



Tchoban Foundation
Museum for
Architectural Drawing

Press release

Berlin 18.1.2019

SIZA – UNSEEN & UNKNOWN

**Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing, Berlin
Christinenstr. 18a, 10119 Berlin**

Exhibition opening: 20th February, 2019 at 7p.m.

Press guided tour: 20th February 2019 at 6p.m.

Exhibition dates: 21st February, 2019 – 26th May, 2019

Opening times: Mon. – Fri. 2 – 7p.m., Sat. – Sun. 1 – 5p.m.

Ticket: 5 Euros, reduction: 3 Euros

Conversation: “Alvaro Siza and the Bauhaus Legacy”

**between Álvaro Siza, Claudia Perren, Director of the Bauhaus Foundation, Dessau,
and Sergei Tchoban, Founder of the Tchoban Foundation, Berlin, introduction by
António Choupina, Architect and curator, moderated by Matthias Sauerbruch,
Director of the Architecture Section, Akademie der Künste, Berlin**

20th February 2019 at 4pm

ANCB The Aedes Metropolitan Laboratory, Christinenstr. 18-19, 10119 Berlin

Registration: reply@ancb.de

Álvaro Siza was born in 1933, on the same year that the *Bauhaus* closed its doors. He is perhaps the last living modernist or, at the very least, the most significant voice to carry out the unfinished modernist project all the way into the 21st century.

Siza: Unseen and Unknown showcases this continuity through 100 sketches, as well as its unavoidable contradictions. These drawings are from his most personal archive, in addition



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to small collections of close friends and family. Hence, they focus not only on the professional legacy but also on the familial one, where Maria Antónia Siza (1940-1973) takes centre stage. His wife will draw him, he will draw her and the loving embrace of the human body will be transversal to architecture, art, life. **[image 1]**

Quite fittingly, Juhani Pallasmaa told Álvaro Siza last year that “architecture is such an impure and complex thing, that speaking about it is like speaking about the theory of life...”. In many ways, the Bernini folds of Maria Antónia’s cloths and hair develop in Siza’s own ink lines and this anthropomorphic research goes on long after her death, at just thirty-two years old. Those bodies will grow increasingly more abstract, like the *Venus de Milo*, losing its arms and becoming something more – where the Hellenic sacred feminine is ever-present. **[image 6]**

Those limbs multiply and turn back into architecture and geometry in the work of their son, Álvaro Leite Siza (1962). Father and son labour independently on related themes, themes of mythology and religion **[image 9]**, intertwining figures that reveal the importance of family. The future is now in the hands of a grandson, Henrique Siza (1992) and his architectural studies in Berlin. Looming in the city are the silhouettes of the masters **[image 10]** that became the backdrop of Álvaro Siza’s first international proposals (1976-90), namely the *Schlesisches Tor Residential Complex* and the *Kulturforum*.

The “*Bonjour Tristesse*”, as it was nicknamed, revisits Berlinesque modernity through the curved corners of Poelzig's *S. Adam Department Store* or Mendelsohn's *Mossehaus*, while the Kulturforum, not far from the ashes of an ever-changing *Potsdamer Platz*, attempts to articulate the pieces of Scharoun and Mies like a glorious puzzle. **[image 2]** Nowadays, beyond the *Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA)*, the *Kulturforum* has an empty core while Berlin is filled with glass buildings – *Glas* being the pen-name of Bruno Taut. Siza’s epitaph for Berlin is unexpectedly truer in the end: “The Taut City”.



Trapped by an unwanted title as ‘the architect of participation’ – after the Portuguese Carnation Revolution (1974) – Álvaro Siza will be invited to redevelop the Schilderswijk-West district (1983-93) in The Hague [image 3], and to design the new Faculty of Architecture (1984-96) in Porto. [image 4] The familial camaraderie of peers and collaborative interactions of students, combined with the white rendering of the Neues Bauen, are evocative of the Bauhausian carefree avant-garde. The School of Porto, as it is now known, proves that the last true modernist is also the ultimate mannerist, reconnecting the complexity of modern vocabularies with classical canons.

Continuity, contradiction and hybridisation play with his subconscious. The unknown Sports Complex for the 1997 *Universiade* in Palermo approaches the materiality of amphitheatres, coliseums and bullfighting arenas – a vastly underrated urban redevelopment, like many of Siza’s international interventions. [image 5] Another example would be his return to the Netherlands in 2002. Reclaiming the skyline of Rotterdam’s harbour, a city in constant expansion and reinvention, he suggests twin-towers yet only one was erected. [image 7]

The *New Orleans Tower* was clad in stone, unlike the curtain-wall that one normally associates with skyscrapers or the iconic Gropius façade in Dessau. It seems serendipitous that one would celebrate the Bauhaus centennial less than a year after Álvaro Siza inaugurated his *Chinese Design Museum* clad in stone, unlike the curtain-wall that one normally associates with skyscrapers or the iconic Gropius (2012-18), in Hangzhou, built around a permanent *Bauhaus* collection. [image 8] Starting that museum in the same year that he fractured his right arm, it is an unwavering testament to his philosophical cornerstone – hand drawings.

Over the course of several meetings, we became increasingly interested in a group of folders labelled as ‘Unidentified Projects’. We managed to identify some of them. Others are still just loose ideas, designs that never were but could have been. A few sneaked their way into



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the final selection, but this was never destined to be a monographic exhibition on Siza and his family – impossible due to the sheer scale of that enterprise and because its main character is still active, in continuous production. Nonetheless, a totalising methodology is sublimated in the works, a legacy which is perfectly summed up by Longfellow's poem *The Builders*: 'architects of Fate that work the walls of Time with great care, even the unseen parts, for the Gods see everywhere'.

The exhibition is curated by architect António Choupina (Álvaro Siza's *Commissaire d'Expositions*) together with Dr. h. c. Kristin Feireiss (Aedes Architecture Forum).

Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing

Founded in 2009 by the passionate draftsman and collector of architectural drawings, Sergei Tchoban, the Tchoban Foundation with its substantial collection serves as a place of research into the history and nature of the architectural drawing. An extensive on-site library focussing on the field is open to experts and interested visitors alike. The overall aim of the foundation, in this digital age, is to bring the fantastic and emotionally charged worlds of architectural drawing closer to a wider public through exhibitions.

This exhibition is under the patronage of João Mira Gomes, ambassador of Portugal in Germany

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In the case of publication, we kindly request a proof copy.



Images



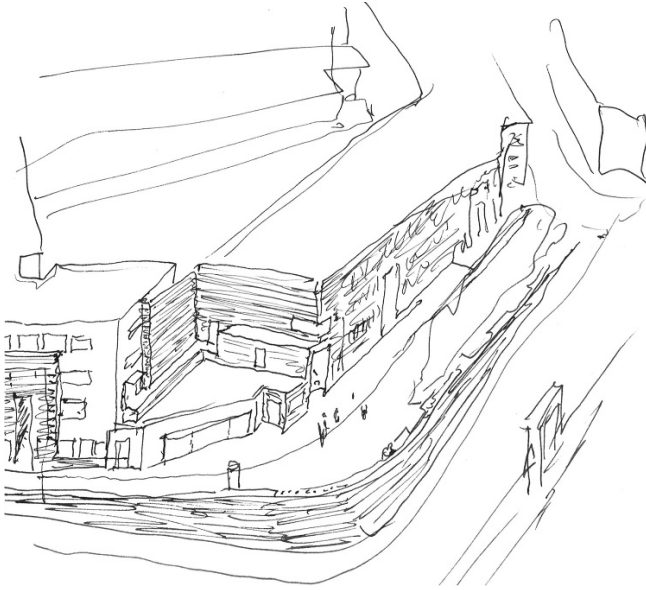
1 – Portrait of Álvaro Siza, drawn by his wife: Maria Antónia Siza
Ca. 1970-73
India ink on paper (30 × 21 cm)



2 – IBA Competitions : Schlesisches Tor and Kulturforum, Berlin
Perspectives of the “Bonjour Tristesse” and Potsdamerstraße
1983
Pen on paper (30 × 21 cm)



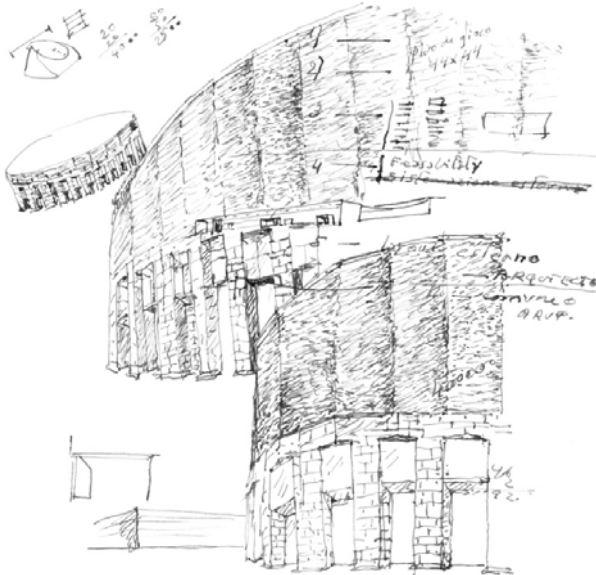
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3 – De Punkt en De Komma Housing Estate, The Hague
Bird's-eye view of the street corner with Haagse Portiek
1986
Pen on paper (30 x 21 cm)



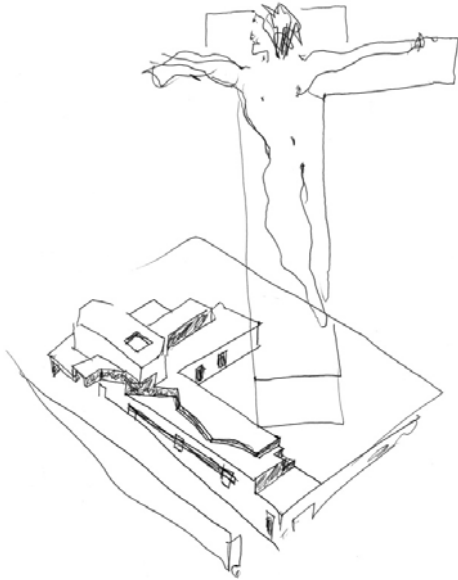
4 – Faculty of Architecture, University of Porto
Landscape panorama from the River Douro
1987
Pen on paper (30 x 21 cm)



5 – Universiade '97 Sports Complex, Palermo
Façade masonry detailing
1994
Pen on paper (30 x 20 cm)



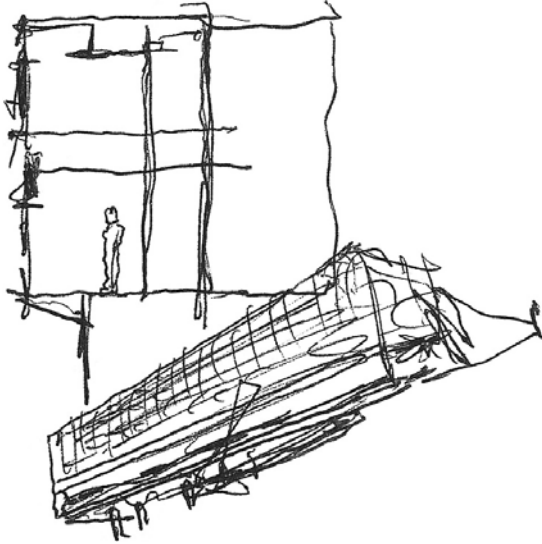
6 – Church of Santa Maria del Rosario, Rome
Window view from the parochial centre
1999
Pen on paper (30 x 21 cm)



7 – House in Francelos, designed by Álvaro Siza's son: Álvaro Leite Siza
Axonometric cross-like concept
2000
Pen on paper (30 x 20 cm)



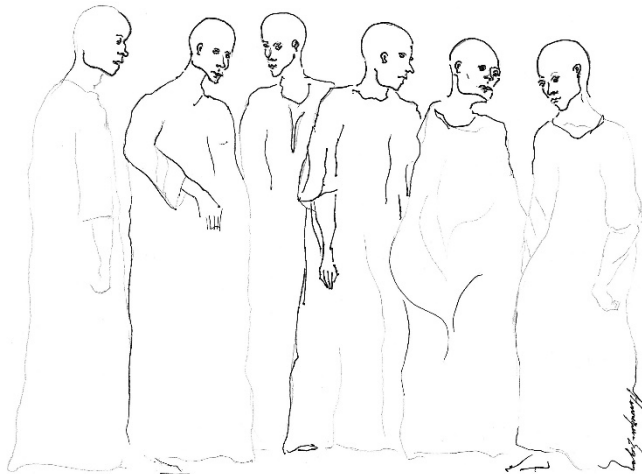
8 – New Orleans Twin-Towers, Rotterdam
Perspective of the harbour towers
2003
Pen on paper (30 x 20 cm)



8 – China Museum of Design and Bauhaus Collection, Hangzhou
Section and axonometric study

2014

Pen on paper (21 x 15 cm)



10 – Drawing by Álvaro Siza's grandson: Henrique Siza

Unknown 2018

Pen and pencil on paper (21 x 30 cm)

All images are courtesy of the Álvaro Siza Archive, Porto.