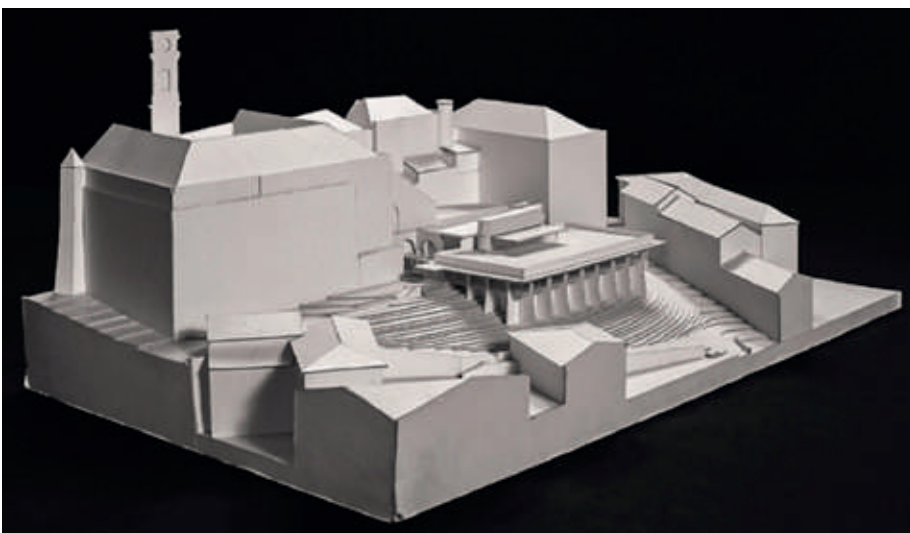
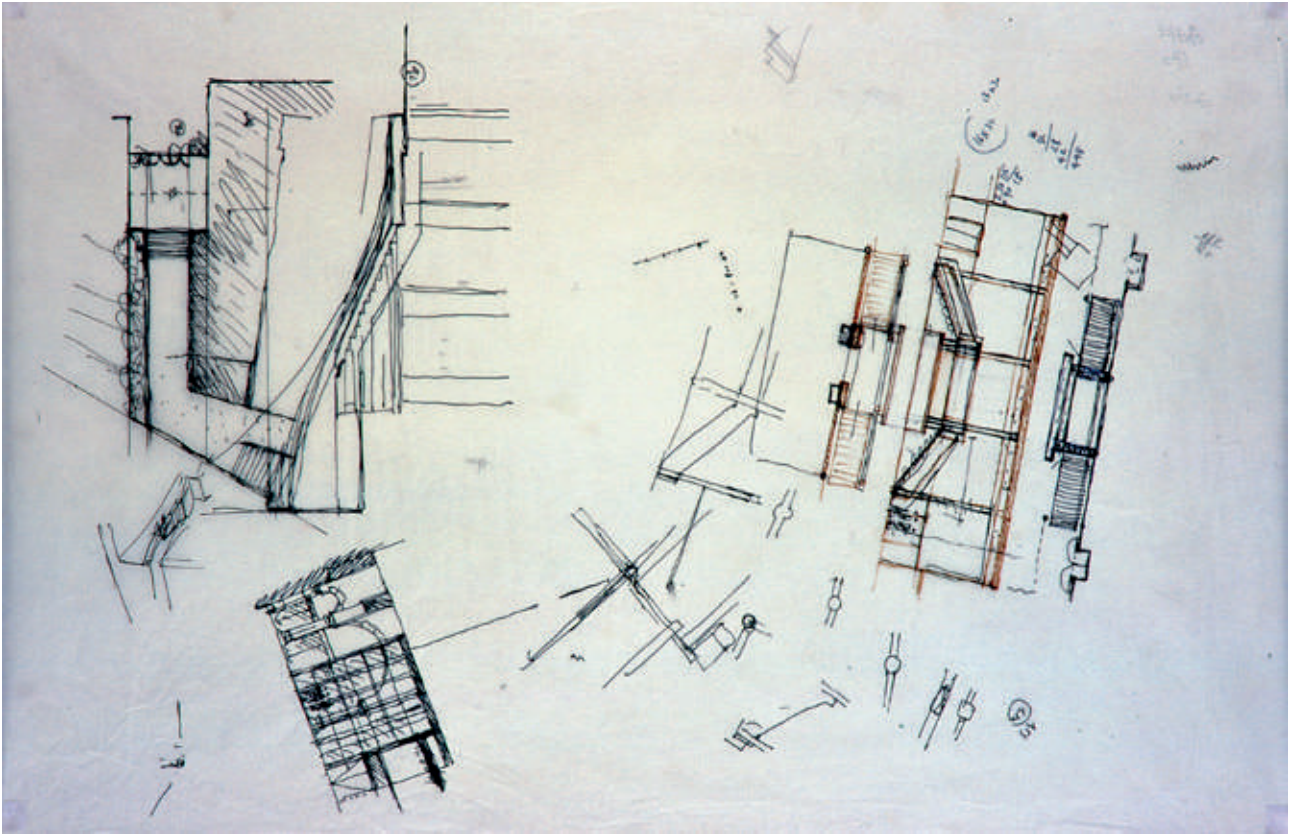
IMG.1: Aula Magna Faculty of Law, Coimbra 1993-2000, design sketch (perspective view), ink on paper; IMG.2: perspective sketches and notes, ink on paper; IMG.3-5: perspective sketches and details, ink on paper; IMG.6: sketch, ink on paper (FIMS/AFT).



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IMG.7: Aula Magna Faculty of Law, Coimbra 1993-2000, design sketches (elevations, plans, sections and details), ink on paper; IMG.8: design sketches (elevations, plans and sections), ink on paper; IMG.9-10: maquette (FIMS/AFT).

Understanding Organised Space

Journey, Supra-Historical Constants, Organised Space, Design, Project

/Abstract

The objective of this research is the investigation on the relationship between the Italian and Portuguese architectural culture in a time span between the end of the second World War and the Carnation Revolution, that sees the fall of the Salazar regime in Portugal in 1974, paying particular attention on the figure of Portuguese architect Fernando Távora (1923-2005), one of the greatest exponents of the Portuguese architectural scene of that period. The debate that took place in those years in Italy around the design, paying attention to the relationship with the context and the right “language” to use, combined with the liveliness of the architectural landscape, pushed some Portuguese architects to have an interest in the Italian architectural sphere with which they come into contact through travels, publications and meetings. This research does not want to be an historiographical analysis of the development of projects but rather a process of synthesis of the compositional thought of the architect and the influences deriving from the Italian culture context, whether explicit or documented, but also stemmed from personal experiences and architectures visited by Távora during his travels to Italy.

The research delves into the compositional aspects of some of Távora’s projects, developed and produced at this stage of his professional career, through a parallel with several Italian buildings of the same period or belonging to classical architecture, which Távora knows and has had the chance to visit in person.

By redesigning the architectures of Távora, as well as the Italian ones examined in the analysis, it was possible to fully understand the links between the various projects and therefore developing a schematic graphic clarifying the examined aspects and support the written text.

This article is excerpted from the writer’s doctoral thesis: G. Liverani, *Contesto e progetto. Influenze italiane sull’architettura di Fernando Távora*, Università di Bologna: Bologna 2017 (Tutor Antonio Esposito).

/Author

Giorgio Liverani
Architect PhD.
www.ellevuelle.it

He graduated in architecture from the ‘Aldo Rossi’ faculty of Cesena in 2009 with top marks and obtained his PhD in Architecture in 2017. Since 2017 he has been an adjunct lecturer at the School of Engineering and Architecture, Alma Mater Studiorum of Bologna, Cesena campus.

Since 2009 he has been working as a freelance in the **ellevuelle architetti studio**, a collective formed by Giorgio Liverani (Modigliana, FC), Luca Landi (Predappio, FC), Michele Vasumini (Forlì) and Matteo Cavina (Faenza, RA). Together they deal mainly with the theme of residential, productive and cultural recovery. In 2013 they were published in Casabella in the international selection of young designers under 30, and in 2014 they were among the 10 nominees of the Young Talent of Italian Architecture Award banned by the CNAP-PC of Rome with the Filandone di Modigliana renovation project. They are among the architects invited to rethink the transformation of the former military area Sta.Ve.Co. in Bologna, among the winners of the competition Scuole Innovative (Innovative Schools) and third place in the competition of ideas ‘Fabbrica della Meraviglia’ called by Orogel for the new administrative headquarters.

In 2019 they come second in the design competition for the construction of the new secondary school in San Piero in Bagno and among the finalists in the international design competition called by the Municipality of Milan for the design of the Scialoia School. In June 2020, they are among the 10 studios invited to the ‘young Italian architects’ meeting cycle promoted by Casabella magazine. In October 2022 they were awarded the ‘Prossima stazione Cesena’ competition for the regeneration of the complex system of public spaces between the station and the historic centre. This year they are among the winners of the 40 under 40 European design with casa bieffe, Corte San Ruffillo and the Neverending Park project in Cesena.



Understanding Organised Space

The need to understand organised space in architecture has been an obsession for Fernando Távora since the years of his academic training until it became a constant requirement that has accompanied him throughout his life. From a young age, Távora needed knowledge beyond the architectural disciplines and ranged into literature, poetry, and other art forms. This attitude leads him to seek outside the academic world new stimuli and new certainties, not only through his relationship with relevant figures in the Portuguese architectural scene of that period, such as Viana de Lima and Carlos Ramos but also through the intense reading of Portuguese literature and travelling, the proper escape route from the limitations and restrictions imposed by the regime.

The publication of *Da organização do espaço*¹ in 1962, twenty years after the beginning of his training at the *Escola de Belas Artes* in Porto, represents a synthesis of the cultural research pursued by Távora in the period between his training years, his first design experiences and the occasions of encounter and comparison with the European and non-European architectural scene. The book is also a turning point and a point of awareness for the overcoming of inner restlessness, a sense of inadequacy that permeated him throughout his youth, an “*atrocious suffering*”² that never completely disappears but turns positive in need for a constant search for certainties and a deepening of the understanding of organised space. The initial tension to the imitation of the Master of Architecture, to their unreachable “genius”, then dissolves in the awareness of profound humanity that permeates architecture and space in general:

[...] the activity of organising space belongs to all men and not only to some. In other words, the organisation of space is a work in which all men participate, with varying degrees of intensity and responsibility, a work from which no man can consider himself exempt. [...] our eyes are always encountering organised space, organised by men, and organised in such a unitary form that it is not easy to distinguish what exactly belongs [...] to each man.³

Man’s influence on organised space is therefore profoundly immanent and not genial, found in all circumstances, both in urban landscapes where human action is most evident, from the more rigorous ones deriving from the Roman *cardo-decumano* grid to the spontaneous ones born out of uncontrolled aggregation in the slums of the suburbs of large cities, and in landscapes that are defined as “*natura*”, ranging from those organised for cultivation to the wilder ones but in which we can always find anthropic elements.

The awareness of acting in contexts that are already in some way conditioned by human action facilitates the compositional process set in motion by the architect who, thanks to the ability to read these elements to understand

1 Fernando Távora, *Da organização do espaço* (Porto: FAUP, 1962).

2 Fernando Távora, “Escola primária do Cedro”, *Arquitectura*, no. 89 (1964): 175.

3 Távora, *Da organização do espaço*, 19-20.

the context and the “circumstance”, can act in the design and organisation of space more consciously:

[...] the artificial forms, the result of human creation – in addition to the natural forms that play a role of fundamental importance – find themselves to be conditioning factors for every new form created since the space organised by man is conditioned in its organisation but, once organised, becomes in turn conditioning for future organisations. [...]

The ‘circumstance’ will therefore be, in the proper meaning of the term, that set of factors that surround man, that are around him and, since he is the creator of many of them, to these must be added those that derive from his very existence, from his being.⁴

The form thus becomes an element with which the project makes the circumstances of the place in which it is inserted its own, inserting a new element that goes on to modify and redefine the space in which it is inserted as a further factor added to that place, in a constant stratification of elements given by history. In this inseparable link between the built form and the circumstance in which it is inserted, the physiognomy of the free space is also defined, organised and influenced by circumstances.

Távora’s focus on the form of the space as opposed to the architecture itself can be seen in numerous travel sketches in which the object of interest is not the pre-eminent building in the place but the place itself and how it has been organised to accommodate and enhance the architecture that finds its fulfilment in it.

This often forgotten notion that the space that separates – and connects – forms is itself form is a fundamental notion, as it allows us to become fully aware of how isolated forms do not exist and how there is always a relationship, either between the forms we see occupying space, or between them and space itself, which, even if we do not see it, we know is constitutive of form – the negative or matrix of visible forms.⁵

The profound understanding of space and architecture, for Távora, cannot be separated from the direct experience of it.

It is also true that the explanation of forms according to certain circumstances is difficult, especially their complete understanding; just as one appreciates a good wine by tasting it and not by reasoning about its chemical composition, so one can only understand a form by experiencing it and its circumstance and not by listening to descriptions of it or consulting its reproductions.⁶

So, a fundamental tool for understanding is, and remains throughout his life, the journey, the discovery of space through an experience that nourishes his

4 Távora, *Da organização do espaço*, 21-22.

5 Távora, *Da organização do espaço*, 12.

6 Távora, *Da organização do espaço*, 23.

desire to understand space. The experience is almost always also an opportunity for comparison with colleagues such as Álvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto Moura, Alcino Soutinho, and José Paolo dos Santos, who with him can observe the different ways in which man has acted on the territory, has shaped it to his liking to make it more welcoming to host his dwelling.

The journey will also be the basis of the teaching courses that Távora will hold at the university, as an indispensable training moment for understanding the constants and permanence of architecture, the historical and cultural heritage, as well as, in its sense, profound knowledge of the territory and landscape, the first stage of design work.

During his formative years, he made several trips in search of the constants of classical architecture and the experiences of Modern and Rationalist architecture. In addition to several trips to Portuguese territory, Távora made several journeys between 1942 and 1944 to Spain, close in terms of borders and terms of political ideology, therefore more accessible to access: he visited Madrid, Toledo, Salamanca, Seville, Granada and Santiago de Compostela.

But it is in Italy that the trips of the following years are concentrated, first in 1947 as the final stage of the European journey, then in 1949 with a trip dedicated to the peninsula alone, and finally in 1952, 1956 and 1964. During his travels, he does not fail to keep a punctual diary in which he jots down impressions, suggestions and emotions he feels while visiting various Italian cities and monuments. With writing, drawing represents another tool for summarising the things seen, allowing him to report the essentials, the volumes, and the relationships between constructions, leaving out all the elements related to stylistic qualities and language to note only the intrinsic values of the architecture. Many of these sketches are contained within books (on the first page of which he never fails to mention the place and date of purchase accompanied by his unmistakable signature) purchased during his stays in Italy and then jealously preserved and archived in his library.⁷

The following is an extract of research whose aim is to explain how Távora's observation of space and circumstances became a conscious or undefined basis for the development of the upcoming or later architectural projects in those years.⁸

The research was not a historiographical analysis of the development of the projects but rather a synthesis effort of the architect's compositional thinking and influences from the Italian cultural context, both explicit and documented, but also deriving from personal experiences and from architectures Távora visited during his trips to Italy, which added to his cultural background as a designer.

⁷ An important section of Fernando Távora's rich library is now preserved, available for consultation, at the Marques da Silva Foundation in Porto.

⁸ This article is excerpted from the writer's doctoral thesis: Giorgio Liverani, *Context and Project. Italian influences on the architecture of Fernando Távora*, Università di Bologna: Bologna 2017 (Tutor: Antonio Esposito).

Starting from the basis of the documentation found in the archives and the study of the existing publications, the research delves into the compositional aspects of some of Távora's projects, developed and constructed during this phase of his professional activity, through a parallel with various Italian architectures of the same period or belonging to classical architecture, which Távora knew and had the opportunity to visit first-hand.

Vila da Feira Municipal Market

The Municipality entrusted the Vila da Feira Municipal Market project to Távora in 1953. The Municipality intended to cope with the town's development by reinforcing the road axis of Rua dos Descobrimentos, bordering the centre and developing on the straight line that visually connects the town's fulcrum to the Castle of Santa Maria da Feira. The site initially chosen for the project was on the left-hand side of the street, a flat space free of private dwellings. Távora changes that determination and chooses a facing site, a vacant space between several existing two-storey dwelling houses. The position of the parcel of land defines the limit of the built-up area to the west, on the slope that opens to the countryside and cultivated fields and is characterised by the presence of an unevenness that requires a study of the altimetry and an adaptation of the project to the existing morphology.

The beginning of the 1950s represents for Távora a peculiar moment in his research path within the Portuguese and foreign panorama.

In 1951, with his participation in his first CIAM in Hoddesdon, he had the opportunity to confront himself with those he considered to be the "masters" of Modern architecture and with the themes they pursued. For Távora, however, the CIAMs of these years also represent the turning point for a change in the vision of Modern architecture. The key idea is that architecture cannot disregard the relations with the place and the people who will use it; a change in perspective is necessary. It is easy to understand how the theme of the CIAM held in 1951, *The Heart of the City*⁹, positively marks Távora, fully grasped by the need to put man back at the centre of architecture, freed from functionalism and tyranny of the machine.

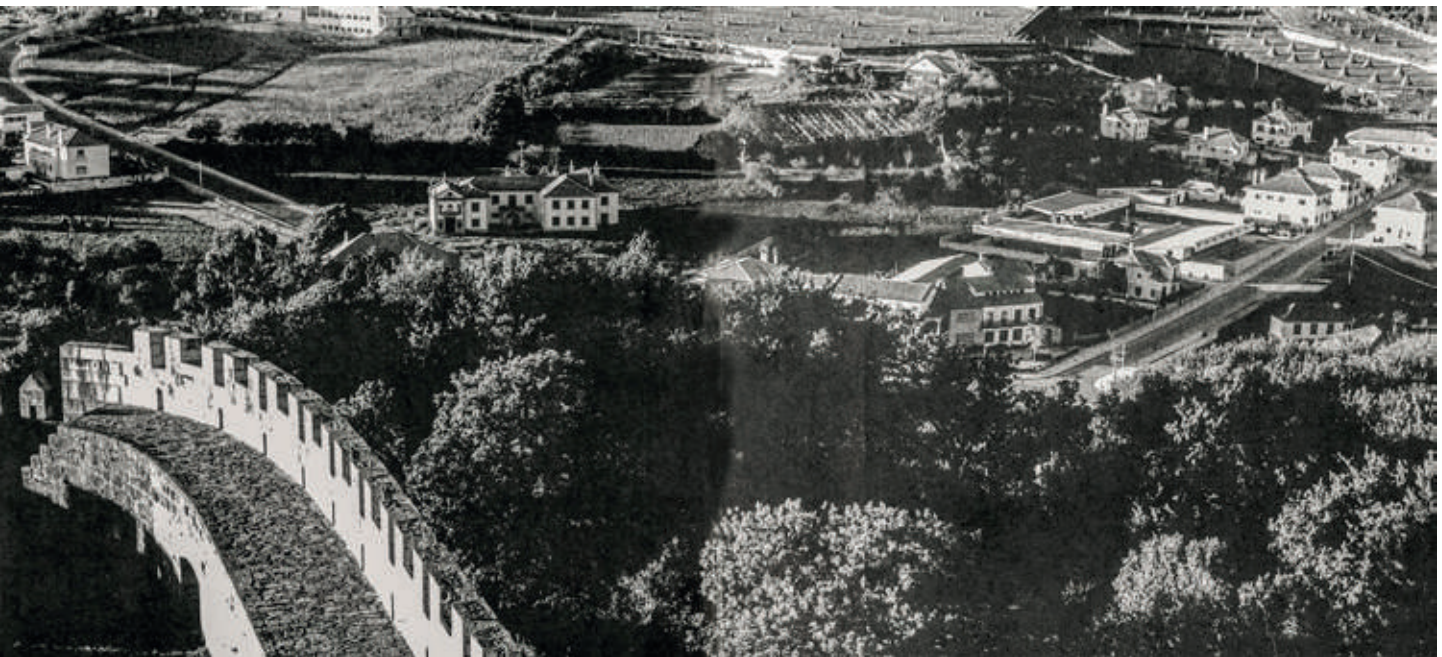
The following year, he took part in the first CIAM summer school in Venice, an opportunity to return to Italy and compare himself with various professionals who gravitated around the Venetian school at that time, experiencing first-hand the results of the research they were carrying out, as well as the traditions and places of a city like Venice. On this occasion, he also met Le Corbusier, who gave a lecture during the summer school.

The changes within CIAM also manifested in 1953 in Aix-en-Provence, a congress Távora attended with the Portuguese group. In the same year, the Santa

⁹ Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Josep Lluís Sert, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, *CIAM 8: The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life* (New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1952).

Maria da Feira Market project started as the first building of public character and large scale realised by Távora, who could better express the reasoning and concepts expressed so far through writings and projects on paper.

The project gives shape and synthetises Távora's thoughts at that moment. The proximity to modern language and its theories must be measured here with the tradition of the place, with the need to design for the village a space in which to exercise an ancient and locally bound activity such as the market, which bases its essence on personal relationships and local products: in Vila da Feira, the functionalism of Modernism must come to terms with the customs and traditions of the place [Fig. 1].



The Rigidity of the Modern

"Building a market in a square of 50 metres, a module also square, of one metre, guides the composition and founds its geometry".¹⁰

Despite the irregularity and slope of the land on which the Vila da Feira Market is to be built, Távora starts from a scheme based on a regular grid of one metre by one metre that defines all the different elements of the project.

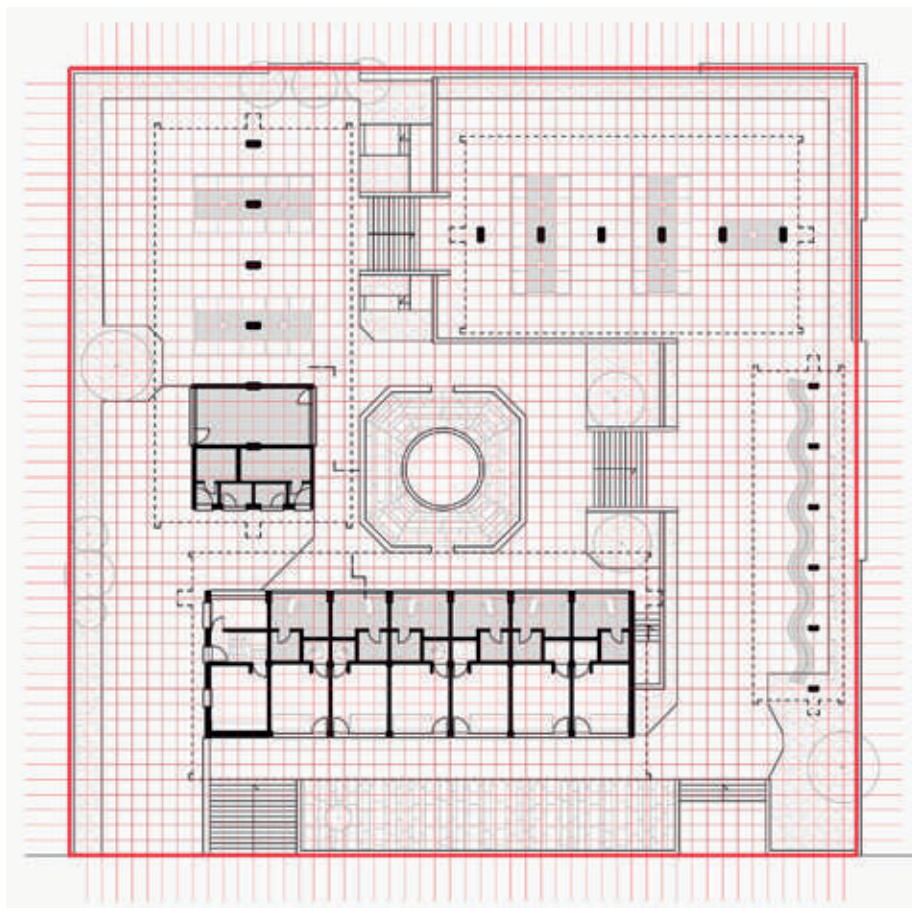
The volumes, perceived as white suspended canopies, are precisely defined within the basic module, fitting with the pillars and retaining walls within the regular pitch of the pavement. The position of the pillars in the axis with the joints can easily be compared to the schematic plans by Mies van der Rohe and, indeed derives from design settings learned during the CIAM meetings. The theme of the "grid" had been introduced by Le Corbusier at CIAM VI, which took place in Bridgwater, England, in 1947. The concept had been carried forward in the following years by the ASCORAL group, and Távora certainly became aware

¹⁰ Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano: Electa 2005), 318.

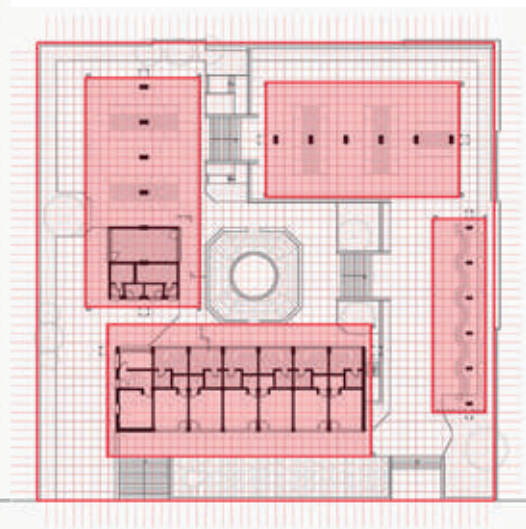
Fig. 1
Historical photo Market seen
from the castle (FIMS/AFT).

of it during his participation in the CIAMs after 1947 and through his preparatory studies for the meetings. Admiration for the Master of Modern Architecture was great in these years, and his influence on Távora's first projects is visible [Fig. 2].

After defining the essential grid, the volumes are inserted according to a spiral design starting from the main entrance on Rua dos Descobrimentos, beginning with the smallest pavilion, the flower pavilion, up to the largest one, which returns parallel to the street and stands as the main façade of the complex above a podium that raises it above the street, the only two-storey element [Fig. 3].



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The white roofing defines the main façade and gives proportion to the elevation on the street; at the same time, it marks the boundary between the Inner Market and the city and relates to the neighbouring façades of the residential houses along the street axis. The modern mark, represented by the white roof, will be mitigated in the project's development using rougher and more traditional materials such as granite for the base and reinforced concrete with a bush-hammered finish. The same beam heads protruding from the roof break up the white surface, marking the structure's pace and the project's entire modularity [Fig. 4].

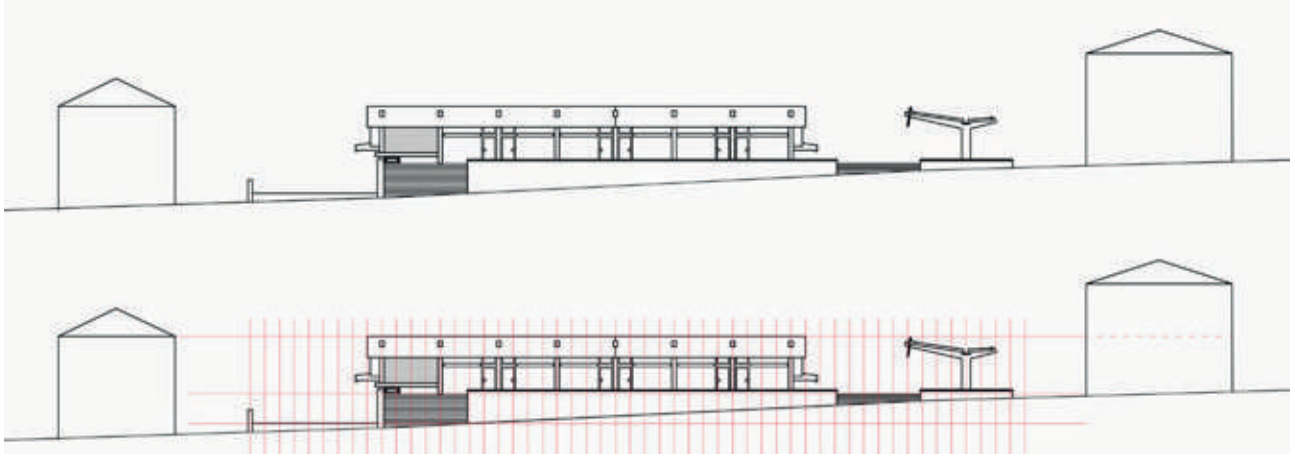
The arrangement of the volumes also defines a central space, protected and not visible from the outside. In the centre, as the fulcrum of the entire composition, a fountain is placed precisely on the diagonal of the 50 by 50-metre base square; the same spiral formed by the different positions of the volumes ends in the central area and the fountain [Fig. 5, 6].

Fig. 2

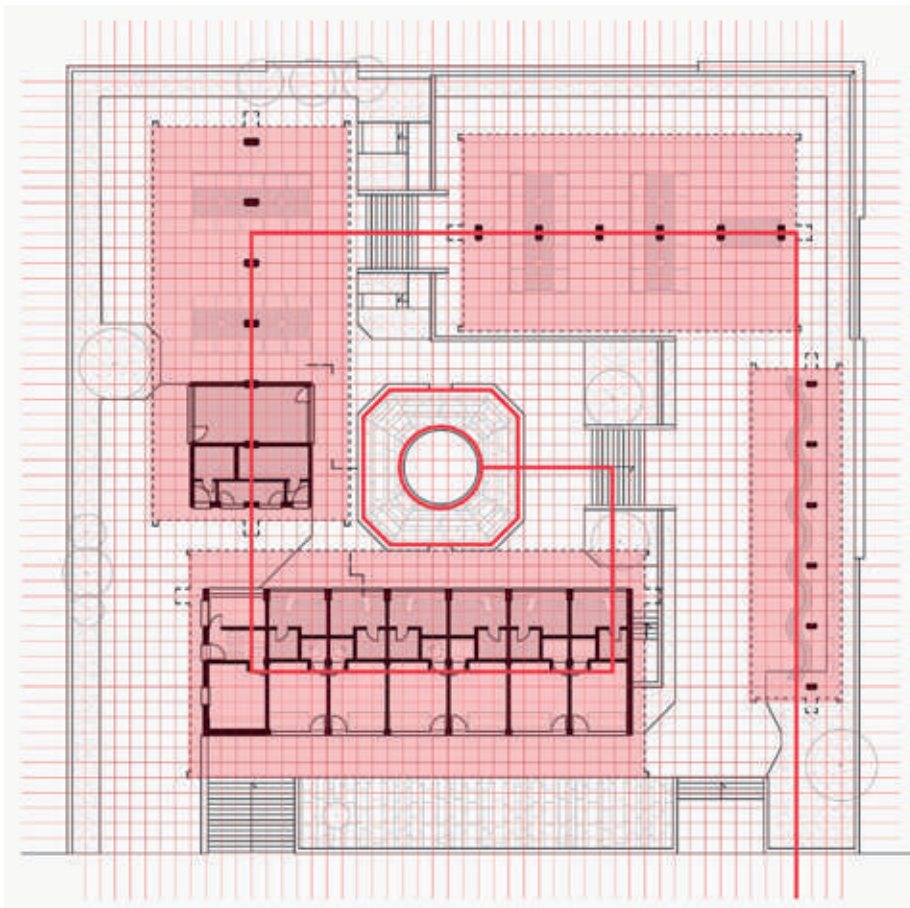
Floor plan with grid 1x1 meter (graphic by the author). All the graphic diagrams included in this essay are contained in the PhD thesis of architect Giorgio Liverani "Contesto e Progetto. Influenze italiane sull'architettura di Fernando Távora" (Context and Project. Italian influences on Fernando Távora's architecture), Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna, PhD in Architecture, Cycle XXIX, 2017.

Fig. 3

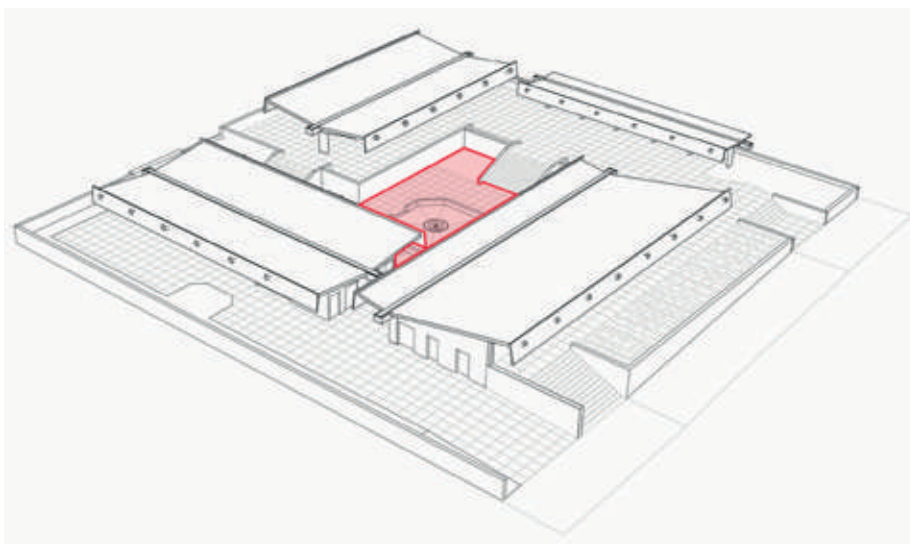
Planning scheme with grid (1x1 meter) and volumes (graphics by the author).



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Fig. 4
Scheme elevation with grid and relationship to neighbouring houses (graphics by the author).

Fig. 5
Planning scheme with spiral of volumes (graphics by the author).

Fig. 6
Perspective scheme with definition of the courtyard (graphics by the author).

Familiarity of Tradition

The schematism and rigidity in the plan, under the influence of the grid promoted by the Modern Movement, are not perceived with the same force in the spatiality and use of materials employed in the construction. A visit to this building completely changes the reading and understanding of the project, as if there were a clear division between the line drawn on the sheet, lacking in materials, depth and spatiality, enslaved to a defined and rigid schematism, and the actual space, the sensations perceived on site, where there is a strong presence of tradition, of indigenous materials and an awareness of the place in which the building fits.

The desire to define a new "Heart of the City" leads Távora to make a crucial compositional choice.

The recently completed markets in the vicinity of Porto, such as the Mercado Municipal in Vila Nova de Famalição, designed by Julio de Brito (1947-1950) or the one in Ovar by Januário Godinho (1948-1955), are based on a compositional scheme open to the city, a sort of new square characterised by a central element, a fountain or a green pool. Separation from the town occurs in these cases by means of gates.¹¹

In contrast, Távora's choice is oriented towards delimiting an inner space defined on the four fronts by the volumes of the cantilevered buildings under which the sale occurs. Access to the market is guaranteed and controlled in two defined positions, one for the public and the other as a driveway entrance for goods. Thanks to the positioning of the main volume on the façade facing the street, the definition of the Market's boundary and access to it is clear. The separation between outside and inside allows the space to be defined no longer as a square, as is usually the case in public markets, but as a courtyard, separated from the rest of the city and more intimate [Fig. 7].



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The space is thus defined by using the volumes of the sales canopy as buildings in an urban composition that give space to a small square. At the same time, it is easy to associate the planimetric layout with the courtyard typology that Távora finds in the models from antiquity, where this represented the heart of the building, a protected space around which the whole building developed. The references are, of course, the cloisters of the numerous Portuguese convents, which he visited many times both as a student and as a professor, and the stately palaces such as the Ducal Palace of Vila Viçosa¹² with its interior gardens derived from the Hispanic-Moorish tradition of the courts of Seville and Cordoba¹³. However, the proportion of the

¹¹ Susana Milão, *Mercado da Feira de Távora: o centro (herma e core). Une telle symétrie ne convient pas à la solitude*, in: Fernando Távora, *"Minha casa"* (Porto: Fundação Marques da Silva 2015): 216.

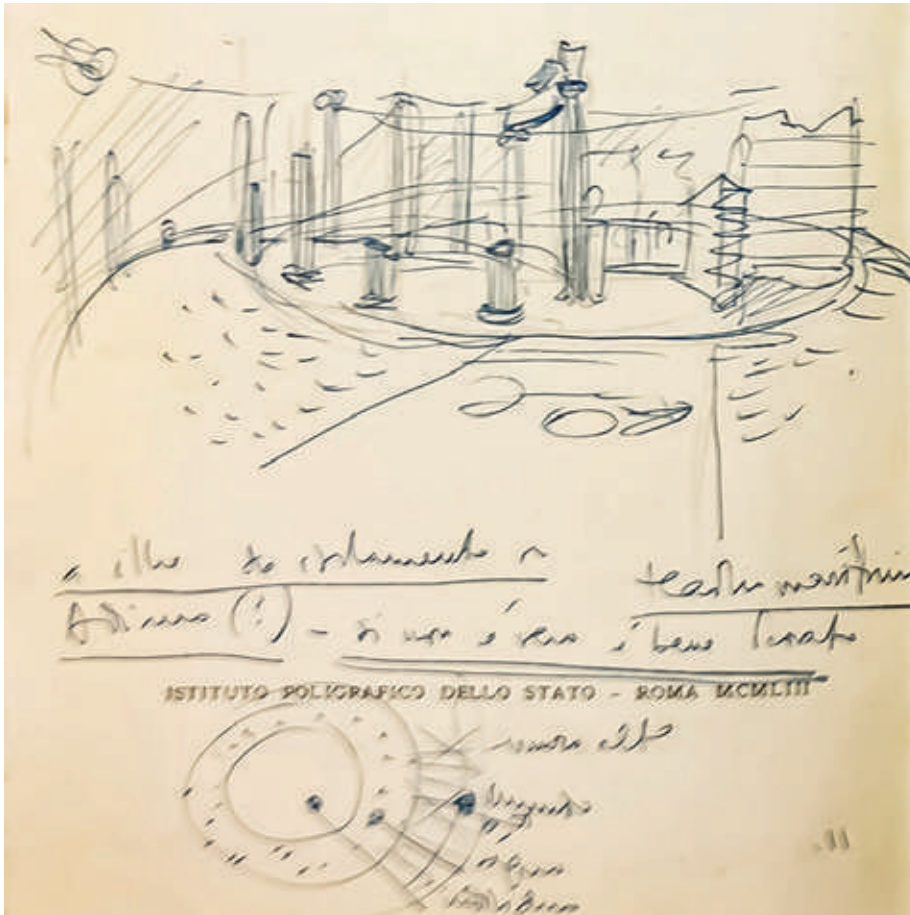
¹² Milão, *Mercado da Feira*, 222.

¹³ Távora made a trip dedicated only to the city of Seville in 1942.

Fig. 7

Januário Godinho, Mercado municipal, Ovar 1948-1955 (Fernando Távora, *"Minha casa"*. *Uma porta pode ser um romance*, edited by Manuel Mendes Porto: FIMS/FAUP, 2013), 216.

roofs and the size of the Vila da Feira Market are more comparable to those of an ancient Roman villa, in which the relationship between the building and the garden is found through the portico that runs on all four sides. In 1956, during the construction of the Market, Távora made a trip to Italy. A visit to Villa Adriana and Villa d'Este in Tivoli allowed him to study these classical residences, especially their outdoor spaces, providing Távora with insights he would use in different projects. It is no coincidence that in two books¹⁴ purchased during his stay in Tivoli, he jotted down various comments on the



architecture he visited, focusing on the intimate spaces of the dwellings and the courtyards or places dedicated to meditation and rest. The sketches in the books depict three courtyard spaces in which the element of water is very present: the Recinto dell'Isola and the Terme con *heliocaminus* inside Villa Adriana and the Corte dell'Ovato in Villa d'Este [Fig. 8].

The Vila da Feira Market shows many of these elements: the definition of a closed, intimate courtyard and a space that allows social relations. The same sensations experienced inside Villa Adriana, defined by Távora: "Place for rest, contemplation (island), strolling, social life (pecile), prayer, entertainment, study, work and hygiene".¹⁵

¹⁴ Gioacchino Mancini, *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este* (Roma: Libreria dello stato, 1953); Salvatore Aurigemma, *La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli* (Tivoli: Arti grafiche A. Chicca, 1953).

¹⁵ Távora's notes on the title page of the cited book by Salvatore Aurigemma (Marques da Silva Foundation Archive).

Fig. 8

Fernando Távora, Teatro Marittimo 1956, drawing in the book: *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este*, (FIMS/AFT).

Sensations also sought in his design, as stated in the memoir dated 1980: “Not only a place to exchange goods but also to exchange ideas, an invitation for men to come together”.¹⁶

The central element of the fountain, as well as the radial seats around it, recalls the basins and fountains seen in the courtyards and gardens of Villa d’Este at Tivoli and Villa Adriana, where the water basins inserted in the courtyards, in addition to the refreshing purpose, ensure a very present sound effect, capable of giving a further detachment from the noise from the outside environment. You can find the same elements in many convent cloisters: “The central space around the lake, with its pool of water, its magnolias, the bench covered with azulejo, the paved floor, evoke the tranquillity and beauty of any Portuguese cloister”.¹⁷

The octagonal shape of the seats arranged around the central fountain is undoubtedly a reference to the various examples of fountains placed in convent cloisters. The evolution of the project initially envisaged an ever-circular fountain within a square-shaped green space (1954). Still, in the final version completed in 1956, after returning from the trip to Italy, the seating around the fountain became octagonal, perhaps as a reference to the fountain courtyard highlighted in the plan of Hadrian’s Villa in Tivoli in the book purchased during the trip. The definition of this space through the positioning of two octagonal basins connected by a long channel certainly struck Távora, who recalled its shape in the Market Court he was designing [Fig. 9].



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A further element of rupture concerning the rigidity of the plan is the presence of the difference in level in the plot: not only the different heights of the soil but also the slope of Rua dos Descobrimentos impose the definition of different levels in the project. The grid defining the pavement, continuous throughout the project, almost seems to try to determine a single flat level

16 Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 318.

17 Fernando Távora, *Project Description* (Marques da Silva Foundation Archive).

Fig. 9

Photo Court of Fountains
Villa Adriana. Source: William
L. MacDonald, John A. Pinto,
Villa Adriana (Milano: Electa,
2006), 48.

in the lot, juxtaposing the platforms as typically defined by Mies in his projects: pure, linear and without exception. The relationship between the rectangles defined by the four Market canopies and the spiral they form from the entrance to the centre would determine a central and well-proportioned space even without height differences. The slope of the land gives this arrangement and the visitors' paths more strength, defining not only the spiral but also a descent towards that intimate and reserved place, represented by the central courtyard and the fountain.

The two elevations which solve the design problem are a consequence of the slope of the street on the main front. Távora chooses to place the public entrance to the Market at the top of the street, closer to the city centre. A few steps lead from the street level to the higher level of the pavement and direct the route to the smallest pavilion, the flower and fruit pavilion, which, thanks to its proportion, leads the visitor into the heart of the Market and towards the other stalls. Once through the entrance, one arrives at a position dominating the entire courtyard space and the inner pavilions, which allows one to perceive the entirety of the Market and grasp the heart of it with its fountain and central square. The visitor is immediately apparent of the position of all the goods and the downward path to follow to see all the stalls.

The level of this paving also continues on the west side of the Market, under the vegetable pavilion. This area represented the highest part of the lot. Placing a retaining wall made of granite blocks and a green belt around the perimeter of the building on this side allowed for green mitigation and the spontaneous growth of vegetation that provides a backdrop for all the stalls.

The second level, the lower one, is defined by the height of the low access to the main street, dedicated only to the entrance of goods by vehicles. The paving continues flat to the inside of the central courtyard, where the fountain is located. The fish and bird pavilion closes the south side of the lot, separating the driveway from the pedestrian part for customers. Connections between the upper and lower parts are ensured by two staircases, one descending from the vegetable stall continuing the spiral path. In contrast, the other descends from the north side, exactly on the axis with the fountain, reminiscent of the monumental entrances of classical villas.

The composition closes with the insertion of the east pavilion. Through positioning this building, Távora solves several project problems and defines some fundamental aspects. The need to give the Market a recognisable façade on Rua dos Descobrimentos, capable of relating with the neighbouring houses, imposed the construction of an element higher than the other canopies, or at least placed at a higher level than the ground, which in that position was the same as the fish and feather pavilion. The aim is achieved by constructing a plinth that detaches from the main road and is at the same height as the high entrance to the Market, on which a building of equal size to the others can be placed. The height thus defined allows the insertion of two superimposed

floors, that of the basement warehouse and that of the shop on the upper floor, at the level of the upper part of the market, which always becomes accessible independently of the operation of the rest of the complex. The asymmetry of this roof, on the other hand, allows the height of the building to be lowered on the internal front, facing the courtyard, where it is aligned with that of the fish and poultry pavilion. Underneath this roof are the meat shops.

The inclusion of this pavilion makes it possible to proportion the external front towards the street and to define the inner courtyard on all four sides.

Távora tries to maintain the relation with the greenery on the lot before the building was inserted and to relate to the countryside behind the market. The base square, the limit of the entire intervention, defines a green belt of about two metres that runs around the perimeter and hosts various plantings related to the greenery outside the lot [Fig. 10, 11, 12].

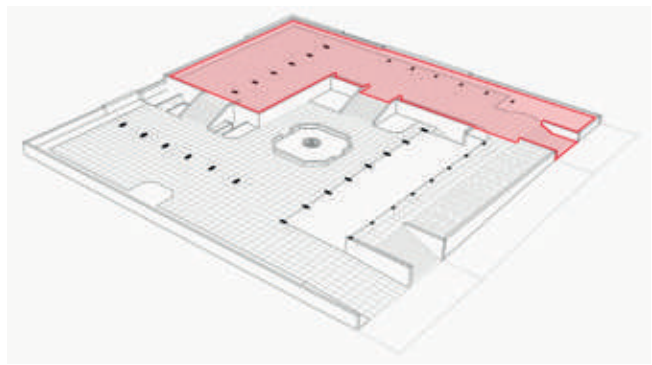
In the same way, the altitude jumps between the high and low levels, where the stairs are inserted, are left green with the presence of trees of considerable size.

The description of Távora's Market proposal is defined as if it were a park (garden), in which the bodies designed by Távora are separated by vegetation in which the public can easily walk through the spaces intended for them, and in the centre of the Market, around a small lake, an almost continuous seating area creates a zone of rest and relations between passers-by.¹⁸

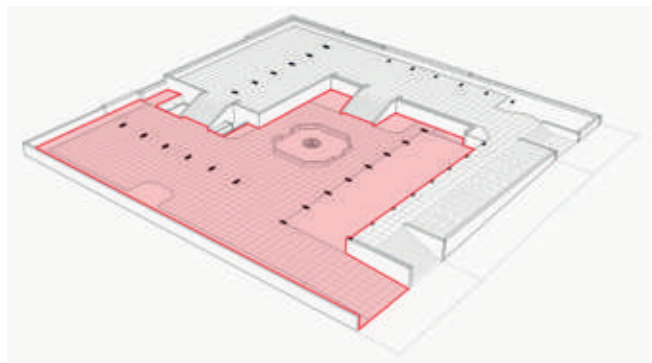
The sense of protection given by the courtyard, the presence of trees and vegetation, as well as the central fountain with a seat lined with azulejos, define a space between garden and square, not detached from the reality and tradition of the place, but in complete harmony with its users.

Green Space in the Market

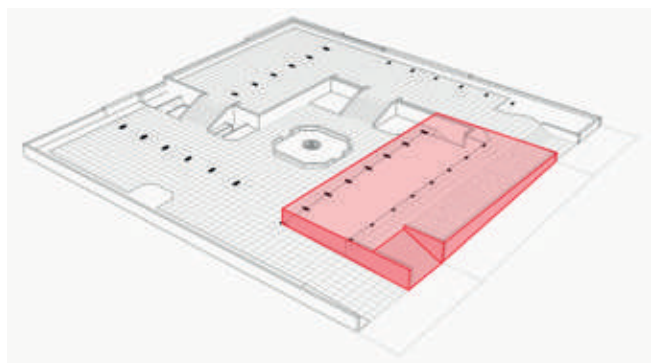
The location chosen for the Market also allows a direct visual relationship from inside the courtyard, with the Castle of Vila da Feira overlooking the town. An ambivalent relationship is thus created between two similar spaces: the



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Fig. 10
Scheme with a intermediate floor (graphics by the author).

Fig. 11
Scheme with division between upper and lower part (graphics by the author).

Fig. 12
Scheme with basement element as closure towards the street (graphics by the author).

¹⁸ Milão, *Mercado da Feira*, 222-224.

castle courtyard with its internal unevenness, staggered planes, and precise views of the town on one side, and the intimacy of the market cloister, overlooked by the fortress on the hill on the other.

Tradition has a significant influence on Távora's design not only from a composition point of view, recalling the cloisters and courtyards of convents and classical palaces, but also from a material point of view, where the skilful use of material defines a space that is entirely familiar to its users, despite the highly modern language compared to the surrounding buildings. Granite stone, the basis of the local building system and found in large quantities in the quarries of northern Portugal, is used in the project with different finishes. The uncertain texture, recalling the composition of the walls of the Castello da Feira, made of semi-finished but not completely squared blocks assembled with variable geometries according to their size, is used for the retaining walls towards the ground in the upper part of the Market and the large plinths of the canopies, defining the ground connection of both the front facing the street and those of the central courtyard on at least two sides. However, the same material is also used unusually for the masonry of the pavilion walls on the street front [Fig. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17].

The structural system of the building is based on a mixture of very different materials. The granite blocks, now assembled in regular courses of equal height and exactly squared, define the external masonry of the shops, which is only interrupted by the insertion of reinforced concrete, which is inserted into the masonry through an interlocking that accommodates the load-bearing pillar, and defines the top of the wall through the roofing beam that juts out on both sides, overcoming the limit of the granite block masonry. Traditional construction techniques merge with modern reinforced concrete techniques, shaping it in unusual ways compared to other examples that modern architecture has developed. The reinforced



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Fig. 15, 16, 17
Market views (photo by the author).



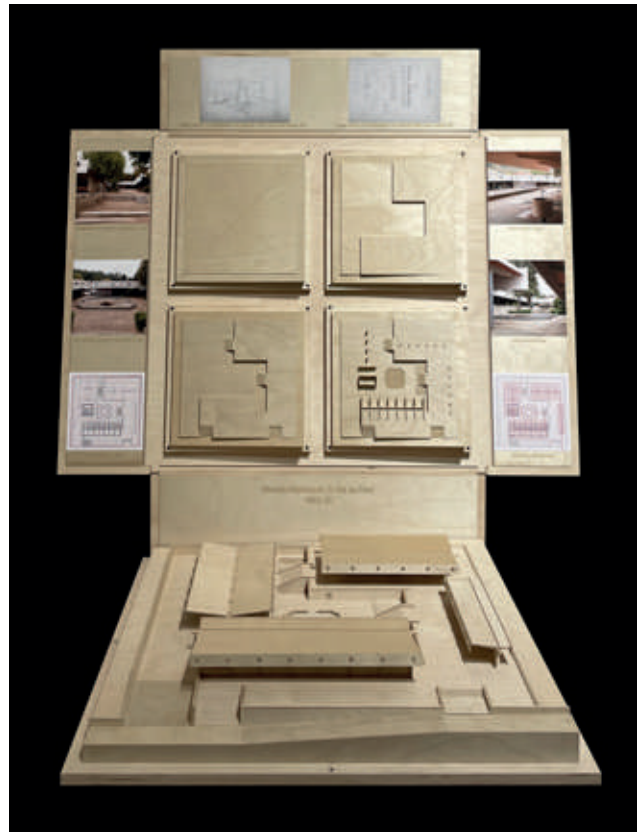
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Fig. 16, 17
Market views (photo by the
author).

concrete uses a bush-hammered surface to better relate to the wall's granite. The same finish is used in the structures of the various canopies made entirely of reinforced concrete, which rest on the ground on rectangular pillars with rounded corners that engage centrally on a reinforced concrete beam tapering outwards, which supports the cantilevered roof on both sides. The pillars fit exactly into the one-metre by one-metre base grid of the entire Market, with a regular four-metre pitch. The beams also mark the rhythm of the façade through their lugs, which protrude from the white surface of the canopy, breaking its purity but defining its proportion with the entire composition. The white plaster of the canopies defines the four volumes of the market, while inside, the ceiling takes on a red colour, which mirrors the tiles that define the bases of the sales counters. Reinforced concrete, made of slabs measuring one metre by one metre that materially define the grid and allow the stones that make up the concrete to emerge in very fine cobblestones, is also used for the flooring. The tradition of Portuguese ceramics and azulejos is used to determine some essential elements, such as the seats around the fountain, the walls of the butcher's shops and the fish market, as well as, through mosaic, to indicate the goods for sale in each pavilion. The design of these mosaics was entrusted to Álvaro Siza. Wood is used with the care and craftsmanship of tradition to make all the fixtures in the market [Fig. 18, 19].



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Fig. 18, Compositional analysis model of the Vila da Feira Market, based on a project by Giorgio Liverani, realized by students L. Rosetti, M. Spadoni, F. Spartà, M.C. Ricci, S. Baiardi coordinated by D. Giaffreda and M. Mangano of LaMo of the Department of Architecture, Cesena Campus.

Exhibited during the exhibition "I viaggi di Fernando Távora", Galleria del Ridotto, Cesena, September 23 – December 11, 2022.

Fig. 19 A model comparing the Red Patio of the Quinta da Conceição and the Corte dell'Ovato at Villa d'Este in Tivoli, designed by Giorgio Liverani, realized by students L. Rosetti, M. Spadoni, F. Spartà, M.C. Ricci, S. Baiardi coordinated by D. Giaffreda and M. Mangano of LaMo of the Department of Architecture, Cesena Campus.

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Quinta da Conceição

The project of the Quintas da Conceição and Santiago in Leça da Palmeira was entrusted to Távora in 1956. Unlike the other projects carried out up to this point, it is not a building but the redevelopment of a Quinta (farm) from which the Municipality of Matosinhos intends to make a municipal park.

Following an expropriation to build the new access to the Port of Leixões and its road system, Távora is asked to manage the park's construction. Judging the planned road system to disrespect the park, the architect proposed an alternative solution to the junction, capable of preserving some remains of a 15th century Franciscan convent located within the Quinta.

The construction took about four years, from 1956 to 1960, and the project was carried out unhurriedly and with due care, thanks to an agreement between the architect and the Municipality:

The Municipality paid me at the end of each year according to what was being realised. In carrying out the work, I acted as if I were the prior of the convent; I would walk around with the masons and gardeners, telling them what to do. An employee gave me advice, and I often followed it. All this was done in a familiar, almost domestic, atmosphere, thanks to the support of the mayor, a very sensitive man who did not attach great importance to money and believed that the important thing was to do things well.¹⁹

But between 1956 and 1957, Távora designed and planned the elements he would later realise in the following years, even with considerable variations from the initial ideas. The Municipality of Matosinhos had already granted Távora the commission when the architect left for Dubrovnik in 1956 for CIAM X. On his return from the trip, Távora stayed in Italy, visiting many historical architectures and jotting down notes and sketches in books purchased.

The analysis that follows studies Távora's project for the Quinta, starting from the situation of the park before his intervention, from the intentions shown in the first projects to the final realisation, and analysing the different elements that compose it, in connection with the architecture he visited during his trip to Italy in 1956.

The state of Quinta da Conceição at the beginning of Távora's project shows certain elements that will be maintained and become its cornerstones. "There was already the avenue, the chapel, the cloister, so there were already elements that offered a structure to be preserved".²⁰

These are mainly architectural remains from the Franciscan monastery in the area in the 15th century. The main avenue of the park was an important axis for the connection between the lower part, where there was an entrance and the upper part with its secondary entrances. The management of the slope of

¹⁹ Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 318.

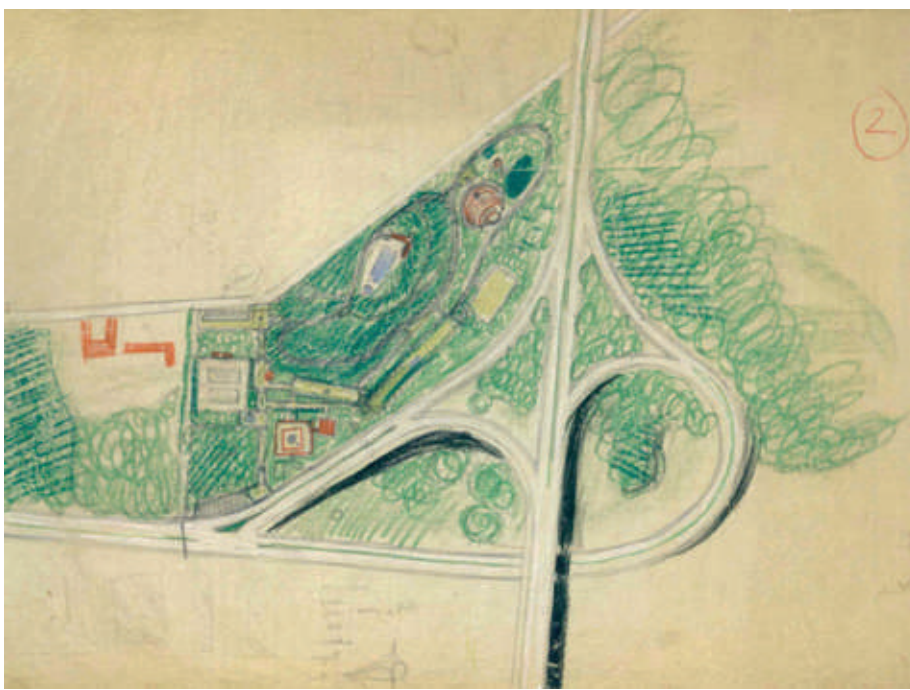
²⁰ *Ibid.*



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the Quinta was entrusted to this gradual path on which several spaces opened on both the north and south sides. On the south side, a series of retaining walls were built into the path, probably to make the space flatter and more manageable to cultivate. Moreover, the presence of the spring ensured plenty of water for irrigation. On the north side, the Franciscan cloister and chapel define the path. In particular, the chapel acted as a hinge between this and a slope that developed towards the north and led to a flat area defined by two walls of remarkably long proportions, at the centre of which was a second spring. The fixed points are therefore already in place at the start of the design process. Távora works on these to redefine the spaces without upsetting the park's layout but restoring the right proportion and relationship of all the elements to each other.

The park's requirements to respond to after the intervention were quite different from those of a private home garden, as it had been up until then, and the need arose to provide fixed reference points for visitors and well-defined accesses and routes. At the same time, the park had to fulfil services that had not been present until then. The first freehand drawings already show a desire to define elements that would bring order to the park, starting with the pre-existing elements and putting them into a system. In sketch 1 [Fig. 20] and even more so in sketch 2 [Fig. 21], there is a clear intention to define precise, orderly spaces connected by paths that are better defined and proportionate to the spaces they serve. In the initial sketches, we see Távora working on reinforcing



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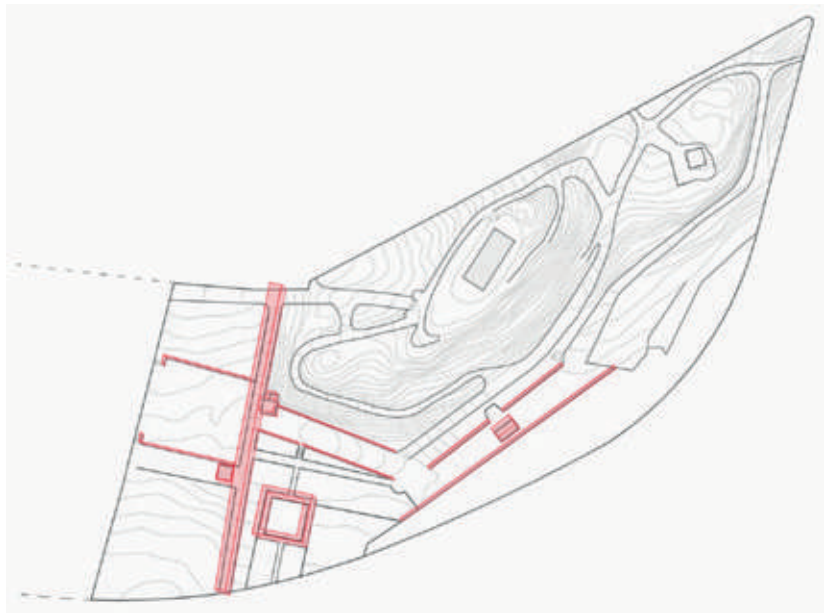
Fig. 20
Quinta da Conceição, sketch 1,
1957 (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 21
Quinta da Conceição, sketch 2,
1957 (FIMS/AFT).

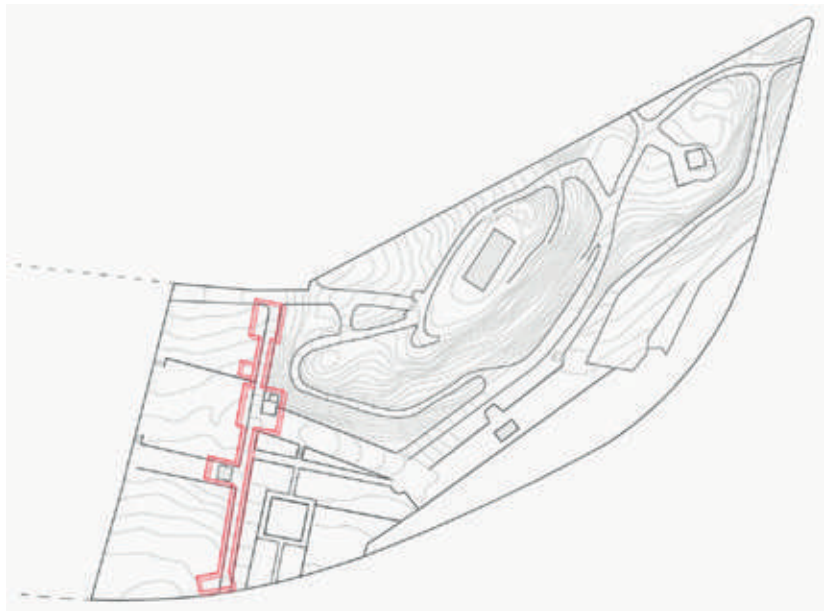
the main avenue as the connecting element of the two entrances, the northwest one in the upper part and the southeast one in the lower part adjacent to the new road system. The visual linearity of the path, clearly expressed in the initial drawings, finds several exceptions at the pre-existing elements, at which it undergoes a dilation, a slowing down, a moment of calm and a pause before continuing its way. The fountain and the chapel are thus inserted in a dilated space that emphasises their importance, as is the case for the entrances at the beginning and end of the route, at the top and the bottom, to which Távora chooses to give prominence with the insertion of two courtyards.

The flat land between the retaining walls to the South of the axis houses two tennis courts. The direction of the courts will then be marked by the presence of the Tennis Pavilion, which was initially only meant to be a small volume for the inclusion of changing rooms but will become an essential visual element for the organisation of the park [Fig. 22, 23].

On the right side of the axis, the paths that previously intercepted the avenue almost randomly and uncontrolled become more clearly defined, differentiating themselves by type. On the top, the path around the upper part of the Quinta seems to start directly from the entrance, wrapping around what will become the new swimming pool, conceived as a further public service element in the park. The path starting from the chapel, on the other hand, is different. It is defined by the succession of narrow spaces that flow into larger spaces, well delimited by rectangular shapes, like clearings in the forest, in which central elements are inserted as focal points to define their dimensions further. These courts are derived from the flat parts already in the park, redefining them, their accesses and perimeter boundaries, and inserting new internal elements. The last route is dedicated to a component on which Távora concentrates his early design phases: the cloister, reorganised to house the function of a museum. As we will see from the subsequent sketches, several solutions are proposed,



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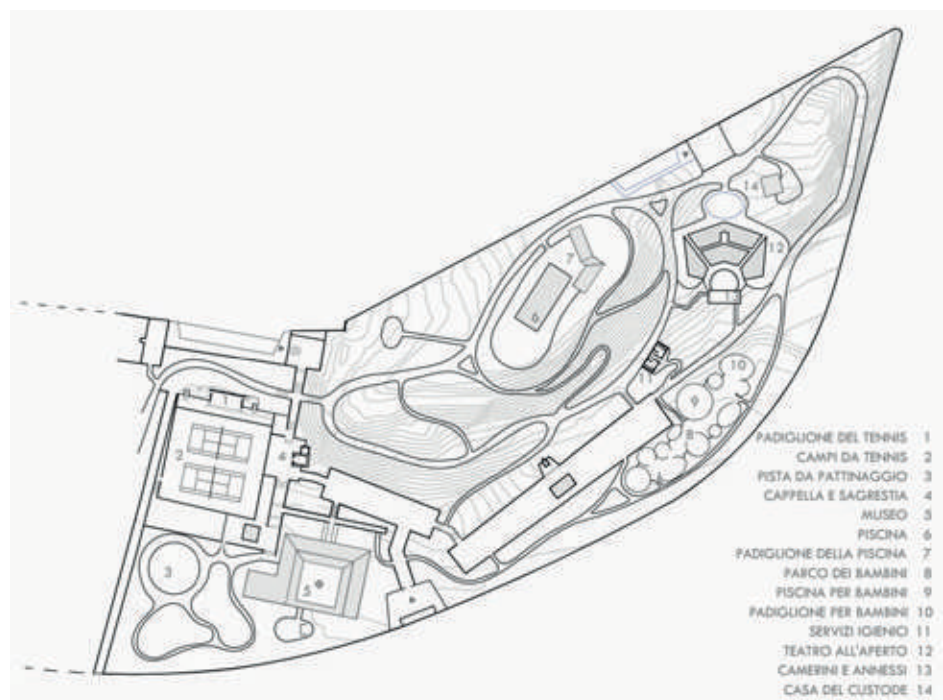
23

Fig. 22, 23
Schemes with the main axis
(graphics by the author).

varying languages and details. The following choices will lead to the building not being constructed, but the work undertaken for its design will be the basis on which Távora will define all the other elements of the park.

The project presented to the Matosinhos City Council dated August 1957 is where Távora synthesises all the suggestions expressed in the previous sketches. The plan, shown below, highlights the totality of the elements and services conceived and designed for the Quinta da Conceição, which Távora and his collaborators would later develop in detail.

In particular, the insertion of the museum defines the end point of the main avenue; through this building, moreover, the difference in height between the lower part towards the street and the upper part where the cloister is placed is overcome. The museum's presence also determines the displacement of the southeast entrance, which is not on the axis with the avenue but is connected to the first rectangular spaces defined in the first sketches. The proposal also envisages the presence of more facilities with the inclusion, in addition to the tennis courts, of a swimming pool at the top, later entrusted to Álvaro Siza, an open amphitheatre for performances, a skating rink and a children's area with a park and dedicated swimming pool. Of all these elements only a few, as we shall see, will be built [Fig. 24].



Cloister and Museum

The starting point of Távora's design research on the Quinta, as already mentioned, is the pre-existing buildings. Particularly in the preliminary sketches anticipating the first project presented in August 1957, the architect focuses on the most striking element present in the area, the cloister of the former 15th century Franciscan convent. The precise square shape of the colonnade was still a trace within the park even though the columns of the portico had mainly collapsed.

Távora had already made several trips to Europe and Italy and was researching popular architecture in Portugal. The investigation into the "supra-historical constants" that the architect was pursuing could not set aside such an important, albeit now ruined, element within the park.

Távora had already been commissioned for the Quinta da Conceição project prior to his 1956 trip to Italy and therefore did not fail to turn opportunities to

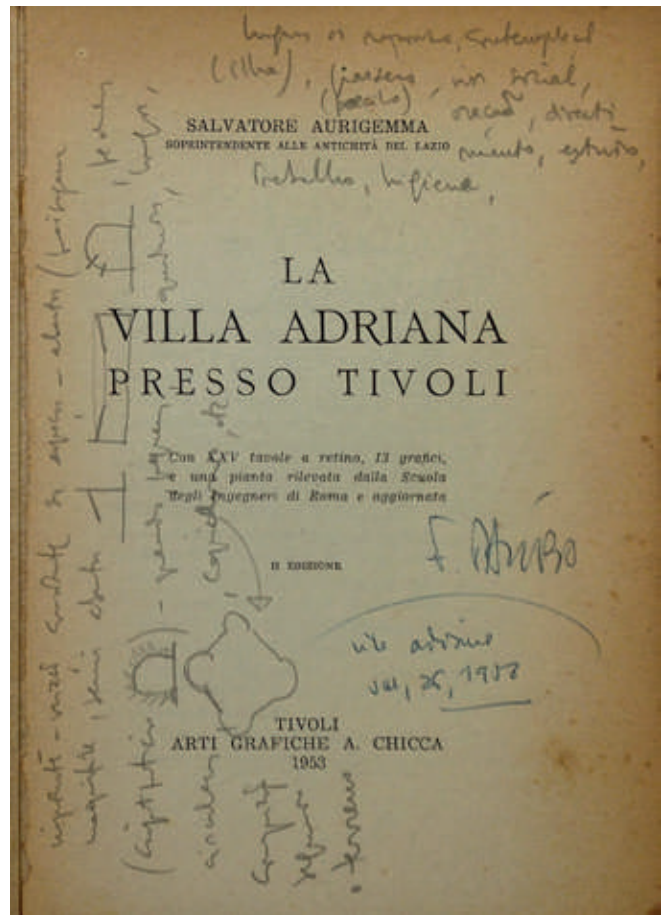
Fig. 24
Project presented by Távora in 1957 (graphics by the author).

visit historic Italian buildings into opportunities to jot down themes and references that he would later use to some extent in the development of the project.

Távora visited Villa Adriana in Tivoli on 26 August, coming into close contact with the ruins of the ancient residence. In the notes on the title page of the book *La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli*²¹, purchased during his stay, the archaeological site is described in words already quoted about the Market, which would fit well with the purpose he sought in the project of the Quinta: "Place of rest, contemplation (island), strolling, social life (pecile), prayer, entertainment, study, work and hygiene".²²

He is enchanted by the succession of spaces in the Villa and how they relate, creating continuity and constant surprise. The lack of homogeneity found and the multiplicity of places are not read as chaotic but as a wise desire to surprise and vary the paths within the villa: "Important constant variation of spaces, open (magnificent landscapes), semi-open, closed (cryptoporticus), large, small, square, elongated, circular, whimsical, etc".²³

Alongside this description, he does not fail to note down the different spaces using sectional diagrams [Fig. 25, 26].



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Within the same book, Távora sketches a particular place in Hadrian's Villa, an unusual space that is not among the most attractive exhibits. The sketch concerns the Baths with Heliocaminus as part of the areas reserved for the emperor, accessible through the circular enclosure of the island. Távora notes: "How many times did Hadrian and Antinous bathe here..."²⁴

The sketch, represented in plan and perspective, focuses on the central space of the baths, i.e. the largest pool, once the only uncovered part. In the plan drawing, it is clear that Távora's interest lies in the rectangular central space, defined by the perimeter colonnade and the different heights of the pavement. He also does

21 Aurigemma, *La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli*.

22 Távora's notes on the title page of the book: Salvatore Aurigemma, *La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli* (Tivoli: Arti grafiche A. Chicca, 1953).

23 Távora's notes on the title page of the cited book by Salvatore Aurigemma (Marques da Silva Foundation Archive).

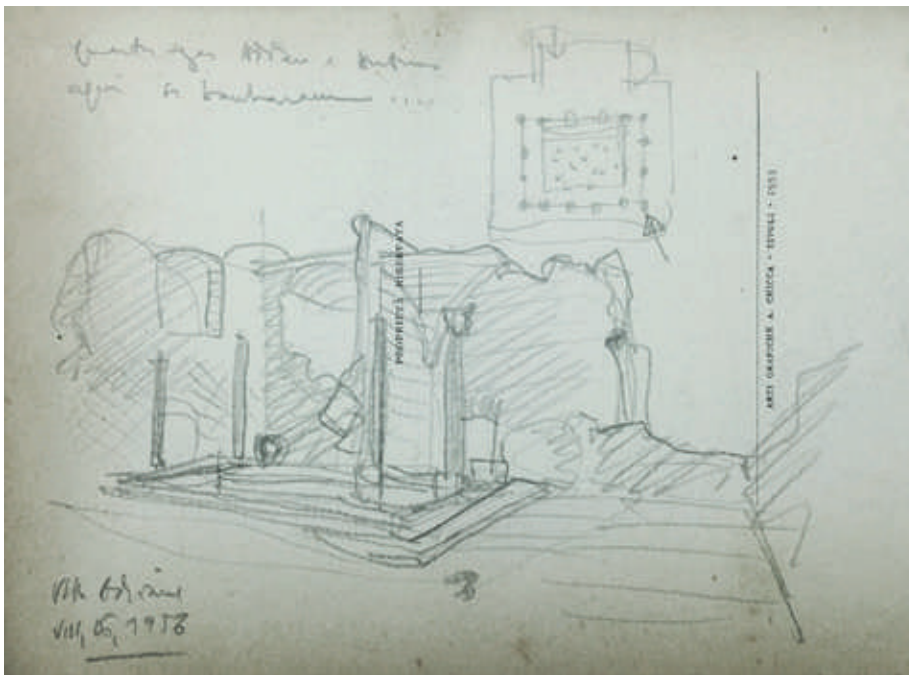
24 Ibid.

Fig. 25

Cover of the book *La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli* with pencil annotations by Fernando Távora.

Fig. 26

Schemes of the sections annotated by Távora (graphics by the author).



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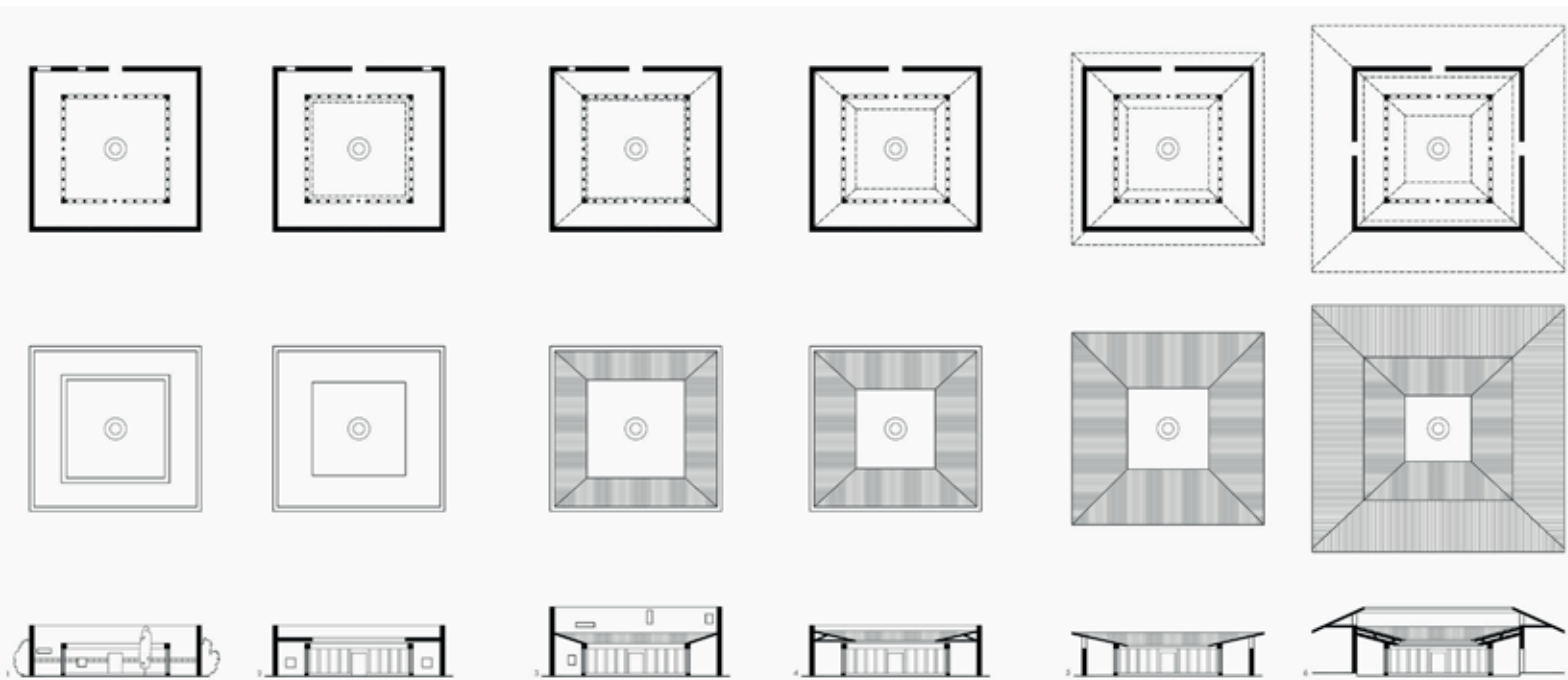
not fail to note the ruins in the background, walls almost two storeys high beyond the colonnade, as a further element of closure to the outside, giving the space an even more pronounced centrality, a clear division from the outside, and an unusual privacy and quietness [Fig. 27].

The situation of the Franciscan cloister's colonnade inside the Quinta da Conceição should not have been too different. The perimeter colonnade was only partially standing, and the traces of the building and walls surrounding the cloister separating it from the outside were completely obliterated. This pre-existing element represented for Távora a fundamental point of management of the park as a natural continuation of the axis of the avenue that could not fail to connect with its square shape. In fact, from the very first drawings of the entire park, the definition of the project focuses on the cloister, and sketch 1 (see fig. 22) shows a series of study sections on the possible completion of the courtyard.

From the small perspective drawn, there is a desire to close off the central space using a new modernist element characterised by high perimeter walls and well-defined openings at precise focal points. The detail of the entrance door and the enclosure in general, which was not built in the museum, will later be taken up in the definitions of the entrance courts.

Internally, the desire to restore the colonnade's function as a perimeter pathway running along an open central space is pursued through different hypotheses of sections that, in different ways, dialogue with the existing. Once the outer boundary has been defined through the parallelepiped about twice the height of the peristyle, Távora draws several schemes, starting from modernist matrices to more classical pitched models with a central *compluvium*. He has different ways of approaching the existing historical element, with the reverential awe of one who has understood its importance and value. Thus, in some cases, the perimeter wall is positioned at a proper distance from the columns without any

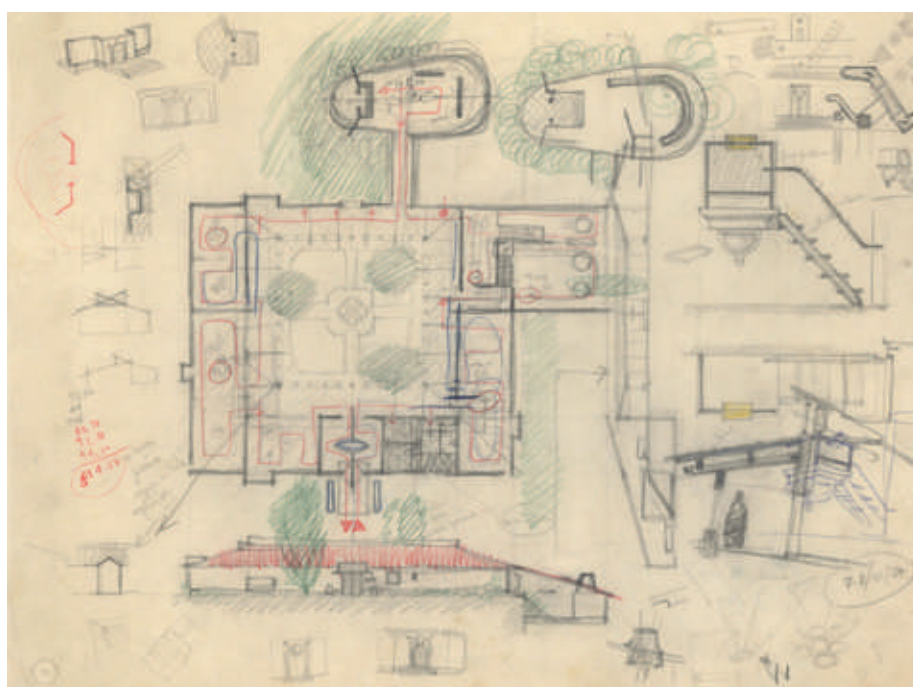
Fig. 27
Fernando Távora, Heliocaminus
1956, drawing in the book:
La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli
(FIMS/AFT).



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element interfering with them. In others, the flat roof overhangs the colonnade truss without touching it; in still others the sloping roof rests on one side on the new wall on the other side on the existing stone beam [Fig. 28].

The drawing dated June 7-8, 1957 [Fig. 29] focuses more deeply on the cloister and museum theme. Starting from the initial idea of a single perimeter wall to redefine the enclosure, it acquires depth by defining interior spaces, actual rooms with defined paths, and niches to display works and artefacts found on-site or elsewhere. All the rooms unravel around the peristyle, which becomes a distributive space of passage between one room and another. The pedestrian connection, perpendicular to the axis of the main avenue, is strengthened, and the museum, through the transit inside the cloister, becomes the connection between the upper



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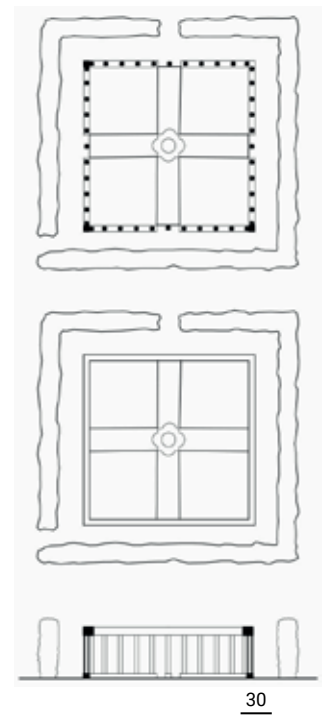
Fig. 28
Schemes of the 6 solutions
(section and plan) for the
museum court.

Fig. 29
Floor plan and elevation of the
Museum (FIMS/AFT).

and lower parts of the park, where the circular skating rink will be placed. The elevation and section sketched alongside the plan make it clear how, through the square body added now on the left of the cloister instead of the right, the difference in level between the two elevations is resolved. Two staircases are inserted into the lower portion of the museum so as not to interrupt the circular route to the works on display. Positioning the fountain and some trees in the centre of the cloister transforms it into an intimate space, separated from the rest of the park and characterised by a more intimate atmosphere suitable for a museum.

The composition thus acquires the valence of a classical Roman *domus*, also approaching the layout and atmosphere breathed by Távora in the Baths with *heliocaminus* visited at Hadrian's Villa, albeit with due differences.

The section chosen as a further advancement of the previous schemes is developed in detail in the drawing. In addition to the perimeter wall and the inclined



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inner roof, selected as the ideal solution, a second roof is added, inclined in the opposite direction. Távora's study focuses on the relationship the two inclined roofs must have when they meet at ridge height. The offset of the lower inner to the higher outer one will allow light to enter the rooms arranged around the cloister through a high skylight. At the same time, the light wooden structure of the roof will rest on the existing columns and truss of the cloister. As already mentioned, this study will not lead to the realisation of the building. Still, the detailed section will be reused in the later *Tennis Pavilion*, just as the diagrams of the relationship of the pitches will be taken up in the *Escola primária of the Quinta do Cedro*²⁵ [Fig. 30, 31].

The financial impossibility of the Municipality of Matosinhos immediately scuppered the idea of building the museum. Still, Távora nonetheless chose to create a closed and reserved space by exploiting the pre-existing convent and

25 The Escola primária do Cedro was built in Vila Nova de Gaia between 1958 and 1960.

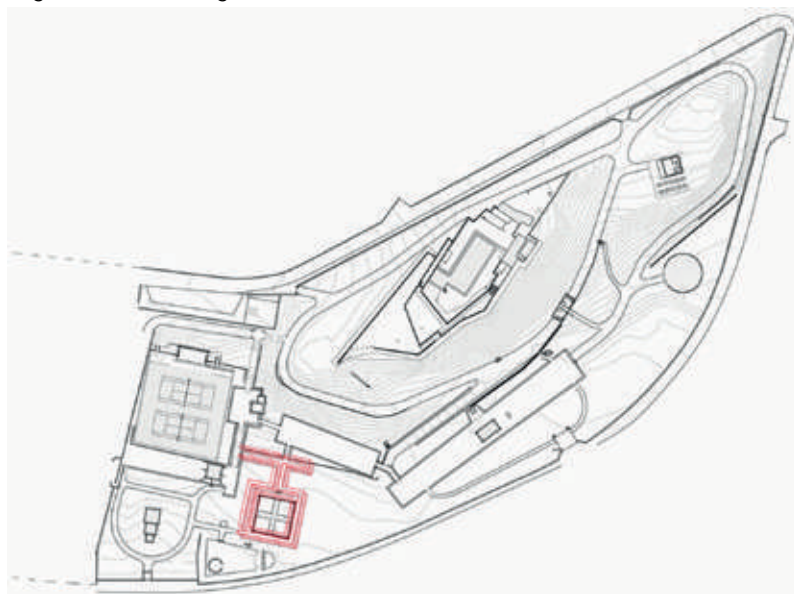
Fig. 30
Schemes of the realised
cloister.

Fig. 31
Image of the cloister (photo by
the author).

cloister colonnade, which he complemented with the remains of another cloister found in Gaia, as Álvaro Siza recalls:

There was an old convent in La Quinta at the lowest location, where he then made the fence with the hedge, and he managed to convince the municipality to buy a porch that he had found in Gaia. It was in a convent in Gaia, not as part of the convent itself but in a garden, and he convinced the president of the Municipal Chamber to bring it here because it was a period thing and reminded him of the old convent that had been built here.²⁶

It is therefore not an actual building but a green wall, formed by tall hedges well suited to the available economic resources. The green curtain separates the environment from the outside, protecting and controlling it. The convent's cloister is hardly noticeable from the outside except through openings and paths clearly defined by the high hedge. From the main avenue, a perpendicular path branches off that also marks the start of the hedge from which it is possible, thanks to a difference in height, to have a perspective view of the entire cloister from above. On the lower side towards the lower entrance, we find a staircase that connects this level to the mezzanine floor of the cloister, inserting itself at an angle directly into the green courtyard [Fig. 32].



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Tennis Pavilion

The study on the Tennis Pavilion in the Park of the Quinta da Conceição included in this research is not intended to repeat the countless critiques, descriptions and studies already carried out on this building but attempts to take a different look by analysing the composition of the project in relation to the entire Quinta and the pavilion itself. "The problem arose of marking the park with a building, creating an object with presence, affirming the axis of the tennis courts and serving as a landmark".²⁷

Távora's compositional requirement was to mark the axis of the tennis courts from the bottom upwards, giving strength to the part of the park to the left of the main avenue. The presence of the cloister element on the right side unbalanced the overall composition, leaving a void on the opposite side that had to be characterised in some way. At the same time, the view from the lower part towards the slope of the hill lacked a visual element to act as a focal point. Távora decided to include the Tennis Pavilion as a visual horizon on the hillside,

26 Unedited conversation with Álvaro Siza (February 2016).

27 Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 319.

Fig. 32

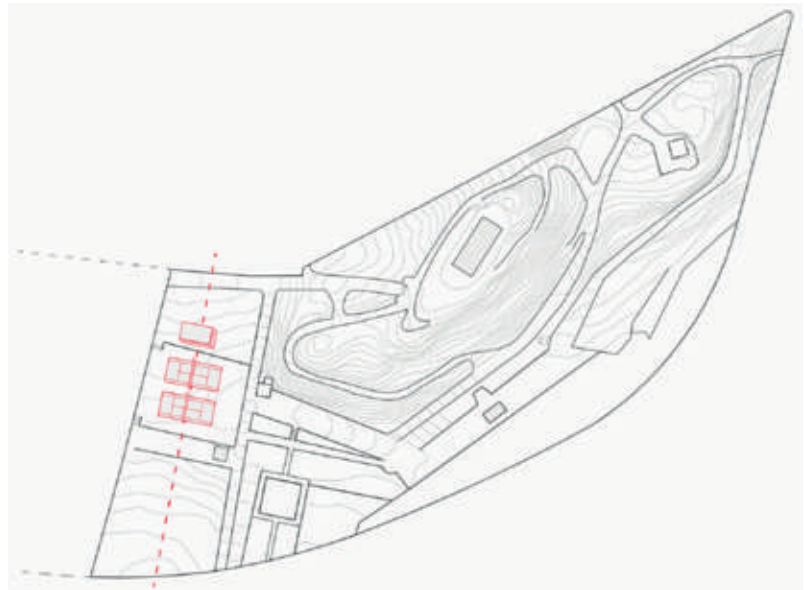
Diagram Development of the museum cloister (graphics by the author).

making compositional choices in the plan and the section and studying how this could be visible from below. In this way, the main axis of the avenue gains even more strength in the plan as it also distributes the pivotal spaces of the park: the cloister on one side and the Pavilion with the tennis courts on the other [Fig. 33].

During his trip to Italy in 1956, Távora visited Villa Adriana and Villa d'Este in Tivoli. As in the imperial residence, he was also impressed by the design ability to organise such an important building and park by making the most of the steeply sloping terrain, devising expedients to make the slope a strong composition point.

In the garden plan, shown on the back cover of the book *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este*²⁸ purchased during the visit, Távora notes three different sections passing through the main axes of the park. The slope and level jumps emphasise the strong axial character of the composition.

The visual axis starts from the lowest point of the park, the main gate, and culminates in the prominent element of the composition, the Villa, which is not a walkway in its entirety but only in part. The aim is to emphasise the architecture at the highest point and ensure that the visitor must walk through the garden not only in a linear path but by crossing different spaces. In this way, the transition between the different heights takes place gradually and at pivotal points of the garden, which are



identified in the meeting of the main axis and two systems perpendicular to it, the water basins ending in the Neptune fountain and the path of the hundred fountains with the courtyard and the Ovato fountain at the apex. Távora also notes the sections of these two transversal axes and then concentrates on two details concerning the court of the Ovato and the walkway of the hundred fountains. Siza testifies to the importance Távora gave to Italian gardens and referring to the Quinta, says:

But Távora was Mediterranean, so if you look at his work at the Quinta, you can see the relevance of his culture as a man from the South. He was referring to the Italian garden, the Italian garden and the Mediterranean. He did a lot of travelling and drawing, and a part was strictly dedicated to gardens. So that when he came back (I still remember the great discussions I witnessed), he would modify the whole project.²⁹

The situation in the Quinta is similar. The slope of the terrain and its complexity require control through design that must be respectful of the existing.

28 Mancini, *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este*.

29 Unedited conversation with Álvaro Siza (February 2016).

Fig. 33
Schematic diagram Tennis pavilion and playing fields axis (graphics by the author).

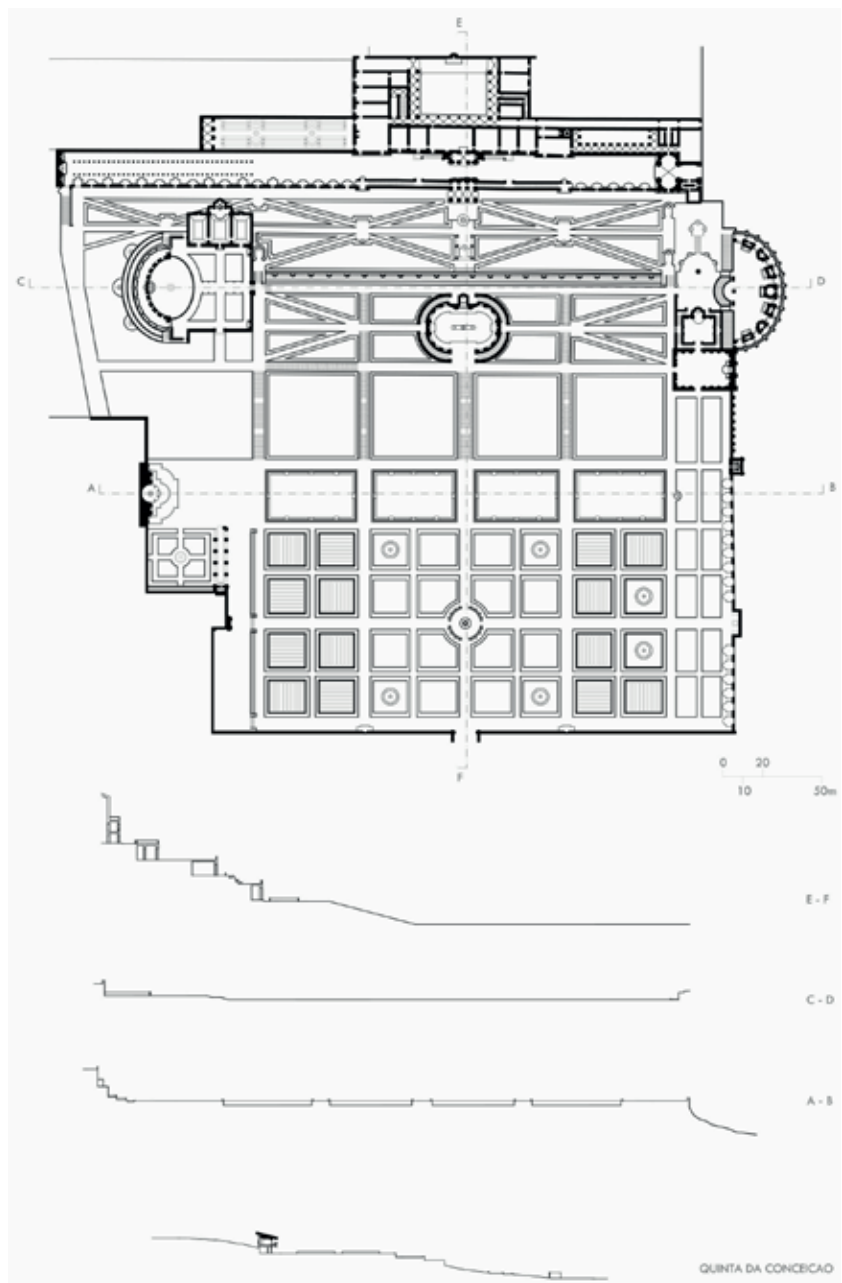
The territorial control interventions dating back to when the Quinta was a convent and the phase when it was a farm were already aimed at softening the terrain by making it flatter, but without any real design intention. Távora's intervention, starting from the retaining walls and the spaces already present in the park, aims to systematise the composition by working on the individual portions, studying in detail the proportions and control of all the spaces, linking them together through paths that are sometimes more direct, such as the avenue, and sometimes gradual, such as the path at the top, which make it possible to discover all the points of the garden through a promenade *architecturale* [Fig. 34].

In this sense, the definition of a main visual axis, that of the tennis courts and the Pavilion parallel to the driveway, serves the architect to order the overall composition. Thus, from the design presented to the City Hall in 1957, the current situation has changed, mainly by varying the entrance on the southeast side from the lower driveway, also

due to the failure to build the museum. The visual axis of the tennis courts is then strengthened starting from the lower entrance gate, inserting a new fountain consisting of three different square pools of larger size as they rise the slope. The central path then widens as in Villa d'Este, circling the new fountain until it reaches the avenue connecting with the upper part.

The need to visually mark the axis of the tennis courts necessitates the positioning of a closing element of the perspective, the Pavilion, which also becomes the endpoint of the high route [Fig. 35].

The Tennis Pavilion designed on the summit synthesises the compositional research carried out for the museum and represents the evolution of the detail sections previously represented and readable within the initial sketches. The skilful use of traditional materials, combined with modern ones such as reinforced concrete, makes the Pavilion a synthesis of



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Fig. 34
Schemes of the plan and sections of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli annotated by Távora in G. Mancini, *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este*, 1956 and below longitudinal section on the tennis pavilion and the axis of the courts (graphics by the author).



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Távora's design process, inextricably linked to the teachings of classical architecture but profoundly attracted to the modern, to the point of a clash, a mixture, a synthesis.

The weight of popular culture as understood by local materials, the acceptance of the consistency of each material or the use of traditional building solutions, will be incorporated into a modern, almost neo-plastic or Japanese syntax in the details and in some ways proper to the contemporary Le Corbusier.³⁰

The juxtaposition of the Pavilion's design with Japanese architecture is echoed in many publications about this project. This is not to be completely ruled out, given Távora's deep thirst for knowledge, who may have also previously studied Japanese architecture, which, however, he only saw live during the 1960 trip, when the Pavilion was already finished in its structure. It cannot be ruled out that some details may have been developed on his return from the trip, such as the handrail and eaves, even though they were already present in the executive design of the previous year. In any case, the link with the traditional architecture seen on the trips to Italy is very clear in the correspondence of the sectional diagrams drawn on the visits to Hadrian's Villa and re-proposed in the museum project that was later not realised to define the final section of the Pavilion [Fig. 35].

Entrance Courtyard and Main Avenue

The design study starts, as mentioned above, with the definition of the main avenue, which undergoes several modifications during the various stages of the project. The final version is very similar to that assumed in the 1957 project, with the exception of the access in the lower part.

³⁰ Javier Frechilla, *La Quinta da conceição: Opus con amore*, in *Fernando Távora, DPA – Documentos de Projectos Arquitectònics de la Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya*, no. 14, 1998: 24-29.

Fig. 35
Image of the tennis pavilion
(photo by the author).

The desire to widen the avenue at precise points along its course remains unchanged and leads to the construction of the *Red Pavillion*, the true gateway to the park, the *Chapel Court*, the entrance court to the tennis courts and, as an endpoint, the Fountain Court.

Analysing the composition of the Red Pavillion, one can find several analogies, both with the buildings visited during the trip to Italy in 1956 and with the first hypotheses concerning the museum project included in sketch 1. Távora notes two precise spaces, which can be traced back to the compositional basis of the new entrance to the Quinta, in the book on Villa d'Este and Villa Adriana³¹ purchased during the trip.

The first sketch (see [Fig. 8]) is of the Maritime Theatre of Villa Adriana, which the architect reproduces in one of the blank pages of the book through a perspective drawing and a plan with some annotations. Clearly visible is the high perimeter wall that delimits the theatre cylinders. Távora also notes some words concerning the composition of the space and a consideration: "High wall, world, water, individual. Hadrian's Isle of Isolation? If not, it is well found".³²

The feeling of isolation from the outside world remains imprinted on Távora, as does the intimacy of the space that is visually separated from its surroundings and only communicates with the surroundings through a door. The proportion of the floor area in relation to the height of the wall is not claustrophobic but cosy and protective.

In the same book, Távora sketches two details concerning Villa d'Este, which he visits on the same day. He is impressed by the solution devised to connect the level jumps within the garden by means of a stepped wall that also serves as a fountain. The wall called the Hundred Fountains, impresses the architect with its ingenuity and the exorbitant amount of water. He notes, in fact, both the elevation and the section of the fountains. The *Hundred Fountains* also mark one of the transverse avenues in the garden, characterised at its ends by spaces that mark the ending. On one side, the avenue arrives at a panoramic terrace, which opens onto the valley below Tivoli, offering surprising views. On the other hand, it arrives in the *Corte dell'Ovato*, a high-walled enclosure that separates a portion of the park from the rest. The wall only opens at specific points, towards the Avenue of the Hundred Fountains and in a southerly direction. From the outside, the high perimeter prevents a view of the inner part. The only perceptible interior elements are the crowns of four trees that can be seen towering over the top of the enclosure. Távora draws the plan of the system, also positioning the trees, the interior seating, and the oval fountain. From the inside, the space is well-circumscribed, separated from the outside, which it communicates only through the view of the two doors. The roar of water from the fountain helps to define the area, echoing between the walls and

31 Mancini, *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este*.

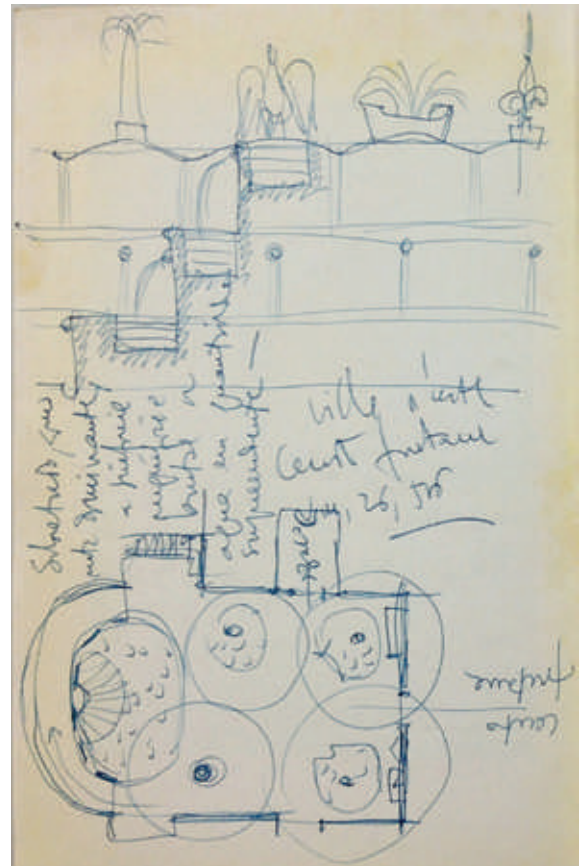
32 Notes by Távora, handwritten beside the sketch in the book: Mancini, *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este* (Marques da Silva Foundation Archive).

imposing itself as the only source of sound. Furthermore, the possibility of a superior view of the courtyard through two staircases leading to the pathway above the fountain allows for an even better understanding of the shape of the space and the relationship between it and the rest of the garden. The exit door of the courtyard faces the axis of the avenue of the *Hundred Fountains* and is connected to it by a descending staircase. The intersection of four different paths at this point defines a connection between different heights. Távora notes beside the sketched plan: "Above all, as a dominant note, a magnificent and brutal surface" [Fig. 36].³³

Through his direct experience of these spaces during his trip to Italy in 1956, Távora arrives at a synthesis in the park of the Quinta da Conceição, initially designing an introverted place like the museum developed around the cloister. In the previously described sectional sketches, he manifests his desire to build a casket within which to store the "treasure" of the cloister's remains. The only perspective sketch of the various diagrams developed in this section concerns an external view in which the perimeter is defined as a parallelepiped with a few openings. The door is a clean cut in the masonry, a clear separation of two sides that remain connected only through an architrave placed halfway up the wall [Fig. 37].

It is from this detail that the strongest visual analogy with the high entrance court, later realised in the Quinta, arises.

This space becomes the main entrance, as a connection of the upper street with the lower park and as a closer access to the *Tennis Pavilion* not far away. Walking along the upper street, the view down the valley is blocked by the granite wall that separated the Quinta from the rest of the city even before Távora's intervention. An interruption in the granite wall along the route defines the new access, underlined by the red colour of the new courtyard inserted by the architect. The courtyard is the only entrance from the car park towards the park, located at a much lower level. The three different levels, car park, entrance, and park, are connected by stairs inside the perimeter of the courtyard. The limit imposed by the red walls seen from the car park seems to embrace and welcome the visitor, interrupting itself right at the entrance, completely removing one of the four sides, the one facing the car park. From above, one does not perceive the floor of the courtyard, which remains at a lower level, reached



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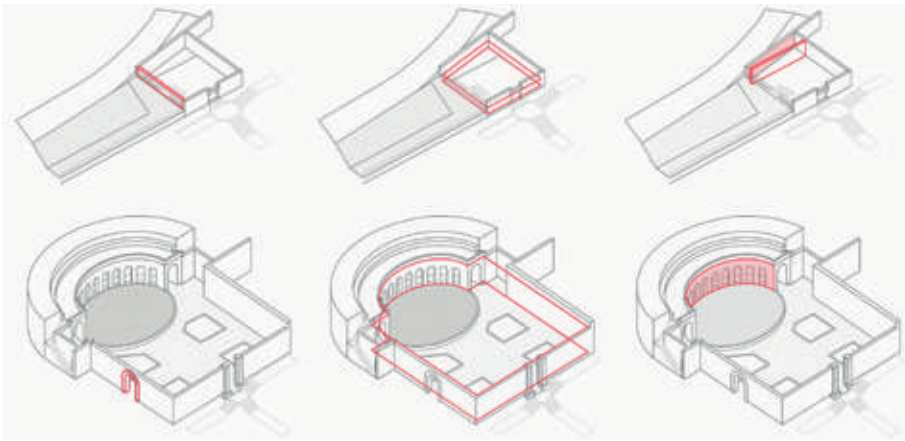


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Fig. 36
Fernando Távora, Corte dell'Ovato e Cento Fontane 1956, drawing in the book: *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 37
Fernando Távora, perspective sketch of the museum building designed around the cloister (FIMS/AFT).

³³ Notes by Távora, handwritten beside the sketch in the book: Mancini, *Villa Adriana e Villa d'Este* (Marques da Silva Foundation Archive).



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by the staircase that represents the real point of detachment from the outside. The visitor is led down into a space defined by the red walls, which control the surrounding terrain, fitting like a perfect and unusual shape into the orography of the ground. The only exception is the north side, which bends following the course of the upper street. The rotation of this courtyard wall does not prevent Távora from nevertheless closing off the space by marking the perfect square on the ground through the paving and leaving the remaining part of the surface green. The presence of a tree in this portion of land, now absent, was meant to recall the space of the Ovato courtyard, with controlled and defined greenery within the wall enclosure. Once the level of the courtyard is reached, the feeling of detachment from the outside is already very present. The gradual access to the garden is accentuated more by the presence of a door, the only gap in the courtyard wall, closed on all sides. The visitor is naturally attracted by the visual perception through it, which, with the positioning of the granite architrave, a clear reference to the perspective sketch of the cloister courtyard, defines a frame for the greenery below and for the path of the main avenue that begins its descent in axis with this point. The proportion of the perimeter wall recalls the enclosure of the Maritime Theatre of Hadrian's Villa, an example of a place of rest and separation from the outside world. The descending path from the car park towards the garden recalls that of the courtyard of the Ovato at Villa d'Este, with a succession of perceptions on the part of the visitor: the view from above the fountain, the descent inside the enclosure, and the opening towards the garden through a well-defined door in the wall [Fig. 38].

The main avenue can be glimpsed through the door in the courtyard and continues in a linear form until it joins the lower level of the park.

The geometry that is defined is very clear and essential based on a sequence of spaces and then using different frames along the way. At a certain point, one arrives at a tennis court right in front, then a horizontal space, then the long staircase continues with landings that define different spaces and ends in access upstairs where there is a beautiful pátio delimited by red walls.³⁴

³⁴ Unedited conversation with Álvaro Siza (February 2016).

Fig. 38
Comparison diagrams Quinta da Conceição – Corte dell'Ovato at Villa d'Este (graphics by the author).

The perception of the route from above is that of an elongated space, of which one can see the conclusion but also several points of exception due to enlargements of the same. The first dilation of space occurs at the chapel and is already perceptible from inside the entrance courtyard. As soon as you enter through the courtyard door, the space opens in all directions, and all the main points of the park are clearly perceptible: the Tennis Pavilion on the right and the white walls of the swimming pool on the left. In this place, the paths of the park intersect the axis of the main avenue and the gradual path that runs around the summit of the Quinta, reached from here by a staircase. The octagonal space, defined by the paving, connects all the flights of stairs that lean against it and is therefore comparable to the space one encounters when leaving the courtyard of the Ovato towards the avenue of the Hundred Fountains at Villa d'Este [Fig. 39].

The upward path of the avenue continues until it reaches the chapel courtyard, where it expands to allow a better view of the small church and access to the sports area of the tennis courts, which is also managed by a small courtyard defined by the hedge, within which there is a seat. The attempt to give the chapel courtyard a rectangular shape, as in the initial design hypothesis, must be subject to the rotation that the small church presents. Two L-shaped walls that rotate in different ways are defined, one coming perpendicularly on the chapel wall, the other running parallel to the main axis.

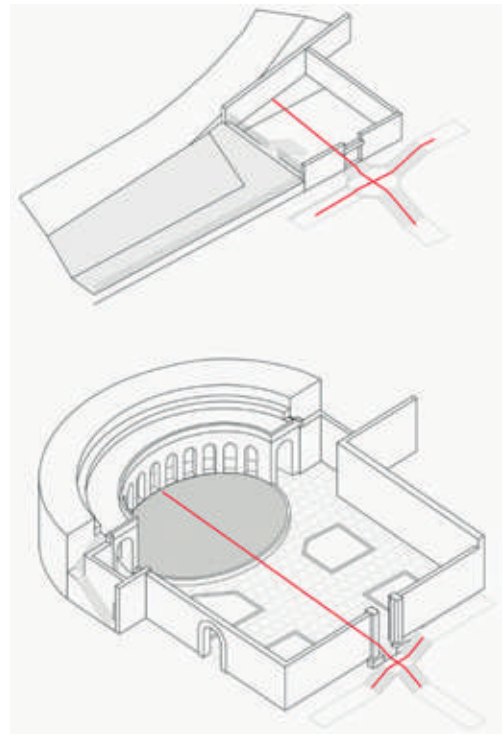
The courtyard is defined by perimeter seating, which creates a more secluded atmosphere than the rest of the park, while high hedges block the view. Within the perimeter, the path coming from the yellow court also converges. Continuing the descent towards the lower part of the park, one encounters an interruption of the hedge to the right at a statue that marks the start of the path to the cloister of the former convent.

The endpoint of the avenue is the space dedicated to the old fountain, elongated in shape and defined by the retaining wall of the tennis courts above. The fountain has remained untouched except for the addition of a few elements reminiscent of the wine cultivations of Portugal, with thin granite poles topped by iron rods.

The path ends in a staircase that connects it to the lower part of the park and the respective entrance, not axially but perpendicular to the path, concealing the ramp through a wall [Fig. 40].

Rectangular Courts and Paths

The theme of the relationship with the orography of the terrain was a very important point for Távora in this project, as it was not a question of organising a flat terrain but of developing a composition that would exploit the potential of the terrain by adapting to it while defining precise spaces.



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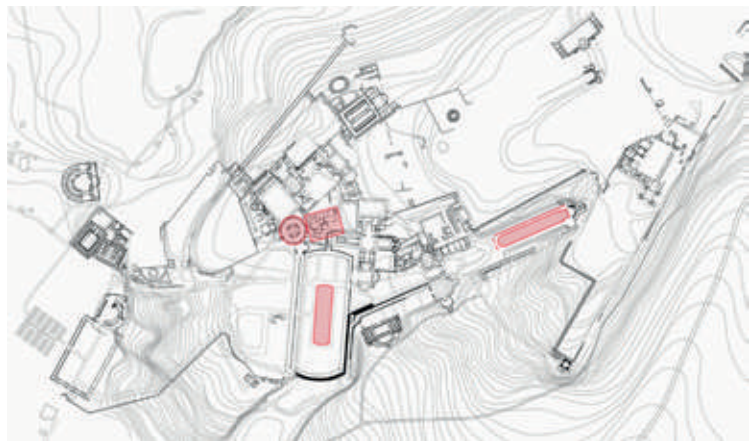
Fig. 39
Comparison diagrams of the Quinta da Conceição – Corte dell'Ovato at Villa d'Este (main axis graphics by the author).

Fig. 40
The entrance court of the Quinta da Conceição from the main axis (photo by the author).

The interest in Villa Adriana and Villa d'Este also stems from this need. The sites of the two villas are actually very different from each other: Villa d'Este is located on a steep slope, which required a very precise organisation of the garden with many artificial elements to control the ground, while Villa Adriana is located on a much gentler and easier to control slope, but despite this, the general composition of the imperial villa follows the terrain with continuous changes of level between the different sectors of the house. Távora, in his notes on the villa, writes: "The composition follows the terrain".³⁵

He is impressed by the ability of a project of such dimensions to best fit on the hillside. In the general plan of the villa, included in the book purchased for the visit, he does not fail to note the most interesting spaces visited: the *Baths with Heliocaminus*, already described in their composition, the *Maritime Theatre*, the *Pecile* and the *Canopus*. Of the latter two spaces, he notes the measurements and highlights the central portions of the water courts [Fig. 41].

In the layout of the Quinta prior to the project, there were two spaces of similar size to those noted in the Canopus and with the same proportions. These portions of the park were difficult to manage because they were very elongated and poorly defined in their surroundings. Through the design and subsequent realisation, Távora acts by redefining the limits of these spaces and their access. Reusing the signs of the retaining



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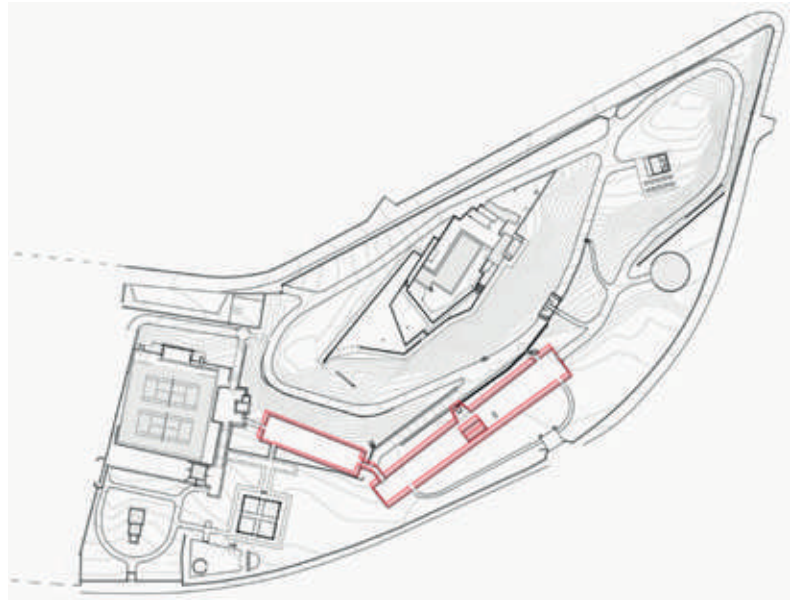
walls already present on the site, he inserts two walls, closing off the spaces on the short sides defining the rectangle. In the courtyard, which will later be painted yellow, by raising the perimeter walls, he controls the existing slope, bringing the plan to a single level. The definition of the boundary establishes a precise point of the beginning and end of the courtyard and consequently imposes a study of the accesses: the first, coming from the chapel described above, crosses a narrowing of the path that leads to the median point of the short side of the perimeter; the second is on the opposite side and joins the slope, at this point descending, by means of a staircase that connects it to the second, lower courtyard. At this junction, there is also the change in colour, from yellow to red, of the perimeter walls containing the land, which characterise the two different courts. In addition to defining the spaces through the colour of the perimeter, Távora positions two rows of trees parallel to the long side, accentuating the perspective vision of the space and giving it three-dimensionality, which now, thanks to the division into three naves covered by the green foliage of the trees, is perceived no longer only as a sign on the ground, clearly visible in plan, but also as a volume in height. The same expedient is used in the Red Court

³⁵ Notes by Távora, handwritten beside the sketch in the book: Aurigemma, *La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli* (Marques da Silva Foundation Archive).

Fig. 41
Villa Adriana, Tivoli, spaces noted on the plan by Távora inside the book *La Villa Adriana presso Tivoli* (graphics by the author).

further down. The larger trees already present define a constant shading over the entire ground. Given the size of the space, which is very similar to that of the Canopus of Hadrian's Villa, the choice is to reuse an existing central element, the fountain, as a junction and stopping point within the promenade. To do this, the existing niche on the west wall upstream is better defined by inserting two seats and a sculptural fountain, fed through a channel running parallel to the upper walkway, reminiscent of the traditional Portuguese linear fountains as well as the one in the fountain courtyard at Villa Adriana. The retaining wall defining the courtyards always acquires a double value as a containment upstream and as a seating area downstream [Fig. 42].

On the north side, the path that unravels around the highest part of the park has a completely different significance from that of the main avenue: the rectilinear course, the insertion between two precise walls and the connection of different heights by means of stairs is completely lost in this path which, although defined on the edges by a stone pavement, gradually follows the slopes and contours. The intention is not to reach the summit as quickly as possible, but in a gradual manner, through a *promenade architecturale* that allows the view of the summit, which houses the swimming pool, from different points. The architecture of the building itself rests on the ground and gradually blends into it until it fades and dissolves into the greenery. Walking along the path from the high entrance courtyard in a clockwise direction, one perceives only the park with an unusual white retaining wall, completely different from other walls or embankments. The wall septum ends in greenery, almost as if it were incomplete, and is lost in the vegetation. Advancing, one perceives a new wall, now further back than the first, almost as if to create successive green terraces, and finally, one perceives the retaining and protective wall of the swimming pool, which, like a white volume, stands out at the top dominating and controlling the surrounding nature. One reaches the entrance, marked by a spire inviting one to enter and by a flight of steps connecting the external level to that of the swimming pool. It is only when entering the building that you realise how the white retaining walls, described earlier, are actually three different steps down, which control the slope and create flat areas used entirely by the pool users. Távora entrusted the design of the swimming pool at the top of the Quinta to his collaborator Álvaro Siza in 1957 still within the firm, knowing that the student would be able to complete the work. The project presented by Siza under Távora's signature in 1958 was influenced by the recently completed Tennis Pavilion. However, the lack



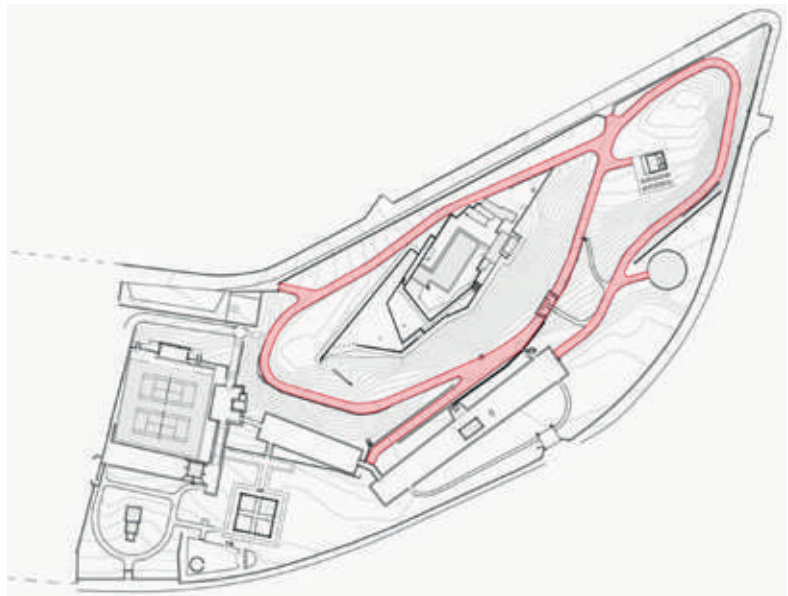
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Fig. 42
Quinta da Conceição, the
yellow and red courts. (graphics
by the author).

of financial availability caused the realisation to be delayed and allowed Siza to revise the project in the following years, in 1961 and 1966, after having already realised the swimming pools in Leça da Palmeira and the Boa Nova restaurant. The greater awareness in controlling the terrain and the aspects that the site presented led to the introduction of the retaining walls in the existing slopes [Fig. 43, 44]. Siza writes in a 2002 article about the swimming pool project:

The location of the pool was determined by the presence of an ancient irrigation reservoir, located at the highest elevation of the estate, with no contiguous areas of equal level, because they were not needed.

The new platforms are supported by long walls of varying directions according to the topography, creating suns on three distinct elevations. The solid geometry of the first two platforms precedes a third, which concludes the enclosure, dissolving in the vegetation and undulations of the terrain. If this last phase of the project, of greater essentiality in design, did not contaminate the buildings, it is simply because they had already been partially constructed. The work had suffered a long suspension for financial reasons. This suspension allowed the project to be rethought and matured.³⁶



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Fig. 43
Quinta da Conceição, the
yellow and red courtyards (graphics
by the author).

Fig. 44
View of the swimming pool
inside the Quinta da Conceição
(photo by the author).

36 Álvaro Siza, "Quinta da Conceição", *Archi*, no. 5, 1 (February 2002): 6-15.

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1

VISUAL

A Dialogue On-Site with Álvaro Siza

A CONVERSATION WITH

Álvaro Siza

The following text is the transcript of a dialogue with Álvaro Siza that took place on 23 February 2016 during a visit to the Vila da Feira Market as part of the “Revisitar Fernando Távora” trip.

We thank Álvaro Siza for revising the text in its English version for this publication.



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Fig. 1

Fernando Távora, Quinta da Conceição, photo by Giorgio Liverani taken during the trip “Revisitar Fernando Távora”, 2016.

In 1953, the design process of the *Vila da Feira Market* was at the end, and I participated in the final part, the drawing of the executive project. I had worked with Távora for the first time in an exhibition in Matosinhos, for which he had invited me to collaborate. I worked on assembling the exhibition and later the rearrangement in Guimarães. In fact, in 1949, Távora was a professor in the fourth year; 49 plus 4 makes 53, so it was in the fourth year that he invited me, which means that the *Vila da Feira Market* was already in construction. The structure of this project was designed by Távora's brother, a collaborator here, as in other works.

This cup-shaped fountain is similar to the *House in Ofir* it is from the same period. When Távora was working on the house, he brought it to the studio on sketch paper and showed it to us. It was a big shock because that house came at just the right time, and the project was built without a competition in four months because Távora's brother was a partner in a construction company, and the leading partner in that company was the *House Ofir* owner. That house is a beautiful work, but it has a particular interest; the organisation of the house is mixed, with the atrium and the three porches divided by zones, so it is a modern plan. The language has a great relationship with the surrounding space in terms of materials; the chimney, which is a volume with great importance in the composition, is cast.

Távora brought the completed project of the *Vila da Feira Market* to a CIAM meeting. Each participant would bring a project: if they did not like it, the work was harshly criticised by everyone, as happened to some Italian architects.¹ And in this CIAM Távora was very close to the ideas of the TEAM X group, above all he was very close to Van Eyck, who wrote an enthusiastic text about the *Market* project. They later maintained a great friendship, and later I was with both in Holland at an exhibition of Van Eyck's work and noticed that he really had an incredible admiration for Távora. Read Van Eyck's text about the *Market* because it is very good. He talks above all about the movement within the design of this market as a public and open space².

As far as the management of the greenery in the *Market project* was concerned, Távora did it all: he normally worked with a gardener who gave him directions, as in the *Quinta da Conceição*, but he himself had a lot of knowledge about it, not from scientific knowledge of plants, but from pure experience due to the fact that he had the house at the Quinta de Covilhã in Guimarães. Távora ran his country house, which was not very big, and made wine, a very good *vinho verde*, and then gave directions to the farmer who looked after the whole estate, telling him where he wanted the trees and what kind of plants to put in. He had a great knowledge, through study, of ancient Portuguese gardens and was very interested in these things and in all Mediterranean gardens in general.

¹ Probable reference to the attacks on the Torre Velasca presented by Ernesto Nathan Rogers during CIAM 1959 in Otterlo.

² See Oscar Newman, *New frontiers in architecture, CIAM '59 in Otterlo* (New York: Universe Books, 1961): 136.

He did not generally work with landscape architects, except for *Quinta de Conceição*, where he worked with Ilídio Araújo,³ a good man and a very important landscape architect, very good friend with Ribeiro Telles⁴ and of the same generation. They were very close friends, I met them several times in Évora, Ribeiro Telles was at the University, and I met him several times when I was doing the plan in Malagueira, on the train ride, because Ilídio de Araújo himself used to visit and discuss things with Ribeiro Telles. So Ilídio Araújo worked with Távora in the *Quinta de Conceição* and I witnessed this from close, they were both real 'gentlemen', but regarding the idea of intervention on the *Quinta* there was a very heated confrontation; they never argued in a bad way, but you could see that there was a very strong difference in thinking. Then, when we returned to the studio, Távora would complain to me.

At the time it was not the custom to call them landscape architects: in the beginning there was no landscape course, they were agronomists, and within the agronomy course, during the 1950s, there started to be a specialisation called Landscaping, and a little later in the 1970s, prompted by Ribeiro Telles, the Landscape course in Évora. So, then what were the references of a landscape architect? An agronomist worked in the field of agriculture and farming tradition, knew technically a lot about how to treat gardens, but had no artistic training, so in the Landscape course it was tried to include a specialisation with an artistic component. Ilídio Araújo then did a beautiful book on the Portuguese garden, I don't know if you know the book *Arte paisagista e arte dos jardins em Portugal*⁵; it is an important book that is out of print, I happen to have the photocopies, I think he got them for me, but the book is out of print and there doesn't seem to be a second edition, and he also wrote something else on the Portuguese garden, although the great references at that time were the Nordic gardens. They had great prestige and use at the time by architects and agronomists, who referred to the gardens of the United States, England, Sweden, and the north in general.

But Távora was Mediterranean, so if you see his work at the *Quinta*, you can clearly see the weight that his culture as a man from the south had; he was referring rather to the Italian garden, or rather especially the Italian garden and the Mediterranean in general.

He did a lot of travelling, a lot of drawing, and one part strictly dedicated to gardens. So that when he returned, (I still remember the great discussions I witnessed), he would modify the whole project. It was just like that, because Távora set the *Quinta da Conceição* through great axes, as that hill has a particular topography, highs and lows, but Távora established, analysing that topography, the great axes and the stairs that connect the top entrance to the

³ Ilídio Araújo (1925-2015) was a Portuguese landscape architect, author of several *Quintas* and botanical garden projects in Portugal.

⁴ Ribeiro Telles (1922-2020) was an agronomist and landscape engineer and founder of the Portuguese Association of Landscape Architects (APAP).

⁵ Ilídio Alve de Araújo, *Arte paisagista e arte dos jardins em Portugal* (Lisboa: Ministério das Obras Públicas, Direcção Geral dos Serviços de Urbanização, Centro de Estudos de Urbanismo, 1962).

low entrance and transversely to the courts where they used to have parties with dances.

The geometry is very clear and essential, based on a sequence of spaces and then using different frames along the way. At one point you arrive at a tennis court right in front, then a horizontal space, then the long staircase continues with landings that define different spaces and ends in an upstairs access where there is a beautiful *pátio* bordered by red walls. There is this staircase, at the top there is this *Red Courtyard*, and then on the side there are these large avenues, where the festivities took place, and so these elements made the design solid, which later also included more organically shaped paths, which develop naturally on the hillside.

There was an old convent at the lowest location, where he then made the fence with the hedge, and he managed to convince the Municipality to buy a porch that he had found in Gaia, it was in a convent in Gaia, not as part of the convent itself but in a garden, and he convinced the president of the Municipal Chamber to bring it here because it was a period historical thing and reminded him of the old convent that had been built here. The Quinta, at the time, was a private country house, and a pleasant and interesting thing something happened. The administration of the Port of Leixões at the time decided to develop the size of the quays and therefore to build a second dock in addition to the one already existing in the port. The urban planner of



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Fig. 2, 3
Alvaro Siza speaking during the trip "Revisitar Fernando Távora", 2016 (photo by Giorgio Liverani).

Matosinhos was Moreira da Silva⁶, a professor of urbanism at the university who was both Távora's professor and mine, Marques da Silva's son-in-law... and I remember that in the first lectures he used to say: "Urbanismo is the translation of the French word *urbanism*". He made various plans in Portugal when he returned from France, he also made the plan for Matosinhos, the chessboard plan, which fits well with the terrain, the relationship with the sea, and with a good relationship with the ancient area. Then urbanism evolved a lot, Moreira da Silva turned out to be old-fashioned and when he made the plan around the port he had designed a viaduct whose construction went through the expropriation of the *Quinta da Conceição*, which had a larger area that reached the river, where you could embark and navigate along it. It had a splendid beach, free of any pollution.

The Leça River was a paradise, I don't know how many kilometers long and ended in an area where there was a Roman bridge and then went to die in the port of Leixões. The new quay has already cut much of this landscape and destroyed the Roman bridge. When the second dock is developed, it penetrates a lot into the territory and eats away at the low land of the Quinta da Conceição where the embarkation space and the beach used to be. Távora and the Mayor, who was Fernando Pinto de Oliveira, very interested in tourism, took an interest in this Quinta and in another one after, the Quinta de Santiago. So the Mayor called Távora, whom he knew very well because of the relationship between the families, and told him: "We advance land in the Quinta da Conceição, of which the municipality does not need, and I spoke with the port director, a remarkable and very intelligent man, and he said that he will give up this land because it is no longer needed for the port, and I would like you to make a Municipal Park". Távora then took the plans, jotted down some notes, and went to talk to the director, explaining to him what he was going to do with the Quinta. However, he could not refrain from pointing out to him that there was a big problem because the port would need other infrastructure, a viaduct that would connect the north side with the south side quickly, and around the port space there had to be a widening, a road with two lanes in each direction, because the port would have a lot of movement of large trucks, and the plan as it was conceived did not work. The director understood the importance of this and decided to hand over the plan for the whole area to Távora.

Távora had a delicate problem at that point because it meant revising his professor's plan. Távora talked to Moreira da Silva and there were no major problems, and they maintained a good relationship. And so, he did a new project in which people like Luis Botelho Dias, Rui Pimentel⁷, José Pacheco, Francisco Figueiredo, who did the study for the movable bridge, the first movable bridge that has now been replaced collaborated.

⁶ David Moreira Da Silva (1909-2002), a Portuguese architect and urban planner trained in Porto and Paris, was a lecturer in urban planning at ESBAP and the author of numerous urban plans.

⁷ Rui Pimentel Ferreira (1924-2005) was responsible for the working group (Minho region) with which Távora participated in the *Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular* in 1955.

So he formed a very good team, in which I participated for a while, until I was no longer working with Távora, but even after that I had nearby I don't remember which job, some houses, a parish centre. I always went with them to a tavern for lunch, and since we were together they would update me on the progress of the project.

So he formed a very good team, in which I participated for a while, until I was no longer working with Távora, but even after that I had nearby I don't remember which job, some houses, a parish centre, so I always went with them to a tavern for lunch where they ate very well, and since we were together they would update me on the progress of the project.

It was funny because they called an architect to make a jewel and the architect said: "OK, this is a jewel, but to define this you have to look at something more". Starting with the jewel, he analysed a much more serious problem: there was no viaduct, after all, there was no movable bridge, which was essential not to cut Matosinhos and Leça completely in two. But this is to say that he really intervened in all aspects of the city, and he had the advantage of always having an overall view, he never tackled a problem in isolation, so when they handed him the project for the *Quinta*, working on the development, from this he reasoned and defined the connection to Leça, the viaduct and many other aspects.

This is generally the case in all Távora projects. It never stops at the individual intervention but always takes an overall view.

So, I also worked on the *Quinta da Conceição* after the construction of the *Tennis Pavilion*. Távora worked on the project at home, and after finishing the construction of the *Pavilion* he was developing the *Pool*. And an incredible thing happened, which would be impossible now. I was obsessed with the *Pool* and constantly asking Távora questions about it until one day he said to me: "The best thing is for you to do this work in your studio"; and so he passed me the assignment. He had to ask the Municipality, as I wasn't yet graduated, but he knew the Mayor well.

I started from the project that had already been developing with all the other guys working in the studio and made a change, then I talked to Távora about it. The pool of the *Quinta da Conceição* was the *Quinta's* irrigation pool, so it was the highest point on the hill where a reservoir was located. Távora had proposed to use it for bathing. It was exactly as it is today, L-shaped, and I visited the site and thought that there was a need for space around the pool, so I proposed making platforms to accompany the slope of the hill and this led to a change in size. I left intact the language of the existing pools and their positioning in the ground, while on the other side I inserted horizontal platforms. He gave his consent to this change and supported me in the presentation to the Municipality, where he was always present as a guarantor.

It was 1962, I had already built the *Restaurant in Boa Nova*, which was a similar case: Távora had to sign the project because I and the others could not sign it.

The idea of tourist development for the centre of Matosinhos, and that of Leça, also allowed the idea of Boa Nova, because the same manager, together with Fernando Pinto de Oliveira, called Távora. From them came the idea of doing the competition. Távora chose not to compete, as did the architect Francisco Figueiredo, and called me along with his other collaborators. There were five of us and he asked us to do the project, saying he would sign it, as he did. We went with him to visit the Boa Nova site before he left for his travel.⁸ The site had a big beach and rocks and he said: "The restaurant must stay here". We panicked because the place was very difficult and impassable, but it really was "the place", and it was a fantastic discovery, because all the other participating groups did the restaurant project in the easiest place, turned towards the beach. He came to my office on the eve of the competition and got to work, drew, and wrote the descriptive memoir of the project, which is beautiful, and which he presented, winning the competition.

There winning project was then modified by the executive project. After a year of work, I asked Távora who was the one who had to sign, to change the solution we were working on, and he agreed. It was only during the construction that he managed to get the Mayor to change the contract and do it in my name; until then Távora had signed everything.

The restaurant, once it was built, was criticised and considered a silly building because the facade faced the back, but it really is the right place, anyone who goes there now understands that very well. However, it was difficult for us because a lot of work was needed and I used to go there and draw the outline directly on site and then it was during construction that we made some corrections because, during the staking out for the building, we noticed that there were some rocks in the way and we decided on the spot to rotate the whole project a bit.

I worked with Távora for a short time, about three years, and then I left because I had some work myself and the final touch came when Távora handed me the Swimming pool at *Quinta da Conceição and Boa Nova...* then it became practically impossible.

I think it also had an influence on the *Leça de Palmeira* swimming pool, because the construction of it began with a commission given to his brother Bernardo Ferrão to make a tide pool there, and Bernardo Ferrão called me saying he needed an architect because he felt a very great responsibility in terms of landscaping. And I am convinced that Távora pushed for this, obviously without wanting to overshadow the person in charge. He must have recommended my name to him, as was also the case later for the Avenida da Ponte, the first version of the project: I remember Távora saying to me one day: "Ah! I am going to lunch with Auzelle now and I would like you to come too, let's go to Rua Nova". So he basically introduced me to Auzelle⁹, and many projects for Avenida da

⁸ At that time Távora was leaving for his "travel around the world" thanks to a grant offered by the Gulbenkian Foundation. See: Fernando Távora, *Diário de "bordo"*, edited by Rita Marnoto (Matosinhos: Associação Casa da Arquitectura 2012).

⁹ Robert Auzelle (1913-1983), French urban planner, author of the Port Urban Plan in 1962.

Ponte had been done at that time, all of them rejected, and Auzelle invited me to propose a project. I remember Távora telling me about a conversation with the vice-president, the one who was implementing the urban plan in that area, who did not know me and asked him: "Do you think he is capable of doing this?"; Távora replied: "He is capable! Of course he is capable! He looks like Christ!"

At the time, Auzelle had developed a Plan for the central area of Porto that included a viaduct. He brought ideas, but he was also a man of vision, because he came to Porto to see the problems and the needs, and he said that what was needed was a plan to empty the central blocks. He then developed the Plan, calling in young architects, so there was a very interesting period in which a good team of young people was formed, of whom the only one alive now is Luís Cunha¹⁰, who was one of Auzelle's favorites and who also proposed a project for the *Avenida da Ponte*, which was also later blocked. Therefore, he brought about a good modernisation, created a good team, and did a good survey of the city, which resulted in two volumes analysing most aspects of the city of Porto, and then defined a plan of which practically nothing was developed. It is a radical vision, but it has allowed us to discover many new factors for which we still have no answers today.

Even today, almost every day someone says to me: "Ah! Távora did this for me or that guy..."; sometimes it's very funny things, sometimes, more serious things. But we, and I say we because we are a group of friends of different ages, which includes Souto Moura, Alcino Soutinho, Rogério e Cecília Cavaca, and others, that had a special relationship with Távora and we often went on trips together. Those trips were epics. Trips to Greece, Italy, Egypt, Morocco, India, China. And He for one was a very interesting person, regardless of architecture, because of his temperament, his ability to communicate, and he was also a person who liked to live a lot. He was a person who liked to eat, as much with the prime minister as with the site manager. He was a person who lived globally and therefore there are very nice stories in each of the many trips we made together, on which he always brought his Michelin guidebook, which he had already studied as well as having travelled to those places many times. At the same time it was a journey and a lesson for us. I went on a trip to Greece where we visited sanctuaries and in each one, he would stop and knew everything. He had a deep historical knowledge of those places; he was a person of a rare culture. And he was not in any way academic, in the formal sense. To a certain extent he was, but in a way that was very conditioned by various tendencies, various interests, various influences.

Vila da Feira Market, 23 February 2016

¹⁰ Luís Cunha (1933-2019), Porto architect at the time of the Auzelle Plan within the city's Urban Planning Department.

The Search for Eternity and the Polyphony Prodigy in Távora

Fernando Távora, Portuguese Architecture, Journey to the East, Modernity, Tradition

/Abstract

Fernando Távora was a pioneer. As he never tired of saying wisely and kindly, "I am Portuguese architecture!" He not only integrated various references in Portuguese architecture but also deeply understood architecture as culture in a profoundly innovative way.

The intense immersion in modernity without abandoning tradition, the desire to innovate while simultaneously not forgetting the roots, are at the core of the rich and complex personality of the architect Fernando Távora, which is reflected in his actions, his work, his teaching, his life.

From Le Corbusier to the modernists of *Orfeu*, from traditional Japanese architecture to Portuguese vernacular and erudite architecture, from classical order to *Miesian* rigor, Távora thinks, feels, and builds a heterodox and inclusive path, a genuine journey in search of truth to "arrive at solutions of eternity".

As he wrote in 1960, "I am increasingly convinced that only by doing the same thing over and over again, in one lifetime or over generations, is it possible to refine and arrive at everlasting solutions. From the Theséion to the Parthenon there is a whole path of progress, as with Mies' Lake Shore 1st and 2nd phases".

In Japan, Távora rediscovers the weight of history and the call to "arrive at solutions of eternity." The investigation into the Portuguese house (1945-1947), the field surveys conducted within the framework of the "Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture," and the study of vernacular and erudite architecture find resonance in Japan.

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President of Docomomo International and editor-in-chief of the *Docomomo Journal* between 2010 and 2021. She is president of the Portuguese section of AICA. She was distinguished by the President of the Republic with the Order of *Infante Dom Henrique*.



In Search of Eternity or the Prodigy of Polyphony in Távora

Fernando Távora was a pioneer. Not only did he integrate various referents in Portuguese architecture, but he also understood architecture as a culture in a profoundly innovative way. Architect and thinker, persistent critic, he possessed that unity of vision that gives coherence to scattered projects. His work was that of a founder of Portuguese architectural culture.

Fernando Távora is not in history, he is history! In other words, he is not just the object or subject of history, but he himself is history, he is change, since one of the so-called historical factors operating on him, is himself. Távora is the Portuguese architectural culture.

Being polyphonic, nourishing the desire to seek eternity, led him to turn to architecture to understand Portugal and the World, or rather, Portugal's location in the World.

For Távora, and because architecture is culture, everything could be a reference in his process of falling in love with the world and its creative, artistic, and poetic expressions. His stay in Japan was an inescapable mark on his career and work. Since the mid-19th century, the search for a synthesis of Western and Eastern artistic cultures has opened unexplored horizons, both figurative and conceptual. Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) explicitly declared his debt to Japanese architecture, seeing it as his adherence to naturalism and reflecting it in his own poetics. The experience of Japanese modularity, the adherence to emptiness and the beauty of imperfection, the profound sense of minimal culture, the art of "empty space", the abstraction and free floating of the art of calligraphy, are some of the aspects that we can highlight of the Japanese contribution to the development of the architecture of the Modern Movement throughout the 20th century in the world. The figure of Bruno Taut (1880-1938) has been recognised as fundamental for his stay in Japan in 1934-1935, as well as the fascination of authors such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Josiah Conder (1852-1920), Antonin Raymond (1888-1976), and later Carlo Scarpa (1906-1978). In the wake of the discovery of Japan by Western architects (German, American, English, Italian), Távora explores the relations established with Portuguese architecture and the affinities between the ancient cultures of both countries, analysing the mutual influences established and created.

Portugal and the World, History and Geography

If Távora's references are diverse, then the important reference is history. It is from time and architecture that Távora intensely investigates – in his capacity as an attentive observer, an insatiable scholar, a man of action based on everyday experience, a lover of life full of desire for the world – history as a way of understanding human existence.

For this reason, the landscape is seen at the crossroads between geography and history, analysing the strong and definitive influences that define the territory. Geography understood as the culture of the sensitive territory, capable of realising that the "Portuguese natural landscape is luminous and tranquil

‘more poetic than plastic’¹, because if every history is a geography, geographies are also symbolic [Fig. 1].

Távora organises the understanding of architecture through the territory and history, space and time of Portugal in order to detect and perceive aspects that have marked the national identity, and certainly the “architectural culture manifested throughout the existence of the country and



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throughout the space that it encompassed throughout the territory where the Portuguese diaspora was felt.”² In the case of its architecture, this was revealed in the need to create “less academic and more hybrid solutions, which are faster, more flexible and more adapted.”³

The desire to understand the current significance of the Portuguese presence and its architecture in territories where it once established itself leads to the permanent study of the process of cultural transfer, since “just as we export concepts and forms to the various communities of the diaspora, we receive from them, or from others, actions and lessons that are reflected in the cities and architectures of the continent.”⁴ Lúcio Costa (1902-1998) and Óscar Niemeyer (1907-2012) who, in addition to their constant debt to Portuguese architectural culture, recall our presence, invoking the spirit and formal atmosphere of the same architectural culture.

It is from this referent, history, that Távora invokes memory, the deep layers of a country’s culture and a discipline, architecture, to lead an initiatory journey into modernity. A modernity that fascinates him, which is why he endeavours to understand the roots and epic of the contemporary world by situating Portugal and its diaspora in this process.

The slow speed of the long duration of architecture made up of the path of progress and transformation, plunges into the sense of the Kublerian “form of time”⁵ revealed in the tradition of Portuguese *arquitetura chã* (plain architecture) that Távora knew how to recognise between Portugal and the world.

1 Fernando Távora, “Imigração/Emigração. Cultura Arquitectónica Portuguesa no Mundo”, in Ana Tostões, Wilfried Wang, Annette Becker, *Portugal: Arquitectura do Século XX* (München/New York/Frankfurt/Lisbon: Prestel/DAM/PF 97, 1998), 141.

2 Távora, “Imigração/Emigração. Cultura Arquitectónica Portuguesa no Mundo”, 142.

3 Távora, “Imigração/Emigração. Cultura Arquitectónica Portuguesa no Mundo”, 143.

4 Távora, “Imigração/Emigração. Cultura Arquitectónica Portuguesa no Mundo”, 143.

5 George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

Fig. 1

Fernando Távora, TGOE class, 28 June 1991 (FIMS/AFT).

Modernity and its Contradictions

The fascination of contradictory affinities with modernity made of attraction and repulsion, is evident in a vast cultural framework that goes from the construction of the collection of modernist texts to the Le Corbusier (1887-1965) collection of books, to mention two important references. There are hundreds of titles, including first editions of or about the Swiss master, but also revealing the most revolutionary aspects of his work and at the same time a plural and hybrid vision of modern architecture, since Távora was born in the year *Vers une Architecture* was published and began his professional life when Le Corbusier surprised everyone with the density of the Ronchamp chapel or the maturity of the convent of la Tourette. Távora is a man from the last generation of the C.I.A.M. who feels the restlessness of the new times and, as Álvaro Siza (1933) puts it, was “formed in admiration of a Corbusier of certainties, immediately sensitive to the LC of disconcerting turns.”⁶

Likewise Frank Lloyd Wright’s discovery when, during his long stay in the USA, he undertook a journey into the Wrightian universe, precisely on the first anniversary of the master’s death, moving himself “to tears” in the supreme place: “Taliesin [...] is more than a building, it is a landscape; [...] Taliesin is also a life and a philosophy.”⁷

In his dispute with modern rationalism, Távora discovers a tradition as old as man himself⁸, while at the same time not ignoring the works of contemporary masters, the new construction processes: “we will lose nothing by studying foreign architecture, otherwise it would be pointless to pretend to speak of Portuguese architecture.”⁹

The House and Garden as a Whole: the Organisation of Space

The discovery of Japanese architecture¹⁰ will leave a deep imprint on Távora¹¹, constituting a prospective enquiry¹² that begins with a focus on the present, on

6 Álvaro Siza, “Fernando Távora”, *Desenho de Arquitectura: Património da Escola de Belas Artes do Porto e da Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto*, (Porto: Universidade do Porto, 1987).

7 Fernando Távora, *Diário de “bordo”*, 1960 (Guimarães: Associação Casa da Arquitetura/Fundação Marques da Silva, Família Távora, Fundação Cidade de Guimarães, ed. fac-símile, 2012).

8 Fernando Távora, “Escola do Cedro”, in *Arquitetura*, no. 85 (1964), 175-179.

9 Fernando Távora, “O Problema da Casa Portuguesa”, in *Cadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1 (1947): 12.

10 Fernando Távora takes around 20 rolls of slides, makes drawings with more or less detailed annotations, buys books and publications and acquires various information about the cities, buildings, museums, universities and institutions he visits – postcards, maps, brochures, guides: “... as well as spending money, I spend precious time and suffer immensely to select books according to my possibilities and their probable interest, but it is necessary to take some to enlighten our Portuguese spirits that are too much in the dark...”, Távora, *Diário de “bordo”*, 181.

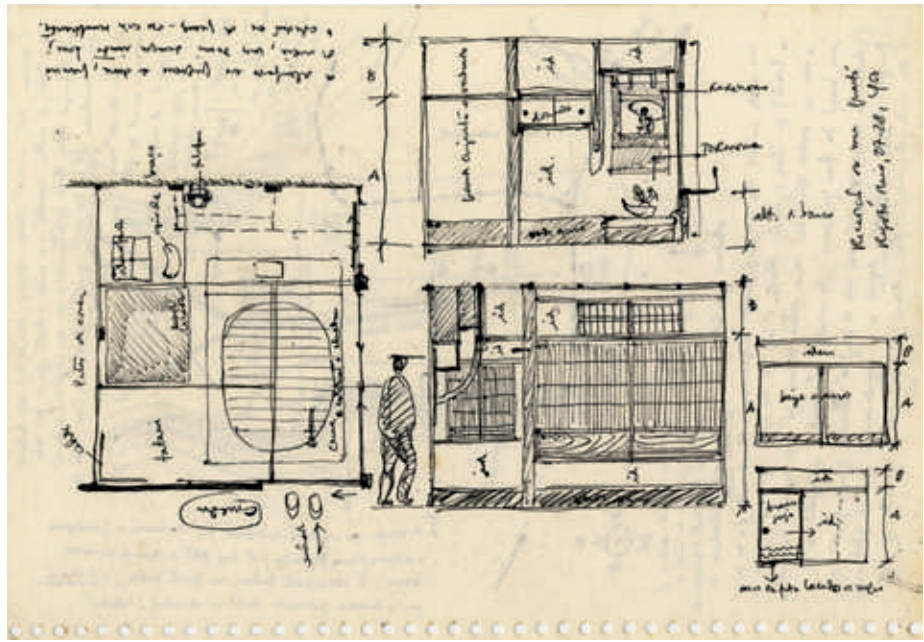
11 Távora is the first Portuguese architect to visit Japan after spending three months in the USA, travelling to pre-Columbian Mexico and then Egypt and Greece. Fernando Távora was a young teacher when, instigated by the director of the Porto School of Fine Arts (ESBAP), architect Carlos Ramos, he applied to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to go on a study visit to the USA to investigate the teaching of architecture, and to Japan, with a view to including in his trip to Japan, having received an invitation in the meantime, “... as a member of CIAM, to participate in the World Design Conference (WoDeCo) ...” to be held in Tokyo in May 1960. Carlos Ramos justified this by the importance of the conference (WoDeCo), which brought together the most important international architects of the time, and by the growing value of contemporary Japanese architecture, particularly the work of the architect Kenzo Tange. The grant was awarded and the five-and-a-half-month trip began in February of that first year. Cf. Fernando Távora, *Carta de Távora para o Conselho de Administração da F.C.G.*, 26/11/1959, A.A.F.T.

12 Cf. Ana Mesquita, *O melhor de dois mundos: a viagem do arquitecto Távora aos EUA e Japão – Diário 1960*, (Master’s Thesis, Coimbra: Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologias da Universidade Coimbra, 2007).

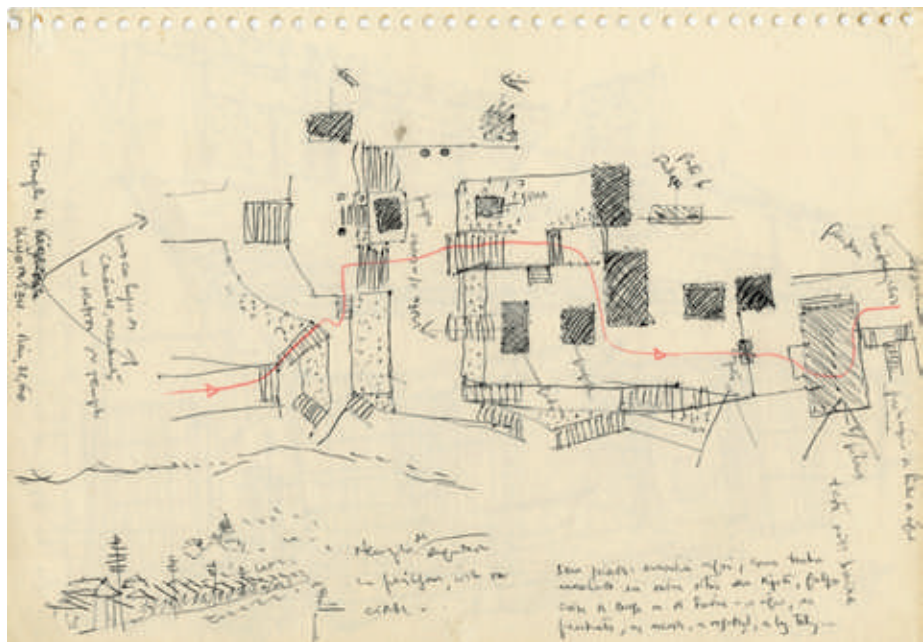
reality, but little by little Távora becomes involved with the subtle and complex question of tradition and how the strength of the past implies the culture of contemporaneity [Fig. 2, 3, 4].

Távora observes how the landscape is constructed in a balance between the natural and the built, understanding the weight of history and the seduction of the form of time. He interprets the relationship between architecture and landscape, concluding that in Japan the “great charm lies in the house-garden whole. It’s not a house and a garden – it is a whole.”¹³ He finds in Japan the weight of history and the call to “achieve eternal solutions.”

The reflections he had carried out 15 years earlier regarding “O problema da casa portuguesa” [the problem of the Portuguese house] (1945; 1947) or the study of vernacular [and erudite] architecture that he had carried out as part of the *Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa* (Inquiry into Portuguese Regional Architecture) (1955-1961)¹⁴, find an echo in Japan. In a situation of ideological resistance, he had developed an approach to tradition and the question of cultural identity, initiating a process of ethical construction as a disciplinary affirmation, which resulted in the essay *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa* [“The Problem of the Portuguese House”], re-reading the myth of the “Portuguese house” based on the bridge between Modern Architecture, “the only architecture that we can do sincerely”, and the popular house, which “will provide great lessons when properly studied, because it is the most functional and the least fanciful, in a word, the one that



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Fig. 2

Fernando Távora, his room in Kyoto, 27-28 May 1960 (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 3

Fernando Távora, Kiyomizu Temple, 21 May 1960 (FIMS/AFT).

13 Távora, *Diário de "bordo"*, 330.

14 Published as *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*, (Lisboa: Associação dos Arquitectos Portugueses, 1961).

is most in keeping with the new intentions.”¹⁵

Távora followed Tetsuro Yoshida’s (1884-1956) approach to tradition through everyday life and the traditional Japanese home, the importance of anonymous craftsmanship, the timeless objects that are so beautiful that they continue to shape our world, but also Kenzo Tange’s (1913-2005) argument in the process of recognising a traditional architecture situated



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uated between Katsura and the Ise Shrine, crossing them with Bruno Taut’s reflection on the connection between past and present, considering the meticulous work of relationship between the built and the natural.¹⁶

On his return to Portugal, Fernando Távora launched the course entitled “Organisation of Space” at ESBAP in the autumn of 1960, with innovative scientific objectives based on the conception of architecture as the organisation and production of space and defending architecture beyond the object. Távora combined a commitment to history with the avant-garde, seeking an authenticity based on the continuity of the sense of history and tradition. In a situation of assumed contemporaneity, he was a pioneer in questioning the dogmas of the Modern Movement, signalling the awareness of the urgency of reconciliation with history, in a dialectical perspective between tradition and future, between modernity and history, between space and time.¹⁷

Classical Order and Heterodoxy

The intense plunge into modernity without abandoning tradition, the desire to innovate, but at the same time not to forget his origins, are at the root of architect Fernando Távora’s rich and complex personality, which is reflected in his actions, work, teaching, and life.

From the polyhedral figure of Le Corbusier to the modernists of *Orfeu*, from traditional Japanese architecture to Portuguese vernacular architecture, from classical order to Miesian rigour, Távora thinks, feels, builds a heterodox and inclusive path, a genuine path to “arrive at eternal solutions”.

15 Távora, *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa*, 11.

16 Collected in Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan*, (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1937).

17 Aldo Rossi, *Autobiographie Scientifique*, (Marseille: Ed. Parenthèses, 1988), 12.

Fig. 4

Fernando Távora, Street in Kyoto, 22 May 1960 (FIMS/AFT).

Portuguese matrices are crossed with the observation of the world, great architecture is placed in context, fuelling the conviction that one does not invent, but always continues. Távora gave substance to Eugenio d'Ors' aphorism manifested with regard to: "Classicism. There is only true originality when you are within a tradition. Anything that isn't tradition is plagiarism."¹⁸

As he wrote in 1960, "I am increasingly convinced that only by doing the same thing over and over again, in one lifetime or over generations, is it possible to refine and arrive at everlasting solutions. From the Theséion to the Parthenon there is a whole path of progress, as with Mies' Lake Shore 1st and 2nd phases"¹⁹ [Fig. 5].

Távora carries out a permanent exercise of critical imagination, searching for the sublime in the dignity of architecture, to think and make the architecture of our time, integrating contemporaneity without falsehood: "the mythologised architecture", "the untouchable white virgin became for me a manifestation of life [...] And the myth fell apart. And between the cottage and the masterpiece I saw that there were relationships such as [I knew] existed between the bricklayer (or any other man) and the architect [...]"²⁰

And, revealing his modernist convictions, between "moving forward" or "stagnating", he clearly decided on the former. His position is anti-academic in that he doesn't accept the codification of the Modern Movement's orthodoxy, its fixed and immutable rules. For him, History, which he learnt from Aarão de Lacerda, "is worthwhile insofar as it can solve the problems of the present and insofar as it becomes an aid and not an obsession."²¹ The importance of Fernando Távora's contribution lies in his lucid and passionate approach to architecture. Without rejecting modernity and the contributions of the avant-garde, he sought an authenticity based on the continuity of a tradition.



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18 Eugénio d'Ors, «Clasicismo. Sólo hay originalidad verdadera cuando se está dentro de una tradición. Todo lo que no es tradición es plagio», (1911) published in "Primeros lemas", *Gnómica*, no. XVII, (1941).

19 Távora, *Diário de "bordo"*, 367.

20 Távora, *Escola do Cedro*, 175.

21 "Entrevista com Fernando Távora", in *Arquitectura*, no. 123, (1971), 150.

Fig. 5

Fernando Távora, photo of Lake Shore Drive, 1960 (FIMS/AFT), ref. 0251-01-sld0080).

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Fernando Távora and the Journey into the Constants as the Foundation of the Project (1950-1960)

Fernando Távora, Architectural Journey, Body and Architecture, Historical References in Design Process, Diario di Bordo

/Abstract

The text investigates the importance of travel in architect Távora's design process, highlighting how his travels influenced his architectural projects and how the structure of his design is based on the cognitive and bodily crossing of places. Távora's exploration of Portuguese culture and architecture played a crucial role in his focus on anonymous architecture and his emphasis on the geographical aspects of architecture. But the text also retraces the pages of the Diary kept by Távora during his "journey around the world" in 1960 – in particular, the visits to Japan and Athens – reading them in parallel with some of the architectural works designed by the same period.

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Journey and Project

In the decade between 1950 and 1960, Fernando Távora intertwined intense design experimentation with a sequence of decisive journeys. In this chronology, the following text analyses and compares the design themes he experiments with and recognises while travelling and then applies them in his design practice.

This comparison aims to show how travel is not, for Távora, a simple training activity but an experience integrated into the design process. This process implies different concepts of travel as a foundational practice.

First the journey builds a cosmopolitan knowledge of different architectural cultures used for the work's success.

Then, the journey feeds a design process informed or based on geography.

Finally, the bodily action of the designer who crosses, again and again, the site on which the work will be built and then the work itself, under construction, is conceived by Távora as a journey as well.¹

The text that follows does not always respect a strict chronological sequence for several reasons.

The first, historical one, is that both the projects and the travels of this decisive decade of Távora's activity are based on a single, wide-ranging cultural construction, in which book study, experimentation in design and travel are interwoven in a sequence, not linear but circular, of anticipations and verifications.

The second is that both the journeys and the projects are, for Távora, an experience open to the circumstances that can suddenly overturn established positions. Not a linear path, then, but the construction of a deliberately complex, contradictory identity, which seeks in the other from self the reinforcement of the self, and whose model is, as is well known, Fernando Pessoa.²

The third reason is that the acceptance of a circumstantial dimension of the design experience – be it an architectural project or a journey – derives from the desire to identify, in the variety of specific cases, constants of a supra – or trans-historical nature.

1 The interest in Henri Bergson (1859-1941) that appears in Távora's youthful diaries, if related to a conception of the project as the investigation and emergence of a potential already existing in places, as an "attempt at exhausting a place" one might say après Georges Perec, could lead to the construction of a broad and useful system of references. Távora's interest in Bergson is mediated by the text *A Filosofia de Henri Bergson* by Leonardo Da Coimbra (1883-1936), a Portuguese philosopher and politician among the founders of the *Renascença Portuguesa* movement. The volume, written in 1932 – Leonardo Da Coimbra, *A Filosofia de Henri Bergson* (Lisboa: Renascença Portuguesa, 1932) – is mainly dedicated to *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, published by Bergson in Paris in the same year.

2 Of Pessoa, Távora writes: "he is a man who says that to be Portuguese, you must be the whole in every part. The concept is that identity derives from a great revelation; national identity must result, paradoxically, from knowledge of everything and everyone." (Fernando Távora, *Para a Edifícios* (1988) interview edited by Manuel Mendes, in: Fernando Távora, *Minha casa* (Porto: FIMS-FAUP, 2015): 13, eng. trans. in HPA n. 11 (2022), pp. 12-39. Pessoa's "heteronymy" – to which Távora constantly refers in his thinking, teaching, and design practice – is thus "a need for identity, to know oneself and one's multiple being, to identify with circumstances that are not one's own but which, in a world articulated in different identities, lead one to identify with others". (Ibid) On Távora's relations with Pessoa – of whose autographs he is also an important collector – see: Silvío Manuel Gomes Alves, *Fernando Távora no País do Desassossego*. (Dissertação de Mestrado Integrado em Arquitectura, orient. G. C. Moniz, Coimbra 2016); Juan Antonio Ortiz Orueta, "Influencia de Pessoa en el discurso de Fernando Távora. Pessoa's influence in Fernando Távora's discourse", *Cuadernos de Proyectos Arquitectónicos*, no. 6 (2016): 51-61; Ricardo Vasconcelos, Onésimo Almeida, Paulo de Medeiros, Jerónimo Pizatto, "New Insights into Portuguese Modernism from the Fernando Távora Collection", *Pessoa Plural. A Journal of Fernando Pessoa Studies*, no. 12 – Special Issue (Fall 2017).

In a fundamental writing of 1952 that we could consider programmatic of the analysed decade – *Arquitectura e urbanismo. A lição das constantes* – Távora defines this learning closely linked to travelling as the “lesson of the constants”, that is, the one that, through a knowledge based on a direct and physical encounter with the architectural works of the present and the past – of every work of the past, whether cultured or popular, authorial or anonymous – alone can offer the project a foundation of “perennial modernity”.³

The Journey Across the Homeland

Távora’s first journey could be described as a *voyage autour de ma chambre*, a boyish Távora’s discovery of Portuguese culture in his family. While still a boy, moved by an early interest in popular art and architecture, he travelled and retraced the Portuguese territory to understand the structure, character, and cultural history of places. These trips were decisive in defining the specifics of Távora’s projects, almost all of which were to be in northern Portugal.

At the turn of the 1950s, following a parallel path within the School and as a member of the Professional Syndicate of Portuguese Architects, Távora’s journeys across Portugal were transformed from an individual act into a collective journey, a journey that stands as one of the foundations of Portuguese architectural culture in the second half of the 20th century.

The research on anonymous architecture as a lesson in authenticity, as a field for identifying the ‘constants’ of a ‘perennial modernity’ as an alternative to internationalist linguistic modernism, finds, in fact, the occasion for collective experimentation in the famous undertaking of the *Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*.⁴

The case, as an enterprise of professional organisation, is widely studied. However, it is essential to remember that, even within ESBAP and through Carlos

³ Fernando Távora, “Arquitectura e urbanismo. A lição das constantes”, *Lusitana, Revista ilustrada de Cultura*, no. 1-2 (November 1952), eng. trans. in HPA n. 11 (2022), 406-409.

⁴ See: *Arquitetura Popular em Portugal* (Lisboa: Gravura, composição e impressão Gráfica São Gonçalo, 1961). The bibliography relating to *Inquérito* is extremely extensive and demonstrates the close ties of the investigation not only with the National Architects’ Union, which promotes it, but also with the Schools of Architecture and in particular with ESBAP directed by Ramos, who is also President of the local section of the Union. Among the most recent texts on the subject, rich in bibliographical references, see: João Leal, “O Vernáculo e o Híbrido: Concepções da Arquitectura Popular Portuguesa entre 1960 e 2000”, *Joelho*, no. 2 (2011): 39-57; José António Bandeirinha, “A lição da ponte de Rio de Onor”, *Joelho*, no. 2 (2011): 129-132; Maria Helena Maia, Alexandra Cardoso, *O Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional: contributo para uma historiografia do Movimento Moderno em Portugal*, In *IV Congresso de História de Arte Portuguesa* (Lisboa: APHA, 2012): 535-546; Joana Cunha Leal, Maria Helena Maia, A. Cardoso, eds, *Surveys on Vernacular Architecture: Their Significance in 20th Century Architectural Cultural* (Porto: CEAA, 2012); Pedro Vieira de Almeida, *Dois Parâmetros de Arquitectura Postos em Surdina: Leitura crítica do Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional* (Porto: CEAA, Edições Caseiras 2012); Alves Vera Marques, *Arte Popular e Nação no Estado Novo. A Política Folclorista do Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional* (Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2013); Maria Elena Maia, Alexandra Cardoso, Joana Leal, *Dois parâmetros de arquitectura postos em surdina. Leitura crítica do Inquérito à arquitectura regional* (Porto: CEAA, Edições Caseiras 2013); Joana Cunha Leal, Maria Helena Maia, Alexandra Cardoso eds., *To and fro: Modernism and vernacular architecture* (Porto: CEAA Editions, 2013); Ana Tostões, *A Idade Maior: Cultura e tecnologia na arquitectura moderna portuguesa* (Porto: FAUP, 2014); Santiago Gomes, *The portuguese way. L’Inquérito à arquitectura popular em Portugal and the search for an authentic modernity*, in Ugo Rossi, *Tradizione e modernità. L’influsso dell’architettura ordinaria nel moderno*, 63-77. (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2015); Victor Mestre, “Arquitectura Portuguesa – la identidad en movimiento. La influencia de Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal en la arquitectura de Posguerra”, *Rita*, no. 4 (2015): 30-41; Paula André, Carlos Sambricio, eds., *Arquitectura popular. Tradição e vanguardia Tradição y vanguardia* (Lisboa: DINÂMIA’CET-IUL 2016); Marta Lalanda Prista, *A memória de um Inquérito na cultura arquitectónica portuguesa* (Arcos de Valdevez: Município de Arcos de Valdevez 2016); Francisco Manuel Portugal e Gomes, “Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa: contributo para o entendimento das causas do problema da ‘casa portuguesa’” (Tese de Doutoramento em Arquitectura, Coimbra 2018, orient. M.J. Teixeira Krüger).

Ramos's specific interest, the investigation of popular architecture is introduced and accompanied by a focus on the geographical aspects of architecture.

In 1953, Ramos invited geographer Orlando Ribeiro (1911-1997) to teach a course on Human Geography at ESBAP, and in the same year, Távora produced with students an *Inquérito às expressões e técnicas tradicionais portuguesas* with the support of the Centro de Estudos Geográficos da Faculdade de Letras and the Centro de Etnologia Peninsular da Faculdade de Ciências do Porto, as part of a broader didactic work that, between 1952 and 1957, intertwined modern international and modern popular.⁵

The geographical vision that Távora considers the foundation of the project, a vision from which derives the non-accessory but structural relevance of traveling, thus has deep roots and, to a large extent, still merits investigation.

However, the ESBAP led by Ramos is not only the environment in which Távora's journeys through the Portuguese routes are transformed into national research on popular architecture.

Carlos Ramos,⁶ in fact, director of the School and mentor of Távora, on the one hand, brings to the classroom a conception of the project capable of combining different references within Portuguese architectural culture, having been influenced by both Raul Lino and Miguel Ventura Terra. On the other hand, he is undoubtedly also the intermediary – like Lino himself, moreover – of a nineteenth-century English culture that elaborates the overcoming of eclecticism, replacing it with the idea of a “popular” language derived, without militant choices of style, from the unrestricted use of different historical languages made subordinate to local geographical conditions, construction logics, and living needs. Moreover, Ramos, although interested in modernist language innovations – which, as is well known, he was the first to introduce into ESBAP, influencing the group of new assistants to which Távora belonged – did not abandon his Beaux-Arts training and culture.⁷

By insisting on the fundamental role of circumstance, considering form as “a strategy referring to the specific place”, and rejecting “the pretence of being

⁵ In 1953, at the UIA Congress in Lisbon, Távora presented an exhibition developed within the School entitled *Técnicas Tradicionais da Arquitectura Portuguesa*; in 1956, at the CIAM in Dubrovnik, he presented a survey on the rural habitat developed with ESBAP students. On the same occasion, the Portuguese group formed by Távora, Viana de Lima, Octávio Lixa Filgueiras, Arnaldo Araújo and Carlos Carvalho Dias presented a project, developed for participation in the conference, concerning a new neighborhood for an agricultural community to be built in northern Portugal. For the importance of investigations into popular architecture in the development of ESBAP, see: Jorge Figueira, *A Escola do Porto. Um mapa crítico* (Porto: Edarq, 2018) now [Coimbra: edarq, 2002]; Gonçalo do Canto Moniz, *O Ensino Moderno da Arquitectura* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2019). Figueira, in particular, argues that the Inquerito represents a founding experience for the School of Porto because it provides a realist approach, an understandable and culturally sound basis for architectural design; it also translates a culturalist attitude and a sociological and anthropological focus that is significant in the School. See: Figueira, *A Escola do Porto. Um mapa crítico*, 49.

⁶ For an overview of the figure of Carlos Ramos see: *Carlos Ramos. Exposição retrospectiva da sua obra* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. Serviço de Exposições e Museografia 1986). The figure of Ramos emerges, as is natural, in many passages of Távora's public and private writings. For a text dedicated to him, see: Fernando Távora, *Evocando Carlos Ramos*, text of the conference promoted by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on 12 February 1986 and published in: *rA – Revista da Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto*, no. 0, (1987): 75.

⁷ As a teacher, Ramos encouraged Távora not to use just one language but to experiment with several. In an interview with Javier Frechilla, Távora stated that Ramos “was compromised with the official classical language but, despite this, allowed his pupils to use other languages in a freer and more differentiated way.” See: Javier Frechilla, *Fernando Távora. Conversaciones en Oporto, Arquitectura*, no. 261, (July-August 1986): 22.

original”, Ramos undoubtedly contributes to consolidating the cosmopolitan vision of the project that characterises Távora’s work, of which the Portuguese anonymous architecture constitutes an initial piece.

Two projects realised in the second half of the 1950s testify to the ability to translate the constants found in the study of popular architecture into new architecture and, at the same time, to put these constants to the test of other cultures and other references that other journeys, about which we will soon speak, are introducing into the Távora’ project. A programme of work, moreover, clearly formulated in the text *Para um urbanismo e uma arquitectura portuguesas*, a year later than the aforementioned text on architectural constants, of which it is, to some extent, a translation in operational and design terms.

Do not close your eyes to the reality of the World – How could we isolate ourselves if one of the aspects of our reality is, rightly, our relationship with the World? Why not study, seriously, the works of the great modern architects and town planners to know how they apply to our case instead of making superficial and systematic statements against these same works? And, as we weave our relations with foreign currents, never forget the lesson of our history, remembering those masters who were called Ouguete, Boytac, Chanterene, Terzi, Nasoni, Ludovice, Mardel, and so many others.⁸

As mentioned, this is a cosmopolitan programme that involves travel as a basic means of implementation.

The project for the Municipal Park in the *Quinta da Conceição* (Matosinhos 1956 ff.) could be defined as the occasion in which walking, travelling, at first individual and then collective, through Portuguese territories, is transformed from a cognitive act into a design act.

In 1956, the Municipality of Matosinhos commissioned Távora to create a public park in an area occupied by the remains of the 15th century Franciscan convent of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, which, following the extinction of the religious orders in 1834, had become public property and abandoned to progressive decay. At the time of Távora’s intervention, only the remains of the cloister, some monumental fountains and the chapel of St. Francis remain on the grounds [Fig. 1, 2].



1

The surrounding land, which has become the property of the port authority, houses a dock. The park programme – which will be realised only in part and

⁸ Fernando Távora, *Para um urbanismo e uma arquitectura portuguesas*, *Comércio do Porto*, 25 Maio 1953 [24 Março 1953; 13 Dezembro 1955].

Fig. 1, 2
Fernando Távora, Municipal Park in the Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos (photo by the author).



2 |

over a long period – includes a play area, sports facilities⁹ and, of course, an overall arrangement of the archaeological remains, paths and greenery.

Távora decides not to tackle the lost image of the convent, of which he does not propose restitution, but to investigate the ‘spatial ritual’ of the place, to use one of his expressions.¹⁰ This investigation, which generates the project, takes place by walking, repeatedly crossing, and ‘travelling’ within the place.

By shifting the design methodology from a figurative approach to an accentuation of the experiential nature of the project, Távora fits fully into the avant-garde of European and American culture that, on the one hand, takes up the tradition of late 19th-century Anglo-Saxon empiricism and on the other hybridises it with existentialist phenomenology. In the specific case of Távora, also with more specifically Portuguese or Iberian matrices such as J. Ortega y Gasset, who was very present in the writings of these years. In *Meditations on Quixote*, Ortega writes that ‘one of the most profound differences between the present century and the 19th century consists ‘in the change in our sensitivity to circumstances’.

Circumstance! Circum-stantia! That is, the mute things which are all around us. Very close to us, they raise their silent faces with an expression of humility and eagerness as if they needed our acceptance of their offering and, at the same time, were ashamed of the apparent simplicity of their gift.¹¹

A theme that returns in *The Revolt of the Masses* with formulations that will be taken up by Távora almost literally in *The Organisation of Space* – the text that

⁹ Among these facilities is the municipal swimming pool that Távora entrusted to the young collaborator Álvaro Siza (Álvaro Siza, *Piscina da Quinta da Conceição*, 1965-1966).

¹⁰ “El edificio,” says Távora in a 1986 interview, “tiene un ritual, un ritual de espacio que nosotros debemos respetar. En caso contrario, estamos destruyéndolo completamente”. (Frenchilla, “Fernando Távora. Conversaciones en Oporto”, 28). This idea of a ritual approach to the project is appropriately emphasized in: Nieves Fernández Villalobos, *Parque Municipal y Piscina de la Quinta da Conceição 1956-1962*, in: *21 Edificios de Arquitectura Moderna en Oporto*, edited by, Daniel Villalobos, Sara Pérez, (Porto: Editorial Sever-Cuesta, 2010), 175-191.

¹¹ José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijote* (Madrid: 1914) English translation: Id. *Meditations on Quixote*, translated by Evelyn Rugg, Diego Marin, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1961): 41.

closes and systematises the decade of travel and projects we are dealing with – where the Spanish philosopher is explicitly cited in a close connection with the Gulbenkian travel experience, which we will discuss in a moment.¹²

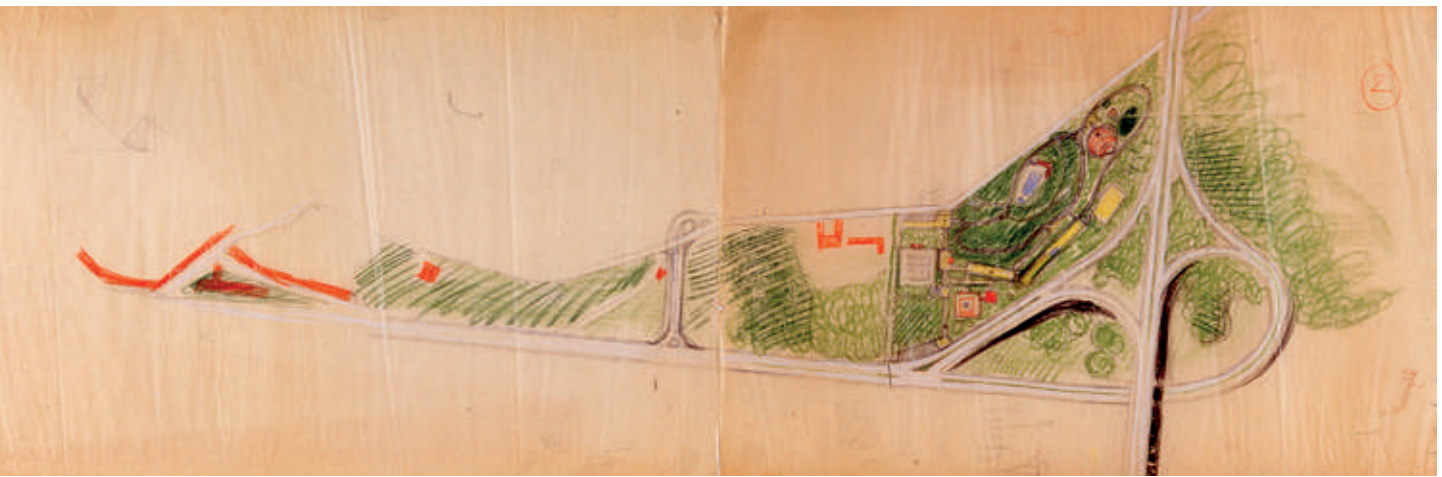
With Ortega, Távora also shares the idea that the dispersion of personality ‘among things’ is not a renunciation of individuality but, on the contrary, a broader and fuller realisation of it.

Being always me, always being circumstantial, always the same as myself and always different in accordance with circumstances – a kind of definition of tradition according to António Sardinha – “Tradition = permanence in continuity” – a balance between what is stable and what is fluctuating, a great variety – resulting from this circumstantialism – and a great unity resulting from my personalism... – 15/III/69.¹³

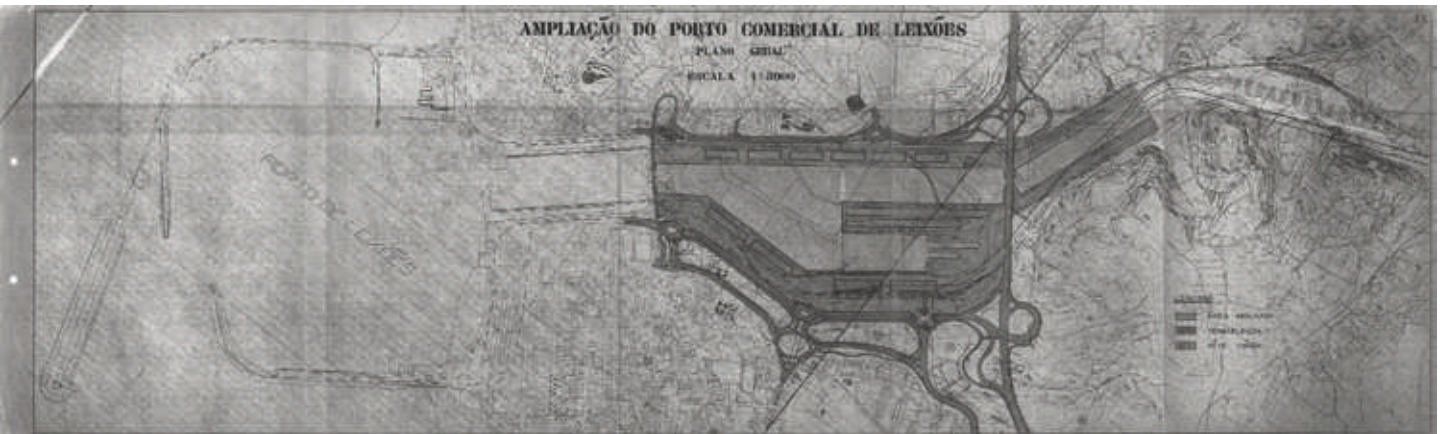
The project for the Quinta is therefore, first and foremost, a project of adherence to existing things, of dispersal of the self, of questioning the circumstance. Practices that imply as their foundation a study of crossings.

12 Ortega y Gasset writes in his *La rebelión de las masas* (1930 English edition Id., *The Revolt of the Masses*. New York: W W Norton & Company Inc, 1932): ‘Life, which means primarily what is possible for us to be, is likewise, and for that very reason, a choice, from among these possibilities, of what we actually are going to be. Our circumstances – these possibilities form the portion of life given us, imposed on us. This constitutes what we call the world. Life does not choose its own world, it finds itself, to start with, not a world determined and unchangeable: the world of the present. Our world is that portion of destiny which goes to make up our life. But this vital destiny is not a kind of mechanism. We are not launched into existence like a shot from a gun, with its trajectory absolutely predetermined. The destiny under which we fall when we come into this world – it is always this world, the actual one consists in the exact opposite. Instead of imposing on us one trajectory, it imposes several, and consequently forces us to choose. Surprising condition, this, of our existence!’ (pp. 47-48) “When people talk of life, they generally forget something which to me seems most essential, namely, that our existence is at every instant and primarily the consciousness of what is possible to us. If at every moment we had before us no more than one possibility, it would be meaningless to give it that name. Rather it would be a pure necessity. But there it is: this strangest of facts that a fundamental condition of our existence is that it always has before it various prospects, which by their variety acquire the character of possibilities among which we have to make our choice... To say that we live is the same as saying that we find ourselves in an atmosphere of definite possibilities. This atmosphere we generally call our “circumstances.” All life means finding oneself in ‘circumstances’ or in the world around us. (in the footnote: See the prologue to my first book, *Meditaciones del Quijote*, Ávila: 1916). For this is the fundamental meaning of the idea “world.” The world is the sum-total of our vital possibilities. It is not then something apart from and foreign to our existence, it is its actual periphery. It represents what it is within our power to be, our vital potentiality. This must be reduced to the concrete in order to be realised, or putting it another way, we become only a part of what it is possible for us to be. Hence it is that the world seems to us something enormous, and ourselves a tiny object within it. The world or our possible existence is always greater than our destiny or actual existence. But what I wanted to make clear just now was the extent to which the life of man has increased in the dimension of potentiality. (pp. 40-41) Távora writes in his *Da Organização do Espaço* (Porto: 1962): “But, contrary to what men sometimes think, the forms they create, the spaces they organise, are not created or organised in a regime of total freedom; instead, they are profoundly pre-conditioned by an infinite number of factors, some of which are well present to their consciousness, others capable of acting on them at an unconscious level. It is difficult to indicate and describe the large number of different factors present in every man-made form and their relative influence. For if artificial or man-made forms, as well as the natural forms that are so important, are conditioning factors in every new form created, then man-made organised space is also conditioned in its organisation but, once organised, then becomes conditioning in relation to future organisations; and it is only for the sake of exposition convenience that one can separate the two aspects of an organised space, conditioned in the act of its creation and conditioning in its existence. To this combination of human and natural factors (and this distinction is only possible insofar as a phenomenon is observed on a human scale, but they are intimately linked factors), we will give the name ‘circumstance’. Circumstance will thus be, according to the very meaning of the term, the set of factors involving man, who, as the creator of many of them, will have to place side by side with them those that result from his very existence from his being.” (p. 21-22) “The importance that forms have in the lives of men ... [has as its consequence] ... the responsibility of every man in the organisation of the space that surrounds him. The responsibility derives from the fact that man must be aware of how the organisation of space, although subject to circumstance, is not ‘fatally determined’ by it and offers the possibility of the organiser’s active intervention; and he must also be aware that space, once organised, itself becomes circumstance. The two aspects, freedom of choice of form while accepting a circumstance and awareness of the importance assumed by an organised space, must be the foundation of the activity of a space organiser. From this, it follows that man, in creating a form, must take a position, both because he is not obliged to submit to the circumstance passively, and because the circumstance can present absolutely negative aspects and it would be cowardly to go along with them instead of fighting them, all the more so knowing that in creating forms, circumstances are created, which can improve or worsen these aspects.” (p. 24)

13 Fernando Távora, “Prologue”, in Távora, *“Minha casa”*, 28.



3



4

The first planning decision concerns the general road system of the area, which Távora requests to modify to prevent the access plan to the Port from impacting the Park. This idea will later be developed in the Port of Leixões Expansion Plan [Fig. 3, 4].¹⁴

He then sets four entrances, only partly realised as planned, and develops the intervention by redefining a network of paths and passages that connect the existing and newly built elements without a hierarchy of relevance, without a distinction between natural and artificial elements.

The guiding principle applied is a central theme in Távora's design method: continuity.

A spatial and temporal continuity that requires, in the design process, moments of abandonment of representation as the primary tool in favour of a gestural, experiential, bodily dimension of which walking is the foundation.

Távora, recounting in retrospect his work in the *Quinta da Conceição*, describes it as the activity of a 'prior of the convent':

I used to walk with the bricklayers and gardeners, telling them what to do. There was an employee who gave me advice, and I often followed

Fig. 3
Fernando Távora, Municipal Park in the Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos, sketch for the modification of the general road system in the area (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 4
Fernando Távora, Extension Plan for the Commercial Port of Leixões, 1958 (FIMS/AFT).

14 Fernando Távora, *Ampliação do Porto Comercial de Leixões*, Mathosinhos, 1958 ff.

it. All this happened in a very familiar, almost domestic, atmosphere, thanks to the support of the Mayor, a very sensitive man who did not attach great importance to money and believed that the important thing was to do things well.¹⁵



5

The usual narrative tone of the project reports drawn up by Távora for the public narrative actually conceals radical and innovative choices, all of which can be classified under the category of continuity.

Continuity of time and space, as mentioned, which removes the project from abstraction and the selective action of representation in order to build a unicum composed of found elements [Fig. 5], kept as such or reorganised, mixed with elements built from scratch.

Continuity of knowledge and practice between designer and workers, the former's foundation for the abandonment of representation.

Continuity between political decision and design action, thus between the designer and the community to which the work is destined, profiling the idea of the project as a shared task dear to Távora.

A continuity that, in compositional terms, not only does not generate indifference but, on the contrary, enhances the specificity of each element brought back into the design action, eliminating any difference between preserving or restoring (actions that Távora, on other design occasions, knows how to isolate and masterfully perform) and inventing.

The place is treated as an existing score, understood and accepted in the project, on which to intervene – to remain in the musical metaphor not inappropriate for a moment in which Távora is still vague a 'harmonic' space – with variations and accents.

Some elements of invention, then, perform the function of creating a hierarchy in the continuity of the place.

In particular, three architectures, all characterised by their being at once elements with a precise formal identity but also devices of exchange, of connection, of highlighting the "profound relationships" that the project intends to emphasise: the swimming pool, the design of which Távora entrusts to Álvaro

Fig. 5
Fernando Távora, Municipal Park in the Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos (photo by the author).

15 Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2005): 339.

Siza – a choice that generates a game of adherence and difference to the overall principles of the project in itself worthy of attention –, the Red Pavilion and the Tennis Pavilion, both designed by Távora [Fig. 6, 7].

If in the Municipal Park project the role of travel is manifested in its experiential dimension of crossing places and connecting, through walking, things and times, in the *Tennis Pavilion* (1956-60) the role of travel – in the broad sense in which we understand it – is enriched with different meanings.

First of all, Távora experiences a specific aspect of the lesson learnt through the trip across his homeland, namely the precise knowledge of the construction grammar of Portuguese popular architecture, more precisely of Northern Portugal.

It is, in fact, a fundamental complement to the experiential dimension of the project already underlined.

Only thanks to the profound knowledge of the building tradition, only thanks to this knowledge shared with the workers, can the cognitive crossing of places, deprived of representation as the primary means of the project, be transformed into a project. The knowledge and exercise of constants become the foundation for building the spatial and temporal continuity mentioned above.

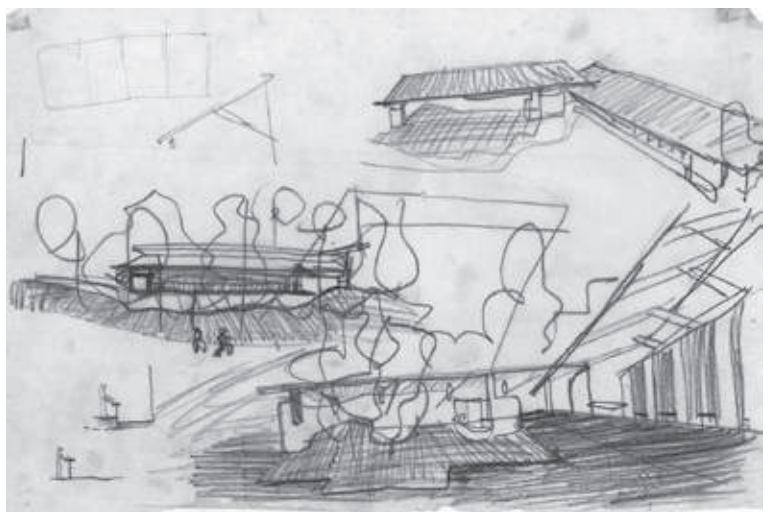
The connection between the design theme of crossing and the importance of constructive exactitude emerges from an apparently self-deprecating remark made by Távora in the project report:

There was the problem of marking the park with a building, creating an object with presence, affirming the axis of the tennis courts and serving as a landmark, as is the case with Siza's swimming pool. The most curious fact is that the grandstand in the pavilion does not work because it is uncomfortable, and the visibility on the courts is bad; this does not bother me much because it is another case, among many, whose highest praise is that it serves no purpose.¹⁶

The radically anti-functionalist position thus expressed has, in reality, deep roots connected with the idea of walking, of traversing places as a cognitive and



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Fig. 6
Fernando Távora, Red Pavilion, Municipal Park in the Quinta da Conceição (photo by the author).

Fig. 7
Álvaro Siza, Perspective sketches for the study of the swimming pool pavilions, corresponding to a version of the project delivered to the Matosinhos Town Hall in June 1958 (drawing digitised at Fernando Távora's studio, with his authorisation, during research for the publication of the monograph Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, Electa Mondadori: Milan, 2005).

16 Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 319.

meditative act, a reflective walking to which Távora recognises an ancient Greek root, as we shall see, and which implies pause, idleness. A cognitive power is attributed to the suspension of action, which Távora also finds in his beloved Pessoa: “Ah, what a pleasure it is not to perform a duty”.¹⁷

This idea is related, returning to architecture, to a particular idea of decoration understood not as an act positive but as a result inherent “in what is left out”, according to an expression that Távora borrows from Francisco de *Hollanda’s Da Pitura*. The space that is left out as an act of suspension of design process has the same value as the space that is occupied, an idea that Távora will develop in a theoretical key in the text *Da Organização do Espaço* but that we see, put into practice before theory, in the use-



less space of pause, in the emptiness as a connecting element that the *Tennis Pavilion* represents within the *Quinta* [Fig. 8].¹⁸

The uselessness of the Pavilion, its being an ‘ornament’ of the Quinta, implies and allows the constructive precision that Távora dedicates to the small building to be understood as an exercise in the legitimacy of building action, in essentiality and correctness in the display of archetypal constructive acts, of constants: founding, supporting, covering, separating and placing space in continuity.¹⁹

The transcription of the popular grammar, the translation of the ‘archaeological’ knowledge gathered thanks to the *Inquérito* into a living language is, in itself, a design result fully coherent with the rejection of any stylistic recovery of tradition affirmed in Távora’s first relevant text published, *O problema da casa*

17 “Ai que prazer / Não cumprir um dever, / Ter um livro para ler / E não fazer! / Ler é maçada, / Estudar é nada. / Sol doira / Sem literatura / O rio corre, bem ou mal, / Sem edição original. / E a brisa, essa, / De tão naturalmente matinal, / Como o tempo não tem pressa.” (Oh what a pleasure / Not fulfilling a duty, / Having a book to read / And not doing it! / To read is a bore, / To study is nothing. / The sun shines / Without literature / The river flows, good or bad, / Without original edition. / And the breeze, that one, / Is so naturally matutinal, / As time has no hurry...). See: Fernando Pessoa, *Poesias*, nota explicativa de João Gaspar Simões and Luiz de Montalvor (Lisboa: Ática, 1942): 244.

18 Fernando Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1999): 18. In fact, the reference to Francisco de Hollanda’s phrase – ‘Decorum is what one neglects to do’ (*Da Pitura Antigua*, a text from 1548 that Távora quotes in an annotated edition Joaquim de Vasconcelos, published in Porto by Renascença Portuguesa in 1918, p. 172) already appears in the *Diário de “bordo”* that Távora kept during the Gulbenkian trip in 1960 on the occasion of a conversation about Paul Rudolph with Eduard Franz Sekler (21 March). Of the *Diary* there exists an *editio princeps* with anastatic reproduction, Portuguese transcription and English translation promoted by the Associação Casa da Arquitectura in Matosinhos, coordinated by Álvaro Siza and edited by Rita Marnoto (Fernando Távora, *Diário de “bordo”*, Matosinhos: Associação Casa da Arquitectura 2012). We also refer, for apparatus and annotations, to the Italian edition: Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, Raffaella Maddaluno, *Fernando Távora. Diario di bordo* (Siracusa: LetteraVentitdue, 2022). In what follows, reference will also be made, as appropriate, to the two editions, indicating only the day of reference.

19 On the connection between ornament, order and the legitimacy of building, the studies of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy remain of reference, useful also for the reconstruction of Távora’s specific cultural framework (“Ornament”, *The Art Bulletin*, no. XXI, (1939): 375-382). Coomaraswamy is, moreover, one of the authors cited by Távora in his text on *The Organisation of Space* (Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 20).

Fig. 8

Fernando Távora, Tennis Pavilion, Municipal Park in the Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos (FIMS/AFT).

*Portuguesa*²⁰ – a text that opposed a cultural vision founded on the isolation of Portugal – and with the opposite idea of ‘perennial modernity’ traced through a cosmopolitan knowledge founded on the journey, developed in the aforementioned text *A lição das constantes* [Fig. 9, 10, 11].



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However, the design exercise does not end with this complex task; the dates are essential in highlighting other aspects.

Távora designed the *Tennis Pavilion* in 1956 and completed its construction in 1960. The project begins at the immediate conclusion of the study trip requested by the *Inquérito*, and it concludes on the return of the Gulbenkian trip, the last in a series that, during the decade, brings him into contact with post-war Modernist culture. We will say at once about these trips, this “anarchic” crossing of the Modern, as Távora defines it, but the *Pavilion*, more than any writings or theoretical elaboration, albeit in full coherence with the cultural passages witnessed in the writings, demonstrates the operational outcomes of a study of “the works of the great modern architects and urbanists, in order to know how they are applicable to our case”, according to the programme mentioned above.

²⁰ Published in the weekly *Aléo* on 10 November 1945 then published, in a revised and expanded form, as the first volume of the *Cadernos de Arquitectura* in 1947.

Fig. 9, 10, 11
Photographic image of the Tennis Pavilion (photo by the author) compared with pages from the resulting volume of *Inquérito: Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*, (Lisboa: Gravura, composição e impressão Gráfica São Gonçalo, 1961: 179, 105).

What is clear is above all the absence of any possible militancy of modernist revisionism.

The Pavilion does not reinterpret in a regional key the canonised architectural innovations of pre-war Modernism: decomposition of tectonic nodes, free plan, isomorphic space, modelling of the void, spatial continuity between interior and exterior. Rather, he translates traditional Portuguese construction, from the tectonic node to spatial articulation, into an actualised architectural practice, tracing common roots between local traditions and modernist canons.

It is a subtle game from which the “modern” emerges not denied but recomposed in a broader thought, shown in its roots, and brought back to a timeless elementality. With an act of constructive clarity, Távora accomplishes, at the same time, an actualisation of the processes captured in anonymous historical architecture and a reduction to the history of 20th century linguistic inventions [Fig. 12].



12

Bringing both Portuguese tradition and 20th century innovation back into the sphere of the constants of the ‘perennial modern’ is, after all, based on a key principle in Távora’s project, namely a cosmopolitan vision in the use of architectural languages. A cosmopolitan vision that saves what is local from the vernacular, leading it back to universal principles and what is ‘foreign’ from the homologation of internationalism. A revolutionary principle with respect to cultural imperialism based on technocracy of which he would find the maximum expression when he travelled to the USA in 1960 thanks to the Gulbenkian Foundation, opposing it, as we shall see, with a programme that was as far-sighted as it was tragically losing in the context of architectural culture in the second half of the 20th century.

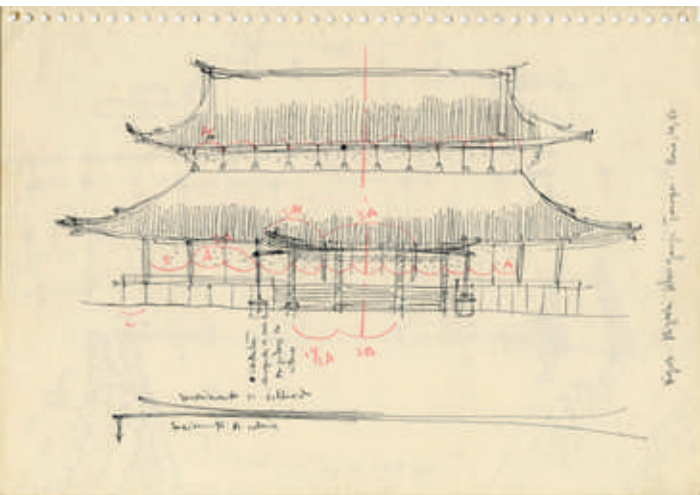
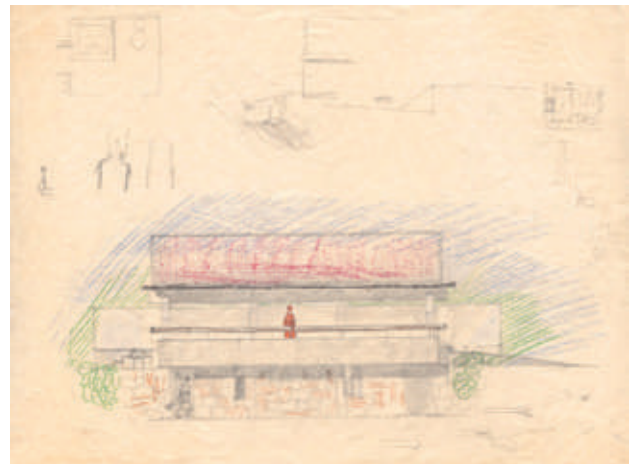
In a text of his maturity, Távora describes his project to replace internationalism with a renewed cosmopolitanism as a character of contemporary Portuguese architecture:

We believe that the thinking behind contemporary Portuguese architecture, of its most representative sectors, does not forget, but rather practices, this tradition of ours that has been mentioned: not imposing, but sympathising and understanding, capable of understanding people and their places, guaranteeing their buildings and spaces identity and variety, as in a phenomenon of heteronymy in which the author demultiplies himself, not due to conceptual or other incapacity, but due to the principle of respect, when deserved, that we owe to our neighbour. This way of being in the world, in

Fig. 12
Fernando Távora, Tennis Pavilion, Municipal Park in the Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos (photo by the author).

truth, does not come from the weakness of the creator in the presence of the other, of his place and time; on the contrary, it is exactly the result of the creative consideration of the other's substance and circumstance.²¹

Returning to the design of the Pavilion, it is sufficient to compare three contemporary drawings – the design of the Pavilion, the drawing of the Robie House (contained in the *Diary* as of 16 April 1969) and a sketch of the Higashi-Honganji temple in Kyoto (*Logbook*, Notebook A, 20 May 1960) [Fig. 13, 14, 15] to understand how Távora's cosmopolitanism translates into an ability to draw on historical sources by making them operative and vital in favour of a project that does not, therefore, become historicist. Rather, the principle is the strengthening and perfecting of one's own language through understanding, accepting and searching for the common roots of other languages.



14

15

The 'Anarchic' Journey into the Modern

The journey to his homeland to discover Portuguese popular culture began genealogically within the family. But it is still the privileged family situation that offers Távora, in a Portugal isolated due to the Salazarian dictatorship, the opportunity to undertake foreign travels while still in his twenties. The urgencies that lead him to the 'indispensable' practice of travelling are twofold and soon become intertwined with travelling abroad.

The first is an individual need, a 'spiritual duty' as Távora would define it, to investigate the axis of 'Greece, Rome, Christendom, Europe', according to the synthesis of the beloved Pessoa.²² We will say more about this later.

21 Fernando Távora, *Imigração/Emigração. Cultura Arquitectónica Portuguesa no Mundo*. In: *Arquitectura do Seculo XX. Portugal*, (Munich – New York: Prestel, 1997): 141-142. On this subject, we refer to our Giovanni Leoni, *Cosmopolitanism versus Internationalism: Távora, Siza and Souto Moura*. In: Francisco Bethencourt, ed., *Cosmopolitanism in the Portuguese-Speaking World*. (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 163-219.

22 "Grécia, Roma, Cristandade, / Europa – os quatro se vão/ Para onde vai toda idade. / Quem vem viver a verdade / Que morreu D. Sebastião?" See: Fernando Pessoa, *Mensagem* (Lisboa: Parceria A.M. Pereira, 1934): III, I, 2.

Fig. 13
Fernando Távora, Tennis Pavilion, Municipal Park in the Quinta da Conceição, Matosinhos, overall sketch (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 14
Fernando Távora, Higashi-Honganji Temple in Kyoto, 20 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 15
Fernando Távora, Sketch of Robie House, Chicago, 16 April 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

The second requirement stems from his choice to enrol at the *Escola Superior de Belas-Artes do Porto* to become an architect and from his meeting with Carlos Ramos, a key figure in his training and the start of his academic career. Ramos arrived at ESAP as a lecturer in 1940, two years before Távora's enrolment. He became its Director in 1952 when he had just chosen Távora and other young graduates as a volunteer assistant. Committed to the ministerial reform of the teaching of architecture, a reform centred on overcoming the stylistic Beaux-Arts tradition in favour of a new figure more oriented towards technical knowledge and social commitment, Ramos brought the themes of modernism into the school, having Le Corbusier as his main reference and, for the teaching model, above all Walter Gropius and his "democratic pedagogy" experimented at Harvard between 1938 and 1952. In addition to the school, Ramos involved his young assistants in the activities of ODAM, the *Organização dos Arquitectos Modernos*, founded in 1947.

Among the favourite destinations of Távora's first trips as an architecture student, however, is Italy, in the 1940s. A first trip, which by Távora's standards could be said to have been improvised, in 1947 and a second, more methodically prepared, in 1949.²³ In Italy, Távora visited the Torre Piacentini in Genoa, inaugurated in 1940, and the Centro Piacentiniano in Bergamo (1912-1927), the works of Figini and Pollini in Ivrea, the Palazzo delle Poste in Naples (Giuseppe Vaccaro and Gino Franzi, 1933-1936); he was interested in the work of the BBPR in Milan, and visited Como to see Terragni. Among his primary interests was town planning, with a particular focus on the QT8 presented at the 1947 Triennale by Bottoni.²⁴

An interest in Italian architecture, as we can see, also driven by curiosity towards authors who, like Piacentini, had worked in Porto and with whom Távora would directly confront himself in his first years of profession, as town planner for the Municipality, elaborating the *Plan for Campo Alegre* (Porto, 1948) and the *Plan for Avenida da Ponte* (Porto, 1955). But above all a curiosity dictated by the affinity he felt with the most innovative Italian research in the common framework of the need for a 'new realism', of a non-historicist but 'vital' relationship with the past, of a confrontation with the historical city as a lesson of modernity, of the definition of new tasks for architecture in the changed framework of post-war Europe and of a break, not simply revisionist, with the dictates of early 20th-century modernism. A profound affinity that, in its most immediate form, will show itself in projects such as that for the *Aveiro Centre* (1963 ff.).

However, the first European trips were also driven by the urgency of encountering the work of the guiding figure in Távora's education, Le Corbusier, from life. An urgency that soon becomes the most painful of disillusion.

23 It is worth mentioning that in 1947, the ICAT (*Iniciativas Culturais Arte e Técnica*) group in Lisbon, in which Francisco Keil do Amaral (1910-1975) is a leading figure, took over the editorship of the magazine *Arquitectura*, which in the following years was an important intermediary between Portuguese and Italian architectural culture. On this subject, see: Lavinia Ann Minciocchi, "From Casabella to *Arquitectura*. The Italian influence of Portuguese post CIAM debate", in *Revisiting the post-CIAM generation*, edited by Nuno Correia, Maria Helena Maia, Rute Figueiredo (Porto: ESAP, 2019): 232-250.

24 In relation to these early trips to Italy see: Giorgio Liverani, *Context and Project. Italian Influences on Fernando Távora's Architecture*, Bologna 2017 (Doctoral Thesis, University of Bologna, Department of Architecture, Tutor Antonio Esposito) and the extract published in HPA n. 11 (2022), 450-485.

Five years before the in-person meeting in Hoddesdon, on 27 September 1947, Távora had written from Marseilles to his fiancée telling of having seen the model of the *Unité d'Habitation*.

My admiration for Le Corbusier is so great that the Marseille model represents for me, together with the original works by Picasso in the Barcelona Museum, the strongest feeling or pleasure I have experienced on this trip because Le Corbusier is “the Great Man, the Master” the creator of most modern solutions and above all the one who orients all the work that will be done in Europe in the next 100 years.²⁵

But in 1952, the encounter with his built work is of an entirely different tone: “A delirium ... and a sadness because all dreams come to an end. Reality is sadness”.²⁶

A criticism of Le Corbusier’s built work that he would return to on several occasions, accompanied by more general objections to the Swiss master’s cultural project to which he nevertheless remained bound by a tormented relationship, both of identification and of overcoming, for the whole of his life, attempting until the very end to interpret it in a way that would tear him away from internationalism and lead him back to his own cosmopolitan vision of architecture, appealing precisely to the relevance of travel in the Swiss master’s work.

In his text on *The Organisation of Space*, which, as mentioned, is in many respects a synthesis of the decade 1950-1960, Távora attributes to the Swiss master the “negative responsibilities” of “famous men” – “the Le Corbusier, the Aalto, the Wrights” – who steer us away from “the path of our personal references” with “utopian” illusions of internationalism when their work “represents a minimal portion of our organised space and, as we move towards anonymity, the confusion, lack of coherence and chaos become more and more acute”.²⁷

But in the *lectio magistralis* given in the Sala dei Dogi of the Ducal Palace in Venice on the occasion of the *Laurea Honoris Causa* awarded to him by the IUAV on 29 April 2003, two years before his death, Távora, quoting as a reference, with sublime *sprezzatura*, the Venetian ‘Gazzettino’ of 24 September 1952, evokes a lecture given in the city by Le Corbusier, ‘whose real name,’ he specifies, ‘was Charles-Eduard Janneret’. With a subtle heteronymic procedure, Távora evokes a Le Corbusier who describes “Venice as the marvellous city that takes on in itself, after centuries of history, the most bizarre architectural contrasts, but which, despite this, shows itself to be harmoniously complete, intact in all its particularity, greyed by the hand of time”. An almost literal quotation from *The Stones of Venice* by the beloved Ruskin. In a few passages, Távora

25 Fernando Távora, “Viagem pel Europa”, in Távora, “*Minha Casa*”, 23.

26 Fernando Távora, diaristic note reported in Manuel Mendes, *Ah, che ansia umana di essere il fiume o la riva!*, in Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 344-345.

27 Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 42.

then takes “the Swiss Le Corbusier”, born in the “small town of La Chaux-de-Fonds”, back to his origins, to his relationship with Charles L’Eplattenier, hinting at the cancellation of that education and the *damnatio memoriae* of his early works linked to his birthplace by the publicists, right from the first edition of the *Complete Works*. He then cites Cingria-Vaneyre’s *Les Entretiens de la Villa du Rouet*²⁸ in relation to “a specific artistic identity for French-speaking Switzerland” whose spirit is “Mediterranean and not Nordic” to the extent that “its art must cease to be influenced by Germany and return once again to Greco-Latin classicism.” Távora recounts, next, a Le Corbusier travelling between Rome and Constantinople, between Athens and Pompeii. “The consideration in which he held Cingria’s book,” he concludes, “Jeanneret’s love for his *Suisse-romande* ‘homeland’, his historical knowledge of Mediterranean culture and all of Le Corbusier’s subsequent creative work, come to mark the furrows of contemporary architecture and urbanism strongly”.²⁹

The journeys of knowledge of the modern then became professional, crowded with personal encounters with the elites of world modernist architectural culture. He travelled to Morocco for the UIA congress in 1951, then back to Italy in 1952 to attend the CIAM summer school at the IUAV in Venice, where he consolidated his Italian acquaintances (Rogers, Astengo, Piccinato, Zevi) and attended, in admiration, the lectures by Le Corbusier and Lúcio Costa.

These journeys are complemented by trips to attend CIAMs as an ODAM member.

In 1952, Alfredo Viana de Lima (1913-91) and Fernando Távora were in Hoddesdon for the first Portuguese participation. Sigfried Giedion and Josep Lluís Sert had invited Viana de Lima as a delegate from Portugal. The invitation to participate in the activities of the Congresses causes the ODAM to be rethought and aligned with the CIAM objectives, assuming – not without a protracted internal debate – even the identity of CIAM Porto, a specification that is not necessary because no other CIAM groups will exist in the country.³⁰

Regardless of the *sprezzatura* that always characterises his frequentation of the elites of international architecture, Távora’s participation in the CIAMs is – in his own words – an interesting experience but lived with detachment, and his personal encounter with Le Corbusier on such occasions, an ‘honour’ but out of time.³¹

28 Alexandre Cingria-Vaneyre, *Les entretiens de la Villa du Rouet: essais dialogués sur les arts plastiques en Suisse romandexi* (Genève: A. Jullien Editeur, 1908).

29 The Laurea Honoris Causa, strongly endorsed by Francesco Dal Co, was conferred by the then Rector Carlo Magnani in the Sala dei Dogi of the Doge’s Palace. The text of the *Lectio* delivered by Távora on 29 April 2003 is published in HPA n. 11 (2022), 410-423.

30 See: Pedro Vieira de Almeida, Maria Helena Maia, “As décadas pós-Congresso – Os anos 50”, *História da Arte em Portugal*, no. 14 (1986): 147-153; Alexandra Trevisan, “Influências Internacionais na Arquitectura Moderna no Porto (1926-1956)”, Tese de doutoramento, Universidad de Valladolid, Director: Prof. R. Rodriguez Llera, 2013; Maria Helena Maia, Alexandra Cardoso, *Portugueses in CIAM X. In 20th Century New Towns. Archetypes and Uncertainties*, edited by Paolo Marcolin and Joaquim Flores (Porto: CEAA e DARQ, 2014), 193-213.

31 Fernando Agrasar, “Eu realmente não posso ver uma janela sen ver do lado de lá: Entrevista con Fernando Távora”, in *Fernando Távora, exhibition catalogue* (Guimarães: Departamento Autónomo de Arquitectura da Universidade do Minho, 2003): 18.

In Otterlo, the last CIAM meeting in 1959, Távora participated in the work of Team X.³² He was also invited to the meeting in Bagnols-sur-Cèze in July 1960, but had to cancel due to travel. He will finally take part, “with a certain shyness” and without presenting work, in the meeting in Royaumont in 1962, an experience to which he will dedicate a key text with respect to his definitive distance from all post-war modernist revisionism.

In *O encontro de Royaumont*, published in 1963, Távora draws a parallel between “the men of the Athens Charter” – who, albeit with difficulty, “produced a document in which paths were indicated, where uncertainty did not exist and where a grammar and a few key words made it possible to establish a common language” – and the impossibility, thirty years later, of reaching a similar shared conclusion because:

Times and dimensions have changed... reality is more diverse, richer and more varied. It is not possible, as yet, to give recipes, to classify with sovereignty, to hierarchize with exactitude. To our eyes and to our minds, the world is complex, elusive. Unusual. We get to know man better, we begin to unmask social phenomena and, in parallel, everything becomes more complicated. Contacts increase, new cultures come into play, concepts become relative, the field of technical sciences widens, in a word, man and the World flourish in unusual aspects. One senses that it is a time of research and doubt, of reencounter, of drama and mystery. How, therefore, can one conclude with clarity?³³

As mentioned, both the learning of Modernism and the traversal of the post-war revisionist projects of modernism do not correspond to a convinced militancy – although not excluding enthusiasms and passions on that front as well – but are marked, from the outset, by a substantial disdain.

Already in a long diary note, dated 18 November 1946, Távora writes:

There is only one thing that I would perhaps really be, but I am not, because blood prevents me, because some force I have not yet freed myself of (and I say fortunately) does not allow me to; I could only be an anarchist today, and in part, I must recognise that I already am one. Somewhere, Spengler says that we all today have something of the communist, but I would say instead, we all today have something of the anarchist. I have tried, by reading, structuring and thinking, to become a modern man, like one who from one day to the next decides to become European to Asian; I have therefore made an intellectual effort that has led me to all the fields of modern thought, or some of them, that, as far as possible, I have known. As an outsider, I have passed in front of each of the modern manifestations, especially those of art, and observed them,

32 According to Álvaro Siza's testimony, at the last CIAM Távora “is closer to Coderch's thinking on traditional Catalan houses and not Candilis' thinking on new cities; he is closer to the ‘rebels’ Van Eyck and the young Italians, not Bakema and his ‘triumphant reconstruction’”. See: Álvaro Siza, “Fernando Távora 1923”, in José António Bandeirinha (ed.), *Fernando Távora. Modernidade permanente. Permanet modernity* (Matosinhos: Casa da Arquitectura, 2012): 266-267. For a contextual overview see: E. Fernandes, *The tectonic shift in Fernando Távora work in the post-CIAM years*. In *Revisiting the post-CIAM generation*, edited by Correia, Maia, Figueiredo, 120-134.

33 Fernando Távora, “O encontro de Royaumont”, *Arquitectura*, no. 73 (1963): 1.

allowing myself to study them, always crying, in front of each one my own point of view; in a word, I have become a neutral in all matters. I abandoned one party, one point of view, to take all parties and all points of view, analysing and dissecting each one.³⁴

The Gulbenkian Journey: the Diary

The trip for which Távora gave up the Bagnols-sur-Cèze meeting was the 'trip around the world' he made, thanks to a grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, from 13 February to 12 June 1960, a trip often described as the most important of his life. The text on *Royaumont* and the coeval *On the Organisation of Space*, but especially the identity as a designer developed by Távora in the early 1960s, owe much to the Gulbenkian trip.

The journey's *Diary*³⁵ kept as a private document throughout his life, bears witness to the completion of the 'anarchic' journey into the 'modern' – with a final and decisive 'showdown' with F.L. Wright – but goes further, offering an encounter not with the 'modernism' of elite architectural culture, but with a 'modern condition', a global contemporary condition that the European travels could not offer him.

The Gulbenkian journey is a journey that surpasses the two previous ones – the journey across the homeland and the 'anarchic' journey into the Modern – because, on the one hand it leads Távora to dismiss any illusions of being able to return to the supposed harmony of popular cultures and, on the other, it makes him realise once and for all how the influence of the 'great men', the 'geniuses' protagonists of early 20th-century modernism was, on the real world, extremely limited.

A journey, the Gulbenkian, shows how the tasks of architecture have radically changed.

The trip's impact on Távora's project stems, perhaps, also from the fact that it is not a personal cultural project, as Távora's trips almost always are, but a task assigned by Ramos as Director of ESBAP.³⁶ Távora is preparing the

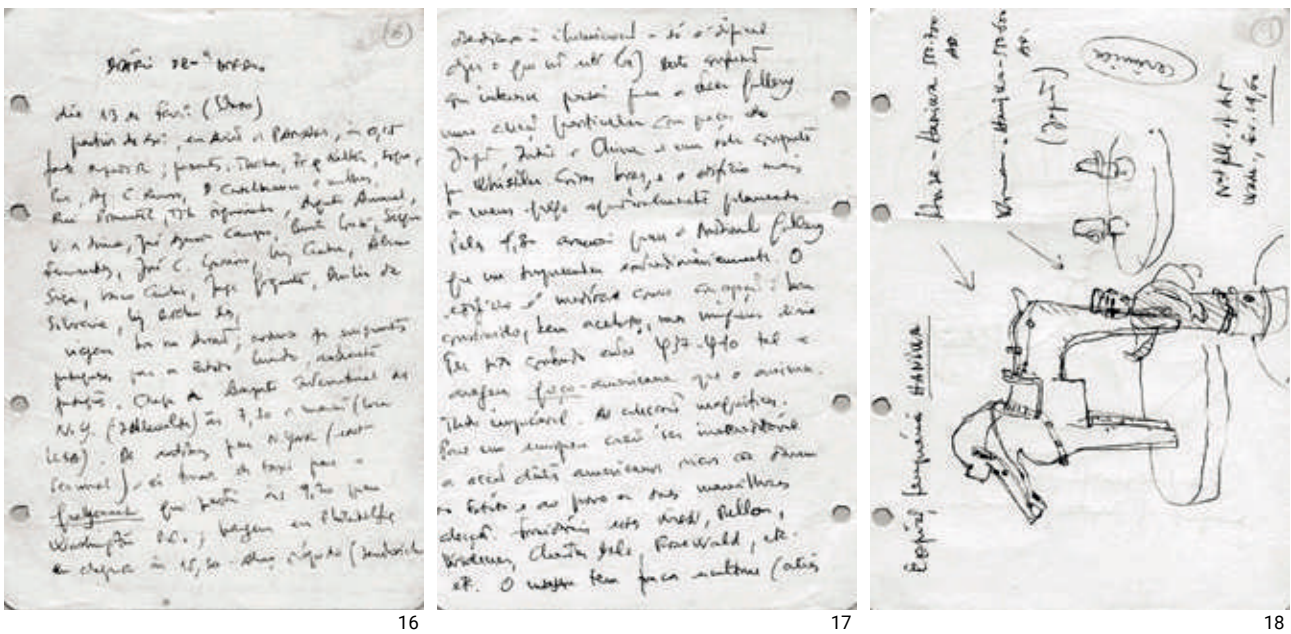
34 Távora, *Prólogo*, 20-21

35 See note 18.

36 On 27 March, in the Italian edition, which includes comments added by Távora during a reading of the *Diary* in the early 2000s, Távora explicitly mentions Carlos Ramos' role in obtaining the scholarship. Many other clues in the pages of the *Diary* testify that the primary objective of the scholarship is connected with the author's recently acquired academic position. Távora had defended his thesis (C.O.D.A.) at ESBAP in 1952, the year in which he had entered the role, following a competition, as an architect for the Municipality of Porto, with which he had already worked on a contract basis since 1948. From 1950 he had started to participate – unpaid – in the group of young assistants of Ramos, Director of ESBAP since 1952. In 1958 Távora had finally left his position at the City Hall to join ESPAB as Second Assistant to Chair No. 14. The Gulbenkian Foundation's call for applications was published on 19 March 1959 and indicated 'Secondary, Higher Technical Education: Sciences, Humanities and Arts' as the general theme. The application submitted by Távora on 27 April 1959, proposed as a work plan: "Study of teaching methods of architecture and urbanism in the following Universities and Institutes: Columbia University, Howard University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Pennsylvania, Illinois Institute of Technology, Institute of Design". The duration indicated by the applicant is four months and the professional qualifications declared are: 'second assistant' at ESBAP, 'consultant-urban planner' at the City of Gaia (a role he has held since 1958), freelancer. Távora declares that he knows English and French; he adds that his wife will accompany him (which will not happen). The USA is the only destination envisaged in the application. On 17 September 1959, the Foundation informed him that the Board of Directors had decided to grant him a scholarship, for four months, to be started within the year. The amount granted is 9,000 scudi per month plus 4,500 scudi for travel. The documents relating to the call for applications - kept at AFIMS and at AFG – are published in Ana Mesquita, "O Melhor de Dois Mundos. A Viagem do arquitecto Távora aos EUA e Japão – Diário 1960." (Dissertação de Mestrado em Arquitectura Território e Memória, orient. José António Bandeirinha, Coimbra 2007), the first comprehensive and document-based study dedicated to the Diary.

submission for the professorship, and the trip is, in fact, an academic mission: to travel across the United States to get to know the teaching methods in vogue in the most renowned schools, especially the most up-to-date results of the innovations introduced into the American academic system by Walter Gropius and the other exiles of European Modernism. At the last moment, again through Ramos's intercession and in full coherence with the Director's interests, the mission financed by the Gulbenkian Foundation was joined by a stopover in Tokyo to attend the World Design Conference (Wo.De.Co.) scheduled for May 1960.

Gulbenkian's daily account of the journey clearly reveals and often painfully denounces the fatigue of an imposed and, above all, solitary undertaking, a circumstance not unimportant for an architect who mainly conceives the journey as a joyful collective experience, of teaching or sharing interests with friends-colleagues [Fig. 16, 17, 18].



The *Diary* has certain characteristics that need to be specified.

Firstly, unlike most *carnet de voyage* written by architects,³⁷ the *Diary* is not written to be read by anyone other than the author.³⁸ To a large extent, the text

37 Ana Mesquita, in her master's thesis, devotes several pages to a comparison between the *Diary* and other architects' travel books, particularly those of Le Corbusier.

38 The history of its publication bears witness to this. Some, early fragments were in fact published in the monograph published for Electa Mondadori by the author with Antonio Esposito (Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*). On that occasion, in the face of a generous availability for the reorganisation and reproduction of the archive, only a long courting led to the integral reading, proposed and conducted in first person by Távora himself. An annotated reading that forms the basis of the Italian edition. However, of these recordings – now preserved at AFIMS – only a few fragments were published then. It was only in 2012, thus seven years after Távora's passing, that the fundamental complete facsimile edition with transcriptions in Portuguese and English finally arrived, promoted by the Associação Casa da Arquitectura de Matosinhos, coordinated by Álvaro Siza and edited by Rita Marnoto, followed ten years later by the Italian edition. In the meantime, on the front of the excavation of Távora's intense diaristic activity and, more generally, of unpublished works, the first volumes of the fundamental and monumental work in progress by Manuel Mendes have seen the light of day. See, to date: Távora, *"Minha casa"*; Fernando Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos palavra desenho obra 1937-2001*, Vol. 1 *Caminhos da arquitectura. Arquitectura e circunstância*, Tomo I, *"O Meu caso" Arquitectura, imperativo ético do ser 1937-1947*, coord. Manuel Mendes, (Porto: Fundação Instituto Arquitecto José Marques da Silva – U.Porto Press, 2021).

Fig. 16, 17, 18
Fernando Távora, pages from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

must be considered as a rough draft for the drafting of the *final report* due by invitation, which was in fact never delivered to the Gulbenkian Foundation.³⁹

The text, however, does not end with the fulfilment of Ramos's mandate – a task that in itself offers infinite reasons for interest – but inevitably allows the personality and cultural identity of the extender to shine through at that date, in an alternation of not docile obedience and flashes of rebellion. The most clamorous of which is the 'flight' to Mexico, perhaps stimulated by some visits to US museums, which matured in Chicago on 7 April in a taxi driven by a Mexican driver, then patiently built up in the bureaucratic implications to finally arrive at the liberating "I'm going to Mexico!" on 20 April and the direct passage, a not insignificant circumstance, from Taliesin West to Mexico City, in the two following days. A variation to the travel schedule expressly forbidden by the scholarship regulations and which Távora experiences as an anti-American transgression.

The palimpsest structure of the *Diary* is, however, even richer and more complex.

Interwoven with the two tasks assigned to him as a young professor and the 'transgressions' he indulges in Mexico and beyond – are encounters, scheduled like the one with Wright, or accidental, that resonate profoundly – positively or negatively – with the cultural identity of Távora, who at that time is a 36-year-old 'young' professor but also an experienced professional architect.

The use of drawing, which is by no means constant throughout the journey, is certainly an obvious – but not infallible – plot to distinguish the tasks imposed by enthusiasms and personal choices.

The few drawings that intersperse the written page, which are otherwise rarely dedicated to architecture, are flanked by two cahiers (Notebook A and Notebook B), full of accurate and timely graphic surveys and annotations, dedicated to the architecture that Távora visits out of personal interest and not as part of the institutional travel programme. However, an exciting encounter does not always lead to a switch from writing to drawing – this is not the case, for instance, for the visits to the two Taliesin or the visit to the Pyramids – and sometimes, drawing is just a quick way to avoid written notes.

The fact remains that careful and scholarly design comes once the United States has left, in the encounters with archaeological Mexico, but especially with the Japanese temples and the Acropolis when the academic mission offers the opportunity to implement the journey into the Great Tradition that Távora had planned from a very young age.

Added to this is Távora's characteristic narrative mode, ironic and transversal. Given the nature of the text, it also lacks the thesis structure that sometimes characterises his academic writings.

39 Távora received, to no avail, numerous reminders from the Foundation and Ramos to deliver the Final Report that was one of the mandatory conditions for obtaining the grant. For more information and a partial reproduction of the manuscript outline prepared and never developed – kept in the Távora Archive at AFIMS – see the study by Ana Mesquita and in particular, the chapter "Relatório Omisso e suas Consequências" (Mesquita da Costa, "O Melhor de Dois Mundos. A Viagem do arquitecto Távora aos EUA e Japão – Diário 1960.", 203-230).

Moreover, it is Távora himself who offers the definition of the *Diary* in the course of his oral re-reading: “a kind of journalistic diary, of a person who arrives in a country and notes everything down” (21 February).⁴⁰ The dry description must be combined with a broader conception of diaristic writing, a genre that saw him prolific from a very young age, expressed in a note of 22 April 1945:

A diary is like a history book, a critical account, and as critical, tendentious and one-sided, and this is because it admits the factor of choice, separation of facts. Now, to choose is to judge and therefore, to make a diary is to ‘tendentiously report’ on the facts that the writer considers most important... a diary is a truncated and tendentious account of the writer’s life.⁴¹

The two definitions are contradictory, but both are appropriate to the complex structure of the writing that accompanies the days of the Gulbenkian journey as a daily ritual, mainly in the evenings and often described as extremely taxing, the last effort before sleep.

On the one hand, the *Diary* is the instrument with which Távora notes down what he will need to write the Report required by the call for applications, thanks to which he obtained the scholarship. A ‘journalistic diary’ to which is added, supplementing it, a collection of materials of a different nature: typed visit programmes, business cards, ‘grey literature’ of different origins.⁴² A private writing destined to remain so and functional to the mission entrusted to him as a professor at ESBAP by Director Carlos Ramos. However, the great daily effort would never turn into the Report due and solicited from him for months on his return, both by the Foundation’s Director, Maria José de Mendonça, and by Ramos himself. Távora’s resistance to the production of the due document, which goes as far as the paradox of a declared “little ease” in writing,⁴³ is probably determined precisely by the fact that the *Diary* is not only a “journalistic” account, but also a “truncated and tendentious” one, whose conclusions are, if not opposite, far removed from the mandate received.

Two themes innervate the *Diary*, clearly showing Távora’s non-adherence to the official mission assigned to him.

The first is the radical critique of the US cultural and economic development model.

Távora is well aware of the transgression and openly admits it in the spoken rereading, accompanying the admission with the irony that, even in the original text, invariably accompanies his rejection of the American model:

⁴⁰ For an analysis of reading aloud and its significance in the history of the *Diary*, see the essay in the Italian edition: Raffaella Maddaluno, *Il Diario di Bordo: dalla testimonianza alla storia*. In Esposito, Leoni, Maddaluno, *Fernando Távora. Diario di bordo*, 20-37.

⁴¹ Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos*, 470.

⁴² Fundamental to knowledge of this aspect of the *Diary* is of course the anastatic edition coordinated by Álvaro Siza and edited by Rita Marnoto.

⁴³ Ana Mesquita, as recalled, devotes a chapter of her discussion to the Report on the basis of a draft, forty A4 sheets, which she consulted, reproduced and transcribed (Mesquita da Costa, “O Melhor de Dois Mundos. A Viagem do arquitecto Távora aos EUA e Japão – Diário 1960”, 103 ff.) and recalls several documents relating to the exchanges on the subject between the default Távora and the Gulbenkian Foundation.

If they knew that there was a Portuguese who kept a diary about their country, who went around saying bad things about America... even if it's not true, I don't always say bad things about America, I also say good things; I also described something about a theatre in New York that had the largest corps de ballet: fifty dancers [Távora imitates dancers, editor's note] (12 April).

The second theme is the substantial disinterest in the destinies of post-CIAM modernism, from the American production of the European masters who emigrated there to the ideal continuation of the CIAM experience in the Wo.De.Co. in Tokyo. Disinterest, which often becomes radical criticism, from which not even the educational reform initiated in the USA by Gropius, whose knowledge is the main institutional reason for the trip, is saved.

The heteronymous structure of Távora's thought allows him to carry on a parallel chronicle and oriented narrative, often intertwining the many apparently purely practical considerations – think of the recurring theme of secretaries, “thousands of secretaries who are rarely interesting” (29 February) – consolidate, by repeating themselves, profound criticisms of the American model – in the cited case the formalism of always-mediated relations – while one of the most structured reflections on the architecture of the American days – the comparison by points between Mies and Wright (13 April) – is noted not in the pages of the Diary but on an enclosed business card. Narrative strategies – because it is difficult not to consider them as such if one knows the sophistication of writing of which Távora is capable – which lead to a consideration. The *Diary* certainly does not belong to the tradition of the *cahier d'architecture*. Here, as on the level of design, Távora does not adhere to a model he is familiar with, the LeCorbusierian account of travel as the construction of one's own personality and cultural identity, for example. Instead, he practises a multifaceted writing style, encompassing heterogeneous materials, mixing, as mentioned, chronicle and tendentious tale, he does not filter and does not distinguish between the cultural objectives of the journey and the data of his daily experience; he lets everything he encounters enter the scene, whether pleasing or unwelcome, accompanying each appearance with his evaluations. In other words, he writes exactly as he design, taking in the complexity that surrounds him, organising it without erasing it but orienting it according to cultural goals and responsibilities to which he feels he must respond.

Hence the difficult relationship with photography, a theme that recurs frequently in Távora's considerations before and after the experience of the Gulbenkian trip, the financing of which required, in addition to the report that was never delivered, a reportage in pictures. Távora, as he recalls, bought a Contina Matic for the occasion and took ‘four or five hundred photographs’, most of which he missed due to an incorrect camera setting (16 April).⁴⁴ ‘The great technique of the modern tourist,’ he notes on 25 May, ‘is not to see things, or rather to see them as a function of possible photographs and then look at them again at home through the same photographs. People want to see everything quickly so as not to see anything’.

44 The photographs are now kept at Marques da Silva Foundation.

Beyond the technical error, about which there may be doubts, at least at the subconscious level, the radical criticism of photography will be clearly formulated as early as the text on the *Organisation of Space*, two years after the trip. Photography is harmful and illusory because it breaks “the continuity of space”, isolates “the most beautiful bits of the building, the most propitious time” and, of course, only documents the best building, “that of the architect with the most famous name, as if it were a prototype, when in fact it is only an exception”.⁴⁵

A distrust of representation that extends, in reality, also to drawing, in which Távora is also a master. His conception of design, moreover, is centred on overcoming the domain of representation as the main ideational tool in favour of an architecture generated by a broader field of considerations and largely entrusted to reading and interpretation in situ, to building site practices, to the inclusion of the life of the finished work over time. Beautiful drawing is a danger for architecture; it can mislead in the interpretation of space; it must, therefore, remain above all an intellectual process and an instrument for the transmission of knowledge, not the skilful elaboration of a figure.⁴⁶

The *Diary* does not betray this position.

Távora travelled across the United States, meeting figures such as Wright and Mies, almost without drawing architectural sketches in the strict sense. Only a beautiful perspective of the Robie House dated 16 April, the reasons for which are easy to reconstruct if one looks at two works in progress on the date of the trip, namely the Tennis Pavilion in the *Quinta da Conceição* and the *Cedar School* in Vila Nova de Gaia, in particular, for the latter, the loggia with a sloping roof. So much so that the drawing of 16 April, an anomalous presence in the pages of the *Diary*, could be interpreted as an occasional note for professional reasons.

In this deliberately ‘non-architectural’ journey, après Viktor Šklovskij,⁴⁷ we find, however, a reworking of certain key themes in Távora’s design method of the 1950s-1960s.

The Gulbenkian Journey, Disregards: Body and Metropolis

One of the most prominent and explicit identities of the *Diary* is the profound critique that Távora brings to American culture. A critique not as a mere observer but structural to his project. As an institutional correspondent of Portugal that, at the date of the trip, has many excellent reasons to be pro-American, as a representative of a School of Architecture that looks to US teaching models, however, he not only does not adhere to the model but concludes that America is “magnificent Laboratory” “precisely and above all for knowing what to avoid at all costs” (13 April).

45 Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 42-43.

46 In a 1993 Interview Távora goes so far as to describe Siza’s way of drawing as “very dangerous”, his extraordinary ability in this respect, declaring that he prefers “the drawing of those who have more difficulty” (Távora, *As raízes e os Frutos*, XXXV)

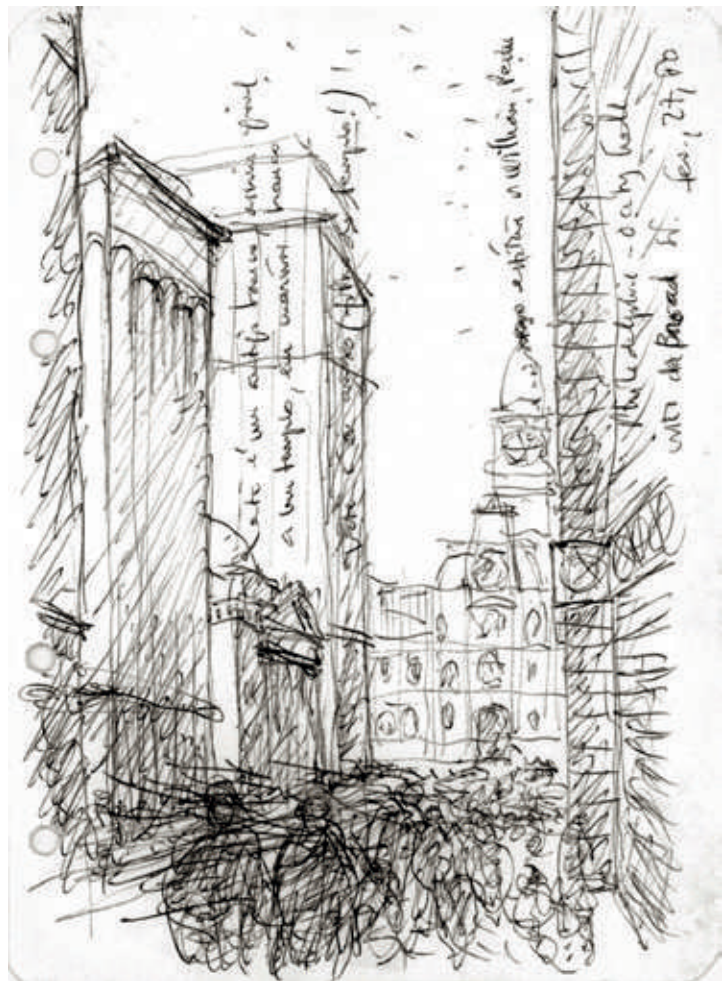
47 Viktor Borisovič Šklovskij, *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love* (Berlin: Helikon, 1923) [translated by Richard Schelder (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971)].

Two themes, in particular, can be traced back to the core of the design experiments Távora carried out in the years leading up to the trip, some of which are ongoing.

The first is the theme of the body as the primary instrument of a design method based on experiential knowledge.

"In the School of Porto, the founding instrument of the Modern act is the body and not the machine," writes Jorge Figueira in his 'critical map', a link to the 'humanist tradition' rather than the 'constructivist project', and if 'machine equals uprooting', 'body equals place'.⁴⁸

Gulbenkian's journey unquestionably testifies to a centrality of the body as a vehicle for knowledge of places, and the theme substantiates the oft-repeated critique of the technocracy dominating the "American model." A centrality of the body that will return as a key element of the formalised design theory with the text on *The Organisation of Space*: "Isn't the presence of his body sufficient... for each man to become an element that organises space?"⁴⁹



19

The account of Távora's travelling body is, in the *Diary*, rich and varied.

First, Távora often insists on the incompatibility between a practice that is essential to him, walking, and the structure of the metropolis but, more generally, the technocentric economic development model he encounters in the USA.

On 27 February, in Philadelphia, after having walked the street between City Hall and the Museum of Art – sketching a glimpse of it in pen – chilled, he feels like 'the first person who walked that route' and notes, for the first time, that in these cities 'nobody knows how to walk'. The desolation and even irritation at cities where it is not possible to get around by walking returns on 29 February when he tries to walk to 346 Broadway – "I walk, I walk, the blocks passed me by, the streets passed me by, but 346 always and still very far away". Eventually, he resigned himself to a taxi. After a second walk later that day, he also bitterly notes the effects of the smog on his clothes [Fig. 19].

But the incompatibility between American culture and the culture of walking is also detected outside the metropolis, for example during the stay with his friend Cristiano Rendeiro, an 'Americanised' Portuguese who lives in the small town of

Fig. 19
Fernando Távora, View of Philadelphia City Hall from Broad Street, 27 February 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

48 Figueira, *A Escola do Porto. Um mapa crítico*, 35.

49 Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 19.

Hamden following models of life that Távora studies with interest, trying to grasp their positivity, to see in that example the possible future of an 'Americanised' Portugal. An 'anthropological' investigation that comes to an ironic if not tragic end 'because it seems to me', writes Távora, "that, beyond representing a force that will crush us, this way of life is very fascinating". Realising that husband and wife, each have a car he observes that "no one knows how to walk and everything is very far away, and above all, everyone can have a car, or cars" (12-13 March); an observation that also captures the consumerist aspect of the prevalence of car culture.

On 6 April, he sees a drive-in restaurant for the first time and wryly observes "that if Americans could take their cars into the kitchen and go to mass or to the cobbler's or to the bathroom, they would certainly do so".

The theme returns to Chicago on 13 April in a day particularly full of reflections on architecture.

Távora is at the IIT, photographs Mies, plans to interview Hilberseimer but then, upon arriving at Crown Hall, catches sight of him and can't find the courage to "disturb the old man". Yet another avoidance of encountering the 'modernist tradition' transplanted to the USA. "Tired and confused" he sits in the basement and draws up, on Robert E. Curry's business card, a dichotomous comparison, by points, between Mies and Wright.⁵⁰ A "dilemma", the comparison between the two, about which the two students – a Chinese and an Indian – he had already met the previous day, with whom he now converses, do not seem to wonder.

The backdrop is dense: Crown Hall, a personal reflection on two opposing visions of architecture, the conversation with two non-Western students who, as he had observed on his 12 April visit, are unwittingly learning an architecture that will prove inadequate if practised in their home country, a Miesian academy fully integrated into American culture and functional to its inherent cultural imperialism.

50 On a business card of Robert E. Curry, Távora notes the following dichotomies:

Anonymity – Mies	Life, everything is known, etc., Wright
Staticity	Dynamism
Artificial materials	Natural materials
Mies sketch drawing	Wright ornament drawing
Minimum of colour	Polychromy
Mies – steel	Wright – stone – tomb
Cold, restraint, sobriety	Heat, emotionality
Anonymous	Individuality
Economics at its core	Economic Freedom
Unification of viewpoints, clarity	Variety of viewpoints, mystery
Play of natural elements for contrast.	Ditto but for sympathy
Painting and sculpture added	Integration of the arts
Intellectualism	Popularism
Similar elements	Different elements
Machine-made	Handmade
Get off the ground – estrangement from nature	Attachment to the terrain – merging with nature
Crystalline and mathematical and geometric forms	Organic and animal forms
Non-translation of inner space and minimum translation of function – symmetry	Outward expression of inner space and functions – asymmetry
Independence from these elements	Relation to customs, lifestyle, climate, local traditions, materials
Difficulties in growth	Opportunities for growth

See: Távora, *Diário de "Bordo"*, at the date.

Against this backdrop, the considerations regarding the Americans' idiosyncrasy for walking return, here articulated with a closely related theme, is also an integral part of a body-centred design conception: time.⁵¹

A subjective time, a bodily one, tends to elude external mechanical measurement as is already evident from the late awakening because 'the clock played the trick on me of delaying an hour'. An event, the delay concerning the rigid American punctuality, which often returns in the *Diary* (18 February), a constantly resurfacing tension between the personal, corporeal times of the traveller and the formal and mechanical times of which he is at the mercy.

Then the remembered architectural reflections and the disappointment of not finding any ideas in the conversation with the two students, finally the resulting outburst. Nobody really walks, in the USA, and "there are no benches", nobody stops to laze around and, therefore, nobody stops to think. That is why there is a lack of ideas. "*Lazing around, chatting, causer* and things like that are not known here".

Távora reinforces his defence of idleness, of pause, of suspension from action, of the cultivation of the useless as a creative process by quoting a line from *Liberdade* by his beloved See: "Oh what a pleasure / Not fulfilling a duty".⁵²

To lose the willingness to pause, to suspend, to purposeful action, always subservient to the economy, is to lose "treasure". We find ourselves at the heart of the radical critique he brings to the American model, and after asking himself whether "it is not possible to create a middle way between this kind of slavery and ours?", he makes it clear that the Portuguese "slavery" is not the cultural model – however superior – but the objective poverty of the country. America offers cars, housing, jobs, services, social equality and "supposed racial equality", it offers plenty of money, but the price one pays in exchange for these advantages is very high: physical and mental illness, juvenile delinquency, racial conflicts, subjugation to labour, a problematic urban life, slums. On top of that, subservience to "extraordinary potentates": communication, real estate, large-scale distribution and entrepreneurship command the country's life. The only faith is money in a country where "you spend to earn". Távora's vision is lucid and, in some passages, prophetic. If this country without faith other than in money were to be opposed by "a country with a Faith", America would not resist.

As we can see, the centrality of the body, the respect for its times and its measures, in addition to providing a foundation for the architectural project, profiles a vision that we could define as social ecology, a discipline that, moreover, begins to emerge in chronological correspondence with the *Diary*.⁵³

51 "In architecture, both in the long and the short term, time plays a fundamental role, not only as a parameter of observation, but also as a dimension proper to the work; of course, every building, just like a painting or a sculpture, has a life, but in its case, it is made more complex because the performance of specific practical functions can force its actualisation, or its abandonment, facts that alter its nature as an organised space". (Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 87)

52 See note 17.

53 The first edition of *Silent Spring*, a work by Rachel Carson that initiated the social ecology strand, was published in 1962 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company).

Closely connected to walking as a form of knowledge and design process is the second theme, namely the encounter with the American and, more generally, non-European metropolis.

Távora often insisted on the “rural nobility” character of his family of origin and the importance of this matrix.⁵⁴ A matrix that, in his youth, resulted in an explicit hostility to the big city.⁵⁵

Still in 1956, Távora, with a certain naiveté, notes in a diary page an explicit “I hate the metropolis” and dreams of living in the family home in the country, in Covilhã, travelling to Paris, New York, Lisbon or Rio “from time to time” to experience “the dirty, tempting world of the metropolis”. The note is the same, however, in which he notes that Carlos Ramos has promised him a professorship at the School and the 1960 trip to the USA, as seen, is part of the programme.⁵⁶

There is no doubt that Gulbenkian’s trip to the United States represents a powerful homoeopathic cure for the young Távora’s anti-metropolitan stance and perhaps more generally for the “nostalgia for harmony” that Jorge Figueira emphasised as the character of his work.⁵⁷ A nostalgia that at the date of the journey also feeds on the city, but a city of small dimensions, familiar and controllable through historical and physical knowledge, the result of crossings, of reflections from life. A city to which, in 1960, Távora had already dedicated an important piece of writing: *About Porto and its space*.⁵⁸ A small, structured city, “a sculpture in permanent movement”, “taking the most varied forms” in a “magnificent or banal” synthesis, a city that can only be assessed in one way, “walking through it, living it, walking along its streets, descending its slopes, climbing to its highest points, inhabiting its houses, feeling it as a living organism that does not stop, that changes day after day”. A specific city, with specific characteristics and which, precisely because of its specificity, can be, “beyond small spaces such as streets, squares or gardens, an urban space structured according to the most modern urban planning concepts”.

In the text on Porto’s space, the term of comparison, to which he does not conform, is Hausmann’s Paris, let’s say the whole urban planning tradition that unravels from that episode. But, having arrived in the USA, Távora does not encounter the great European cities or even the metropolitan imagery of the historical avant-gardes; he encounters the metropolis as a direct translation of the capitalist economy, which appears to him as “a chaos in which one gets lost”,⁵⁹ the realm of discontinuity and disorder, the themes that he will bring to

54 Fernando Távora sobre o Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal, entrevista por João Leal in: Távora, “Minha Casa”, 3.

55 “Madrid, Barcelona, Marseilles were the cities where I felt most, and with increasing gravity, a series of circumstances and determining factors that, against all supposition, make urban life almost unbearable”. (Távora, “Minha Casa”, *Viagem pela Europa*, 17, note of 27 September 1947).

56 Note of 20-21 April 1956 in: Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos*, 36-39.

57 Figueira, *A Escola do Porto. Um mapa crítico*, 36-37.

58 Fernando Távora, *Do porto e do seu espaço*, “Comércio do Porto”, 26 Janeiro 1954.

59 “For life is at the start a chaos in which one is lost. The individual suspects this, but he is frightened at finding himself face to face with this terrible reality and tries to cover it over with a curtain of fantasy, where everything is clear. (Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of Masses*, 156-157).

the centre of the project in theoretical form in the text on *The Organisation of Space*. Moreover, beyond Távora's cultural matrices, it should not be forgotten that his is an institutional mission aimed at probing models of teaching but also at Portugal's development at a time when the country is transitioning from a fundamentally agricultural model to an industrial one.

The comparison between the US metropolis and European cities, which is part of the test of continuity between European and US culture, is a recurring theme in the *Diary*, almost always expressed negatively.

Washington, apart from the White House area, is chaos, writes Távora. However, the comparison between the monumental area and its French references is also ruthless, a 'Greek style' but hypertrophic. Lacking, above all, is continuity over time: "It is as if everything had been bombed and the city had been rebuilt in a state of emergency, preserving only a few old buildings. It is worth visiting this city to understand how Paris is a work of art... It is chaos taking shape".

However, the problem of the failed cultural relay between Europe and the US stems from something other than architectural incapacity. It is a political problem: the use of an architectural model developed in a monarchy to represent "a federation that is a champion of democracy".

The city lacks "civic sense" and shows a gap between places of government and places of citizenship.

He writes on 28 February that Philadelphia is closer to the idea of an 'American city', perhaps because of the skyscrapers, perhaps because even "old" buildings have "more symbolic value for Americans than interest for an architect". Even here, however, there is no shortage of chaos and filth.

But the real encounter with the American metropolis, free from comparison with European models, takes place, inevitably, in New York, where Távora arrives on Sunday, 28 February, "practically at night" and, surprisingly enough, observing without prejudice, recognises in the chaos if not values at least a new form of collective life:

... no light is fixed; everything glitters as on a hot summer night full of fireflies (this is an incredibly new concept, that of movement, of a society in permanent motion - movement in all scales of space and time) ... I recognise that for the first time, I feel the life of a city in this place. Lots of people, lots of light, lots of languages, open shops, lots of souvenirs for sale.

Távora immediately lowers the tone of his metropolitan lyricism by resorting, as he often does, to irony: "something like Santa Catarina", referring to a shopping street in Porto.

It is difficult, however, not to relate the vision of this metropolis in perpetual movement at all scales of space and time with the key idea of the *Organisation of Space* and with the passage that that text makes between the idea of a harmonious space, to be recomposed in its fullness and unity, and the idea of a

relational space that derives from a constantly renewed design commitment to the organisation of chaos.

It is not, however, a sudden enlightenment, although on reading the pages of the Diary it certainly comes as a surprise.

The cultural matrices of Távora are multiple and complex, and in part, they are still to be excavated. Certainly, at that date, a very present author is Ortega y Gasset who in his *The Rebellion of the Masses* writes:

... the urbe or polis was born from a void: the forum, the agora; and everything else is a pretext to guarantee this void, to delimit its perimeter. The polis is not originally an aggregate of houses, but a place of civil gathering, a circumscribed space for public functions... new category of space, much more original than Einstein's space.⁶⁰

Ortega y Gasset distinguishes the new space, a vacuum in which relations take place, from the space of rural man, whose existence 'preserves the unconscious warmth in which the plant lives. in his *Meditations on Quixote*, he writes that

... things connected in a relationship form a structure. What would a thing considered in isolation be like? Poor, sterile, confused. One would say that there is in each thing a certain secret potentiality to be many other things, a potentiality that is released and expands when another or others enter into relation with it. You would say that each thing is fertilised by the others; you would say that they desire each other; like males and females; you would say that they love each other or that they aspire to unite, to join together in societies, in organisms, in buildings, in worlds', 'one thing cannot be determined except in relation to others.'⁶¹

The sense of a thing, Ortega writes, is the supreme form of its coexistence with others, "the mystical shadow that the rest of the universe spreads" over it. This gives rise to a duality, a perennial conflict, between the "materiality" of things, on the one hand, "what constitutes them before and in spite of all interpretation" and, on the other hand, the "sense" of things "what they are when interpreted."

This is what we call realism: bringing things to a certain distance, putting them in a light, slanting them so that the side that slopes towards pure materiality is accentuated. Myth is always the starting point of all poetry, including realist poetry. Only in the latter we accompany the myth in its descent, in its fall. The theme of realist poetry is the crumbling of poetry. I do not believe that reality can enter art in any other way than by making its own inertia and desolation an active and combative element.⁶²

Ortega's positions describe very well the experiments, including design experiments, that Távora completed or had in progress at the time of the Gulbenkian trip, and the perennially unstable balance between materiality and interpretation

60 Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of Masses*, 150 ff.

61 Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote*, 87 ff.

62 Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of Masses*, 135 ff.

well defines the theme of the Anonymous that is at the centre of this research as well as the idea of a realism that does not forget myth.

Certainly the impact with New York, in fact the entire Gulbenkian journey and the confrontation with the great metropolises of the United States and elsewhere, the exercise of reading an “organised space” foreign to him, devoid of recognisable values, is an important step in the redefinition of the project’s task. His field of action is redefined and is no longer a cutout in which to exercise form autonomously, but the chaos to which the whole world falls prey, the discontinuity of space with respect to which form becomes an instrument of interpretation and recomposition, not replacement.⁶³

The Gulbenkian Journey: Reflections

On 6 February 1950, Távora wrote in an unpublished note that he wanted to know

... the artistic manifestations connected to tradition through a journey that would pass through Egypt (Cairo), Greece (Athens), Italy (Rome) and France, a journey that would allow me to determine the constants, the connections between the Pyramids, the Parthenon, the Pantheon and St. Peter’s, Versailles and the Eiffel Tower. The determination of this constant classicism seems indispensable to my spirit as critical as it is in need of certainty.⁶⁴

“There is only one way to dominate the past, Kingdom of Things Past: to inject our blood into the empty veins of the dead. It is precisely this that the reactionary cannot do: treat the past as a way of life”.⁶⁵ The idea, which we find in the pages of Ortega y Gasset, of “using” the “classic” for our salvation, without regard – that is, disregarding its classicism, transporting it down to us, bringing it up to date, describes very well the task that Távora has given himself, from a very young age, regarding the “necessary” knowledge of the Great Tradition to which he feels he belongs even if, to define the theme of constants, his references are also others, and among the most cited *The Decline of the West* by Oswald Spengler.⁶⁶ A knowledge of “constant classicism” that is, throughout his life, the prime mover of his travelling.

By the time of the Gulbenkian journey, Távora, as we have seen, had already extended the youthful task of taking monumental history as a non-figurative but methodological model, as a lesson of constants and not as a history of forms, by including Portuguese popular architecture among the references. This research is certainly not disconnected or alternative to the study of the Great Tradition for two distinct reasons. Firstly, because of the absolute exemplary value he

63 These are key themes of the text on *The Organisation of Space*. See in particular Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 13 ff.

64 Manuel Mendes, “Ah, che ansia umana di essere il fiume o la riva!” in Esposito, Leoni, Fernando Távora. *Opera completa*, 355-356.

65 Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote*, 49.

66 Távora often cites Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* (1918) and in a 1996 interview states that the book had offered him, for the first time, an idea of “evolutionary history”, a broad vision, “which evidently still exists today, which is interesting - and which is exactly what I introduce into these stories I tell, when I practice History [of Architecture].” (*Fernando Távora sobre o Inquérito*, 11).

attributes to the lesson of popular architecture. Secondly, because an integral part of the research on popular architecture is the comparison between it and the best results of the modernist season, Wright and Le Corbusier in particular. Not a juxtaposition but an action of integration and overcoming, as we have seen. Because, in Távora's vision, it is not a matter of creating a contraposition between tradition and modernity but of giving continuity to two forms of modernity: the permanent modernity of popular architecture and the modernity of the innovations, linguistic and spatial, of "modernism". Innovations, these that fully belong to the Great Monumental Tradition, which is the ultimate outcome of the cultural cycle of Greece, Rome, and Europe of which he also feels part.

At the time of the Gulbenkian trip, Távora had also long since begun his journey into the Great Tradition, in the sense now mentioned, through his travels in Europe. In 1947, while travelling in Italy, he had already clearly outlined his positions concerning the meaning of the monument by "criticising" St. Peter's, which "strikes you as colossal, luxurious' but is "a church where you don't feel like praying", and instead enthusing, for the first and not the last time, about visiting Venice, a city that certainly has monuments, 'but is a city'.⁶⁷

The 1960 trip, however, allowed him to add some milestones: Mexican archaeology, Japanese temples and Katsura, the Pyramids, the Acropolis.

One consideration, or rather a general attitude, unites these visits.

The pages of the *Diary* are punctuated with criticism of the US idea of the museum. US museums are "irritating" because they only testify to the wealth of those who have been able to acquire the exhibits, a culture acquired, not produced. Museums are therefore "detached from society", "something like a Rembrandt in a rich butcher's house". They do not have the 'naturalness' of French or Italian museums, their idea of preserving things of their own. Still, above all, there is no continuity between what can be admired in US museums and the places of everyday life. We are once again at the centre of Távora's reflections on design: the continuous space that is the translation of a system of relations in constant adjustment, spatial relations and, at the same time, economic, social, and political relations.

Visits to Mexican archaeological sites, traditional Japanese architecture, the Pyramids and the Acropolis are all marked by a verification, even before the strictly architectural values, of "continuity" in the sense now mentioned. The monuments celebrated in the Great History only have value if read as integrated and integral to the civilisation that produced them since even they do not retain their value if isolated or besieged by incongruous settlements or uses.

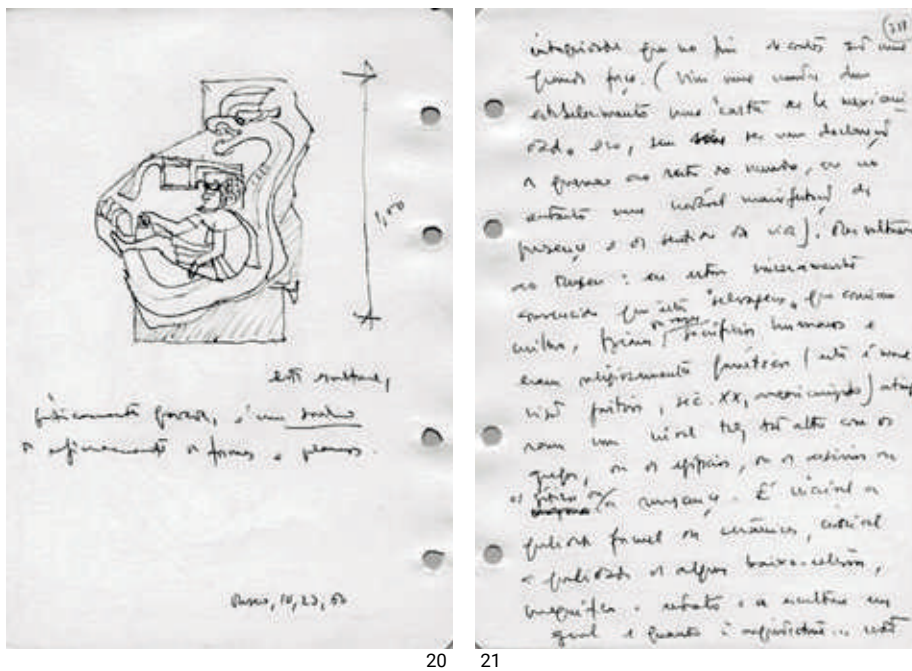
In *The organisation of space*, he will develop in theoretical form the idea of a monument that goes beyond "the scope of this or that more or less erudite building, of more or less known history, to encompass much broader areas and more common buildings".⁶⁸

67 Távora, "Minha Casa", *Viagem pela Europa*, 38-39. Concerning the relationship between these journeys and Távora's project research, see Liverani, *Context and Project. Italian Influences on Fernando Távora's Architecture*.

68 Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 58

The Gulbenkian Journey, Reflections: Mexico

The week in Mexico (22-29 April) is all about this political conception of the “monument”. It is, as mentioned, a transgression of the institutional programme envisaged by the fellowship, a real headlong rush dictated by impatience with American life and culture. “I am beginning to tire of North America, and I feel the need to seek out people of my race,” he notes lapidary on 7 April, and his enthusiastic praise of Mexico, once reached, is all played out in opposition to the US model [Fig. 20, 21].



It is with this spirit that Távora enters the National Museum, “so rich”, with “an air so natural that it enchants”, but above all, there is, over the entire span of time witnessed by the works on display, the permanence of an “essence”, of an identity with respect to which changes of language or religion are “details”. Again, it is an element of contrast and criticism to the USA’s “amorphous country *par excellence*, where everyone has blood from twenty origins - and in the end it is as if they had blood from nowhere defined”. On the other hand, Mexico is a place of “coherence” and “integrity”, evidence of a civilisation equal to that of “the Greeks, or the Egyptians, or the Assyrians, or the Goths, or the Renaissance.” Távora is seized by an aesthetic exaltation such as, in the US weeks, had only happened to him in Taliesin East, “a kind of madness that led me to make drawings and which, above all, made me very tired”. “Everything is understandable”, “everything is integrated in a climate that has changed but is in the process of becoming”.

The visit to Teotihuacan (26 April), “which alone is worth the trip”, shows how, in Mexico, Távora seeks not so much a lesson in architecture – he does not, in fact, devote a sketchbook to the experience as he does to the Japanese temples or the Acropolis⁶⁹ – but the model of an “integrated” traditional culture that

Fig. 20, 21

Fernando Távora, notes and sketch of a Maya Sculpture with annotation: ‘this sculpture, carved in the Gothic manner, is a dream of refined forms and planes’, 23 April 1960, from the *Diário de “bordo”* (© Fundação Marques da Silva, Arquivo Fernando Távora).

69 Távora returned to Mexico at the end of 1990.

has been able to develop in continuity over time. Arriving at the site while also grasping the relationships between architecture and the ground – one of his great design themes – he strives above all to imagine the place “in the golden age”, “the buildings ordered in their polychromy and abundance, animated by the crowd in great ceremonial rites” and, on the truck for the return journey, he searches for the spirit of the culture that produced that place

... what people! Aztecs, Toltecs, Chichimecs, Maias and who knows what else! What an enchanting journey; I was there imagining them naked, feathers on their heads, performing the great rites of the sun or fire or making some human sacrifice (in addition to people, there were chickens, children, loaves, baskets, etc., all incredibly mixed up)’. Again, the comparison with the United States was given in conversation. “You know, we are a bit crazy,” a fellow traveller tells him, “comparing us with the Americans”

and Távora then launches into a “eulogy of madness compared with North American passivity”.

And if my Spanish had been better, I would have ventured a translation of Pessoa: “Without madness what is man, if not a healthy beast, a deferred corpse that procreates?”⁷⁰ – but my Spanish is poor and the man was quite clueless (but he felt things).

The Gulbenkian Journey, Reflections: Pyramids

The visit to the Pyramids (5-8 June) is a disappointment precisely in relation to the theme of continuity.

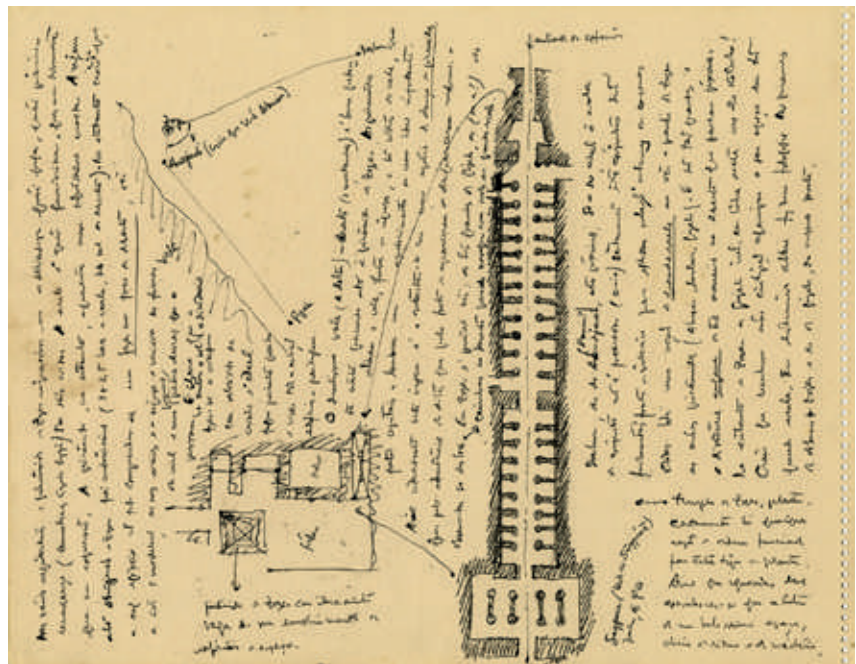
On the one hand, Távora is admired by the geographical dimension of the archaeological complexes outside Cairo when (6 June) he reaches the sites of Abuigareb and Djoser on horseback – a “very demanding” but ideal journey to grasp the aspects that interest him. Sand (the material), sun (the climate) and distance (the geography) allow him to grasp the large-scale geographical dimension of the relationship between building and landscape – the “valley (and delta) – desert (and mountain) dualism”.

I don’t think any other civilisation has organised its space on such a grand scale ... The pyramids look down on the valley, the source of wealth, and are visible from the valley as capital points to commemorate an important event or idea.

This is the recognition of a central theme in Távora’s project and, according to the reading of space that would be theorised two years later in the text on *The Organisation of Space*, this geographical structure is captured not statically but dynamically: the pyramids “dance” appearing and disappearing as the traveller proceeds through the desert dunes.

70 “Sem a locura que è o homem / Mais que a besta sadia / Cadávr adiado que procria?” Pessoa, *Mensagem*, I.III.5.

But the encounter with the pyramid of Cheops in the previous days had been a disappointment “because contemporary civilisation has come too close”. The pyramids, he realises, usually shown as isolated in the desert, are almost part of the city. “A horrible thing,” he comments again in the voice-reading, “camels, donkeys and horses”, “importunate and sticky Arabs sticking to people”, “buses, houses, restaurants”. “The pyramids were built for the solitude and grandeur of the desert and not for this park-like dimension that partly surrounds them”. Yet another consideration from the *Diary* that testifies to how Távora senses the possible cultural damage associated with mass tourism.



22

Perhaps with subtle irony, perhaps unconsciously or perhaps by chance, finding himself in the presence of a building that, for him represents one of the great models of the relationship between architecture and the land, he does not draw it but dedicates a sheet of the Notebooks (*B*, no. 7) to a group of camels, capturing their way of crouching on the ground [Fig. 22].

The Gulbenkian Journey, Reflections: Japan

If the stopovers in Mexico and Cairo only hesitate a few drawings devoted to architecture in the strict sense, the visits to traditional Japanese architecture and the Acropolis generate most of the pages of the two larger sketchbooks that Távora brings back from the Gulbenkian trip, the first (*Notebook A*) devoted to Japan and Thailand, the second (*Notebook B*) to Baalbek and Athens.

In the Notebooks, the relationship between drawing and writing is reversed, with the former prevailing over the latter, but it does not disappear and, despite its skilful use, drawing remains an “intellectual” tool and a “transmission of knowledge”, without indulging in calligraphy or figures as an end in themselves. An extensive accompanying text justifies each graphic sign and explains the reasons for it. As Távora states in an interview, “The drawings we make while travelling are emergency drawings”; we cannot draw everything and “drawing has a quality regardless of value”.⁷¹

Thanks to the two Notebooks, it is possible to observe first-hand how the visits to traditional Japanese architecture and the Acropolis are acts of recognition of architectural themes already firmly structured in Távora’s design activity, as

Fig. 22
Fernando Távora, Saqqara, 6 June 1960, from the *Diário de “bordo”* (FIMS/AFT).

71 Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos*, XLIV (from a 2002 interview).

demonstrated by the parallel analysis of some projects from the 1950s-60s, thus preceding or contemporary with the Gulbenkian trip.

The *Vila da Feira Market* (1954-1959) shows how advanced the research on architecture as an organised and relational space that Távora found, especially during his visit to Japanese temples, was in practice well before theory.

Távora started the design of the Market in September 1954, implementing the provisions of the 1950-1951 Urbanisation Plan, approved in 1953. The Plan placed the structure near the Castle of Santa Maria da Feira to create an element of urban prominence in relation to the Castle itself and the park surrounding it.⁷² The final design was in 1958 and the realisation in 1959, the year in which Távora presented the work at the CIAM in Otterlo.⁷³

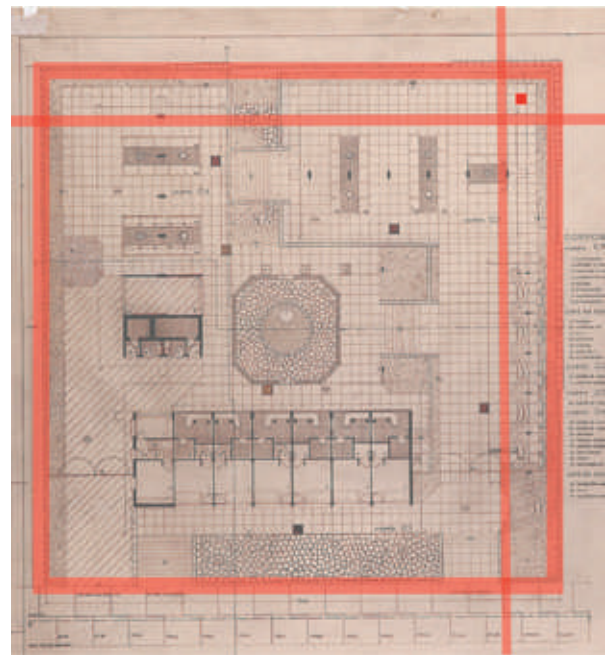
In the same report, written ex-post, the project is described in the following words:

A 50x50 metre square to set up a market. A square module, measuring 1x1 metre, commands the composition and introduces its geometry. Several bodies, with a protective sense, are distributed to form a patio. Not only a place for the exchange of things but also of ideas, an invitation for people to meet.

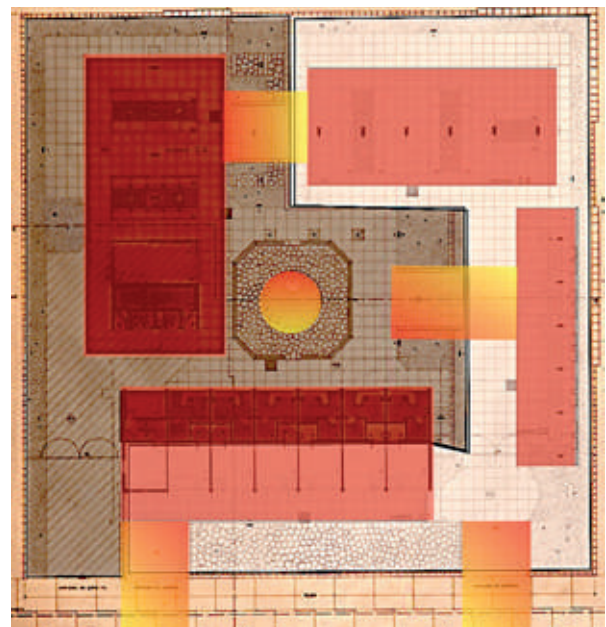
The idea of the four autonomous pavilions and their location on two platforms at different heights is already in the first memory, but in the first version drawn, Távora imagines the pavilions surrounded by greenery and, in the centre of the complex, "a small lake".

In the final design, the four pavilions – three equal in size and a smaller one intended for the flower trade – are placed within the complex's square basement, chasing each other in a dynamic centrifugal succession around a focus, off-centre with respect to the position of the pavilions and also with respect to the square basement. In the built version, the focus is marked by a fountain inscribed in a continuous concrete seat covered with azulejos to form a square with rounded corners.

An emptiness, an invitation to a possible stop in the larger space left free between the pavilions [Fig. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28].



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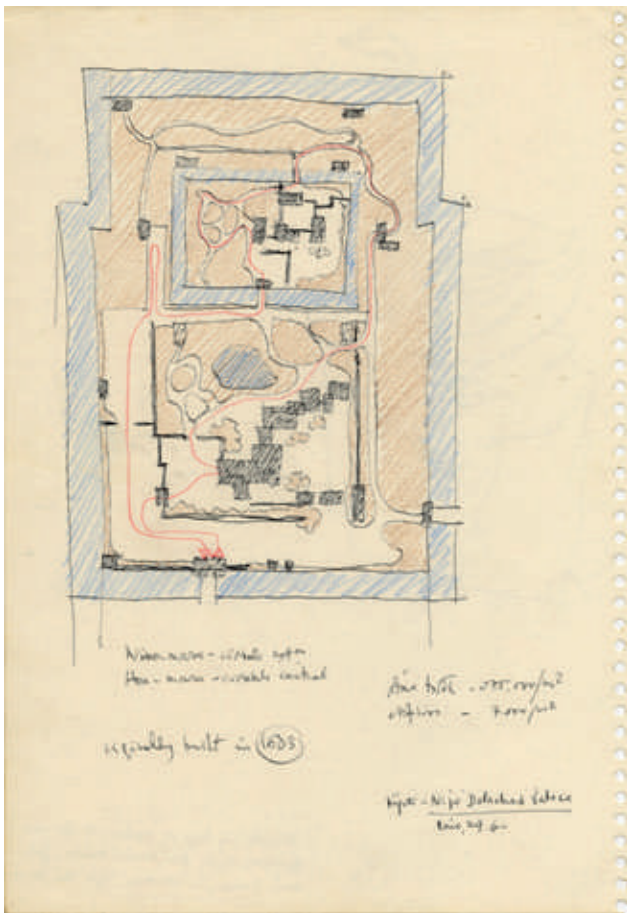


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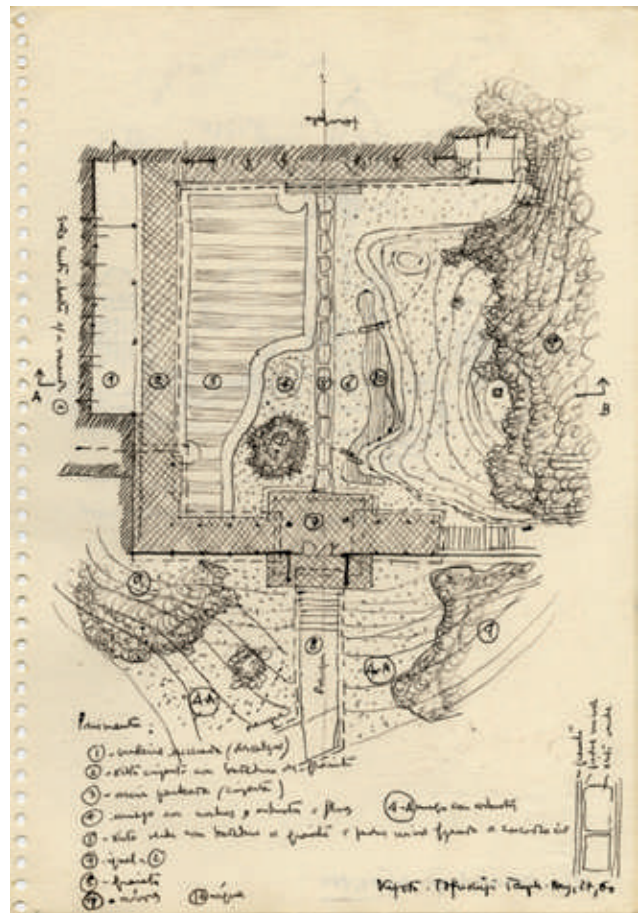
72 Susana Milão, *Mercado de Feira de Távora: o centro (herma e core). Une telle symétrie ne convient pas à la solitude*, In Távora, "Minha casa", 214-231.

73 Cfr. Oscar Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo* (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1961): 133-137.

Fig. 23, 24
Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market, general plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

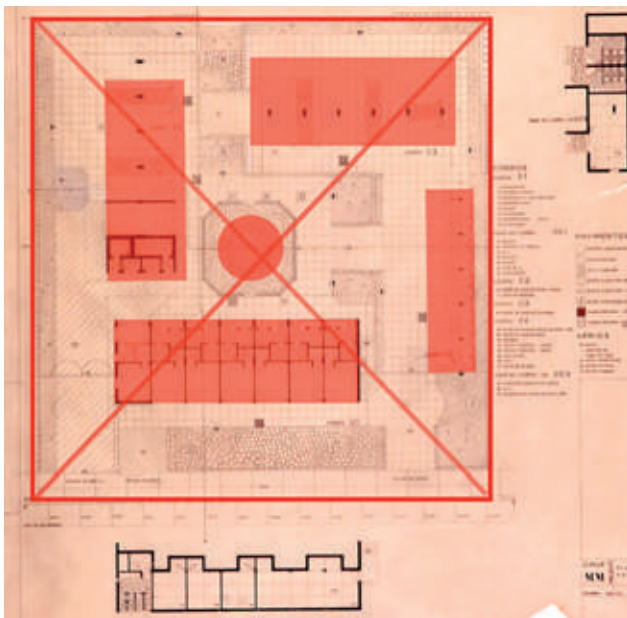


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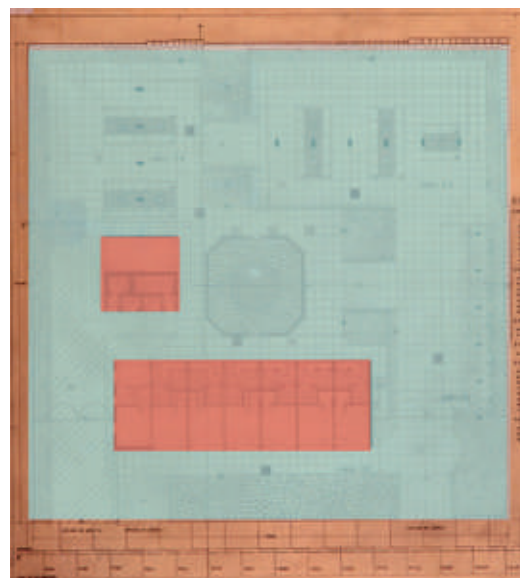
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This central space, moreover, is in continuity with the space of the pavilions, broadly defined only by the projection on the ground of the canopies that cover it. Only the pavilion facing the street, in fact, has closed spaces – facing inwards and outwards from the Market – and so does the head of another facing the last section. For the rest, the space of the square that identifies the Market is fluid and freely passable.



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The subtle complexity of the ensemble, evidently the result of a reflection on the crossings and stops that the Market can offer, is further complicated by a play of altimetry. The base on which the Market stands is detached from the street level, showing a granite wall on the outside that contributes to the monumental tone⁷⁴ sought by Távora for this new architecture on an urban scale and intended for collective use. A monumental character clearly in dialogue with the historic city and the Castle in particular. The elevated platform is divided into two levels, and four staircases connect, the first two – on the street front – the street level with the higher platform – which houses the smaller pavilion and one of the larger ones – while the other two, inside the Market, connect the high platform to the low one, placing the pavilion facing the street straddling the two platforms.

The overall sense of a series of variants governed by the one-metre by one-metre mesh is accentuated by the sales equipment in the open pavilions: long concrete floors covered with slate for sales and cylindrical wash basins, elements with a rich materialisation but, in their geometry, with a neo-plastic flavour⁷⁵ [Fig. 29, 30].

The abstract compositional logic that governs the ground organisation described above – with its coexistence of modularity and variation of the elements distributed within the mesh – changes radically if we raise our gaze to the elevated elements, which are distinctly plastic. The primary structure of the canopies that define the pavilion space by their projection on the ground is, in fact, composed of imposing columns with a rounded rectangular section that support symmetrical cantilevered beams to form a wing-like structure, all made of bush-hammered reinforced concrete. The soffit between the exposed beams

74 On this topic, see Carlos Machado's extensive and learned analysis of the Market (Carlos Machado, "The Market", in *Reclaiming the Use of Fernando Távora's Municipal Market of Santa Maria da Feira*, edited by Vincenzo Riso (Braga: Universidade do Minho. Laboratório de Paisagens, Património e Território – Lab2PT, 2018,): 23-56.

75 For a detailed analysis of materials and construction systems, see: Isabel Valente, "Structural analysis", in: Riso, *Reclaiming the Use of Fernando Távora's*: 79-91.

Fig. 25

Fernando Távora, Nijo Palace, Kyoto, 24 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 26

Fernando Távora, Tofukuji Garden, Kyoto, 26 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 27, 28

Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market, general plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

Fig. 29

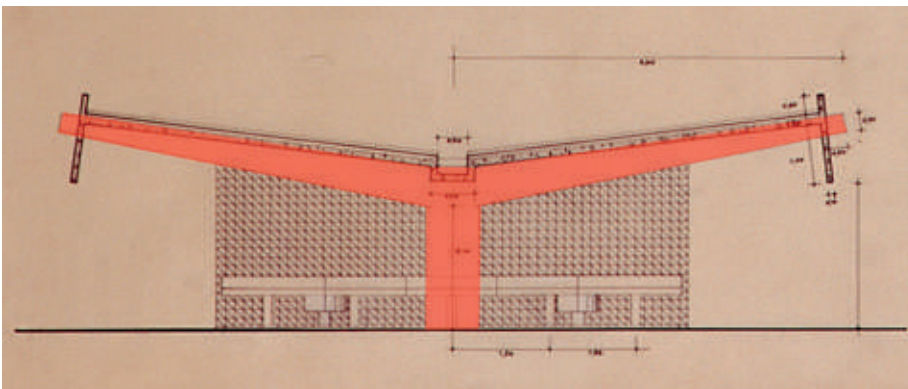
Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market (photo by the author).

Fig. 30

Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market, general plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).



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is plastered and painted red. This structure determines the most immediately evident architectural identity of the Market, repeating itself in the various pavilions but articulating itself in different variants, sometimes in purity – albeit with dimensional differences – sometimes with infills, these sometimes covered with azulejos, in other cases, as in the street front, glazed [Fig. 31, 32].

The fluid space of the Marketplace is thus generated in the relationship between the organisation of the ground – the materialisation of potential different crossings of the site also in relation to the city – and the clear, monumental architectural definition of an element added to the urban structure.

The Portuguese genealogy of the innovative structure conceived by Távora has been identified by several observers in various references, among which the Ovar Market built by Januário Godinho in 1948 stands out.⁷⁶

Various biographical and cultural ties unite Távora to Godinho, who was born in 1910, but above all, about the Market project, an interest in the work of Wright,

76 “But also the Market in Ovar (Januário Godinho, 1948), as a precedent, not only in the way of organising the same programme, as an ‘open’ market around an ‘interior’ free space, but also having chosen the ‘butterfly wing’ roof, a clear influence by Le Corbusier – see the houses Errazuris (1930), or Jaoul 49 (1937) – which came to Portugal partially filtered by the dissemination of the Brazilian modern architecture”. Carlos Machado, *The Market*, in Riso, *Reclaiming the Use of Fernando*, 23-55. See also: André Tavares, *Duas Obras de Januário Godinho em Ovar* (Porto: Dafne Editora 2012); Fátima Sales, “Januário Godinho: a arquitectura como síntese. Diálogo entre tradição e modernidade”, *Revista Arquitectura Lusitana*, no. 6 (2014), 33-50; Milão, “Mercado da Feira de Távora: o centro (herma e core), Mercado da Feira de Távora: o centro (herma e core). Une telle symétrie ne convient pas à la solitude”.

Fig. 31
Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market (photo by the author).

Fig. 32
Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market, section of canopies (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

an interest in but not a militant adherence to the innovations of European modernism, “a Husserlian perspective” that opposes the “Cartesian concept of abstract space” in favour of a space that is “no longer ‘geometric’ but existential” for which “the work of architecture is a construction that is born from this experience”.⁷⁷

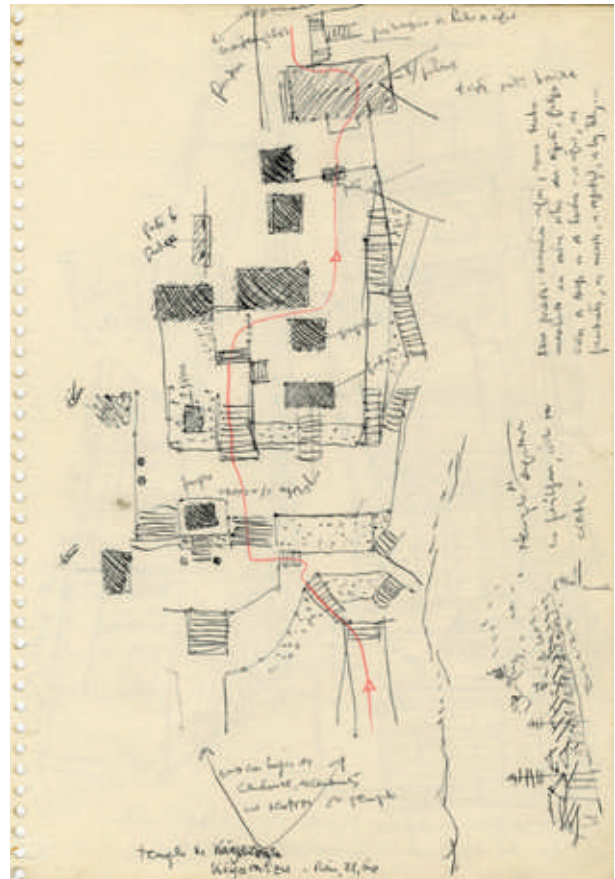
The visit to traditional Japanese architecture, which Távora was already familiar with from books,⁷⁸ is the occasion for a series of acts of recognition relating to the central themes of the project.

First of all, we might say the conception of an architectural element as the primary objective and centre of design action is overcome in favour of a geographical vision of the project in which the individual architectures are relevant as components of a relational system that encompasses every element, artificial and natural, solid or aerial.

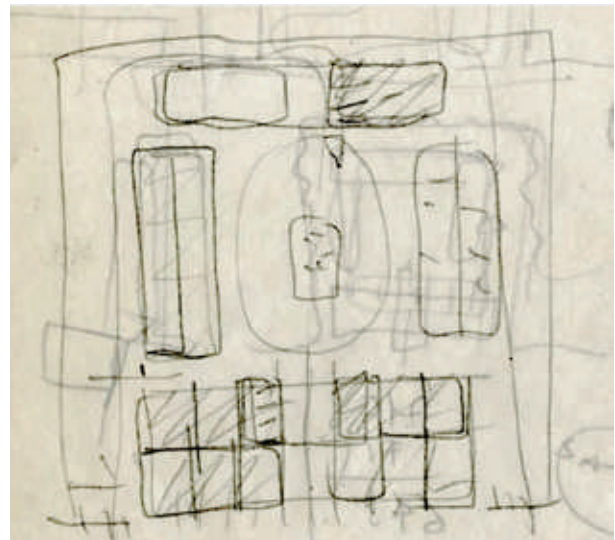
On 21 May, visiting the Kiyomizu Temple, Távora notes: “What interests me about a Japanese temple at the moment is not so much the building itself but the layout of the buildings in relation to each other and to the terrain – flat or sloping” [Fig. 33, 34].

Visits are, in fact, always approached with plans of the area, presumably found in guidebooks or publications. Távora mentions this in his writing, and the drawings prove it beyond doubt. The view is, first of all, zenithal and planimetric, aimed at capturing the overall structure of the place, then also revealed in its elevations and orographic variations. The place, described and represented, naturally also includes the architectural structures in a system of relationships.

Even when compared to the innovative Ovar Market, the Vila da Feira Market appears to be a radical work, in which the single architectural element, the concrete canopy, is repeated with a seriality that depletes its already skeletal, anonymous form, substantially referable to a structural diagram. This simple and impersonal element is then subjected to a constant exercise of variation, subjugated, so to speak, to the true centre of the design commitment, that is, the materialisation of a system of relations between spaces, or rather places, with different characters. A system of crossing and stopping opportunities,



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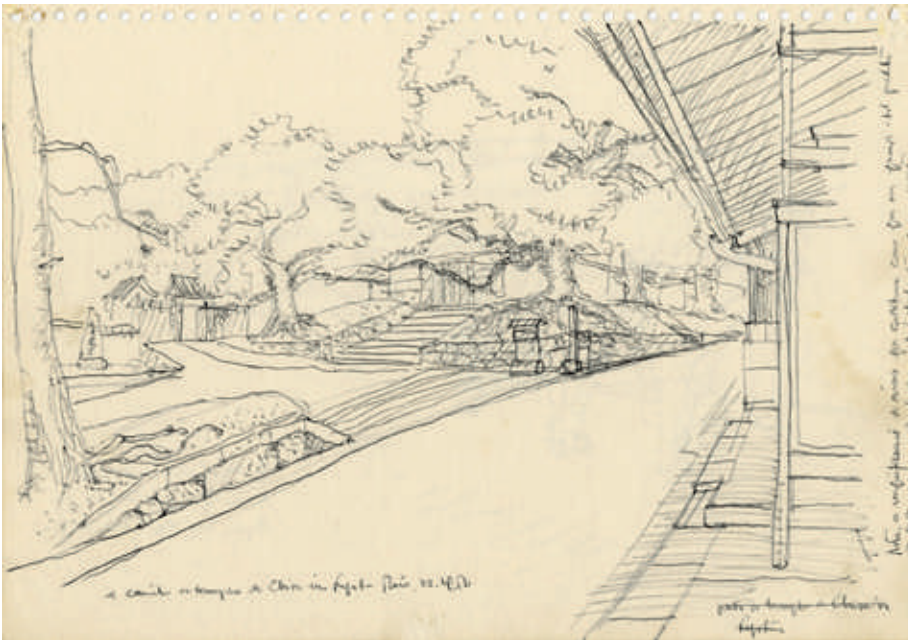
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Fig. 33
Fernando Távora, Kiyomizu Temple, 21 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 34
Fernando Távora, Preliminary Study for the Market in Vila da Feira (FIMS/AFT).

77 Sales, “Januário Godinho: a arquitetura como síntese. Diálogo entre tradição e modernidade”, 35.

78 Távora’s rich library contains a collection of volumes dedicated to Japan. On this topic, see João Cepeda, “Traces of Japan’ness in Modern Portuguese Architecture” (PhD work paper, Instituto Superior Técnico Lisbon, 2020), which lists some of the volumes on page 8.



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composed of physical elements but also and above all of immaterial paths. A principle, the serial repetition of simple elements at the service of a composite and flexible architectural system, which Távora summarises observing Japanese temple architecture in the idea of a “free symmetry” and a “mutual enrichment of elements”. As evidence of the recognition of a compositional principle among the constants he is searching for, in drawing 3c of *Notebook A*, sketched during a visit to Kiyomizu Temple, Távora notes: “I am not joking: I found here, as I found in other sites in Kyoto, something of Braga or Sintra - the water, the slopes, the stairs, the vegetation, perhaps the light... The temple of... frames the landscape, seen from the city”.

Moreover, the drawings drawn on the occasion show a clear affinity with the typical writing of the Tavorian project [Fig. 35, 36].

A second theme, closely related to the principle of “free symmetry” and the mutual enrichment of elements, is the use of a modular grid. This principle returns in Távora’s projects and would obviously also require further investigation of the modernist crossing and the relationship with Le Corbusier in particular.

The Market, as mentioned, is based on a metric grid, a 50 by 50 metre square divided into modules of one metre by one metre. The “rule” of the tatami is among the aspects that most fascinate him on his journey through traditional Japanese culture. Still, a visit to the Ryoanji temple (27 May) suggests a decisive consideration in relation to the model of open and relational spatiality. The attempt to draw a survey of the temple complex based on modules failed,



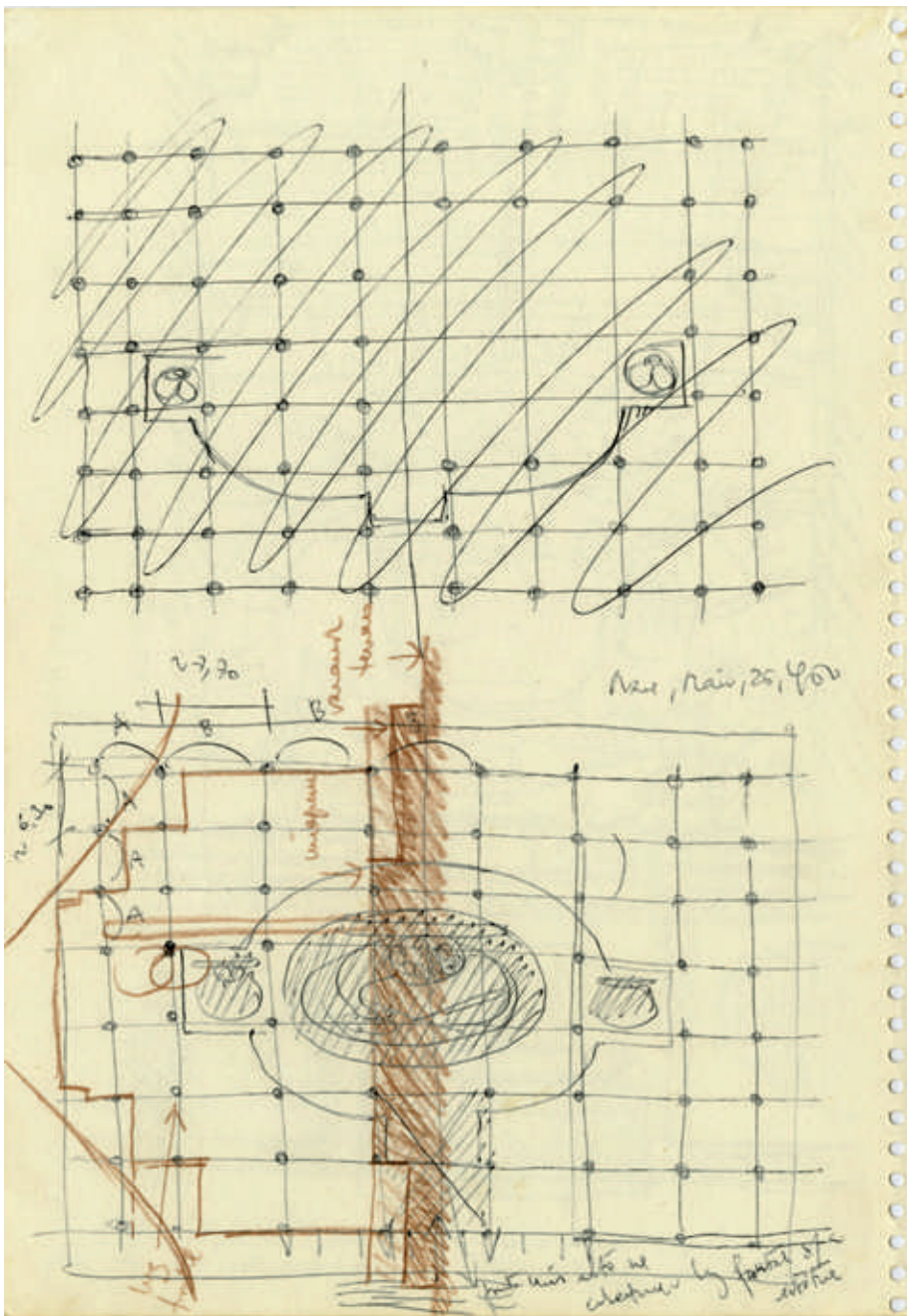
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Fig. 35

Fernando Távora, A Street in Kyoto, 22 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 36

Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market (FIMS/AFT).



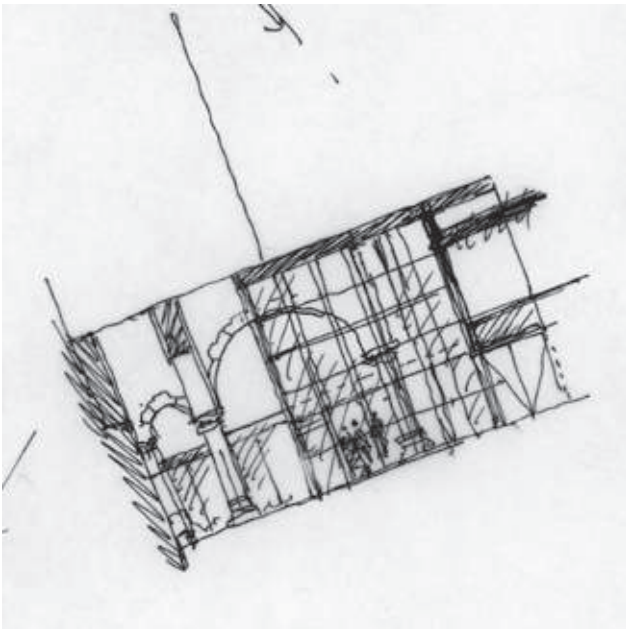
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because – he notes “modular rigidity, which we generally think of as the basis of Japanese architecture, does not exist” and “we constantly come across resounding kicks that are wisely placed on the modules”. The “spirit of the module” is always present, “the tatami generally does not make mistakes”, but the position of the pillars offers “extraordinary surprises” due not to error but to “a wise richness and freedom” [Fig. 37].

A coexistence of rule and transgression, rigour and freedom that, once again, is for Távora a recognition.

This is a lesson that will take him beyond the elementary nature of the square grid chosen for the *Marketplace* into projects in which he will make much more sophisticated use of the module. One thinks of the project for the *Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law* (Coimbra 1993-2000), where the module is traced in an

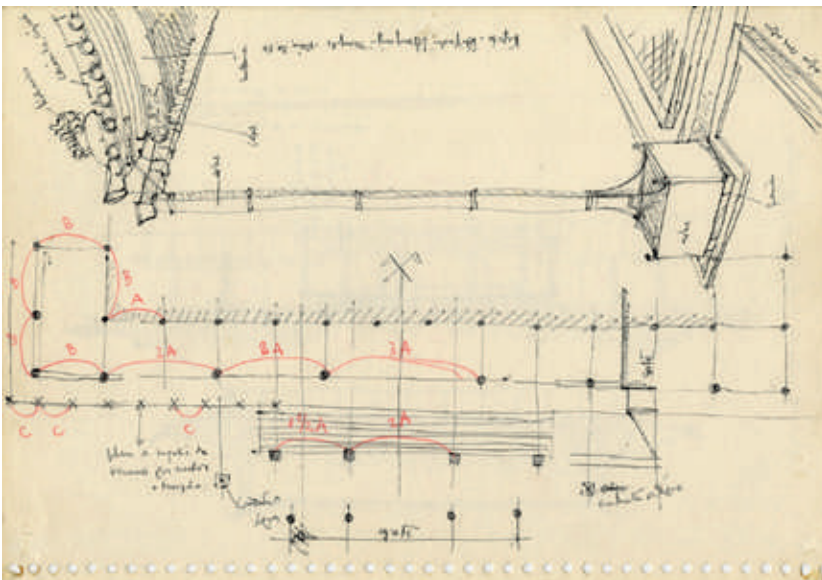
Fig. 37
 Fernando Távora, Daibutsu-Den in Nara, 26 May, 1960, from the *Diário de “bordo”* (FIMS/AFT).



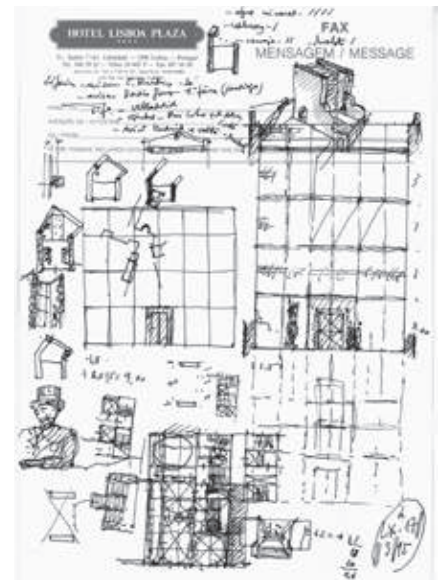
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existing ruin on the site and becomes a guide for the proportioning of the entire project, but with a variety of applications that certainly also recalls the lesson learnt in Japan [Fig. 38, 39].

Again, one thinks of the module as not metric but corporeal, the palm, which is the basis of the House of XXIV project (Porto, 1995-2003) [Fig. 40, 41].

However, already in the Market, one can observe a move away from the abstract and purely geometric use of the grid because it is given a material consistency evident in the study of the paving and, thanks to it, a variety that underlines the system of relationships on which the project is based and the diversity of 'opportunities' it offers [Fig. 42].

A third theme, already mentioned, intervenes in the Market to further complexify the structure determined by the geometric abstraction of the starting grid, its materialisation and variation, and the placement of the described pavilion

Fig. 38

Fernando Távora, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra 1993-2000, study sketch (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 39

Fernando Távora, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra 1993-2000 (photo by the author).

Fig. 40

Fernando Távora, Higashi Temple – Honganji in Kyoto, 20 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 41

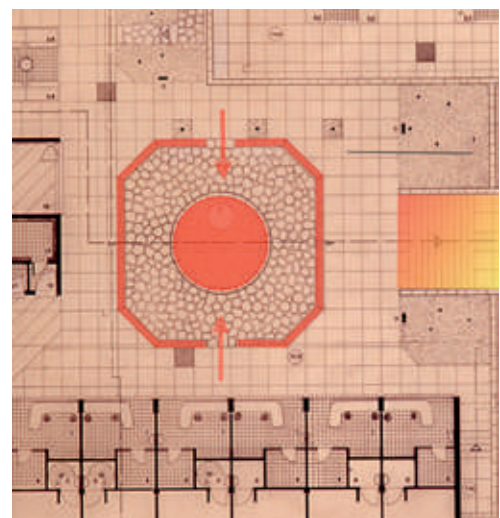
Fernando Távora, Recovery of the old Council Palace, "House of the XXIV", Porto, 1995-2003 (FIMS/AFT).



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system on this grid hybridised with reflections of a phenomenological and experiential stamp.

The theme is that of the centre, which in the final design takes the form of a possible gathering of people on a long continuous concrete bench deployed around a fountain [Fig. 43, 44].

Thus, in a system of free crossings, we find an enclosure into which we must enter and which, in some way, interrupts, with a pause, the flow of passersby. We have already mentioned, in relation to the Tennis Pavilion and the Red Pavilion, the profound meaning that Távora attributes to these places of pause, suspension of action, encounter, and reflection.

Of course, here, as pointed out by Carlos Machado,⁷⁹ there is an echo of the question of the centre, of the “core of the city” that marks Hoddesdon’s CIAM VIII, Távora’s first participation in Congresses in 1951. Without now going into the

79 Machado, *The Market*, 32.

Fig. 42
Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market (photo by the author).

Fig. 43
Fernand Távora, Vila da Feira Market (photo by the author).

Fig. 44
Fernand Távora, Vila da Feira Market, plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

complexity of the debate that developed on that occasion on the subject, there is no doubt that Távora found it in keeping with his interests.⁸⁰ But in his case it is certainly not a question of revisionism of pre-war rationalism as much as a structural link with the historical city, and more precisely with his own city and its specific characteristics, taken as the matrix of the project. In 1954, the year he designed the Market, he, in fact, published the aforementioned text on Porto and its space.⁸¹

There is no doubt that the spatial model of the city of Porto, the combination of a city of flows – known in an experiential, corporeal form – but with spots that structure and hierarchise it, is among the matrices of the *Market* project.

The model of the historical city as understood by Távora, implies a specific idea of monumentality to which we have already alluded and which is very precise, in the Gulbenkian journey, in contrast to the American idea of monument and museum. It is the idea of a diffuse monumentality, which extends beyond the single “erudite” building, according to Távora’s already quoted expressions, and remains, on the model of Venice, always and in any case, a city.

The recognition of an ordinary monumentality takes place in Japan on the occasion of the – albeit unfortunate – fundamental visit to the Villa of Katsura. On 23 May, with his friend Samper,⁸² he plans a visit that immediately proves too complex to organise. In the end, Távora goes along, complainingly, with the group visit already booked for the same day, and dedicates a sheet of *Notebook A* to the Villa, admittedly more written than drawn, partly because of the uncomfortable conditions of the visit, but above all to demonstrate that the values relevant to him are not formal. “Everything we call modern is there,” he notes in the Diary – Mies, le Corbusier, “less formally” Wright – all “the principles are those that have been inculcated in us for the last twenty or thirty years”.

But the notes on the drawing reveal other values that seem to prevail in making it, as he writes, “a jewel”.

First of all, the ordinary dimension, despite its imperial destination, is “a cross between a common dwelling and a palace”, “a building for a simple life of seated people”. He will find the same mixture of domestic character and, in this case, defensive character in the architecture of Nijō Castle (24 May), like Katsura, a true lesson in the clarity of the layout, the relationship between the architectural parts and their relationship with the garden.

80 Direct evidence of this interest is a copy of the volume Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, Josep Lluís Sert, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, *CIAM 8. The Heart of the city: towards the humanization of urban life* (London: Lund Humphries, 1952) with handwritten notes by Távora, kept at AFIMS. But see also: Fernando Távora, “Entrevista”, *Arquitectura*, no. 123 (1971):152: “The topic was the core, seen as the heart, the centre. Not just referring to the urban centre, but specifically the need for a centre at any level of organisation in Architecture and Urbanism. For instance, the centre of a city or the centre of a house. Hence a quite comprehensive, architectonic, urbanistic and human vision about the need of the core as an element of spontaneous or organised, individual or collective life.” For a quick overview of the topic see: Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi, *CIAM 8. The Heart of the city as the symbolic resilience of the city*, in *HISTORY, URBANISM, RESILIENCE, The Urban Fabric*, edited by Carola Hein, 17th IPHS Conference, vol. II (Delft: TU Delft Open, 2016): 135-144.

81 Távora, “Do porto e do seu espaço”.

82 German Samper Gnecco (1924-2019), Colombian architect.

Fig. 45

Fernando Távora, Higashi Temple – Honganji, Kyoto, 24 May, 1960, from the Diário de “bordo” (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 46

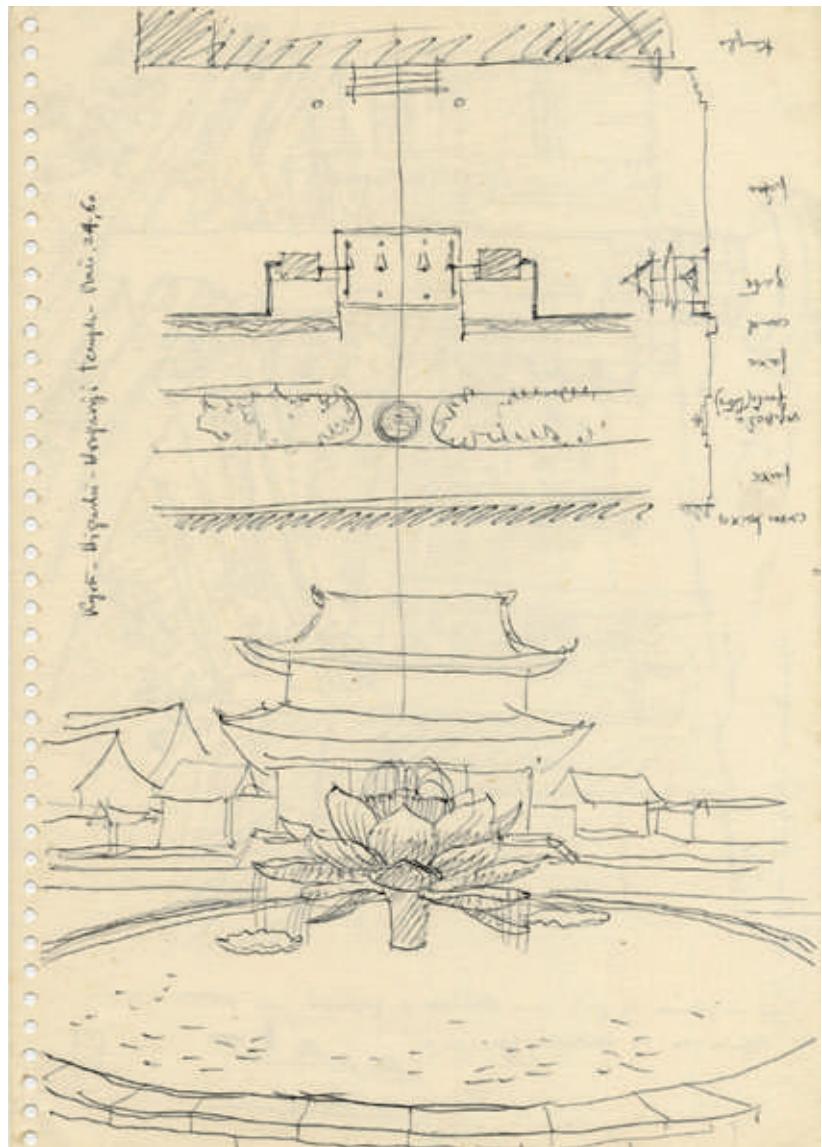
Fernando Távora, 8 May Square, Coimbra, 1992-1997 (photo by the author).

Fig. 47

Fernando Távora, Holiday House, Ofir, 1957-1958 (FIMS/AFT).

But more generally, the continuity between the ordinary and the monumental, between fixed elements and paths, characterises the spatial structure that Távora recognises in Japanese temple complexes. He was, therefore, “enchanted” by the lotus flower fountain at Higashi-Honganji, so much so that he drew it on 24 May, showing its role in the structure he visited and capturing its particular monumental tone.

It is a sober composition on a flat terrain. I made some drawings of the play of forms of the main temple, which I found very interesting. The composition is monumental, and I didn't think, who knows why, that the Japanese were capable of working at this scale. We have become accustomed to the idea of gardens, houses, low bridges, etc.; when we arrive here and see monumental things (as I had already seen in Nikkō), we are a little disoriented. It is evident how wood is exploited to its physical and plastic limits. The axis of the composition (of a free symmetry, Japanese style) extends to the street, where it is marked by a beautiful fountain representing a large bronze lotus (20 May).



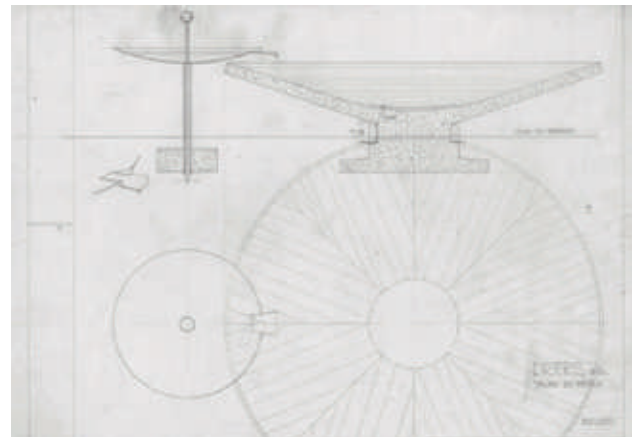
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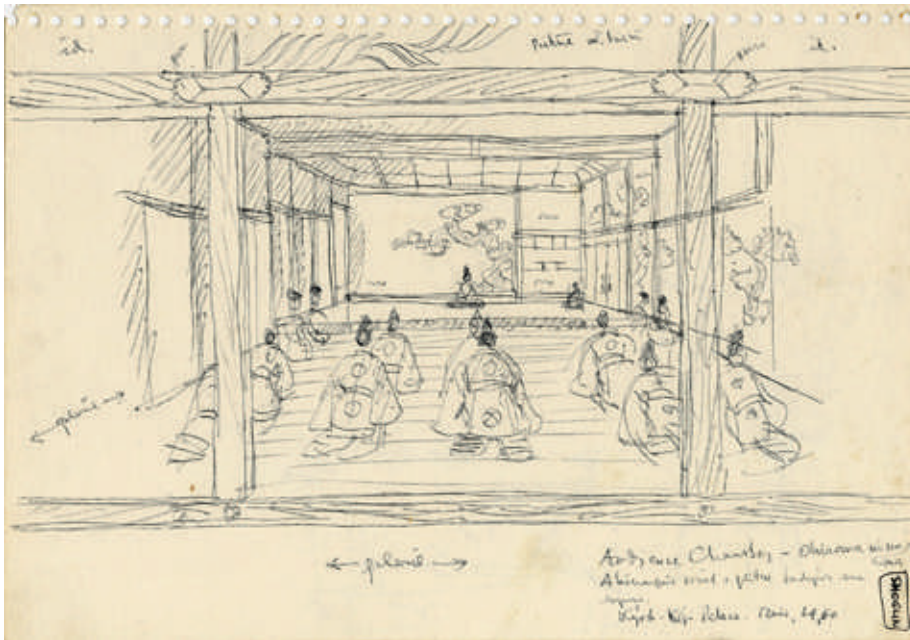
An element, the fountain, that Távora will take up, translating into projects such as the *House in Ofir* (see below) or the *8 May Square* (Coimbra, 1992-97) [Fig. 45, 46, 47].

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A final theme, among those central to the Marketplace project, is the subject of an observation that subtly leads to the core of the Tavoran project.

To define a place, the *Market*, open to the city and capable of welcoming it, visually and in its flow of life, Távora in fact builds a basement that raises the whole, with respect to the street level. As seen he then articulates the Market floor in two platforms that he connects with a system of stairs. A small altimetrical variation that nevertheless contributes decisively to the transformation of a geometric structure, the square of the plinth, into a system of meeting occasions. This variation is accentuated by the arrangement of the pavilions, one of which is placed on the border of the two internal altimetry.

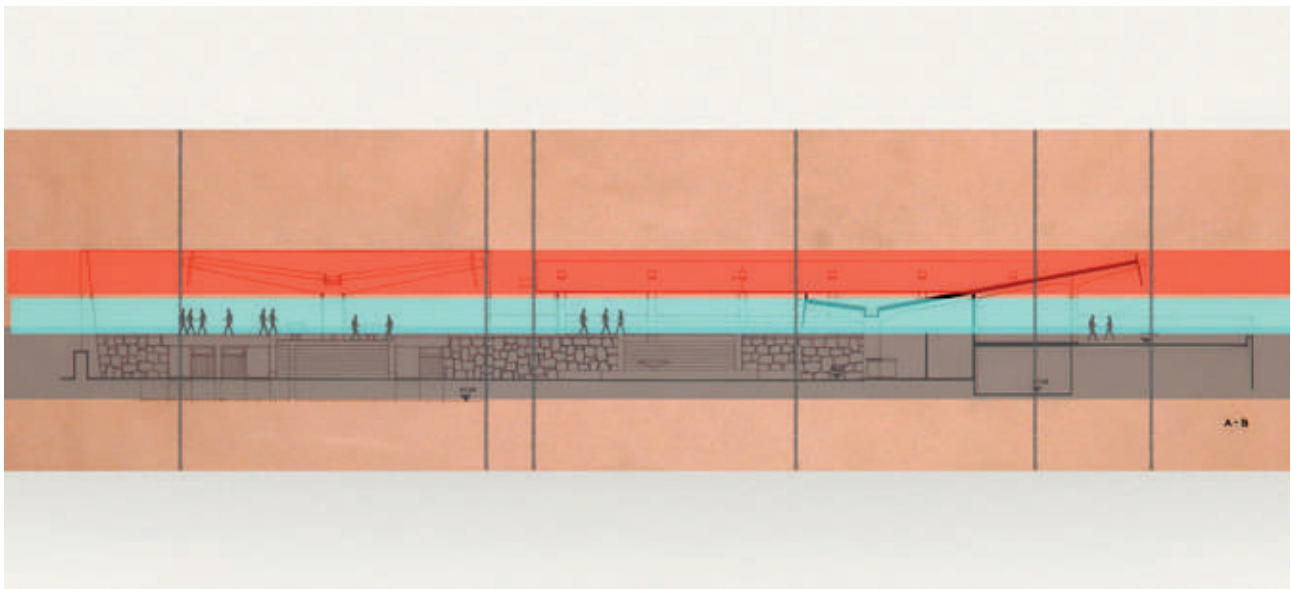
It is therefore not surprising that during the visit to Nijo Castle (24 May), Távora pays attention to the structure of the floor of the Shogun's Reception Hall and,

Fig. 48

Fernando Távora, Nijo Palace Audience Hall, Kyoto, 'Social and Political Hierarchy Translated into Space' 24 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 49

Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market (photo by the author).



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in particular, to a small difference in height that separates and distinguishes the space intended for the Shogun and the space designed for the feudal lords. Távora sketches a reconstruction of an audience and notes

Social hierarchy and politics translated into space'. Space and the use of space, human presence, are indistinguishable elements of the architecture, and the subtly different character, the "curious and intelligent contrast" between the reception area and the Shogun's residence area, is achieved with minimal architectural variations: variations in size and level, and the tone of the paintings [Fig. 48, 49].

Távora recognises in that detail the use of altimetry as a tool to define and characterise spaces according to the principle of decorum as suspension and subtraction. A rewriting of the terrain that, for example, in the square projects – think of the long work on the squares of Guimarães or the aforementioned 8th of May Square in Coimbra – is intended to be, in addition to an "organisation of space", a "politics translated into space", according to the felicitous expression formulated in Japan.

But the architectural theme that, more than any other, anticipates and builds on Távora's theory of the organisation of space is certainly that of the intermediate space.

While the overall market concept consists of a basement element covered by suspended structures that leave the space below almost completely free, the altimetric articulation is not the only factor that transforms this space from an isomorphic space of a 'modernist' matrix to a complex system of possible relations [Fig. 50].

Aldo Van Eyck immediately grasped a shift from geometry to experience in Otterlo when Távora presented the work he had just completed. The Dutch architect, observing it, stated, "that the current notion of space and time should be replaced by the more vital notion of place and occasion."

Fig. 50
Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market, section (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).



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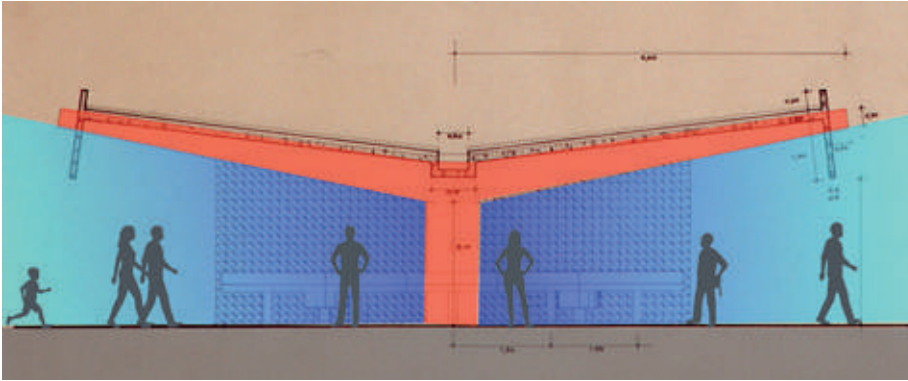
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Fig. 51, 52, 53
Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira
Market (photo by the author).

The place of occasion and encounter, the place of circumstance – a pivotal component of Távora’s vision of the project – is the intermediate space, devoid of a specific function, a place of encounter, of uncertainty, of decision-making regarding the possible options offered by the “open work” structure imagined by Távora [Fig. 51, 52, 53].⁸³



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This emphasis on passage from space to space as a “change”, is also the subject of an act of recognition during a visit to Japanese temple architecture. The intermediate space appears to him as one of the main characteristics of temples. Visiting the Higashi Temple he notes “the importance of doors as an element of preparation; a feeling + or – unknown in the West” (*Notebook A*, drawing 11r, 24 May) [Fig. 54, 55, 56].

83 The reference to Umberto Eco’s famous book, published in the same year as the text on the *Organisation of Space* (Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta*, Milano: Bompiani, 1962 eng. trans. Id., *The Open Work*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) is not gratuitous if we think of the ties that unite Eco to Leonardo Ricci, an Italian architect whose research in the 1950s and 1960s had significant affinities with Távora’s research, starting with the theme of the Anonymous, which was also made explicit in a 1962 volume (Leonardo Ricci, *Anonymous (XXCentury)*, New York: Braziller, 1962). In this regard, see: Ilaria Cattabriga, “Leonardo Ricci and Umberto Eco. The Merging of Parallel Visions on the Scientificity and Openness of Experience in the “Ricci-Eco Motion”, *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 10 (2022): 82-117.

Fig. 52

Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market, canopy section (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

Fig. 53

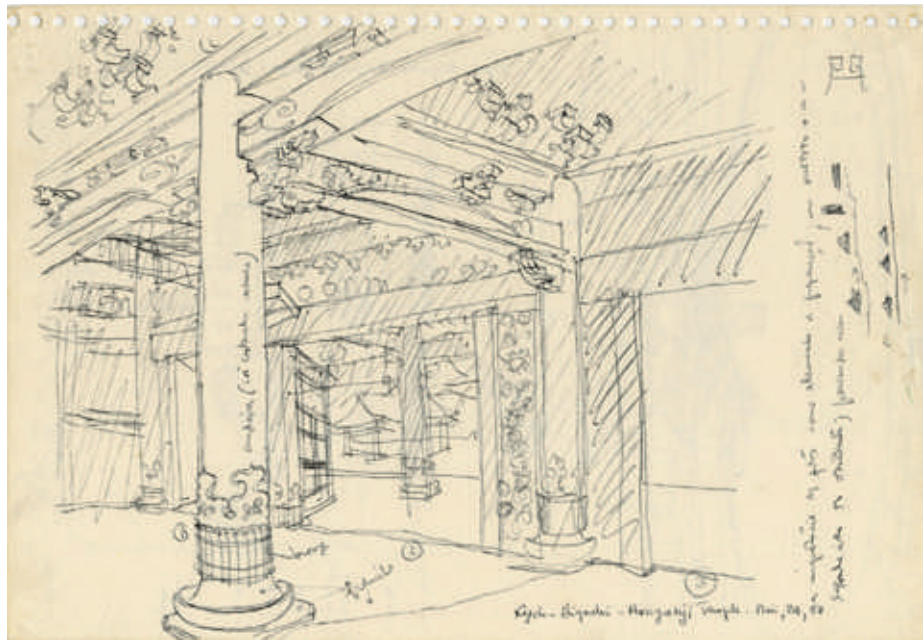
Fernando Távora, Vila da Feira Market (photo by Alessandra Chemollo).

The fluidity of space that relates the different elements of the temples and the surrounding nature returns in other occasions of observation, the ‘covered but open building’ in Nara, the veranda at the Kinkaku-ji Temple in Kyoto in which “the hall can open completely onto the lake / all open” [Fig. 57].

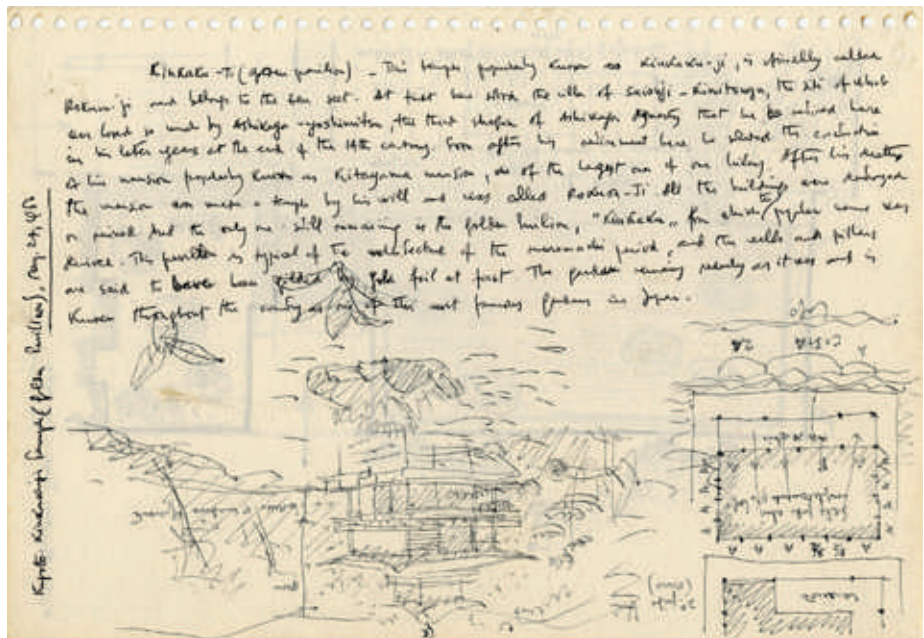
The theme of the in-between space returns as a basic compositional principle in *Holiday House in Ofir* (1956-1958), combining with other key themes also reflected in Távora’s various journeys in the decade 1950-1960.

The Fernando Ribeiro da Silva House, usually cited as the Holiday House in Ofir, is considered the work that, perhaps more than any other, represents all the themes of Fernando Távora’s passage from the tormented modernist, and more specifically LeCorbusian, formation to his own “third way”, heralded with the 1947 essay on *O problema da casa portuguesa*. The now substantial literature devoted to this work has defined its role well in the evolution of the Portuguese single-family house and, specifically, in the context of the experiments on the subject in the 1950s and 1960s.⁸⁴

Looking at it through the lens of Távora’s design research alone, there is no doubt that the continuity with the *Market* is remarkable. It could be said that the *House in Ofir* extends its experimentation by putting a single architectural element – in the *Market* the sales pavilion, here the body of the house – to



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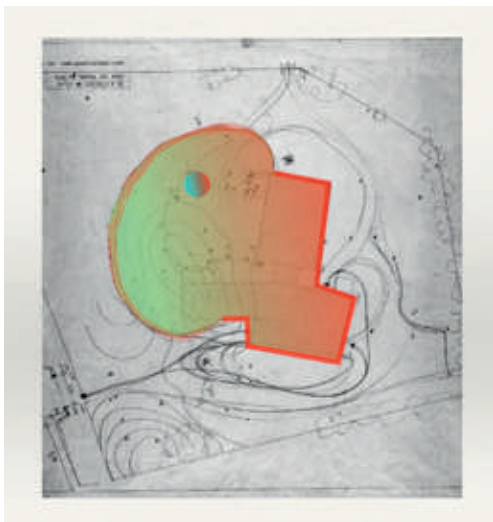


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Fig. 56
Fernando Távora, Higashi-Honganji temple, Kyoto, 24 May 1960 from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 57
Fernando Távora, Kinkaku-ji Temple in Kyoto, 27 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

84 See: Fernando Távora, “Casa em Ofir”, *Arquitectura*, no. 59, (1957): 10-13; Michel Toussaint, *Summer house at Ofir, Portugal, 1957-1958*, (Lisbon: Editorial Blau, 1992); Ana Tostões, “Casas de Férias modernas, anos 50 e estilo contemporâneo. A utopia de uma doce vida”, *Jornal de Arquitectos*, no. 196, (2000): 45; Nuno Seabra, Ricardo Gil Pedreira, “Como se escreve uma casa. A Casa de Ofir de Fernando Távora através do texto publicado”, in: Távora, “*Minha Casa*”, 254-271 (with bibliographical references); Eduardo Fernandes, “Távora’s house in Ofir: Sustainability and vernacular knowledge”, in *Structures and Architecture: A Viable Urban Perspective?*, edited by Marie Frier Hvejsel, Paulo J.S. Cruz. (London: CRC Press, 2022): 1307-1314.



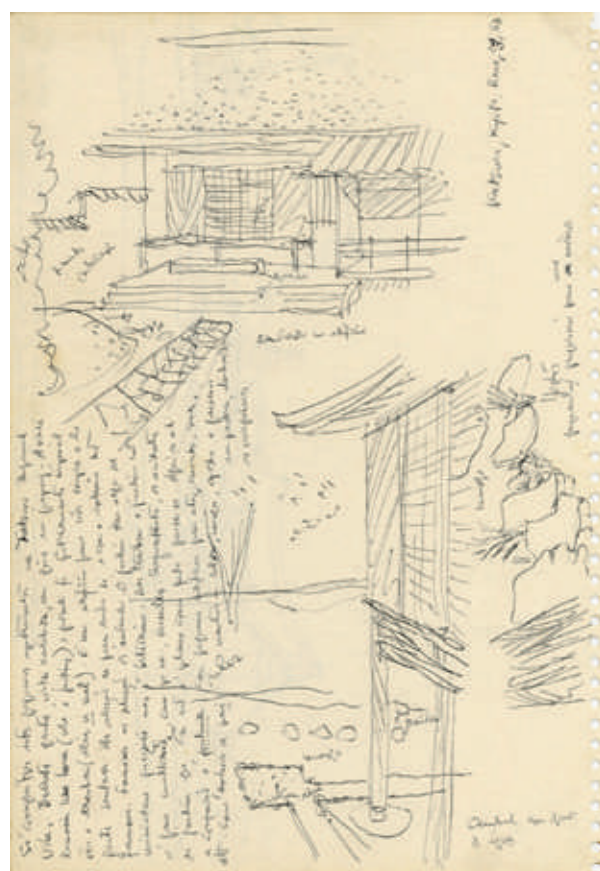
58 59



the test of the landscape, rather than the city, in order to experiment with new potentialities of the relational space that is at the centre of Távora's research in these years. A landscape captured in its broad geographical structure⁸⁵ but also designed, as Sergio Fernandez has pointed out, because the plot of land is, originally, flat, and Távora raises part of it so as to define – with a subtle but unequivocal gesture – the garden as an integral element of the domestic space.⁸⁶

If the *Market* has, as we have said, a spatial dynamic centred on a void, an inhabited void, even in the *House at Ofir* there is no lack of an “aerial” focus – again, a decentralised centre – outside the architectural volumes marked by the circular concrete fountain placed in the garden. We have already mentioned how the fountain is the subject of a reflection at Higashi-Honganji [Fig. 58, 59].

But the most relevant moment of recognition, in traditional Japanese architecture, of an integrated space between house and garden is certainly the view at Katsura, which strikes him not only for its tone of “ordinary monumentality” as already mentioned, but also and above all for its relationship with the garden, since Katsura, Távora writes, is not a house with a garden but a “whole house-garden” [Fig. 60].



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Fig. 58
Fernando Távora, Holiday home in Ofir, general plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

Fig. 59
Fernando Távora, Holiday home in Ofir (photo by the author).

Fig. 60
Fernando Távora, Katsura Imperial Villa, Kyoto, 23 May 1960, from the *Diário de “bordo”* (FIMS/AFT).

85 Távora writes in the project report: “the terrain has its own shape, its own vegetation, its own structure; in summer the nerve-wracking north wind blows, in winter the chastising south-west wind; close by, in Esposende and Fão, there are constructions that have a very particular tone; on the other side of the river, not far away, there are granite and shale” (Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 319).

86 “Before construction, the land was completely flat. Távora made a little hill to enclose the space of the garden. Its main point is symbolised by a concrete fountain. The idea to connect the house with the site was interesting, but he went much further in modifying the natural topography to emphasise the spatiality. It was a very new attitude for us. It’s fantastic when you are there in this garden. You feel as if you were in a very generous, outdoor sitting room. For me, the scale is the most important aspect of this house. (Sérgio Fernandez, *House in Ofir*, 2020, text published online: <https://whatisahousefor.com/house/house-in-ofir-to-be-deleted> (last view, May 2024).

Even when visiting the Ryoanji temple in Kyoto celebrated for its garden (27 May), he exalted above all its relationships with the building, the mixed character of temple and house, the “play of closures and openings”, “the possible relationships of the interior spaces with their respective gardens. I will always remember a division there was on the rich red flannel cloth tatami (what a red – appropriately placed in an order – free Japanese style)’.

During the visit to Nijō Castle, the theme of the Japanese garden, the observation of the balance between the freedom of natural growth and the constant control, through design, of the quantity and quality of plant species as well as the relationships between them, leads him to a comparison with the growth of cities, the balance that is shattered when its dimensions get out of control and the city turns into chaos.

I believe that there is a continuous struggle between man and nature in these Japanese gardens because nature never stops growing, creating movement, acting, and changing. The concept of the Japanese garden is a static concept, according to which the plants must maintain between themselves and the spaces that separate them, that exact relationship that is considered perfect (clearly, this occurs in the small size, certainly not in the fields and forests). And I believe that the Japanese think so; because the truth is that for a certain space and for a certain building it is not indifferent that the essences have a given volume or its triple. There is a relationship that is exact and perfect (the same phenomenon happens with cities; their centres were created for a certain size, according to a certain relationship; the growth of cities as trees in neglected gardens alters the optimal proportion and we fall back into the chaos we know. It is simply easier to prune trees and tame them than to control city life). The Japanese completely possess the concept of the proportions of things: in a small lake (in Samper’s room, there is a 1.00x0.60 garden, with a lake, bridge, fish, stones and trees), they do not put big fish and vice versa. It is not so much a mania for miniatures as is sometimes thought, it is more an exquisite sense of harmony of the whole.

But in the *House of Ofir*, the relationship with the garden is only one element of a much more complex compositional exercise centred on the walled space.

The matrix of this space is planimetric. Three clearly distinct bodies – the living room, the bedrooms, the services – in fact three autonomous pavilions connected by an intermediate space, partly internal and partly external, that connects the access routes from the north – separate and distinct pedestrian and car entrances – to the garden, located to the south.

The paratactic, pavilion-like structure evident in the plan is, however, somewhat contradicted by the characterisation of two fronts of the complex: a northern front in which the walled surface prevails and a southern front open towards the garden to make it an integral part of the domestic space [Fig. 61, 62].



61



62

This is an outline description that must be articulated point by point as it varies according to the basic principle of Tavorian composition, i.e., circumstantial occasion.

Fig. 61, 62
Fernando Távora, Holiday home
in Ofir (photo by the author).

To the north, we have the blind wall of the living room, with the long wall partition also blind. For a stretch, the wall flanks staggered the living room block, defining the entrance to the dwelling. Then, it delimits the volume of the garage and continues with a last stretch of free wall [Fig. 63].

The references, even just the obvious ones, are numerous.

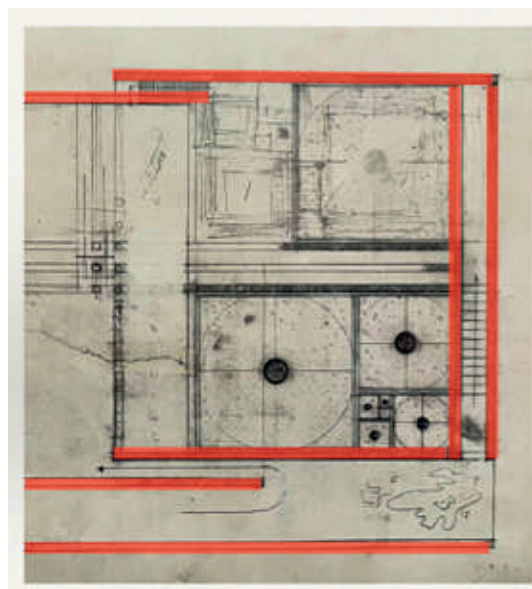
A critical reflection on the relationship between the walled box and the free wall septum, free septum which also recurs in the two wall wings extending towards the garden, suggesting its inclusion in the domestic space and contradicting, or making more complex, the pavilion structure of the two bodies destined, respectively, for the living room and sleeping area. In this interplay of staggered walls that generate an entrance tangent to an apparently compact body, which in fact does not exist as such, we discern Miesian echoes, a possible reference to the *Danteum*, which would be justified by Távora's interest in Terragni, and, certainly, the Baroque lesson of his beloved Niccolò Nasoni.⁸⁷

But the idea of a walled shell protecting the domestic space open to the garden and integrated with it could indeed find many other references, from Portuguese folk architecture to a work such as Frank Lloyd Wright's Solar House [Fig. 64, 65, 66].⁸⁸

Observing the north front in elevation, we then see the interest in neoplasticism – already present in the *Market* and, moreover, mentioned in the project report of the house – evident in the way Távora grafts the body of the chimney and, quite gratuitously, brings out the parallelepiped volume of a niche which, on the inside, flanks the dining table, interrupting the texture of the granite wall painted white with a reinforced concrete element. The north wall is, in fact, all a skilful and almost provocative play of contradictions that physically translates the idea of a compound expressed literally in the project report:⁸⁹ the external



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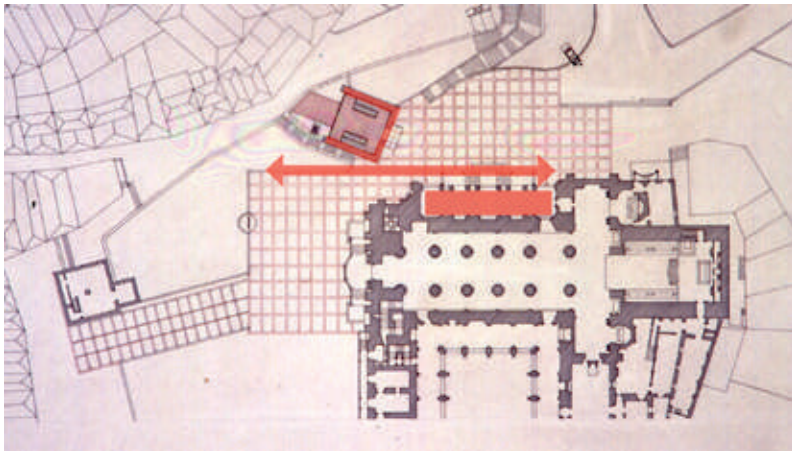
Fig. 63
Fernando Távora, Holiday home in Ofir, general plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

Fig. 64
Giuseppe Terragni, Pietro Lingeri, *Danteum*, 1938 (graphics by the author).

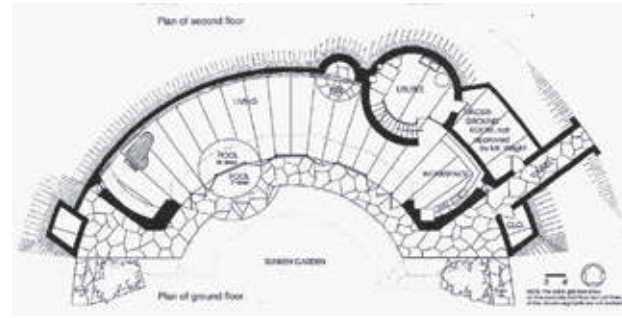
87 A project in which Távora explicitly refers to the Italian architect, active in Portugal, Niccolò Nasoni (1691-1773) is the one for the already mentioned *House of XXIV* in Porto. Eduardo Souto de Moura emphasises the reference in an interview: "The building could only be realised by knowing the site and the archaeology of the pre-existing building, understanding the Baroque, the importance of Niccolò Nasoni and the relationship with the Loggia he built on the side of the church... The Loggia, for example, benefits from the fact that the passer-by used to look at it from the front but no longer does because the space available has been reduced. As you walk around the tower, the Loggia appears in foreshortening, allowing you to appreciate how Nasoni treats the Baroque stereotomy and softens it. It is a relationship that I only understood when walking with Távora, who walked through the space staying close to the Cathedral and narrowing the visual angle; I seemed to grasp the spirit with which Nasoni conceived the building, a Baroque spirit in search of proportion, not classical contemplation." (Porto, 13 January 2002, partially published as Eduardo Souto de Moura, "La Torre di Távora", *Casabella*, no. 700, (2002): 64.

88 Frank Lloyd Wright, *Herbert and Katherine Jacobs Second House*, Madison, Wisconsin 1946-1948.

89 "One of the most basic notions of chemistry teaches us the difference between a compound and a mixture, and we believe that the essence of this notion applies perfectly to the specific case of a building. In reality, some buildings are compounds, others are mixtures (without mentioning those that are simply concoctions...), and, in the case of this building constructed in the pine forest of Ofir, we wanted it to be a true compound, a compound in which an infinity of factors came into play, certainly of variable value, but all, all to be taken into account." (Cf. Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 319)



65 66



“white wall” membrane cladding that on the inside reveals the traditional granite structure, but this too painted white; the external chimney is yellow, abstract, but the internal fireplace is a trilithic granite structure that visually dialogues with the aforementioned concrete niche, ironically equipped with a lintel [Fig. 67].



67 |

On the north side the composite exercise consists of suggesting a continuity of the “shell” that protects the house on that front, a shell that is actually, as we have seen, a complex, discontinuous, and permeable space. On the south side, the effort consists in constructing the boundary line between the interior space of the house and the garden not as a separation but as a place of exchange and continuity.

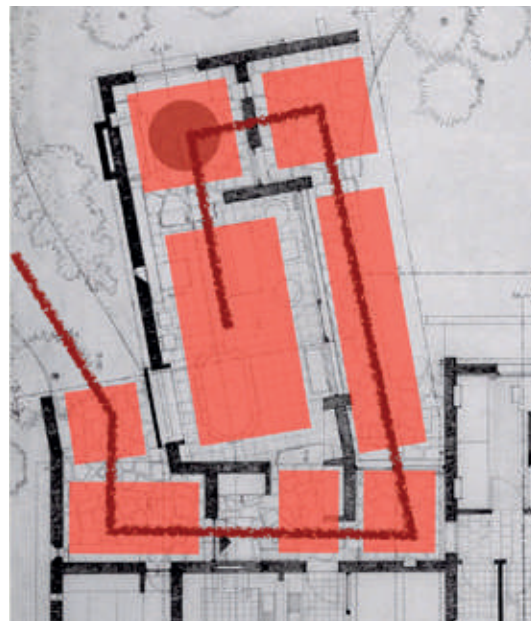
As mentioned above, on the extreme sides, two free walls extend beyond the line of the front of the two pavilions they define – the living room and sleeping area – suggesting an embrace of the north wall with the garden space. This extension of the wall not only contradicts the pavilion structure of the two bodies, making them not isolated elements but articulations of a whole but defines on the front of the living room a filtering space between the pavilion and the garden, a paved space in continuity with the intermediate space of the entrance and with a more closed portion of the living room that houses the fireplace.

Fig. 65
Fernando Tavora, House of XXIV, general plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

Fig. 66
Frank Lloyd Wright, Herbert and Katherine Jacobs Second House, 1944-1948.

Fig. 67
Fernando Távora, Holiday home in Ofir, elevation (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

The continuity of the pavement – in opus incertum stone – highlights how the living room “pavilion” is not an autonomous element but, in reality, a component of a spiral space that unfolds around the large glazed dining-living room space, leading from this, with a small but significant difference in height, to the square-plan vestibule housing the fireplace – the second off-centre of the house –, then to the patio that unites the body of the living room and the garden, finally creeping between the three pavilions, which it connects but without establishing a centre, since this intermediate space remains a path-space and leads to the entrance to the house enclosed between the two staggered walls mentioned above and which constitute the protective shell of the whole. The opus incertum paving is then reposed in the proximity of the other wing that suggests, in the night pavilion, the embrace of the garden [Fig. 66].



68

The interplay of references, as can be seen, is complex and Távora, who describes his projects in short, seemingly literary but, on a non-superficial reading, always revealing texts, lists several of them in his report for the *House of Ofir*:

the architect has his own cultural, plastic and human background (for him, for example, the house is not simply a building), he knows the meaning of words such as organicism, functionalism, neo-empiricism, cubism, etc., and, in parallel, he feels a boundless love for all manifestations of spontaneous architecture in his country, a love that comes from far away.⁹⁰

One might say this evocation of distance, in space and time, even with respect to the most immediate reference – Portuguese “spontaneous architecture” – immediately reminds us of the idea of the journey as a necessary act, even in the case of proximity, to recognise the project’s constants.

An “anarchist’s” journey into modernism, as we might define it following Távora’s writing, using neoplasticism, Le Corbusier, and other references highlighted above.

A “journey across the homeland”, according to the definition we have given it, although in the *House of Ofir*, even on this front, the distances covered by the project are considerable compared to other contemporary works.

The functional breakdown of the house into three “pavilions”, as Sergio Fernandez points out.⁹¹ is a departure from popular domestic architecture, the work’s first and most prominent reference. It is difficult to say, however, given the complexity of relationships now highlighted, whether this is a homage to LeCorbusierian functionalism or, somewhat, a critique of this hypothesis, or even, and perhaps better, an overcoming of functionalist experiments by

90 Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 319.

91 “Traditional houses never had such a scheme – three completely distinct and architecturally articulated zones never appeared in vernacular buildings”. Fernandez, *House in Ofir*.

Fig. 68
Fernando Távora, Holiday home in Ofir, plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

appealing to the deep and anonymous matrices of the same, thus putting them to the test of popular architecture as a direct and non-authorial translation of everyday life.

Moreover, an influence of Brazilian architecture has also been written about the *House of Ofir* in relation to the exhibition *Brazil Build. Architecture New and Old 1652-1942*, curated by Philip Lippincott Goodwin with photographs by George Everard Kidder Smith, staged at the MoMa in 1943 and shown in Lisbon in 1953.⁹² The exhibition catalogue is divided into two sections, the first devoted to historical, mostly monumental architecture and the second to new modern Brazilian architecture. Távora, who at the time of the design of the *House of Ofir* knew and quoted the volume, has nevertheless repeatedly emphasised the paramount importance – in his education and, more generally, as a cultural model – of the figure of Lucio Costa. An acquaintance that came about within ESBAP and thanks to the teacher Carlos Ramos. In fact, Costa visited Portugal for two long periods, in 1952 as director of SPHAN (*Service of National Historic and Artistic Heritage*) and in 1961 invited to ESBAP by Ramos, with the aim of studying Portuguese popular architecture. His methodological indications are fundamental, as Ramos himself acknowledges, for similar Portuguese research. Costa emphasises the link between Brazilian architecture and Portuguese architecture, stating that it is necessary for him to first know the history of Portugal in order to then understand the Brazilian evolution up to the modern, the tendency of the house to open outwards and the negation of the roof up to the flat roof. A rootedness of innovation in the constants of anonymous popular architecture certainly akin to the process followed by Távora but foreign to the comparison between ancient and modern monumental excellences on which the MoMa exhibition is based; an initiative, moreover, that is entirely American and internal to the project of continuity of architectural internationalism from which Távora detaches himself.⁹³

About the *Inquerito* matrix of the project, certainly significant – with respect to other contemporary works discussed above with which the house shares an actualisation of tectonic nodes – is the use of materials, the forcing of traditional ones – granite painted internally and clad externally – and the combination of

92 Philip Lippincott Goodwin, *Brazil Build. Architecture New and Old 1652-1942*, photographs by G. E Kidder Smith. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1943). For the relationship between the *House of Ofir* and Brazilian architecture see: Paulo Tormenta, "Fernando Távora – Do Problema da Casa Portuguesa, á Casa de Férias de Ofir", *DC Papers: Revista de crítica y teoría de la arquitectura*, no. 9-10, (2003): 61-71; Hugo L. Farias, "La Casa: Experimento y Matriz" (Tesis Doctoral, Directores Y. Bonet Correa, J.F. Ganhão Da Cruz Pinto, Madrid 2011), 29-129; Tiago Nuno Freitas, *Brazil Builds-interferences in Portuguese Summer houses*, Conference Young Scientist, (Košice: s.e., 2015).

93 Philip Lippincott Godwin (1885-1958) signed the exhibition and its catalogue as president of the American Institute of Architect, in addition to being a consultant to Moma. His introduction to the volume begins: 'The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the American Institute of Architects in the spring of 1942 were both anxious to have closer relations with Brazil, a country which was to be our future ally. With this motive and with a keen desire to know more about Brazilian architecture, especially their solutions for the problem of controlling heat and light on large exterior glass surfaces, a flying trip was undertaken. George Everard Kidder Smith, architect, accompanied me to record scenery and architecture; the colonial had been widely photographed – the modern almost not at all. (Goodwin, *Brazil Build. Architecture New and Old 1652-1942*). On Lucio Costa's relations with Portugal and Távora see: Lucio Costa, "Documentação Necessária", *Revista do Serviço do Património Histórico e Artístico Nacional*, (1937): 31-39; Madalena Cunha Matos, Tânia Beisl Ramos, *Um encontro, um desencontro. Lucio Costa, Raul Lino and Carlos Ramos*, VII Seminário DOCOMOMO Brasil, (Porto Alegre – Rio Grande do Sul, 2007); José Pessôa, Maria Elisa Costa, *Bloquinhos de Portugal: A arquitectura portuguesa no traço de Lucio Costa*, (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 2013); Sara Silva Reis, "Fernando Távora e Lucio Costa, pontos comuns" (Integrated Master's Dissertation in Arquitectura apresentada à Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, orient. J.M.N. Viana Brás Rodrigues, Porto 2017).

these with new materials, such as Omenilite covering the intrados of the roofs. This is a flashy, almost provocative dialogue, as we have seen in the comparison between the granite hearth and the concrete niche/window, which could be summed up overall as experimentation not so much with popular tradition as with the potential of the current ordinary materials and the possibility of combining them with the ordinary material of tradition. A search for banality rather than popular tradition, which corresponds well with the model of Cistercian sobriety expressed by Távora in his youthful diaries and which becomes, in time, that idea of decorum as a reduction of expressive means already mentioned [Fig. 69, 70].⁹⁴

But certainly, the journey into Portuguese popular architecture – a genealogical journey that becomes, on the occasion of the Inquerito, institutional – can be traced back to the central and most innovative theme of *Ofir's House*, namely the study not simply of a relationship between interior and exterior space but of an intermediate spatiality understood as pure relational space.

The patio or courtyard, enclosed by the ensemble of these organisms, is an authentic open-air room. Stretching along the other sides of the courtyard, the various roofs and the drying room, where maize, beans and all the earth's produce in need of shelter and fresh air are stored and exposed to the sun, are raised on one or two storeys.... The continuity of the low-sloping roofs surmounts the leafy ceilings of the surrounding branches, embracing the whole and giving it a cosy appearance, immersed in the landscape [Fig. 71].⁹⁵



69

94 The figure of Bergson appears, in Távora's private writings, above all in relation to an anti-technological and anti-specialist vision as a reminder of a tradition of austerity and the "essentialisation of life" that, even in a youthful formulation, offers excellent premises for the idea of design method based on "potential" resources existing in the place. Távora, as already mentioned, quotes Bergson mediated by Leonardo de Coimbra's *A Filosofia de Henri Bergson*, a text mainly dedicated to *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, published by Bergson in Paris in 1932: Leonardo Coimbra, *A Filosofia de Henri Bergson*, (Lisboa: Pensamento Português, 1932). Using the pages of one of the theorists of the Renascença Portuguesa Távora, in opposition to "a delirium of industrialisation" and the "orgy of technological innovation", he invokes "a new simplification of life", "a new purifying asceticism". To these references, he juxtaposes a reference to St. Bernard, "the austere friar", who – on another page of his youthful diaries – offers a decisive connection with the architectural sphere: "There is a typical case in the history of Architecture in which decisions of a moral order and a new concept of life were reflected in the forms that were created; it is the case of St. Bernard's reform, which produced a new and more rational form of architecture. Bernard's reform which produced a truly functional, superior and upright Arch. as he wanted his Order to be; Alcobaça is an example of this: there is no decoration for decoration's sake, no appearance, not even the decorative; there is only the spirit of Cister and integral adherence - as integral as the work of men can be". (Quoted in Mendes, *Ah, che ansia umana di essere il fiume o la riva!*). The call for a new austerity, substantiated by pre-modern models - is completed with reference to the "master" Le Corbusier, creating a very subtle and stimulating connection between his own search for an essential life (hence a project) and the concept of "maison - machine à habiter", a "supreme simplicity" of the machine or reinforced concrete in which "nothing is useless" and, consequently, "everything is functional". The result, writes Távora, of the influence exerted on Le Corbusier by the "Gothic in its best phase", therefore more "functional and, therefore, more ascetic". A "concept of life", visible above all in Corbusier's interiors, which brings to mind 13th century hermitism and refers to the ideals of St Francis, in whose Canticle "everything refers to the fundamentals".

95 So wrote Fernando Távora, Rui Pimetel and António Menêres in one of their reports: *Arquitetura Popolar em Portugal* (Lisboa: 1961): 38.

Fig. 69, 70
Fernando Távora, Holiday home
in Ofir (photo by Alessandra
Chemollo).



70 |



71 |

Edifício de SANTA MARIA, GUADIANA, Casa de J. J. J. J.

COCHILIN, VILLA, ABARIL, Casa e jardim. VERDEIRA, St. ESTÁZIL DE BOUTEIRO, GUADIANA, Quinteiro de casa de lavagem



Fig. 71
 Arquitectura Popular em Portugal (Lisboa: Gravura, composição e impressão Gráfica São Gonçalo 1961), 39.

It is, for Távora, the recognition of a true design obsession.

I have always had a certain obsession with the question of the window because the window is really a hole through which you touch the outside. So in the contact between inside and outside, the door or window is fundamental. And actually, what people see, how they see it and what they see is fundamental in a house. Consequently, I have an obsession with open and closed spaces and the relationships between spaces.⁹⁶

Although, remaining with the trips across the homeland, it is also necessary to mention another reference whose fortune in Portuguese architectural culture differs greatly from the *Inquerito*.

On several occasions, Távora recalls that his encounter with Raul Lino's work took place within the family as a boy because of a book given by his father to his brother Bernardo with a dedication "for my son Bernardo, so that in his professional activity he will always follow the great masters".⁹⁷ But the link is more profound and more personal. First and foremost, Lino's interest in travelling within Portugal since the late 1990s and in travelling abroad, such as to Brazil, which Távora mentions in connection with assimilating folk art.⁹⁸ But the cosmopolitan Távora can certainly also be interested in Lino's references to the architecture of Morocco, which manifests itself – according to Pedro Vieira de Almeida, curator of the controversial exhibition dedicated to him in 1970 – in projects such as the Monsalvat houses (1901), Silva Gomes, O'Neill (1902), Tânger (1903).⁹⁹

Lino is also a connecting figure for Távora, like his master Carlos Ramos himself, with 19th-century English and German culture, and thus with the innovations in domestic architecture developed in these areas.¹⁰⁰

Many of the principles enunciated by Lino, experimented in built works such as the *Casa do Cipreste* (1912), return in Távora's research and are evident in the design of the *House of Ofir*: attention to the site; the planimetric study as the generator of the project even in its volumetrics; the paratactic structure and the specificity of each component; the use of local techniques and labour understood as the geographical foundation of the project; the importance of

96 Agrasar, "Eu realmente não posso ver uma janela sen ver do lado de lá": entrevista con Fernando Távora", 23.

97 Távora, *Para a Edifícios*, 3.

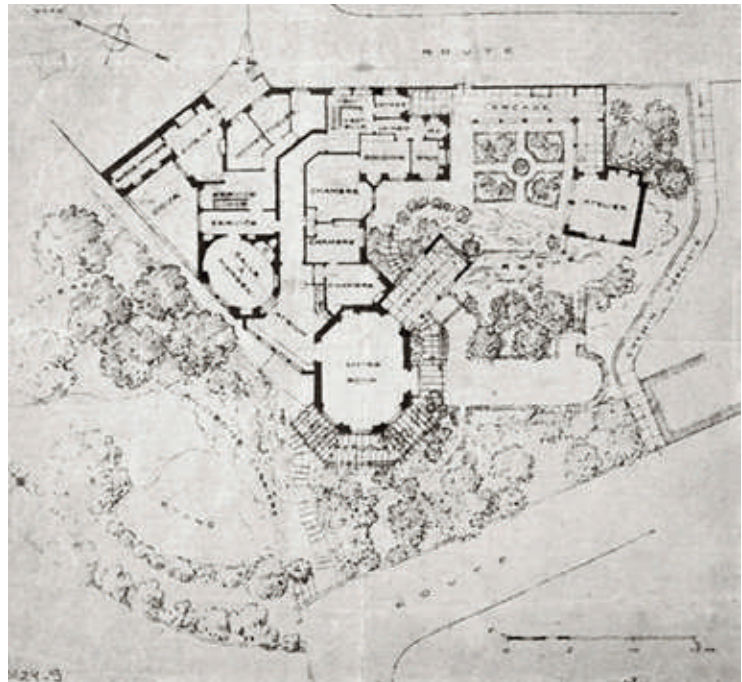
98 Ral Lino, *Auriverde Journada. Recordações de uma viagem ao Brasil* (Lisboa: Valentim de Carvalho, 1937); Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos*, 433.

99 See: Pedro Vieira de Almeida, *Raúl Lino, Arquitecto Moderno*, in Lino Pimentel ed., *Raul Lino. Exposição Retrospectiva da sua Obra*, (Lisboa: Oficinas Gráficas de Gris Impressores, 1970): 115-189.

100 Raul Lino (1879-1974), an architect from Lisbon, began his studies in Windsor in 1889, continuing them in Hanover and finally completing an apprenticeship with Albrecht Haupt (1852-1932). This path brought him into contact with the reform of English domestic architecture at the end of the 19th century. His work, immediately oriented towards the theme of the Portuguese house, was influenced by the study that first systematised its results, namely, *Das Englische Haus* by Herman Muthesius (Herman Muthesius, *The English House*, New York: Rizzoli, 1979). In 1918 he published, in Lisbon, *A Nossa Casa – apontamentos sobre o bom gosto na construção de casas simples*, a text in which he studied the forms of living in the different regions of Portugal. See, also for more extensive bibliographical references: Paula André, edited by, *Celebrando A Nossa Casa (1918-2018) de Raul Lino* (Lisboa: DINÂMIA/CET-IUL – Centro de Estudos sobre a Mudança Socioeconómica e o Território, 2018). Regarding Lino's influence on the *House of Ofir* see: Joana Carvalho dos Santos, "Architecture and Interior Space in Portugal" (Doctoral Thesis, Tutor Maurizio Vogliazzo, Politecnico di Milano, 2004).

a “natural” relationship between architecture and the ground on which it stands; the house as a “translation” of the client’s personality.

But the theme that we already find in Lino, and which will be one of the most productive and innovative in Távora’s research, is that of the elaboration of an intermediate space between interior and exterior, a theme that is also central, as we have seen, in the design of the *Market*.¹⁰¹ In that work, the political significance of the intermediate space was emphasised, and the construction of a space of relationship and exchange in the structure of the pavilions and the void at the centre of the overall spatial device was conceived as a place of rest and encounter [Fig. 72].



72

In the *House of Ofir*, for obvious thematic reasons, the “political”, “civic” idea of a relational space leaves place for the idea, also central to Távora and closely related – to which we have already alluded in connection with the *Tennis Pavilion* –, of the need for a useless space, an architectural place removed from utility and economy. A place of relationship and free exchange, a place of conversation, of confrontation. In addition to the political value of such a space, the absence of which stands out as a mortifying lacuna in his journey through American culture, the aesthetic and philosophical value of the act of suspension that offers space to circumstance, to action not predetermined by architecture, is highlighted here. An act of welcoming experience within the project’s structure in which emptiness plays a central role as later theorised in the text on *The Organisation of Space*.¹⁰²

Again, the theme, as we can see, is dense with references and finds moments of enthusiastic recognition in Japan.

At his friend Toshihiko’s father’s house in Tokyo (15 May), he notes: “Since the house is raised from the ground by 40 or 50 cm, the thresholds are an ideal space for sitting”. The visit to his friend’s father’s house is also an opportunity to observe the incompatibility between Western furniture and the spatial structure of the Japanese house without fixed walls. Again, an important experience in developing the idea of a continuous, fluid space, a compound of fullness and emptiness.

101 Nuno Portas emphasises the theme in his preface to the text on the Organisation of Space: “integration and rupture, between internal space (which is external and semi-external) and site” Nuno Portas, *Prefácio à edição de 1981*, in Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, VII-XXIV.

102 In 1962, Pedro Vieira de Almeida – whom we have mentioned as the one who recovers the figure of Raul Lino, going beyond his cultural and political responsibilities within the Estado Novo – wrote his *Ensaio sobre algumas características do espaço em arquitectura e elementos que o informam* and elaborated the idea of a transitional space, intermediate between interior and exterior, which he would later relate to vernacular architecture, developing its philosophical and political meanings. Several pages of the text, Vieira de Almeida’s degree thesis (C.O.D.A.), are dedicated to Távora’s text on *The Organisation of Space*, which came out that same year. The search for an intermediate spatiality between interior and exterior also characterises Álvaro Siza’s research in these same years. In this regard, we refer to: Giovanni Leoni, “Siza prima di Siza”, *Casabella*, no. 896, (2019): 3-21.

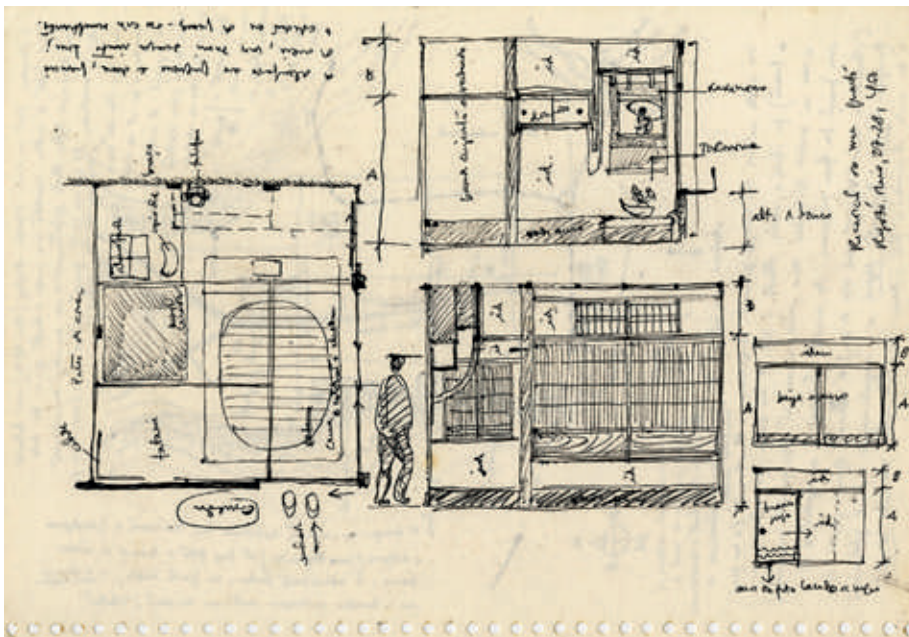
Fig. 72

Raul Lino, Casa do Cipreste, San Pedro de Sintra, 1914.

Távora returns to the theme on 20 May by describing and drawing a hotel room – its physical characteristics and the way people live in it – and adding an illuminating comparison, confirming his cosmopolitan vision of architecture:

... Japanese entrances remind me of those in Venice because of what they have in common: the harbour, the change, the affirmation of the difference of worlds, etc. Our entry threshold here is very emphasised... the street penetrates the house, but the street-house separation is perfectly defined.

An insight, the relationship between traditional Japanese architecture's treatment of the threshold and the ordinary structure of Venetian passageways, which also illuminates Távora's interest in Carlo Scarpa's work [Fig. 73, 74, 75, 76, 77].



73



74

Moreover, in the Japanese leg of the Gulbenkian journey, the “geographical” vision of the temples is inevitably intertwined with a constant evaluation of the relationship between architecture and the body, indicating a non-visualist but anthropological conception of architectural space. These are the living bodies of visitors, the body of Távora himself always in the foreground, and statues which, inserted in an architecture lacking an anthropomorphic matrix, take on a very special role.

At the Buddhist temple Sanjūsangen-dō (21 May), observing the 1001 statues of the Buddha, Távora defines “an uncommon principle”, by which he is “impressed”, the “repetition of similar (not the same) elements, along the whole extent of the building”. In Nara, he is struck by the “size” and “terribleness” of the Todaji guardian. Observations of rhythm and scale of presences that in Nijo Palace in Kyoto become more complex

Two days later, when sketching the Great Buddha Hall in Nara, Távora makes a comparison with Western spatiality, which is curiously evoked through a reference to the Lincoln statue in Washington.

Fig. 73
Fernando Távora, Sketch of his room at the Seikoro Inn, Kyoto, 27-28 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 74
Fernando Távora, Holiday home in Ofir, general plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).



75 |



76 |



77 |

Fig. 75, 76, 77
Fernando Távora, Holiday home
in Ofir (photo by the author).

Here the columns create a richness of space and a framing of the central figure that does not exist in Washington. It makes one want to turn, to see, to understand. The interest in unravelling the mystery of choosing the best viewpoint not only of the statue, which is not free (see how in plan the general base plays with the pillars) but is framed in a perfect architectural system ... part of the interior space ... (not) an extra thing in space. [Fig. 76]

A space that is not defined by geometry and perspective vision but generated by the body in motion.

A spatiality that is also found in the Katsura complex and its purest form is a continuity in the variety of architectural elements and spaces, "punctuated by small buildings for standing, talking, eating, etc."

It is important to specify that if his direct acquaintance with traditional Japanese architecture provides him with the opportunity to recognise the theme of relational space in the search for constants, his other experiences in that same country, on which he has the highest expectations of finding a traditional culture still alive and operating, show him, after the trip and in sequence with other visits, that the world is not the place endowed with "order and quality" that professional magazines present us with, but widespread chaos, a realm of discontinuity.¹⁰³

This overcoming of youthful illusions of the recovery of harmony of space was decisive for the evolution of his architectural project and led us to another recognition that is useful for reading the design of the House of Ofir and the relationship it establishes with the garden and more generally, with the landscape.

The Gulbenkian Journey, Reflections: Wright

It is difficult to say how much the visit to traditional Japanese architecture also contains a bit of Wrightian Japan, and how much the visit to East Taliesin preceding it on the same trip (9 April) contains something of Távora's passion for Japanese architecture. They certainly have in common the theme of the harmony of space and its overcoming in favour of a more disillusioned and more effective conception of relational space.



Fig. 76
Fernando Távora, Daibutsu-Den
Interior, Nara, 26 May 1960,
from the *Diário de "bordo"*
(FIMS/AFT).

103 Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 42-43.

The encounter with Frank Lloyd Wright is one of the few encounters with “modern” architecture on American soil that was explicitly desired, prepared, and described with the typical enthusiasm of an architectural journey in the footsteps of the masters. So much so that Távora defines the visit to Taliesin East, the climax of the encounter, as a “shock, perhaps the greatest of my life as an architect.”

It is not an exaggeration to say that the encounter with Wright, an author present with no less than sixty-two volumes in Távora’s library and an obvious influence on his built work, has, at the date of 1960, a similar relevance to the encounter with Le Corbusier; two encounters that are also two overtakes. As we have seen, Le Corbusier is the author of reference in the ESBAP renewed by Carlos Ramos, taken as such also by the young Távora, who initiates a tormented lifelong relationship with him. At the beginning of the 1950s, Wright reappears on the scene of the Portuguese debate concerning the organicist vision, driven by Bruni Zevi’s positions in perfect parallelism and historical relation with what happens in Italy.¹⁰⁴

If almost all the encounters with contemporary architecture during the American weeks of the Gulbenkian trip – from Mies to Kahn – are described as chance encounters approached with an attitude somewhere between the curious and the blasé, the numerous visits to Wright’s architecture are instead openly planned and have the tone of a study trip. Távora visits the Guggenheim (5 March) “with great curiosity”, bringing criticism but appreciating its fluid space that offers “the possibility of conversation” mixing art and everyday life. On 8 April, he visited the Johnson Wax, an aseptic visit, as an architect, which resulted in a highly positive judgement but concluded with a remark about the difficulty of reproducing such quality where Wright’s charisma, the “inestimable” publicity value of his signature and the consequent investment of the client were lacking. In the Chicago area (from 10 April) Távora then makes a canonical tour of Wright’s architecture and, in the course of the trip, also visits Taliesin West (21 April) and the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo (15 May).

The only properly architectural drawing of all the visits to Wright’s work is the sketch mentioned above of the Robie House, within the pages of the *Diary*, dated 16 April 1969.

However, the real “representation”, not drawn but written, of the encounter with Wright is reserved for the visit to Taliesin East (9 April), the place where Távora expects to encounter the full coincidence of life and work that he considers the

104 Zevi’s *Storia dell’architettura moderna* (Turin: Einaudi 1950) was already published in Spanish at the time Távora wrote the *Diary* (Bruno Zevi, *Historia de la arquitectura moderna*, Buenos Aires, Emecé Editores, 1954) but would not be published in Portuguese until 1970 (*História da Arquitetura Moderna*, Lisboa, Editora Arcádia, 1970-73, preface by Nuno Portas). Távora, moreover, had attended Zevi’s lectures during his trips to Italy prior to the Gulbenkian trip and quoted his lectures in class with his students as early as the Gulbenkian trip years. In the early 1950s, in the context of the debate on organicism, interest in Zevi was considerable in Portuguese schools. Duarte Castel-Branco, an EBAL student, on his return from a trip to Italy proposed a Portuguese translation of *Architettura e storiografia* (Milan: Libreria Editrice Politecnica Tamburini, 1950) and published (1952) a number of pamphlets translating Zevi’s texts into Portuguese: *A Contribuição Finlandesa, from History of Modern Architecture; Da cultura arquitectónica* from Bruno Zevi, “Message to the Congrès International d’Architecture Moderne. Della cultura architettonica”, *Metron*, no. 31-32, (1949): 5-30; *As diversas idades do espaço*, from *Saper vedere l’architettura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1948) (Cf. Lixa Oliveira Filgueiras, “A Escola do Porto 1940/69”, in *Carlos Ramos. Exposição retrospectiva*, n.p.). Ana Mesquita, in her study on the *Diário*, mentions at several points the influence of Zevi’s *History of Modern Architecture*, even considering it a “filter” through which Távora observes the architecture he gradually encounters (Cf. Mesquita, *O Melhor de Dois Mundos*). Regarding the process of constructing the figure of an “organic” Wright in Zevi’s writings see: Roberto Dulio, *Introduzione a Bruno Zevi*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2008), in particular the chapter *La metafora di Wright*.

most precious value of Wright's teaching for him. This is an expectation that certainly influences the mode of the visit, which is completely different from the visits to other Wrightian works.

The visit generates a narrative apparently dominated by inspired and idyllic tones, which, in reality, are dense with tensions and contradictions and dominated by a sort of self-defence from the architectural personality of the Master. Távora seeks a comparison with a model for his architecture, perhaps with "the" model after the disappointment of his encounters with Le Corbusier's work during his first trips to Europe; but not a formal model so much as a model of method. He almost seems to fear that Wright's architectural prowess might overpower him, take him away from the methodological structure that interests him. Thus, he returns to the non-direct but transversal encounter he reserves with other "modern" architects during the trip. "I came from Portugal to see Taliesin" he exclaims at the first difficulties. Still, it is a fact that he has not really organised the visit, has not gathered information about the means, and finally reaches the place with a process, based on circumstances, that is very reminiscent of the structure of his design method: he wanders around Spring Green, gathers information from passers-by, finally snatching a lift from an elderly gentleman who has stopped at the Post Office with his car. "If the post office had closed before I had solved my problem, I don't know what would have become of me".

The driver found by chance turns out to be a mason who helped build Taliesin and, as a result, knows the complex well, becoming, in effect, a guide. The entire visit takes place without Távora hardly ever getting out of the car, and the Diary's register doubles.

The words of the driver-mason – as a heteronymous – prosaically illustrate Wright's work.

Protected by this lowering of the tone of Wright's work description entrusted to the guide, Távora elaborates on his considerations about Wright as a man looking for himself in Wright and Wright in himself in his typical attitude of a cosmopolitan traveller.

The first vision he is struck by when passing through Taliesin is already his vision about architecture at that moment: the disappearance of architecture as a form in itself in favour of a spatial continuity involving every aspect of what exists. Here the key term is still, however, 'landscape'.

Taliesin is a landscape, Taliesin is a whole, in which it is perhaps difficult to distinguish the work of God from the work of man.

There is still the nineteenth-century Romantic, Ruskinian and Morrisian overtones that often surfaced in the younger years and which the Gulbenkian trip would definitively dismiss. As the visit progresses Távora begins to get emotional, especially when he arrives at the cemetery where Wright is buried with his family, but the driver-mason "is eager to show me things" and Távora finally gets out of the car only once he reaches the Master's studio.

Rather than assessing the building with the critical acumen demonstrated at the Guggenheim and Johnson Wax, however, Távora peers inside, imagining the life that took place there when Wright lived there. He does not dwell on the details but captures “a richness of form, a naturalness, that I have never found in contemporary architecture” and recognises, in a process of clear identification, the ability to breathe life back into historical constants in modern architecture.

I felt myself in the Middle Ages, in Greece, in Mexico, in the presence of a cathedral, a Parthenon, and an Aztec temple; such is the integrity of this architecture.

But the guide presses on, and the visit continues, still in the car, until, having arrived at the house, Távora pulls up, takes a photograph, and finally feels that he lacks “the courage to continue”. “I felt that I had already understood Taliesin and that I was emotionally exhausted”.

The exact two hours of the visit, as Távora specifies, leave him in the grip of an attack of Stendhal syndrome: as if possessed, “far away from myself and far away from everything” he wanders into the countryside on a dusty road and cries “like a child”. Taliesin “is a landscape” but it is also “a life”, “a philosophy”.

Because Taliesin struck me precisely for what it possesses of total, of cosmic, for what exists beyond stone, wood, this or that formal refinement.

But even in the emotion and mourning, Távora does not seem to lose the lucidity of an analysis that places the figure of Wright with great precision in his own cultural project without neglecting the main critical positions established at that time.

The all-encompassing power of Taliesin, he writes first of all, makes one forget the “incidental” aspects in Wright’s life, “the formal whims”, “the vanity”, “the cost of the works”, “the cars”, “his little everyday things”, aspects that Távora nevertheless lists. The element of greatest contrast between his own position and Wright’s position – a project dominated by personality – is thus placed on the sidelines, becomes incidental.

Having done so, Távora brings Giedion onto the scene, but not through a direct quotation from his *Space, Time, Architecture*, as much as by recalling a line he heard personally on an unspecified occasion. A mode of appropriation typical of the heteronymous personality, used by Távora. In Távora’s memory, Giedion, “with a smile”, snatches Wright away from the “notorious integration of the arts” as he was himself a “painter, sculptor and architect”. The seemingly casual and innocent recollection is worth a critical essay if we remember that Giedion’s text, decisive for the post-war redefinition of Wright’s role, was written in the late 1930s, in a Harvard just under Walter Gropius’ guidance. The reported consideration, which does not exactly coincide with the formulation of the theme that

can be read in *Space, Time, Architecture*,¹⁰⁵ turns into the occasion for a veritable attack on functionalism – Gropius’s house seen on 26 March now appears to him, he writes, as “a refrigerator resting on a hill” – which is followed by Wright’s dragging back into the Great Tradition. His ability to create continuity between architecture, painting, and sculpture, as well as between urbanism and landscape, can be traced back to the lessons of ancient Greece or Gothic culture. Wright thus emerges from the genealogy of the “modern”. Not a prodrome but an alternative or, rather, an external line of continuity of historical constants. An architecture still capable, unlike the works of Le Corbusier or Mies, of producing ruins, of incorporating what, for Távora, is the raw material of the project, a temporality of long duration that exceeds the life of the individual work.

Wright’s lesson is the “power of integration” and, in the enthusiasm of his visit to Taliesin, it appears to him as a radical alternative to the America of quantity, of technique for technique’s sake, of money for its own sake.

In perfect parallelism with a potential Le Corbusier interpreter of the Swiss regionalism that Távora has been yearning for all his life, making him somehow participate in the construction of his own heteronymous personality, there appears here a Wright interpreter of an America that, by visiting it, he certainly did not find. An America that has gathered, as in Pessoa’s vision or in Ortega y Gasset’s considerations that are so present at this height, the ultimate destinies of a tradition that from Greece passes through Rome and perfects itself in Europe.

It is, therefore, no coincidence that, at this point, Távora brings in Zevi, cantor if not the inventor of the “organicist” Wright, whose words he almost steals:

Wright succeeded in creating organisms. Who dares to question the shape of a finger, the colour of a flower or the beak of a pelican? They are so... because they are so.¹⁰⁶

A Wright, the one who moves Távora to Taliesin East, perfectly functional to post-war European pro-Americanism.

However, in the final balance of this and other visits to Wright’s work, even in admiration, there remains a difficulty in assuming the model, which concerns the constant and necessary presence of Wright’s enormous personality.

From the *Diary* emerges a multifaceted Wright, certainly admired for his architectural prowess, feared for the same reason, a heteronym put to the test of a possible identification, in fact, set aside and, at the same time, kept as a more akin model if the tasks of architecture had not by then radically changed. The parallelism with Le Corbusier’s process of appropriation and rejection is visible, one and the other exceeding, in their greatness, the season of the Modern, to which they also belong, but both no longer acceptable as masters tout court for

105 Cfr. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture. The Growth of a new Tradition* (Cambridge MA: Harvard university Press, 1959), third edition, pp. 409 ff., the chapter *Aesthetic direction*.

106 “When you call Wright’s architecture organic, what do you mean? Essentially two things: 1) that his buildings are as intact as living organisms” Bruno Zevi, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, Milano: Il Balcone, 1954: 21; but the quoted text is from 1947.

reasons unrelated to their greatness. A double bond, with one and the other runs through all of Távora's theoretical and constructed work.¹⁰⁷

Two years later, bringing into academic form many of the thoughts developed during the trip, Távora makes a parallel critique of the two (non)masters. LeCorbusierian functionalism, which he does not completely reject, lacks the specific of place in favour of an internationalist vision and lacks the specific of the individual in favour of a "geometric" vision of the body. But if with Le Corbusier's functionalism "it can be said that man forgot himself, with regard to the achievements of Wright's organicism it can be said that man forgot other men". When Wright died, his lesson was transformed, with his American heirs, into "an endless sea of forms".¹⁰⁸

The Gulbenkian Journey, Reflections: Acropolis

The stop in Athens is the last on the trip, and Távora makes no secret the excitement of feeling a little at home. It is not simply a matter of physical proximity. Having lunch in a tavern "that could have been Portuguese" (9 June), he launches into consideration, to which he will often return in time, regarding a Mediterraneanness, not strictly geographical, to which he feels he belongs, a southern identity "even though I was born in the North of Portugal because in truth the North of Portugal is South".¹⁰⁹ But the southern and Mediterranean identity that Távora perceives and searches for as the matrix of his project does not contain any myth of romantic naturalness; it rather refers to a "classical sensibility", to a "nostalgia for Greece, Egypt and Rome", to Fernando Pessoa's quoted "Greece, Rome, Christendom, Europe". And it is "something of this Ancient Architecture, a certain classicism, a certain longing for eternity"¹¹⁰ that Távora goes in search of in his first visit to the Athenian monuments, grasping some of the principles, some of the constants that would underpin his projects over the years.

The lesson of the Acropolis contributes decisively to one of the key themes of Távora's project, namely the relationship between architecture and place, never interpreted as contextualism, never indulging in forms of pretended naturalness, always centred on the clarity of the founding principles of the work, in a courteous, accurate but not surrendering dialogue with the existing.

During the visit to the Acropolis, the process of recognising constants is evident and easily readable in comparison with one of the debut projects, the *Casa sobre*

107 In a 1988 interview, Távora recalls the enthusiasm for Wright that he felt during the Gulbenkian trip and, in a later interview five years later, he calls it a 'Wrightian passion during an acute crisis of rationalism'. An enthusiasm he does not regain when he returns to visit his works with Siza in 1988. "All interesting", he says, "but not part of my family", "I see them as interesting works by an outsider". (Távora, *Para a Edifícios*, 9). In another interview, this one from 1993, Távora states: "I observed and continue to think that the great rationalists were never rationalists, the great internationalists were never internationalists, an opinion that led me to a certain scepticism in relation to these terminologies that always served to make plastic choices. Having reached this conclusion, even Frank Lloyd Wright went into crisis for me, without my ever ceasing to admire him enormously" (1993 Távora interviewed by Bernardo Pinto, *Boletim da Universidade do Porto*, 19/0, 3/4, p. 47 Out-Nov 1993 now in Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos palavra desenho obra 1937-2001*, IX).

108 Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço*, 40 ff.

109 Fernando Távora, *Di corpo inteiro*, interview with Rádio Comercial of 17 December 1988 now in Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos palavra desenho obra 1937-2001*, XLII.

110 Fernando Távora, interview in *Espaços*, 10, I, 2000 now in F. Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos palavra desenho obra 1937-2001*, XXIV.

o mar (1952), which contains, in nuce, an architectural theme that was later to become decisive in the development of Távora's design career, namely the search for a relationship of continuity between the architectural body and the ground.

The *House by the Sea* project (Foz, Porto) precedes the Gulbenkian trip by eight years and is the project to obtain the CODA or degree from ESBAP.

The project report of the time echoes the positions expressed by Távora five years earlier in his text on *The problem of the Portuguese house*, rejecting "decorative whimsy" and "archaeological nonsense" while attributing to the architecture he designed "architectural forms" that "derive from the conditions imposed on the material by the function it has to perform" but also "from the spirit of those who act on the material itself", from "a profound reason", "an intimate and constant force that unifies and binds together all forms, making each building a living body, an organism with its own soul and its own language".¹¹¹

In an interview almost fifty years later, the tension between functionalist and organicist references disappears as the sense of the "intimate and constant force that unifies and binds all forms together" becomes clear:

I think of the House by the Sea, my graduation project. Now, if I wanted to trace a biography of that house, I would have to tell the story of an illustrious lady, I would have to retrace my life, I would have to think back to my origins, to the place for which I imagined the house, which is the beach of Senhora da Luz, where there is a lighthouse that already existed in Roman times; there is its profound reason, and it is the same place where my family's house stands today, where I have lived and still live. The project springs and develops from that history, and only through it can one understand how it is not an accident, the school exercise of an architect designing buildings on *pilotis*.¹¹²

The tension between a "school exercise" of building on *pilotis* and the propensity to make each building belong to the place on which it stands is visible in the drawings. Indeed, these show a parallelepiped body of geometric purity suspended on a structural cage with corbelled pillars that raise the box off the ground. An external staircase on the street front that appears almost without openings leads to the only open floor facing the ocean, with a ribbon window. On the roof, a "gesture" never repeated by Távora in his later projects: a free, curved wall [Fig. 79].



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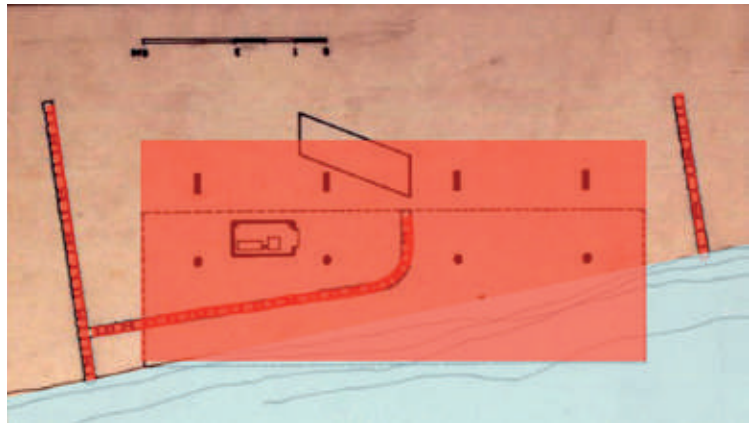
111 The report reads: "Architecture cannot and must not submit to motifs, to more or less curious details, to archaeological nonsense. The authors of these 'Casas à portuguesa' forgot and still forget that the traditional forms of the entire art of building are not a decorative whim or a baroque manifestation. Initially, and here in their true sense, architectural forms derive from the conditions imposed on the material by the function it must perform and the spirit of those who act on the material itself. Thus, in all good architecture, there is a dominant logic, a deep reason in all its parts, an intimate and constant force that unifies and binds together all the forms, making each building a living body, an organism with its own soul and its own language." (Marques da Silva Foundation, Távora Archive).

112 Fernando Távora, *La mia opera*, in: Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 9-10.

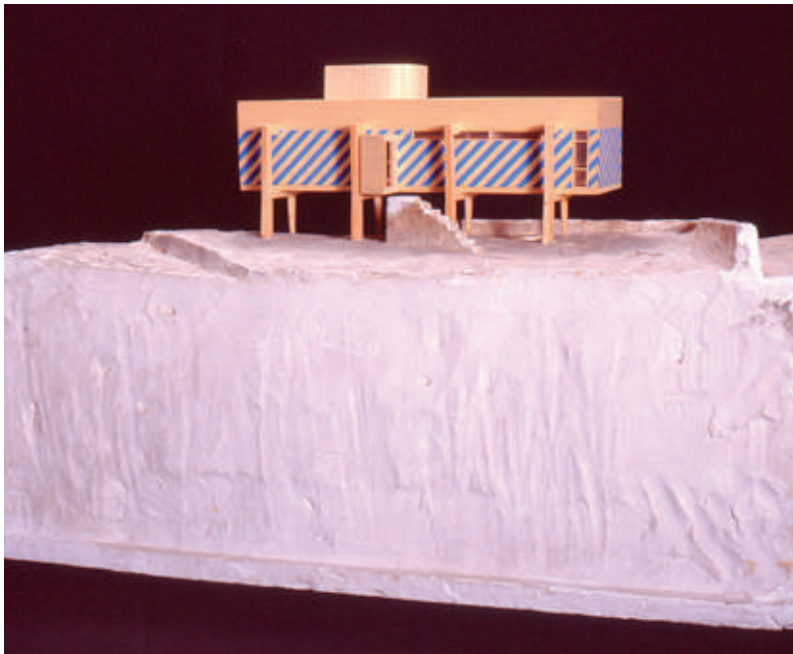
Fig. 79, 81
Fernando Távora, Casa sobre o mar, Foz, Porto, model (FIMS/AFT).

So far, the school exercise, the attempt at “critical adherence” to the master Le Corbusier. But the drawings contain much more and, again, the journeys feeding the project are more than one.

First of all, the journey across the project site itself, the knowledge and consideration of archaeology, not the “silly” or stylistic one of the “Portuguese style” house, but a precise knowledge of the ruins that the site hosts, an ancient history intertwined with the biography of the author and his family. Then, the consideration of hydrographical and orographic structures, the overlooking of the ocean, and the decision to place the building on the border between water and land are considered [Fig. 80].



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The drawings show how the house’s body is already inscribed in a complex system – house, ruins, rock, water – and how the geographic and non-purist representation of its location expresses an attraction, a desire to make the building descend from the pilotis, experiment with its correct ground support, and create continuity between all the elements.

Then, also inescapable, the “journey across the homeland” with which Távora “contaminates” the LeCorbusierian exercise as it appears in the staircase to the suspended body [Fig. 81, 82].

But the design of the *Casa Sobre o Mar* delineates above all one of the key themes of Távora’s design research, namely the relationship between the building and the ground, and in this respect, the act of recognition that takes place on the occasion of his first visit to the Acropolis is decisive.

Fig. 80
Fernando Távora, Casa sobre o mar, Foz, Porto (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

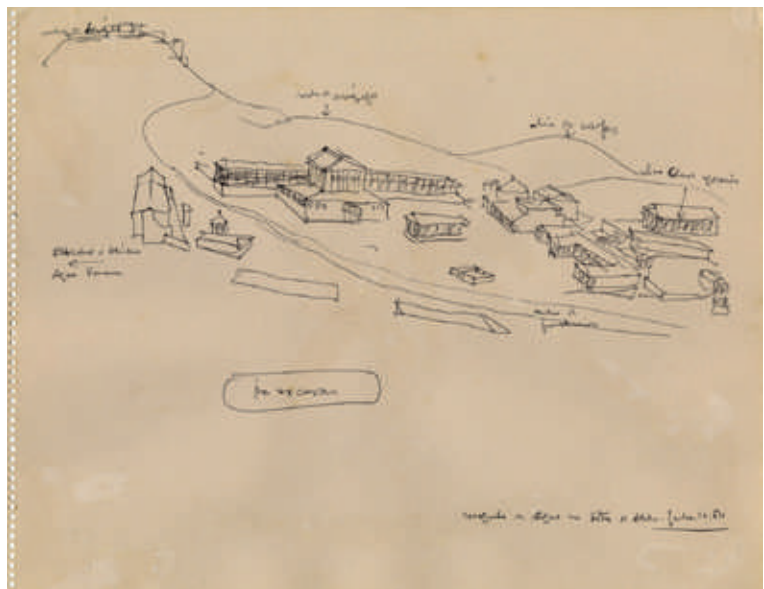
Fig. 82
Arquitectura Popular em Portugal (Lisboa: Gravura, composição e impressão Gráfica São Gonçalo 1961), 288.

It is important to emphasise that Távora begins his first real-life analysis of the Athenian archaeological complex – a place to which he will return on other trips, unlike Japan – with a visit to the Stoà of Attalus (9 June), immediately returning to the theme of walking as an act of knowledge, reflection and political confrontation. Curious, he writes, “how our civilisation, despite its economic wealth, ignores the need for the Agora in its broadest sense”. Having delineated the political and social background that generated the complex, as in the case of the Japanese temples, the gaze turns geographical. Távora observes, first of all, the orographic and planimetric layout, the “viewpoints”, the “slopes”, walking among the excavations “always with a map in hand to understand better”. The synthesis of this geographical observation is entrusted to three drawings. The first (*Notebook B*, no. 14, 9 June) is dedicated to the relationships between the different elements of the complex, to the “variety” that derives from the relationship between “unity” and “balance/disbalance” of the individual components, the “single mass” of the Parthenon and the “composite mass” of the Erechtheion, the quantitative differences between the two bodies, the rebalancing elements such as the statue of Athena, all in the perceptive and dynamic interpretation that he would theorise about two years later in his text *On the Organisation of Space* and that add an original and decisive element to his conception of the “classical”.

In the *View of the Acropolis from the North* (*Notebook B*, no. 20, 11 June), the synthesis becomes broader on a geographical scale. Távora depicts the relationships between the different architectural elements. These routes connect them, the framing in the landscape, emphasising the contrast between “the valley where

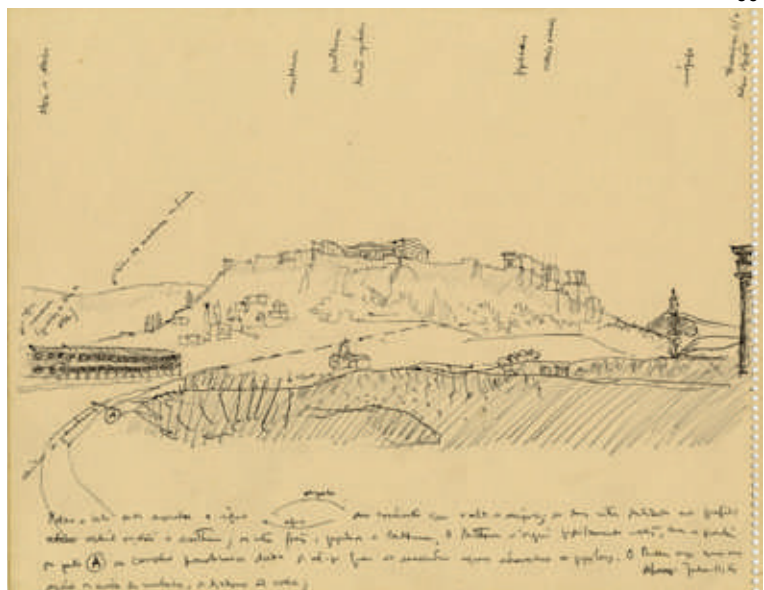


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the Agora rests” and “the height of the Acropolis”, the role of each element in the overall pattern – “the two delicate notes in the profile: Nike Victory and the Erechtheion; the strong notes Propylaeum and Parthenon”. A “landscape” that, amazed and delighted, he sees transformed by the light of a full moon when (10 June) he returns for an evening visit [Fig. 83, 84, 85, 86].



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Fundamental to the overall vision of the drawing now described is the perception of the “Parthenon... as a kind of mountain crown, a diadem of rock”. It is a decisive architectural theme, a recurring lesson in many of his projects, already grasped in an earlier drawing (*Notebook B*, no. 13, 9 June): “the composition” structured “on three levels – natural terrain with its characteristics (textures, concavity, movement, vegetation); supporting walls – of more or less coarse stone, with elements that create platforms and transitions of values; buildings – creating profiles, play, quality, prestige of the sacred place / (marble, elegance of detail, generous play of light and shadow)”.

Having grasped the geographical value of the whole, the gaze becomes closer.

Redesigning, on the same day, the *Athena Varvakeion* (*Notebook B*, no. 19, 11 June) and recalling its original location within the temple, he grasps another character of the Parthenon that structurally enters into Távora’s project, namely a “double scale” of the building, a “great sculpture” that participates, together with the “sacred rocky peak”, in the shaping of the landscape on the one hand, and on the other the “sacred, closed, mysterious interior space, organised with the intention of giving all the dignity and grandeur to a figure”. Two different spatialities, both of a relational nature – the presence of the building in relation to the place and the interior in relation to the statue – but, above all, the recognition – bluntly anti-modernist – of a distinct spatial quality of the interior in relation to the exterior. A decisive distinction for Távora’s research on intermediate spaces and on continuity of architectural space based not on the dematerialisation of the envelope but on the articulation, connection, and characterisation

Fig. 83

Fernando Távora, Acropolis, Athens, 9 June 1960, from the *Diário de “bordo”* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 84

Fernando Távora, Model of the Agora, 10 June 1960, from the *Diário de “bordo”* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 85

Fernando Távora, View of the Acropolis from the North, 11 June 1960, from the *Diário de “bordo”* (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 86

Fernando Távora, Acropolis of Athens, 9 June 1960 from the *Diário de “bordo”* and F. Távora, House Above the Sea, perspective (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

of the interior, intermediate and exterior spaces. A plastic continuity, combining matter and void that is quite different from the modernist dream of the infinite and indefinite open space.

Finally, the constructive lesson, which Távora does not entrust to detailed drawings as he had done, for example, in Baalbek a few days earlier – perhaps because he was aware that he was dealing with largely reconstructed architecture – rather offers an opportunity for methodological considerations.

Again, the first was internal and structural to his conception of architecture. The consideration moves from the Theseion, built as “a kind of model for its almost parallel construction, to be able to verify measurements, dimensions” (9 June). An observation that leads him to reiterate his conviction that “only *by doing the same thing several times, over a lifetime or generations, is it possible to refine and achieve eternal solutions*”. Again, this is a radical critique of the idea of architectural creativity as a compulsion to invent ever-new forms. A critique of the “consumerism” of form, a theme to which he also often returns in the Diary and which here offers him the occasion for yet another critique of the American technocratic economy according to which you are “obliged” to “change model, whatever it costs and whether or not there are fundamental motivations for doing so”.

The process that strikes him in ancient Greek architectural culture is instead an “accumulation of experience” – which he also observes on a figurative level in ceramics, “whose motifs developed not over a lifetime but over generations” – and which also becomes a question of language in architecture because the Greeks.

They used the same language many times over a period of one hundred, two hundred, and three hundred years. They made the Parthenon on the right side and then rebuilt it on the left side. They took it apart and rebuilt it, the current one, not on the same foundations but in the same place. All this took place with the greatest speed and decision, because it depended on political events. The construction site had its own boss and a series of artists and everything worked with formidable speed.

And in his enthusiasm for this language that is not tied to the individual personality but collective and transgenerational, closely connected to political life and the permanence of building techniques, a compliment, and not an insignificant one, to Mies van der Rohe, combined with a personal programmatic position supported by a philosophical reference to that date very much present in his reflections, escapes him.

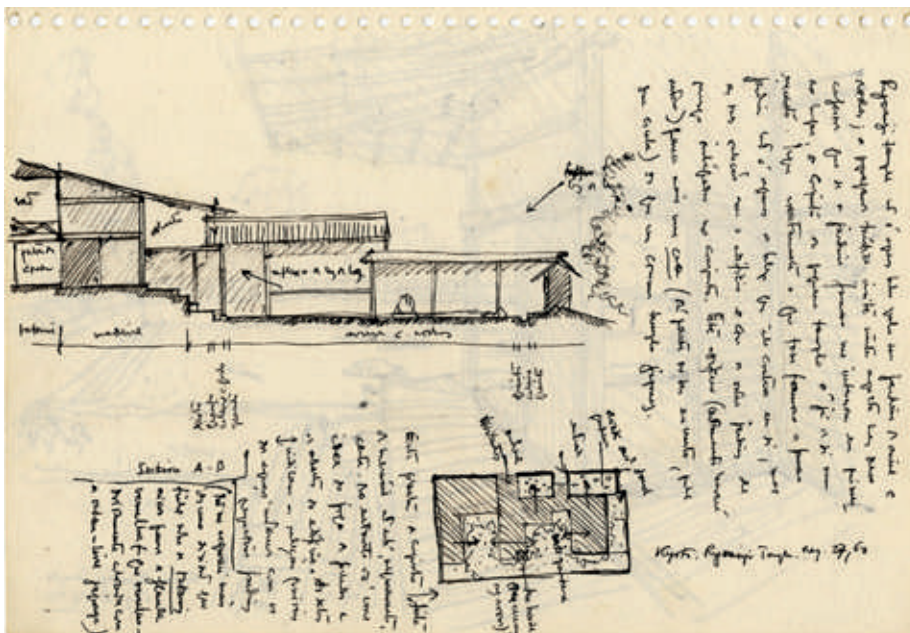
From the Theseion to the Parthenon there is a whole evolutionary journey, as happens with the Lake Shore 1a and 2a phase of Mies. In general, nowadays, this growth of experience – see what Abel Salazar says in *Philosophy of Art* – is very limited, because the pace of life forces a constant variation of techniques, programmes, etc., and also because people as well as societies think it is shameful to repeat themselves.

The tension between suspended geometric purity and adherence to the complexity and stratification of the ground, shown but not resolved in the *House by the Sea*, becomes, in many of Távora's projects, the exercise – often generative of the project – of laying the architectural body on the ground. The examples could multiply and lead to an analysis of how this is also a key theme for other Portuguese authors close to Távora. One thinks of Álvaro Siza's Tea House



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(Leça da Palmeira, 1958-63), which stands a short distance from Senhora da Luz and faces the same geographical conditions. The competition, as is well known, is won by the Távora studio, which entrusts it to the young collaborator, suggesting the location between land and sea that underpins its sophisticated design process [Fig. 87].

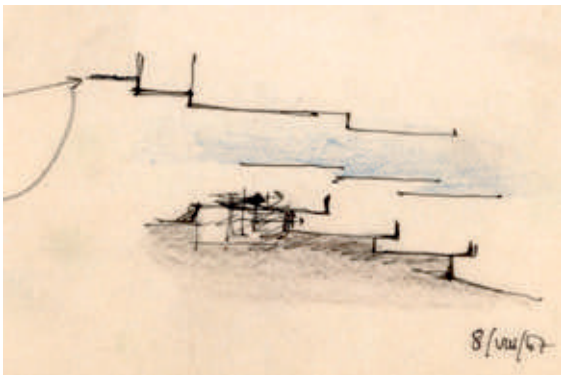


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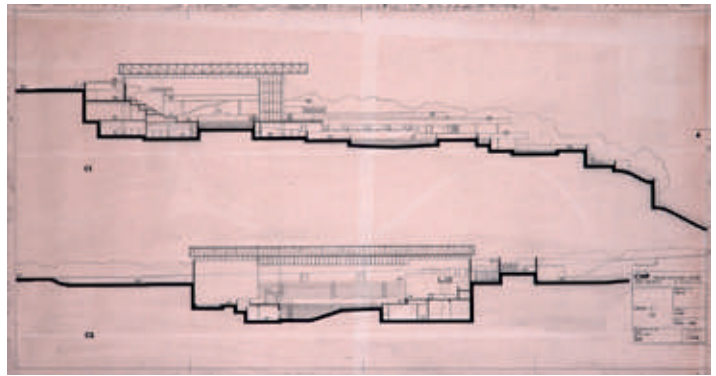
In 1967, the unrealised project for a swimming pool in Campo Alegre was once again an exercise in architecture in dialogue with the structure of the ground, again an opportunity for a long-distance confrontation with Siza, who, on the same terrain and addressing the same theme of continuity between ground and architecture, will realise the FAUP headquarters (Porto, 1986-1995) [Fig. 88, 89, 90].

Fig. 87
Alvaro Siza, Casa de Chá, Leça da Palmeira, 1958-63 (photo by the author).

Fig. 88
Fernando Távora, Kyoto, 27 May 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).



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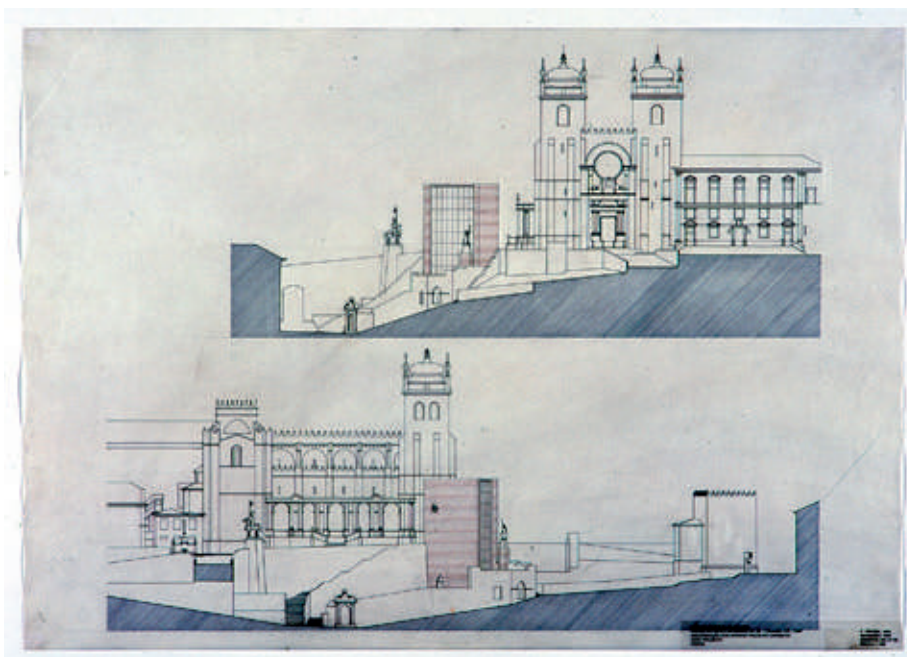
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In other projects, the exercise of altimetric placement of a new building in a non-sub alternative and non-contextualist logic of continuity and integration appears decisive with respect to the confrontation with important architectural pre-existences.

Thus in the transformation into a pousada of the Convent of Santa Marinha da Costa (Guimarães, 1972-1985), so in the masterly reading of the city through a small architectural work offered with the aforementioned House of the Twenty-Four (1995) next to the Porto Cathedral [Fig. 91, 92].



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Fig. 89, 90
Fernando Távora, Porto, project for a swimming pool, Campo Alegre, 1967, concept sketch and section (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 91
Fernando Távora, Project for the conversion of the Santa Marinha da Costa Convent into a pousada, Guimarães, 1972-85, sketch (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 92
Fernando Távora, House of the Twenty-Four, Porto (FIMS/AFT).

But the project that shows, fully resolved, the themes raised by the *Casa sobre o mar* with an almost literal reference to the constants observed in Athens is the realisation of the *Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law* grafted into the university “acropolis” of Coimbra (1993-2000).

The project programme is simple – the construction of a new *Aula Magna* capable of accommodating 450 seats – of extraordinary complexity is the planned location of the new architecture. The building fits into the heart of the university citadel of Coimbra, whose history began when D. João III ceded the Royal Palace to the University. The Palace stands on top of a rise within the Arab medina, and the new institutional settlement develops around the *Paço das Escolas*, with the addition of buildings along a secular chronology. As Gonçalo Byrne observes in an illuminating note on the work:

... the hill was occupied in an extremely organic manner, constructing the buildings directly on the sloping ground, avoiding the construction of large terraces or platforms where buildings and groups of houses could be placed. The Arab layout is built directly on the land, the orography of which remains visible in the roadways and small sloping squares that deviate little from the natural conformation. The retaining walls have a visibly autonomous development and almost always reproduce the contour and plan of the building, which seeks direct support from the ground regardless of the elevation at which it meets it. The ‘buttress buildings’, with their more or less cubic form, sit directly on the hill, transforming its natural configuration into a sort of cubic crystallisation: an encrustation of reliefs (the buildings) and empty spaces (squares, calli, patios, etc.). The aggregate built around the *Paço das Escolas*, where the new Amphitheatre of Law fits in, was constructed in exactly that way. The peripheral buildings, from the Joanina Chapel to the Via Latina complex, rest directly on the ground as large buttresses of the central platform, an idea clearly assimilated by Fernando Távora’s project.¹¹³ [Fig. 93]



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On the land entrusted to Távora, behind the Library, in a void created by the gap between the Joanina Chapel and the Faculty of Law, there are also the ruins of a Manueline arcade, five arches running parallel to the front of the historical buildings, closed by two orthogonal arches [Fig. 94, 95, 96].

A series of initial sketches shows the making of the project, the understanding of the site in its abandonment, the presence of the Manulean ruins to be included, the relationship with the existing monumental complex, the facing

113 Gonçalo Byrne, “Da Aula Magna a lezione magistrale”, *Casabella*, no. 693, (2001): 55.

Fig. 93
Coimbra University Citadel
(Google Earth).



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towards the Mondego river that somehow imposes the responsibility of defining a new prospect of the citadel towards the city. The sketches are the result of walking, of the cognitive wandering in the place that, as mentioned, is the foundation of Távora's project.

In addition to this, not visible in the drawings but pointed out by Távora in the report, there is "the layout of a Roman road and the remains of the structure of a wall from around the same period", with which the foundation work will impact.

But the key decision of the project, which is also clearly visible in the first study sketches, consists in a choice of an elevational nature, in the decision regarding the location of the building so that it can be added to the historic complex without arrogance and, at the same time, assert its new presence without awe.

Távora resorts to the cherished theme of an "art of sitting" to explain his choice.

There are different ways of sitting that characterise different civilisations; the Japanese sit one way, the Indians another, and the animals each have their way. It is important to understand how a building sits on the ground and, in this way, takes possession of it, and places itself permanently on it. In the design for the amphitheatre in Coimbra, I tried to show the delicacy with which the building is rooted in the ground, to then project outwards with horizontal planes and upwards with small volumes.¹¹⁴

Fig. 94

Fernando Távora, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra, sketch (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 95, 96

Fernando Távora, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law, manufactory remains during the early stages of construction (photo by the author).

Fig. 97

Fernando Távora, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra, study sketch (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 98

Fernando Távora, Acropolis of Athens, 6 June 1960, from the *Diário de "bordo"* (FIMS/AFT).

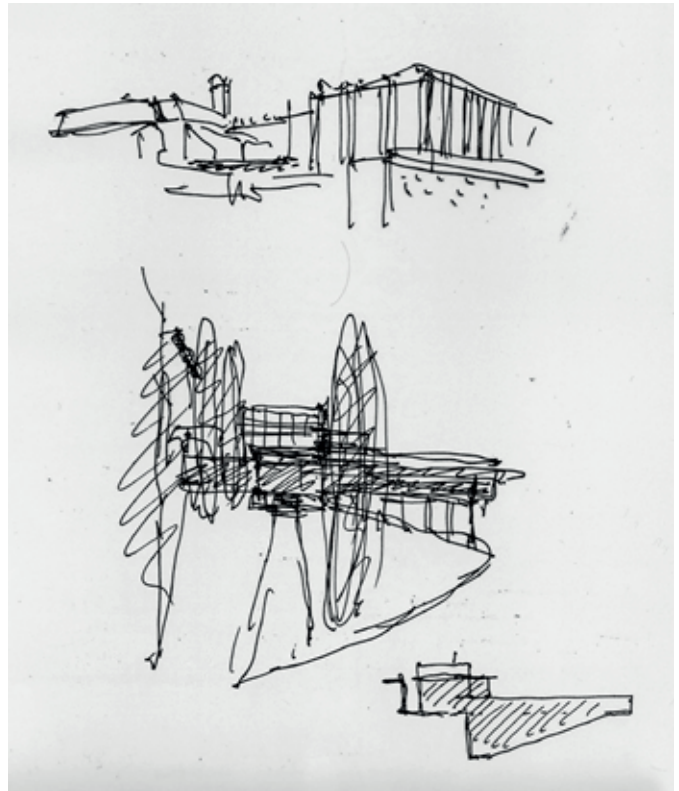
114 Giovanni Leoni, "Távora e la conoscenza dello spazio", *Casabella*, no. 693 (October 2001): 46-57.

An 'art of sitting' that is often the focus of his attention during his various travels.

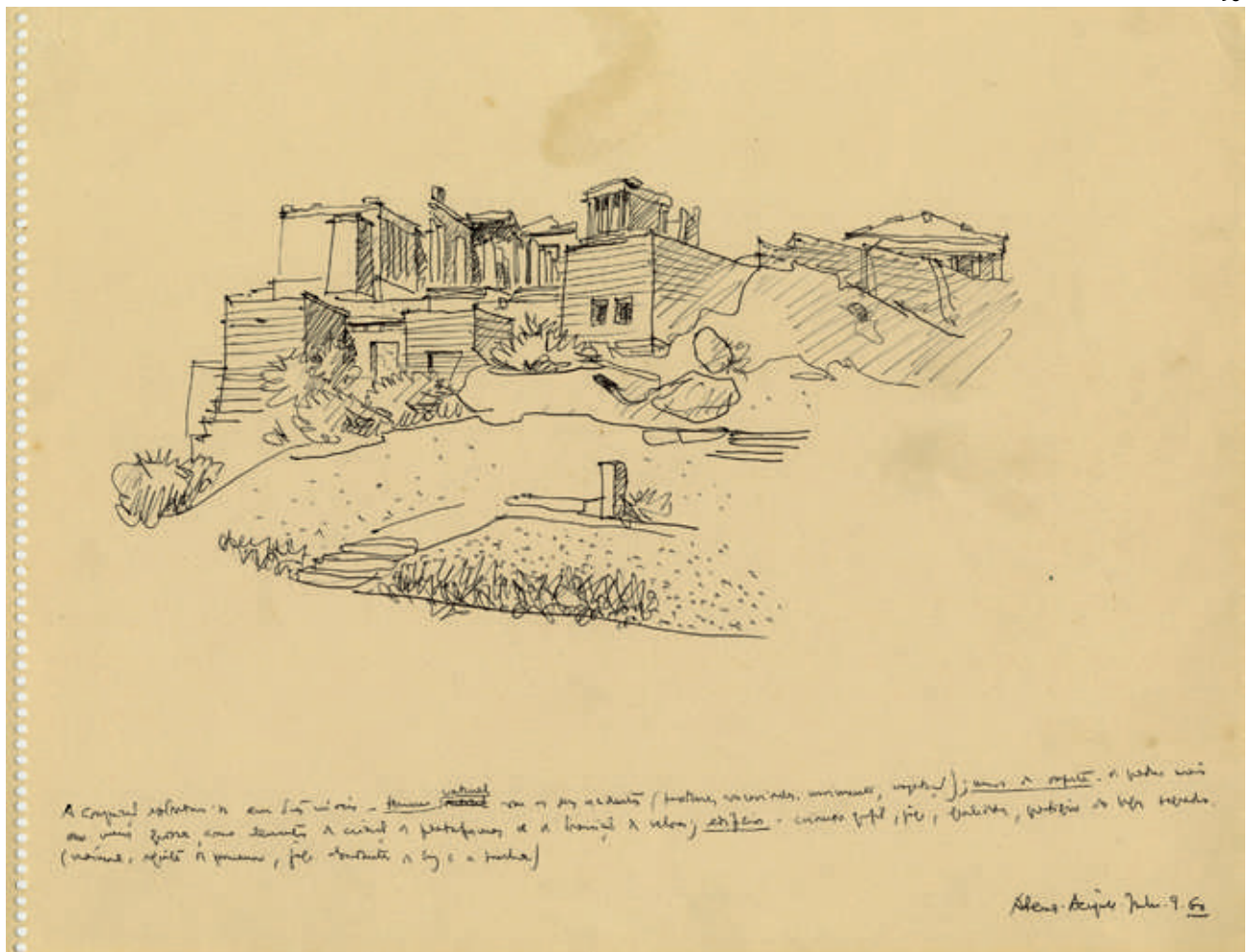
The tension felt in the *House by the Sea*, the programme to bring the building down from the abstraction of the pilotis to the complexity of the ground by constructing a continuity – spatial and cultural – between building and place, finds a full and crystalline realisation here [Fig. 95, 96].

The proper placement of the Aula Magna on the ground has significant consequences.

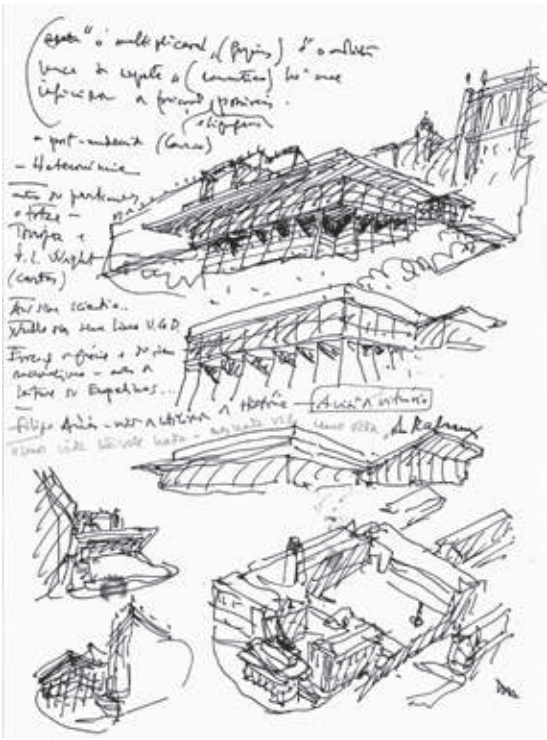
The thirty-by-thirty metre body, with an extremely simple planimetric layout – an "archetype" that "amounts to a masterly lesson in architecture", as Byrne defines it in the note mentioned above – manages to be, at the same time, an ideal continuation of the Paço das Escolas, offering a new surface to the pre-existing monumental complex, but also a new monumental element that, with eight stone buttresses, peremptorily affirms its belonging to the university "acropolis" [Fig. 97, 98].



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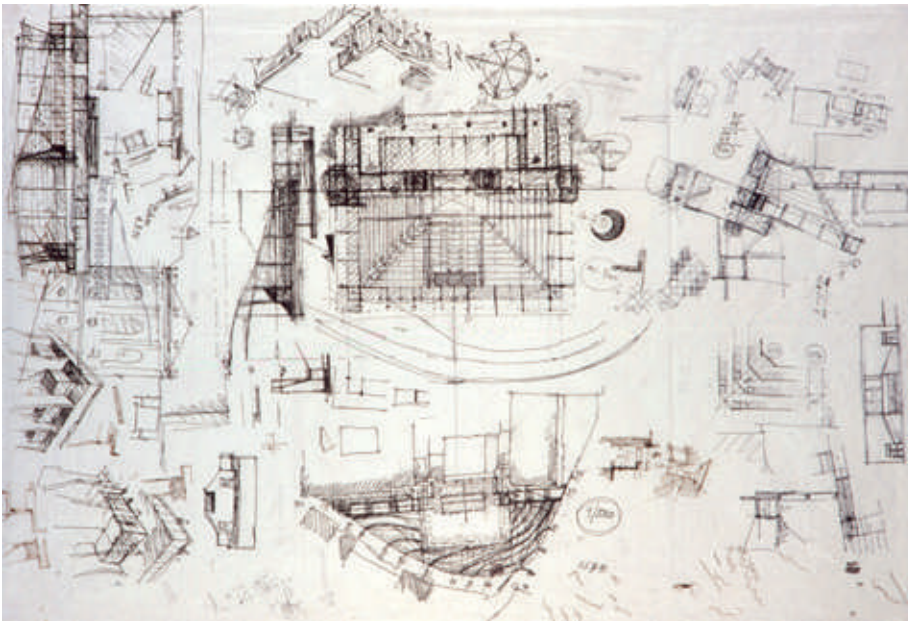
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However, the building's descent to the ground is not a design choice like others; it implies a mutation that could be described as ontological. Here, the suspended architectural volume of the *House by the Sea*, devoid of constraints, endowed with an order of its own generated and controlled by geometry, is transformed, as it descends to the ground, into a solid-aerial compound that absorbs and reorganises lines of energy, both material and immaterial, already present in the place. A compound that encompasses not only the physical elements but also the temporal dimension and the "life content" that the place potentially contains [Fig. 99].

The system of relations that the building gathers, or rather, with which the building is composed, addresses, on the one hand, the Faculty of Law.



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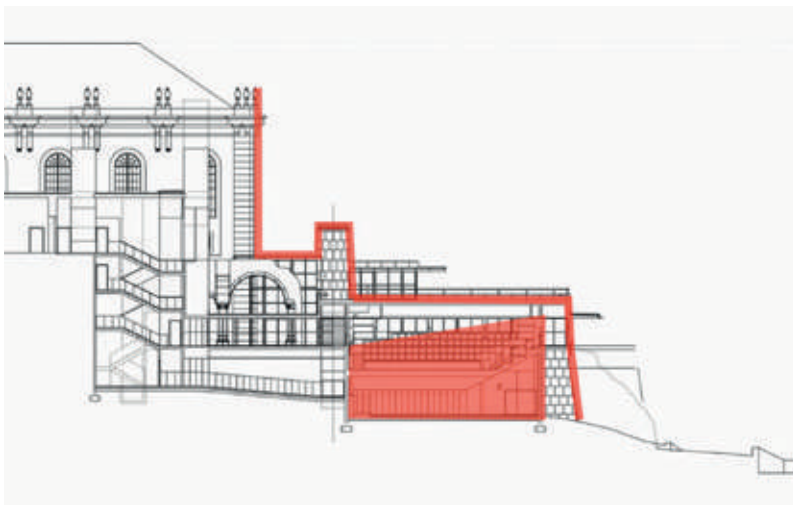
Fig. 99
Fernando Távora, Great Hall of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra, overall study sketch of the project in relation to the university citadel (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 100
Fernando Távora, F. Távora, Great Hall of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra (photo by the author).

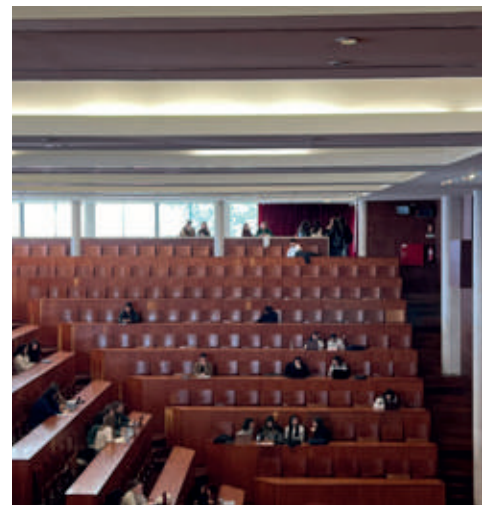
Fig. 101
Fernando Távora, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra, study sketches showing relations with the university citadel (FIMS/AFT).

With a choice that is certainly not taken for granted, Távora turns the cavea not towards the main elevation, thus facing the river, but towards the university nucleus. Hence, the oxymoron of a main elevation that is, in reality, the back of the hall dictated by the intention to make the chair, a symbol of institutional activity, fully belong to the university complex towards which the academic community turns. But even those sitting at the chair have no view outside except for a strip of the sky thanks to a long ribbon window that, behind the cavea, embraces the entire Aula.

Observing the sections, one grasps the heteronymic exercise to which Távora subjects the small building: a prominent platform, a clearly marked monument, an “underground” volume that becomes part of the citadel’s orographic configuration [Fig. 100, 101].



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The transformation of architecture from a suspended and isolated object, as it still was in the *Casa sobre o mar*, to a system of relations thus intertwines other central themes of the Tavorian project already mentioned above.

Firstly, the conception of the project as a cognitive crossing of the place.

In Coimbra, the routing system offers a concrete and timely example of the Távora’s idea of continuity.

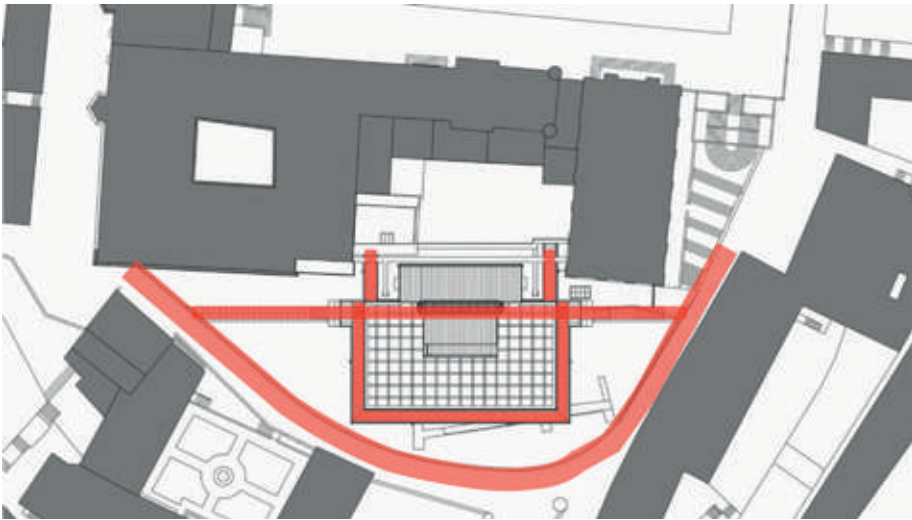
In fact, the path that embraces the Aula at the top of the cavea continues at the points where it meets the pre-existing buildings, physically and functionally connecting the Aula with the Library on the one hand and the Law School on the other.

This path is crossed, at the level of the cathedra, by another passage tangent to the cathedra, which extends outwards on both sides, overcoming the unevenness of the terrain and connecting with the existing road system.

Only a visit to the work fully restores how the system of relations now described is the result of a project that is based not on the abstraction of drawing but on the experience of repeatedly crossing the place, a crossing that generates an ever-deeper knowledge, naturally supported by cognitive investigations, also conducted through drawing.

Fig. 102
Fernando Távora, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra, section (FIMS/AFT, graphics by the author).

Fig. 103
Fernando Távora, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra, interior (photo by the author).



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Fig. 102
Fernando Távora, Aula Magna
of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra,
floor plan (FIMS/AFT, graphics
by the author).

Fig. 103, 104
Fernando Távora, Aula Magna
of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra
(photo by the author).

The transformation of the “journey”, of the conscious and reflective crossing, into a project, subtle but already present in a work such as the *Park in the Quinta da Conceição*, here becomes generative of a new architecture but entirely determined by a physical action of an interpretative nature [Fig. 104, 105, 106, 107, 108].

As in the case of the *Quinta*, evident there in the relationship between *Park* and *Pavilion*, the completion of a project based on bodily experience is a rigorous constructive knowledge bridging existing and new construction.

In this regard, the theme of the grid, of the module, returns, but it should be understood not as a foundational and normative instrument but rather as an interpretative tool.

Távora identifies in the Manueline remains a module of fifty-five centimetres and applies it as a generative measure and organising criterion for the entire new building, from the overall proportions of the spaces to the dimensions of the doors to the size of the seats. A relationship of continuity in the large glazed atrium that introduces the hall is an evident scene, in a balance between rigour and freedom that,

as mentioned, is one of the values recognised in the Japanese “law of the tatami”.



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Fig. 105, 106
Fernando Távora, Aula Magna
of the Faculty of Law, Coimbra
(photo by the author).

The Gulbenkian Journey, Reflections: Mies

Távora's encounter with Mies van der Rohe during the Gulbenkian trip is twofold.

The visit to the IIT, no longer directed by the German master for two years but still strongly marked by his presence, is part of the institutional programme to study US innovations in the teaching of architecture and urban planning.

But within the framework of the substantial disinterest that the *Diary* testifies to for the American architecture of those years and for the American outcomes of pre-war European Modernism, there is also, relevantly, the encounter with some works by Mies. This encounter is not ideological but phenomenological, resulting in a judgement that is more positive than negative, with, however, significant shadows.

Távora puts, between himself and his interest in Mies, the usual blasé attitude with which he makes it clear, without ever stating it explicitly, that it is not a journey in the footsteps of the modernist masters. Besides, as we have seen, even the approach to Wright, far more ideological and prepared, takes place in a transversal form and with a series of expedients aimed at not turning the visit to Taliesin into a "museum" visit.

On 29 February, his first day in New York, Távora is having lunch and, consulting the city map, notices that he is near the Lever House and the Seagram, so he decides to visit them. The Seagram immediately appears to him "impressive for its nobility, its presence, its dignity", the Lever House 'already more decorative'. The judgement is set. Mies is exempt from the main defect that Távora would attribute as much to the masters transplanted to the USA as to their pupils or followers: "decorative", a "pleasing Americanism" that is "a skilful synthesis of decoration and technique". The observation then becomes more precise and concerns constructive aspects. After all, he had already noted in his youthful diaries his own hesitation between Wright and Mies, describing Portuguese sobriety as "impossible in material (form) - but possible in technique"¹¹⁵. Távora's analysis in situ is subtle and emphasises how the two buildings, substantially coeval, constructed "with practically the same technologies", with such similar "plastic" intentions, offer such a different outcome. The Lever House is "at best pleasing" while the Seagram "speaks" in the same way that some Greek temples "speak", and others do not, according to Paul Valéry, an author who – if we extend the quotation by Távora – attributes this gift "to the talent of their builders".¹¹⁶ His is therefore not the reading of an American Mies reconverted to "classicist" forms that Távora could, at that date, have already borrowed from Zevi's *History of Modern Architecture*; rather, it is the recognition of Mies's belonging to the Great Tradition of constructive

115 Távora, *As Raízes e os Frutos*, 44.

116 "Dis-moi (puisque tu es si sensible aux effets de l'architecture), n'as-tu pas observé, en te promenant dans cette ville, que d'entre les édifices dont elle est peuplée, les uns sont muets ; les autres parlent ; et d'autres enfin, qui sont les plus rares, chantent ? - Ce n'est pas leur destination, ni même leur figure générale, qui les animent à ce point, ou qui les réduisent au silence. Cela tient au talent de leur constructeur, ou bien à la faveur des Muses." See: Paul Valéry, *Eupalinos ou l'architecte*, in *Architectures*, recueil publié sous la direction de Louis Süe & André Mare, Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1921): 17.

constants, as revealed by a conclusive and unexpected observation in the *Diary*, triggered not by a visit to a Miesian work but by a reflection elaborated while observing the Acropolis (9 June) as mentioned above. An observation, like few others in the *Diary*, internal to his own design work, which he closes by comparing this progressive “growth of experience” to Mies’s work for the Lake Shore Drive buildings in Chicago, which he visited with admiration on 20 April: “it seems almost impossible the degree of elegance that could be achieved with simple steel profiles!”.

On 9 March, chatting with Mario Salvadori fresh from a second visit to Mies’s New York opera, the comparison between the Lever House - “a ballerina” - and the Seagram - “a great lady” - the latter now described in material detail, returns, even more starkly. “It is difficult to reach such a level with so much sobriety,” Távora notes, evoking one of the themes that most often return in his training, sobriety in fact, usually referred to Le Corbusier for the contemporary but sought above all in medieval and specifically Cistercian models.

In the face of Távora’s appreciation of Mies’s architecture, as he had the opportunity to observe and analyse it in person, his objection to the German master’s role in the United States is, one might say, exquisitely political, even if the visit to Detroit, particularly unfortunate in relation to the quality of the architecture observed, wrenches from him a strictly disciplinary comment: “poor Mies and poor Le Corbusier have architected so much and created so much beauty that they don’t deserve this kind of grandchildren, bastards, everywhere! What a pity”.

The “political” attack on Mies takes place on the Crown Hall stage between 12 and 13 April. On this occasion, too, Távora describes a “chance” encounter with what Mies “considers to be one of his major works”. On 11 April, he wanders around the IIT Campus looking for the “*Department of Architecture*” that no one seems to know anything about. He finally heads for “a building that seemed to stand out from the whole, and luckily, it was exactly what I was looking for”. The purpose of the visit was an appointment with George Danforth, a pupil of Mies and his fresh successor as head of the school. The meeting is postponed, and Távora notes a not encouraging: “I didn’t want to stay or see any more Mies”. The next day Danforth is present but busy with others and Távora “to pass the time” wanders around Crown Hall, offering an aseptic description of it from which he seems to appreciate above all the dimension of a “democratic” collective space: “A kind of public square where everyone gathers, everyone knows each other and no one hides”, a place where “life proceeds well”. The building is then “impeccable in its proportions and exactness”. He is disappointed, however, by the overall visit to the Campus and, in particular, the Chapel, which “possesses the scientific, rational and comforting air of the great majority of American religions”.

But the most radical critique takes its cue from observing the students’ work, and not only because they were more copied than inspired by Mies (and Hilberseimer for the urban planning projects) to delineate a ‘Germanic school’ on American soil.

While attending the design reviews conducted by Danforth, with a casualness that may leave some doubt, Távora points his attention to the work of two students, one Chinese and one Indian. He has no particular objection to the quality of the projects but observes that “if the poor Indian goes to do that kind of stuff in India, in the heat, with no money and no technique, he will definitely be liquidated”.

Távora’s main objection to Mies’s work, at least to its American phase, thus consists in having placed his constructive skill at the service of the indifference to the specific that is characteristic of American culture; indifference if not technocratic imperialist arrogance. It is no coincidence that, on the day following the review, he again meets the two students from China and India, finds them pleased to have Mies “as a source of inspiration” and is negatively struck by their inability to ask themselves questions, especially a question that, as we have already mentioned, appears decisive to him well before the trip, namely the “Mies-Wright contrast”, to which he dedicates, on the same day (13 April), a note already quoted above.

Both the ‘political’ objection to Mies, which we could summarise as a vindication of his own cosmopolitan vision with respect to an internationalist drift of Miesian scholasticism, and the sequence of opposites with which he structures the note by attributing them in parallel form to the two architects, are illuminated when read in parallel with two fundamental texts published by Távora in the early 1950s: *Architecture and Urbanism. The lesson of constants* (1952) and *For a harmony of our space* (1954-1955).

The first text contains a concise but perfectly delineated definition of the project as a cosmopolitan practice.

Wherever there is man, at any time, in any place, there is architecture and urbanism. A necessary phenomenon, inherent to man’s very nature, an indispensable extension of his life, a manifestation of his existence; the variety, the infinity of aspects, and the plurality of realisations are inherent to this universality. Each physical or spiritual climate corresponds to its own solution; the result is an immense panorama that the reading of the past offers to our eyes and that the present itself does not conceal: infinite construction methods, innumerable plastic subtleties, various programmes, the strangest materials, always and everywhere the unprecedented, the different, the unexpected.¹¹⁷

A cosmopolitan vision that implies a broadening of the project’s field of action – of its themes, actors and competencies – already described here as a new task with respect to architecture, i.e. an action of “organisation of space”.

The second text, which, even more explicitly, is not intended to be a theoretical text but a concrete action programme for the development of post-conflict Portugal, focuses instead on the balance of opposing aspects that architecture must undergo.

117 Távora, *Arquitectura e urbanismo. A lição das constantes*, 292.

Any form, road, dam, house, painting, any organising element of space has at least two aspects: a quantitative, objective, invariable aspect, and a qualitative, subjective, variable aspect; in a word: a technical aspect – the process of realisation; and an artistic aspect – the plastic value of the realisation.¹¹⁸

A coexistence of contrasting forces, an unstable balance between ‘technical’ and “plastic” that already clearly outlines the opposing coexistence of personality and anonymity and the need to conceive the architectural work as a balancing act between the necessary and the possible, the objective and the subjective.

The hastily written note in the impeccable but corrupting spaces of Crown Hall – to be read in parallel with the emotionally thrilling but ultimately equally liquidating view at Taliesin East – shows Mies and Wright as supreme representatives of the two force fields that in the project of spatial organisation necessarily fight each other. Supreme examples but one and the other, no longer useful, no longer able to cope with the chaos of contemporaneity which, in the two cited texts strongly conditioned by 19th-century architectural literature, Távora still wants to convert into a “harmonic space” but which, also thanks to the Gulbenkian trip, will become – having abandoned any hypothesis of redemption – the field of action, the raw material of his project.

On 15 April Távora visited the *Form givers at mid-century* exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago and found them united as masters, indeed, of form, Wright “with a sumptuous air”, Mies, without comment:

Works... always the same... for a change. It is better to consult the catalogue. I’m fed up with architecture... and architects.

118 Fernando Távora, “Para a harmonia do nosso espaço”, *Comércio do Porto*, 10 de Agosto de 1954, 8 de Março de 1955.

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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 Historique, 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:

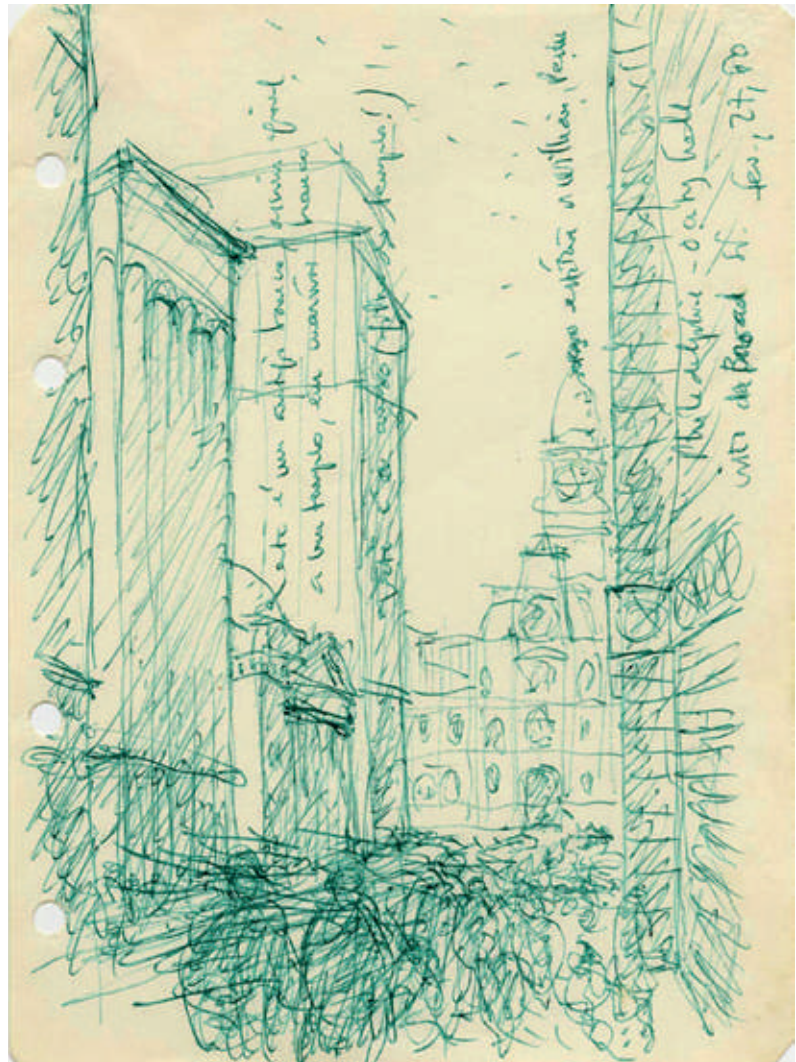
"I have to say that the professor and his wife were extraordinarily nice to me and that I was actually very touched by the professor's understanding of my situation as a derelict in this huge machine!" (30 March).

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]

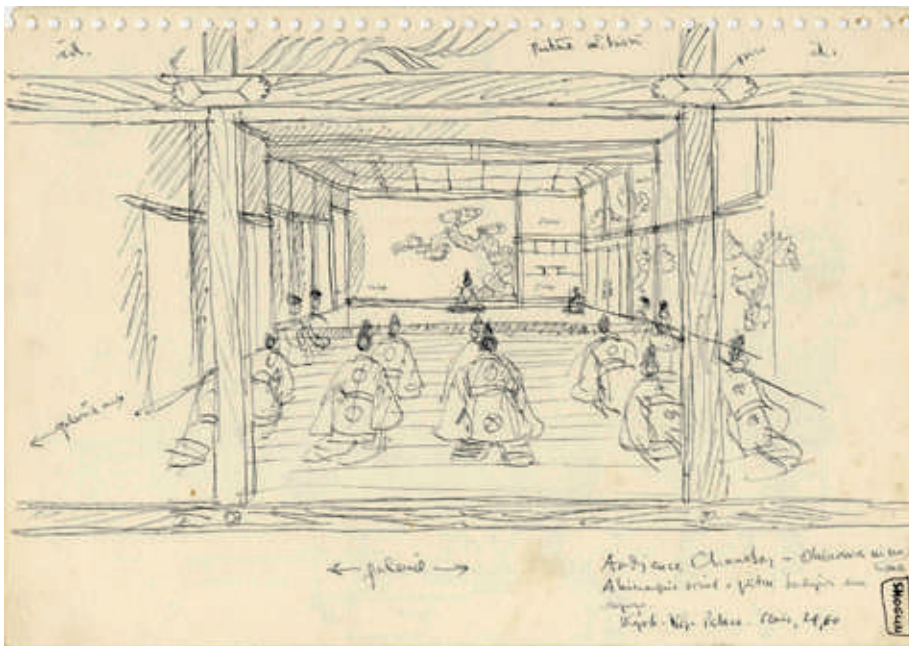
Over time, his habit of travelling transformed the moment of confrontation as a producer of estrangement into an ability to make the unfamiliar familiar. By defining and thus accepting differences and recognising similarities, he ensured that what was foreign to him could become the basis for future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

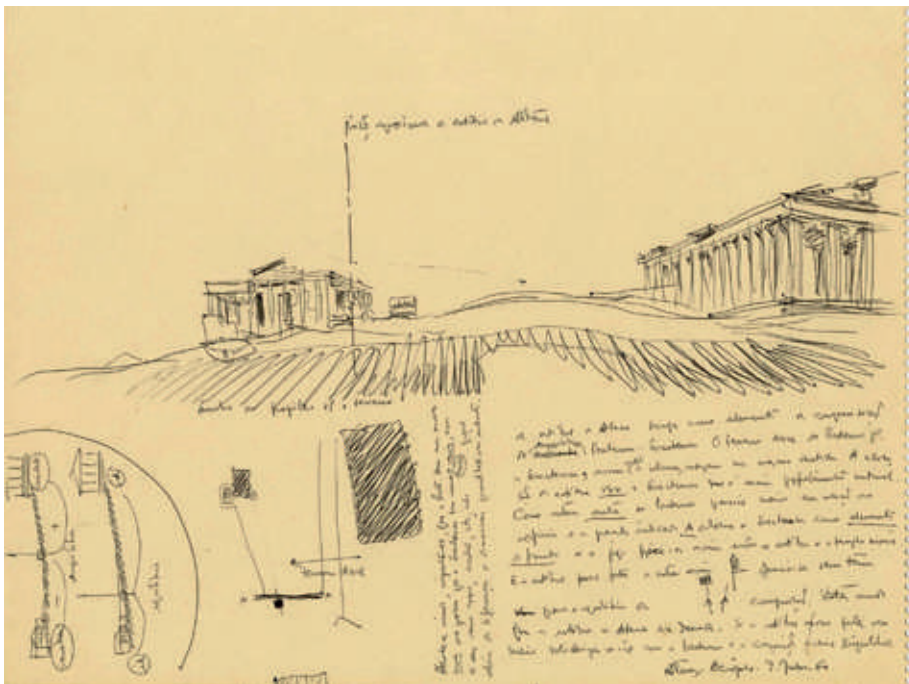
It is a perception that he begins to feel clearly for the first time when he visits Taliesin, a place that Távora describes as having such an integrating power “that the Creator himself would be annoyed” (9 April). The feeling forces him to step outside of measured time and confront the cosmic forces 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.

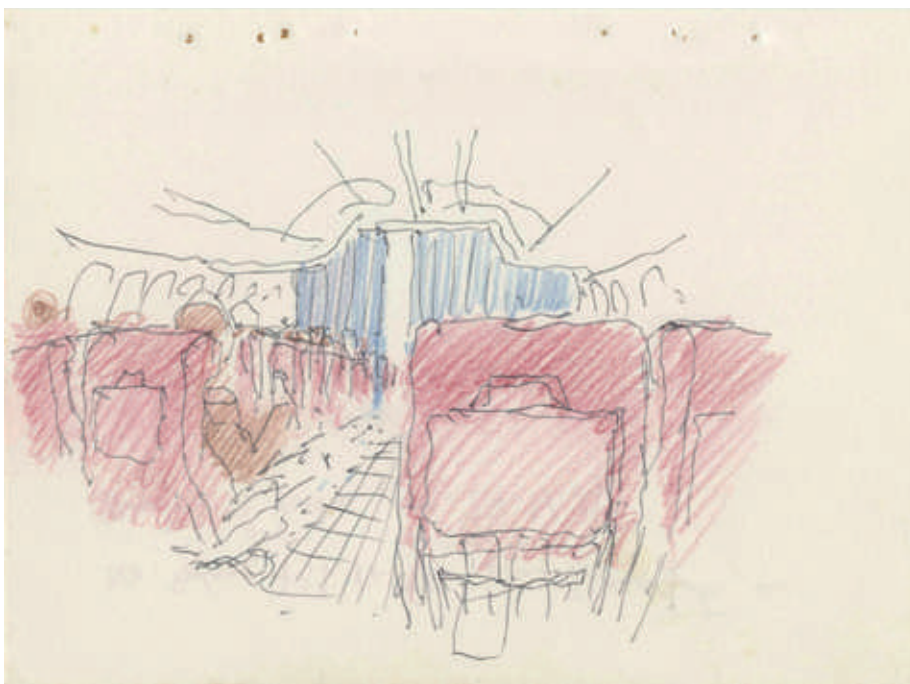
Referring to transit as a specific moment from the perceptual point of view of the journey, as a continuous change of place, contrary to what happens in departure and arrival where one separates from a place or re-joins a place, in transit it is the movement itself that becomes the element of perception [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

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

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



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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).



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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.

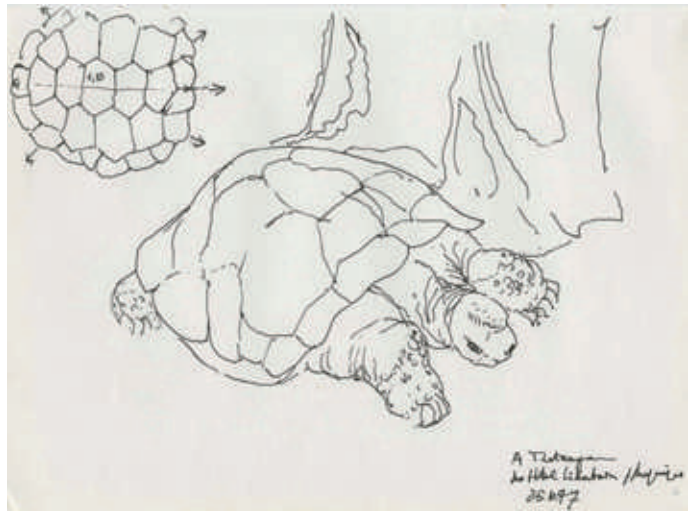
15 The native is unable to see the totality, because he is part of an interior, as Lévy-Strauss writes: "I have learned (...) how the even brief appearances of a city, a region or a culture, usefully exercise attention (...) and also allow us to perceive certain properties of the object that might have 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 *Diario 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.

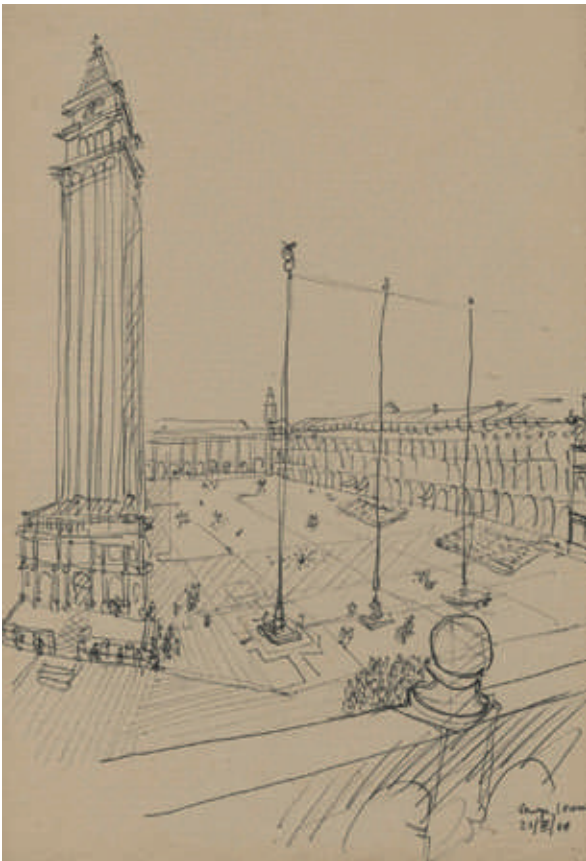
An idea of culture that he transferred to his students and collaborators with the awareness and kindness of one who knew he had received a privilege.

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.

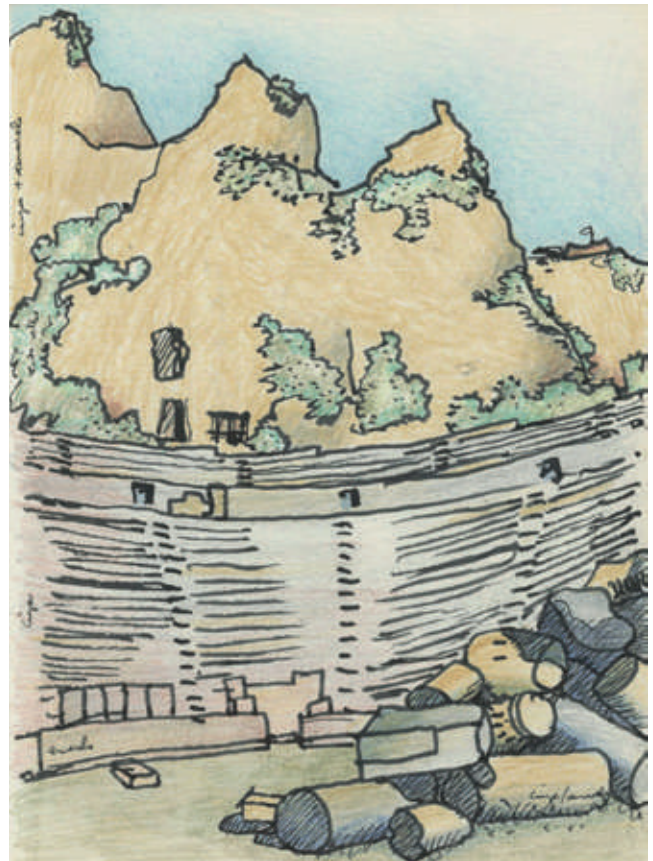
The narration of his journeys that he made in class or during the correction of a project in the atelier, was not intended to recount the episode itself, but

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. VVeneza-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

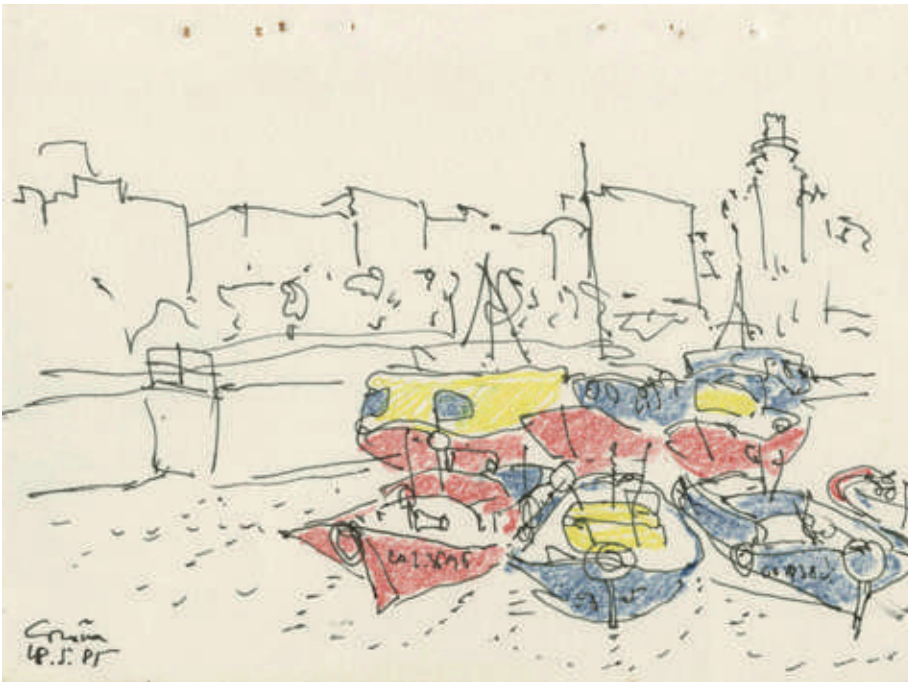
Therefore, the transition to writing did not exactly produce the original document, because just like translation, transcription is not a reproduction of the source document, but a representation, subject to a new grammar. It cannot be a faithful substitute because it would transform the oral performance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

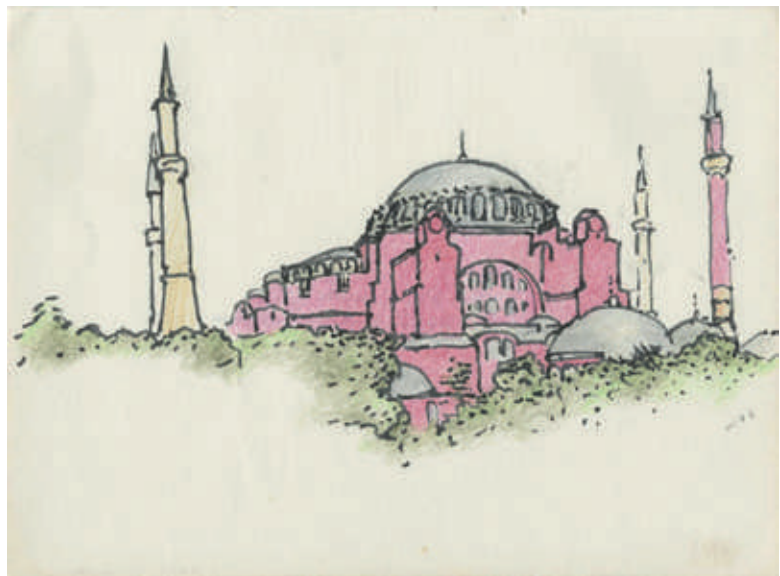
that had so excited many architects, is not enough for him, it does not excite him fully. The unease he feels in the contemporary world I think is already all there in the Gulbenkian journey, undefined, but it is already there.

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



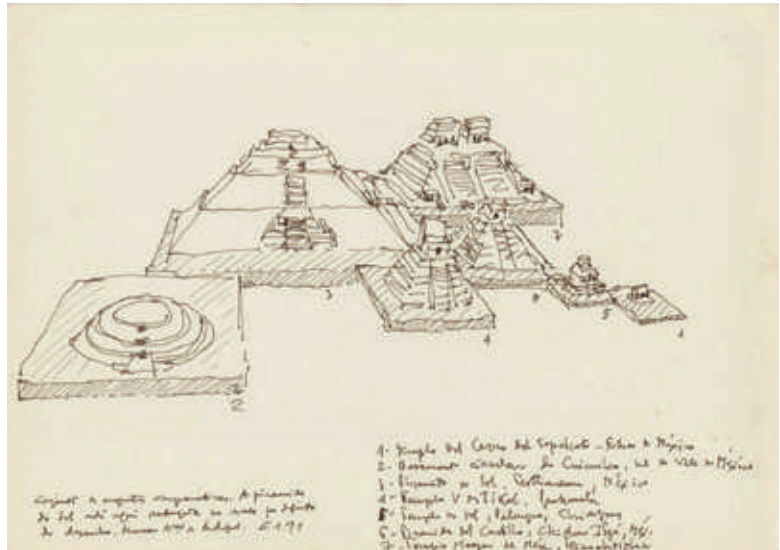
that I read the Diary in its entirety for the first time. Before that I had heard parts of it read, publicly, at school. I was at his side when, with great emotion, he read about his visit to Frank Lloyd Wright, to the Taliesin Mound. A knowledge of that trip shared with the students. His lectures were 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)

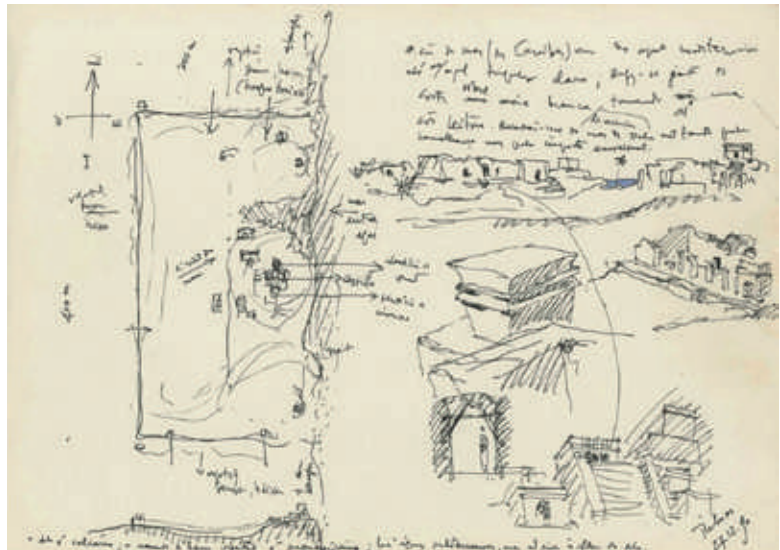
...SF... When Távora left for Lisbon, destination USA, I was there and the trip, at that time, seemed almost unthinkable. We said goodbye to him in a kind of celebration. The Gulbenkian trip would then reappear in his lectures, sometimes he would read extracts from the Diary and when he read the Wright 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

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

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).

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

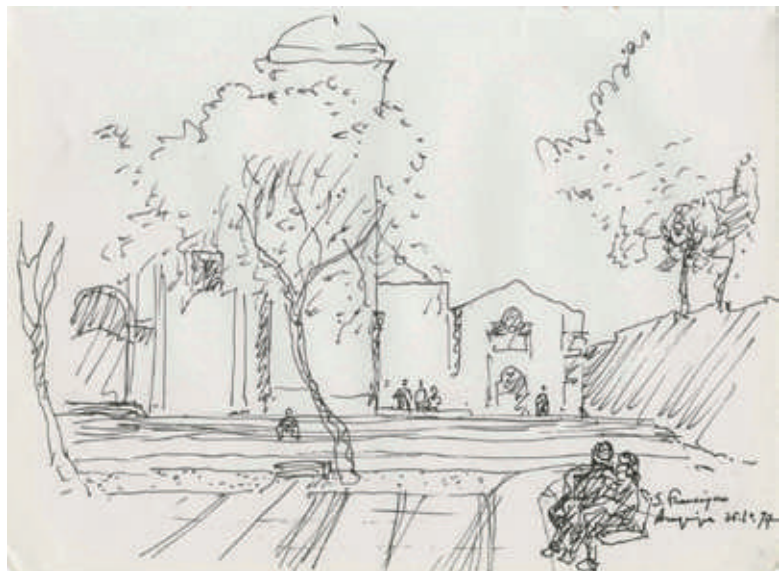
...ÁS... I travelled a lot with Távora, for business or simply for pleasure and it was always an extraordinary occasion. It was a pleasure because he was always a person of good humour, great vitality, and love of life. For me, they are all unforgettable moments. Among the business trips, I particularly 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



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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)

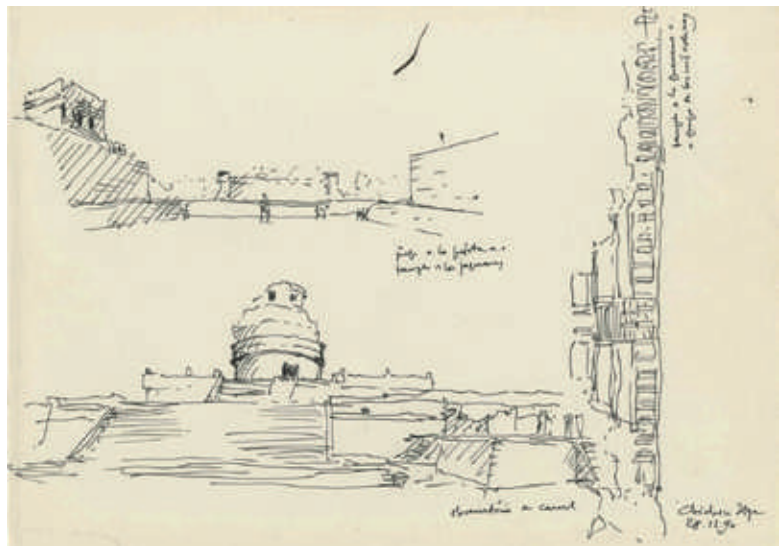
...**FBR**... Távora loved to tell his travel experiences to us in the studio, his was a very fluid form of storytelling, a reworked memory, he did not describe the experience, he put it in a context. He liked to share, the tablecloths of the tables

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.



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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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Dialogues with Memory and Time: A Contribution by the Marques da Silva Foundation for the Promotion of Fernando Távora's Archive

Exhibition, Travel Drawings, Architecture, Archive, Fernando Távora

/Abstract

Travels were imperative for Fernando Távora. Drawing was the most esteemed tool for analysing and understanding what he had the opportunity to see whenever he “jumped borders”. During the month of September 2022, a substantial set of Távora's journey drawings, archived today at the Marques da Silva Foundation, travelled from Porto to Italy. It was the subject and the objective of an exhibition, *I viaggi di Fernando Távora* (Cesena, from 23 September to 12 December), promoted by the Architecture Department of Bologna University in a cooperation with the Foundation. The opening event, as requested by the curators – Antonio Esposito, Francesco Saverio Fera, Giovanni Leoni and Giorgio Liverani – included a presentation speech dedicated to the Marques da Silva Foundation and its activities for the valorisation of Fernando Távora's archive since 2011, when this Foundation took on the challenge of ensuring its conservation, study and diffusion. The speech pronounced on that occasion was an answer to both the request of the curators and the peculiarity of the circumstances: an exhibition focused on a very specific production by a single author and an event – the presentation and the exhibition opening – addressed to a heterogeneous public, composed of both architects and non-architects, having mostly a first contact with Fernando Távora's work and with Marques da Silva Foundation itself. This contribution, although deprived of the voice and of the images it was originally complemented by, is the transcription of that communication. It also represents a state of an in-progress journey, to which new meanings and new comprehension of the relevance of this fundamental archive are continuously added in time.

/Author

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Paula Abrunhosa (1964) is graduated in Humanities by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of University of Porto and obtained her Master Degree in Musical Sciences at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of University of Coimbra. Having been in charge of the artistic coordination of the Orquestra Nacional do Porto, in 2008 she began the collaboration with Instituto Arquitecto Marques da Silva.

Since 2009, she integrated the newly created Fundação Marques da Silva as Communication and Production Advisor. She was author and presenter of the national radio channel Antena 2 program *Arte de Música*.

At the Fundação Marques da Silva, she's also author and presenter of the podcast series: *Escritos Escolhidos and Passa-a-Palavra: falemos de arquitetura*. She's coordinating several publications at the same entity and she is the translator of the architectural books *Poética Urbana: a cidade da palavra literária*, by Marta Llorente, and *Do projeto clássico à memória da ordem*, by José Ignacio Linazasoro.

The real art is finding the exact point of contact between things and our interpretation of them.

Álvaro de Campos

I'm not in a hurry: the sun and the moon aren't in a hurry.

No-one walks more quickly than their legs.

If where I want to be is far away, I'm not there in a moment.

Alberto Caeiro¹

1. About the context

I would like to begin by saying thank you for the invitation to this session addressed to the Marques da Silva Foundation, which I represent here today, and by acknowledging the perseverance of those who never gave up believing it was possible to organize this first exhibition of Fernando Távora's travel drawings in Italy. That's why I would like to direct my first words of gratitude to Professors Fabrizio Apollonio (Director of the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna) and Elena Mucelli (Coordinator of the Master Degree in Architecture of the same University); to the team of Galleria del Ridotto and to all who collaborated in this project and showed their commitment in leading this challenge to success. But I also want to address my thanks to the exhibition curators, Professors Giovanni Leoni, Giorgio Liverani and especially to Antonio Esposito and Francesco Saverio Fera (our counterparts in the process of preparation of this project). It is important to highlight that Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni, since the publication by Electa of the monograph *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, have been making a substantial and major contribution to the promotion and international acknowledgement of "our" architect's work. It is also important to remember that through the exhibition that opens today and the publication of the Italian translation of the journal of Távora's 1960 travel to the United States and Japan² that Esposito and Leoni are preparing along with Raffaella Maddaluno, they keep animating and diffusing the debate and reflection about one of the most important leading figures of Portuguese architecture of the 20th century and about his work – both designed, drawn and written.



1

* This presentation was translated to English by Architect Francesco Cancelliere.

1 Quotes and Távora's poem translated by Gil Stoker..

2 *Diario di Bordo [Logbook]*, with opening texts by the translators, was launched in this exhibition framework, in Biblioteca Malatestiana, on November, 22nd, 2022. The book was published by Letteraventidue, with both Fernando Távora's Family and Marques da Silva Foundation support.

Fig. 1

I viaggi di Fernando Távora, exhibition view. Galleria del Ridotto, Cesena, 2022 (© Paula Abrunhosa).

2. About Form and Matter

The exhibition *I viaggi di Fernando Távora* provided the opportunity of showing again this set of original drawings. An exhibition project is always surrounded by countless variables that support and frame it, but the singularity of the exhibition act determines, as a consequence, a unique experience of observation, enjoyment and appropriation of what we are allowed to see. It represents, without any doubt, a peculiar and irreplaceable kind of apprehension, distinct from the one allowed by archival research or by any kind of reproduction, either in books or digital support. From this point of view, Marques da Silva could only receive with enthusiasm the challenge proposed by the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna. This exhibition makes it possible again to enjoy the possibility of admiring these drawings, in the same space and in a compression of the different times of their execution; to offer the visitors the option of dwelling on the detail of a drawing or being overwhelmed by the force of the collection; and to look at them with a widespread perspective, although oriented by the narrative proposed by the curators.



2

An important compilation of this collection of drawings was exhibited by Fernando Távora himself, in either monographic exhibitions or events focusing their unifying subject or theme, which naturally originates from the fact that they are travel records. Other events followed. After the integration of the collection in the Marques da Silva Foundation archive, Manuel Mendes, as the coordinator of the cycle *Figura Eminente U. Porto 2013: Fernando Távora*, presented some of these drawings in the spaces of Marques da Silva Foundation headquarters, as a part of the exhibition *Fernando Távora: 'uma porta pode ser um romance'*. Four years later, in 2017, Fernando Távora's son and collaborator, the architect José Bernardo Távora, organized the exhibition *Viagem aos desenhos de Viagem* in the headquarters of Sociedade Martins Sarmento, in Guimarães (the exhibition now presented in Cesena is based precisely on the selection proposed and presented in that event). More recently, in 2020, again in the headquarters of Marques da Silva Foundation, other travel drawings dating back to 1960 were presented, integrated in the exhibition *Mais que Arquitetura* curated by Luís Urbano. *I viaggi di Fernando Távora* is to be considered as a follow up of this line of events, it is more a stage, more an approach, although each project, each segment of the path, each reconfiguration of the space and of the exhibition itinerary will always have its own narrative, its own public, never exhausting the many possibilities of proposing different readings, different interpretations, different queries.

The specific condition of being organised following the criteria of focusing on travel drawing, and more precisely on the travels made by Fernando Távora from 1960 to 1997, governs the exhibition *I viaggi di Fernando Távora*. The

Fig. 2
General Theory of Space
Organization, *The example of
Chandigarh*, Lesson 13. Fine
Arts School in Porto, 1991
(FIMS/AFT, ref. A 0035).

presented drawings are able to capture places, sites, details, and they expose the interest of the one who fixed them in that way, through the fine lines traced by a pen on a simple sheet of paper. These drawings expose what had captured the attention of their author, the necessity of comprehension of what he was seeing and what he was compelled to record on paper. And that's because "they are made in order to be able to reflect and learn from what one is seeing and discovering while travelling, because the drawing allows analysis".³ When considered in a different dimension, they are drawings that cross the time and the borders of the portrayed places and sites, for the artistic skill they reveal and their powerful communication force drive them far beyond the moment in which they were created. To the extent that they are exhibited, in a certain way these drawings keep on travelling, both literally and by bringing to us those same moments and places today's observers are taken back to, in a reverse-direction journey.

In Fernando Távora's words:

the mountain and the chair, the city and the tree leaf, are acknowledged rigorously by drawing, since only drawing allows detecting their very nature, the soul of forms, only drawing is able to communicate them, by interpreting and criticizing them, many times with humor.⁴

Nevertheless, it's better to keep in mind that the exhibited drawings offer only a partial insight into a much wider universe and they must be considered in perspective. They are fragments, mere parts of a much more extensive body, composed by both the travels that are recorded here and the other journeys that are not referred to in this exhibition. And it must be remembered that these exercises in seeing, as a direct consequence of a very peculiar way of thinking and of absorbing the impressions he had the opportunity to experience, were made along with notes written in parallel and photographic records of the same travels, so that a more deep insight into their comprehension should not be exempted from a cross-checking of all these complementary record types.

It turns out that they are, in their condition of drawn records, a part of a much more expressive and substantial set, as they represent one of the multiple possible approaches to drawing and one of the manifold perspectives of immersion in the extensive archive of Távora's production, where one may find so many other drawings that give evidence to multiple ways of comprehension, of "conquest" of what he was seeing as an architect. These drawings attest the process of creation and of development of the design practice, to the extent that Távora himself supported the idea that through drawing "Architects give shape and communicate their conception of the world [...]".⁵ In other words, in his vast archive we

3 Fernando Távora, in an interview made by Fernando Agrasar, in: *Asociación Primeiro Andar* (coord.), *Távora (exhibition catalogue about the architect's work)*, (Guimarães, DAA / Museu Alberto Sampaio / Asociación Primeiro Andar, 2002): 22.

4 Handwritten note by Fernando Távora, dating back to 1988, transcribed in: Manuel Mendes (ed.), *Prólogo*, C2.3, issue 1, series Fernando Távora, 'Minha Casa' (Porto: Fundação Marques da Silva, Universidade do Porto, FAUP, 2013).

5 Ibid.

may find different categories of drawings: the ones that respond to a necessity of a material recording of memory; the ones that consist in an act of reflection of thought; the ones that convert themselves into a tool for action and knowledge; the ones meant to communicate and convey ideas and orientations to different kinds of interlocutors. Anyway, in this vast universe we always and in any circumstance refer to drawings made by an Architect, a condition that crosses all the dimensions of Fernando Távora's work as an expression of a life "lived as a passionate statement of the profound meaning of Architecture".⁶

3. About the man and his legacy

Fernando Távora was born in August 1923, in the city of Porto, a town built out of granite surrounded by the River Douro estuary and the ocean coastline. In a text written in 1999, with the title *O Granito da minha Infância* [The Granite of my Childhood]⁷, Távora advocated that this stone, which always surrounded his physical existence and which he always used in his design practice, was rather the material where the very spirit defining both him as a person and his own work existed, than a mere constructive reference. Endowed with a catalysing personality, from which a great culture and erudition arose, along with a great intellectual generosity able to turn him into an exceptional educator, Távora has been the author of a highly recognized quality, both in conceptual and constructive terms. A key personality in Portuguese architecture of the second half of the 20th century, he had a widespread vision of his profession, transversally crossing many converging fields of knowledge. He designed buildings which are able to respond to their circumstances, as if they were living bodies, with a soul and an image of their own. He pursued the coherence between what he did and what he had in mind. He proved himself able to find a very personal path, with the History becoming the material of the project, insofar as Architecture represents an age-old dialogue between the earth and mankind: there is always a *past to be observed and a future to be built*.⁸

Távora passed away in Porto, in 2005. Besides his built work, he left a vast legacy of documents related to the activity he carried out in his atelier (documented in the most diverse supports: from drawings to writings, from photographs to models), as well as an immense written production where his complex process



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6 Fernando Távora and José Bernardo Távora (coord.), *Fernando Távora: Percurso. A life long trail* (Lisboa: Centro Cultural de Belém, 1993): 9.

7 Typed text, dating back to 1999, never published before, found by José Bernardo Távora and first disclosed during the second episode of the podcast *Escritos Escolhidos*, in 2020.

8 Fernando Távora, "Escola Superior Agrária Convento de Refóios do Lima", in Luiz Trigueiros (coord. ed.), *Fernando Távora* (Lisboa: Blau, 1993): 142.

Fig. 3

Fernando Távora during the construction of Guilherme Álvares Ribeiro House. Porto, 1967 (FIMS/AFT, Foto4042).

of questioning both the world and himself – his own critical thought – was mirrored; he left many records of both his itinerary as a student and his activity as a teacher; a large collection of honourable mentions and evidences that account for the many positions he was responsible for and the projects he was engaged with; his activities as collector and compulsive reader – and as a traveller, obviously – are well documented, too. Talking about the trail of his influence in his pupils and collaborators, in order to exemplify his relevance it is sufficient to remember that two Pritzker Prize laureates are to be counted among them: Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura. That's why, quoting what Pilar del Rio said when speaking of her husband José Saramago, I would say that for Fernando Távora death *was just a mishap*.

In 2011, Fernando Távora's family made the decision to entrust to this institution his archive and library: a valuable collection of documents with a great public and cultural relevance. Marques da Silva Foundation was thus endowed with the great privilege and responsibility of becoming the keeper and caretaker of Távora's memory; since then, the Foundation has taken up the role of preserving the architect's intellectual and substantial legacy, thus becoming a mediator between the past time of Távora's life and the present time going on after his passing away.

In practical terms, this means that Marques da Silva Foundation archives are now holding approximately 320 projects, in the fields of architecture and urban design and planning, both built and unbuilt, developed from 1946 to 2005, among which the projects developed in cooperation with his son José Bernardo Távora are ranked.

A documentary collection consisting of:

- approximately 15,000 drawings
- 60 metres of written documents
- 130 models
- approximately 12,000 photographs, including print photos, negatives, slides and photographic films.

A documentary collection complemented by:

- approximately 7,000 titles from his personal and professional library, where a collection of ancient treatises and a collection of books about Le Corbusier can be found, among the obvious books about architecture and urbanism and many others about history and art history, philosophy, sociology and literature. In this archival fund, the even more relevant private collection of manuscripts, typescripts and prints about Fernando Pessoa should be highlighted; a collection entirely dedicated to the other great Fernando in Portuguese culture and complemented with important contributions by different authors of the so-called *Geração de Orfeu* [the 'Orpheu' Generation], a group of writers who represented one of the richest and most original moments in the history of modern Portuguese literature.

From this point of view, it might be said that the Foundation, as a place of revision and reflection, was assigned the duty of “writing the future time”, the time coinciding with Fernando Távora’s life, in a constant and continuous quest for significance, oriented to its valorisation and promotion and to the demonstration of the originality of his thought and of his itinerary; a process to be achieved by sedimenting multiple research perspectives and critical analysis of his peculiar and original way of thinking and making architecture.

4. About the path leading to Marques da Silva Foundation

Fernando Távora had not the time to know about Marques da Silva Foundation as it exists nowadays, although the present institutional framework owes much to the incorporation of his archival fund, since in 2005 (the year of his passing) this project was still in a primitive phase of its foundational organisation. Only in 2009 this process was to be settled. He was nevertheless a very active



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figure in the process of determining the context which gave rise to Marques da Silva Foundation, since the 1980s, when in his role of President of the founding committee of the future Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto he publicly expressed his support to the architects Maria José Marques da Silva and David Moreira da Silva in their actions of public promotion of the work and career of José Marques da Silva. Marques da Silva was a major architect in Porto, who lived between 1869 and 1947, graduated from the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris and was able to leave an indelible trace on his home town. Like Fernando Távora, José Marques da Silva was not only a distinguished architect, but also a preeminent professor and public figure with a relevant civic projection, yielded by the several public positions he held during his lifetime. In the catalogue of the exhibition about Marques da Silva presented in Porto, at the Casa do Infante, in 1986, on the initiative of the Architects’ Association – *Secção Regional Norte da Associação dos Arquitectos Portugueses* – along with the architects Maria José Marques da Silva and David Moreira da Silva, based on research by the historian António Cardoso and with the planning and mounting of the exhibition space by the architect Nuno Tasso de Sousa, as a kind of premonition Fernando Távora wrote that keeping, studying and promoting the memory of outstanding architects – such as Marques da Silva – represented an essential action in order to raise the national community awareness

Fig. 4
Marques da Silva Foundation,
view from the main entrance
of the José Marques da Silva
House-Studio. Porto, 2020 (©
Inês d’ Orey).

of the substantial nature of the discipline, a discipline “crucial to daily life that should be the basis for the quality of life we all must aspire to and we all have the right to”.⁹

The bestowal of the inheritance of the married couple Maria José Marques da Silva and David Moreira da Silva, respectively daughter and son-in-law of José Marques da Silva, to the University of Porto legitimised, a few years later, the creation of the Marques da Silva Institute. In 2009, the transformation into the present-day Foundation would follow, in an act of empowerment with a clearly defined mission and strategy. The incorporation of Fernando Távora’s archival fund, in 2011, would represent the first relevant moment of expansion of the initial endowment that constituted the original structure of the Foundation. In 2022, when the fusion of the Marques da Silva Foundation archive with the Documentation Center of the Faculty of Architecture – both under the University of Porto – was announced, the Foundation was holding the memory and archives of more than 40 architects, whose work is decisive for the knowledge and understanding of Portuguese architecture in the period from the end of the 19th to the second decade of the 21st century. At the present time, Marques da Silva Foundation along with its function of collecting and keeping archival funds in the field of architecture, positions itself as a dynamic space for research and promotion, with a strong link to universities as the scientific base for its actions and methods of document conservation, and a publishing line of its own. The growth of the physical archive has been followed by the build-up of a digital archive, organised as an essential tool for researching and supplying content on a global scale. The digital archive allows access to a vast collection of information and images related to the itinerary and work of several architects included in the institution archives. More recently, in 2020, since the beginning and consolidation of a continuous programme of exhibitions and cultural activities, it might be said that Marques da Silva Foundation has entered a new cycle of growth and expansion.

5. About the place that distinguishes it

Marques da Silva Foundation headquarters are located in a central area of the city of Porto, in a compound with a relevant heritage value composed of three buildings: the House-Studio, designed by José Marques da Silva in 1909 and restored by Alexandre Alves Costa and Sergio Fernandez in 2015 (it accommodates today the spaces for administrative services and for the reception of researchers, as well as the spaces for temporary exhibitions on the main floor); The Garden Pavillion, restored by Francisco Barata, Nuno Valentim and José Luís Gomes in 2009 (entirely devoted to the documental archive); and the nearby Lopes Martins Mansion, dating back to the end of the 19th century, not yet entirely restored, but nowadays accommodating exhibitions and events, as well as some archive spaces that expand the main ones, thanks to several ad hoc interventions.

⁹ António Cardoso (coord. ed.), *J. Marques da Silva. Arquitecto. 1869-1947* (Porto: Secção Regional do Norte da Associação dos Arquitectos Portugueses, 1986): 9.

All these spaces are of great material and immaterial relevance, where different times and authors convene – from their original function as domestic spaces meant for inhabiting to their transformation and adaptation to accommodate an institution such as the Foundation.

The significant expansion of the documentary funds during the last years, as well as the consolidation of a

new cycle based on a continuous programme of exhibitions, has led to new structural and spatial challenges that are being answered by the development of a future expansion in the gardens, to be materialized by the new Center for Documentation by Álvaro Siza Vieira. When it is built, as desired, the new extension will represent the “common territory” for both the documentary funds of the Foundation and the Center for Documentation of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto.



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6. About the answer to the challenge

As mentioned before, the acceptance of Fernando Távora’s archival fund was accomplished in 2011 and 2012, through a process supervised by Távora’s son and former collaborator, the architect José Bernardo Távora, and by Professor Manuel Mendes, architect and researcher whom Távora himself assigned the task of giving body to the book he always dreamed of. It has to be mentioned that this publishing project, under the title *As raízes e os frutos. Palavra desenho obra*, to be achieved in the context of Marques da Silva Foundation, began to find its accomplishment in 2021 through the publication of the first volume of a total of eight: “*O meu caso. Arquitectura, imperativo ético do ser, 1937-1947*”.

So, the time has come to ask a fundamental question: what has been done since and about the acceptance of this archival fund and how may the activity of Marques da Silva Foundation be assessed?

First of all, information has been made available to hundreds of researchers, who may now access Fernando Távora’s documental fund both physically and virtually, following the rigorous, intensive, systematic work of inventory, description, conditioning and digitalisation which has created more than 8000 digital images (more than a thousand of them are already available online for viewing) and a bibliographical digital catalogue allowing access to the titles it contains.

Fig. 5
Marques da Silva Foundation,
view from the inside path
of José Marques da Silva
House-Studio. Porto, 2020 (©
Telma Dias).



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In addition to this task of mediating the memory through archival and technical processing, in a constant struggle against the danger of obliteration and oblivion¹⁰, Marques da Silva Foundation has been promoting a vast programme of other initiatives allowing us to trace multiple possible interpretative and comprehensive itineraries in Fernando Távora's work, inspiring diverse readings and decryptions of the nature and meanings of his achievements when faced with the questions our own times raise in the dialogues with both his built work and his intellectual production.

That's why during this last decade, since the organisation and the diffusion of information and knowledge that arose from Fernando Távora's archival and bibliographical fund, multiple comprehensive actions have been proposed and supported by the Foundation, both on its own initiative and in cooperation and

¹⁰ "Memory allows to understand people and facts. Memory is the human being's resource against death and erasure" is a statement by António Cardoso. It is during his Ph.D. research about José Marques da Silva that the idea of the donation to the University of Porto by the architects Maria José Marques da Silva and David Moreira da Silva arose.

Fig. 6

Fernando Távora, 'a door can be a romance', main entrance of the exhibition (Eminent Figure of University of Porto, Lopes Martins Mansion, Marques da Silva Foundation, Porto, 2013 © Helena Amaro).

partnership with other institutions. These scientific and promotional initiatives are materialised by meetings, exhibitions, conferences, guided visits, publications and book releases (among which support for the activity of translation of Távora's original texts into different languages should be listed), elaboration of architectural maps and even the proposal or monitoring of the classification processes of built works, such as the petrol stations in Guimarães and the house in Covilhã.

For Marques da Silva Foundation it is clearly an open work in progress, a concept borrowed from the literary universe of Umberto Eco that makes perfect sense in the context of constant and relentless exercise of repositioning Fernando Távora's role in relation to the time in which he lived and in relation to the new challenges that arise from each accomplished stage of the Foundation's activity.

Ten years have passed since Fernando Távora's celebration as a Eminent Figure of the University of Porto, in 2013, a vast programme of events devised by Marques da Silva Foundation, the Rectorate and the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto, under the supervision of Manuel Mendes. Now we are in 2023, when the hundredth anniversary of the architect's birth will be celebrated, with the promise of new insights into the work of a man who liked to cross borders and, liked Fernando Pessoa, liked "to travel, to explore countries, to constantly be someone else"¹¹, keeping a permanent attention on the quality of the construction of the world.

Considering that this is indeed an exhibition that cannot be separated from the author of the exhibited works, allow me to close this intervention by using again the words written by Fernando Távora himself, hoping that they might help to understand the fascination he is still wielding, also on the ones who did not know him personally or who are not architects, a situation I personally find myself in:

"I know, I know

yes, I know. I know it now and have known it for a long time

yes, I know, I know that.

But I know that, and I also know the opposite.

And it is so difficult to know that and to know otherwise.

To accept that and not to despise the opposite.

Yes, I know.

I know that the earth will be five million years old

I know that life will be three million years old

11 Fernando Pessoa, *Viajar! Perder Países!*, September, 29th, 1933.

I know that the "small" distance from the earth to the moon increases,
by approximately 400,000 kilometres.

I know, yes, I know,

I know

I know that I'm only 56 years old,
1.65m tall and with a step of 70 centimetres.

Yes, I know,

I know

but I also know

that the beach will be different if you steal a grain of sand

I know

that the sea will not be the same if I steal a grain of sand

I know

that the universe changes when I breathe or even when I think.

Yes, I know

I know that I come from afar and will go far

I know that I am not just here but in many places, I know

that I don't just live as long as I live.

I know that the infinitely large is as infinite as
the infinitely small

and I know and I know more and much more

I know that I am no exception.

I know that I am like all men

- those who were born and died

- those who will be born to die.

And I know that between me and the others is an eternal and indissoluble
union,

and that the others need me, as much as I need them.

And I know that knowing we are infinitely great

because we are infinitely small

is what constitutes the passion of life.

I know, yes I know.

(And it is about this life of passion that has been

mine that I will speak.

With irony, with sadness, sometimes with bitterness,
but always, always with passion.)

Years ago I thought a thought to carve on a door
that I offered, symbolically, to the house of some friends.

That thought simply thought: make of each
moment a life.

I offered the door but I didn't carve the thought.

I carved it in my memory and try to practise it daily.

And it is that passion for the passion of life that I passionately want
to convey. For we do not live if we do not plunge
permanently and passionately into the passion of life.

I know, yes I know.

I know."



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Fig. 7
Fernando Távora, travel to
Greece: ancient theatre in
Delphi, 2000 (© José Bernardo
Távora).

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The Travel Drawings of Fernando Távora: a few Brief Notes on their Exhibition and Conservation

Drawings, Ballpoint Pen, Felt-Tip Pen, Paper Conservation, Survey

/Abstract

Fernando Távora was a renowned Portuguese architect who made significant contributions to the field of architecture, both in Portugal and internationally. He was known for his unique design style and his ability to seamlessly blend traditional and modern architectural concepts.

Távora was a prolific traveller and used his travels as an opportunity to analyse and capture his surroundings through the art of drawing. His drawings, made with felt-tip and ballpoint pens, graphite and crayons, are highly regarded for expressing Távora's observations and reflections on the architecture and urbanism of different regions and cultures.

In September 2022, the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna, in collaboration with the Marques da Silva Foundation, hosted the exhibition "Fernando Távora in Viaggio" (Cesena, from 23 September to 12 October). For this exhibition, it was necessary to assess the state of conservation of the eighty-seven drawings, the colours present and the different types of paper used by this architect. It was also an opportunity to carry out conservation work and to place the drawings in acid-free passe-partout and boxes.

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As a professional in the field of conservation and restoration, she coordinates technical teams, prepares objects for exhibitions and carries out preventive conservation and restoration interventions on objects belonging to external and internal entities of the University of Porto.

Currently, her interest is focused on the conservation of architectural drawings, especially on tracing paper and its various copying processes, participating in conservation projects of collections of architects such as José Marques da Silva, Vasco Vieira da Costa, Raúl Hestnes Ferreira and Maurício de Vasconcellos, among others.

Fernando Távora's Travel Drawings

Fernando Távora drew intensely and passionately, using a variety of media and supports, everyday materials that were at hand: ballpoint pens, felt-tip pens, fountain pens, sketchbooks, loose pages from books and business cards. These drawings show the architect's perspective and understanding and were used to capture a moment in time. They were made with a certain utility in mind and certainly not with the intention of being a work of art. The drawings acquired this status because of their great quality, the documentary value they represented and the fidelity of the portrait of their author. Over the years, the works of art that Fernando Távora produced during his travels have been displayed in numerous exhibitions. The first time, in June 1982, fifty of his drawings were selected by him to be exhibited at the Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto, in a presentation entitled "Fernando Távora: travel to travel drawings".¹

In 1988, fifty travel drawings were again exhibited at the Quadrado Azul Gallery in Porto,² and at the Forum Galleria in Viseu.³ Although, in comparison with the catalogue of the 1982 exhibition at the ESBAP, the information in the catalogues of these other two exhibits is scarce, it is possible to see changes in relation to the fifty drawings exhibited in 1982, namely the drawings relating to the trip to Japan in 1960 (only nine drawings were exhibited this time), the trip to Paris in 1962 (three drawings were exhibited) and five new drawings relating to the trips to France (Paris) in January 1967 and to India in December 1985 (three drawings depicting Goa and Daman).⁴

In 1990, the fifty drawings exhibited in Porto and Viseu in 1988 travelled to Viana do Castelo and were presented at the Centro Cultural do Alto Minho from 22 May to 10 June.

In 1993, the Cultural Centre of Belém held the monographic exhibition "Fernando Távora – a life-long trail", designed and coordinated by Fernando Távora and José Bernardo Távora.⁵ For this exhibition, the same selection of fifty travel drawings has been mounted with double-sided tape on cream cardboard and placed in a wooden frame in direct contact with the glass [Fig. 1, 2].



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1 Fernando Távora, *Viagem ao desenho de viagem. Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto* (Porto: Escola Superior de Belas Artes, 1982).

2 Fernando Távora, Joaquim Matos Chaves, Jorge Barros, *Fernando Távora* (Porto: Galeria Quadrado Azul, 1988).

3 *Fernando Távora: desenhos de viagens*. Viseu: Galeria Forum, 1988. See between March 23 and April 10 1988.

4 On display were drawings from his journeys in 1960 (Washington, Philadelphia, Taliesin, Mexico City, San Francisco, Kyoto, Nara, Bangkok, Beirute, Baalbeke, Cairo, Sakara, Athens), 1962 (Paris, Mount St. Michael), 1964 (Venice, Milan, Siena, Spoleto, Assis and London), 1967 (Paris), 1970 (Barcelona), 1973 (Congonhas) and 1985 (Goa, Daman).

5 Fernando Távora, José Bernardo Távora, eds., *Fernando Távora. Percurso: a life long trail* (Lisboa: Centro Cultural de Belém, 1993).

Fig. 1-2

Drawings from various sketchbooks exhibited at the Cultural Centre of Belém in 1993.

Nine years after the exhibition at the Cultural Centre of Belém, fifty-three⁶ travel drawings were displayed in a new installation entitled “Távora: travel drawings”.⁷

In 2013, on the occasion of the ninetieth anniversary of his birth, the Rectorate of the University of Porto, the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto and the Marques da Silva Foundation joined forces to honour Fernando Távora. The aim of the initiative “Eminent Figure of the University of Porto – 2013” was to recall Távora figure in its different dimensions, to promote the scientific, cultural and educational aspects of his work as a knowledge, architectural, artistic, disciplinary and documentary heritage. The programme of this event included a presentation installation at the Marques da Silva Foundation entitled “A Door Can be a Novel”, curated by Professor Manuel Mendes. Interacting with the spaces of the home studio designed by José Marques da Silva, the installation was organised into seven stations, the fourth of which, entitled “Jumping Frontiers”, exhibited some of his never-before-exhibited travel drawings, from a trip to Spain in 1942, a trip to Brazil in 1994 [Fig. 3] and a trip to Celorico de Bastos with his students in 1944.



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In 2017, travel drawings were once again the focus of a new exhibition: “Travel to Travel Drawings, Guimarães-Távora revisited”. This presentation, conceived and coordinated by the architect José Bernardo Távora, brought together eighty-eight of Fernando Távora’s travel drawings and nine photographs by Luís Ferreira Alves of buildings built by the architect in Guimarães. Thirty-eight drawings have been added to the initial selection of fifty made in 1988.⁸

In 2020, the Marques da Silva Foundation hosted the exhibition “More than architecture”, curated by Luís Urbano. The exhibition included 12 drawings made during Fernando Távora’s travels in 1960.

Two years after this exhibition, the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna, in collaboration with the Marques da Silva Foundation, has decided to hold the exhibition “Fernando Távora in Viaggio” at the Galleria del Ridotto.

6 From the selection made in 1988, three new drawings have been added: two drawings from the trip to Kyoto, 1960; one drawing of Mount St Michael, Paris, 1962.

7 *Távora (catálogo da exposição sobre a sua obra)*. Guimarães: DAA / Museu Alberto Sampaio / Asociación Primeiro Andar, 2002.

8 On display were thirty-six drawings from Fernando Távora’s travels in 1960 (Washington, Philadelphia, Taliesin, Mexico City, San Francisco, Kyoto, Nara, Bangkok, Beirute, Baalbeke, Cairo, Sakara, Athens), five drawings from 1962 (Paris, Mount St. Michael), thirteen drawings from 1964 (Venice, Milan, Spoleto, Assisi and London), one drawing from 1970 (Barcelona), two drawings from 1973 (Venice, Milan, Spoleto, Assisi and London). Michael), thirteen drawings from 1964 (Venice, Milan, Siena, Spoleto, Assisi and London), two drawings from 1967 (Paris), one drawing from 1970 (Barcelona), two drawings from 1973 (Congonhas), three drawings from 1985 (Goa, Daman), fifteen drawings from 1994 (Olinda), four drawings from 1995 (Myra, Ancara, Istanbul), six drawings from 1997 (Machu Picchu) and a final drawing from 1993, which represents a map entitled “1 - The trip around the world as a Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation scholarship holder / 2 - The trip to Brazil with ESBAP students / The ‘places’ where I have been (in black); The places where my ancestors have been (in green)”.

Fig. 3
Sketchbooks from the trip to
Brazil, 1994.



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Eighty-seven⁹ original drawings by the architect Fernando Távora, selected by José Bernardo Távora in 2017, were on display in Cesena from 23 September to 12 October 2022.

Surveying the Collection

Since 1982, the travel drawings have been exhibited in many different places and environments, so it was essential to assess the state of conservation of the colours and the various paper supports used by the architect Fernando Távora.

The drawings entitled City of Mexico, Philadelphia, S. Francisco, Taliesin and Washington (1960) belonged to the “On board” diary and were made with ballpoint pens of different colours (green, red, black). The paper, 148 mm high and 107 mm wide, was thin and yellowish and had four perforations on the left margin for the insertion of rings. Some of the papers in the “On board” diary had the watermark AMS REGISTERED BOND.

The remaining drawings belonged to various sketchbooks. These drawings, made on heavier paper, had no watermark and were made with a black pen, black ballpoint pen, graphite and coloured pencils. One of the sketchbooks, consisting of forty drawings, 175 mm high and 250 mm wide, was used continuously

⁹ Based on the selection made by Bernardo Távora only the map from 1993 was not exhibited.

Fig. 4
Drawings in the exhibition.

in Japan (Kyoto, twenty-six drawings; and Nara, eight drawings) and in Bangkok (six drawings). Another sketchbook, containing twenty drawings measuring 245 mm high and 315 mm wide, was used continuously in Lebanon (Beirut, two drawings; Balbeque, four drawings), in Egypt (Cairo, Saqqara, six drawings) and in Athens (eight drawings). They had a perforation in the left margin for the insertion of a metal spiral.

There were also drawings that belonged to sketchbooks that had already been dismantled, such as the one relating to the trip to Brazil, 125 mm high and 185 mm wide (Olinda, fifteen drawings in felt-tip and coloured pencil).

In terms of conservation, there has been some concern about the fading of the inks used by Fernando Távora in his travel drawings, as they have been exhibited countless times.

Drawings made with felt-tip and ballpoint pens are very sensitive to light, fading and colour changes.

Ballpoint pen inks are complex mixtures of several dyes and pigments, up to 50% of the total ink formulation, contained in either a glycol-based solvent or benzyl alcohol. Additional components (vehicles) include fatty acids, plasticizers and polymeric resins to improve the consistency, flow or drying characteristics of the ink.¹⁰

Felt-tip pens became popular in the mid-1940s and were quickly adopted for their quick-drying inks. The inks consisted of soluble organic dyes dispersed in a resin matrix with either water or alcohol solvent.¹¹

The conservation community was quick to recognise the transient nature of these materials and recent studies have shown that more than half of the 75 felt-tip markers tested had very low fastness to light.¹²

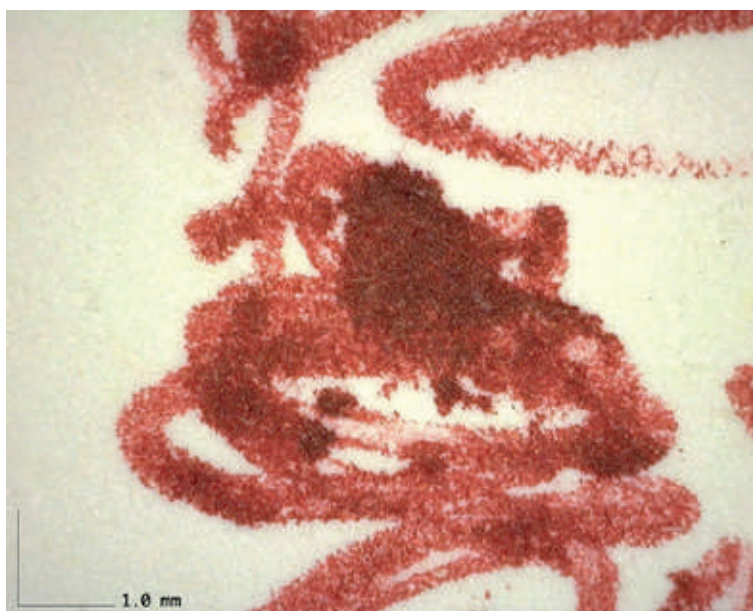
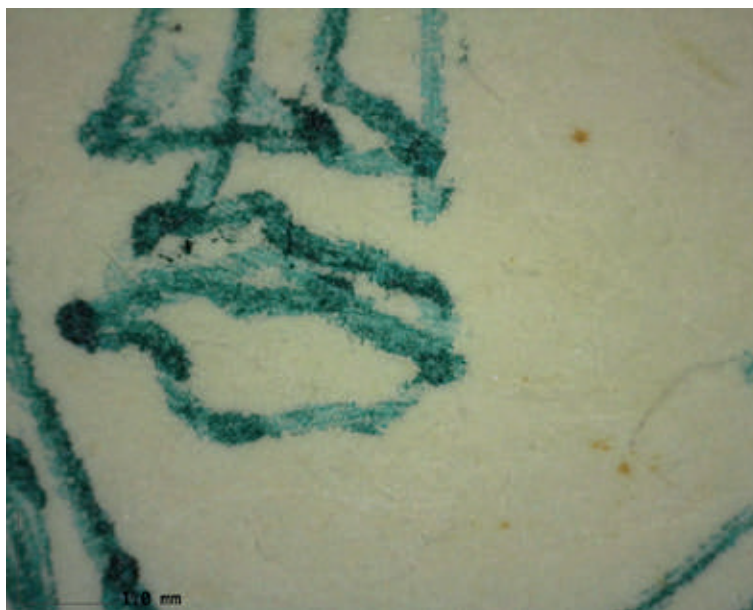


Fig. 5, 6
Dino-Lite digital microscope images of the green ink of the ballpoint pen used in the drawing of Washington sand the red ink in the drawing of San Francisco.

10 Alyami, Areej et alii, "Metal nanoinks as chemically stable surface enhanced scattering (SERS) probes for the analysis of blue BIC ballpoint pens", *Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys.*, no. 19 (2017): 14652.

11 Mirabile, Antonio et alii. "The Colors of Lina Bo Bardi: Analytical Investigations of Lina's Felt-tip Pens." In *Science and Art: The Contemporary Painted Surface*, Royal Society of Chemistry, Antonio Sgamellotti, Brunetto Giovanni Brunetto and Coatanza Milani, eds., (London: Royal Institute of Chemistry, 2020): 117-138.

12 Fenella G. France, "Fugitive modern media and challenges of long term exhibition". In *ICOM-CC 17th Triennial Conference Preprints, Melbourne, 15-19 September 2014*, Janet Bridgland ed., (Paris: International Council of Museums 2014).

With this in mind, the inks were examined using a Dino-Lite digital microscope to observe any changes in the binders, dyes and pigments [Fig. 4, 5, 6, 7].

Although the vast majority of the inks were still cohesive, very vivid and showed no signs of fading or alteration, there were doubts about the inks used in the *Congonhas* drawings [Fig. 8, 9].

The *Congonhas* drawings were probably made with a black felt-tip pen on coated paper. The drawings now show a purple hue rather than black. However, we cannot prove that black was the original colour as there are no reliable photographs of these drawings in the catalogues consulted.

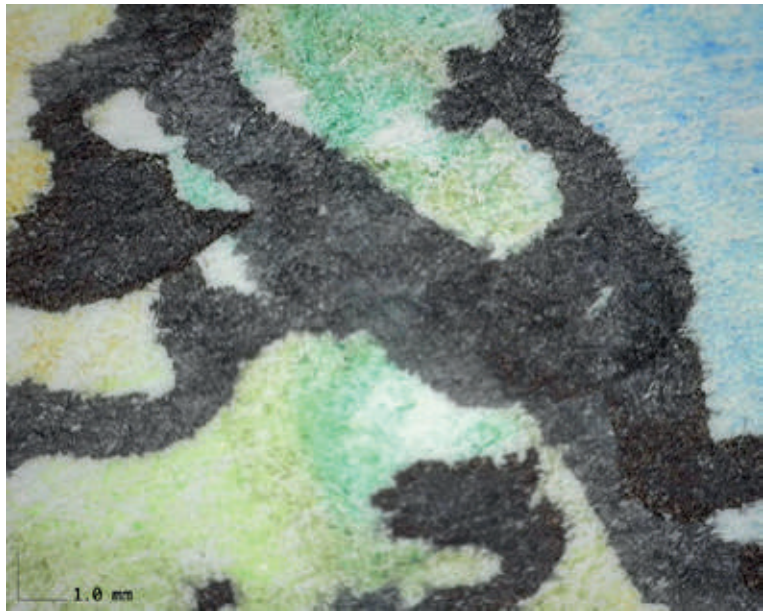
After assessing the condition of the supports and the colours, minor conservation and restoration work was carried out. As most of the drawings were mounted on beige paper with double-sided tape on the reverse, it was necessary to remove all these external elements.

Crepe erasers and solvent-soaked swabs were used to remove the adhesive residue from the double-sided tape¹³ [Fig. 11]. *Hake* brushes, smoke sponges and various erasers were used to clean the surface of the drawings [Fig. 12].

Tears were mended with *Kozo* paper (5gsm) pre-coated with wheat starch paste. For the exhibition 'Fernando Távora in Viaggio', the drawings were mounted with pasted T-hinges in acid-free passe-partouts (*Mulberry*, 32gsm) and placed in Portfolio Museum boxes [Fig. 13-16]. This final housing system protects the drawings from light, heat, moisture and fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity.

Conclusions

Fernando Távora's travel drawings are valuable documents of his creative process and his exploration of different cultures and architectural traditions. As such, they have been shown in numerous exhibitions since the 1980s.



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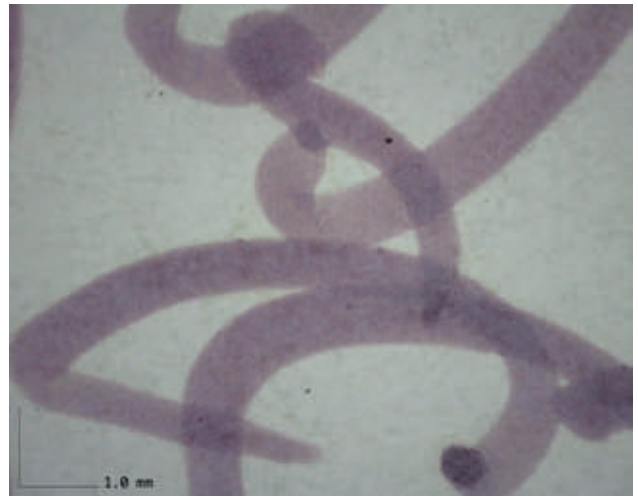
8

Fig. 7, 8
Dino-Lite digital microscope images of the black ink of the ballpoint pen and the blue, yellow and green inks of the coloured pencils used in the drawing *Myra Theatre* and the black ink in the drawing *Peru Ollantaytambo*.

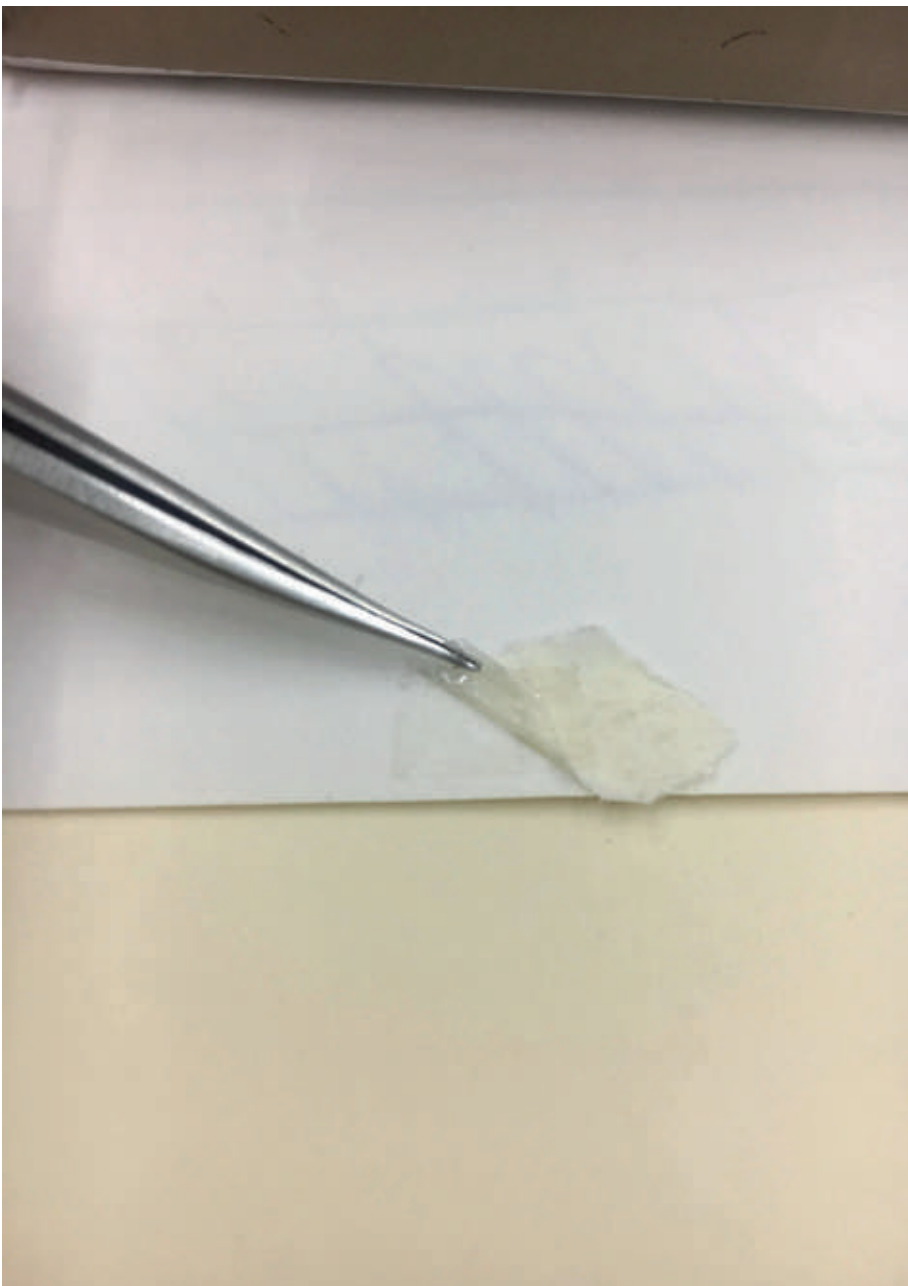
¹³ Leonie Müller et alii, "Pressure-sensitive tape removal in paper conservation: a review", *Journal of Paper Conservation*, no. 23 (February 2022): 59-75.



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Fig. 9-10
Dino-Lite digital microscope images of the felt-tip pen used in the drawing Congonhas (detail of the cemetery with the 12 prophets sculpted by António Francisco Lisboa, Aleijadinho).

Fig. 11-12
Removing the double-sided tape from the back of the drawing and surface cleaning with a Hake brush.

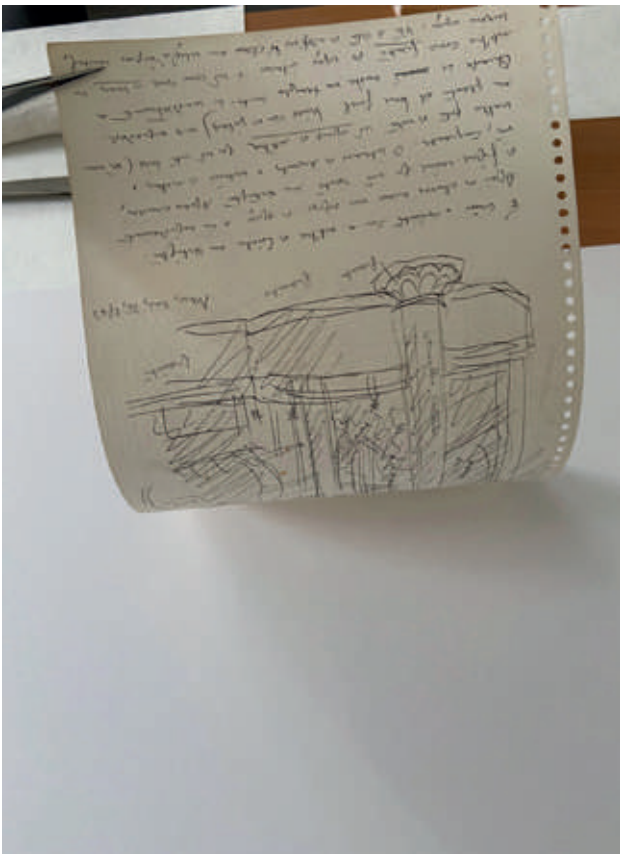
Fig. 13-16
Hanging system used in the travel drawings: T-hinges made of *Mulberry* paper applied with wheat starch paste to the back of the drawings. This system allowed full access to the back of the drawings.



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The materials they are made of make them particularly susceptible to fading, so the greatest care should be taken in future exhibitions. Close monitoring of environmental parameters is recommended, particularly relative humidity and light. By following proper storage, handling, maintenance and exhibiting techniques, these drawings can be accessed, enjoyed and treasured by generations to come.

Fig. 16

Dino-Lite digital microscope images of the felt-tip pen used in the drawing Congonhas (detail of the cemetery with the 12 prophets sculpted by António Francisco Lisboa, Aleijadinho).

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VISUAL

Architecture of Photography

Roberto Collovà

1

BIOGRAPHY

Roberto Collovà, architect and photographer lives in Palermo. He has taught Architectural Design at the Faculty of Architecture in Palermo, at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio from 2001 to 2006, and at architecture schools in various European cities. He founded the Randazzo-focus Photography Gallery in Palermo ('87/'89), which has held twenty-two exhibitions and published several photography books. He won the IN-ARCH Award for Design 1991 and Gubbio Prize 1996 for architecture in historic centres, and was also a finalist for the Mies van der Rohe Award 1990 and the Gold Medal for Italian Architecture 2003. he was a commissioner... in the Jury for the Mies van Der Rohe Award 2005, Advisor for the BSI Swiss Architectural Award 2008 and the Young Architects Program MAXXI-MoMa PS 2011/2015.

His projects and writings are published in various Italian and European books and magazines.

His photographs are published in several Italian and foreign architecture magazines.

Books include: S. Braida Santamaura, *Palermo Viva. Monumenti e Opere d'Arte da Salvare*, (Palermo: Rotary Club 1972); *Viaggio a Palermo* (Palermo: Randazzo-focus, 1987); *In Prospective N PROSPECTIVE*, vol. collet. (Reggio Emilia: Comune Reggio Emilia, 1990); *Alimena*, (Palermo: Comune Alimena, 1995); R. Collovà, *Giardino di giardini. Azioni sulla costa sud*, 2018 (Palermo: PalermoManifesta, 2018).



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After finishing my architectural studies, my disaffection was such that I immediately sold the drawing board.

I had not been given what I expected, precisely with regard to architecture. My restlessness made me imagine other ways. My interest in photography, which had first started as a support for architectural studies, had soon expanded and had moved out of the merely instrumental sphere. I had bought a Yashica 6x6 – a Japanese copy of the famous Rolleiflex – now hidden so well in the studio, as an anti-theft device, that I could no longer find it.

I had taken my first photos before I was eighteen when the prize of a school competition had given me a Kodak Brownie 6x6 cassette. Somewhere, here on the walls of the studio, there must be a small print from '62, taken with that little plastic box, which already testifies to the catastrophic transformation taking place along Via Notarbartolo in Palermo, the street I used to walk down every morning on my way to high school. Along the beautiful street were lined villas and mansions of some interest that I saw disappearing one by one. Perhaps attention to architecture and how to look at it was beginning to manifest itself that way! The enthusiasm for architecture, on the other hand, had been formed in my senior year of high school by attending the U.S.I.S., the American Library¹; it was there that I would find books by contemporary architects, Wright, Neutra, Sullivan and the others. An encounter that had made me

adjust my focus; my first idea was to be an engineer but the readings and figures in contemporary architecture had fueled this broadening of interests, reducing engineering curiosity and opening the door to a more humanistic view of construction. But, as I said, after the disappointment of the University where no one had known nor could answer, after '68, the discipline-political engagement question, the question architecture or photography had remained on the table for several years as a possible exit, another passion that was being fed by other inputs and encounters.



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Over time, a balance has been established between two paths that I have long experienced as alternatives and that have, I would say for specific reasons, two different speeds.

¹ U.S.I.S. (United States Information Service). U.S. opens in Palermo one of the first American Libraries established in Italy since 1945.



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You know better than I do that architecture has really slow times, especially in Italy, and training to practice two different speeds of work was extraordinary for my training. Later on I discovered this double speed within the practices of architecture itself.

Photography is immediate, what you make you can process almost immediately, everything is in your hands, and you are alone in governing what you produce, just like a painter or a writer. In architecture you set in motion a complex process in which so many others are involved, almost like in film.

The theme of two speeds then I found it in many different experiences.

For example, in the work of *Malagueira*² whose book I am closing; for me, as a witness to Siza's work, time was a central issue. Malagueira's construction begins to be concretely visible but also to show itself as a stable process between 1977 and 1978 because there were many doubts that it could proceed unhindered. In the same years, from 1980 onward, Siza made other interventions with some speed, such as the Berlin³ and The Hague⁴ projects, works that had quite different rhythms, both because they were carried out in different production contexts and because of the different nature of the processes under way and their original motivations. Malagueira is a complex process that is not only about architecture, – it almost always is so – with its physiological slow times, but much more because it stems from the Carnation Revolution of 1974 and the subversion of a project that was already underway. The first project begins by using the repertoire of M.M., low houses, medium houses, high houses, which is decommissioned in progress due to the clever intuition of an architect working at the municipality, the author of the project. He understands that the subject of the SAAL Brigades⁵ intervention at *Malagueira* is a complex issue, as well as a great opportunity, and that to conceive and govern it, it takes a sensitive mind which has a wide view; so he omits himself, proposing Siza as architect. The process is reversed and a very long journey in time begins, coinciding with a fairly long period of Siza's life. Also of mine, since my last trip to Portugal, photographing *Malagueira*, was a few months ago, while my first was in 1982.

I digressed a bit to say that the elaboration of the photography-architecture question involves common planes, similarities involving observing, looking, selecting figures, producing landscapes, the significance of details, bringing to light what others do not see, but also many differences.

Photography at first is a tool for me, but after a while, you realize that a medium cannot be just a medium, it becomes so many other things, a real practice of thinking, to see, to observe and also to witness, to create memories.

² Álvaro Siza's *Quinta de Malagueira* neighborhood in Évora is one of the most important new construction projects promoted by the S.A.A.L. Brigades during and after the 1974 Revolution.

³ Siza realizes the three projects, *Fraenkelufer*, *Kottbusserstrasse* and *Schlesisches Tor*, on one block in the Kreuzberg district.

⁴ Schilderswijk *social housing neighborhood*.

⁵ The S.A.A.L. Brigades (*Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local*) are Revolution intervention groups formed by workers, students, architects and other citizens to manage popular participation in construction interventions.

It still generates language.

And one thing is certain for me, you can't photograph what you don't know, you have to be inside an issue, you have to appropriate a place, an issue, an event, you have to enter into it in sympathy, literally. Not to be in this pathos, in this knowledge, is a form of blindness, and you cannot resort to ideological visions that you can then translate into photographic images, without incurring the production of a parallel, inevitably formalistic language.

There was one thing that always happened to me while I was doing a photography assignment or I had given myself a theme to develop – it opened up space for a kind of parallel, indirectly associative practice: I would take pictures sideways and these often, I found out later, were interesting and meaningful for other reasons, they were freer and lighter. It also happens to me when I write, but maybe it happens to everybody, I get thoughts, ideas, figures, that have nothing to do with what I'm writing about. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I happened to work for magazines such as *Vogue casa*, *Ville e Giardini*, *Interni*, almost as an exercise, and later on, differently for *Lotus international* and other qualified magazines. During these engagements, I almost always found myself photographing something else as well.

In '82 I spent more than a month in Portugal photographing practically all the works of Siza and several other architects of the "Portuguese school," Távora, Soutinho, etc. At the end of the year, a substantial exhibition on Portugal came out of my work on the side.

In '80, the adventure of Portuguese architecture began, connected, in terms of meetings and relations, to the affair of the *Belice Laboratories*⁶ in which I was, for my group-in my case Siza's – the architect on the spot, the one who supported him. The Belice earthquake produced a lot of paradoxes that are still there, the cities somehow multiplied, the shacks, the old city, the new cities ... the three cities, in some cases merged, in others remained separate.

I was working, as it were, keeping two levels of observation, one tending to the project – there was not always a client but it was as if there was – the other, one might say, somewhat rambling; in reality it was a secondary observation, an attention that could be created precisely because there was the circumstance of the first. So at the end of this experience I traveled for three months to Belice to prepare photographs for the 16th Milan Triennale in '81 invited along with Mimmo Jodice and Maria Mulas who had worked on the same theme. I had photographed the wounded architecture and the country, like anything else, with a reportage attitude.

The concepts and situations I mentioned, discovered also, and perhaps, earlier with photography than with architecture, are partly transferable to it.

⁶ The *Belice Laboratories* were a workshop held throughout August 1980 in Gibellina. Organized by a group of professors from the Faculty of Architecture in Palermo (Collovà, La Rocca, Aprile, Bisconti, Castagnetti) with the mayors of nine Belice municipalities, the workshop elaborated eighteen specific themes of the post-earthquake and early reconstruction, proposing them to working groups directed by invited architects: U. Riva, Á. Siza, G. Pirrone, F. Venezia, F. Purini, L. Termes, B. Minardi, O.M. Ungers, P. Nicolini.

I generally don't think of an architectural project by imagining an object, as I often see so many architects do, who start with an idea, and then engage in deductively implementing it, doing the details and all. I have never been able to think in this way. Maybe because of my own difficulties or limitations. I wasn't able to imagine from scratch, I didn't know where to start, and, on the other hand, nobody had taught me that in school.

I began to understand these things only when I did my undergraduate degree, abandoning the idea of doing an architectural project and facing an experience with Vittorio Gregotti, who proposed, to me and a fellow student, a thesis in industrial design. A discipline that was not yet being taught in our faculty. I was happy to leave the field of architecture, about which no one had taught me much, and this now, it seemed like a free field, it was like starting from scratch, like being reborn and entering a laboratory of practices for which I had curiosity but knew nothing about. I would have done it with photography but at that time there was no possibility. In about three months, I must have read and studied about sixty books and journals that related to industrial design, and so I worked on a thesis that at first was supposed to be theoretical but also had to have an application aspect. On the way we changed the program. The thesis was only theoretical, the application aspect manifested itself with an exhibition, a kind of repertoire of D.I. In truth it was a form of initiation, a first approach; and it was not by accident, everything also happened to support a teaching project, which was later realized with the establishment of the Chair of Industrial Design at the Faculty of Architecture. Our graduation opened a new path. We had been given a prize that the Compasso d'Oro reserved for graduation theses.

In architecture work, as in photography, there are always elements and initial conditions that cannot be questioned. Architecture is almost always arrived at through precise, though often thematically unfounded, assignments, but – good thing they are there –. Even if you take them as elements of security, everything else you have to do yourself, including questioning them. In the architecture of the nineteenth century, especially in the design of the city, those who drew it had at their side like a neat scansion from which to take parts, complex or more elementary pieces, that had a high level of certainty because they had already been rehearsed in the city—a relatively simple job, when compared to the contemporary condition. An architect, even a non-brilliant one, hardly ran the risk of getting urban syntax wrong and also had many comforts of language. He worked in a world of examples,





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the syntax of which was known to everyone. It is clear that we are no longer in this condition, and therefore we have an obligation to be smarter, more observant, more humble, we have to identify the problem but also be able to design it, something that has nothing to do with the inheritance, let's say *compositional* – which continues to persist among other things in schools of architecture and in the profession – that is, with putting things together that form volumes and spaces. I think we should instead put together issues, questions, suppositions, hypotheses, to make our associations of ideas flow within this unsaturated “environment.”

For these reasons, for me now, working with photography or architecture, in a sense, from a method point of view, is not so different.

It's clear that as you're making one or a set of photographs, you have different conditions to respond to, elements that are of this discipline, of this craft, but you know that your most important attitude is to include or exclude. Maybe in architecture you don't have to do the same thing? If I try to design a transformation of a piece of a city, first of all I redesign things, almost instinctively, of them I know in fact that neither I nor others will question them anymore, therefore they will remain.

Here, the selective specificity of photography helped me decipher this.

Then there is the formative aspect of meetings, the first with Gregotti, then the long relationship with Pierluigi Nicolini, with joint courses and *Lotus* magazine, and finally the meeting with Álvaro, with a long collaboration as well as a true friendship. There are many other encounters, with photographers for example: my old friend Fausto Giaccone to whom I managed to have the beautiful book

Una storia portoghese (A Portuguese Story) made from the reportage made in '75 on the occupation of land in Alentejo, when in 87-89 I was in charge of the Randazzo-Focus Gallery in Palermo. Giovanni Chiaramonte whom I invited to Architecture for several years to teach Photography courses. Ivo Saglietti, a great friend, sensitive and committed photojournalist.

The most important lesson came from all these experiences and meetings together, when I learned to understand that things are already there and that your job is to try to find them among others and put them together, when you become aware that ours is an ongoing work of inclusion and exclusion.

Photography makes you understand this because, precisely the things are there, ready to become another unpredictable, willing to become your landscape, because you have to decide what, how and when.

I can say that the practice of photography has become increasingly refined if dense with contradictions.

It has retained a residue of the initial uncertainty in me, which has become vital because of the doubt that continues to work over time as a critical assistant; of this I am quite happy.

Speaking now about Távora, I have never worked on his works with a project, although I have photographed some of the most important ones. The opposite of what I did with Siza and also with Souto de Moura and other architects. For example, regarding Gehry I did an accomplished work on the *Goldstein Siedlung* in Frankfurt on which I also wrote an essay for *Lotus*, the same with Estevan Bonell on the *Badalona Sports Hall* for *Casabella*. With this kind of work another plane opened up for me, one of great interest. The photographs began to become the text, the figure text, of another written text, of a critical text. These are not illustrations but two interrelated narratives. It happened then many other times, it is a work that I really enjoy and it continues to be an active practice.

As I said, on Távora, I have never done work that had a lens; yet, I have photographed the *Quinta da Conceição* in Matosinhos, the *Library and Square* in Aveiro, the *School* in Vila Nova de Gaia, the *Market* in Vila da Feira, and even the *Plan of Guimarães*.

In 1982, in Porto to photograph the work completed by Siza, the *Quinta da Conceição* in Matosinhos I see it as a repertory park. A refined place of sophisticated arrangements, where one encounters a kind of intentional archaeology,



where you understand that there is a certain arbitrariness in the arrangement of the fragments and all the delicacy of the reconstructive action of a possible memory, a bit like Grassi's *Sagunto Theater*. Nothing or little is philological; it is rather an analogical process. While the Fifth is a popular park.

The sequential photos, which in the book on *Malagueira* became a mode for me, here are done almost unconsciously.

It is the insistence on an evolving situation that produces scenes, it is also the expectation that something will happen.

To the Bressonian myth of the fleeting moment ... I've never believed so much, I believe in situations, rather, that things keep happening in a place, and that there are constraints, something like what Tàvora calls *circumstances*. Clearly something particularly significant happens sooner or later, however, maybe something even more significant will happen in a while. That's why I don't believe much in the fleeting moment, although I know photographs that are miraculous, beautiful and unrepeatable.

I believe to one who stands there, senses that that is a place where theater, the theater of the city, is staged, where things and actions can take meaningful forms. So these sequences were born in a magical place, evocative of many things of the past, the evocation of a Lion's Gate, where a gateway is to pass from one world to another.

The *Tennis Pavilion* I photographed that was like in a thicket, the opposite of what it looks like in some photos, a modern, clean building; it has features I want to talk about.

The characteristic feature of the architecture of this *Pavilion* is the permanent discontinuity between its parts and elements. It is all solutions of continuity, all transition from one thing to another, there is no continuous envelope, there are juxtaposed pieces.



This is also characteristic of Umberto Riva's architecture, which detaches everything, which always finds a way to build the hinge between the parts.

A picture like this (photograph 5) why did I take it? It reminds me of certain sketches by Le Corbusier where there is this big dimension that comes over you and where men are put there to measure space. While others I put them together because for me they are illustrations.

This one with the hand (photograph 7) is a bit of a game because the hand is real, not marble; it's almost random, I wanted to leave it because it creates a bit of a creepy suggestion, of archaeology reconstructed in a semi-arbitrary way, I guess.

As you know Távora was working on the design of a swimming pool for the highest part of the *Quinta de Conceição* but, when he embarked on the famous Gulbenkian trip, he left the design of the project to the *young man of study* (Siza). He really had to trust him! What remains and what happens again? There remains the situation. There is the hill with the slope of the flanks, the two overlooks, then the rise. Siza on one side continues to work on the construction of this sort of bastion of which the pool is the last level. I have chosen some of these photos (photograph 6) precisely to tell the story of the continuity that arises gently downstream with the pools at different levels, then the different paths to the terraces, and sometimes the stair and ramp systems that flank each other and are sometimes staggered. Gradually, we arrive at certain points wilder than the care of the older part in the valley, referring more to the pre-existences, while, at the top the buildings are getting harder because of the larger volumes and a bit “*casa portuguesa*” for the inhabited parts.

Here (photographs 2 and 3) a repertoire of somewhat domestic and urban situations opens up at the same time, in the sense that in the city we look at each other from one balcony to another, we cross the street, – it is interesting to me and has a strong relation to the question of photography and architecture – that is,


the question of relationships, at what level of proximity we move, how we recognize each other, how we measure each other. Here, for example, (photograph 4) there is a complex situation, resolved with a sequence. In the foreground there is a woman, a man and children, they are at the bottom, while, at the top, in the background, there are scenes of figures playing an important role, crossing a threshold, changing their light. And here (photograph



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8) we have arrived on the high part, where you can perceive the terraces with *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, then you see (photograph 9) some boys – again a sequence – moving in the background of a wall while others sit high up, like those in the last photograph (photograph 10) on the edge of a high wall. Here one can sense the entrenchment of the central part around the pool.

These photos were the beginnings of something that gradually became more interesting to me, in an instinctive sense because, even though they are physical constructions, you are chasing something. Something is still happening.



VISUAL

The Concept Fragment

Alessandra Chemollo

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BIOGRAPHY

Alessandra Chemollo was born in Treviso on the 20th of August 1963 and lives in Venice. She graduated from the University IUAV of Venice with a thesis on the relationship between Architecture and Photography.

Her reflection on the representation of architectural works is developed in her professional work and in her self-produced projects, without interruption.

He has realised photographic projects to illustrate numerous monographic texts, deepening specific ways of interpreting architectural works from documentary sources, thanks to his close collaboration with architectural historians – starting with his experience with Manfredo Tafuri.

In her 30 years of professional experience, she ranges from historical to contemporary architecture and develops theoretical areas with didactic and curatorial purposes.

Since 1986 she has worked as a photographer; between 1991 and 2013 she worked with Fulvio Orsenigo (ORCH – www.orsenigochemollo.com). Since 2013 she has been teaching the Photography module of the Master of Landscape at IUAV.



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I would like to briefly relate a story that, seen from today's perspective, is strangely circular.

A story that starts with the research work I did for my degree thesis, at IUAV in 1995, a thesis that had Marco De Michelis as supervisor and Paolo Costantini as co-rapporteur, whose theme was the photographic reading of Álvaro Siza's work. If this is the starting point, the point of arrival is a small exhibition of mine, "Reduced Version", held in 2003 at Ca' Pesaro, which put together the works of Álvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto de Moura and Fernando Távora.

I believe that to talk about photography one must always consider two elements: the *medium* and the *context*.

In the sense that – in the first place – if I work with equipment that uses medium format film, my look will be different from if I shoot with digital equipment.

Secondly, the fact that a work such as the one on Fernando Távora's architectural work I did in the context of a community of people, so I think my photographs are mine but they are also a little bit Ivana Barbarito's, a little bit Antonio Esposito's and a little bit Giovanni Leoni's, because the thought that generated them is a thought that we developed together, with Távora alive, therefore with a chance to discuss many things with him and not just architecture. Távora, who, as we know, summed up his concept of architectural photography in a sentence that went something like this: "photography is a tragic destruction of architecture because you can take beautiful photos of bad architecture".

This seems to me to be a premise.

The work I did on Távora's work was the latest in a series that began with the Siza monograph for Electa¹. My graduation came after thirteen years of studies during which I was already working as a photographer and in particular, between 1990 and 1994, with Manfredo Tafuri. It was a fortunate opportunity because working with him was a real education. A reading of ancient architecture I would dare say philological, which involved working on the work of Leon Battista Alberti starting with an orderly reading of his texts, with subsequent discussion of the results.

With this particular background, for me, photographing architecture means working on a project idea.

For the thesis I had interviewed the protagonists of the photographic history of Siza's work and among them Roberto Collovà.



¹ Kenneth Frampton, *Álvaro Siza. Tutte le opere* (Milano: Electa, 2005).

My first meeting with him was in September 1994, when I was working on my first book for Electa, a book whose title, *Il trionfo della miseria (The Triumph of Poverty)*², I am very proud of. The book was dedicated to the Alberghi dei Poveri (Poor People's Hotels), I had been to Naples to interview Mimmo Iodice then to Palermo, by ship, to interview Roberto Collovà. It was an interesting meeting in the reading of Siza's works, for a depth that in my opinion derives from Roberto's having kept two paths together: architecture and photography. His account of what struck him in getting to know Siza's work was fundamental: Roberto decided to photograph Siza after meeting him in a design workshop on the Cave di Cusa³, work that he summed up in this way: "Siza does not make a project about the place, he makes a project to see the place, so his project is a project of vision and I have learnt, through working with Siza, that seeing is the first possible design act".

This is what holds the two paths together.

I do not know how consciously or instinctively Collovà's position coincides with the thinking of Eric De Maré, who divides photography into document, photograph and image, attributing different values to the three categories.

This is exactly the division Collovà works with, using three techniques. He works in black and white to make a reportage, and we could call them images, a work he has been doing for years, covering the whole of Portugal. Then there is photography, work he does in Hasselblad, mainly for architectural photos destined for magazines. Finally, there is documentation, a 24x36 format work that basically serves his teaching activities at the university.

Another lesson picked up by Collovà, for which I am very grateful to him, is his description of *Malagueira*⁴ because he tells of how Siza at one point stops the project and his stopping the act of designing allows Malagueira to become a living city.

When Siza was presented in Italy, by Vittorio Gregotti in an article in *Controspazio* in 1972⁵, there was immediate talk of a *non-describability of Siza's work*; an important point because, as we shall see, it has much to do with the work on Távora. Gregotti wrote that "it is not a matter of a literary non-descriptiveness but of the very inability of drawings



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2 Elisabetta Molteni, Paolo Nicoloso, Andrea Guerra, *Il trionfo della miseria. Gli alberghi dei poveri di Genova, Palermo e Napoli* (Milano: Electa, 1955).

3 Álvaro. Siza, E. Souto Moura, R. Collovà, N. Lopez, *Percorso per le Cave di Cusa*, Sicilia, 1980.

4 Álvaro Siza, *Malagueira neighbourhood*, Evora, 1977-1992.

5 Vittorio Gregotti, "Architetture Recenti Di Álvaro Siza", *Controspazio*, no. 9 (1972): 22-25.

and photography to communicate the specific sense of his work". This is why Siza has become, in a way, the architect of detail and has a series of publications highlighting this aspect.

It is interesting to note that over the next twenty years, the ones I have analyzed, we find a very strong evolution in the way photography interprets him, first linking his image to the different political movements following the Carnation Revolution, and then building the image of an *archistar* whose hands end up on the cover. Another interesting aspect of Collovà's work, which I believe is a key point in understanding how the description of architecture has evolved in the world of photography, is his work on *action buildings*⁶, which is in some ways borrowed from the way Ugo Mulas worked on artists. Collovà testifies to having seen Siza, for the first time, in a euphoric state in front of this idea of architecture making in which design becomes something else.

Of Collovà, Siza says that he "knows how to capture the movement of people in a form that explains the project" and that seems to me a very powerful definition.

Another photographer I consider a master is Giovanni Chiaramonte, who was also involved in my thesis on Siza's work.

A lesson I learnt from him concerns his photographic project to describe the Leça da Palmeira Pool⁷. He says: "In the Swimming Pool of Leça I was faced with a space that was really not perspective with the full awareness that mine is a tool that gave me Renaissance perspective. This is the problem with the Modern. The Modern actually founds a new project that is not that of perspective, that is not that of the Renaissance order, that is not that of the world conceived as Cosmos. All the more reason I believe that Siza, who is a great modern in an age of postmodern imbeciles, he who has grasped the greatness of the modern from within, posits a space that is not perspective".⁸

This is also an important theme, in my opinion, for understanding Távora's work.

"In this building," Chiaramonte says, "I found myself in a labyrinth because the structure of the pool as I perceived it is just that. I arrived on a windy day on this street and I saw the ocean and the arch in a pool facing the ocean, in this, how should I say, direct relationship with infinity. Then

6 R. Collovà, "Action building Álvaro Siza", *Lotus International*, no. 37, (1983): 74-77.

7 Álvaro Siza, *Tidal Pool*, Leça de Palmeira, Matosinhos, 1961-1966.

8 Interview with Giovanni Chiaramonte in Alessandra Chemollo, "Storia Fotografica dell'opera di Álvaro Siza" (Degree Thesis, IUAV, Venice, 1995, advisors Marco De Michelis and Paolo Costantini).





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there is the land in the middle. Siza has built this building that comes out about thirty centimetres from the earth on the street and forces you to go inside the earth because you have to go inside, you have to climb stairs, you find yourself in a navel, in a long, narrow funnel in which you can hardly even see the sky, underground, and he makes you go through a labyrinth, he makes you penetrate a viscera. After this closed, internal pathway, it returns you to infinity, this infinity that you saw before but that was only reachable through the pathway and there, whatever, it's genius".⁹

The last point that concerns my thesis is what Siza thinks about photography because it is interesting to understand the relationship that the architect has with photography. There are architects such as Richard Neutra, who controls the design process - which ends with the photo shoot - to the point of emptying the houses and furnishing them anew for Julius Shulman to photograph, and others who decide to leave the photographers free.

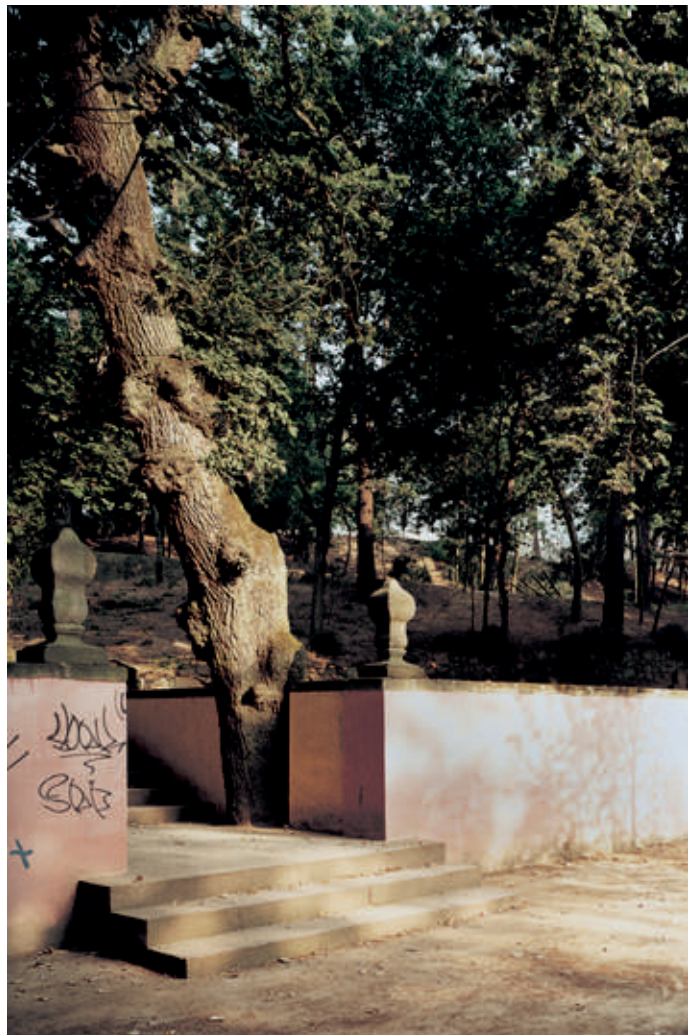
It is another theme of architectural photography, the freedom one is given or one takes.

I have always taken much more freedom than they gave me, but the issue is also the direction that that freedom takes because it is not true that all interpretations are interesting and I am a little critical of certain readings that, in my opinion, do not go in the direction of the fibre of the work but, in some way, distort it, add meanings that are not meaningful. One of Siza's first published works is the *Boa Nova*¹⁰, which he designed at the age of twenty-three while working in Távora's studio. It is interesting that Siza recalls how, for the first and only time, he accompanied a photographer to photograph one of his works and this one, Fernando Aroso, said "yes, beautiful, but I want to come back tomorrow morning with the fog". Siza comments, "Aroso was an Atlantic, not a Mediterranean". This idea of superimposing a personal language on the work I think was particularly clear to Siza.

Siza says he never accompanies photographers to photograph his works. "The architect's eye obviously has to be, has to be a very well-prepared eye to see relationships mainly with a double activity, analytical and synthetic. An architect learns by seeing, the most important learning for him is with his eyes. To see a lot at various scales,

⁹ Interview with Giovanni Chiamonte in Chemollo, Storia Fotografica dell'opera di Alvaro Siza.

¹⁰ Álvaro Siza, *Thea house in Boa Nova*, Leça de Palmeira, Matosinhos, 1958-1963.





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the details but also the character of a city, to grasp all these things with different modes of vision – because one trains oneself for this as for everything, and the photographer is obviously an expert in observing – is indispensable. So I will say that the architect's eye is not special, but it is, without a doubt, specially trained to see, as is the photographer's eye. Clearly, for an architect the most important thing, more important than the objects and details themselves, is the relationship between things, but this exercise in seeing, not looking but seeing, should be a very important point in everyone's education."

This consideration leads him to conclude:

"In my opinion, it is impossible to understand architecture through photographs: perhaps that is why I do not make any recommendations to photographers today, because I think photography has its own autonomy and sensitivity - and sensitivities are different. You can understand a lot about architecture through fragments of the concept." – I find the expression an incredible synthesis – "This is perhaps richer than my youthful anxiety to show all the things I was consciously concerned about in the project because the reality of a work goes, I think, much further than what we consciously look for, many things escape. A photograph can be a surprise, we can understand with a photograph things we were not aware of, many times born by chance, subconscious," – another important theme – "the product of unconscious memories. The value of photography is quite autonomous, it is like an interpretation of reality: it cannot explain everything we want to say with architecture but it can discover other things. I really like an interpretation that is not contaminated by me because I believe that the works contain more than our conscious".¹¹

Coming to Távora, the context in which Ivana Barbarito and I are working – Ivana will explain in more detail how we have worked together – is that of a book¹² that, using Távora's own words, comes to the conclusion of the cycle of his life; thus, with the awareness that he has of a final act. What amazes him, again using his own words, is the recognition of the end with the beginning, this his finding a coherence, through the reading that, with Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni, we have provided him with, and that somehow gives him confirmation and amazement, I believe, together. His position with respect to architecture is one in which there is architecture understood as life, very different from the sale of the product. Much architecture photography today is related to the sale of the product. If we go and look at the history of architectural photography, which is very recent – because we start talking about it starting perhaps with Julius Shulman, one of the first who can really be said to do it for a living –, we see an impoverishment of language in function of selling the product. Instead, Távora's architecture is an architecture born of particular stories, of life mixed within architecture.

I hope that the photographs I have taken speak for me more than the words I use, and the books I have published seem to me to testify how my looking at

¹¹ Interview with Álvaro Siza in Chemollo, *Storia Fotografica dell'opera di Álvaro Siza*.

¹² Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa* (Milano: Electa, 2005).

different things makes me almost a Zelig, an observer capable of becoming the thing he is looking at. And what I felt in front of Távora's work, what I have become, is his ability to develop an attention more for the things that were there before his gesture than for his gesture itself.

It is a fundamental character that I also find in the *Quinta*.

For the volume dedicated to Távora I worked with a Silvestri, with two warehouses, one for black and white and one for colour (in very rare cases the shot was the same): many times black and white was a choice to describe, let's say to take the attention of colour away from form, to systematise that idea. That is why I then asked to work on Souto de Moura only in black and white, precisely to focus on the idea of space rather than detail, whereas in Távora, very often, detail is important.

In the photos of the *Quinta*, I think this work of his emerges above all by looking at the place where he is, as a first action. He describes his long work in the *Quinta* starting from a being in the places like the prior of the convent, he tells how he stayed there for a long time, longer than necessary. The need for a walk that serves to understand, to get out of a productive cycle, to make a design part flourish that has non-functional needs. In his words: "an architecture that remains in its place of origin in a natural and unspectacular way".

I believe that this was a bit of my work, the sense of photographing Távora, and as I have been fortunate enough to do many books for Electa, it has resulted in what I consider to be, in my personal career, the best book on a monographic work by an architect. Working together with the authors of the written parts, and also the synergy with the graphic designer Paolo Tassinari contributed a great deal to a result achieved "by force of levare", as Michelangelo used to say, an art of levare also on Paolo's part, which I feel tackles well the challenge of a narrative that, first and foremost, gives value to the place.

I conclude my circle with the exhibition *Reduced Version*, created on the occasion of the honorary degree awarded to Távora by the IUAV¹³: eleven photographs of Távora's work, eleven of Siza's work and eleven of Souto Moura's work. An exhibition that I self-produced, which was inaugurated at Cà Pesaro and then went on tour. A moment of comparison of the works of these three architects who are so closely linked, and who, thanks to the occasion of the honorary degree, visited together.

Leaving the exhibition, Eduardo Souto de Moura took me under his arm and said: "I finally understood why I design this way; because when my girls were little I used to take them to the Távora Park".

It seems to me that "photography as a fragment of the concept" gave Eduardo his illumination and I consider this a great honour.

¹³ Fernando Távora received the *Laurea Honoris Causa* from the IUAV in Venice in the Sala dei Dogi of the Doge's Palace on April 29, 2003. The degree, conferred by the then Rector Carlo Magnani, was proposed and strongly desired by Francesco Dal Co.





VISUAL

The Photographer Never Turns a Blind Eye

Ivana Barbarito

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BIOGRAPHY

Ivana Barbarito, curious, observer of reality, passionate about hand drawing, researcher of the poetry of everyday life, architect, photographer. She was born and studied in Bari. The landscape and the yellow light of the South still influence her way of looking at the world. Since the beginning of her architectural studies, she has been interested in photography as a tool for observing and analysing reality. She has attended different workshops with Italian photographers – Gianni Berengo Gardin, Guido Guidi, Giovanni Chiaramonte – to deepen her reflection on the representation of architecture and the natural and human landscape.

In 2003, she took part, with Alessandra Chemollo, in the photographic campaign on the complete works of Fernando Távora and Eduardo Souto de Moura in view of the relevant monographs published by Electa and edited by Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni. From this experience she began to collaborate, as a photographer, with several architecture magazines (Casabella, D'A, Domus, Architettura and Vida) and at the same time developed personal research on her vision of landscape.

In 2006, in Venice, she collaborated on FSE (European Social Fund) photography courses at the IUAV on the theme "La visione. La fotografia tra percezione e rappresentazione" (Photography between perception and representation). After moving to Paris, she tackled small-scale projects in Italy and France, from their spatial organisation to the design and realisation of custom-made furniture.

In 2011, with Benjamin Bancel, he set up the BarbaritoBancel studio where different life paths and complementary outlooks are united by the common desire to renew with each project the pleasure for architecture, for the reflection of spaces designed by light, for design, teamwork, meeting with clients and craftsmen, experimenting with new techniques and materials. A continuous transformation in search of its own balance between rigour, imagination, sensitivity, method, discussion, listening – and many designs.



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I will just talk about my experience during the months in Portugal with Antonio, Giovanni and Alessandra. I will start with a photo that I find very amusing, partly because it was inspired by a phrase of Alessandra's – 'the photographer never turns a blind eye' – and partly because it describes the situation I found myself in.

The thing I had been asked to do, going to Portugal, was to look, to see.

I was a photographer by passion, I did photography, I had already worked a little with Giovanni Chiaramonte. I knew, from classes at university, the Portuguese school, Fernando Távora, but I didn't speak a word of Portuguese. I met Alessandra at the airport on her way to Portugal, so it was mostly an adventure, a journey. A journey as an instrument of knowledge, guided by chance. When I arrived in Portugal, there was Alessandra working for Electa¹ and there was me, who was in charge of the images for the IUAV Diatēca.

I was only asked to see and report what I saw.

At the beginning I was only moved by enthusiasm, then the problem arose, the anxiety came to be complete in the work to allow the people who had to use the diatheque to find the fundamental elements of architecture. Things got a bit complicated, but we put a number of tools in place. The first was that each time, before we went to photograph an architecture, we somehow studied the project – the drawings, the site, the writings.

Then we had a great fortune, that of being able to spend time with Távora and with Souto de Moura.

¹ eference to the two volumes: Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni, *Eduardo Souto Moura* (Milan: Electa, 2003); Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera Completa* (Milan: Electa, 2005), whose photographs are by Alessandra Chemollo.



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In the preparation of today's meeting there was really an act of memory and I remember very well the meetings with Souto de Moura in which he would bring up drawings, explain, talk to us about the relationship with the client, everything was very clear.

We also spent a lot of time at Távora's, but I don't have the same kind of memory. At Távora's we talked about everything, not about design. We talked about life, about past episodes, anecdotes, we talked about many things but not necessarily about the project. So we would leave, or at least I would leave Távora's studio, not with an idea of a project but with a state of mind, almost a feeling, I would say, of 'portliness'. A very beautiful thing indeed, only that in practical terms this desire to tell everything didn't seem to help me with the question of how to photograph his projects.

Fortunately, I was not alone.

One of my first tasks as a 20-year-old with performance anxiety was to follow the photographer, Alessandra.

In the beginning, particularly in the *Quinta*, in order not to make a mistake, in order to get everything done, I told myself: 'I follow her, I don't miss anything, she has the route in her head'. So if she was in one place I was not very far away and the photographs show that. But maybe the message and the description are different even if we were in the same spot.

There was another issue.

I was already photographing, but at my own pace. In this three-month experience, the rhythms of my work changed. We had a schedule, we had to photograph every day and it was not a question of "today I am tired of seeing, today I don't feel like it", it was a rhythm that was very difficult at the beginning but which, from a certain point of view, allowed me to move from seeing to feeling.

There is a sentence with which Távora presents his Cedar School: "Architecture appears to me today as a great force, born of the earth and man, linked by a thousand threads to the changes of reality, a force capable of making a powerful contribution to the happiness of the environment in which it is born".² In the *Quinta* project, as in the project for his house in Guimarães³, the question I feel strongly about is: what are we being asked to see?

In the end, you realise that the themes are naturalness and beauty.



² See also: Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 319.

³ Fernando Távora, *Casa a Covilhã, Fermentões*, Guimarães, 1973-1976. See also: Esposito, Leoni, *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*, 202-205.



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The photographer has a privileged role because he is there to interpret and narrate, to let himself be touched by the emotion he is living in that moment. In Távora, in my opinion, it is not just about design, but the feeling that he communicates to us is that he comes to represent the invisible threads that changed the everyday life of the people living in the spaces. Those threads were, in some way, that whole that Távora told us about in his office, that he gave himself very clearly.

The *Quinta* is a representation of this.

There is the description of the place but there is also the description of that whole life, that search for the whole that Távora put into each of his projects. The feeling you had was an evidence. That place was like that and could not be different. You had the feeling that things had always been there. A feeling, very strong, of a beauty that enriches you, makes you more noble.

And then Alessandra asked me a question: "what did you learn from this experience?". And, also linking to what Roberto said, as a photographer and architect


I learnt this idea of seeing combined with the idea of listening.

A search for evidence, but evidence that is a rightness, that touches the emotion, given by listening to the place in its light, by listening to the history and the people who live it but, above all, to their desires about this place.

I think that Távora, in his works, achieves this fullness of life.

I also learnt how photography can be a tool for revealing the invisible threads of life and can therefore be an upstream instrument capable of giving directions to the designer, as in an orchestra where many instruments ultimately create a unique melody.





VISUAL

A Look at Fernando Távora's *Quinta da Conceição*

Sebastiano Raimondo

1

BIOGRAPHY

Sebastiano Raimondo, graduated in Architecture in Palermo with photographer and professor Giovanni Chiaramonte. In 2014 he founded the group *Presente Infinito* with five photographer friends in the city of Naples. With them he edited the book of the same name, made several exhibitions in Italy and abroad, the projects Napoli – nuova luce in 2015 and *Madonie Paesaggi* in 2021 for the "Photography Strategy 2020" call for proposals of MIC. He was selected in 2020 by the German-Italian foundation VAF among the finalists of the 9th edition of the prize for young Italian artists with the project *Custodire soglie*, in 2022 he won the first prize at the photography biennial of Vila Franca de Xira in Portugal with the project *Reduce-re*. He lives between Portugal and Italy, is a doctoral student in *Architecture of Contemporary Metropolitan Territories* at ISCTE-IUL in Lisbon and professor of photography at the Academy of Fine Arts in Palermo since 2018-2019. He has published photographs and texts for: *Passagens* and *Caleidoscópico* (Lisboa, 2013); *Lições de Arquitectura* and *Circo de ideias* (Porto, 2017); *Sophia* and *Edições Scopio* (Porto 2018 and 2019); *Edizioni Caracol* (Palermo 2019); *Sacred* and *Urbanautica Institute* (Verona 2020); *Palermo/Periferie*, *Accademia di Belle Arti di Palermo* (Palermo 2020); *IX Premio Fondazione VAF* and *Manfredi edizioni* (Imola 2022).



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I began in the February 16 seminar with a line that John Chiaramonte made on the day of my graduation, “Raimondo graduated with a thesis on architecture in a Faculty of Photography.” I graduated in the Faculty of Architecture in Palermo and then defended the same thesis entitled *Uma ponte, photography as a way of inhabiting and building the world* in the Escola de Tecnologias e Arquitetura of the ISCTE in Lisbon; here I am finishing a PhD with a similar methodology that investigates how contemporary Portuguese photography has been shaped. Although I come from architectural studies, my interest is mainly photography.

The pretext of working in Fernando Távora’s garden is not only about this architect’s work but about an idea of the Portuguese landscape from some architecture and photography projects.

The occasion of the seminar “Ci sono sempre relazioni profonde – Fotografare l’architettura di Fernando Távora” carried out in Roberto Collovà’s studio in February 2023, was an intermediate verification step between the experience of the place with the camera and the printing of the photographs in the darkroom that took place the following March. For the seminar I had prepared digital contacts of the negatives produced, paginated according to the path studied for the shooting days, in order to make clear the experience made. I had not chosen the most beautiful images, that was not what interested me on that occasion, but what I had managed to see there. I had selected a large number of images, variations of shots on certain moments in the garden that seemed to me to have a certain intensity, images of wide views and others of details that were symbolic to me, subjects that I observed several times during different days, times and seasons because they were enigmatic and images whose reasons I would later study.

Going all the way to Porto with a backpack and tripod of a certain size and weight had forced me to plan ahead, without this I would have risked losing a lot of time figuring out how to move around the garden, taking away valuable time from understanding the project. Planning a trip from Palermo to Porto during the winter with a large format camera is not the easiest thing, I would never have been sure of finding possible weather conditions and I was also ready for the use of



a more comfortable tool to put under my coat or umbrella, accompanying the images to the drawing. As luck would have it, on the last visit in January, despite the intense cold, there 4.0 As luck would have it, on the last visit in January, despite



the intense cold, there were amazing light conditions as I had hoped for. In the previous August visit I had taken notes on framing, how the sun moved, and where to set up the tripod and camera; a search for the *genius loci* behind the location of a building from which to look and relate to the activity and being of gardeners and visitors. For this reason in August I spent more time exposing less film with a smaller, easier camera, while in January I spent less time and exposed more film and plates with the large format camera.

Sometimes the method does not apply slavishly, like a container to be filled to carry a content from one part to another, it cannot be identical time after time, just as the design need not always precede the project.



I think it is the place itself that suggests the way it wants to be looked at.

I inhabited the rooms of this project in different seasons and with different photographic cameras. When the opportunity arose to participate in the seminar, I decided that the most natural and consistent tool with my experience in photography, and in that place, was the large format camera, with the 120 color roller in 1:2 format and the 4x5 inch flat plate in black and white, tools that I prefer to use when I feel the need to linger a lot and observe carefully.

The first observation of the contacts was a way to verify what I was able to see and what questions the images were able to ask me about the direct experience made. The question of verification¹ arises from my need to understand, through the practice of photography, a cultural genesis of the garden and landscape². The object of study of this practice were places united by my assiduity and pleasure in frequenting them, in which I recognized an archetype of garden and landscape construction, distant enough to be able to look at them from one another and show their differences. The choice of this tool for looking implies an increase of friction in direct experience, and the slowing down of the time of perception. In this intense experience, even from the physical point of view, observation itself can distort the possible result. I felt it was important to take this positively into account in order to have a greater awareness of the subsequent

¹ See: Ugo Mulas, "Le verifiche 1971-1972", in Ugo Mulas, *La fotografia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1973): 143.

² The first fundamental references to this practice are in the volumes of Luigi Ghirri, *Paesaggio italiano* (Milano. Electa, 1989), *Il profilo delle nuvole* (Milano. Feltrinelli, 1989) and Giovanni Chiaramonte, *Nascosto in prospettiva* (Milano. Ulteyra – Itaca, 2007).



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reconstruction I would make of it. Each phase of this photographic project built up during its making and reworking by large or small steps the previous phases.

The garden is a landscape architecture that changes over time; its rooms are alive and depend on the care and manner in which they are inhabited.

This is a different place in Roberto Collovà's images, as in those of Alessandra Chemollo and Ivana Barbarito, because it was lived in different times, with different purposes, if any, and produced by different visions and ways of living. I went to photograph using notes and memory of a natural path born spontaneously from a certain habit. I have been frequenting the city of Porto for quite some time, I have been also a guest at a friend's who lives not too far from La Quinta, when I first went there it was a very pleasant discovery, and it is still one of my favorite places in the city. I have always experienced it when I needed to find time to go over a presentation, read something, take notes, or just take a walk.

The printing stage refined my project by necessarily transforming the previous sequence, in the relationship between the images and in their selection. The process of printing directly from negative allows for the re-presentation of the experience that occurred in real space as a result of the comparison between memory and what remained in the images. The discipline required in the dark-room (as much as the choice of paper, color filtering, contrast, cropping and print size) is not mechanically obtuse but a methodological tool to achieve that comparison. The summary of ten images here, digitizations of prints made in March 2023, are for this reason other than those presented during the seminar.

I was not able to study the drawings of the garden (probably they never existed except those of the tennis pavilion and Siza's swimming pool) but starting from these images, and from the comparison with those previously created by the other authors, a discussion was generated which my seeing questions us about the nature of this garden and the cultural nature of the landscape: a project that calls into question the concept of historical linearity.

The fragments scattered throughout the garden like relics suggest this ambiguity, a deception masterfully set up by Távora by declining variations of the garden theme as if they had their origins in pre-existences built over the centuries, suggesting that the project is the relationship of each of these by means of the fences that delimit them. The walls, the buildings, the relationships between the floors, the stairs, the doors and the scattered remains are all staged with the aim of undermining the certainty of their previous existence in defined times and in the space where we observe them today. It seems like a way of saying what the photographic image is and the similarity is amplified knowing that there are no drawings of the general project that serve as a reference.

From 1993 to 1996 the "Incontri di fotografia di Coimbra" (the subject of my Ph.D. thesis) organized by Albano da Silva Pereira and Teresa Siza were concerned with composing an image of contemporary Portugal that had not previously been a concern. The 1993 edition was dedicated to the declaration of intent that would guide the authors to work in the following years, in the general



catalog of the international collective exhibition entitled Jardins do Paraiso, among the many authors there were the photographers Gabriele Basilico and Lewis Baltz who also contributed a text.

Basilico writes about a journey sitting in a car where he cannot sleep, he observes a fascinating sequence of images that follow one another from the window, he says that the photographer tries to recompose the disorder of the outside world through the frosted glass of his photographic camera and the operation always



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oscillates between the naivety of simply recording the reality of the world out there and the embarrassing impotence of not being able to understand the linear mechanism that built it.

Baltz, on the other side of the ocean, in a landscape that is not surprisingly called landscape in a different way, warns the reader against the certainties of a clear distinction between total artistic freedom and mechanical description of reality.

I don't believe that there are places that are more capable than others of evoking an idea of the construction of the Portuguese landscape but I believe in the possibility that in some there are still traces that suggest the different ways in which it was built.

In the *Quinta da Conceição* of Távora there is the enclosure of the cloister of San Francesco, with the remains of a hermit convent, there is one to show the spectacle of the machines of the protected port among the trees that attenuate the noises, one with red walls which functions as a passage and at the same time the scene of a theater with its steps, and there is that of Siza whose walls are like those of a bastion, white like a contemporary fortification on top of a hill.

Transparent, opaque, permeable or impassable fences, from which scenes can be seen or onto which scenes are projected and the pattern of time is recorded, sewn into a project on the complexity of the landscape, where the fragments function as metaphors to question perception of coherence between its parts.



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