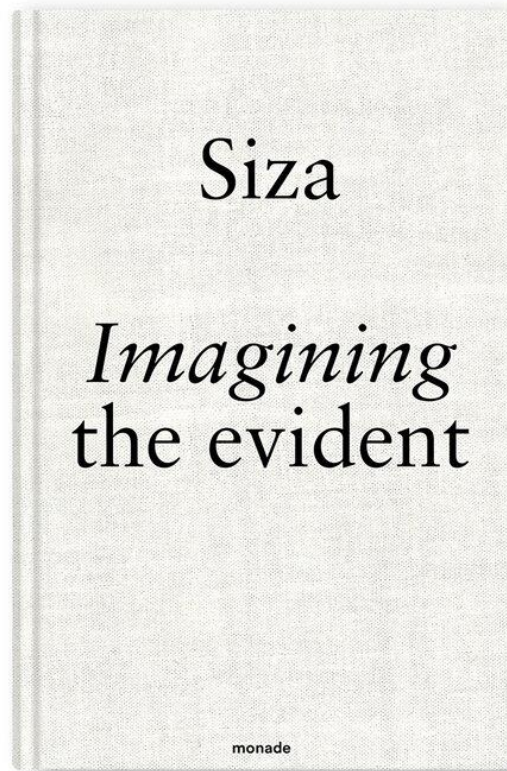


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by Alvaro Siza

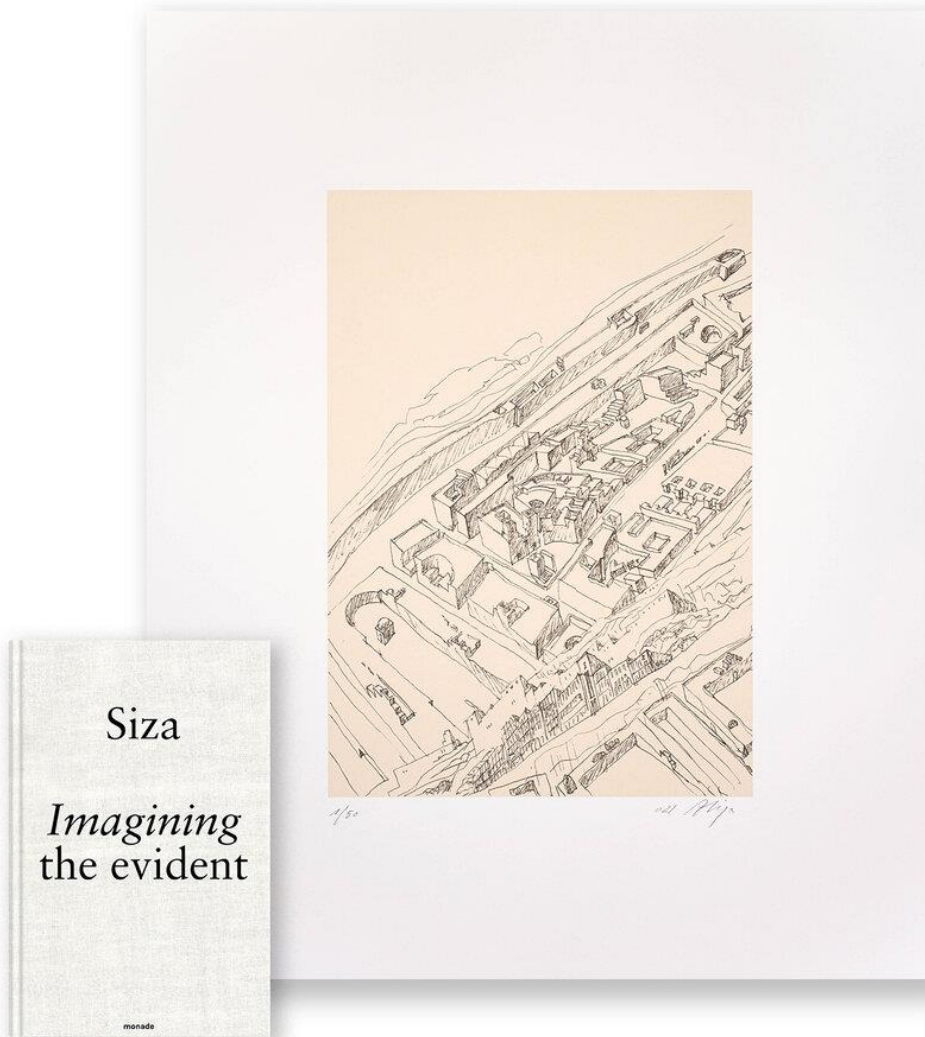
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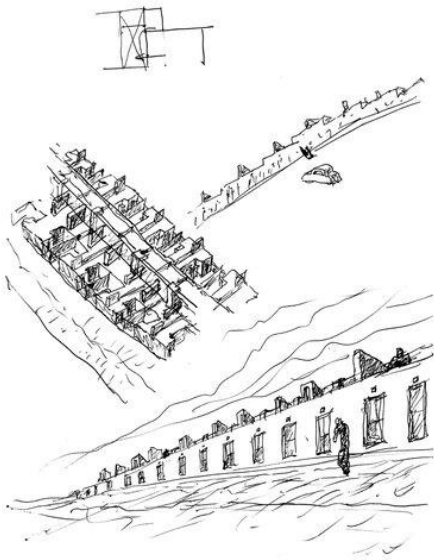
Vittorio Gregotti

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Daniela Sá

“I would like to try to expose my vision of architecture through the projects I have accomplished, or simply imagined, as my thoughts are cemented therein.”

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Studies on the assemblage of the houses
Evora expansion plan, Quinta da Malagueira, 1977

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Evora – Malagueira

In today's architecture and cities, the haste to get everything finished quickly never ceases to amaze me. This tension to find a definitive solution prevents any correspondence between the different scales, between the urban fabric and monuments, between the open space and buildings. The priority in today's interventions, however small and fragmentary they may be, is the final image: this explains why interpenetration of the various parts of the city is so difficult.

In Evora, the period of prolonged, endless study and rumination enabled me to avoid applying a single pre-established principle. However, over the last twenty years the intervention has run the risk of being abruptly halted, due to an idea that it has no structure and is dispersive; thus, unable to ensure urbanity.

The initial option of the project was to try to delimit the territory with disseminated interventions, so that time and the ability to execute the works would then complete the design by occupying the empty spaces. The possibility of continued accompaniment of the plan's evolution was crucial for the unity of the urban fabric. In former times, at least up to the turn of this century, it was common for one architect to accompany the development of an entire city. This condition is still essential today, so that a proper balance is ensured.

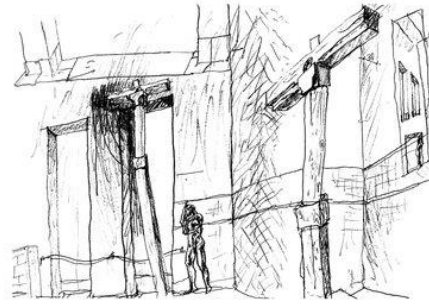
Interpretations of the plan for Malagueira are not unison: they range from positive comments, highlighting the innovative interventions, to complaints regarding the long-winded agony of the process and hence stating the absence of a future. In the period immediately after the revolution of 25 April 1974, a very large area outside the walls of the city

“To begin with the obsession of originality is an unrefined and rudimentary process.”

When I began to study the program, I quickly realised the enormous scope of this division in the secular continuity of tradition. However, I do not think this has any kind of parallel in the real life of the Church, in the relationship between the Church and society. Therefore, and despite the necessary adaptations, I tried to preserve continuity within tradition. Thus, looking closely at the character of this church, its considerably conservative design is quite apparent. This intention clearly emerges from the layout of the floor plan, which effectively expresses a rigid axiality. Contextually, the verticality of the interior is very salient. In truth, although the nave is a square section, the intercourse between certain features, such as the two openings behind the altar, creates a sense of elevation. A number of discussions reinforced this idea of canonical spatiality continuity. Moreover, the guidance of the theologians was constant and decisive. So, for example, the baptistery, initially placed beside the altar, was later moved to be closer to the entrance, to indicate the presence of the congregation. Additionally, since the procession of celebrants has to move along the longitudinal axis of the church, it was necessary to have a door on the sloped curved wall. The celebration ritual clearly requires specific options in the design of space and in the organization of walkways.

Along some of the interior walls I used *azulejo*, tiles. A sturdy skirting was necessary to obviate problems and for maintenance purposes. I initially thought of wood cladding, but I quickly realized that this would not be the most suitable option as it would have annulled the verticality of the wall, and above all because the reflection of the light would have been inadequate. I then thought of *azulejo* which, since they are handmade, retain a slightly irregular surface. This allows

for particular reflections of light, while the joints that are left empty express a sensitive presence. Continuity of the plaster and the unity of colour are broken by this presence and these reflections. At the initial stage, the *azulejos* lined the entire church; later, owing to the fact that the curved wall needed to reach the level of the ground and the problematic solution of their contact with the doors, the use of tiles was restricted.



One of the aims that could not be waived was ensuring that the details were not so apparent as to compete with the structure of the space. I worked intensely on the relationship, encounter and transition of the materials.

The function of *azulejo* is to solve the problem of continuity and to attenuate the existing gaps. The way in

“My main concern when designing, let us say a chair, is that it should look like a chair. That is the main issue. Nowadays, many chairs have been designed to look like something else. The need for originality and difference almost always leads to an abandonment of the essence of a given object.”

Autobiographical Note

He was born in Matosinhos in 1933.

He became an architect, instead of a sculptor not to contradict his father.

He initiated his professional activity while at the School of Architecture, lacking the patience to focus solely on his academic studies.

In the meantime, he also worked with the architect Fernando Távora, and thus continued his studies.

He was engaged in a collective project of the time: not being traditionalist and not ignoring his roots.

Overall, his initial interventions received negative criticism, and were referred to as being strange or even too modern (which astounded him).

He began his teaching activity at the *Escola de Belas-Artes* of Porto.

He worked for Residents' Associations following the Revolution of 25 April, and experienced an intense participatory process. It was stimulating, creative and rapidly halted.

He accepted invitations from other countries. His initial works in Berlin were met with disappointment, as they did not match expectations (criticised for lacking the expected delicacy of detail, for their meagre inspiration).

He received several international awards, resulting in invitations to work in Portugal, followed by criticism and being classified as "estrangeirado"TM.

He is frequently considered to be slow and inergetic, which is, in fact, not untrue.

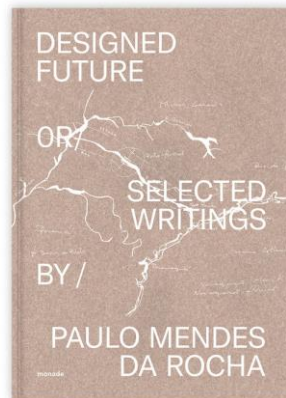
He is called upon to participate in juries, competitions, receptions, conferences, exhibitions and for work opportunities.



Selfportrait
1982

TM Term used to refer to someone who admires and cultivates what is foreign.

Suggested Books

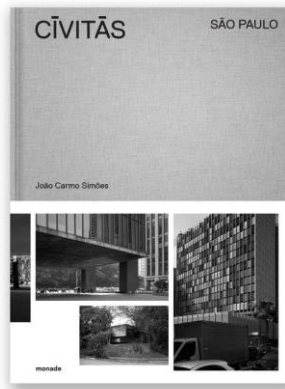


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Paulo Mendes da Rocha (b. 1928).

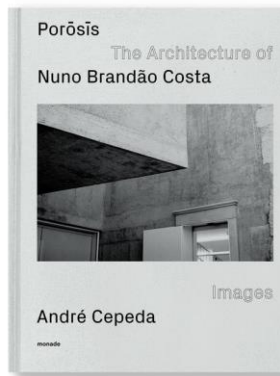
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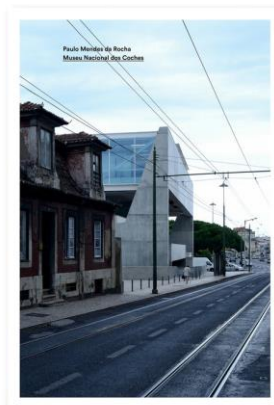
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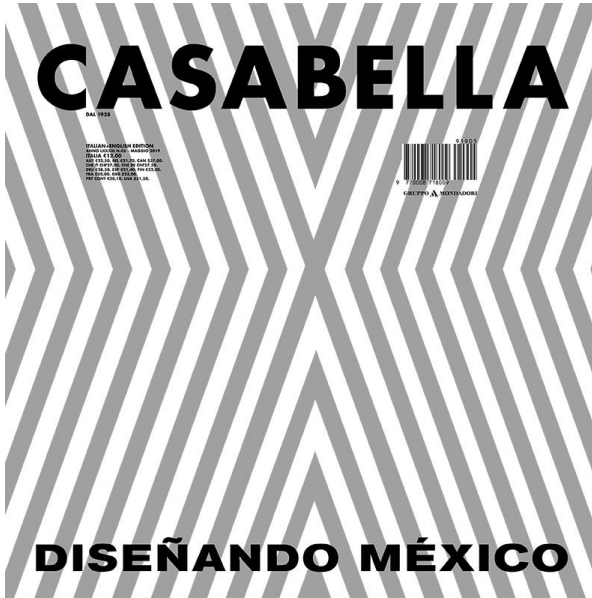
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Paulo Mendes da Rocha / Museu Nacional dos Coches

This book presents the first great work in Europe by the Brazilian architect. Built on the famous site where the Portuguese set sail to travel overseas, the Museum promises to stimulate thought on the relationship between the great city and its buildings, Europe and America, and the very idea of being modern.

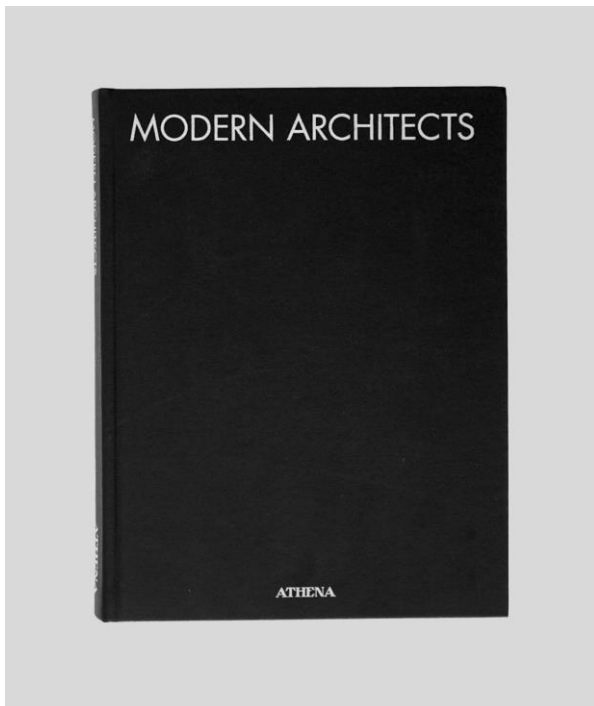
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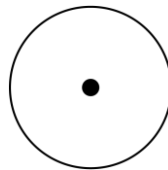


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