

Leça da Palmeira Revisited: Sixty-Seven Years of Recurring Work by Álvaro Siza

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Abstract : Over the last sixty-seven years, Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza Vieira designed several interventions for the Leça da Palmeira waterfront. With this paper, we aim to analyze the history of this set of projects in a chronological approach, seeking to understand the connections that can be established between them. Born in Matosinhos, a fishing and industrial village located near Porto, Álvaro Siza built a remarkable relationship with Leça da Palmeira (a neighboring village located to the north) from a personal and professional point of view throughout his life: it was there that he got married (in the small chapel located next to the Boa Nova lighthouse) and it was there that he designed his first works of great impact, the Boa Nova Tea House and the Ocean Swimming Pool, today classified as national monuments. These two works were the subject of several projects spaced over time, including recent restoration interventions designed by the same author. However, the marks of Siza's intervention in this territory are not limited to these two cases; there were other projects designed for this territory, which we also intend to analyze: the monument to the poet António Nobre (1967-80), the unbuilt project for a restaurant next to Piscina das Marés (presented in 1966 and redesigned in 1993), the reorganization of the Avenida da Liberdade (with a first project, not carried out, in 1965-74, and a reformulation carried out between 1998 and 2006) and, finally, the project for the new APDL facilities, which completes Avenida da Liberdade to the south (1995). Altogether, these interventions are so striking in this territory, from a landscape, formal, functional, and tectonic point of view, that it is difficult to imagine this waterfront without their presence. In all cases, the relationship with the site explains many of the design options. Time after time, the conditions of the pre-existing territory (also affected by the previous interventions of Siza) were considered, so each project created a new circumstance, conditioning the following interventions. This paper is part of a more comprehensive project, which aims to analyze the work of Álvaro Siza in its fundamental relationship with the site.

Keywords : Álvaro Siza, contextualism, Leça da Palmeira, landscape

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