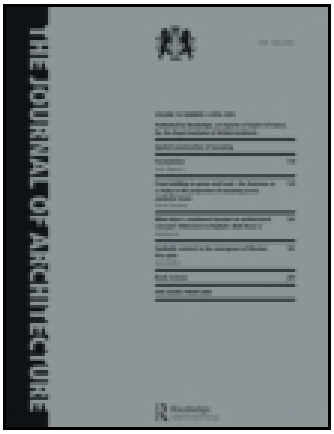

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The Journal
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Language, sites and types: a consideration of the work of Álvaro Siza

Robert A. Levit

College of Architecture + Urban Planning, University of Michigan, 2000 Bonisteel Boulevard, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2069, USA

Siza's architecture is remarkable for its precise accommodation to sites. Since the 1970s it has shown a more explicit reliance upon typological forms. Both aspects of his work suggest an architecture anchored to history. Yet, for all the importance that site and type seem to play in Siza's work, they emerge as strange protagonists. Although tightly calibrated to site, Siza's architecture reveals the remoteness of the past, establishing an intricate contrast between itself and the underlying site. Types are deployed, but the hierarchies of our movement through them, of implied architectural promenades, seem to occur against their grain – as if the historical orders manifest in types were inherited instruments of a remote and somewhat alien past. This article delineates these phenomena in Siza's work, and reveals their genealogy in the historical milieu out of which Siza emerged.

I would like to start my discussion of the Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza's work by first considering some texts frequently cited in discussions of his projects: one by Siza himself, one by his mentor Fernando Távora, and another, a poem, by Portugal's most celebrated poet from the first half of the twentieth century, Fernando Pessoa.

'My architecture does not have a pre-established language nor does it establish a language. It is a response to a concrete problem, a situation in transformation in which I participate. . . . In architecture, we have already passed the phase during which we thought that the unity of language would resolve everything. A pre-established language, pure, beautiful, does not interest me.'

Álvaro Siza, 1978[1]

'Those who advocate a return to styles of the past or favour a modern architecture and urbanism for Portugal are on a bad path . . . "style" is not of importance; what counts is the relation between the work and life, style is only the consequence of it.'

Fernando Távora, 1962[2]

Tenho tanto sentimento
Tenho tanto sentimento
Que é frequente persuadir-me
De que sou sentimental,
Mas reconhe o, ao medir-me,
Que tudo isso é pensamento,
Que n o senti afinal.

Temos, todos que vivemos,
Uma vida que é vivida
E outra vida que é pensada,
E a única vida que temos

1360–2365

É essa que é dividida
Entre a verdadeira e a errada.
Qual porém é verdadeira
E qual errada, ninguém
Nos saberá explicar;
E Vivemos de maneira
Que a vida que a gente tem
É a que tem que pensar.

I'm so full of feeling
I'm so full of feeling
I can easily believe
I must be sentimental
But when I mull this over
I see it's all in thought,
I felt nothing whatsoever

All of us spend
One life living it,
Another, thinking it.
And the only life we have
Is split between
The true one and the false.
But which is true
And which is false
Nobody can explain.
And as we go on living,
The life we spend's the one
That's doomed to thinking.

Fernando Pessoa[3]

All three texts reveal currents of feeling and thought that are distrustful of language. Pessoa poses his point, in his broad appeal to the reader – 'all of us,' that is – as a general human condition. He suspects that in all of us thoughts run like a parallel stream beside a 'life that is lived'. Language has its own independent logic. We tell stories about ourselves, define experiences, judge events, and give voice to our feelings. Yet what we tell ourselves follows on the structure of language as given to us. The murky liquid dynamism of life is poured into the ready mould of language without convincing us that something is not left out in the shape assumed. The events of our life take on the form of known narrative structures. We see taking form in ourselves the shadow of a *bildungsroman*, a cinematic melodrama or life as advertised. Ready words name our sentiments, and we love, we miss, and we grow angry according to the elaborate histories connected to the words that name these sentiments. Meaning – even that conveyed by a rudimentary individual word – is divided up in certain arbitrary ways, as a simple attempt at translation from one language to another readily demonstrates. Although inevitably and endlessly falling prey to the preformed patterns of thought, intimations of another life shimmer out of thought's reach on the horizon of consciousness. (Pessoa's trickiness lies in not calling that sense of the incommensurate the glimmerings of a truer life, but pointedly supposing that no such judgement is possible: 'But which is true / And which is false / Nobody can explain'.)

Álvaro Siza's and Fernando Távora's statements suggest that something analogous has occurred in architecture. Távora rejects what he calls 'style', which is really expression that no longer seems properly linked to its content – expression that

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

seems superfluous to meaning, mere flourishes. He favours something instead that will grow out of the relationship between 'work and life'. Siza, a student of Fernando Távora and a lifelong friend, echoes the older architect's sentiment: he rejects 'pre-established language' and seeks to respond to a 'concrete problem, a situation in transformation in which I participate'. In architecture they aim for that utopia where form would be neither an arbitrary inheritance nor an arbitrary system, but would grow directly out of our needs, and those needs' interaction with our environments, and most generally (if also most vaguely) out of who we are.

Yet what does all that mean? It reminds me of an analogous ambition ascribed to the 'American action painting' of Pollock, Kline, de Kooning *et al*. by their champion and critic, Harold Rosenberg. He said that this painting 'at its inception was a method of creation – not a style or look that pictures strove to achieve'.[4] The paintings were records of human gesture unmediated by the treacherous pressure of thought and preconceived images.

But what could this mean in relationship to architecture, an art that is by its very definition premeditated? First we draw, then someone following what amounts to instructions must build. Architecture is neither a very spontaneous process nor is it very receptive to those patent contrivances that try to transpose 'automatic' drawings to the built realm. To understand how these statements, or theoretical ambitions, relate to architecture, and to understand what consequences they finally had on Álvaro Siza's work, we shall have to trace two parallel histories. The first relates to the understanding developed by the previous generation of Portuguese architects – among whom Távora played a significant role – of Portuguese vernacular architecture, and of the impact it had on their thinking. The other historical thread that needs pursuing relates to the development of the architectural promenade: there the notion of a mobile subject reflected a changed perception of the subject and its relationship to the architectural object. Of particular importance will be the conceptual precedent set by the way these changes inscribed themselves in Le Corbusier's work.

In the Portugal of the 1940s and 1950s, two developments lent depth to the feeling of at least one group of architects that the country's architecture was falling into a set of empty stylistic patterns. The fascist dictatorship of the Estado Novo (as the regime was called) had adopted a narrow range of models by reference to which they were able to promulgate a homogeneous state manner – monumental, even when small; quasi-neoclassical in appearance; modern in functional considerations (Fig. 1). Following a familiar fascist pattern, it proffered this architecture as the sole and unique representation of a single and historically homogeneous Portugal. It did not matter that this architecture, drawn from a version of the past adapted to contemporary programmatic demands and the heroic goals of the state's self-representation, looked little like any of the traditional Portuguese architecture from which it purportedly drew its legitimacy. Just as the representation of the state in the guise of a stern father leading a Portuguese nation as if it were an extended family required the repression of real

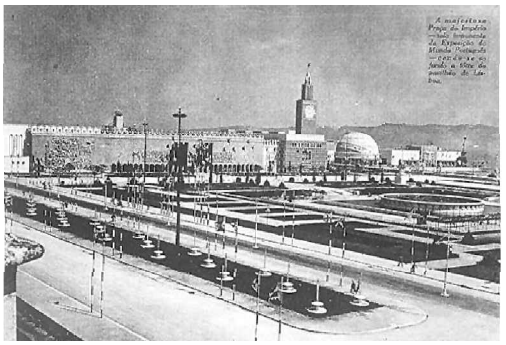

Figure 1. Praça do Imperio e Espoço, 'The Portuguese World', 1940.

Figure 2. Portuguese vernacular: farm buildings, Minho region.

political differences, so too did the architecture mandate an artificial stylistic homogeneity. The state in a sense held language hostage, and lent an exaggerated urgency to the suspicion of language's treachery.[5]

The second development came from the increase in private and commercial building in the country. Large numbers of citizens working abroad and returning to Portugal to build homes or businesses – a pattern that persists in Portugal today – had encouraged the construction of buildings in many imported architectural styles. Their roots within entirely different urban, climatic, technological, material and social circumstances, and the contrasting uniformity of many towns and countrysides of Portugal, made these new buildings appear quite bizarre.

Architects, led initially by Keil Amaral and later including Távora, sought in the traditional vernacular a model of architecture to which they could look as a remedy. They eventually produced a thick survey called *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*, in which they documented, region by region, the varieties of vernacular architecture in Portugal. What they sought in the vernacular was a form of building without resort to 'style', or what they called 'constants', by which we can understand formal norms. Although they chart typologies within the body of the book, in the introduction they deny the importance of type. They are afraid that from types a 'Portuguese architecture' might be sought and reified into a code, just as the state had done with its models. They flee from the stifling and betraying codifications that are language. They do say that the buildings reflect, although not in types or specific architectural elements, 'something of the character of our people' in terms of a tendency to domesticate and turn 'humble' certain traits of the baroque. Exactly what that is, which must be some formal characteristic – simplification of contour, for instance – is purposely left unsaid. Instead they point out the 'strict correlation' in those buildings 'with geographical factors, as well as economic and social conditions'. They are 'simply direct expressions, without intrusions nor preoccupations with

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

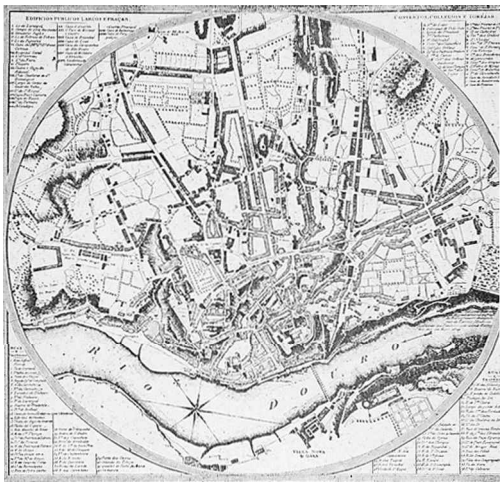

Figure 3. Plan of Oporto.

style to perturb the clear and direct consciousness of these relations'.[6] Paulo Varela Gomes, in his brief but excellent synopsis of Portuguese architecture, has called the thinking reflected in this book a 'metaphysic of the relation between work and life'.[7] The vernacular is seen as the unmediated and, shall we say, prelinguistic product of life and its conditions. I would again bring to mind Rosenberg's idea of 'American action painters' whose work did not *represent* the being of the artist so much as it was an unmediated trace, or record of the artist's life in action.[8] These buildings are like tools, transparent to their human task (Fig. 2). They bear the logic that brought them into being: the task to be performed, the hand that will need to grip them, and indirectly that aspect of the society reflected by the very existence of the need to perform that task to which the tool is dedicated. The sign is not yet broken into the arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified.

Whatever degree of truth there may be in the supposition that form has a more natural relationship to 'life' in the rural communities and regions from which these architects drew their examples, the central fact of unselfconscious reproduction and incremental modification of traditions is lost and inaccessible to the very selfconsciousness that goes in search of it in the vernacular. If the vernacular were merely a model for how to produce buildings in harmony with one's contemporary circumstances, these architects' work might have been more like certain traditional strands of modernism. They, like Hannes Meyer, might have tried to eliminate the question of language by focusing exclusively on modern techniques of construction and solutions to contemporary problems. But there was something in the actual formal character of the vernacular that was appealing to them.

The architecture grew in an incremental way and not, as they pointed out, with great concern for formal precepts. Buildings accommodated themselves to the existing conditions of their sites. Buildings attached to walls allowed themselves to be shaped by those walls. Both walls and, to a large extent, buildings allowed themselves to be shaped by the contours of the land. Much of Portugal is hilly or mountainous, and much of the building in towns and countryside exhibits the highly irregular figures that result from this conformity to the landscape. They created an angling, fragmented, mosaic pattern across the countryside.

Even in major towns, the streets are rarely straightened, nor is the geometer's mark to be found in the squares. These too still bear the geometry of original terrain-driven figures (Fig. 3). There is then a general absence of an architecture of *a priori* geometrical form; building maintains the legibility of the antecedent world into which it is built – that is, the rolling forms of the earth – and its slow, incremental pattern of addition and growth are visible; new building does not raze old building. The vernacular has an archaeological effect whereby its own history and natural history are inscribed in its form. In this respect it satisfies some of those objectives sought out by its investigators. When Siza began to practice in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many of these characteristics would have had an effect on the strategies he adopted. How his work diverged from this model, however, will intensely reflect the remoteness of the unself-conscious practices of these rural communities.

The other significant historical strand that threads into Siza's work pertains to the relationship between the development of architectural promenade and the notion of a mobile subject. The historical evolution of architectural promenade, originally connected with landscape architecture, posited a human subject that would no longer contemplate from a single point of view a static and graspable order. It would move through a sequence of landscape environments meant to stimulate constantly varying states of sensations. Watelet, credited with making the first picturesque garden in France in the 1770s, thought (in Robin Middleton's words) that 'the essential enjoyment of a landscape arose from the constantly changing experience enjoyed as one moved through it.'[9] The focus of the subject's attention in the garden shifted away from the apprehension of ideal geometries, or the formal relationships that seemed more important in the conceptual schema of architecture, to a focus on the continuous changing passage of sensation. A person involved in the appreciation of his or her own sensations will distinguish between these sensations, corporal and intimate, and the remoteness of an architecture's abstract autonomous conceptual order – unless of course that order, as the eighteenth-century garden theorists sought for their gardens, is dedicated to the peripatetic subjects' perceptions.

The transformation in the attitude towards the relationship between subject and object heralded by the promenade's focus on a sensorial rather than conceptual order is significant with regard to this essay's original discussion of language: if in the hierarchy of things greater value is placed on an apparently direct appeal to human sensation, certain orders whose presence can be thought without immediate reference to perception – ideal geometrical schema, for example, or the fugitive and intangible persistence of types – will appear more alien despite the fact that they too are apprehended by the human mind. Even though the environment geared toward the satisfaction of a thirst for 'sensation' may be as rigorously orchestrated as the driest geometry, an apparently more spontaneous and natural appeal will be made to a self apparently involved in a more spontaneous and natural response. Forms arranged with a mind to this arousal of sensation and related to our 'free' movement will seem like a more 'natural' and

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

human language, while what we might call conceptual orders will seem more and more obdurately alien – artificial and 'other', like the cloak of reified languages that will not conform to the uniqueness of each human being.

Le Corbusier was obviously interested in this wandering person, and the *promenade architectural* was a central theme of his work. By giving the promenades a representative physical figure and by making this figure distinct from the idealized order established by structure (columns and slabs), he was able to construct an architectural metaphor of the disjunction between an idealized order of architecture and the order of the peripatetic subject of sensations. Thus stairs and ramps in his architecture not only facilitate the actual movement of an individual through his buildings, but just as ergonometric furniture suggests the absent body for which it is designed, the twisting ribbon of stairs – on the left as you enter Villa Savoye, or on the right as you enter Villa Stein – suggests the phantom of that promenading subject. The same is true of the ramps at Savoye, at the Mill Owners, and at the Dr Currutchet house. These components of circulation follow the logic of the 'free plan', and are distinct from the structure of the architecture. Thus the 'free plan' not only distinguished between those eternal orders that the structure would embody against non-structural infill, but proposed a distinction between an idealized space and order and the incidental aspect of human passage. Whether we are thinking of the universal space of the columnar grid or the endurance within it of a certain Palladian aspect – the ABABA rhythm of

Figure 4. Approach to Salemi: drawing by Álvaro Siza.

Stein's structural grid – the percourse through the emblematic Stein house wanders 'freely' across the grain. The columnar space is either a modern shell to be inhabited or a ruin through which we amble. We can thus extend the metaphorical scope that the 'free plan' allows for: the stairs and ramps incarnate our contrary patterns of movement. But the 'free plan' also identifies an enormous amount of what is connected with the particularization of space, the establishment of those hierarchies of dwelling connected with different rooms, windows, and their figurative aspects with the notion of a kind of permanent furniture. The apsidal wall of the Stein dining room is like a piece of furniture, while the bookshelves that are furniture and

Figure 5. Fountain at Spanish Steps, Rome: drawing by Álvaro Siza.

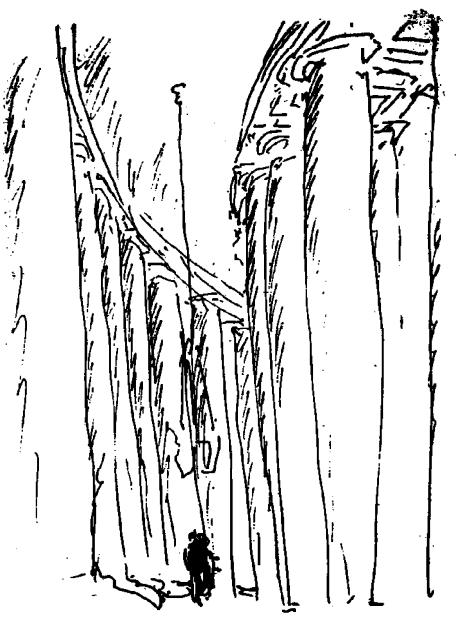

Figure 6. Colonnade of St Peter's, Rome: drawing by Álvaro Siza.

conceptually impermanent are used to articulate the space of the l'Esprit Nouveau living area. Furniture is what we bring to a building. It reflects not the preordained order of the architecture but the more personal act of our moving in and dwelling. The 'free plan' thus suggests that all those freed materials are a kind of furniture within and distinct from the principal order of the architecture. It is evidently very much part of Le Corbusier's work. He created a dialectical opposition between an architecture of idealized order indelibly inscribed by the marks of a subject that is an other in the very midst of the architecture that shelters it.

Siza's sketches reflect his own relationship to that notion. Architectural, urban, and landscape settings are always shown from a point of view that implies the unique moment of perception of the seeing subject. The drawings do not submit to the 'proper' order of the architecture; we do not see from the vertex, for instance, of a perspectivally conceived space: the drawings infrequently attempt to construct the objective description of, say, a plan. In the collection of drawings published in 1988 as *Travel Sketches,*[10] scenes are cropped or viewed at odd and casual angles whether they are of classical buildings, spaces with baroque coordinating principles of preferred unbroken axial

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

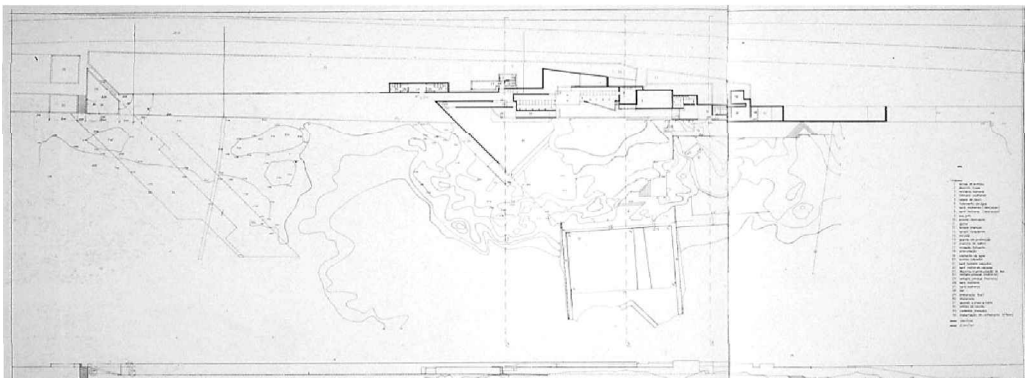

Figure 7. Pool at Leça de Palmeira: plan.

views, or ordinary street scenes. In a manner similar to that of the hand-held camera, and with similar rhetorical effect, they represent views taken in while one casually ambles down a road or sits in a room or café. As in a sidelong glance, things are seen distorted, or as the view drops too low, the foreground's intimate proximity is juxtaposed onto public distance (Figs 4–6). Here we might think of that comparison made by Panofsky between the 'objective' distance and framing of St Jerome in his study by Antonello da Messina and the intimacy of Durer's engraving of the same subject, which places the viewer at the very frontier of the room, the foreground rushing up, thereby making one feel on the verge of crossing through the study to St Jerome himself.[11]

Siza's sketches make us think of the changing views taken in during a stroll. Each sketch stands emblematically for one in a series of succeeding views, implying the uninterrupted stream of our perception as we move through the space of city and country. Possibly by association with the techniques of photography and film and their connection with immediacy and unmediated (non-conceptual) recording, there is the feeling of an 'eyewitness' account – of being there.

Architecture is the background to life lived. As in Le Corbusier's example, it retains the marks of our human use of it. Landscapes, rooms and streets are filled with voluble human activity – people promenading, talking, buying and selling. Other scenes retain the clues of someone's recent passage: rumpled clothing sits on a chair, laundry is left hanging to dry. Inanimate things retain their obdurate separateness but are criss-crossed and marked by human activity. Buildings and landscapes thus appear both remote and enmeshed in the resulting tangle.

These drawings create the peculiar sense that we hover just before the drawn scene. They suggest the physical presence of the voyeur at the very site of the sketch. In literal terms, in some drawings Siza allows his own feet and hands – hands caught in the act of sketching the drawing

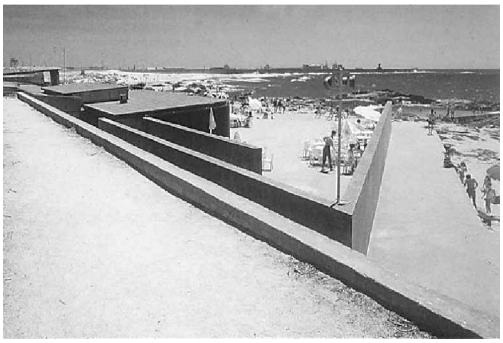

Figure 8. Leça de Palmeira: pool to sea.

we are now looking at – to enter into the drawing's frame.

Architecture thought of as the consequence of the relationship between work and life, and the reconceptualization of the subject according to notions of sensation and the promenade – these are the two fields of thought through which I would like to examine some of Siza's projects. Although the chosen group of works cannot exemplify the full range or complexity of his entire opus, it does touch on persistent and central themes.

One of the reasons the vernacular was able to represent to Távora and his colleagues their notion of a natural language had to do with its historicity. As an accretive process that maintained the evidence of the historical circumstances of its making – the topographical conditions to which it responded, and the accumulated agglomerations of an architecture continually added upon without erasure of preceding layers – it represented an architecture revealing the process of its own becoming. Maybe it did not so much demonstrate the naturalness – whatever that might mean – of its forms in relation to life itself; however, its archaeological qualities suggested the historical record of life's needs. Such effects depended on the passage of real history. But there is a manner in which Siza's architecture produces an analogy, or more properly, a representation of this process, although with an effect quite different from the original. As a representation, it is not the thing referred to any more than a painting of a landscape is a landscape. The very selfconsciousness of the metaphorical construction of this historicity also leads to certain complications. There is a nagging selfconsciousness – legible in the architecture – that suggests that the archaeological metaphor also reveals the loss of the very continuity or natural historical process that it seeks to represent. The act is estranged from the very foundations that set it in motion.

One of Siza's early projects is the beach-side public pools in Le a da Palmeira (1961–66) (Figs 7 and 8). One portion of it is a series of intermittent parallel concrete walls and slightly sloped roof slabs running in parallel – some at a slight angle – and backing onto the face of a concrete boardwalk. The roofs (when they exist) and the walls form few closed corners but instead, in de Stijl fashion, slip by each other. Of those closed corners visible in the plan, many are in fact buried underground and thus hidden from view. Roof slabs reach beyond the edge of walls or are separated by deep reveals that create the illusion that they float – independent of the walls below. The beach itself is full of large formations of craggy rocks, and the various swimming pools are formed by the conjunction of the open figures of low concrete walls and the

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

rock formations. Other elements amid the rocks are cast concrete stairs, ramps and platforms, whose regular shapes are set within the rocks and sand, and dive into the beach's jagged formations.

This architecture is intimately calibrated to its site; the pools hold water only through the collaboration of existing rock formations and the newly cast concrete walls. The group of parallel walls at the back of the site is like a delaminated extension of the boardwalk, its edge echoing in layers into the territory of the beach. And concrete is made from sand. Nevertheless, there is something alien about this architecture on the beach. The hard-edged forms of the concrete planes – straight or, in one small instance, smoothly and geometrically curved – do not enter into endless negotiations with the particulars of the terrain. Those portions of the project that enter into the territory or rocks stop and start as dictated by the natural formations, but they do not become distorted in an attempt to accommodate themselves. Walls, platforms and roofs do not fuse with the landscape, but form a kind of interrupted tracery over it, a kind of drafted graffiti. And instead of a literal historical accumulation of artefacts deposited over time, they offer something more akin to the primal markings of a draughtsman over the territory. They seem more like the emblems of drawing than of building.

Yet this drawing is no simple matter either: the syntax of slipping planes and spatial porousness has something of that original spatial generality, or placelessness as it has been called, that was a quality of the de Stijl vocabulary; it lurks in the pattern language of this project. Like the gridded canvases of Mondrian or the brick country house of Mies, the spatial order – because there is nothing finite about it, no closed figure – suggests the possibility of the pattern's extension: beyond the frame in Mondrian's case, or as a latent and hidden order in the continuum of space with Mies's house. In the Le a project, the tendency to understand the language in relation to this more abstract extension makes the project feel that it lies there with a certain indifference between the new layer and the existing material of the site. We could imagine a series of traces, dashes and hovering planes proliferating in collage fashion along the beach and beyond. And here lies the crux of one form of equivocation in the project. The particular arrangement of forms is particular to place, but hints at an abstracted indifference. The porous spatial paradigm of the syntax allows the site to visibly pass through it. Contrast this fact with the effect of an intact closed spatial figure or completed type, where the nature of its autonomy would tend to close out the site, making the interaction and layering less continuous as the figure stated its formal independence. Here the formal syntax is everywhere autonomous, everywhere infiltrated by the site.

The constant contact between the space of the architecture and the space of the natural site binds them in an archaeological fashion of layers, at the same time that the layer of nature is an alien intrusion. The site is colonized without submitting to human reformulation, and thus suggests an archaeology or historicity where the past – that is, the existing site or its representation – remains alien to us. The proposition is for an archaeological

Figure 9. Boa Nova tea house, Matosinhos.

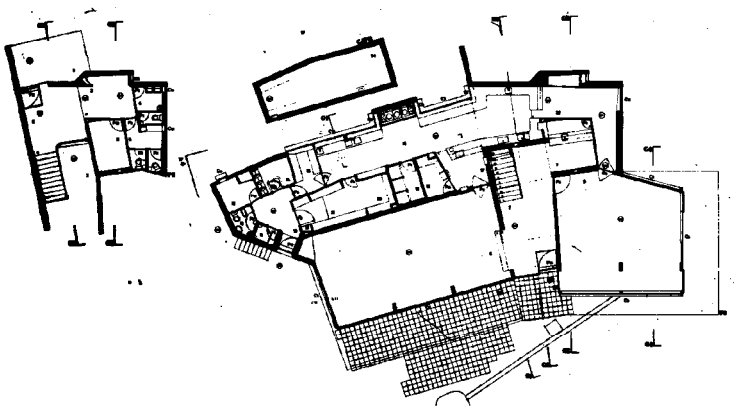

Figure 10. Boa Nova tea house: plan.

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

intimacy that will not admit a naturalness of relation to the past.

The project suggests an architecture that, like graffiti, is drawn on the site. In this sense, the layers of archaeology have to do with the act of conception and design settling upon the material of the existing. But as with Le Corbusier, we are also given little emblematic traces of our own peripatetic passage through the site. The ramps and the stairs are like those set into the background of the columnar grid's spatial ideality. Here similar ciphers now have as their alien background a real site. The conceptuality of the architecture's syntax, conceived of as intimately bound and alien to site, is echoed by the littered trail of ciphers that put our phantom presence amid a world of rocks that we can touch but cannot change.

Yet, describing the Le a da Palmeira pool project exclusively as a syntax of slipping planes is not entirely accurate. The large pool is an incomplete rectangle. One of the parallel walls along the boardwalk folds out at a 45° angle, as if to suggest the project's precinct. However, its acute angle and implicit extension to the ocean horizon – there is a trace of its geometry at the seaward end of the large pool – tend to establish its definition as a wall dividing endless space rather than defining a figure. In other projects of this period the de Stijl character of the syntax gives way to interlocking groups of incomplete figures. This is the case in such works as the Boa Nova tea house (1958–63) (Figs 9 and 10), the Alves Costa house (1964) (Figs 11 and 12), the Alves Santo house (1966–69), and the Rocha Riberio house (1960–62). In each of these projects a certain more 'architectural' character is proposed for the project: the projects adopt a somewhat more traditional vocabulary, using pitched roofs of ceramic tile; also the more traditional notion of rooms and spaces as closed volumetric figures is suggested. Yet in each case these figures are stated in abbreviated form: they are open L's as in Boa Nova, or as in other houses a variety of fragmented L's, unequal-legged three-sided rectangles, or other more difficult to name fragments, as well as simple straight wall segments, attached to nothing. The open figures nestle within each other and overlap.

In one respect the effect of these broken figures is not all that different from the open matrix of sliding planes. Space – whether conceived of as that universal spatial continuum of modernity, or as the actual but open space of a palpable portion of the world (a site) – flows through these fragments. The projects propose a sort of Trojan horse of conventional architecture, whose syntax, upon inspection, dissolves into a series of fragments. Space, or site, passes through them just as it does through the walls of the pool project. In the Alves Costa house, an emblematic moment occurs at both the front door and at the garage. At both these points, fragmented figures overlap trailing walls, like stiff streamers, into the field of another figure. These trailing walls disrupt the sense of closure that the figure into which they penetrate might otherwise offer. Thus the virtual closure suggested by the figural fragment is conceptually undone, and the reading of an open spatial syntax of walls – dividing up space – is forced upon it. In the garage, in particular, a low extension of the east wall of the house slides under the open

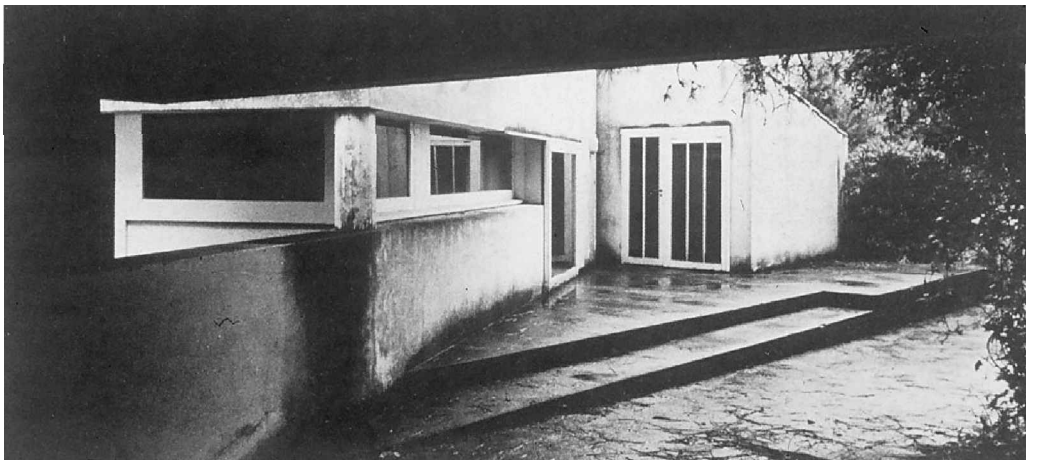

Figure 11. Alves Costa house: view.

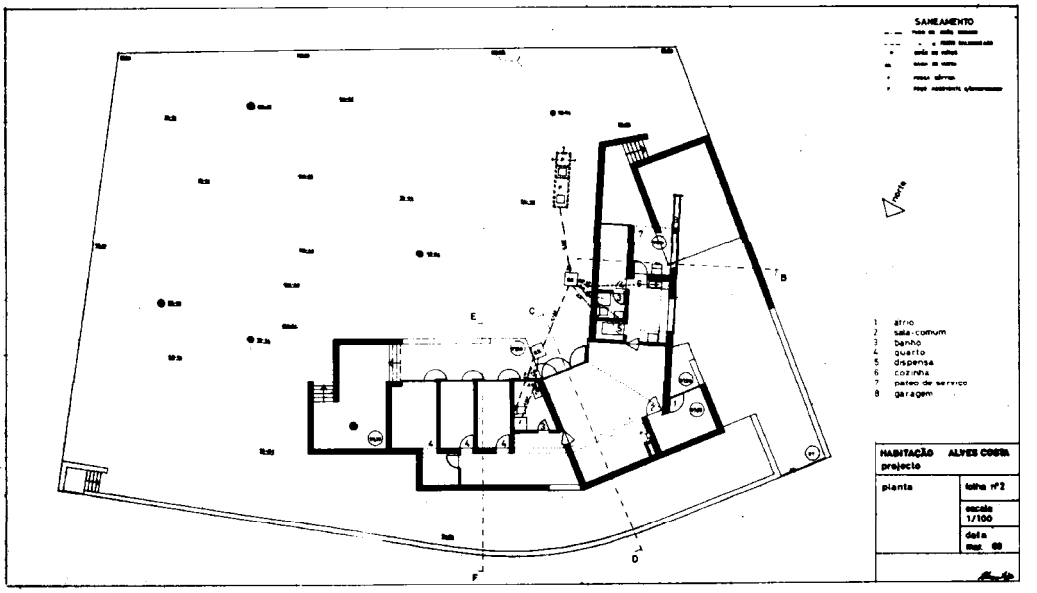

Figure 12. Alves Costa house, Molebo do Minho: plan.

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

hanging corner of the structure, while the wall extends into the figural domain of the house. Both walls, each a part of a figural fragment, disrupt the spatial integrity of the other fragment into which they penetrate. The two figures' conceptual identity flip-flops as these walls are understood in one instant as boundaries of space, in the next as overlapping dividers of space.

As with the pool project for Le a, the syntax of the Costa house is spatially porous. The conceptual transparency to the field of the site, the conceptual presence of that field in the midst of the very figures enclosing the dwelling space of the house, presents the house to us as intervention 'layered' into the site, an open sketch on the site – and thus the persistence in these projects of the archaeological metaphor.

The figurative expectations that the fragments set up – the expectation of closure that might have been absent in the more apparently modern and de Stijl syntax of the pool – in some respects amplifies the peculiarity of a conceptual intrusion of the site into the house, even in the absence of great rocks.

The percourse into the house adds another peculiarity. With the apparent conventionality of the ceramic tiled roofs and the bounding figures, the expectation that one might move through the building in a more conventional pattern also grows. Yet instead of, for instance, passage into a bounded room through a cut in the wall – a threshold, that is – at the front and back doors a person would move between the fragmentary figures as if they were a landscape of ruins. Here we begin to see a theme that will develop with more didactic clarity in the succeeding projects: the notion of how the subject is placed in contrast to the weight of latent conventions of architectural figures begins to emerge. The split between how human movement and perception are orchestrated exists in contrast to certain conventionally apparent orders of the architecture. Such a contrast begins to create an architectural corollary to the sketches we have described.

From the 1970s Siza's work begins to exhibit more explicit uses of type. In projects for housing we see a pattern of *siedlungen*-like town houses (the SAAL housing at Bou a, 1973–1977, and S o Victor, 1974–1977, both in Oporto; and housing in Caxinas, 1970–1972). In several other projects we begin to see the repeated use of a U-shaped courtyard scheme (the Pavilh o da Faculdade de Arquitectura, Oporto 1984; the Carlos Siza house, 1976–1978; and the Escola Superior de Educa o in Sétubal, 1986–1992).

Certainly, the concept of type is tricky, and has changed over time. But let us say, for instance, that the U that appears many times in Siza's work is a configuration of form that wakes in us a chain of associations with other like configurations. It tends to be nameable, because it is that very characteristic – that it belongs to a category – that constitutes the being of types. What I have referred to as syntax in the case of the pool does not constitute a nameable configuration. It is more in the nature of a strategy or pattern of form than a nameable entity as a type must be. Thus although Siza did use such syntactical patterns, he was able to avoid a certain aspect of that initial anxiety about pre-established languages. Flexible spatial

patterns appear to be more spontaneous and less burdened by history than types.

Yet because the type has a certain integrity as a conceptual category, it also implies a kind of closed autonomy; its stable and independent conceptual existence is a form of aloofness. And it is here that it becomes susceptible to the suspicions voiced by both Távora and Siza as well as Pessoa. It is not 'style', but it has something of style's formulaic nature. It is not language, but like language it seems public rather than intimate; like words, types seem to exist independent of us. Thus types were held in suspicion by Távora and his colleagues because they suggested the possibility of a reified formalization of architecture. And even though the vernacular may have been susceptible to a typological survey and analysis, what was held to be appealing in the vernacular was its qualities of flux, its qualities of historicity – its layering of past and present – that seemed a palimpsest of its becoming. We should note that, like the language we speak, type's impersonality is susceptible to that endless reformulation that allows all learned languages to acquire clandestine and utterly unique qualities added by each speaker. The resonance of a word is created by the unique world of each mind, and diction and grammar are shifting sands that reflect the biologically infinite permutation of speakers and history. But types also never lose their fundamental correlation to the historical things by which they steal away from the actual and specific into a realm of remote concepts and categories.

Types would seem to work against one complex and essential aspect of Siza's archaeological metaphor. The manner of layering so far described has suggested a simultaneous intimacy and estrangement between the layers of new project and site. The transparency and conceptual incompletion of the formal language of the project that allowed the 'intrusion' of the site's alienness into its midst is not obviously in the nature of the type. This is so because the type tends to be a closed or at least a finite world, which tends conceptually to close out or reorganize in its own manner what lies outside it. It may rest archaeologically on what precedes it, but it excludes those things through its own internal cohesion.

Siza uses a variety of strategies to 'attack' this integrity, enabling him to persist in constructing a relationship between site and intervention (as each project should be called in his work) that binds them without naturalizing their relationship. He also deploys certain strategies that metaphorically present the alienness of the type, as an inherited formal construct, in relation to a subject that cannot see itself reflected in that inherited order of architecture.

The Pavilion for the Faculty of Architecture is a U-shaped building, a species of the three-sided courtyard (Figs 13 and 14). It is set at one end of an enclosed garden. The garden is oblong, and its entry is on one of the long sides towards the far end from the pavilion. From that vantage point the building remains hidden by a large clump of bushes and small trees. The U-shaped form of the pavilion also is pinched, and tapers towards a large, old tree that contributes to its concealment. Although the project opens up in the direction of

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

Figure 13. Pavilion for the Oporto Faculty of Architecture: overall view.

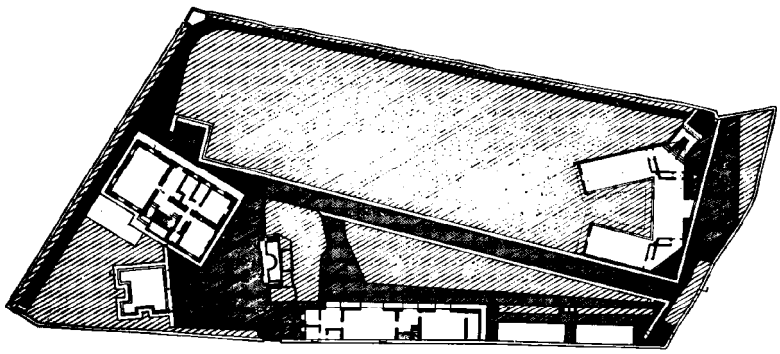

Figure 14. Pavilion for the Oporto Faculty of Architecture: site plan.

the garden's principal axis – that is, it faces or embraces the space of the garden in the direction of the patio area of the garden entrance – the path to the building and its entry follows another order of logic. Gravel paths lead along the two edges of the rectangular green in which the pavilion sits, and onto which it opens. To enter the building, it is necessary to skirt the whole garden edge or walk along the nearer side of the green and around the side and back of the pavilion. The entrance is a one-storey box shoved into the corner of the project furthest from the garden entrance. It is a circuitous route – a surprising location for the entrance, because the courtyard's configuration suggests a more formal solution to its approach and entrance. It has latent in it an axiality to which the garden is susceptible. Yet neither the approach nor the location of the entrance acknowledges such latent implications. Lest we forget that such implications exist, a small bay protrudes at the middle of the rear along this central axis – although this too, as it is deflected asymmetrically in its shape by its contact with a virtual bounding line around the building, only puts an equivocal emphasis on the axis.

The building has no base but for a thin black line of tile set flush in the white wall, nor is the ground in any way specially prepared for the building. It is significant that the building's figure, on one side and at the back, is caught up in the geometrical organization of the ground plane, but there is no sense of accommodation at the point of contact between building and ground; at the short end of its arms and along the side of the far arm the building sets right down into grass as if it were a model or play object set down upon a living-room carpet.

Perhaps habitual percourses around the edge of the garden drove the logic of a corner entry, now hidden and far from everything else in the garden. The inherited order of the object is treated with the kind of indifference that we might imagine in reinhabiting a ruin, or building the new city around it, as happens in Rome. New windows and doors are cut into an ancient edifice; new street patterns are laid out with no necessary regard for its original order or hierarchy or organization. It is as if the building were a piece of nature to be colonized. I exaggerate to make my point, because clearly each decision of dimension, shape and location has been considered. But the cumulative rhetorical effect seems to suggest these purposeful contrasts and superimposed counter-orders. The building is in many ways, like the pool at Le a, calibrated to its site, yet that calibration feels more like an exploration of how disparate things may be set together, existing simultaneously yet disturbing one another as little as possible. So here now is the found object of the pavilion; the grass might as well pass right under it. A promenade wends its way around the garden, momentarily leaving hidden this built visitation to the site, and there, in the intimacy of the garden corner, we enter the building. The entry provokes a local eruption in the fabric of the building, and an entirely localized figurative event occurs, as if marking the type with an event of human passage, as the stairs, ramps, or other such materials had occurred against the background of the columnar grid in Villa Stein or Villa Savoye. The type then

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

Figure 15. Carlos Siza house: view.

Figure 16. Escola Superior de Educaç o: view.

becomes a kind of ideal background for a human promenade, as occurred in Le Corbusier's work against the background of the space idealized by the columnar order.

In the Carlos Siza house (Fig. 15), the effect of this artifice of apparently aleatory relationships between different layers of order is more radically visible. This project too is a pinched U. Its central axis is marked by the living room's protruding bay window. Here too, entry is made casually from the corner, although in this case one enters into a sort of ambulatory that enfolds the courtyard of the house. In this house the 'indifference' to site is more radical. The house sits on a raised base. At a certain point along one edge of the site, the raised plot's perimeter wall folds sharply back into the house, passing through one leg of the U and conceptually cutting off three of the bedrooms from the rest of the house. Through the typological figure, an element connected with site passes in a formally disruptive fashion through its interior. Some rather extraordinary readings are possible as a consequence of this event. The three bedrooms seem to be simultaneously outside the house and within the garden precinct while still legibly within the figure of the U. The courtyard, which is properly an extension of the garden space into the heart of the house, is now outside the garden beyond the cutting diagonal of the garden wall.

A third event of an entirely different sort is superimposed upon the superimposition of site and type. An optical cone of vision is cut from the centre of the dining-room window, twisting the geometry of two columns; dimensioning along its trajectory the two opposite windows of the courtyard; aligning, along radials drawn from the cone's vertex, the dividing walls of three bedrooms; and popping out from the far side of the house a little bay window of sorts. Vision is inscribed as another uncoordinated order into the fabric of the building. The indifference of one order's logic to that of another suggests the independence of each. The rhetorically aleatory nature of their relationships suggests the foreignness of one to the other – that is, they constitute an archaeology of architecture, represented by typological formations or as in Le a, with

syntactical strategies, site, and the order of the subject. Each is intimately bound to the other, yet alien.

It is possible to trace these themes through many projects. In the Escola Superior de Educa o in Sétubal (Fig. 16), the three-sided courtyard opens to an undulating landscape that rolls into its arms. Distinct from the University of Virginia example that ought to come to mind, the project does not so much classically frame a landscape beyond its orderly tranquility as prompt this very landscape to wash right into its midst. The sequence from the parking lot or from the road running along the building's opposite flank leads to one of the legs of this project's open courtyard that is longer than the other. To signal its peculiar role within the typological context, as the initiation of an entry sequence along this leg back to the building's principal vestibule on centre at the base of the courtyard, the columns kneel – that is, incline – and the roof drops down as if in the gesture of a canopy. Ramps link the various elevations of ground brought together at this surprising moment. Within, a pattern of circulation that hints at the latent symmetry of the project unfolds as a series of unique events out of kilter with the 'proper' order of the plan, as if to highlight the contrast between promenade and purported order.

The oddity of the paths to the building, traversing along the rolling grassy landscape from one side, or through an apparently casual closed patio placed at an angle to the long leg of the building, makes this building seem to lie unexpectedly upon the ground. Paths unrelated to the logic of the building bring us to the 'wrong' part of the building to initiate our entry into it, and the internal pattern of circulation carries on to similar effect. We wander the building as vagabonds about the ruins of Rome.

Our trace and mark appear upon the body of Siza's buildings in other ways. Physiognomic figures in facade patterns lend a strangely human aspect of gesture to the body of many of Siza's buildings. In the totemic boxes of the Oporto Faculty of Architecture studio buildings (1986–1993) (Figs 17 and 18), different 'characters' are detectable, one with close-set eyes, one glancing west, and one, a Cyclops, looking ahead. The skylights of the easternmost studio seem like a creature from John Hejduk's architectural bestiary. Yet all these gestures are not so surprising; they, like the optical cut in the Carlos Siza house, inscribe within the body of the architecture the roving subject's perceptual experiences. These windows through which we see represent that act of seeing in a rhetorical gesture. Behind, a ramp rises along the face of the classroom and lecture hall building, and the gliding glance that peers out during the ramp's ascent is cut from the building's face – the slope of the roof suggests the ramp inside but is steeper, making the cut of the ribbon window, which follows the angle of the ramp, more palpable as a gash in the fa ade – that is, the cut is not 'explained' in relation to the building's sloped profile.

It bears noting that the gateway pairing at the west end entrance to the Faculty's campus is contradicted by the change in section that runs along the axis that they establish. Entrance is made through a flared vestibule stuck into the face of

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

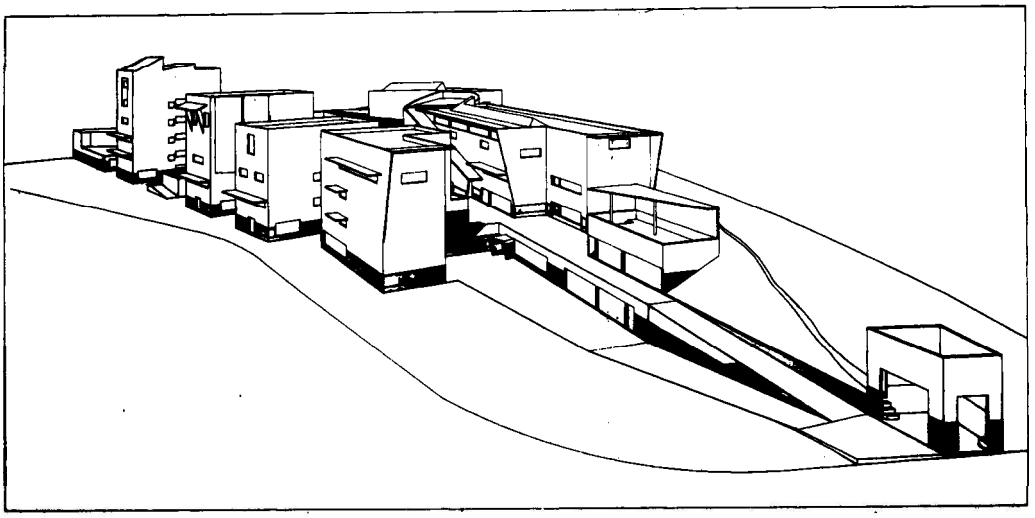

Figure 17. Oporto Faculty of Architecture: perspective.

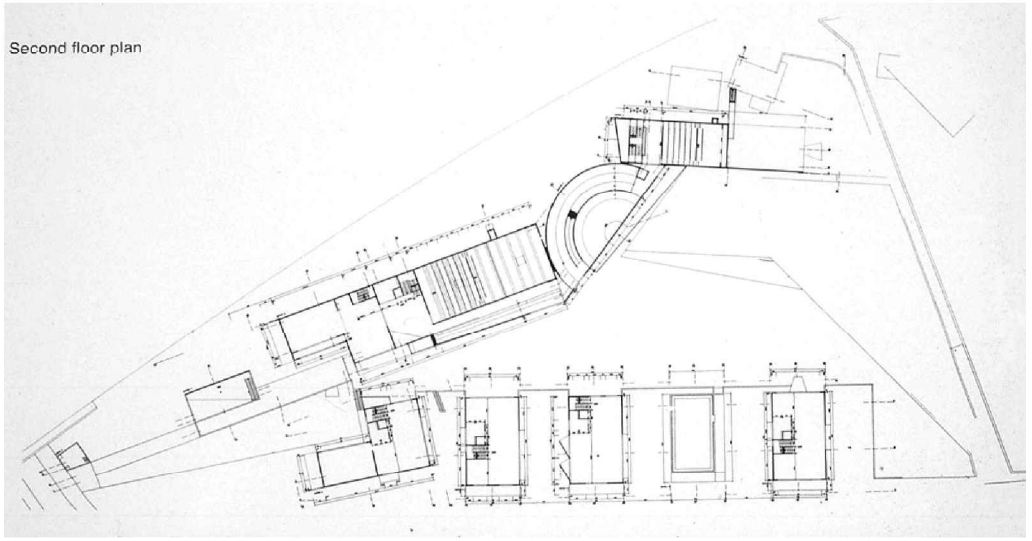

Figure 18. Oporto Faculty of Architecture: plan.

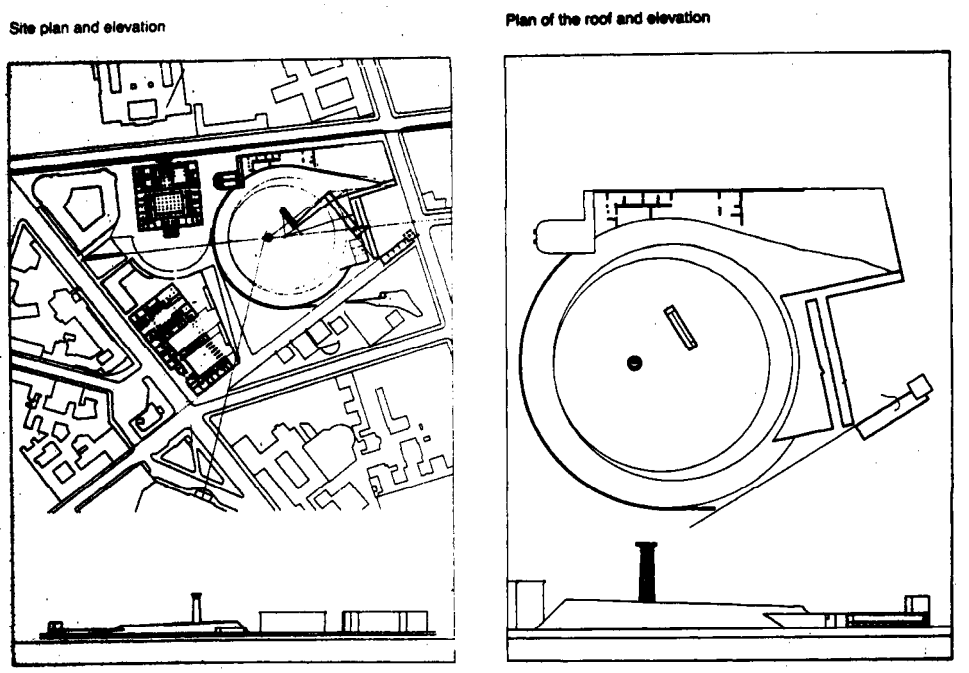

Figure 19. Monument to the Victims of the Gestapo, Berlin, 1983: plans and elevations.

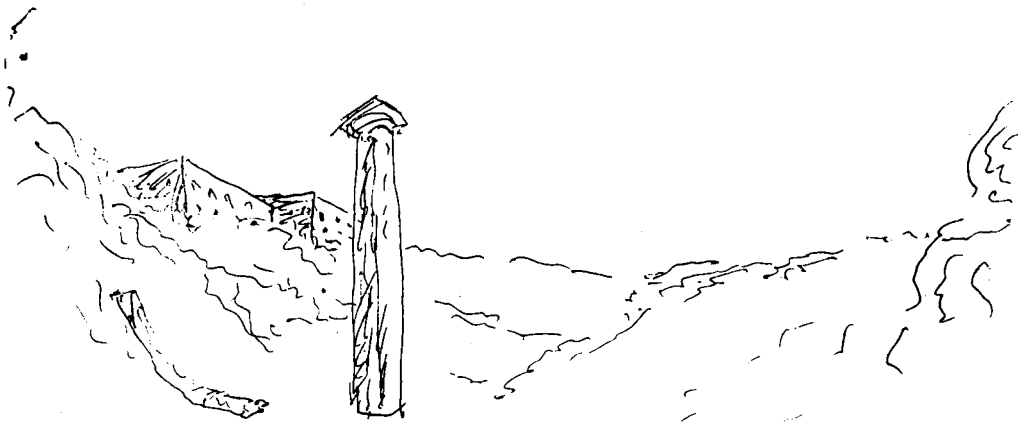

Figure 20. Monument to the Victims of the Gestapo: drawing.

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

this sectional change, or up a flight of crossing stairs and into the bottom of the ramp's figure. The markings of path about the building and the anthropomorphisms play similar roles, leaving a trail of marks on the building, suggesting an order of movement and perception overlaid onto the more stable order of forms. The project is set on a steeply inclined bank of the Douro River; the split in section is in fact related to a mosaic-like pattern of platforms into which the embankment is cut. Thus its disruptive role is, again, the superposition of the non-conforming patterns of site and architectural configuration.

One project summarizes particularly well the themes I have tried to highlight in Siza's work. The competition entry for the Monument to the Victims of the Gestapo, Berlin (Figs 19–21) is somewhat anomalous in a body of work that on no other occasion contains an explicit component of the past's classical vocabulary. Here, eccentrically located in the middle of a large round bowl of landscape, stands an inhabitable doric column. Inside, a spiral staircase nearly fills its shaft and runs up to its capital. The site plan shows the column at the intersection of important axes – one running down the centre of the street, another running nearly perpendicular to and from the centre of an adjacent building's monumental fa ade (this latter axis is slightly displaced by the corner of an interceding building). Where the two axes cross stands the column. Yet the column's location, in spite of this apparent logic derived from the larger order of the site, and following baroque notions of monumental urban arrangement, still stands strangely within the immediate surroundings of the monument. It stands within a great round built earthen landscape bowl, which is itself located within an outer ring of bermed land. Set down into this landscaped bowl, with its base and much of its shaft hidden from sight from without, the visible portion of the column floats disembodied, cut off from the ground. The axes, severed from the column by the ambiguous form created by the landscape bowl's exterior, fail to stay the column within that larger urban order from which they emanate.

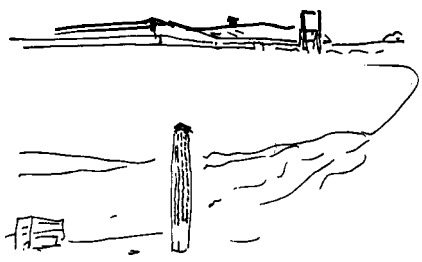

Figure 21. Monument to the Victims of the Gestapo: drawing.

The fragmented sequence from the small plaza – which the project makes through a group of oblong buildings at the end of the approach street – to the column within the bowl continues to disrupt one's understanding of the formal continuity of column and city. Through a series of small tube-like buildings (their entire cross-section is identical with the corridors they contain) one enters on axis with the column at the centre of the plaza's principal bounding fa ade, tacks back and forth once, into a slot-like corridor open to the sky, then, once again centred, enters a passage that protrudes into the slot at an acute angle and

ramps down a now-covered passage with a row of columns down its centre. Through one more corridor, now with ceiling sloped along its length following the slope of the bowl above, one arrives with another change of direction at a switchback ramp, enclosed but open to the sky. One finally rises up and out into the bowl – at a point off-centre and off the principal axis, although on a radius defined parallel to a diagonal street adopted in the arrangement by portions of the project's geometry. Here one turns right and, looking across the centre of the bowl, sees the column standing off-centre to the right.

The buildings analysed in plan all belong to one or another of two principal site geometries. However, I imagine that the effect of moving through the building is to distance one from the city through a certain disorientation, and to allow for a passage into the bowl-shaped park in which the column stands – stranded. Here this explicit emblem and trophy of a past architecture stands removed from its own 'natural' context – once a component within the syntax and body of a classical building and from its possible normative relationship to the city, established by the classically conceived urban axes, and perceptually undone by the bermed bowl in which it stands isolated in a garden. Under such conditions it is not unlike those nineteenth-century follies that were merely occasions within the more important order established by the narrative-like sequences of experiences in picturesque garden promenades: in those cases the dominant experience of the folly was not the reconstitution of the historical universe from which the folly came, but a more general and emotive nostalgia for a lost world. Follies, like collections in general, signify not the presence of the collected object so much as the absence of the world from which a relic has been saved.

What then is the connection between this project and the purpose to which it is dedicated – a memorial to the victims of the Gestapo? The column appears in the city like some found object of a world lost, its withheld relationship to the larger city only making more poignant the absent world of ordered relationships of which it is an emblem.

The following is possible: the column can be viewed as a relic of a classical past – possibly of that classical humanist past whose vision assumed an organic continuity between man and the world, where man remained linked to the world around him by virtue of the analogy he saw between himself and the forms of the world. His own subjectivity was not rootless among the world's autonomous objects and events, but shared in their order and could thus reform it. He imagined that the image he held of his own developing rationality could infuse the world, and if this rationality produced a humane order, then the world would be humane. Humanism could tame the obdurate alienness of the world by seeing 'the human subject . . . incorporated into the dance of forms filled by the world' and should not be betrayed by this world. The human disaster perpetrated by the Third Reich, driven by an image of history that negated the importance of the individual subject, divides us from such classical humanist hope. The column, once homologous to man and a great emblem of the humanist reciprocity between world

The Journal
of Architecture
Volume 1
Autumn 1996

and subject, is now only a nostalgic artefact to be collected but incapable of integration within the city that survived the disaster.

It is also possible that the column is full of more frightening associations derived from its historical association with power, and more particularly with the neoclassical affectations of the Third Reich. In this case, we would stumble upon this symbolic structure collected from the wreckage, defanged in its museological park. Both readings are possible, even in one person. As they oscillate, what remains constant is the remoteness of history, its irrecoverability. When the past is conceived of, it is called history, and at that moment under the glass jar of a name it is as remote as is the world from which the items in a collection have been drawn.

The column is a ruin collected from a lost epoch. The pieces of architecture by which we are brought to it, guided in their layout by the geometry of the surrounding urban site, still gather as if merely part of a series of abutted fragments. By passing through them, we happen upon this lone column. The column, sited by an elaboration of the existing site's order, remains unjoined and alien in the city's midst. Such might be a parable of the memory of those victims within present-day Berlin.

Siza's architecture emerged from an epoch that sought to recover from the betrayals of language and the misuse of history. The sense of language's remoteness, the uncertainty of our own relationship to inherited forms and even to the historical soil on which we build is codified in an architecture that joins subject, land and language, without suggesting that there is anything natural about such a grouping.

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3. Wilfred Wang (ed), *Álvaro Siza: Figures and Configurations, Buildings and Projects 1986–1988* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), n.p. Poem cited from *Fernando Pessoa: Selected Poems* (Chicago, Swallow Press, 1971), translated by Edwin Honig.
4. Harold Rosenberg, 'The concept of action painting' in *Artwork and Packages* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 213.
5. The historical thread of my argument here draws largely upon the article by Gomes, 'Quatre batailles en faveur d'une architecture portuguaise,' pp. 30–62.
6. *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* (Lisbon, Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, 1961). Quotes are from the unnumbered pages of the Introduction. The translations are my own.
7. Gomes, 'Quatre batailles en faveur d'une architecture portuguaise', p. 42.
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9. From Robin Middleton's introduction to Nicolas LeCamus de Mezieres, *The Genius of*

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10. *Álvaro Siza Esquissos de Viagem/Travel Sketches* (Oporto, Portugal, Documentos de Arquitectura, 1988), series edited by Eduardo Souto Moura *et al*.
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