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Architect Álvaro Siza Vieira's Self-Portraits

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ABSTRACT

The Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza Vieira has an intense activity as a draughtsperson, allowing sensitive experience and creative thinking to be developed. Among the architectural sketches, we find his self-portrait drawings. From the face to the body, from the front or in profile (standing, sitting or lying down), Siza Vieira observes and draws himself into everyday life, with the organic fluidity of the line and the simplicity as a criterion and as an attribute. Here, the analysis of self-portrait drawings is organised in a paired matrix of physical parameters and cultural factors, with an approach to technical, artistic and compositional aspects of visual expression: i) trace quality; ii) pose and horizon line; iii) anatomy-physiognomy in the face proportion, iv) representation of flesh, skin and hair; v) resemblance-appearance; vi) facial and emotional expression; vii) the body as landscape; viii) the body as a character; ix) identity and specular duplication; and x) intersections between optical-haptic and gaze-gesture.

INTRODUCTION

Architect Álvaro Siza Vieira (Matosinhos, 1933), who graduated from the Oporto School of Fine Arts (1949-1955), is one of the most significant representatives of contemporary Portuguese architecture. With a vast body of work designed, built and recognised, Siza Vieira also extended his activity to teaching, lecturing at the University of Oporto and as a guest at various foreign institutions, from Harvard to Pennsylvania, Lausanne to Bogotá (Nicolin, 1998).

His written reflections and regular participation in conferences and seminars broaden the cultural context of his works and projects. A member of various academies and professional institutes, he has won several national and international awards, including the Vitruvius Prize, the Hyatt Foundation Pritzker Prize and the Golden Lion at the Venice Architecture Biennale (Cruz, 2017).

“Throughout his career, Siza has been questioning architecture from both inside and outside the discipline” (Grande & Muro, 2019). In this simultaneity, drawing has been an engine of creativity that allows for adjustments and novelties in the concrete resolution of architectural problems. From the small to the large scale, from the Leça Tea House to the Reconstruction of Chiado, architect Siza Vieira is seduced by the links between art and architecture, synchronised in the composition between volume, space, light and function.

For Jacinto Rodrigues, Siza's main contribution is his ‘method’, which can be explained by three essential characteristics: i) the process of complex morphogenesis, ii) design as plastic and technical-operative research, iii) the existential sense of place (Rodrigues, 1992). His work converges towards an architectural culture based on the social dimension, technical rationality and the expressiveness of the sensible, with direct influences from

the “Oporto School”, organised around personalities such as Carlos Ramos and Fernando Távora, from whom he inherited the responsibility and urgency of drawing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Architect Álvaro Siza and the Expression of Simplicity in Drawing

In Siza Vieira, drawing as thought and action are characteristics of his position and technical, artistic and cultural intervention within the broad scope of architecture, where body, place and heritage intersect. Valdemar Cruz, in the book “Retratos de Siza” [Portraits of Siza] (2017), summarises his work: ““The Architect of Silence” [...] summarises the essence of what I think of Álvaro Siza Vieira and the way [...] I see his architecture. In a society so massacred by the noise of all kinds, I sense in Álvaro Siza's work a rare ability to build seductive spaces of silence. From that point of view, it's reassuring. Even when it disturbs through its simplicity” (Cruz, 2017).

Through the work and the space, simplicity as a criterion and an attribute also extends to drawing. In addition to the quality and graphic identity of his energetic open-line trace, Siza's drawing is a methodology for the structural understanding that drawing makes possible: “As if the world itself, before becoming thickness, shadow/light, volume, perspective, the density of things, had the strict simplicity of a drawing. And as if that initial drawing that the world must have had, as if that structural definition of what it was before it was clothed in volume and thickness, could be restored. Or discovered” (Almeida, n.d.).

For Siza, restoring simplicity through drawing is, in addition to a functional act, a means of observation, derivation and desire. In this duplicity, drawings “from the natural” and operative drawings to conceive and support the architectural project intersect. We identify Álvaro

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Siza's drawings and sketches by their gestural, by the overlapping of hypotheses, by angels that fly over (Fleck, 1994), by diagonals that extend perspectives and by the fluidity that speeds up the gaze. A simplicity that seeks visual clarity is "A kind of evidence of things, a sense of the essential, of the economic in its broadest sense" (Almeida, n.d.). In an interview with ArchiNews (2016), the architect refers to this extraction of clarity in the fog with which the project is unleashed: "ARCHI - What do you consider to be the most valuable tools for provoking the senses? The organisation/ management of spaces? The pathways? The materials? The light? The colour? Does everything lead to harmony and proportion? AS - There's always a haze to it all. It's all foggy at first. The project's development is to remove the fog and make reality emerge clearly" (Alho, 2016).

Alongside the operative and architectural drawings that help to clear the dust of this diffuse nebula, there are drawings of everyday observation as exhaustive exercises in visual exploration and the development of sensitive experiences. "From the search for intelligence (the art of designing) to the desire for intelligence (the art of drawing)" (Belém, 2012) are graphic records with various encounters, mutual influences and labyrinthine transfers. For example, travelling drawings are wrapped up in this experience of knowledge, the plasticity of observation and recording of culture, geometry and geography: "At the same time, we lose a world of small comforts and the perverse charms of routine. (...) For me, I like to sacrifice a lot, to see only what immediately attracts me, to wander at random, without a map and with an absurd sense of discoverer. (...) Suddenly, the pencil or the bic ballpoint begins to fix images, faces in the foreground, blurred outlines or luminous details, the hands that draw them. (...) In an interval of true Travelling the eyes, and through them the mind, gain unsuspected capacity. We apprehend excessively; what we have learnt reappears, dissolved in the lines we then draw" (Siza, 2019a).

Amongst his everyday drawings, travelling and architectural sketches, self-portraits are a graphic extension of his work as a draughtsperson. Inserted in the interstices of his drawings, it is the set of these self-portraits, drawn over the years by the architect Álvaro Siza, that this text takes as a case study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Set of Self-Portraits: Selection, Criteria and Methodology

Portraiture is a recurring genre in Siza Vieira, treated as a practice and pleasure in drawing. It alternates from autonomous drawings of portraits and bodies to marginal annotations of faces interspersed between other drawings. It is known that portrait drawing began early for the architect. He writes: "under the guidance and on the lap of an uncle who didn't know how to draw. After practising on closed and open boxes, horses in outline (...), I oriented my production towards portraits: family and neighbours available" (Siza, 2019a). This idea of 'portrait and familiarity', which became present over the years, seems to be at the root of what later triggered the

self-portraits that appeared.

They are drawings of self-observation, projected reflection and self-representation, where body parts such as hands and feet are added to the face. The hands often appear, with a scribe between the fingers, to emphasise the exercise of the draughtsperson: "I Siza I am drawing". Mediated by the mirror, the drawing signals the characteristic features from which the simultaneous expression of recognition-strangeness emerges.

The analysis of the drawings is organised in a paired matrix of physical parameters and cultural factors. The matrix discusses technical, artistic and compositional aspects of visual expression: i) quality of line; ii) pose and horizon line; iii) anatomy-physiognomy in proportion to the face; iv) representation of flesh, skin and hair; v) likeness-presence; vi) facial and emotional expression; vii) the body as landscape; viii) the body as a character; ix) identity and specular duplication; and x) intersections between optic-haptic and gaze-gesture.

Focussing on the self-observation drawings, this analysis excludes other faces, people, characters and figures scattered throughout the architectural drawings. Also not included are portraits of family members, friends and acquaintances, frequently appearing in their notebooks. However, we would like to emphasise the importance of these portraits, which greatly stimulated the portraitist's activity and eventually allowed him to prolong his self-representation by recording the other person's face.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Architect's Self-Portrait and Self-Observation

Self-portraits are a personal availability for self-observation that can, through drawing, become a practice of visual recognition through a model that is immediately available but requires a mediated and reflected visualisation. In Siza Vieira, the self-portrait appears among the drawings of everyday life, depicting himself either from the front or in profile and two general frameworks: the close-up face and the face accompanied by the body (standing, sitting or lying down).

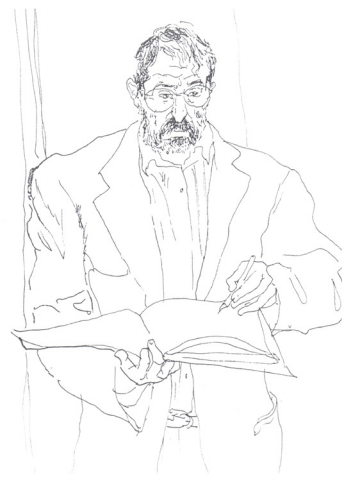


Figure 1: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Standing self-portrait, n.d
Source: Santos (1993)



Figure 2: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait, n.d
Source: Sorvedouro (2017)

Siza draws himself with various recognisable features. The glasses, ears, nose and beard take on geometric and volumetric significance. The glasses are thin and rounded: they frame the eyes. The ears are relevant, and the nose is prominent and occupies space. The beard and moustache are dense and fill almost half the face, using lines that recreate the fur's texture and add to the hair's expression. The density clears up the expression of the mouth and the lines of the lips, and sometimes the robustness of the beard makes the jaw and neck disappear, which lengthens the facial proportion.

These self-portraits are almost caricatures of some individual features. They escape the canon and don't seek ideal schemes of proportion or stability of symmetry, which is why the anatomy drawing is not separated from the physiognomy drawing. Angles, volume, geometry and the movement of surface anatomy come together in the same line. In the self-portrait, "the artist ceases to be a mere spectator and becomes both judge and defendant (...) If, in the portrait, we try to know what we see, in the self-portrait we not only draw what we see and know but also what we know without seeing" (Ramos, 2010).



Figure 3: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait in Cape Verde, n.d.
Source: Machabert & Beaudouin (2009)

With these configurations, between memory and cross-observation, what mask or character is present in Siza's self-portraits? What kind of fiction or argument? What levels of exposure and privacy are premeditated, and what is the consequence of "taking from the natural"? Is there a pose or just a position? What expressions are present in the architect's self-portraits?



Figure 4: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait sitting on a sofa, n.d.
Source: Rodrigues (1992)

From the combination of the expression of the eyes and the mouth comes the expression of the face. In a facial analysis of emotion and the psychological meanings of the face (character, temperament, personality), Siza appears neither sad, nor upset, nor depressed, much less proud. The drawing of the gaze sometimes has an expression of suspicion or surprise. Siza often seems stunned or amazed by the reflection that looks back at him, in the sense of the "seeing-oneself-seen-without-being-seen" that Derrida tells us about in *Memories of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (1993).



Figure 5: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait at 17 years old, 1950
Source: Álvaro Siza Documentation Centre (n.d.)

When he draws standing up holding the sketchbook, his eyes are wide with a frown, and there is an atmosphere of introspection and attention on the model (Figure 1 and 2). We see the same focus in the self-portrait with the hat (Figure 3), in which he seems immersed in the act of drawing. Similar concentration can also be seen when he draws from the front, sitting on the sofa (Figure 4). In the self-portrait at 17, we can see the absorption and visual fixation in the expression and curiosity of the eyes (Figure 5). There are no smiles in either of them. The zygomatic muscles don't move, the mouth is closed, and the facial expression emphasises concentration.



Figure 6: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait with raised finger, n.d.
Source: Siza & Castanheira (2009)

In the self-portrait of the raised finger (Figure 6), the gaze in profile has a direction and focus yet seems dematerialised. But in the self-portrait with the cigarette in his mouth (Figure 7), his eyes are closed in quiet depth. His face remains distant from the cigarette in his hand 'Chez Soutinho' (Figure 8), in which the seated and elevated position increases the floating sensation. But in the self-portrait for Kristin (Figure 9), where he is sitting in profile with his arm outstretched, the architect Siza regains his concentration and returns to his body.



Figure 7: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait with a cigarette in mouth, n.d.
Source: D.Fernandinbo (2007)

In the different self-portraits, the expression of the line has the fluidity, spontaneity, organic movement and visual synthesis of his architectural drawing. The evidence of the flesh of the face is a technical quality of the architect, who manages to manipulate the simplicity of the thin line with the appropriate inflexions and micro-intensities within the graphite or the type of pen he uses. Beyond the lines emerges the sensation because, as the architect says: "The drawing is a trace without geometry, it is the drawing of a fleeting atmosphere" (Siza, 2018).



Figure 8: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait 'Chez Soutinho', 1991
Source: Almeida (n.d.)



Figure 9: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait for Kristin, Berlin, 2014
Source: Feireiss & Choupina (2019)

Mastering trace management also allows him, with the same nib, to treat the diversity of drapery and its folds and still not confuse skin, fur, hair, and fabric, maintaining the quality of visual continuity in the difference of materials. Harmony of gesture that manages to be deviant in the motricity of the hand, without losing the precision of proportion and the calculation of scale that ensures the sensation of recognising your face.

Siza's Self-Portraits on the Horse

Siza also portrays himself on horses. In a drawing from 2003, he depicts himself naked on a horse, in profile, with a recognisable face and wearing glasses, as if he were riding towards a mission, holding a small sabre in his right hand (Figure 10). He draws a thin and slender body; he marks the nipple and navel, excluding the left hand, which would be in the foreground. The caption "Condottieri Álvaro" by recovering the Italian term *condottiere*, meaning commander or mercenary leader of the city-states of the late Middle Ages (Higino, 2015), evokes an allusion to the needs of battle (personal and professional). Possibly the idea of defence, action, a front to combat inequalities and the devaluation of culture. In the self-portrait in which he flies on a dove (possibly a dove of peace), he also appears naked, looking to see further afield, as if conquering new territories (Figure 11).



Figure 10: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait 'Condottieri Álvaro', 2003
Source: Cruz (2017)

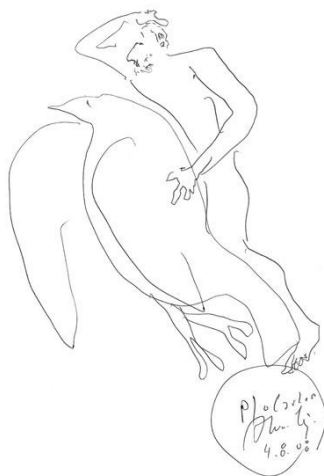


Figure 11: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait flight on the dove, n.d.
Source: Siza & Castanheira (2009)

In another self-portrait on horseback (Fig. 12), Siza struggles and gallops with a sword drawn. It's the architect's alter ego that lurks in an adventurous and heroic character (Lorenzo, 2017). Siza's body tilts and his face is no longer in profile. Now, he's looking to the right, facing someone who might be next to him. He keeps his glasses on and hides his left hand again, but this time, it's in the background with another function: "The left hand holds the reins as if to tell us that the situation is under control and the direction is safe. The piece of the sword represented is not a threat (unlike the previous drawing where it appears to be about to be driven into someone), but almost a friendly solution, perhaps a farewell: see you at the other end! The horse and rider are in retreat" (Higino, 2015).

It exudes an expression of victory, with forces, rotations and muscular tensions. It's not an agonised horse like the one in Picasso's *Guernica* (1937), nor is it Delacroix's narcissistic horse that struggles with the light (1825), nor are they Degas' racehorses. Siza's horses are closer to the hard-working horses of Géricault and Leonardo.



Figure 12: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait on a galloping horse, n.d.

Source: Castanheira & Porcu (2001)

Drawings of horses are a regular feature of Siza Vieira's work. As he says, drawing horses returns to his childhood (Siza, 2019a) and continues into adulthood. Norman Foster refers to a meeting with Siza at a symposium in Santiago de Compostela, where the architect would be drawing horses from memory: "He was sitting next to me with the blank pages of an open sketchbook in front of him. (...) He began with a caricature of the board's chairman, which was followed, as the night progressed, by horses ridden by mysterious riders who leapt across the pages full of sketches and diagrams" (Foster, 1994).

In Siza's work, horses are sketched in profile, tense and moving, often hunched and restless, and usually appear as an autonomous subject "which, like Barragán, he likes to represent" (Machabert & Beaudouin, 2009).

The Self-Portrait in the Drawings of the Hands That Draw

The identity of the face is joined by the drawing of the hands as self-observation. The presence of the hand seems to accentuate the activity of drawing, as well as organising

technical aspects such as defining the foreground, incorporating the scale of the draughtsperson, activating the axes of spatiality and locating the horizon line. In this sense, the architect says in conversation: “I can’t remember the first time I incorporated my hands into a note. Someone pointed out to me that back in the 1950s, there were some notes in which these hands appeared. Perhaps it’s a question of a certain conception of space, an attempt to give as global an idea as possible, retracting the foreground to the place of the gaze” (Llano and Castanheira, 1995).

But they’re not just hands; they’re hands that draw (with the pen between their fingers): the stimulus of the drawing of the hand-being-observed (Berger, 2007). What message do the drawn hands that are drawing convey? Like the paradoxical duplication of hands in Escher’s lithograph (Drawing Hands, 1948), the act materialises, and a visual order is established in perception, triggering in the observer the mutual relationship between rhythm and muscle memory (Pallasmaa, 2009).

The linearity and single direction of the mechanical and nervous orchestra of the traditional instrumental transfer between eye and hand, in which the eye is the director and the hand is the producer, seems to be a bodily reduction that does not explain the interleaving of the eye and hand movements and the intentional and occasional modifications that result from the cognition transformed by these movements during drawing. With the hand, we are taken from grasping to understanding (Brun, 1991).



Figure 13: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Drawing of the hand that draws in the Pantheon of Rome, 1980

Source: Llano & Castanheira (1995)

That’s why Siza knows that the hand is not just a technical organ of pressure and response; it is, above all, an organ of knowledge (Focillon, 1996, p. 112). Furthermore, “The hands dream. Between the hand and the things, a whole psychology unfolds” (Bachelard, 1971, p. 72). The hand builds thinking and fantasy, and in Siza, the work is done with the hands, and the architect wants to show them and

show himself through them. “The thing about Siza is that he gets his hands into the work. It’s a very peculiar form of self-portrait. Drawing his hands or face is the same operation as putting himself in the portrait. (...) It’s not an unprecedented gesture. Palladio (1508-1580) also used to put his drawing hand into the drawing. The hand is also a recurring motif in Chillida (1924-2002). Siza knows this” (Higino, 2015).

Drawing hands during the act of drawing or observing hands being drawn has various functions of spatial interactivity. The different three-dimensional movements of rotation and extension, allowed by the psychophysiology of eye and hand motricity, intersect many cognitive regions and functions (Mallgrave, 2011), with influences on the cultural quality of the gestures that link the visual, spatial and motor systems. “All gestures - even the gesture of drawing - are loaded with history, unconscious memory, incalculable, anonymous wisdom” (Siza, 2019a).

A visual relationship is constructed by tensions, inversions and exchanges between the optical, the digital, the manual and the haptic (Deleuze, 2003), where sensations can simultaneously be experiences of sight and touch. The phenomenological reduction of Siza’s gesture upsets the Cartesian axes by interconnecting the *res cognitae* with the *res extensa*. Deleuze’s haptic visuality, by connecting the senses, allows us to re-signify spatial interpretation: by seeing his hand draw, Siza is inside. “The hand that can be seen drawing the landscape, an image constantly present in Álvaro Siza’s drawings, is more than a symbol of the imaginative perception of this architect artist. Siza Vieira goes into the landscape. It is the image of the world that he sees and is seeing himself... As in Goethe’s tale of the Green Serpent, the margins between sensation and the intelligible, between heaven and earth, between the sensible and the para-sensible connect. (...) This poetic fusion is not applied through Euclidean geometry in architectural sketches. Drawing becomes the expression

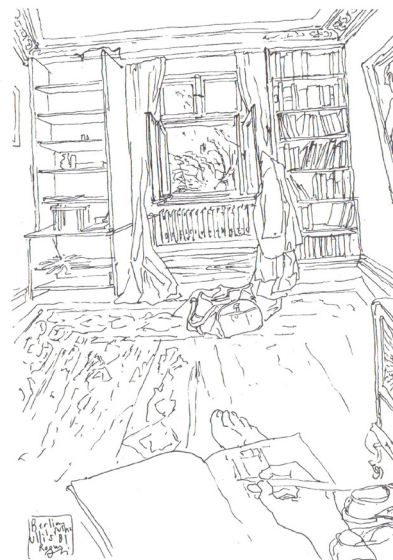


Figure 14: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Drawing of the hand that draws at the Ulli Böhme House in Berlin, 1981

Source: Llano & Castanheira (1995)

of a plastic space without reference to a vanishing point. Hence the polycentric images” (Rodrigues, 1992).



Figure 15: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Drawing of the hand that draws the architect Fernando Távora, n.d.
Source: *Castanheira & Porcu (2001)*

This polycentric perspective with the hand in the foreground directing the gaze is present in multiple drawings of cities and architectural interiors, whether inside the Pantheon in Rome (1980), inside the Ulli Böhme House in Berlin (1981), or when the hands draw Fernando Távora with his arms crossed over the table (Figure 13, 14 and 15).

In St Mark’s Square in Venice (1981), the axis of the central perspective is aligned with the distribution of the hands and the seated body (Figure 16), but the diversion of vanishing points is particularly evident in the Gardens of Versailles (1988), where Siza includes the hands in the



Figure 16: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Drawing of the hand that draws in St Mark’s Square in Venice, 1981
Source: *Mazza (2019)*

foreground of the drawing but adds an aerial view of his head (Figure 17). In this self-portrait of the head almost in plan (despite the volume), he adds shoulders and arms, as well as details of the hair, glasses and nose. Multiple observation points emerge: the drawn Siza and the Siza who draws and sees the view, and we see Siza seeing and drawing, and we also see the observed view.



Figure 17: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Drawing of the hand that draws in the Gardens of Versailles, 1988
Source: *Almeida (n.d.)*



Figure 18: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait, n.d.
Source: *Machabert & Beaudouin (2009)*

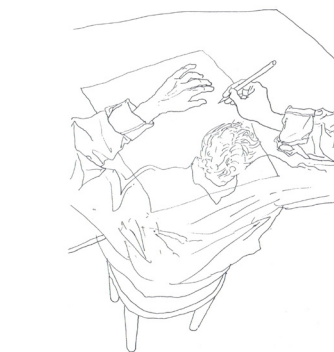


Figure 19: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait in Argentina, 1982
Source: *Llano & Castanheira (1995)*

The Drawing of and in the Mirror - Self-Portrait at the Hotel Mediterraneo, 1982

Most self-portraits are mediated by the mirror's reflection, which is an explicit response, whether it's due to being present at the moment or a memory of previous visits. However, in the self-portrait at the Hotel Mediterraneo (Córdoba, 1982) (Figure 20), in addition to the face, the mirror is also drawn as if it were a frame.

The drawing of the and in the mirror, and of the reflection as a device, emphasises the presence of the double by extending the virtual space, which Merleau-Ponty explains in *Eye and Mind*: “the mirror has sprung up along the open circuit between the seeing and the visible body” (Merleau-Ponty, 1993). The seeing face of the mirror, which is not another but the same, is parallel but not flesh and could be a stranger who has appeared there.



Figure 20: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait at the Hotel Mediterraneo, 1982

Source: *Grande & Muro* (2019)

In Hotel Mediterraneo, Siza's face, although serene, appears slightly astonished by what the reflection gives back. Recognition and correspondence have various mismatches and fragmentations, with successive distances from identity. In *Sugli specchi e altri saggi* [On mirrors and other essays], Umberto Eco takes up Kripke's theory of “rigid designators” to explain this discontinuity in and of the mirror: “Only the mirror image, as an absolutely rigid designator, cannot be called into question by counterfactual questions. In fact, I could never ask myself (without violating the pragmatic principles that regulate my relations with mirrors): «if the object whose image I apprehend had different properties to those of the image I apprehend, would it still be the same object?». But this anti-counterfactual guarantee is only given to me by that threshold phenomenon, which is precisely the mirror. The theory of rigid designators is a victim of the magic of mirrors” (Eco, 1989).

The counterfactual has, in Eco, the sense of what

didn't happen but could have happened, and the rigid designator (or draughtsperson) points to the same thing in all the possible worlds in which that thing exists. Note the existence of another drawing, also in a bedroom (Figure 21), in which Siza once again portrays himself in the mirror frame, but this time, the framing of the drawing refers to the perspective of the interior space (walls, ceiling, pillar, beams, furniture), and the self-portrait is reduced and appears in the middle of things, in a position emphasised by the spatiality of the reflection in the corner of the room.

Reflection as a spectral activity dependent on another stimulus and as an optical frontier where deviations from (as)symmetrical direction occur is understood by Siza in the broad sense of representation (a-a'), especially when he says that “the perfect object will be a mirror without a frame or polish (...) reflections of reflections” (Siza, 2019a). The light is returned, and with this, he foresees at least two situations: increases in distance between the double and the original (a-a'-a'') or a return to that original by cancelling the reflection (a-a'-a). The perfect object to which the architect refers is an invisible mirror (Gregory, 1997), where only the illusion of the reflection that has become the substance of real space remains, which Derrida explains: “In order to form the hypothesis of the self-portrait of the draftsman as self-portraitist, and seen full face, we, as spectators or interpreters, must imagine that the draftsman is staring at one point, at one point only, the focal point of a mirror that is facing him; he is staring, therefore, from the place that we occupy, in a face to face with him: this can be the self-portrait of a self-portrait only for the other, for a spectator who occupies the place of a single focal point, but in the center of what should be a mirror” (Derrida, 1993).



Figure 21: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait in the bedroom, n.d.

Source: *Leyva & García-Posada* (2012)

In the self-portrait of Hotel Mediterraneo, the right hand is also shown drawing, thus joining the family of portraits with hands included. The polycentric representations are

repeated this time between the plane of the drawing support, the plane of the drawing in the mirror, and the plane of the sketchbook on the lap. In addition to the hand, feet are also drawn, which in turn are duplicated by the hand that draws the feet in foreshortened in the sketchbook.

“The footprint is the first real evidence of another living human presence” (Aldersey-Williams, 2014), associated with passage, gravity, rhythm, impression and territoriality. However, in *Hotel Mediterraneo*, Siza’s feet rest and almost float. The bare feet, accompanied by the hand, acquire a sense of full-body presence.

But feet are not associated with the technical, social and moral virtues of the hand, and everyday Portuguese expressions such as “give with your feet” (means “to kick someone to the curb”), “feet of clay”, or even “put your feet in your hands” (means “to get things mixed up” or “to bungle something”) emphasise this difference and hierarchy. “When someone’s handiwork is faulty, it’s often said that they did it with their feet: that’s their bad reputation. What is done well is the hands’ virtue; what is done badly is the feet’ fault. (...) What about the feet of a dancer? What about the feet of an exceptional footballer? Isn’t it above all with the feet that they dance and play football?” (Higino, 2015).

With the automatism of walking and gait coordination, and because it is not linked like the hand to writing (verbal production), the fine motor skills of the feet tend to be culturally neglected. The prominence of the thumb of the hand, which developed the brain for higher functions of instrumental motricity (Pallasmaa, 2009), was only possible because bipedalism allowed the hand to free itself and conquer other expressions of the oropharynx, the jaw and the spatial navigation (Brun, 1991), which changed cognitive structures.

In the motor and sensory homunculi, the hand occupies more cortical representation than the feet due to its functional justification (Jeannerod, 2005), and we sometimes notice an increase in size and visual strength, almost neorealist, when the architect Siza draws hands. But it is curious that Nuno Higino, in Álvaro Siza: *Anotações à margem* [Álvaro Siza: Notes on the sidelines], also pointed out an oversizing in the drawing of the feet: “There seems to be an exaggeration in the size of Siza’s feet: perhaps an excess caused by the perspective, perhaps an oversight of scale” (Higino, 2015). It should be emphasised the feet stretching is noticeable in the self-portrait of the *Hotel Mediterraneo*.

The Self-Portrait as Topography of Body-Home-Landscape

In most of Álvaro Siza’s self-portraits, we have seen a visual fluctuation that unsettles the eye, as if the continuity of the waving expanded the endless space, thereby opening observation time to an insatiable gaze. Regarding gaze management, gestures and the unfinished, Siza says: “In his desire for absolute perfection, Michelangelo wanted definitive control over his work. Perhaps that’s

why he cultivated an aesthetic of the unfinished, a kind of suspension of History. He didn’t manage to do it, although he let us glimpse the energy of awakening in violently carved movements. A glimpse of the sublime and the eternal. Centuries later, Pablo Picasso followed similar paths in a new and open way (...). Picasso turned our eyes into an insatiable probe, as was and is necessary. Michelangelo would not fail to raise the mallet to any of his statues, again saying: *Parla*” (Siza, 2018).

We could also add the insatiable expansion of infinity in Rothko’s stains, but unlike Michelangelo’s desire, Siza’s faces don’t speak. They seem fixed in silence, on fixed or distant horizon lines, not exactly in infinity, but in *medias res*. The same happens when he draws the faces of others, friends and family: “as if we were being left out, as if from far away we were observing an encounter whose voices do not reach us (...) Laughter that is not heard (...) gestures without sound” (Almeida, n.d.).

What does this pattern of suspended sound recording have to do with self-representation? A form of personal introspection? Of attention? Perhaps. In this way, Siza remains distant, thereby reinforcing the insatiable recording of the instant of a time by capturing the fleetingness of everything that moves (Leyva & García-Posada, 2012). He experiments with observing the body as it unfolds and stretches out.

Regarding Siza’s drawings and their extension to the point of rupture, Saramago emphasises “*O Desenho do (Outro) Natural*” [Drawing from the (Other) Natural] in the title of the preface to Bernardo Pinto de Almeida’s book *O Que a Luz ao Cair Deixa nas Coisas*. Álvaro Siza - *Desenhos* [What the Falling Light Leaves on Things. Álvaro Siza - Drawings]: “an ‘ontology’ between the line that copies what the eye sees and the line that invents for the eye to see. (...) Álvaro Siza saw streets, squares, gardens, people talking or nothing more than showing him their faces so that he could portray them, he sometimes saw to draw himself (...) the freedom of the line, both selective and creative, worked on what was seen to make it visible in another way (...) “Where is the body?”. Álvaro Siza gives me the answer: here and nowhere” (Saramago, n.d.). Saramago’s “here and nowhere” is explained in a drawing of the “body as landscape” and the “body as home” when the body-place and the body-volume are dissolved in topography. A mapping of isolines in the drapery, in which Siza seems to be “pouring the form” (Siza, 2019b) in a successive unfolding of the line, appears both in the self-portraits and in several other portraits, such as when he draws Souto de Moura, Fernando Távora or Alcino Soutinho (Almeida, n.d.). The same topographical gesture appears in Siza’s drawing of the *genius loci* of the landscape and territory, whether in Santiago de Compostela, Machu Picchu or the hills of the Douro (Machabert & Beaudouin, 2009). The small, open, rhythmic and multiplied traces are also reminiscent of the segmented lines and hatches of Van Gogh’s landscape drawings.

As a creator of spaces and volumes, topography organises

the territory, the landscape, the city, the house, the object and the body as fields for the composition of metrics and distances, which are mutually extended in the sense of architecture as total art (Rodrigues, 1992). The human body is the scale and reference and is, above all, the proportion of space and the place from which architecture's physical and social distances are measured. As Gregotti points out: "for Siza, drawing is not an autonomous language; it is a question of taking measurements, of establishing the internal hierarchies of the place that is being observed, of the desires that it arouses, of the tensions that it induces; it is about learning to see the questions, to make them transparent and penetrable" (Gregotti, 2006).

With the failure of the models of the modern movement and the international style, the architect Álvaro Siza opened

to other fields of conceptual, formal and material plasticity, "Which changes, transforms, adapts, but which endures" (Belém, 2012) through the roles of drawing. Sensitised by Wright's organicism and Alvar Alto's expressionism, he looks for new solutions to humanise the Vitruvian triad and the autonomous exercise of drawing figures and faces evokes this predisposition towards body-house-landscape extensions, or in other words, how "this place touched my gaze" (Almeida, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

In 2022, the renowned magazine *El Croquis*, in issue 215/216 dedicated to the architect's works (2015-2022), put a painted self-portrait on the cover, signed and dated from 1953 (Fig. 22). We look directly into the eyes and the awakening of 20 years. Much later, in a short text written in 2016 under the title "What is there of you in what you draw", Siza explains the personalised subtraction in drawing that makes identity accessible:

"You've seen so many beautiful things
 Maybe too much or not enough or too fast
 That brings to mind the confusion of beautiful things
 The effort to exclude or not
 That's what's in you in what you draw" (Siza, 2019b).

Finally, Siza draws himself on the balcony (Fig. 23) in a "building he designed. The snail lamps authorise this assumption. He seems a little dazed, looking obliquely" (Higino, 2015), from top to bottom. For those viewing the drawing and the face in profile, the view is also oblique, but now from the bottom up, like someone on the street. This position emphasises the perspective of the upper balcony, where someone is also looking down. The architect continues to lean on his hands, which appear drawn on the guard that covers his body. Siza peeks out from the balcony, looks outside, and renews the pleasure of observing, which leads to the drawing.



Figure 22: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait at 20 years old, 1953

Source: *El Croquis* (2022)



Figure 23: Álvaro Siza Vieira, Self-portrait on the balcony, n.d.

Source: Almeida (n.d.)

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